

Spiritual Warfare Praying

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You see, for many of us, the problem of us getting along with other people is our inability to get along with ourself. Everything visible and physical is preceded by something invisible and spiritual. The consequences we are dealing with in our lives, in our homes, in our culture, we are dealing with them because there is a gap between where God is and where we are. He wants to know that you want him and not just want his stuff. See, a lot of folk go to church to get God's stuff but who don't want the God who gives it. So if you're in distress, don't let that drive you away, draw you near. When you get close and wanna live for him, want to please him, want to honor him, want to exalt him, want to draw near to him, then heaven opens up, and he lets you find him. He lets you find him.

When you've lived long enough, it becomes pretty clear that life is not a playground but a battleground. When you've lived long enough, you've come to realize that life is not always easy. While we cherish those times of fun and frivolity and play and excitement, we dread those times of pain, and anguish, and struggle. Someone had said that life can be described as being bittersweet. It has those sweet moments that we cherish and embrace, and those bitter moments that bring us to tears, hurt, and pain.

Paul is writing, and he concludes his treatise to the church at Ephesus to talk to them about the battleground of life. We call it spiritual warfare, but he's not just talking about any kind of battle. He describes this one specifically by calling it the "evil day". The evil day. The evil day is when all hell breaks loose on you. The evil day is when you are overwhelmed. Yes, life has its normal ups and downs, but that's not what he's talking about here. He's talking about when you are under major attack, when your world is being shattered, your dreams are being destroyed, your hopes are being dimmed, and where you look out, and all you see is the light of an oncoming train. He calls that the evil day, the day when hell is after you, and your name has come up. He says, when that day comes, when that period of time when you're under major assault comes, he says, "I want you to understand how to approach this because", he says, "on that day, you're going to need the strength of the Lord", verse 10.

Normal stuff is not gon' work, and playin' church sho' 'nuf won't work. He says, "On that day, you're going to need the supernatural". And so he goes into these verses, leading up to the subject of prayer to tell us how to approach this time in your life, in my life. Now, I wanna make sure that I'm not wasting my time on this sermon, so does anybody here know what I'm talkin' about when I talk about an evil day? An evil day, when you're under massive spiritual assault.

Well, let me remind you that everything visible and physical is preceded by that which is invisible and spiritual. Everything visible and physical is preceded by that which is invisible and spiritual. So Paul wants you to know, if you want to address in the time of your attack the visible and physical, you need to do it from the perspective of the invisible and spiritual. He gives you the term that he uses throughout the book of Ephesians of "heavenly places". "Heavenly places" means the "spiritual realm", and what he's saying is that, when you are under assault, when your life is being shattered, you're trying to be in the will of God, you're trying to walk with God, but you're being attacked, your well-being is being attacked, your dreams are being attacked, your health is being attacked, your stability is being attacked, your resources are being attacked, your future is being attacked, you are just under assault.

He says, during those times, you have to view things from the location of heavenly places or the spiritual realm if you're going to be strong, to walk through, work through the times of

those attacks, and he wants to set the plan in place for how you're gon' to make it through the evil day. For those who raised your hand, because you've been in or are in the evil day, this will matter to you. For those of you who've not yet been to the evil day, keep living. It's comin'. When you're under assault and your stability, your world, is being shaken, he says, during those times, three times, he says, "I want you to stand firm, stand firm, stand firm, don't quit, don't quit, don't quit", because the temptation is easily to throw in the towel when your world is collapsing right in front of your eyes. He says, "The first thing I want you to understand is that you wrestle not against flesh and blood".

In other words, people aren't the source of your problem. They may be the conduit for your problem, but they're not the source of your problem, for we Christians "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers, and world forces that are located in heavenly places" or the spiritual realm. When you are under the fire of oppression, when you're under the fire of the evil one, when you're under fire of demonic attack, when you're under the fire of suffering, he says, "You take your stand on the ground where Jesus Christ has already been burned for you, where Jesus Christ has already suffered for you".

You grab ahold of the strength that the Lord has to offer. You do not run away from God when you are in the evil day. You have to run to God when you're in the midst of the evil day because you're now engaged in spiritual warfare. When your world is being attacked in whatever way it's being attacked, that's not the time to run from him. It's the time to run to him. It's not the time to evade him. It's the time to embrace him. He says, "Stand firm. Hold onto your faith in the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of the suffering, the pain, and in the midst of the struggle". He then tells you how to dress for spiritual success. He gives you the armor of God. He tells you, "I want you to get dressed for the battle".

Now, when you're in a war, and when you're in a parade, a military parade, they show the weapons. When you're in a war, you use the weapons 'cause in the evil day, this is not "Showtime at the Apollo". This is time when you gotta get dressed. He says, "You gotta put on truth, put on righteousness, put on peace". He goes on, he says, "You gotta put on faith". He says, "You gotta put on the helmet of salvation". Then he says, "You gotta use the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God". He gives these six pieces of spiritual arsenal or spiritual armor that the believer is to utilize when it comes to taking a stand in the evil day or when you're under spiritual attack and spiritual oppression that's affecting your physical, financial, circumstantial, emotional, family well-being.

Take your stand harder than you've ever taken it before, but put on this armor. But now you may not remember all the pieces of the armor. So let's make it easy because Romans chapter 13, verse 14, says, "Put on Christ". If you can't remember all the pieces, remember this one, "Put on Christ". Why? Because he says, "I want you to put on truth". Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life". He says, "I want you to put on righteousness". Scripture says Christ is our righteousness. He says, "Put on peace". Jesus said, "In this world, you will have tribulation, but I give you my peace". He says, "Put on the helmet of salvation".

Scripture is clear Jesus is the author and finisher of our salvation. And then he says, "Put on the Word of God. Use the sword of the Spirit". John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God". Verse 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us". Jesus says he is the Word. So if you don't remember truth, remember Jesus. If you don't remember righteousness, remember Jesus. If you don't remember peace, remember Jesus. If you don't remember faith, remember Jesus. If you don't remember the helmet of salvation, remember Jesus. If you don't remember the Bible, remember Jesus because Jesus is the full armor of God.

I studied the Bible in college for four years. I studied the Bible for four years, workin' on my master's degree, another four years, workin' on my doctorate degree, and then I've been preaching all of these years, and I'm still learning new things from this awesome, inexhaustible book, the Word of God. That's why I'm so excited about ["The Tony Evans Study Bible"](#) and its accompanying work, ["The Tony Evans Bible Commentary"](#). It will take all of this training and this teaching and make it available to you to understand, utilize, and apply God's most powerful Word.

You put on Christ, you become centered in him. This is not belief in God. This is centered in God's Son, who is the revelation of God, the manifestation of God, who is the power of God, to manifest himself particularly in the evil day. Now, you wanna do it all the time, but you better do it in the evil day when the doctors don't have answers, when the bankers don't have answers, when your friends don't have answers, and sho' 'nuf when you don't have answers. You need to be centered on the person of Jesus Christ and all the tools that he offers you, but he says you gotta put him on. The question is "How do you put him on"? That's where verse 18 comes in.

Let me read it again. He says in verse 18, "With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints". The way you put on Christ, that is, practically utilize him to equip you to move through the battle you face, is with prayer. Now, prayer is relational communication with God. A lot of people wanna pray when they're in spiritual warfare, who have not prayed till they got the spiritual warfare. In other words, they don't know how to stand strong in the Lord 'cause they haven't been standing with the Lord, but now that they're in an emergency, they need the Lord. He's talkin' about staying in touch with him all day.

That's why 1 Thessalonians 5:17, says, "Pray without ceasing". In other words, "Stay in touch with me". Now, let me explain why this is so important. The evil day is principalities, powers, and world forces. This means you are under attack. This means that this attack is coming from the devil and demons. It is unfortunate that far too many Christians have lost sight of demons. Demons are angels that went rogue. Demons are the spiritual mafia that attacks us in the spiritual, that brings about our pain in the physical, and the Bible has an answer to demons. The answer to demons are angels.

So here's how this works: The Bible declares every Christian has been assigned an angel, and the job of the angel is to look after the well-being of the believer. So every Christian has an angel that is assigned to you by God. One of the jobs of your angel is to thwart the demonic attack that is coming against you 'cause angels know how to fight angels, and so when the demonic angel comes to bring pain and anguish and defeat in your world and in your life, you have an angel. The Bible says, when we pray, we engage God, the Holy Spirit, and I'll talk about him in a moment, who activates the angel assigned to you to deal with the demonic oppression that is coming against you.

So he says, "With all perseverance", but he tells you somethin' else, and it's the key. He says, "Pray in the Spirit". Verse 18, "Don't just pray", meaning, "Don't just have conversation", but he says, "I want you to pray in the Spirit". Now, a question is "What does that mean"? The Bible talks about the role of the Spirit is to deliver the mind of God. 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 9 and 10, "But just as it is written, 'Things which eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard, and which has not been entered into the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him.' For to us God revealed them". He's not talkin' about heaven, he's talkin' about earth. "To us God revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God".

See, when you're in the evil day, that means folk can't help you. When you're in the evil day, they have limitations that they can do for you, and you need something that "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and the imagination is not conceived of". You need the supernatural to enter into the

natural. Now, being in the Spirit is opposed in Scripture to being in the flesh. To be in the Spirit... Let me start with the participle "in". He wants you to be in the Spirit, so he does not want you visiting and exiting. He wants you operating in the realm of the Spirit. What is the realm of the Spirit? The realm of the Spirit is a spiritual mind-set.

In Romans chapter 8, verses 1 to 13, read it when you get home. He gives this extended discussion about the Spirit, and he says, "When you have the Spirit, you have the mind of the Spirit", so this has to do with how you're thinking. The mind is your thought. He wants you to think spiritually, not secularly. He wants you to think biblically, not worldly. He wants you to think the mind of Christ, not the mind of man.

So I wanna show you, again, Galatians 5. Galatians 5 says this about the spirit. Verse 16, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please". He says there is a battle, and it's a battle between the spirit and the flesh. Let me define the "flesh". The "flesh" is the desire to please self independently of God. The flesh is the desire to please yourself as opposed to pleasing God. We all battle with the flesh. "Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the desire", please don't misread that. He didn't say you won't have the desire 'cause the flesh wants what it wants.

So you will have the desire, but the Spirit will override it. Don't read the verse in reverse. Don't read, "To get rid of the desire of the flesh, walk in the Spirit". That's backwards. "Walk in the Spirit, and it will overrule the desire of the flesh". It will overrule it. The capacity to do what you need to do or what God wants done will be activated in your experience as you walk in the Spirit. Now, many times, people will say, "I'm praying, but nothing is happening".

Well, let me explain. If we, as humans, went into the water and tried to breathe and start to inhale, inhale, and exhale, you're doin' the right thing, but you're doin' it in the wrong environment. Many Christians pray. They doin' the right thing, but they're doing it in the flesh. They're doing it in the wrong environment, and if you're doing the right thing in the wrong environment, the right thing won't work. So just 'cause you say your prayers in the mornin', say grace at dinner, and say your bedtime prayer, that's the right thing, but the question is "Have you been walking in the right environment"? Because, if you're not walking in the right environment, doing the right thing won't work, and, in fact, it can help kill ya quicker.

So he says, "Oh, oh, oh, oh, I want you to be consumed with being in my presence. Walking in the flesh", he says, "will put you in a spiritual graveyard, but walking by the Spirit will put you", and here's how you know because you're no longer having to force things when you're in the Spirit. But the Bible calls the Spirit, a wind. A wind. It blows. The Bible says the Holy Spirit guides us. He pulls us. Now, you can walk. You should walk, but you're walking on some power. You're walking on some undergirding. You're walking on some strength because you're walking with the mind of the Spirit, consistent with the revelation and Word of God so that he can override, and so you begin to flow in it even though you still have to walk, and even though you may have a ways to go.

He says, "Pray always in the Spirit", spiritually. And so he's my only out, and so we cry out to God and trust God, but you have your evil day. Oh, you will, and if we make prayer a lifestyle, walking in the Spirit a lifestyle and not a visit, don't treat the Spirit like a tree church. Don't just come for a visit. No, he says, "You roll with me, and you stay in contact with me all day, every day, short, long, fast, slow". When we contact God, if the timing is wrong, he'll say, "Slow". If the request is wrong, he'll say, "No". If we are wrong, he'll say, "Grow". But if the request is right, the time is right, and we are right, sooner or later, he'll say, "Go".

So I want this to be known as a house of prayer. Praise God for great music, praise God for

preaching. All of that's critical to worship, but if we don't make contact with heaven, all we did was come to any event, a religious event. But if we, as a church, will cry out to God, and when God meets you in your evil day, however that happens, sometimes he takes you through it, sometimes he delivers you out of it, and sometimes he just gives you the strength to deal with it. He does it in all kind of ways, but however he decides to do it, you'll know he's right there in the midst. He changes your perspective in the midst of your evil day. And, you know, you can go a long way with a change of perspective.

It reminds me of the story of the two hunters, and they found out, in Alaska, they will paying \$5.000 for every wolf that was killed because it had overgrown with wolves, and they were creating an imbalance in nature, so they had to get rid of some of the wolves. So these two buddies decided, "We're gonna go to Alaska. We're hunters. Let's kill wolves, \$5.000 a wolf". So they got their gear. They pitched their tent 'cause, "Tomorrow morning, we're goin' out and kill some wolfs, \$5.000 a wolf".

So they went to sleep to get ready for tomorrow. In the middle of the night, one of the men heard a noise. He turned on his light, and he could see through the canvas he was surrounded by wolves. He went to hunt wolves, and now the wolves are huntin' him. There are 25 wolves surrounding his tent. They're growling. As he put it up closer, he could see the teeth of the wolf, so they were ready to attack. He woke his friend up. "Bob, get up, get up, get up. Look"! Bob said, "What"? He said, "Look, we're rich". Perspective can change everything.

Life wouldn't be life without a crisis, would it? You're either in one, just came out of one, or sooner or later, you'll run into one; things that overwhelm you. Well, I want you to join me in praying through the crisis, the thing where you are desperate for God, and make sure you connect your prayer with obedience. When prayer becomes connected with doing what God told you to do, then not only do you get to pray, you get to see Jesus pray on your behalf, or as the Scripture says, "to make intercession for us". When you're in a crisis, you need an interceder, somebody to help you out. Jesus Christ is so situated to be that supernatural help, so in your crisis, get a partner in prayer through your prayer and your obedience, and let's see what miracle awaits you.