

Spiritual Warfare - Key to Local Revival

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12)

Real Christians are involved in a spiritual conflict. This is a fight in which guns and tanks are of no use. Paul said, "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood". The conflict is not with people, or nations, but with Satan and his demons. We need to recognise that many times when people oppose us, the reason behind it is spiritual. The spirit at work in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2) hates the true children of God and wants to hinder the work of God through us. This is one reason why there will always be certain people rising up to cause trouble for the children of God. Sometimes these people will be from within the church. Some of them will be born again Christians. Being a born again Christian is no guarantee that the evil one will never speak or act through you. We all need to be vigilant. We need to be on guard, prayerful, keeping the Word of God in our hearts and our eyes on Jesus. If not, we are vulnerable to satanic attack ourselves.

We are to love and forgive our human enemies, but we are to oppose the evil spirits at work behind them with all the spiritual weaponry that God makes available to us. Paul was keenly aware of the reality of the spiritual conflict in which all true believers are involved, since he himself had to fight many battles with the powers of darkness in order to be effective in his ministry. Paul's instructions in the letter to the Ephesians are highly relevant for us in our spiritual warfare against Satan and his demons.

The Spiritual Realm

The spiritual realm is normally unseen to us. At times, people may be granted insights into the spiritual realm through gifts such as "the discernment of spirits" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:10. This gift often manifests in the form of a vision or dream. A person may see a picture or an image - normally with their eyes closed but sometimes even with their eyes open. What is seen is not physical but

spiritual in nature. God does not let us see like this all the time, and not everyone has this gift. Whether we have this gift or not, we are still called to engage in spiritual warfare. We must understand that the real action of warfare is taking place in the normally unseen realm of the spirit. The spiritual realm operates in parallel to the physical world. There is some correspondence with physical geography. By this I mean, a certain geographical place may have more or less demons or angels present at any given time. Evil activities attract evil spirits. Prayer, praise and faith bring God's angels on the scene and disperse demonic powers.

Some countries are held in a stronger grip than others by demonic presence and powers. Effective prayer is the key to breaking Satan's grip on a person, place, city or nation. For prayer to be effective to this end, there must be *lots of it*. Only with much extraordinary prayer will Satan's death grip on a community, city or nation ever be seriously weakened. Such spiritual warfare must take place *together* with activities of evangelism and discipleship if the hearts and minds of the masses are to be won for the Kingdom of God. The Lord has much to teach us concerning these things.

Satan's Hierarchy

Ephesians 6:12 reveals that we are struggling against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this age, and against a spiritual host of wickedness in heavenly places. Think of them as a huge cloud of insects blackening the atmosphere, biting helpless people, irritating them, poisoning them, infecting them, weakening them, sending them crazy and eventually killing them. The people cannot see these insects and because of their irritation, attack one another instead of the insects they cannot see. These "insects" are operating according under the command of other larger, darker entities which have authority over certain zones, cities and nations. At times these principalities are in conflict with each other in order to increase their influence and prestige, but generally their efforts are concentrated on destroying the people of God. The people of God are not entirely defenseless against this demonic horde, indeed at

times the cloud of "insects" is driven back in certain places and at certain times through the prayers of God's people, and some of the wounded and dying are rescued and come to a place where they receive healing for their wounds. At other times though, when some of God's people stop praying, they themselves become bitten and weakened by the onslaught of the cloud of "insects". This is a fairly accurate picture (howbeit incomplete) of the spiritual warfare as it is in our times.

What are these principalities? They are demon princes, which are assigned by Satan to control certain cities and countries in the interests of Satan. In the book of Daniel, chapter 10, verses 12, 13 and 20 we are granted a rare Scriptural insight into the organisation of Satan's kingdom. Here we see that the archangel Gabriel was sent by God in response to Daniel's prayers. However, Gabriel had to fight with the prince of Persia (a demon prince over the Persian empire) for 21 days. It was during this same period that Daniel was setting his face to seek God through a partial fast. Gabriel could not break through with the message from God until another one of God's archangels, Michael, came to assist and defeated the demon prince of Persia. This allowed a very important prophetic message of God to reach the prophet, who was concerned to know what was God's plan and purpose for Israel, God's chosen people, who were in bad shape at that time. From this we can see the following:

1. Satan organises his kingdom in a hierarchy, with a demon prince over each country or empire.
2. God hears our sincere prayers from the first day we offer them, and send angels to bring the answers to prayer.
3. The manifestation of the answer, be it a message or a change in circumstances, will not come through until the dark powers opposing the answer have been defeated, and God's angels break through.
4. There is a relationship between our prayers, our faith, our perseverance in prayer (and fasting) and the coming of the answer.

5. To engage in effective spiritual warfare, we must be patient, trusting God when the heavens seem to be as brass, and maintaining a determined attitude. Our motivation needs to be a concern for others, not just ourselves.

Modern Day Examples

In some countries, there have been effective campaigns of prayer which have severely weakened Satan's grip on people and places. The most notable examples are Brazil, Argentina, Guatemala, South Korea and parts of Africa. In these nations, significant portions of the population have woken up to their need for God and have responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is no coincidence that the church in these nations is deeply committed to prayer.