

SPIRITUAL WEAPONS: ALL KINDS OF PRAYER

October 1, 2017 | Pastor Randy Remington

With this sixth installment, we continue our Sunday sermon series *Spiritual Forces*. In this lesson we continue to look at our weapons; This week's is prayer.

In his classic book *Screwtape Letters* C.S. Lewis's observes, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight".

THE NATURE OF EVIL

Let's read one of the most important passages on this subject:

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor 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. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 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. **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 6:10-18)*

It is important that we understand the nature of evil in our world. The Evil One stands behind the people, evil rulers, evil institutions, and systems of this world. Many of us have been taught that everything bad in our world has a "natural cause", so there must be a human, natural solution. But the scriptures tell us that there is an unseen evil behind these and the answers will not be found in earthly solutions. The phrase "against the powers" gives us a sense of what we're battling against. We have a formidable opponent that we should not take lightly. Far greater than any of us on our own can resist, but not greater than God, or him in us.

The sport of the day, when this was written, was hand to hand combat. This was wrestling with an opponent that took skill and endurance. That's the idea behind Paul's use of "struggle" or "wrestle" in the second sentence above. For us, this battle is waged in our neighborhoods, our cities, our nations and in our world. But this battle is also a very personal battle for us, against the enemy, our sinful nature and more.

The most educated, civilized people and nations are still experiencing terrible violence, oppression, racism and genocide. Education and other "intellectual resources" are good but they are not the answer to the evil around us. When Jesus began his ministry, he immediately unapologetically initiated a spiritual battle against the real source of evil, bondage and destruction in our world. This now is the assignment of the church to press against the kingdom of darkness.

HOW WE RESIST

In some of our bibles, verse 18 (And pray in the Spirit...) is the beginning of a new paragraph. In reality this verse is part of Paul's continuous thought from verses 10-18. The key words in relation to this weapon of prayer is: "all" and "always". So let's consider the spiritual authority that the Church has been given to "...stand against the Devil's schemes."

- Spiritual Authority must be exercised under authority
- Spiritual Authority is exercised through faith in God's Word
- Spiritual Authority is exercised through prayers of faith

TWO OPPOSING KINGDOMS

The thought of that time was “the present evil age” and “the age to come”. They saw it as a very clean transition, but when Jesus came that didn’t necessarily happen.

“Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. But some of them said, “By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.” Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.” (Luke 11:14-22)

“We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.” (1 John 5:19)

When mankind sinned we gave up the title deed to the “house”, our world. But Jesus binds the “strong man” (Satan) through the cross, the stronger man (Jesus) bound him so the strong man no longer has control over his previous domain, including you. In contrast to the belief of Jesus day, we are experiencing overlapping kingdoms or seasons. It’s a time where God’s Kingdom is manifest on earth, but Satan’s influence is still substantial. He is defeated, but not destroyed.

This Age (Satan’s Time)

- Sin
- Sickness and death
- Demon-possession
- Evil people triumph

The Age to Come (God’s Time)

- Righteousness; God’s Presence
- Healing and Life
- Freedom and Wholeness
- Peace Reigns

Revelation points to a time when there is no more evil, no more strife, wars, sickness, poverty, etc. But now on earth his kingdom is moving forward against the kingdom of darkness. There will be no more darkness, because God will be our light.

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’” And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:1-8)

Jesus starts this parable with; **“...they should always pray and not give up”**. The parallel in this story is not the Judge and God, rather it is the widow that tells us that we need to always pray and not give up. This prayer is a powerful weapon and we mix prayer with deeds, actions naturally flow out of prayer. It is a stance that says “no” to the enemy’s work, standing in prayer and the power of the Spirit, with persistence.

Prayer is our way of saying things do not have to stay the way they are. We pull back because we don’t believe it will make any difference.

Revelation chapter 8, gives a peek into something very special. As we see into a heavenly reality, John sees the angel holding a golden sensor with incense. We are told that this contains the “prayers of the saints”, that is a sweet aroma before God. We’re then told that the angel takes the sensor, mixes fire from the altar and hurls it to earth. The prayers go up and the power comes down. This is a picture of the unique joining of God’s will and our prayers. “Your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”

“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God’s people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God’s people,

*went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake."
(Revelation 8:1-5)*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Before this lesson, what were your thoughts on the importance of prayer as a weapon for believers?
2. After reading Ephesians 6:10-18, what are some things you noticed? Also discuss the key words; "all", "always", and "against the powers".
3. Looking at page one of the notes above, discuss the nature of evil. Some would contend that bad things stem from a natural causes, so there should be a human, natural solution for each problem. The scriptures seem to be in contrast to this, what are your thoughts?
4. During Jesus' time, people thought that there would be two ages; "the present evil age" and "the age to come". They believed it was going to be a very clean transition, but that didn't happen with Jesus' first coming. Discuss this tension caused by these two overlapping kingdoms.
5. Looking at the parable in Luke 18, what are the lessons we learn?
6. Lastly, after reading our Revelation 8 passage, what did you learn about prayer? Also what does it show you about the unique joining of God's will and our prayers?