

# **Spiritual warfare**

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**“Prayer is warfare to the last breath.”**

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## Introduction

Saint Hesychius wrote this:- "Just as someone in the midst of a crowd holding a mirror and looking into it sees not only his own face but also the faces of those looking into the mirror with him so someone who looks into his own heart sees not only his own state but also the black faces of the demons."<sup>1</sup>

He is trying to warn us that the spiritual battle is all around us at all times. If we forget this, we will be overwhelmed. We need constantly to be on our guard and have our weapons ready:-

*Christ's cross is bright  
A shining breastplate  
against all harm  
and all our enemies  
May it be strong –  
the place of our protection.*<sup>2</sup>

The battle is all around us. It rages day and night. Awake or asleep we are in it and part of it. So we had better learn the principles of it and how to withstand the onslaught of the demons all around us.

### **\* 1. It will come to us**

**Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." (Matthew 4:1-3)**

The spiritual battle will come to our door - into our lives, into our homes, into our work and our families. Here is why:-

### **1. Satan was thrown out of heaven**

War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev 12:7-10)

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<sup>1</sup> "On watchfulness." Saint Heyschius

<sup>2</sup> Alexander's Breastplate

## **2. He is determined to reclaim his position**

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me." (Matthew 4:8-9)

## **3. To do this he has to chain humanity.**

He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. (Rev 13:16-17)

## **4. To do this he has to destroy the only group which knows his plans – the church.**

But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison. (Acts 8:3)

**The key to his destructive plan is to break the intercessory stream because he knows we can do this:-**

During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them. (Exodus 2:23-25)

## **\* 2. It's a long struggle against a disciplined enemy**

**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.** (Ephesians 6:10-12)

There are no quick solutions. This is a long hard battle against a relentless enemy. It is, as Paul tells us, a struggle (Gk - "wrestling.") and a long one. It is a spiritual struggle, although it will often reveal itself in the earthy places - in our lives, bodies and families.

There is no truce. "The thief comes to kill." (John 10:10) The enemy is strong and well organized, using the systems of this world against us and evil dark powers in the spiritual world:-

"But against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world."

This is not a game. It is war and demands well trained and determined warriors, willing to give all.

### **\* 3. The fight touches the heart and mind**

**Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."** (Luke 22:39-42)

The spiritual battle is fought out in our hearts and minds. There we fight:-

**\* Doubt:** "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John 20:25)

**\* Deceit:** "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1)

**\* Lies.** "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44)

**\* Death.** Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. (Mark 3:6)

In the end, it comes down to a battle of wills, and our very existence is often on the line. This is our only defence:-

"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." (Mark 14:36)

## **\* 4. It is tough and dangerous**

Apostle Paul makes this clear.

**I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.** (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)

God calls the toughest soldiers to the toughest tasks, and intercession is one of the toughest, as it brings us into direct opposition to dark spiritual powers. We must expect it. We need determination, endurance and protection as this Intercessor tells us:-

*May the Angels go before me into the battle line. The armies of the heavenly host - Cherubim and Seraphim in their thousands. I beseech the Archangels, powers and angels to defend me with their massed ranks and to scatter my enemies.*<sup>3</sup>

## **\* 5. It is active**

**Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.** (1 Peter 5:8-9)

Many Intercessors miss this point. The enemy is prowling around - moving from place to place looking for prey. We are not on a static battlefield, but one which is very active and mobile. The enemy switches his attack and we must be quick to switch our attack as well, or we will end up fighting an empty space.

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<sup>3</sup> Breastplate of Laidcenn

One older intercessor put it like this:-

*To cling to God and the things of God - this must be our major effort and this must be the road the heart follows unswervingly.* <sup>4</sup>

## **What can we do?**

The weapons of spiritual warfare have not changed since we began to fight in this way.

### **1. Prayer**

**And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.** (Ephesians 6:18)

One old Intercessor put it like this:-

*"Prayer is the indestructible wall of the church, the unconquerable fortress which terrifies the demons and protects us in the way of righteousness."*

Intercession is hard work, but we will endure by recalling often that prayer is a gift of the Lord to us. Its motivation and inspiration come from the Spirit moving in us. All of our faith is a grace gift from the Lord. Let's not try and put prayer outside of this giving.

**Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.** (Romans 8:26)

### **2. Authority**

**For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.** (2 Cor 10: 3-4)

We must fight with the certainty of victory. Jesus is the stronger one who has overcome the strong man. (Matthew 12:22-29) We are more than conquerors. (Romans 8:37) Nothing can stand against us. (1 Samuel 17:45-47)

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<sup>4</sup> John Cassion

### 3. Love

**This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.** (1 John 4:10)

We win and overcome by the power of love, not the power of aggression or anger. We have to be firm, but firm in the victory of love. Many intercessors do not understand this. They shout and rave! But the danger here is that we begin to pray in our own strength. If we do that, we will be ineffective and in danger.

One of the ways of fighting is by turning inwards and absorbing into ourselves the sacrificial love of Jesus. This makes us incredibly strong and completely baffles the enemy. We will have to endure a lot for love. But its victory is seen here:-

\* "Love never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:8)

\* For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. (1 John 5:4) <sup>5</sup>

### 4. Confront

**David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands."** (1 Samuel 17:45-47)

In the end we have to face the enemy. We need to take David as a template.

\* **The name of the Lord.** There is no greater name (Philippians 2:9-11) and we should use it.

\* **Defiled.** Satan is a defiler, an invader, a thief and a liar. (John 10:10) He is entitled to no respect.

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<sup>5</sup> New Living Translation



\* **The Lord will deliver you.** Victory, already won on the cross, is guaranteed. Goliath's best plan was to surrender straight away. But Satan never recognises his defeat.

\* **Not by sword or spear.** David has it exactly right. Power belongs to God, and as that power is released, so God establishes his victory. We are merely the agents by which that victory is won.

\* **The battle is the Lord's battle.** We must never forget this, or we will be defeated.

\* **He will give you into our hands.** Our job is to pick the fully ripened fruit! We take the victory which is the Lord's victory. Then he gets all the glory and we are filled with joy.

## **5. Plead the blood**

**For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.**

(1 Peter 1:18)

One older Intercessor put it like this:-

*To enjoy the victory that is ours in the Lord, we must be clothed with truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace and the helmet of salvation – all given us freely at no price, having been purchased by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

For more information on the blood, go to **RELEASING THE POWER OF THE BLOOD** at [www.touchingthesoul.org](http://www.touchingthesoul.org)

## 6. Spiritual weapons

**The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:4)**

The old Intercessor added this:-

*We must be well equipped with the sword of the spirit which is the word of God. One must not neglect the communications link with the command and control centre through the practice of unceasing prayer.*

There are many weapons at our disposal; Paul lists these:

**Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:14-17)**

But we often stop there - but the next verses are critical to us:-

***"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:v18).***

Our old friend again:-

*In a battle environment with constantly changing fronts, any soldier that is not in continuous contact with the centre is doomed. God guarantees the link and frequency but the choice to keep the line switched on is the individuals. Similarly, we must not neglect the strength and support derivable from being in communication and fellowship from fellow soldiers hence Paul sent Tychicus to the Ephesians "...that you may know how we are and that he may encourage you"(v22). No soldier goes to battle alone. It is a teamwork with individual members playing their different roles.*

## 7. Worship

**“Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever.”** (Revelation 4:9-10)

Heaven is full of worship, and in the spiritual battle, we must be full of powerful worship. This was true at Antioch, where the Spirit spoke to the leaders while they were worshipping. What does worship do?

- \* Worship brings that closeness and knowledge of God.
- \* Worship brings us into the heavenly places, and then to the throne of God.
- \* Worship tunes us into the worship of heaven, and gives us that encouragement and strengthening which flows from the presence of God.
- \* Worship helps us move into the flow of the Spirit:- “Then the angel showed me the river of water of life, as clear as crystal flowing from the throne of God and from the lamb.” (Revelation 22:1)

Within this worship, we are established again in the victory of the cross of Jesus:-

**“He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code with all its regulations that was against us and stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”** (Colossians 2: 13-15)

**“Now has come the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night has been hurled down.”** (Revelation.12:10-11)

Within worship, God speaks through the prophets, and prepares a way for the preaching of the word of God. The Church at Antioch worshipped, and their hearts were prepared to hear from God about the direction of the Church. The same must be true for us.

## **Further reading**

I have referred to my own material and it can all be downloaded, free of charge from:-

**[www.touchingthesoul.org](http://www.touchingthesoul.org)**

Details of the Serving Africa Mission can be found at our website

**[www.servingafrica-mission.org](http://www.servingafrica-mission.org)**