

So you want to be a Christian? There is an enemy!

Graham Cooke wrote the following: “Our authority comes out of who we are in Christ, and our capacity to intimidate the enemy comes out of our intimacy with God.”

One of the constants of this series has been idea that our success as Christians is rooted in our continuous connection to God on a daily basis. The fact remains that He is to be in the middle of everything we do and well as what and who we are.

Today we are going to talk about warfare within the Christian life. There are people that have made a lot more out of this than is probably healthy. There are some people of faith that ascribe anything thing bad that happens to a demon of some kind or the other and others have been blaming the devil until it is said in jest more than in truth.

The danger of becoming too focused on our spiritual enemy is exceeded only by the danger of ignoring him. Jesus did neither. He went about doing His Father’s business of bringing radical redemption to an oppressed world while maintain an awareness of the spiritual warfare operating around Him.

When God’s Kingdom advances by the delivery of the hopeful message of salvation, it brings a sense of horror to God’s enemy, because he knows that the enlargement of God’s Kingdom automatically meant the destruction of his. Our mission on earth is to continue and enlarge the work of Christ. This means that we will be opposed in our mission. When you engage in God’s work and Kingdom seriously you will face opposition from forces beyond humanity. The Bible refers to “spiritual wickedness in high places.”

The attack [of Pearl Harbor] took place [December 7, 1941] on a sunny Sunday morning. A minimal contingent of soldiers was on duty at the time. Most offices on the base were closed and many servicemen were on leave for the weekend. New technology, including the new radar mounted on Opana Point, were in place, manned and functioning at the time of the attack. The incoming Japanese attack planes were detected by the radar and reported, but were mistaken for an incoming group of American planes due from the mainland that morning. While on practice maneuvers outside the harbor that morning, an American destroyer spotted a Japanese submarine attempting to sneak into the harbor. The submarine was fired upon, immediately reported — and ignored.

Despite these and many other warnings, Pearl Harbor faced great loss that day. The losses and ill preparedness came from one major cause...no one believed it could really happen.

We are in spiritual warfare. Sometimes we call it a bad day or blame it on mean people, but many times we are under heavy assault from the devil. So how do we to God’s work while understanding and maintaining a vigilance regarding the enemy of our soul?

Today we are going to look first at three key principles: Jurisdiction, Authority and Power.

Jurisdiction is our invitation to rule certain areas of our lives

God invites and in fact requires us to rule certain areas of our lives and to rule them well. Adam and Eve were charged to *“fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”* (Genesis 1:28 NIV)

I can think of three areas that Christians should have jurisdiction and rule over in a godly ways; our homes, our work and our church communities. It is very important and critical that we realize that God gives us jurisdiction that is entrusted to a community not to an individual. We should exercise our jurisdiction by living it out in community with our families, our friends at work and with our church body. Jurisdiction is never given to solitary individuals. When that happens you have a cult or at best a very unhealthy situation.

Authority is our right to rule which is gained by an intimate relationship with God

God places us into relationships that demand we rule well, but it is up to us to build a unified purpose in each area. If you are single or not married, your partnership begins with God and extends to all the people He brings into your sphere of jurisdiction and influence. If you are married, that intimate partnership then becomes the basis of our authority in every other area both inside and outside the home.

When we accept God’s invitation to rule in our earthly partnerships the result is power or the ability to rule and enforce your power. This is also true in the spiritual realm of our lives. God backs us up when we trust Him and He gives us the power necessary to rule well.

I really want you to hear this: When power is understood to be the domain of God, then wise men and women cease to grasp for it and instead embrace a life of trusting obedience, just as Jesus taught and practiced.

Power is your ability to rule and enforce your authority in Christ.

God calls us to live in His power in every area. When you come to unity with your spouse in your home, God will release His power to love and lead your family. As you build unity with coworkers, God will empower your projects with heavenly wisdom and effectiveness. When you work in harmony with the leadership within the church, God will anoint your spiritual gifts and strengths to inspire others and lead them into a growing relationship with Christ.

In Luke 10, Jesus sent His disciples on a mission to do His work. He clearly had a plan. One of the things I love about God is that He is most definitely organized. The bible is absolutely packed with leadership principles and organizational management. They were going to face opposition of a spiritual nature but what they learned is that they had authority and power that was beyond them through Christ.

Here is what this mission looked like:

1. Strategy

The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit. Luke 10:1 NLT

We should never take for granted the essential nature of partnership. It has always been that way in warfare. Even snipers generally need a spotter or a team to give them the best chance to do what they do. The bible has always practiced this strategy. The men and women of the New Testament and First Century church are rarely seen doing ministry alone.

When we engage in ministry within or outside the church it is good to do it in pairs. There are a lot of reasons for this but my favorite is by the far the community and chance for mentoring that happens when we do life together. (Organist/Pianist, Sunday school teachers who didn't want anyone to do their "job") The fact is you become a better leader by teaching and training others to do your job. It may be that they might even be better than you and if you are doing it for God that would be just fine with you because the kingdom of God will be advanced.

2. The Jurisdiction

Now go, and remember that I am sending you out as lambs among wolves. Luke 10:3 NLT

It is so important that we realize the jurisdiction we have been sent to. Christians are called to engage and displace the enemy and establish God's rule instead. This is what breaks my heart about the weakness of the church in America. Our culture is going to hell all around us and way too many churches and "Christians" are sitting around on a Sunday enjoying each other's company and then going to work while our Country is collapsing.

This week I've been inside of a drug dealer's house in our city and I've seen the effects of a life lived outside of God's rule. There are people who have no problem harming others or stealing from others to support their evil habits. I looked into the eyes of a drunk or high young lady this morning that had parked her car and fell asleep in a public parking lot and you know what I thought? Besides wondering who takes the drugs that create such a vibrant market for it or who sold her the alcohol I wonder this:

Where is the church? Where are the Christians that say they know the best secret to life and living on this earth and then never tell it? I think about the peace many Christians and churches have made with sin and sinful behavior and I wonder why we don't care. Jesus clearly gave us a mission to do and it was to go into the world and make disciples. He didn't say give them handouts but give them a hand up and out of the sin and muck they live in. He didn't say sing me some songs and sit real quiet during the sermon. He said that we were to be the light of the world and salt of the earth. Without salt there is no flavor and without light men and women are left in darkness. I will say it till I die. Do you want your community cleaned up and made safe? What are you going to do about it? What could God do through you in regards to your neighbors? It's

not going to happen overnight but we are called to engage people and that means living unselfishly. You know what I am afraid of? I am afraid that most of us in this room live for our little kingdoms and not the kingdom of God. We build our little empires and never give God the opportunity to be in the middle of what we do.

3. The Mission

Heal the sick, and tell them, 'The Kingdom of God is near you now'. Luke 10:9 NLT

In warfare, there is always an objective. In many wars, the objective is land. For example, in the Middle East, Israel and the Palestinians are fighting because they both want to have the same land. In Afghanistan we're fighting because we want to destroy the power base of terrorism. Hitler fought because he wanted to create a "superior" race. The Southern states fought the Civil War because they wanted to be free from the oppression of the Northern States. The Gulf War was fought because the U.S. wanted to end the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, so they could have access to oil. I mention all of these wars, not because I want to say who was right or wrong, but to show that in every war, there is an objective. There is a reason we are fighting the war. And the same is true with spiritual warfare. If we are going to wage war on Satan's kingdom, we have to know what our objective is. Our objective, our mission is to rescue people from Satan's grip. To free them from his control. Just as Jesus said at the start of his ministry.

Jesus said, *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free,"¹⁹ and that the time of the LORD's favor has come.*

Luke 4:18-19 NLT

Our mission as Christians is to fight the fight for men and women's souls. We are to declare and demonstrate the Kingdom of God.

4. The Results

When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!"

²¹ *At that same time Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and he said, "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way.*

Luke 10:17, 21 NLT

The result of doing what God wants us to do as Christians brings us a lasting joy that you cannot buy. Even Jesus was joyful in response to their success in doing His will. The most important thing that happened however was the release of spiritual authority and power that caused the mission itself to succeed.

Our most important partnership that will produce results of spiritual victory in our lives is the partnership between you and the Lord. When we attach ourselves seriously to His mission (I'm

not talking about playing church) we will be filled with power that is beyond ourselves, our gifts and even our own strengths.

5. The Focal point

I want to point one last thing out to you from this story. Jesus gave them a very important admonition in the debriefing session. There are times when people go a little crazy with the notion of spiritual warfare. They chase down all kinds of roads, pathways and bunny trails until it seems like they are more impressed with Satan's power than they are the power of God. They look for evil more than they do presence and power of God in their everyday lives.

But don't rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven." Luke 10:20 NLT

Jesus taught them to stay focused on the main thing. It was not their power or the enemy but their intimate and surrendered relationship with Jesus Christ that mattered. He is the source of our power and ability to stay true to Him. He alone gives us peace. His presence in our lives is a force to be reckoned with.

The courage of Civil War leader Stonewall Jackson in the midst of conflict can be a lesson for the believer. Historian Mark Brimsley wrote,

"A battlefield is a deadly place, even for generals; and it would be naive to suppose Jackson never felt the animal fear of all beings exposed to wounds and death. but invariably he displayed extraordinary calm under fire, a calm too deep and masterful to be mere pretense. His apparent obliviousness to danger attracted notice, and after the First Manassas battle someone asked him how he managed it. "My religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed," Jackson explained. 'God knows the time for my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready, no matter where it may overtake me.' He added pointedly, 'That is the way all men should live, and then all would be equally brave.'"

As I close this series until the fall I want to call you into action. We have talked about our relationships, our destinies, our gifts and strengths, surrendering, our money, the Holy Spirit, telling our story, faith and now today recognizing we have power over the enemy.

Listen, do everything you can to understand God's will in your life. Live as close to Him as you possibly can and love Him with all you heart, mind soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

There is a cause worth giving your life for. There is something more important than many of the things we make such a big deal about.

James Hudson Taylor in challenging English students during his time to be involved in China mission work, used to tell of the story about Peter, his Chinese convert and disciple. On one of

their sea journeys, Peter (who do not know how to swim) fell from the side of the boat. Fortunately, there were fishermen nearby, just a grab away from where Peter fell. Taylor shouted at the fishermen and asked them to help his friend, “Hey, help my friend, he is drowning.” However, the fishermen did not bother to do his call for help because they were busy loading their catch from the net to their boat. Taylor continued to yell, “Stop what you are doing, and help my friend. He is just a grab away.” But the fishermen continued on their work until the last fish was loaded to the boat. Then they jumped and got Peter out of water. They tried to revive him, but to no avail. Peter died of drowning. He could have been saved because he was just a grab away from the fishermen. Then, he asked the students/church members what they thought of about the Chinese? Some said, they are bad, evil, selfish, unconcern about the salvation of a dying man. You know how Taylor responded? He said, “I saw differently. I think the Chinese are like most Christians today, they are unconcerned about the plight of the sinners who are now just a grab away from them. The reason is that they are so busy with their (lives) work.”

“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:8-9 NKJV

“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.” Ephesians 4:26-27 NKJV

¹⁰ A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. ¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Ephesians 6:10-13 NLT