

## Spiritual Warfare

A couple weeks ago, I presented a teaching on what I called Spiritual Jiu-Jitsu. My premise was that the high-level grappling, submission-based, gentle fighting art of Jiu-Jitsu is, in a way, intertwined with the roots of Christianity. I encouraged God's people to wrestle with Him in a Jiu-Jitsu type way- holding on closer and tighter to Him, because only in being close to him can we find true blessing, forgiveness, hope, and purpose.

Now, there is another form of "spiritual fighting" the Bible mentions, that is often termed as "spiritual warfare." The Bible mentions, concerning the follower of Jesus, that *"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."* ([Eph 6:12](#)) Now you might feel that there are real people out to get you in life, while this may be true, the Bible is clear that mankind's *true* enemy is *spiritual* in nature. Our enemy is one that wants to see God's creation destroyed, families torn apart, minds distracted from truth, lives giving into temptation, lives in-effective for living for the things that really matter- ultimately our enemy wishes that death and destruction would reign in our lives rather than the life-saving presence of King Jesus.

Jesus describes this enemy as a thief, He says *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly."* ([John 10:10](#)). Peter, who had first-hand experience with this real enemy's temptation, says this *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."* ([1 Peter 5:8](#)). Now, our natural reaction to words like thief, devil, a devouring-prowling-lion might create a little fear within our hearts. But nowhere in the Bible are we told to fear our enemy. No, we aren't to fear any man, or any spiritual or physical enemy- in fact the only one we are told to fear is God Himself. Then concerning our enemy, we are to, again as Peter says *"Be of sober spirit,"* and *"be on the alert."* When we think of being "sober," we think of being in our right mind- not hindered mentally by alcohol or by any other drug. Now obviously being physically sober is necessary in order to be of sober spirit, but being of sober spirit is probably another level above just being physically sober. We could be physically sober, but in our hearts, in our spirit, we could still be distracted/hindered/handicapped by many things: over-focus on temporary worldly things, loving things more than Jesus,

worshipping in our hearts something or someone other than Jesus, believing lies from the enemy, doubting God's goodness, truth, and promises, etc. I believe what the Bible teaches us concerning spiritual warfare is not an over-focus on our enemy, his plans, and his tactics, but rather we are to focus solely on God- on His truth, His plans, His purpose. You aren't to fear, because *"greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."* ([1 John 4:4](#)) God is greater, He is with you, and it is He who has the power to defeat the enemy in your life.

My family often sees a little bit of what you might consider spiritual warfare on Saturday nights. I often have trouble sleeping that night, or have bad nightmares, or out of the ordinary things happen. I assume it's because come Sunday morning, there is an enemy who hates to see Jesus worshipped, who hates to see the body of Christ encouraged, strengthen, convicted, functioning- that enemy would much rather see followers of Jesus fearful, distracted, frustrated, tired, unmotivated to be with others of God's people. This past Saturday evening, my wife and I were woken up to a loud crash inside our home. I got up out of bed to see what had happened, to find that a picture frame had fallen off our wall and shattered glass in the hallway. I swept the glass up against the wall so that no one would step on it in the night, prayed out loud asking for God's protection for my family, and then went back to bed. In the morning I found that the picture that had broken was one amongst many wedding pictures of various couples, and it just so happened to be the wedding picture of my wife and I. I also noticed that the nail in the wall was still perfectly secure, even angled slightly up so that a picture frame wouldn't slide off. I examined the picture frame, and though the glass had broken all on the floor, the frame itself and the hooking mechanism were still both perfectly intact. I tugged on some of the other frames to test their strength, and none of them budged. The bottom line was that everyone had been in bed, no one was moving around the house, nothing was shaking any walls- yet somehow the picture frame leaped off the wall and crashed on the ground.

Now, you might be reacting to this story in one of two ways- first you might be thinking, *"Oh it's nothing Wes, there's some other scientific explanation,"* and you might attempt to downplay any idea of an enemy in a spiritual world that would seek to distract or cause fear. Or, perhaps you might be leaning towards the other extreme and be thinking *"Oh Wes, you need to perform some spiritual ritual, cast out demons, have a prayer vigil, and, and..."* But I would advocate that you not adopt either of these views. The Bible warns us of a spiritual enemy, so yes- we are to be aware of and not pretend that enemy doesn't exist, but nor are we to

over-focus on his limited power or be tempted to fear. Our biblical response to this type of situation must be claiming God's truth and promises, and asking for His intervening presence and protection- and then trust that God is fully capable of handling the enemy.

While God is all knowing, and all present everywhere, our enemy is not. If we have surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus, His spirit resides within us and there is no room inside us for the enemy to get inside our head. He doesn't know or hear your thoughts as does God. For this reason, I have made it a habit of praying out loud. I want my enemy to know that I am standing on God's truth, trusting in Jesus, and claiming His truth and promises. I want my enemy who comes to tempt me to know that I am claiming God's word and promises, promises like *"Submit therefore to God. But resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* ([James 4:7](#)) Often at the very mention of the name Jesus, I already sense God's peace, and no longer feel threatened to fear.

I want to encourage you to be aware in your own life, to be of "sober spirit" and "on alert" against this adversary of mankind. In some places of the world spiritual and demonic activity is very obvious, blatant, and out in the open. But often here the spiritual activity taking place is much more subtle. One of the best tactics of the enemy around here is for you to be attacked, but not realize you are being attacked. He would love for you to not even notice it, but if you do, then he'd prefer for you to just brush it off as nothing, or for you to go to some weird extreme place of fear. Be alert, on guard, vigilant, not looking for the devil under every rock and around every corner, or blaming him for your own sin "the devil made me do it," but have a healthy awareness that in this world there is a very real battle raging all around us for the hearts and minds of men and women. Recognize what is going on... when you've found new joy in being with God's people and you're learning a bunch, and all of a sudden something happens in your life that will now make it harder for you to make it to church... when you're repairing a relationship and out of the blue a new circumstance is presented that would seem to undermine the repair being made... when you're thinking about sharing Jesus with a friend and every excuse in the world immediately floods into your mind... Be alert. Search out some "go to" verses from scripture that you can claim in situations so that you would not give in to the tactics of the enemy who seeks to destroy your life, but that in Jesus you will be able to stand firmly in His truth and have life in Him more abundantly.