

Class 203 Introduction to Spiritual Warfare: Session 3 Full Notes

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8b)

Session Three: The Weapons of our Warfare

3.1 Being sober about our situation

3.1.1. With apologies to Louis Armstrong...

It's not always a wonderful world! The Bible is clear about the fact that we are engaged in a conflict with the forces of darkness. This is a spiritual conflict but, as in human wars, the casualties are very real indeed. We are presented with an enemy who delights to steal, kill and destroy the lives of human beings. Nor are human beings exempt from the battle; in fact, as Christians we find ourselves more the target!

... Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Eph. 6:11-12)

Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith... (1 Pet. 5:8-9)

3.1.2. A brief word for conscientious objectors

There is no quarter in this war, nor can we wish it away. More common than this though, is the mindset which causes Christians to believe they are an impregnable fortress. Far from seeing themselves as targets, some think themselves immune from the onslaughts of the devil.

To be blunt, God would not waste His breath telling you to be careful unless there were consequences to your carelessness.

Neither give place to the devil. (Eph. 4:27)

This implies that if we give him place or leave it unguarded he will seize it! In other places, of course, we are warned against his snare or his wiles. These warnings are written to Christians by Christians so that we will see ourselves as the logical target of an enemy who seeks to prevent the forward momentum of God's Kingdom in the earth.

3.1.3. The cost of losing the war

The consequences of defeat are real. God has promised grace for temptation and strength for the battle. We can choose to avail ourselves of His supply – or not. But a failure to be strong in the Lord carries the risk of being overwhelmed by a hateful, clever and determined foe. The enemy, if left unchecked, has power:

- To hinder the apostolic mission: *...Satan hindered us...* (1 Thess. 2:18)
- To destroy godly order in society: *... some have already turned aside after Satan.* (1 Tim. 5:15)
- To corrupt doctrine: *...seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons...* (1 Tim. 4:1)
- To introduce counterfeit spiritual manifestations: *...try the spirits...* (1 John 4:1)

Added to this more direct form of power is the enemy's ability to bring Christians to ruin indirectly through his skill at temptation. If we make room for the "spirit of the world" (1 Cor. 2:12) it is no surprise if we should end up like Demas:

For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica... (2 Tim. 4:10)

3.2 God Gives Us Weapons Of War

3.2.1. The primacy of the Word of God

Much popular teaching on spiritual warfare emphasizes technique over the presence of the Lord, being strong in the Lord and being strong in the power of His might. We have seen a host of books and teachings in recent years setting forth all kinds of novel suggestions. Some of this has been profitable and we would attribute it to the Holy Spirit's work as He continues to restore to the Church some precious truths that were obscured by tradition. But other teachings may do more harm than good if they take us away from a proper focus on Christ and on the role of the Word of God. In our day it is necessary for Christians to again be renewed in their minds about what God says of His Word:

For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. (Ps. 119:89)

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (Matt. 24:35)

... the words that I speak unto you are spirit and are life. (John 6:63)

3.2.2. The power of the Word of God

The Word contains and communicates the life of God into the heart of Man. As such, if we are to be strong in Him we must be built up in His Word. The Word has four purposes in the arena of spiritual warfare. Of course, the Word is so all-encompassing in its power that you will find these aspects useful in other spheres of life as well.

1. Encouragement

God communicates encouragement to our spirits as we meditate in His Word. The devil would seek to dissuade us from the truths of God's purposes and power toward us. It is a comfort to know such verses as:

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4)

2. Exhortation

In addition to lifting us up, God's Word spurs us on in many places to good works and to spiritual combat when we have become complacent.

3. Edification

The message of God's grace builds us up and gives us an inheritance.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)

4. Establishment

Paul said that God had power to establish us according to his gospel. (Rom. 16:25) I believe this is different than being merely edified. To be empowered for service is not the same as being established in Christ; one has to do with the need of the moment, the other with being of proven character for the long haul and increasing as Christ Himself did in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52). This enables people to be pillars or foundations for others.

3.2.3. The Word of God as a defensive weapon

The Word is used as a defensive weapon to assess doctrines and teachings, filtering them for their faithfulness to the received teaching of Christ and His apostles. It is also used to assess temptations and respond to them appropriately. Because it reflects completely the heart of God on matters of sin and righteousness, it alone and not sentiment, culture or tradition must regulate our response to any temptation. In this, our supreme example is Jesus in His wilderness temptations. By use of the Word, Christ could identify the nature of the temptation:

- Where was the potential sin contained in this situation?
- What is the way of escape?

When pressed upon in any trouble we also use the Word defensively as the Spirit quickens to our spirits the many promises of the Word of God. All Christians should be intimately acquainted with what God has said to His saints on the principal topics of life.

3.2.4. The Word of God as an offensive weapon – the Sword of the Spirit

The Word is used offensively as we declare and pray what God has said. Some of this is directed at the enemy; some of it as in the case of prayer affects him only indirectly.

I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. (Isa. 62:6-7)

...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit... (from Eph. 6:17-18)

Here God invites us to partner with Him in intercession, essentially by using His own words. You can see in Ephesians 6 the intimate connection between the Spirit's sword and prayer. In intercession of this type we pray God's revealed purpose and Will. This is a higher level of intercession than praying against the devil's plans per se. It can be useful to pray against the enemy but it is better to pray for God's Kingdom to be released and supplant what the enemy is doing. This type of praying is well illustrated in the case of the apostolic prayers of the New Testament, which reveal God's plan and priorities for the Church.

3.2.5. The Blood of Jesus

What is the power of the Blood of Jesus? Is it a talisman, or something else? As commonly used in our day, we would never know that the Blood is not principally directed to the enemy, but to God. The Blood of Jesus and our share in it are our means of access to the Presence of the Father and His Throne of Grace. Thus, we could neither worship nor pray at all without it. So the Blood strengthens us by establishing our heart in the grace of God – it is our weapon against condemnation.

It is because the Blood of Jesus represents His sacrificial work that demons detest hearing it mentioned. To plead the blood of Jesus is not to sprinkle something physical or even spiritual at the enemy, but to remind Heaven that we are partakers of the covenant which that Blood purchased. In Rev. 12:11 the sense of the Greek is that they overcame "on account of" or "because of" the blood of the Lamb. There is no reference in the New Testament to the Blood of Jesus providing physical protection or to "pleading the blood" as a form of prayer. Even in the Passover story, the fact of the lamb's blood on the door meant that the family within had come under the covenant it represented. There are no similar stories even in the Old Testament. If it were otherwise we would expect to see people in the Old Covenant frequently sprinkled with sacrificial blood for physical protection.

3.2.6. The Name of Jesus

To know the power of the name of Jesus we need to understand the ancient world's view of names. The closest analogy we can make is the power of attorney. To operate in the name of someone meant that one must be treated as if he were the person represented by the name. As we studied in our last session, God has invested Jesus with all authority in Heaven and in Earth. His Name carries that great authority.

But as with the case of Jesus' Blood, the Name of the Lord is no lucky charm. An active faith in Who He is and reverence for His Name is required in order for the saints to wield His authority.

And His name through faith in His name has made this man strong, whom you see and know; yes, the faith which is by Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.... Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him does this man stand here before you whole. (Acts 3:16, 4:10)

Another point to consider is that we do not have carte blanche to use that Name but we must move at His direction. What has He directed you to do? Even Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing.

3.2.7. The Presence of God released in the worship and holiness of the saints

There is a special strength released in our lives and against the enemy as we render praise to the Lord.

Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have ordained strength [praise – according to Jesus!] because of your enemies, so that you might still the enemy and the avenger. (Psalm 8:2, Matt. 21:16)

But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. (Psalm 22:3)

There are many occasions in Scripture in which God did supernatural acts as His Presence was released in conjunction with the worship of His people.

Not to be overlooked is the presence of God cultivated over time in the hearts of holy men and women whose lives have made them attractive places to the Lord.

3.2.8. The Gifts and Ministries of the Holy Spirit

The active working of the Spirit tears down people's resistance to the Word of God and causes them to see the superiority of God and His Kingdom over all others. Are we praying to be God's agent?

But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. (1 Cor. 14:24-25)

Christians should pray every day for the manifestation of the Spirit at the point of their needs and the needs of those they meet. His Presence should be invoked regularly in our public gatherings.

3.2.9. Prayer and Fasting

Prayer, especially as intensified by fasting, invites God to enter into situations and calls his grace into places it hasn't yet gone. It isn't possible to discuss this in the depth we would like. Let it suffice to say that the principal value of fasting may be that it adds *depth* to our encounter with God whether in repentance, prayer, or worship.

Reaching out to God with prayer and fasting brings an increase of power and foils the plans of the enemy; it has so often overturned even the righteous decrees of the Lord when He has arisen to judge.

"O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that is coming against us; neither do we know what to do - but our eyes are on you." (1 Chron. 20:12)

3.2.10. The ministry of the holy angels

Intercession can also bring the angels of God into the fray in support of the saints. As God wills they are released to come to our aid.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? (Heb. 1:14)

3.2.11. The Christian graces

The power of Christlike living in daily situations creates an atmosphere in which the Light of God expels the evil one. The chief of these graces, forgiveness, frequently unlocks the human soul by disarming all the objections it raises to God and his ways.

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink - for you shall heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward you. (Prov. 25:21-22)

3.2.12. The love of God

Love is the highest wisdom and the strongest weapon - a weapon against which there is no defense.

Love never fails [ends or runs out]... (1 Cor. 13:8)

...faith which works by love. (Gal. 5:6)

3.3.13. How to fight people without fighting people

1. walk in love – actively doing all God says for others
2. walk in forgiveness – keep your soil free of bitterness
3. pray for your enemies – intercede for them
4. speak blessing over them – engage in holy retaliation
5. understand what the Will of the Lord is – have God’s perspective
6. obey the directions of the Lord – His living Voice
7. submit the matter to the Lord – trust Him for the outcomes