**Spiritual Warfare:**

**Authority to Drive out Demons**

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*“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.” (Eph 6:12)*

**Background & Introduction**

Acts 19:13-16 tells us of some Jews, specifically seven sons of Sceva the Jewish chief priest, who were into driving out evil spirits. They “tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, ‘In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.’... One day the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?’ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.” Why didn’t their efforts work? What were the sons of Sceva missing? According to Mark 3:14,15, Jesus wanted to send out the twelve to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. As we are sent and participate in Jesus’ ministry, we sometimes meet people (Christians or non-Christians) who seem to be possessed, or at least seriously afflicted by demons. They are spiritually sick and burdened with heavy emotional darkness and baggage. We often feel that we have no idea how to really help them or care for them. What are we supposed to do? How can we “drive out demons”?

**The Reality of the Spiritual World**

Contemporary Western culture is marked by its adherence to naturalism, the view that nothing exists outside or in addition to the natural world, that is, the observed and observable world and its constituents as these are identified by our best empirical science. According to the teaching of Scripture, however, in addition to things that are visible (naturally observable), there are also things that are not observable by our natural senses or instruments of empirical observation, narrowly conceived (2Co 4:18).

God. Scripture (Jn 4:24; 1Co 15:45) describes God as Spirit (*pneuma*), which means something like an immaterial (non-physical) person. God, in His Triune being (as Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is an eternal, everlasting, unchanging and holy Spirit. He transcends the created universe, in both its physical and spiritual aspects.

Heavenly Realms. In addition to the earth, there is a “heaven” (Ge 1:1; Eph 1:10), identified as the dwelling place of God (Ecc 5:2; Rev 4:1-2). There are “heavenly realms” (Eph 1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10). Once Paul (either in the body or out of the body) was caught up to the third heaven, which he also identifies as paradise (2Co 12:2,4). Paul said our citizenship is in heaven (Php 3:20), and that we have been seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph 2:6). There is also a “kingdom of the air,” and a ruler of that kingdom whom Scripture identifies as “the spirit at work in those who are disobedient” (Eph 2:2). In the heavenly realms, there are rulers and authorities (Eph 3:10), and there are powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of evil (Eph 6:12).

Angels. In Scripture, there are both good angels (those loyal to God) and bad angels (those aligned with the devil and in rebellion against God). Speaking of the good angels, Hebrews 1:14 asks, “Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” Accounts of the activities of angels are scattered all through Scripture: The LORD appears to Abraham along with two angels, who go on to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Ge 18,19). The angel of God helps Hagar in the desert (Ge 21:17-19), and the angel of the LORD tells Abraham not to kill Isaac (Ge 22:11). Jacob sees angels going up and down a ladder between heaven and earth (28:12), and wrestles with an angel who represents God (32:24-30). The angel of the LORD stops Balaam’s donkey (Num 22:22-35). Joshua sees the commander of the army of the LORD (Jos 5:13-15). Ezekiel sees four living creatures within the fiery cloud of God’s glory, guiding some sort of chariot of God (Ezek 1). Isaiah sees the Lord surrounded by Seraphim​ (Isa 6:2), which appear again as “living creatures” around the throne of God in Revelation 4:6-9. Two angels (Michael the archangel and prince who protects Israel [Da 10:13,21, 12:1; Jude 9] and Gabriel [Da 8:16; 9:21; Lk 1:19,26]) are mentioned by name. There is a relationship between what these angels do and what happens in the natural sphere.

Perceiving Spiritual Reality. The spiritual realm and what it contains are not naturally accessible to us. We need to have the eyes of our hearts opened by the Spirit of God in order to perceive them. So Paul speaks of the “spiritual man” who has the Spirit of God and is therefore able to discern the spiritual things that come from the Spirit of God and give insight into the mind and thoughts of God (1Co 2:10-16). Elisha prays to the LORD in 2 Kings 6:16-17 to open his servant's eyes so that he might see the horses and chariots of fire filling the hills around Elisha. To grasp the things of God and His kingdom, we need the Spirit's revelation.

We can’t accept many of the statements made all throughout the Bible unless we accept that there is a spiritual world alongside and intersecting with the physical world. We can’t adopt the Bible’s view of God or of the created universe without accepting that these spiritual realms are real, just as real as the physical world with its empirically observable entities. Since naturalism does not allow for many of the realities posited by the Bible, if we are taking Scripture seriously as our standard of truth, we cannot accept naturalism, even if we acknowledge that naturalism is helpful as a working assumption within narrowly empirical investigations of physical reality.

**The Nature of Spiritual Warfare**

The term “spiritual warfare” does not appear in Scripture. But the idea represented by this term is clearly present in Ephesians 6:12: “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.” This verse follows Paul's exhortation to “put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes” (6:11). Paul also mentions “the day of evil” (13), urging us to stand our ground and to stand firm. Christian life in this age takes place in a war zone. (See also 2Co 10:3-5, where Paul speaks of waging war with weapons that are not of this world).

There is an enemy army led by a fearsome general (the devil / the evil one) bent on the destruction of the saints of God. This enemy leader is described as prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1Pe 5:8). For this reason, Peter urges believers to “be self-controlled and alert” and to “resist him, standing firm in your faith” (9; see also Jas 4:7). Elsewhere he is called “the great dragon… that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray” (Rev 12:7-9). The name “Satan” is mentioned in OT and NT (e.g. Job 1:6; Mt 4:10; Lk 10:18). He is also called the devil (Mt 4:1), the prince of demons (Mt 9:34), Beelzebul (Mt 10:25), the prince of this world (Jn 12:31; 16:11), the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2). In the context of the war in heaven described here, Michael is depicted as leader of God’s army fighting together with his angels against the dragon and his angels and hurling the dragon down to earth along with his angels. Demons are originally angels created good by God, but they rebelled against God and became opponents to God. Their sin was in pride, refusing to accept their assigned place (2Pe 2:4; Jude 6; cf. Isa 14:12-15; Eze 28:11-19). The Bible refers to Satan’s kingdom as the “dominion” or “reign of darkness” (Col 1:13; Lk 22:53), and to those allied with him as “principalities and powers” (Eph 6:12; Col 2:15).

We have already seen angelic beings depicted in the language of warfare (e.g. Jos 5 and 2Ki 6). In the book of Daniel, there is an interesting description of spiritual powers engaged in conflict. Gabriel tells Daniel that he came right away in response to Daniel’s prayer, but was detained by the prince of Persia for 21 days until Michael (one of the chief princes) came to help him. Only then was Gabriel able to overcome the resistance and to reach Daniel, in order to explain to him what would happen to his people in the future (Da 10:12-14). From this account, we can learn a few things about spiritual warfare. First,human beings can wage spiritual warfare in prayer (even when they do not know what specific conflicts are taking place as a result). Good angelic powers are sent and move as the prayers of the saints are heard. Secondly, unlike God, angelic powers are limited in place and time and strength. Some of these spiritual powers are stronger than those lower in the divine hierarchy. Thirdly, battles are being fought in the spiritual or heavenly realms, and at least some of these battles have to do with the release of revelation of God’s word or messages to His people. Fourthly, Satan appoints demons to oversee his interests among nations (Da 11-12).

### **The Strong Man & the Stronger Man**

In the spiritual conflict that rages around us unseen, there are only two sides. When we are called to be Jesus’ disciples, we are not called into neutral territory. We are transferred (rescued) from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light, the kingdom of the beloved Son (Col 1:12,13). We join the side of a king who is in the process of putting all of His enemies under His feet, and who will have victory in due time (1Co 15:25). The devil is strong, but Jesus is stronger. Jesus is the victor. The battle is not ours, but the Lord’s. In Jesus, we are stronger than the devil and demons.

**Satan’s Dominion of Darkness (The Strong Man)**

The devil is more powerful and wiser than people. He won the first battle in the Garden of Eden and has been a strong adversary ever since (Ge 3:1).

Spiritual Strongholds.In Scripture, we find cases of individuals possessed or afflicted by particular unclean spirits (sometimes by multiple spirits, e.g. the demoniac from Gerasa, or Mary Magdalene), but we also find evidence of demonic strongholds that can affect entire nations and cultures. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 Paul writes, *“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. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”* The Greek word translated as “strongholds” here can also mean castle or fortress in its literal meaning, or figuratively it can refer to the arguments and reasonings used to support or fortify a position. Tony Evans defines strongholds as patterns of unrighteousness that hold us hostage outside of the will of God. The strongholds of the enemy are established in our hearts and minds, which means that spiritual warfare takes place primarily in the battleground of human minds and hearts. Paul speaks of strong Satanic deceptions (arguments, pretensions, thoughts) that hinder people from true knowledge of God and produce disobedience to Christ.

Jesus said that the devil “does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (Jn 8:44). Deception is the devil’s main method of attack (Rev 12:9; 20:3); he seeks to obscure and distort the knowledge of who God truly is – the loving and self-giving Father, and (relatedly) the knowledge of who we are (God’s dearly loved children in Christ). He tempts (Ge 3:1-5; Mt 4:3). He make men rebellious against God (Eph 2:2). He accuses God’s people (Zec 3:1). He disguises himself as an angel of light so that we cannot realize it because he wants to deceive us (2Co 11:14).

Genesis 3 displays the pattern according to which the devil establishes strongholds. The serpent suggests a false idea of God, and once his “argument” and “pretension” has been established in Eve's mind, he uses it to tempt and lead her into tragic disobedience to God. What were the “strongholds” active in Eve's temptation? She believed the following falsehoods about God:

1. The restriction God had placed on them, forbidding them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, outweighed (in importance) the great gifts and freedom He had granted them.
2. In placing the restriction on them, God was motivated by the fear that they would become “like God, knowing good and evil.” Relatedly, they would not surely die if they ate the fruit - God had lied in giving that as the reason for the restriction.
3. Becoming “like God,” in the intended sense, is something desirable, which would result if she ate the fruit of that tree.
4. If God really loved her, God would not have restricted her from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

These strongholds created a lens through which she interpreted God and his word, so that now when she was led to look at the fruit up close, she “saw” that it was “good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom” (3:6). The lust of the flesh or of the eyes was aroused. James 1:15 says, “Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin.” Based on her false view of God and his word, she felt justified in breaking the command. The stronghold not only darkened her inner life, but bore evil fruit in her outward actions. Satan wants us to rebel against God and his truth. His final purpose is our death by our disobedience. As James 1:15 says, “And sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” Satan has been “a murderer from the beginning” (Jn 8:44). His purpose is to destroy God’s work in all areas: individual, family, society, church and nation. The devil wants our death by any means.

Once established, the lies of the enemy have a profound effect on our emotions and our perception and interpretation of our experience. The deeper these strongholds are established in us, the harder it is to receive genuine revelation of God. And this leads us to an increasing openness to disobey Christ, to live in ways that are opposed to the way revealed by God in Christ.

Examples of Strongholds.Strongholds can affect us as individuals; they can also be established more broadly in our culture and at the national level. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil that impact all merely human, worldly social systems and indeed all of human life on the earth. In his book entitled “Victory in Spiritual Warfare” Tony Evans mentioned seven of Satan’s strongholds such as marital, chemical, sexual, gambling, food, emotional, and debt strongholds in our culture. From Daniel we saw that specific demonic principalities can be over specific geographic regions. This is evident in the religious and political ideologies that drive human conflict and war. At the present time, we see powerful demonic power at work in radical Islam bent on destroying Christianity. But the values and assumptions of Western secular humanism (namely a distorted view of individual freedom or autonomy, and the supremacy of reason as the judge and arbiter of human affairs) have the potential to be just as hostile to the gospel of Christ – though in a different way – as radical Islam. Indeed we have seen a very thorough erosion of gospel faith in Western liberal societies over the last two or three centuries. The false religions of the world obviously have some spiritual power, and biblically speaking this is due to the demonic powers behind them, which are in strong opposition to the preaching of Jesus Christ and the gospel.

There are also broad, national sin problems that afflict particular cultures. In many cultures of the world pornography has a powerful grip on the population. Pornography is clearly a powerful form of bondage and slavery, and involves a profound hatred of women. In general, sexuality and marriage are an area in which the devil has been establishing strongholds in North America, and this has been happening in the church as well as outside of it. Porn addictions have ruined the careers of many Christian leaders and pastors. These strongholds become ever darker in human hearts and minds, and have led to a large-scale child porn industry, to sex tourism which often involves sex with underaged individuals, and to human trafficking – the explicit enslavement of people for sexual and other exploitation, which has grown to be a multi-billion dollar global system. Since the devil’s aim is to steal, kill and destroy human beings, the area of human sexuality is a key strategic area for him to attack. God created sexuality as a means of great blessing between married men and women. In fact, the very creation of human beings in God's image involved their creation as male and female. So in attacking this area, the devil is attacking humanity at the root. People addicted to pornography, and those involved in other forms of sex-related darkness (both victims and perpetrators) need deliverance and forgiveness.

Legalistic self-righteousness (trying to be righteous by our own standards and efforts) or a hypocritical “religious spirit” is one of the most subtle and dangerous spiritual strongholds established by the devil. When we ask what power of darkness led most directly to the crucifixion of Jesus, we have to admit that it was not lust, but the religious spirit of the Jewish leaders. Jesus told the religious leaders of his day: “the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you” (Mt 21:31). Their hearts were hard against God’s word, and they refused to repent, thinking of themselves as “clean” compared to others who were “sinners” (Lk 7:30; 18:11). Jesus had exceedingly harsh things to say against these religious leaders; he spoke more harshly against their hypocritical self-righteousness than he did against any other sin: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness” (23:25-28). Jesus extended this lament and judgment to the whole city of Jerusalem that was under the authority of these leaders, and prophesied the destruction of the temple based on these sins (23:35-39). For Christians who strive to live morally pure and upright lives, self-righteousness and a religious spirit are a serious temptation. They turn our hearts against God and one another. They lead us to judge, criticize and accuse one another (our family members, coworkers and disciples), so that our interactions with others come to reflect the accusations of the devil rather than the grace of God and the gospel.

All such strongholds must be broken down with divine weapons. In contrast to Satan’s lies, we have Jesus Christ who is the Truth, and the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth. As the Spirit applies the truths found in the Word of God so that Christ is revealed, demonic strongholds can be demolished.

**Jesus is the Victor – Jesus’ Triumphant Kingdom over Satan**

All Satan’s agenda and strategies have been defeated by Jesus! This is the good news we have to know in our spiritual battle. Jesus has overcome forever.

Jesus is stronger. Even though Satan is strong, God, the LORD has ultimate authority over him (Job 1-2). One basic reason why Christ came was to destroy the works of the devil who has been sinning from the beginning. 1 John 3:8 says, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." Christ has destroyed “the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14-15). Matthew 12:29 and Luke 11:21-22 tell us that when Jesus was accused of driving out demons through the power of the prince of demons, Jesus answered, "how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house." Even though Satan was strong and fully armed, Jesus overpowered him, taking away his armor in which he trusted. Jesus defeated the strong man because he is the stronger man (Mk 3:23-27; Ro 16:20; Rev 12:9). Now the stronger man Jesus can thoroughly plunder the house. Jesus is the victor over the power of sin and death and the devil (Lk 10:18). All Jesus’ enemies are being put under his feet (1Co 15:25).

Jesus’ victory over Satan at the cross and in his resurrection. The devil is overcome by the cross of Jesus, by the blood of the Lamb. In the anticipation of his cross, Jesus said in Jn 12:31, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out” (see also Jn 16:11). Jesus was already the victor in his very death, not only in his resurrection and exaltation. Colossians 2:13-15 declares Christ's triumph over Satan. Christ has disarmed the powers and the authorities and he exposed them openly, triumphing over them by the cross. When Christ died on the cross publicly for us, he paid the penalty and died the death which our sins deserved. Thus, he cancelled the record of debt that stood against us. Through Christ who paid the penalty for our sins, God disarmed the devil of the ground of accusation and triumphed over the devil's kingdom. The irony of the cross is that Satan’s apparent victory was his defeat. God’s promise (Ge 3:15) that the head of the serpent would be crushed, and the heel of the man would be wounded was fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of the woman. Now Jesus has already won the victory by his cross, and through his resurrection he secured his victory over Satan.

The battle is the Lord’s.The risen Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). He is Lord of the universe. In Jesus, we can have confidence that we have the victory in spiritual warfare. Our victory is directly connected to Jesus Christ. Colossians 2:10 says, “In Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.” When we are in Jesus, Satan can't touch us. When we come to Jesus the victor and accept his sacrifice for our lives, we are putting ourselves under his authority. Because we are transferred into the dominion of Jesus, we are free from slavery of fear of death (Heb 2:15). Because of Jesus’ victory, we are not fighting for victory. In our spiritual battle, we are fighting from the place of the victory Jesus has already accomplished. Satan has lost his authority forever. Satan has no authority over us. The devil’s lie is that he is as strong as an elephant and people are as weak as mice. But the opposite is true. In our spiritual battle, he looks like the giant Goliath scoffing at the boy David. But David, the anointed of God, defeated Goliath. David is a shadow of Christ, who destroyed the power of the evil one (1Jn 3:8). Victory is possible for us because “he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1Jn 4:4). “The battle is the LORD’S and he will give all of you into our hands” (1Sa 17:47). The battle is not ours but the Lord’s (2Ch 20:15). We should open our eyes to see how the Lord and his army are fighting (2Ki 6:17). We must remember that the Lord is fighting the battle and we are on his side (Jos 5:14). What we need to do is to remember Jesus and depend on him in our spiritual warfare.

### **Spiritual Authority & Spiritual Weapons**

How has Jesus equipped his disciples with his authority to engage in spiritual warfare? And what weapons has he provided for us to use to wage this warfare?

**Spiritual Authority**

1) Our identity. Jesus, the Son of God, gave us the right to become the children of God through faith in him (Jn 1:12). As the children of God and the brothers of Jesus, we are given the authority accordingly. According to the gospels, the demons were afraid and shocked as they encountered Jesus mainly because of who Jesus was. The demons cried out, saying, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are-- the Holy One of God?” (Mk 1:24) These demons were in submission to Jesus because of his identity as the Holy One of God. Acts 16:18 shows that the demons recognized that Paul was a servant of God. As Jesus redeemed us and gave us sonship, our identity is the major source of our authority. This is the unchallengeable righteousness as the children of God.

2) Jesus’ commission. We received the authority to drive out demons as we received his calling. One of the main purposes of Jesus’ calling his disciples is to commission them as kingdom workers. As he sent them out, Jesus gave them the authority. Luke 9:1 says, “When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.” Jesus did not give them anything but the authority in his name. This authority is not only for the salvation of men but also the restoration of all creation (Mk 16:15-18; Ro 8:19). Acknowledging and exercising this authority in proper manner will result in amazing fruit for individuals as well as for communities, cities and nations.

3) The Holy Spirit. Jesus gave his disciples the Holy Spirit to fight the spiritual warfare. Acts 1:8 says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” The Holy Spirit is stronger than any demonic powers of the dark world. 1 John 4:4 says, “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” The demons are not impressed by religious terminology or position in a church or human titles. The authority is maintained and increased as we deepen our relationship with the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Holy Spirit is the one who leads the spiritual battle and enables us to overcome all the demonic powers and drive them out. It is crucial that the Holy Spirit guides us from the beginning and to the end in the spiritual warfare.

**The Church as the King’s Army**

Because Christians have been given spiritual authority in spiritual warfare, we have to perceive this in the communal dimension of the church. When the risen Lord has given the great commission to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19-20), the church is called to challenge Satan’s dominion, “rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” (Eph 3:10-11). The church is not only the bride of Christ (Eph 5:32), but also the army of Christ, engaged in spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness (Eph 6:12). Therefore, the church on earth is called the church militant. As we are called to spiritual warfare, Jesus Christ promised the victory of the church against Satan’s dominion. “The gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Mt 16:18). In spiritual warfare, Christ is our Captain and we are assured of victory. We the church march in the name of the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6). The army of Christ is powerful in spiritual warfare because our weapons are not of the world, but “they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2Co 10:4-5). In fact, Satan is already defeated (Rev 19:11-21; 20:7). The church is aggressively invading Satan’s territory to set its captives free. Wherever the army of Christ advances, the darkness will be dispelled. Lies are defeated. Finally, the King’s army will see the complete defeat of evil. In Revelation, we see the final victory that sings: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

**Spiritual Weapons**

There was a time that the disciples could not drive out demons. And the disciples asked Jesus why such a thing happened and why they could not drive out demons (Mk 9:14-29). Jesus’ answer was simple and to the point, ”This kind can come out only by prayer.” Prayer is denying what we can do and believing what God will do. Prayer is a life in the Holy Spirit. Prayer is the expression of our dependance on God. Prayer is inviting the Holy Spirit over us. Prayer is life with God. So when Jesus said, “only by prayer,” he meant one’s life style of depending on God and living with Him. “If God is with us, who can be against us.” Jesus not only gave us the authority over all demons but also the weapons for the warfare.

There are two kinds of weapons: defensive weapons and the offensive weapons.

Defensive weapons. In light of Ephesians 6:10-20, we are to stand against the devil’s schemes. Noticeable point is “flaming arrows.” If anyone gets one shot, death is ensured. What are they? The flaming arrows are those things that shake and push us from where we stand as children of God (identity), believers in Christ (faith), soldiers of Christ (mission), lovers of God (intimacy), the ministers of Christ (love and care for fellow men), and the church, the body of Christ (community), saints in Christ (holiness) and more. Lies (opposite of the truth), self righteousness (against righteousness of God), man made ideology or philosophical system (against the gospel), doubt and unbelief (against faith in Jesus), thoughts, words and desires that break relationship with God and with others are to be included in the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Concerning the “fourth” above, the defensive armors are explained Eph 6:14-20. Some scholars have viewed this part of Ephesians based on the Roman soldiers armament. Yet, it seems ok to understand this based on the high priest and God’s way of preparing him to be a minister before God and on behalf of the people.

What are the defensive weapons? First, our God is our shield and defender (Ge 15:1; Ps 11:9:114). Clothe yourselves with Jesus Christ (Ro 13:14). Second, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel of peace and shield of faith. These are given to us by Christ and we use them by faith (Eph 6:14-15). Third, prayer and the Word (Mt 4:4). We can defend ourselves with the word. The devil’s schemes and his flaming arrows are to attack to shift us from the righteousness, peace, faith and truth of the word. Yet, the best defense is to proclaim the truth of the word, to hold on to the righteousness of God, to keep the gospel in our hearts for peace through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul encourages the Christians to keep on praying on all occasions for themselves and for others. It is because all these defensive armaments are God’s gift and we can have them by faith through prayer. So, Paul said in Romans 13:14, “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Offensive weapons. There are several effective offensive weapons in the spiritual warfare. First,praise and worship is one. When Saul suffered with the evil spirits, David played the harp and made music. The evil spirits left and Saul could have relief. Worship and praise of God brings God’s presence and his presence drives out the evil spirits. Second, intercession is another. Joshua was in the battle, and Moses, together with the elders, prayed on the mountain. God gave them the victory (Ex 17:8-16). A mother came to plead with Jesus for her daughter who was suffering from demons. Her prayer was heard and her daughter was healed. Third, the word is like a double-edged sword. (Eph 6:17) Jesus defeated the devil with the words of God. (Mt 4:1-11) We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ and to knowledge of God. Hebrews 4:12 says that the word of God is like a double-edged sword. As we read, study and hear the word, the word can cut to the heart, the word exposes lies, the word cut out evil desires and false ideas, and the word can bring us to the light of the truth. Fourth*,* the blood of Jesus. His blood cleanses us from all our sins and the evil spirits as we apply it by faith (1Jn 1:7). Fifth*,* the name of Jesus. We use the name of Jesus to bind the spiritual forces (Mt 18:18; Ac 4:12) and his name gives us salvation from the evil forces. We drive out demons by faith in the name of Jesus.

### **Practical Application & Strategies**

So how can we use the spiritual weapons God makes available to us to pull down the strongholds of the enemy, at the individual, cultural, national levels? Whether a person is demon *possessed* or merely afflicted by demonic forces and spiritual strongholds, believers have the authority to drive out the demons and set people free from the forces that afflict them (Lk 9:1-2; Jn 14:12). When dealing with demonic affliction, it is important to distinguish between the person afflicted and the demonic powers afflicting them. Satan tries to make us feel uncomfortable and even angry toward the victims afflicted by demons. We must strive to do everything in love, to maintain the person’s dignity and to strengthen the person’s will to be delivered from demons. Jesus rebuked demons, but never condemned their victims. Out of compassion and love, he healed and recovered them and returned them to their homes and community. The primary goal of driving out demons is not the casting out of demons itself, but bringing healing to the whole person (Isa 61:1-3). Many who have a mental or personality disorder may be under the influence of demonic power. But we should not try to categorize problems as either demonic or mental (emotional) because the problems cannot be neatly divided into exclusively the mental or exclusively the demonic. It is sound to help the person from both a psychological, or emotional, and a spiritual point of view. The individual may require professional and biblical counseling to deal with complicated personal disorders along with inner healing as described below.

**The Ministry of Inner Healing, Deliverance and Intercessory Prayer**

Demons usually attach themselves to emotional or spiritual “garbage” (Dr. Charles Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*), whether by our conscious invitation / involvement with unclean spirits, or by unconscious processes such as nursing resentment and bitterness or continuance in unconfessed sin. Spiritual strongholds may even be passed down from one generation to the next. For this reason, to help people to be delivered, we have to help them deal with the emotional and spiritual issues that have opened the door of their hearts and minds to the enemy. When we deal with the person’s emotional and spiritual garbage, we can identify what kind of evil spirits are afflicting them. And even if we get demons out without healing the emotional or spiritual issues, chances are high that the demons will return (Mt 12:43-45).

The focus of inner healing is to restore healthy relationships with God, ourselves, and others. When we are restored to the right view of God and of His grace, and we experience His love for us, we can accept, love and forgive ourselves and others as God does. Demonic strongholds are weakened as we come into closer relationship with God. The blood that Jesus shed on the cross has power to forgive our sins, purify us from all sins, cleanse our consciences, and heal our wounds (Heb 9:14; 1Jn 1:7b; Isa 53:5). We are delivered from the enemy's strongholds as we give Jesus our heavy loads (Mt 11:28; 1Pe 5:7; Eph 4:17-32; Mt 6:14-15) and grow in deeper intimacy with God. The greatest weapon is the person’s intimacy with God.

It is best to engage in healing and deliverance ministry in teams of around 3 to 5 people. The team should prepare with prayer, including fasting (Mk 9:29). Demons are afraid of Jesus’ name (Mk 16:17; Lk 10:17; Ac 16:18b), the cross (blood of Jesus) and resurrection. In Jesus’ name, they obey and follow our commands. In the name of Jesus, take authority over the place, time and people involved, so that evil spirits may not hinder. Pray for God’s help. Intercessory prayers are powerful weapons (Jas 5:16). Command evil spirits to obey and not to be violent. Deal with emotional and spiritual garbage by commanding demons (calling with specific names such as spirit of anger, hatred, lust, fear, greed etc.) in the name of Jesus, to go out and never come back. In our private times of intercessory prayer for others, in the name of Jesus, we can include an element of verbal rebuke to demonic forces that may be a component in situations for which we are praying. Claim the authority of Jesus’ name and the power of His blood over specific areas of darkness as they are revealed.

There is no formula for spiritual warfare – we have to grow in sensitivity to what our Lord the Holy Spirit is doing, and follow His lead in full dependence and submission. In Ephesians 6:18, right after discussing the armor of God, Paul writes, “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.” Once again, we cannot overcome the enemy's forces by our own strength or skills, but we walk by faith in love, relying on God's power in constant prayer.

If the demon refuses to leave in spite of the command given in the name of Jesus, then it may be best to wait until another time after more prayer and personal spiritual preparation on the part of the person being ministered to and the persons who are engaging in this ministry (Mt 17:19-20; Mk 9:29). It would often be wise, in difficult cases, to have help from someone with more maturity and experience in this area.

**Discipleship**

In addition to times of specific healing and deliverance ministry, people need to cultivate ongoing inner healing and spiritual growth to become completely free from the influence of strongholds. The person needs to be willing to change habits, attitudes, and possibly certain friends to live in the healing and freedom God has given and to build on it. Prayerful relationships with Bible teachers, counselors, or accountable persons can help the person to increase their freedom in Christ. Of course, this assumes that the mentors and accountability partners are themselves walking in freedom and that the relationships formed are healthy. Each person also needs to engage in personal and corporate spiritual disciplines such as prayer, praise, worship, Bible study and devotional life.

In UBF ministry, we seek to help college or university students be healed and recover through one-to-one Bible study with shepherding and counseling, reflection writing and sharing in small groups, and life testimony writing and sharing. These aspects of ministry can help people to realize the emotional and spiritual garbage they are carrying and to deal with it; they can also help people to grow in a godly way of living in Bible reading, prayer, worship, fellowship, thanksgiving and witnessing. One of our chapters has found material from the following ministry useful in helping young men engage in spiritual warfare to overcome strongholds in the area of purity: *freedomfight.org*. This takes place through purity prayer meetings facilitated by the senior pastor.

**Forming a Healthy Community**

Since the Christian community or church is the army of Christ, Satan and his forces desperately try to attack the church to weaken her power in many ways. To fight against Satan and to defend ourselves, establishing healthy community is very critical. If our communities are healthy places where demonic powers cannot find entry points, then ultimately they cannot stay but run away from us. How can we establish such an environment in a Christian home, the church, and ultimately in the world around us?

1) Christian homes. Our homes are a spiritual battleground where parents are responsible for establishing a good spiritual environment. In their busy schedule, Christian parents feel pressure to do everything right and the burden of trying to raise up good children. The instructions to parents in Scripture are short and simple: “Fathers (parents), do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). The goal of parenting is not control of behavior, but heart and life change. The most subtle destroyer of the Christian home is the demonic deception of legalism that ends up with rule-based parenting. Even though children growing up in a Christian home know what God requires to do, they are unable to follow it by their own strength. What many of them experience at home is legalism through micromanaging, impatient parents. The spiritual reality is that we are at war against the devil’s lie and our pride. So, what is essential to good parenting is recognizing that good parenting is impossible on our own. With this truth, parents can rest in their identity in Christ and engage in spiritual warfare at home. Then we will kneel down in prayer and completely depend on God’s grace. Then we will be more patient and reflect our heavenly Father’s love, showing mercy and the beauty of grace to our children and spouses. In this way, we can practice grace-based parenting and foster a healthy family environment as tools in the hands of our Redeemer (cf. Parenting by Paul David Tripp).

2) The Church. First, by loving each other. Satan likes environments filled with hatred, discouragement, hopelessness, complaints, ingratitude, and unforgiving and condemning hearts. Because of these things many become sick mentally and spiritually and generate emotional and spiritual garbage that Satan likes. But he is distressed when we forgive, embrace and are united in Christ’s love. Love and forgiveness are like atomic bombs to evil spirits. Jesus said in John 15:12, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” John Stott, in his book entitled *The Cross of Christ*, emphasizes that at the cross, Jesus disarmed and triumphed over the devil, and all the principalities and powers (Col 2:15). He calls the Christian community to “live under the cross.” This means that every aspect of the Christian community’s life is shaped and colored by Jesus’ self-giving love, service, and suffering,rather than seeking to maintain our personal honor based on selfish ambition, to rule over others and to live in personal comfort and security. The attitude of Christ, who defeated Satan on the cross, produces harmony in all Christian family relationships: between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters; and in the church: between pastors and other church members, and among members. The more the cross marks our Christian life in the home and the church, the more God’s kingdom advances in the world. When Jesus healed a boy possessed by an impure spirit, his disciples asked him privately why they couldn’t drive out the demon. Jesus replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer” (Mk 9:29). 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 commands us, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” When Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God, suddenly there was such a violent earthquake and all the prison doors flew open and everyone’s chains came loose. Consequently, the jailor and all his household were saved (Ac 16:16-34). If we build a loving, forgiving, joyful, prayerful, and thankful atmosphere, Satan and his forces cannot stand anymore. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit mightily works to shake the stronghold of Satan, loose the chains of Satan’s bondage, and save souls.

Second, by cultivating emotional health. In *The Emotionally Healthy Church,* Pastor Peter L. Scazzero says that it is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature. Living with unresolved emotional and relational issues hidden in our hearts will not only hinder us from effective ministry, but when we avoid dealing with these things we miss the opportunity to grow in deeper communion with God and each other. Emotional health may be a missing link in our discipleship. Through his own experience of failure in church and his own family life, he came to admit that “despite our significant investment in small group leadership training, we did not understand the central role of emotional health in spiritual maturity to living in Christian community. Our discipleship model failed to acknowledge emotional growth – the progression from emotional infancy, child, or adolescence into emotional adulthood.” Scazzero provides an emotional or spiritual health inventory designed to help us check our own emotional health level. We strongly recommend that you take this survey. Scazzero also lists several principles that an emotionally healthy community should follow. These include being willing to be vulnerable and to show our brokenness; understanding our own limitations; learning how to grieve our losses; making sure we take the time for self-care; maintaining personal time with God through meditation on Scripture, prayer, and reading; Sabbath-keeping; and in addition maintaining a balanced family and marriage life. Scazzero urges us to“make Incarnation your model for loving well” as the key to establishing an emotionally healthy community: In emotionally healthy churches, people intentionally follow the model of Jesus. They focus on loving well, recognizing that the indispensable mark of spiritual maturity is not about recognition, numbers, spiritual gifts, or biblical knowledge. The essence of a genuine spiritual life is to love-God, other people, and ourselves.

**Taking on Cultural, National, and Global Strongholds**

When the Apostle Paul took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for two years, all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. God did extraordinary miracles through Paul including healing and driving out demons. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power (Ac 19:8-20). As we preach the gospel, teach the word of truth, and raise Jesus’ disciples with prayers in spiritual warfare, people and society can be changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Satan’s strongholds in a person, group, territory, and country would be demolished.

In general we have not paid much attention to strongholds in the culture surrounding us, believing that as we work with the Lord to transform individual lives, cultural change will follow. This may be true, but there are also ways of engaging in intercessory prayer in a way that shifts the atmosphere over a city or even in a nation. The Lord has said, “if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2Ch 7:14). We can only admit we have much more to learn about the various dimensions of spiritual warfare. And yet the essence of it is quite simple: pray in the Spirit with all kinds of prayers and requests, trusting in the power of God.

### **Conclusion**

In the ministry to drive out demons, as Jesus’ disciples, our spiritual growth into deeper intimacy with God is the most important. Our greatest weapon is intimacy with Jesus because driving out demons is done not by our own might or power but by the Holy Spirit (Zec 4:6). So we can say that our spiritual authority is in direct proportion to our spiritual intimacy with God. If we really believe the scriptural testimony to the existence and activity of demons, and if we really believe that “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1Jn 3:8b), and Jesus has already given his disciples authority to drive out demons (Lk 9:1; Mk 16:17), then it is appropriate to expect that even today triumph over the power of demons is a normal part of each believer’s life in spreading God’s kingdom and rejoicing in Christ’s victory in it. In Luke 10:20, Jesus says that we should not rejoice too much or become proud in our authority over demons, but that we should rejoice rather in our great salvation. We must keep this in mind lest we become proud and the Holy Spirit withdraws his power from us.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How can we present spiritual reality to intelligent people whose thinking is steeped in naturalism?
2. Can a Christian be possessed by demons? “Possession” or “demonization”?
3. What is the relation between mental illness and demonic influence?
4. What do you think are the strongest demonic stronghold in our present time / culture?
5. How do you experience the power of Jesus’ victory in your own spiritual life and struggle?
6. How do we combat? How can we do that as Jesus did?
7. What does prayer do?
8. What does it mean that the word is the sword of the Spirit?

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