

— Spiritual Warfare — Bringing Jesus' victory home

On the first Resurrection Sunday morning Jesus came out of the tomb triumphant over sin, death, hell, the grave and satan. The battle was won and Jesus was declared King of kings and Lord of lords.

Philippians 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Colossians 2:15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Revelation 1:17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

God has through Jesus triumphed over all His enemies. Jesus told John that He now has the keys to death and the grave. The work is done, the battle won, but the war goes on. Jesus is reigning until all His enemies are under His feet and during this time He allows satan to work through pagans as he promotes his worldly philosophy.

1 Corinthians 15:25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

This is where spiritual warfare comes in. The enemy is defeated, but not yet subdued and Jesus calls on the Church to play a profoundly active role in bringing about his ultimate destruction. Before Jesus believers were dead in sin and did walk according to the course of the world, but when God saved them He gave them a new purpose and power to go with it.

Ephesians 3:8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; 10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God's purpose for the Church is that it be a showcase of His manifold wisdom, constantly proving to satan that his prideful behavior and diabolical schemes are futile. God desires His people to be part of

a local church because the activities of the Church — worshiping, praying, preaching, fellowshiping, evangelizing, discipling — all show people working together in a way that only God's wisdom could bring about.

The Church is involved in spiritual warfare when God inhabits the praises of the people as they corporately worship and in those praises He sets ambushes for the enemy. When the Church comes together in intercessory prayer the enemy is squashed. Do you think this has anything to do with all the controversy and dissension about music and the unwillingness of so many people to gather for prayer? Christian living is always a struggle that calls for the power of God if it's going to be won. The battle is not with people, rather with the source of their worldly thinking and acting, that is the devil, rulers, powers, world forces of darkness, and spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies. Only the full armor of God can prepare a Church for the fight.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

So how is the battle fought? Not with fleshly weapons, rather divinely powerful weapons that can destroy fortresses. The Church is to be destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God while taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Jesus has done the work and provided all the weapons that will ever be needed and the Church is ready to punish all disobedience with just one condition — **obedience must be complete**. Do you think believers are obeying God with these kinds of victories resulting? Do you think the lifestyle of many professing Christians has anything to do with the direction our culture and country is going? The mass shootings must be blatantly satanic. The moral perversity now being endorsed by the Supreme Court is flowing out of the dark one. Only restraint on satan can stop the anti-God mentality that is gripping our generation. The Church needs to repent of a lengthy list of sins and compromise with the world and come back to holiness and obedience to the Word of God. Such a return or renewal falls along the lines of 2 Chronicles 7:14 — *If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

There is coming a day at the middle of the Tribulation Period when

the Church will completely triumph over satan. By that day the Bema Seat will be past and the Church will be standing in perfect holiness before Jesus. Every last believer will know they are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and will give testimony to the truth, all the while having laid down their soul-life in absolute surrender to their Lord. That will empower Michael and his good angels to cast the devil and his bad angels out of the heavenlies, down to earth.

Revelation 12:7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death."

On a local level a Church can have similar success right now. Look what happened in the early days of the Church at Rome:

Romans 16:19 For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. 20 The God of peace will soon crush satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

The Church was marked by an obedience that Paul sought to reinforce by encouraging wisdom regarding good and ignorance regarding evil. He predicted victory over satan because of their faithfulness.

Full obedience . . . probably no one can be 100% at every moment, but anyone can be committed to wanting to obey. Walking in the Spirit guarantees victory over sin — *Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.* Sometimes the greater question is desire. Do I really want to be rid of the sin, or do I just want to keep it hidden? The computer is an amazingly valuable tool, yet the gateway to more trouble than can be imagined. I hear often about the high percentage of Pastors who are hooked on porn. Everyone who knows that interacting with that stuff is sinful and wrong. But the temptation has sunk such a hook into the mind and emotions that a huge conflict exists in the man. (Actually other sins like anger are equally destructive.) Right after an encounter he feels so ashamed and guilty, but some sort of rationalization may try to downplay the thing and begin to set the stage for doing it again.

The first step to deliverance and victory is deciding that it is categorically wrong and to be hated and never again accepted on any level. That's the hardest step because the biochemical response of the mind to the experience is so pleasing and powerful that it demands being repeated. To come to obedience to God a person has to take this step. It may take time and a lot of it, but don't give up. Fight the good fight until you win.

Lasting victory goes back to walking in the Spirit. Once a man has made up his mind, then he surrenders to the Holy Spirit constantly as the One who will free him from the lusts of the flesh and enable him to walk in holiness.

Maintenance is important as well. Avoid images that can stimulate lust. Maybe they're not actually porn, but over time sexual stimulation from the wrong source will take a man down.

Are secret matters of the heart really an issue? No one's being hurt. Actually, when hidden sin is retained the spring of life that is supposed to flow from the heart is polluted and that touches everyone.

Proverbs 4:23 Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life. 24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth and put devious speech far from you. 25 Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. 26 Watch the path of your feet and all your ways will be established. 27 Do not turn to the right nor to the left; turn your foot from evil.

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