

Spiritual Warfare II: Participating in the Battle

Ephesians 6:10-18

Mark 9:14-29

May 31, 2009

Last week we talked about Spiritual Warfare and we are going to continue that this week. It's a term that I have come to find out is new to some of you. Many who contacted me over the week shared that they never really thought about Satan and what he is doing in their life every day. Actually, I'm not surprised. That's exactly how he wants it. Remember, one of the things I said last week was that one of Satan's biggest accomplishments is that he is able to convince many, many people that he doesn't exist, or that he's not important enough to worry about. When that happens he is able to get God blamed for all that is wrong in your life.

The truth is that there IS a spiritual battle going on all the time and you ARE caught up in it – whether you are aware of it or not. Last week's sermon was an effort to make you aware of it.

This week we are going to talk about what it takes to participate in the battle as a spiritual warrior...and we're just going to jump right in.

First, you need a vision of your place in the larger story. For those of you who drive, have you ever had the experience of realizing as you were driving down a highway that you were zoned out on the road about 50 yards ahead of you? You don't notice the other cars. You don't notice the landscape on either side of the road. You don't notice the sky. It's just you and the asphalt.

The truth is there is more to the world than just you and the asphalt. There is the natural world around you. There are relationships with other people. And there is your spiritual life.

That spiritual life includes your personal relationship with Jesus; but it doesn't end there – although that's where most of us stop. Just as your relationship with the people you love occurs within the larger context of the sociopolitical systems of our country and world; your love relationship with Jesus occurs within the reality of the larger spiritual world. As a being created in the image of God, you have citizenship in two worlds – the earthly and the spiritual. We must make sure that we are aware of both...not just one. Satan still works in the lives of people. He might not possess people in the way he did in the Mark 9 passage. As mankind has grown more sophisticated in our understanding of the human mind and body, Satan has had to change his tactics to use more subtle means of disrupting our lives. But make no mistake, he is still very active.

Second, you need a people to fight alongside. A solitary person can fight and do well against another person. David did fine against Goliath – even though Goliath was a formidable adversary. This was because it was person against person. However, in the Bible when people are going up against the spiritual they always do it in groups with the Holy Spirit and the name of Jesus as their power source. Think about Jesus. He recruited twelve other men to do battle with him against Satan and the negative spiritual forces that he knew he would encounter in the Kingdom of the World.

When he sent the disciples out into the world, he did not send them alone. He sent them in pairs.

Some of the men here at Sunrise have been engaged in a study entitled, Wild at Heart. One of the principles taught in that study was that men (and women) need a band of brothers/sisters to travel the spiritual journey with. These friends in Christ surround one another with accountability; and, they have one another's backs in the fight. The stronger your relationships in Christ become, the more the Enemy is going to try to take you down. And believe me...you are no match for the Enemy of the Kingdom of God if you stand by yourself. You need others with you. So make sure the Enemy does not separate you from your church, and that you don't keep allowing him to give you logical sounding reasons for not being a part of a small Christian group like a Bible study class or a Sunday School class. As long as you stay away from those places you won't be strengthened and gain brothers and sisters who will stand with you – and that is just what the Enemy wants.

Okay. You now are aware of your larger spiritual surroundings, and you have Christian brothers and sisters to fight alongside. **Now you need the proper equipment. Ephesians introduces us to the full armor of God.** It is what you must put on every day when you awake in the morning; because, even before you get out of the bed in the morning Satan begins to work on your mind and heart. So, let's go through all of the elements of the armor and see what they are for.

Eph 6:13-17

Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Belt of Truth – The belt of truth is closely related to the sword of the Word of God; for it is upon the belt that the sword hangs. The Holy Spirit opens all Truth to you so that you can discern falsehood and its associated temptations when you encounter them.

Breastplate of Righteousness – The breastplate is a very important piece of equipment because it covers your heart. Scripture tells us over and over to protect our hearts, for where are hearts go the rest of us always follows. This heart protector is made of very special stuff – righteousness. However, as Christians we must remember that we have no righteousness of our own, for we are sinners. Our righteousness comes from Christ. He covers our hearts with His righteousness so that the Enemy cannot penetrate and get to our heart. In other words, Jesus is the protector of your heart.

Shoes: peace of the Good News – Good footwear gives a warrior stability. In Romans, the gospel of peace is described as that firm relationship we have with God because of the work done by Jesus Christ. We are solid in our relationship with the Father and can stand with confidence knowing that because of Christ we are now reconciled with God. And if God is your friend, then there is no enemy that cannot be defeated.

Shield of Faith – The shield is your faith which connects you to the almighty power of God. We cannot come against Satan under our own power. It is the power of God alone that defeats him. Paul tells us in this passage that the shield stops the fiery arrows of the devil that are meant to destroy your faith.

Helmet of Salvation – The helmet of salvation covers our heads which contain our minds. Our minds are highly significant in spiritual warfare. In Romans 8, Paul is very much to the point as to why your mindset and thoughts are so important.

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so....

Sword: Word of God – When you wield the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God you are using scripture as your weapon. Jesus gave us a perfect example of how to do this during His wilderness temptations. The devil would say something like, “*If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.*” And Jesus would respond with, “*It is written, `Man shall not live on bread alone.’*” The Word of God has power. This same Word that formed all of creation and has the power to break it apart is given to you to be used on behalf of the Kingdom of God in the war against the Enemy.

Now that you know your place in the larger story, you have Christian brothers and sisters alongside you, and you have a defensive armor that connects you to the power of God, there are only two things left to do.

You must confess your faith in God through Christ Jesus and then you must put your faith into action. Raise your voices in praise and worship to God and live as those who are victorious! Listen again to the words of that great hymn, “Onward Christian Soldiers.”

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus going on before.
Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;
Forward into battle see His banners go!

Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane,
But the church of Jesus constant will remain.
Gates of hell can never gainst that church prevail;
We have Christ’s own promise, and that cannot fail.

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus going on before!