



WHY WE FIGHT

TERRY BENNETT

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By

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Terry Bennett Ministries, USA

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PART I: SEE THE BATTLE

CHAPTER 1

WE ARE IN WAR

We are in a fight! This is not just a theory—this battle is taking place every single day in our homes, our marriages, our churches, and the heavenlies. It is imperative for believers today to see that the fight is real, to understand where this fight takes place, and to see God’s strategic purpose and goal through battle. Yes, God is a warrior! We will look together at God’s military battleplan and our role as priestly warriors in this conflict, a people set apart for His name. It is my prayer that through these pages the Spirit of God will bring clarity to our hearts as to why we fight.

Who Are the Players in This Fight?

¹⁴The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go and dust you will eat all the days of your life; ¹⁵and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed

and her seed. He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.

Genesis 3:14-15

This passage lays the foundation for the war we are in. We need the Holy Spirit to reveal God's meaning and distinction between the two seeds. We can see in God's promise to Abraham that the seed of the woman is ultimately a reference to Christ Himself, the Seed of God. So we must be rightly informed that there is an enmity, or another good translation would be hostility, between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of Christ.

There are really only two sets of humans in the creation and in the universe: the seed of Satan and the Seed of Christ. The Seed of Christ is all those who are His, who have been born again (which is only the beginning) and who are progressing forward into the fullness of God's purpose, life, plan, and desire. It is ongoing in this life and in the life to come, but in this life there are clear choices that we must make in order to come into God's full desire and purpose. We can see that this conflict is still active in the New Testament in this familiar passage from James:

⁵Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose, "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? ⁶But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁷Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James 4:5-8

James clearly lays out here the progression of humbling ourselves as God gives grace, submitting ourselves to God, resisting the devil, and drawing near to God. These are the four things that James points to, but I want us to notice that James says, "*Resist the devil.*" This underscores what Genesis 4:15 is very clear about,

that between the two seeds there is open war, open hostility and conflict, which was raging during the New Testament and is still raging today.

It is important for us to understand the basic principle that yes, brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ the Lord absolutely defeated Satan: *“When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him”* (Colossians 2:15). But the divine economy of God has been so ordered that although the Lord has defeated Satan and secured a universal triumph over all of His foes, those foes are still left for us to deal with today. They are left to train us for war. They are left to test us, try us, and prepare us through battle, i.e. conflict.

It is strategic that the Lord left these foes here on the earth. Yes defeated, but still here. Some will say, “Well if they are defeated, they have no ability to harm.” But that simply is not true, nor is it in keeping with the Scriptures. James is very clear that we are to resist the devil. So although the enemy is defeated, he has been left to be defeated by the saints as well. The saints absolutely have something to do with the full defeat and putting away of Satan and his evil forces.

The Lord has not put our foes out of the universe or out of the earth, though He Himself has triumphed over them. He has left them for us to deal with in His triumph. This is how you and I get our spiritual and moral development. It is by conflict. It is by battle—grim, terrible, spiritual, and physical battle—that the moral excellencies of Christ’s triumph will be brought out through us. We will triumph in His victory, but we know that our faith will be tested and deeply tried in the battle. It is not simply an ethereal conflict. It is oh so very real.

I want to be as clear as I can about this without in any way making Satan larger than he is. He does that well enough without our help. He is constantly trying to make himself appear more powerful, larger, and more important than he is. We must, however, think rightly about him, and we must not underestimate our

enemy. That is one of the key principles in any warfare. Never underestimate your enemy.

The New Testament is clear in the book of James: we are currently in a fight, and that fight is with the devil. I want you to think about this for a moment. We will get to Ephesians 6 and 2 Corinthians 10 and Paul's other writings concerning these things as well, but here in James, he is telling us to resist the devil. The devil had been defeated by Christ previously, before the book of James was written, and yet we are still told to resist him. We are still in battle with him. It's important that we see that. And if we see the strategy of God in this—to use this conflict to perfect the vessel, perfect the instrument that He is making us to be, perfect the priesthood, perfect the bride, perfect the church, perfect the body—I believe we will glorify God and not complain. I believe it is God's heart for us to go through this battle. Thus, we must fight. We must fight it out. We must resist.

The full realization of the victory of Christ will be brought to bear upon these demonic forces through us, His people, His instrument. With that in mind, look at 1 Peter 5, another important passage of Scripture on this subject.

⁸Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. ¹⁰After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

1 Peter 5:8-10

Notice the end result of this conflict and suffering. It is to perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. Again, what is the end result of conflict? What is the end result of this battle? What is the end result of wrestling with and resisting this adversary the

devil and the forces with him? It is to perfect, strengthen, and establish us. I want us to see that both Peter and James understood that we are in real warfare, and this very real warfare is with the devil. We are at war with Satan. With that in view, let us look at what the Apostle Paul has to say in Ephesians 6:10-11:

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

So here is Paul, like Peter and James, bringing in this issue of the devil. Jesus Himself talked about the devil and said to Peter, “*Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; ³²but I have prayed for you*” (Luke 22:31-32). We see there that Satan was after the apostles, and Paul is bringing it up to the church as well. We are to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. We need the Holy Spirit to underline that in our hearts for a moment.

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.

Ephesians 6:12

Paul is outlining to us the truth that we are not just wrestling against flesh and blood. We are, but we are also wrestling with spiritual forces of wickedness. I am aware that there is confusion about this entire arena, not only in the United States but in many of the countries of earth, when it comes to spiritual warfare. Some books and teachings are saying we are not to focus on warfare, not to worry about it because the Lord has defeated all of our enemies. They promote the mentality of “don’t worry, be happy,” claiming that the enemy is not a threat because he has already been put under the Lord’s feet. We have that extreme, and we have the other

extreme of believers who say, “Yes, there are spiritual powers at work, but we are not called to battle with them.”

The Scriptures say the opposite of both of those things. These Scriptures bear out the reality that we are in a battle; we are in a struggle; we are in a war. There is open hostility. We have an adversary, and that adversary is the devil. He is contending with us, and the reason he is contending with us is because the Seed of Christ is in us.

Genesis 3:15 is very real. The Seed, Christ, is in us. So not only are we in battle against spiritual forces of wickedness in the high realms, we are in battle against the highest spiritual being in rebellion and antagonism against God, Satan himself. These passages that we read in James, 1 Peter, and here again in Ephesians point that out very clearly.

Paul tells us that we are to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. So there is a direct conflict between us and the devil, between us and spiritual forces of wickedness, and none of these passages are telling us to act as though it does not exist. They are not saying, “Satan has been defeated, so just ignore him and his forces.” They are telling us to stand firm and resist. They are calling us to fight; they are calling us to war and to battle.

¹²For our struggle is not (just) 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. ¹³Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. ¹⁸With 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, ¹⁹and pray on my behalf.

Ephesians 6:12-19

It is very clear here that Paul is speaking of defensive armor, but he is also speaking of offensive weaponry when he speaks of the sword and other aggressive weapons in picture and type. The sword is a type representing the Word of God, Scripture, and the voice of God. Thus Paul is talking about being armed and ready for offensive battle. That should be perfectly clear, and I believe it is here in Ephesians 6. Be ready for warfare! That is what he is saying to the people of Ephesus and to us in our day.

“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” (Ephesians 6:10). We are not battling in our own strength. We are not to battle in our own wisdom. We are to be strong in the Lord, which means the Lord is strong in us. It must be the strength of His might operating through us against the enemy, and therein is our confident hope. Our hope is in the Lord and His victory, not in ourselves as warriors. It must be the Great Warrior, the Captain of the hosts in and through us, yes, using us. It demands our willingness.

Where Does This Fight Take Place?

Paul makes clear that this battle is in the prayer realm. Through prayer we are fighting—fighting against flesh and blood and spiritual forces of wickedness in high places and against Satan himself. We are also taking our stand against them. So there is this conflict. Paul addresses this again in 2 Corinthians 10. Paul is very clear that we are warring, but not according to our flesh. We are not warring by our own strength, our own wisdom, or our own might, either corporately or individually. It is not even about numbers, really, when you think it through. It is about the presence of the Lord and the measure of Christ in us.

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵We 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.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

That gives some clarity to some aggressive tactics of God. He aims to destroy those things that have raised themselves up against the knowledge of God, those beings and schemes that have raised up their own purposes, plans, or desires in antagonism against God. The knowledge of God, which is speaking of revelation, and the purpose and plan of God are included in that. We are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. So we see even in this that there is warfare.

I keep coming back to this, but we must believe it in our day. You know, brothers and sisters, I wish, just like you, that these things were not being challenged. I wish there were not unfounded doctrines of men and demons circling through the body of Christ right now. There are books and teachings out there that do nothing but bring confusion, so we must allow first the Holy Spirit and also the Scriptures to bring clarity. I want us to believe God, believe the Holy Spirit, and believe the Scriptures because God is believable and trustworthy.

He will reveal Himself and the truth of these things through the Scriptures. I believe Him, and I believe the Scriptures more than I will believe any other teaching. You and I know that to be in the Lord is to be in conflict and battle, and I believe it is obvious to most of us. We have come hand-to-hand, so to speak, in conflict with the enemy.

There is a fight going on with the devil and with his spiritual forces of wickedness every day around many of us. No, these things have not been put away! Yes, they have been brought under Christ, but He has not put them away. And yes, He is going to

use us—His people, His church, His bride, His body—to finish or bring full realization to His defeat of those evil forces. That is the truth. In the meantime, God is using them to train us spiritually and morally. God is using them to train our hands for war. God is using the conflict, using the battle, to actually build us into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

What Is the Purpose of This Fight

1 Chronicles 26:27 tells us that through the spoil of battle, the house of God was built: *“They dedicated part of the spoil won in battles to repair the house of the Lord.”* It is no different today. Through the conflict of battle, God is building us to be a spiritual dwelling place of God. So conflict and battle are important to God, or else Satan would already have been put away. They are important to God for the preparation of His bride. They are important to God for the maturing of the saints. It is important to God for us to learn to utterly trust Him and depend upon Him and not ourselves. What comes out of this conflict is the perfecting, strengthening, and establishing talked about in 1 Peter 5:9. It comes out of conflict and battle. Isn’t that beautiful?

I worship and praise God for what He is doing in these battles. I do not want to misrepresent the battle. Yes, the battle is severe and even grim at times—physically, mentally, and emotionally. It is grim conflict. It is hand-to-hand wrestling, as Paul says, in this fight against the enemy. But we are invoking the Lord within us in this fight. The Lord who is in us is in conflict against His enemies. We must be aware of this flow and press more and more into the strength, wisdom, knowledge, will, and purpose of God. We must invoke Him aggressively against the enemies’ schemes, even those of flesh and blood, as well as these demonic powers.

I want to be clear with us that the measure of Christ within us is going to be the measure of effectiveness against demonic principalities, demonic forces, spiritual forces of wickedness in high places, and flesh and blood that we contend with while on this

earth. It is the measurement of Christ in us—His Spirit, His presence, His life, His glory, Himself as truth—that is the cause of true effectiveness and usefulness in warfare in this time.

So this is the introduction to why we fight. I want to say that we fight for the eternal will and plan of God. We fight for the eternal purpose of God, in which humanity is included. The new humanity—that which is in Christ—is to be directly involved in this fight. We are to stand; we are to resist; we are to fight a good fight. We are to recognize our warfare, and we are to be warriors and soldiers in this battle, as Paul says to Timothy.

We are not to lean on foolish doctrines that tell us there is no fight or that we are not to be involved in it either in the earth or in the heavens. There is no truth in that, brothers and sisters. That is why I have gone over these Scriptures, and we will go over more later on.

I want us to be assured that one of the best ways to fight is to be clothed with the armor of God, so to speak. That armor closes the enemy's access points in us. Spiritually speaking, the armor means that we can say that Satan has nothing in us, as Jesus said in John 14:30. In other words, Satan has no place in me; he cannot get at me because he has nothing inside of me. We must see the spiritual truth and reality of that. You and I know it is not some physical armor that clothes us; it is spiritual. And because it is spiritual, because it is eternal, it has even greater significance.

Putting on the armor is saying that Christ is being established, Christ is increasing, Christ in greater measurement is gaining ground. There is spiritual enlargement, spiritual intelligence, spiritual understanding growing, and His divine life is increasing in you as a vessel. He is taking more and more ground, which means you have greater usefulness as an instrument and greater effectiveness as a vessel.

So brothers and sisters, be encouraged with that. It is a journey. It is not quick. I want to say this to us: this is a war, not a battle. Because it is a war, it will not be over quickly. The winning of a

battle is not the same as the winning of a war. We can win a battle and lose the war, but that is not the will of God. So be encouraged. Stand your ground in this hour. Stand for Him. Resist the devil, and give him no place. Be clothed with the armor of God, and fight the good fight of faith.

CHAPTER 2

OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS BATTLE

May the Holy Spirit minister the following Scriptures to us. May He move them off the ground of intellect and logic—man’s capacity to understand—and move them onto the ground of the Spirit. The church and the world need the Holy Spirit desperately. May He reveal the Lord in us and through us, unveiling His heart and purpose.

As you read the passages of Scripture in this chapter, I want you to understand Paul’s dedication to the Lord, and also understand that he was not the only one to have such dedication. There were other apostles and prophets and average men and women of the New Testament era who gave themselves fully to the Lord, and there were those who chose not to. We see this not only in New Testament times, but throughout history and still in our day. Because men and women chose to sub-

mit to the Lord to be His vessels and instruments, the Lord was able to do His will in and through their lives.

That same choice is extended to you and me, and it is God's will that we choose Him wholeheartedly. We are called to be such vessels. If we make that choice, our walk with Christ should lead us down a path of ever-increasing commitment to Him and to His purpose. If we are not grasping, by the Holy Spirit, that purpose and its significance within ourselves and the body of Christ, then we are missing the point. God wants us to understand why we are here.

God created you to be a fit, effective vessel, indwelt by His Holy Spirit for such a time as this. He can and will make a difference through your laid-down, individual life and through us as a corporate body. He is doing it, and He will continue to do it. Do not let the enemy's lies immobilize you. We must not give up pressing onward or be distracted by lesser things. Fight the good fight of faith and take hold of the promises!

I appeal to your inward being, the Spirit of Christ in you, to understand that each of us is battling over this issue, on both an individual and a corporate level: whose vessel will you be? Your own? Christ's? Is your choice to give yourself completely to the Lord really going to amount to anything? Absolutely yes! It will amount to something not only in this age, but in the age to come.

Controlled by the Spirit

In 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses this issue of control:

¹⁹For although I am free in every way from any one's control, I have made myself a bondservant to everyone so that I might gain the more [for Christ]. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to men under the Law, [I became] as one under the Law, though not myself being under the Law, that I might win those under the Law. ²¹To those without (outside) law I became as one without law, not that I am without the law of God and lawless toward Him, but

that I am [especially keeping] within and committed to the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. ²²To the weak (wanting in discernment) I have become weak (wanting in discernment) that I might win the weak and overscrupulous. I have [in short] become all things to all men, that I might by all means (at all costs and in any and every way) save some [by winning them to faith in Jesus Christ]. ²³And I do this for the sake of the good news (the Gospel), in order that I may become a participator in it and share in its [blessing along with you].

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 AMP

The 19th verse by itself is an intriguing statement, and I might say, a loaded statement. We would all agree that parts of the church have a control problem; Satan uses man's control over the church to neutralize its effectiveness. Let's look at it from the opposite direction, though. What if Satan reversed that strategy, leading us to a place where no one could control us, not even the Lord? We would become so independent that we wouldn't know how to submit. That's more than just a thought; it is exactly what Paul is addressing here. When Paul became a new creation in Christ, former things did not control him, yet he allowed God to use him in a variety of ways to minister to all nations and peoples. In verses 24 and 25, we see Paul urging the church to allow God to work in their lives so that His purposes would be accomplished:

²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours. ²⁵Now every athlete who goes into training conducts himself temperately and restricts himself in all things. They do it to win a wreath that will soon wither, but we [do it to receive a crown of eternal blessedness] that cannot wither.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 AMP

Notice Paul's meaning in these passages. Just as Paul submitted to God in becoming all things to all men, he also submits to restricting himself in all things in order to reach the goal. In a race, competing runners go into training. In order to win, their very lifestyle has to change; they must restrict certain desires. Are we willing to allow the Holy Spirit, God Himself, to control us? I know it's easy to say we are willing, but is there proof of that in our actions? Are we really allowing the Holy Spirit to restrict us in all things, in areas of our own flesh and soul, to be even more useful and effective in this life, more competitive in this race?

The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write these words. This is the Scripture, my brothers and sisters; it is not meant to bring us under a particular man's control or our own control. It is meant to bring us under the Lord's control. There is this desire in my heart that God would have His army, fighting to make His bride ready for such a time as this. You and I both know that this reality requires some restrictions in our lives—even concerning good things, things that could easily distract us from the best of what the Lord has. Are we willing to allow the Holy Spirit to go there? I know many of you are, and I want to encourage you to consecrate yourselves further. Hold nothing back. If we're going to run, let's run to win; otherwise, we are not really in a race.

I hope you know that I do not desire to control you. I have been given the beautiful opportunity of meeting some of you. It makes me weep to see your love and appreciation. I do not deserve it, but I love you, nonetheless, and I certainly am for you, whether I have met you or not. There are many of you in nations across the world that I have never met and I would not recognize you—I have only seen your emails or handwritten letters—but it makes me so appreciate that you are running the race and being filled with the Holy Spirit in this time, alive unto God and the fire of God being in you. That is great joy for me.

Our Purpose in Christ

Don't run aimlessly, without purpose. Run to reach the goal, to win the prize:

²⁶Therefore I do not run uncertainly. ²⁷I do not box like one beating the air and striking without an adversary. But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel {and} things pertaining to it, I myself should become unfit [not stand the test, be unapproved and rejected as a counterfeit].

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 AMP

In verse 26, “uncertainty” means “without definite aim.” We live in a time of aimlessness. The people of God have lost His over-arching eternal goal. We've lapsed into day-to-day temporal living without any real purpose. Look where this aimless living has gotten us, brothers and sisters. God is not random. There is a great, eternal goal that Paul is pinpointing. There is a definite aim. Here Paul uses a boxing analogy, saying, “Look! There is an adversary, and I aim for him.” If we're going to box, let's make sure we know who we're aiming at. If we do not have a target, we'll end up wasting time and energy fighting the air, or worse, fighting each other. We must be able to see the bigger picture, the purpose which was present before the beginning of all things and goes beyond the end of all things. We are part of that which is eternal, and it is God Himself who has invited us into that purpose. Paul says in Romans 14:7-8 AMP:

⁷None of us lives to himself [but to the Lord], and none of us dies to himself [but to the Lord, for] ⁸if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or we die, we belong to the Lord.

We are part of something much bigger than we can imagine, and the enemy pulls every tactic he can to blind us to that fact. He

subdues us into believing that wholehearted dedication to God is fruitless, meaningless, and that our lives are having no impact. He would have you believe that this battle for wholeheartedness is unimportant, and then He would place other “good” things in your path to distract you. These things are counterfeit. Satan wants you punching the air.

Let’s strike at the heart of this issue. In all of His vast creation, there is nothing more important in the mind and heart of God than having His way in and through us. When we look at these issues of warfare, it is necessary that we comprehend that purpose, because there is a real enemy who is trying everything he can to keep us from stepping into the fullness of that purpose. The enemy is attacking our hearts and our minds. So again I encourage you to fight a good fight. Take hold of the promises.

In 2 Timothy 2:1-4 AMP, Paul is speaking to Timothy,

¹So you, my son, be strong (strengthened inwardly) in the grace (spiritual blessing) that is [to be found only] in Christ Jesus. ²And the [instructions] which you have heard from me along with many witnesses, transmit and entrust [as a deposit] to reliable and faithful men who will be competent and qualified to teach others also. ³Take [with me] your share of the hardships and suffering [which you are called to endure] as a good (first-class) soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No soldier when in service gets entangled in the enterprises of [civilian] life; his aim is to satisfy and please the one who enlisted him.

We are in active service, military duty to the Lord. Is that hitting home with us? We are in active service. We are not retired. We are not on leave. So let us not get entangled. There is a difference between necessary involvement in civilian affairs and entanglement in civilian affairs, and it can be a critical difference if it keeps us from God’s purpose.

Just as a soldier's aim is *"to satisfy and please the one who enlisted him,"* that should be our aim as well. We must plug into the heart and mind of the Lord to understand what He wants from us in this time. Let's go forward with spiritual understanding and the mental attitude of soldiers asking God for true spiritual wisdom and discernment. What does it mean to be a good soldier in Christ Jesus? What does it mean to run this race in such a way as to reach the aim of God? The Holy Spirit wants to help us with these questions. May God encourage us as we choose to walk in His plan for our lives.

We are not here to live for ourselves. We have been bought with a price, brothers and sisters; we are here to be instruments, vessels of Christ's life. We are here to join the Lord in this great spiritual campaign to defeat the enemy, to defeat every antagonistic force that has set itself up against the knowledge of God in the heavenlies and on earth, in the lives of the lost, and in the governmental control of the nations. The enemy is trying to manipulate and control God's own house, God's own church, God's own body.

This is a specific campaign. It is strategic, not random. It is every day, not seasonal. There is no letting up, and all of us should be in this fully with nothing held back, completely given over to God. Lord, make us an army that pushes back darkness by the light of God's life that is filling us individually and corporately. This is the light released by the Holy Spirit in us and through us that shatters and destroys the darkness.

Satan's Deception

We the people of God are supposed to be in the field under war conditions. Are we conscious, both corporately and individually, that we are in a great campaign of the Holy Spirit Himself and there is no letting up until the ultimate victory is won and we are totally sold out to Him?

There's a huge variety of teaching on this subject, yet, there remains a disconnect between understanding and action. Is there

really, by the Holy Spirit, a deep, inward conviction that we are at war and on active duty in service to the Lord? If there is conviction, it should prompt action. We can listen to teaching and be interested in the instruction but not be involved in the fight, which means we are not really counting in this war. We have been adopted into the kingdom for such a time as this, and the Lord wants to challenge us, young and old alike, to put on the armor of God and join the fight alongside our brothers and sisters.

We are at war, and if you or I don't join the conflict, it matters to the body of Christ. If one part of the body is not working, it affects the rest of the body. Even just one makes a difference. In this battle, you and I matter; we matter as individuals and we matter in our corporate gatherings. If we give up or if we refuse to enter in, the body suffers. My failure or forfeiture will matter to you. This is not a guilt trip; this is a fact of war.

In my study of war history—my favorite part of history—I have examined several wars: the Second World War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the U.S. Civil War. I have seen this truth made real, time and time again. Even in the days of the Greeks and the Romans, when they were presenting themselves in the vaunted squares they formed for battle, one man down mattered! Someone had to take his place or there would be weakness. One fallen soldier brought weakness where there had been cohesion and a united front. I have seen how one person made a difference in a battle's outcome and in an entire war, at times. I have read about it over and over again. Would you want to argue that Joan of Arc wasn't important?

This is where the enemy attacks us. He attempts to single us out as one man or as one woman and make us feel unworthy and ineffective. His tactic is very simple, and I want to expose it to each one of us. He wants you to feel like your efforts are ineffective, your sacrifices are pointless, and that you do not matter. I'm here to tell you what the Holy Spirit has told me: you matter. You are important in this army. I want that to sink deep within our hearts.

You matter to me, but more importantly, you matter to His purpose, His plan, and what He would do in this time. For such a time as this, He has brought you into the kingdom.

You matter not only in this earth, hear me in this, you matter in the heavenlies. You matter in this universe and the vastness of His creation beyond what we know. The enemy would lie to you and tell you differently, but you matter. It is urgent that the Holy Spirit brings this fact home with clarity and definitiveness. Christ in you matters. The Holy Spirit in you matters. Much of our defeat and many useless casualties are because too much of the church is uninvolved in this fight. They do not believe it and do not even see it or understand it. It's a lie that you don't matter. The enemy is able to defeat us because he is able to convince us of that lie.

When We Don't Fight

This is not a time for lackadaisical attitudes. It is not a time for fun as we think of fun. This is not a time to eat, drink, and be merry. This is a time of war; it has always been a time of war. This war has been raging since time began, and it will continue until time ends. Ask the Lord to confirm that in your heart. Time after time, when a people are haphazard, half-hearted, uncertain, in doubt and fear in battle, they almost always lose. It may not matter how well-armed they are. Their hearts must be uncompromising and set on the goal.

We must understand that we are in a conflict here, and there is urgency to it. If we fail to understand that reality by the Holy Spirit, then much will be lost. Remember when Nehemiah organized the remnant because of the great threat they were under? As they rebuilt the house of God, each of them was on alert, keeping their swords at their sides. Lord, give us similar insight for our day and time.

There are consequences when we give up, when we fail, when we don't believe. We not only suffer as a body, the throne suffers. We are dealing with the eternal plan and purpose of God. The

very throne of God is involved in this conflict. Satan is fighting us because he is fighting the throne. We are to be representatives of that throne.

The reason we have failing health and failing marriages and families within the church is because individuals have not taken their place in battle. These struggles are products of our disengagement. We are supposed to be armed to the hilt with the armor of God, but we aren't. We don't see the need to fight, so we haven't made ourselves battle-ready. Satan has the advantage. He's able to make us believe there is no battle. There are consequences when we don't fight.

I'm convinced that many—though I wouldn't say all—of our casualties are because we are not fighting. We are literally standing in the ring taking hit after hit after hit and not raising a fist in defense. What does a good defense look like in this war? Praying, interceding, travailing, receiving the burden of the Lord, putting on the full armor of God. But we are not only on defensive mode. We should be aggressively seeking the Lord's kingdom to be established in us and in others, but we're not. We are not seeing this great darkness pushed back. We are not fighting a good warfare.

Have we seen enough sickness? I believe with all my heart that we can curtail this vast amount of disease that has invaded too much of the church. These physical repercussions are a result of the delusion and darkness the church is under. Where the enemy has spiritual ascendancy, it's because the life of God is restrained by His people. Let us ponder these things and ask ourselves if they are connected. I believe they are very much connected to what we are seeing in sickness, disease, the breakup of marriages and homes, and the condition of our children, wives, and husbands. The enemy is behind this destruction, death, and decay.

Ephesians 6 says if we are fully clothed in the armor of God, Satan has no access to us. Jesus also said in John 14:30 AMP: *"The prince (evil genius, ruler) of the world is coming. And he has no claim on Me. [He has nothing in common with Me; there is nothing in Me that belongs*

to him, and he has no power over Me].” That should be the reality we know as a corporate people and as individual Christians. But instead, the enemy enjoys spiritual ascendancy in the church. He is manipulating and controlling much of it, downplaying warfare, a truth that the Scriptures clearly teach. Actually, he is creating doctrines that go against warfare. He doesn’t even care if we passively believe what the Scriptures teach, as long as we do not fight. Ponder that for a moment. The Holy Spirit, who has been sent to train us for battle, is hindered by these attitudes that Satan is sowing into the church.

Paul himself tells us: *“stand therefore being clothed in the armor of God.”* Why would Paul tell us to clothe ourselves with the armor of God if there is no battle to be fought? The idea that spiritual warfare is nonexistent is a ridiculous doctrine of demons, and we have bought into it. It doesn’t matter who is saying it or what preacher is preaching it or what teacher is teaching it. It doesn’t matter what their name is. I am interested in rank. On whose authority are they saying these things? Can you hear my heart in this?

Brothers and sisters, the enemy is gaining great ground in the nations. The light of God is not restraining the darkness; the truth, as it is in Jesus, is not restraining the lie. Self-centered living has dulled and continues to dull true heavenly living to the point that there is little distinction between the world and the church. There are consequences to this type of living. The consequences are not only to our physical health, but to our mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. The church is experiencing these consequences right now. I want that to change, don’t you? It is not meant to be this way.

I must understand that if I fail, then my brothers and sisters will suffer. If I don’t step up, I effect the purpose of God both now and eternally. This is why we fight. We fight for the throne of God. We are battling the evil one who will stop at nothing to establish and spread his reign upon this earth. Satan fights against the goodness and graciousness of God that radiates from His throne

WHY WE FIGHT

toward His entire creation. We fight to push back against the evil one who wants to insert himself on this earth and from this earth spread his evil. This war began long before we were created, yet we have the privilege of taking up arms at this very moment and giving the rest of our lives to this cause. We must fight!

So fight, brothers and sisters! On our knees right in our own homes, right in our own marriages and families, for our children, parents, and grandparents. Fight for your own community, and begin to seek the Lord for a fresh release of life in your local gathering, whether it is made up of two or three or 2,000 or 3,000. Numbers don't matter. We stand and fight together; we do not break rank.

So let's lay hold of eternal life, let's fight the good fight of faith, and let's understand the part we have in this war. God has intentionally and purposefully brought us into it, as we will see.

CHAPTER 3

INTIMACY AND SUBMISSION: REQUIRED!

To those of you reading this chapter, may God use these words to give you His direction in this time, for we all surely need it. It doesn't matter if you are one who has been waging warfare for years as an intercessor or a leader in the body or if you have just begun to fight as a new Christian. We cannot live off of last year's or even yesterday's revelation. We must hear what the Lord is saying now. We must be ever moving forward, pressing in to know the Lord's purposes for this time.

In the last chapter, I spoke briefly on the church's issue with control. I mostly emphasized the individual Christian's responsibility to submit to Christ, which I will continue to discuss here, but I'd also like to widen the conversation to include the church's responsibility, particularly as regards the leadership in the body. In coming under the control of our Commander Christ, we begin to realize that we cannot fight this war in our own strength. We must rely on and draw from the life of God in us to sustain us today

and in the days ahead. This is a spiritual war, so it follows that our natural resources, like intellect and muscle, have no power to defeat the enemy:

³For though we walk (live) in the flesh, we are not carrying on our warfare according to the flesh and using mere human weapons. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, ⁵[inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One), ⁶being in readiness to punish every [insubordinate for his] disobedience, when your own submission and obedience [as a church] are fully secured and complete.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 AMP

In this war, it is the Lord who arms us with both weapons and stamina. If we wage warfare from our own resources and efforts, we will tire quickly. We will become discouraged and despondent. We will be defeated. The key to fighting the good fight and taking hold of the promises is found in the depth of our relationship with the Lord. That idea may seem simple, but how we steward that relationship is of utmost importance. In Ephesians 6—one of the most significant New Testament passages on spiritual warfare—Paul instructs us to cultivate that inner life. After we do that, then we are to put on the armor of God.

¹⁰In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [be empowered through your union with Him]; draw your strength from Him [that strength which His boundless might provides].

¹¹Put on God's whole armor [the armor of a heavy-armed soldier which God supplies], that you may be able successfully to stand up against [all] the strategies and the deceits

of the devil. ¹²For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the despotisms, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere. ¹³Therefore put on God's complete armor, that you may be able to resist and stand your ground on the evil day [of danger], and, having done all [the crisis demands], to stand [firmly in your place]. ¹⁴Stand therefore [hold your ground], having tightened the belt of truth around your loins and having put on the breastplate of integrity and of moral rectitude and right standing with God, ¹⁵and having shod your feet in preparation [to face the enemy with the firm-footed stability, the promptness, and the readiness produced by the good news] of the Gospel of peace. [Isa. 52:7.] ¹⁶Lift up over all the [covering] shield of saving faith, upon which you can quench all the flaming missiles of the wicked [one]. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation and the sword that the Spirit wields, which is the Word of God. ¹⁸Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit, with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints (God's consecrated people). ¹⁹And [pray] also for me, that [freedom of] utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth to proclaim boldly the mystery of the good news (the Gospel)."

Ephesians 6:10-19 AMP

Part of the process in this journey of waging warfare—and I believe this is a process that is becoming more and more real to us—is learning how to draw strength from Christ.

The Source of Our Strength

"Draw your strength from Him" (Ephesians 6:10). Therein is a great clue for successful warfare. As it says in Zechariah 4:6, it is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord (within

us). In order to fight a good fight, we have to understand we are not up to the task in and of ourselves. Many of us are using our own minds to battle rather than the mind of Christ. Our own soulish minds hinder us.

I do not say that in a condemning way. I point this out to us because our soulish minds do not know how to fight spiritually, so they are not going to be effective. Without the Spirit of Christ in and through our spirit properly subjugating our souls and flesh, we will be useless in this fight, no matter how strong our minds or our natural intelligence. These things will be of no help to us. We need the strength of God in us, and so He has put His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, in us.

It is not the strength of our human spirit. It is the strength of the Holy Spirit. It is the measure of Christ, not only by the reality of Him being in us, but by the formation of Himself as He increases and governs us. We are possessed by Him, His possession. We will be most effective in warfare when the measure of the stature of Christ's fullness is formed within us.

If we are wanting to run away or give up quickly—after just months, or even years into the Lord's service—the battle will be lost. If we are completely beaten down and run over and thinking, “this is just not working,” then we will not be able to last. God cannot stand with someone who is clinging to that attitude. Faithlessness, doubt, and fear take us off of heavenly ground and bring us onto our own ground, which is not a ground of confidence in the Lord. Our victory is found not in our self-confidence but in our confidence in Him.

If we find ourselves overtaxed and overburdened, it is because it is not the Lord's burden that we are carrying. We are not fighting in His strength but in our own. “What do I do then, Terry?” James 4 tells us what to do: Humble yourself, submit to God, pray the prayer of submission (not my will but Yours be done), resist the devil and draw near to God. Resisting the devil implies warfare, and in that, we must resist our own strong tendencies, our own

strong will, and our own self-motivations and draw near to God. But we do not draw near to God to get things from Him. We draw near to God to commune with Him and Him with us.

“That strength which His boundless might provides” (Ephesians 6:10). Paul is referencing Colossians 1:24 and following it as he moves through Ephesians 6. Paul is laboring, striving with all the strength of God that is within him. It is God’s strength in Paul. That is why he and others in the Bible could go through trials year after year after year. It was not because Paul or Peter or John or any of the rest of those men and women were super Christians. It was the measure of Christ in them. Or rather, the measure of Christ formed in them. It was God’s strength in them, and it is God’s strength in us that will make all the difference.

Listen, you can have the same measure and a greater measure of Christ in you than Paul the Apostle had. I hope you believe that, because it is absolutely true. God has not put restrictions on you or me. He has not established Paul as the unsurpassable ultimate standard. Paul is in Scripture as an example; he is there to press us on. These writings that the Holy Spirit spoke through Paul are there to press us on even higher, deeper, and greater, to be even more possessed by and engaged in the Lord. He would have us go deeper in intimacy with Him, in knowing the Lord in the strength of His might. So let me encourage you in this. The Lord alone holds the resources that we need to stand firm in this time. They come from above, not from us. It is He Himself who sustains us. We must choose His life, not our own, if we want to see victory.

The Necessity of Submission

That brings me to a vital aspect of any warfare: command. The church’s problem in its present condition stems from a lack of good leadership, leadership that has failed to submit. In the body of Christ, we’re losing souls, we’re squandering time, we’re demeaning the Lord’s honor, we’re allowing the enemy to have au-

thority, and we're deficient in spiritual intelligence. It is because the leadership has failed. That's a bold statement, but let me explain.

In warfare, two types of leaders emerge: the good commanders and the poor commanders. In my studies of war history, I've seen the qualities of a good commander versus the qualities of a poor commander. A poor commander is inept, does not understand warfare, is fearful, is easily swayed by his own soul. Over and over I've seen the difference a good commander makes in the outcome of a battle—even one who has inferior numbers. This type of commander understands war, and he will often easily defeat a commander who has an inferior comprehension. If we're after victory, the quality of our commander is vital. As the church, we have the best commander, the Lord, over us. But will we, particularly leaders, submit to that Supreme Commander? That is the heart of the issue.

It really doesn't matter what we think about ourselves or what the Lord has said about us or how the Lord is using us or what position we hold in the body. All must bow to His command first, recognizing Him as the ultimate authority. We must be good listeners, coming under His directives and His orders. We must bow and continue to bow our knee to the Lord, submitting to Him before any other. Do you agree? If we desire that posture from all of God's people, then we must lead the way in it.

The church of Jesus Christ, because it has not submitted to our Supreme Commander, finds itself in a pitiful state as pertains to life, as pertains to light, and as pertains to resisting the devil. I am not just speaking these things in a general sense. Look at the divorce rate in the church. Look at how many people are leaving versus coming to the church. Much of what is called the church has no relevance in our society. It has no voice, no consequence, no bearing on how the world lives their lives. It has no meaning or purpose. The culture has more influence in the church than the church has in the culture. This is the present state of affairs, particularly in Western-culture Christianity.

The reason is command. Those of us who are leaders, we must ask ourselves if we're truly submitting to the Lord. Are you hearing now? Are you listening to Him now? Are you bowing your knee to Him now? What is it He would do today? What is it He would say today?

Brothers and sisters, we must not live off the past. Leaders, we cannot live off of what God said twenty years ago or fifteen years ago or five years ago or even a year ago. In warfare we must be flexible. Flexibility is key. Yes, there are divine, inflexible principles coming from God's very nature, but throughout history, we've seen how God takes those principles and applies them in different ways. He does not change, that is true, but He moves differently in different circumstances, different times, different cultures. This is why we must be listening to the Lord now. We must know what His desire is for this particular time. If we keep trying to recreate past movements, we will miss out on the new. God's purpose remains the same, but He is constantly doing something new. And if we are to know what He is saying in this time, we must be submitted to Him, sitting before Him waiting for direction, personally engaged with Him in intimacy. There is no other way.

Do not assume this matter will resolve itself on its own. We have an active role in this. Any and all victories are going to begin with coming under the leadership of our Supreme Commander. We must be, as Paul says, "*strong in the Lord.*" But being strong in the Lord has nothing to do with our own strength. In the kingdom, strength is letting go of our sufficiencies and depending wholly on the Lord. The key to waging good warfare starts with bowing your knee before your Supreme Commander.

We must allow the Lord to be in command of us in this hour, not leaning on our own understanding. I say this especially to leaders. I plead with you! If you are not bowing your knees on a daily basis and allowing God to disrupt you and challenge you with what He wants to do, then you are unfit for command. You would do yourself and the body of Christ a great favor by stepping down

and coming under the disciplining hand of the Lord. Allow Him to remove you from leadership until you learn how to follow Him again. Examine yourself. If you are in this for the wrong reasons, then you need to repent. Get out of the ministry; see that true ministry is ministering to the Lord Himself. Ministry as perceived in Western-culture Christianity is nonsense. May God bring us back to that place of submission. God, bring us back! That is my prayer.

So many times the importance of command is overlooked in conflict. Are the right people in the right position? Has God placed us as leaders or have we assumed roles that are not ours? We need the direction of God Himself, the Holy Spirit. We need to let the Lord remove our own ideals. We need to allow the Lord to deal with our rebellion, self-centeredness, and desire to control. God, do this in our hearts.

We must have the ears to hear and the humility to obey. Many of the catastrophes of natural war history could have been averted had the supreme commander's orders been obeyed. In war, good commanders were sometimes not supported by a good staff. The staff was either inept, or the subordinate commanders thought they knew better, so they ignored orders, deciding to go their own way. As a result, armies lost cohesion and began fighting in different directions, a sure way of destruction. Military history is filled with this type of dynamic.

Other times, many lives were sacrificed because certain leaders were unable to lay out a good battle plan to counter the enemy. Are you coming up with strategies based on your own logic and experience because you've learned this and that through the years, and you can apply this and that? Or are you getting your direction from the Lord? As Christians, we need to let go of the plans we've crafted on our own and ask the Supreme Commander to give us His plans, aggressive plans to go after the enemy and to strike him, to defeat him.

Strength for Battle Is Found in Intimacy

In warfare, this point of command is important, but equally important is our need, as soldiers, to be strong in the Lord. In speaking to many Christians, I have found there is a real lack of understanding about the source of our strength. We have fought poorly these past years because we've fought in our own strength rather than with divine intelligence and divine understanding. Because of this, we have won very few, if any, battles. We have grown weary in well-doing. Despondency has caused us to grow tired.

If you're fighting in the strength of the Lord, are you going to grow physically and mentally weary? Will you need rest? Yes, but you need to enter into His rest. And we are not just after God strengthening us; we are after God being our strength—there is a difference.

We want to learn to partake of Him, to press into Him, to gaze upon Him in His beauty and be transformed. Never forget the importance of communion prayer. Never forget the importance of intimacy. Never forget that good warfare is founded on knowing the Lord. He becomes our strength. He becomes our life. He becomes the one who continuously fills us. The secret to fighting the good fight of faith is being filled with Him, partaking of Him, feeding on Him.

An army cannot fight well if it does not have the resources. Those men and women need physical provision to keep up their strength. There's an old saying concerning war: "An army fights on its stomach." It is true. If soldiers are to be effective, they must be fed properly. If they are on short rations, their strength wanes quickly. We must feed and drink on the Lord continuously. Jesus said His flesh is true food and His blood is true drink, and "*you cannot have any life in you unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood*" (John 6:53).

In John 15, Jesus emphatically says that without Him we can do nothing; our dependency is upon Him. Paul too brings this out in Ephesians 6 when he exhorts us to be strong in the Lord. We

are to be empowered through our union with Him. As a branch draws its life from the vine, we must draw our strength from Him, the strength that His boundless might provides. As we learn to draw from His strength, we are then to put on the whole armor of God, which God alone supplies. God is the one who clothes His army with armor. He is the one who keeps His army going with food and drink.

Please understand that warfare in itself is not a substitute for feasting on Him. While in warfare, we must eat and drink of the Lord. We must learn to continuously draw from His might and wisdom, receiving His revelation so that we can fight the good fight and lay hold of the promises. We cannot neglect that inner life; for this is why we fight.

The Pitfall of Self-Absorption

There is no shortcut to this, brothers and sisters. If we are perpetually discouraged and ready to give up, if we know weakness rather than internal victory, then we are not going to experience victory in warfare. We are already defeated from within. In this time, the Lord is going to uncover things within us that are hindering us in our walk and in our warfare. Much of that centers around self-condemnation, which is fueled by self-examination. Let me say as nicely as I can that there is too much self-focus, too much self-centeredness. We are always examining ourselves and questioning ourselves and becoming bound by the self-life because of it. Satan is using that as a weapon against our hearts and minds.

God wants to deliver us from that very thing. He is allowing us to see it so we can be delivered from it. But you have a part in that deliverance. You must renounce that type of thinking. It is filled with doubt and fear. It is filled with uncertainty and questioning. It is filled with emotions. There is no faith in it. There is no confidence in it. Let me speak right to your spirit: Be rid of it! Renounce it, and allow the Holy Spirit's fire to purge this stronghold that is in you, this self-centered focus that always has us question-

ing and doubting and discouraged, that has us wanting to retreat and run. Let the Lord take that from you.

If we are going to be His soldiers—and I wish we had all the time that we really need for training—we are going to have to learn as we go. Right now many of us are being thrown into the fight, thrown into the fire, so to speak. We are learning to recognize how the Holy Spirit deals with us as He makes us into the instruments, the vessels that He wants us to be.

Brothers and sisters, this place of union, this place of abiding in Him, this place of intimacy is vital to the soldier, vital to the instrument, vital to the vessel. Maintain that secret place before the Lord. Then and only then can you be an effective soldier in these battles against the spiritual forces of wickedness.

I love Ephesians because Paul talks about the heavenlies, but then he comes down to the practical. He ties the heavenly and earthly realms together beautifully. Unfortunately, the church is oftentimes trying to understand the heavenly based on an earthly perspective rather than the other way around.

Being Heavenly-Minded

The reason much of the church is not experiencing warfare is because it is not heavenly in its thinking, its desires, its purpose, its mind, its understanding, its direction, or its goal. The heavenly-minded person, one who is seeking after the divine will and purpose of God, will not be able to avoid warfare. In Ephesians 6, Paul says that if we are going to go for the heavenly, for the eternal, then warfare will be brought down upon us. All who are listening: if you want God's purpose to be established and you want to be part of that purpose, if you want to be in His army, if you want to be part of His inheritance in the saints and go for the fullness of what He is after in eternity, then you will know corporate and individual warfare unlike anything you have ever experienced.

Much of what is called the church is already in the hands of the enemy. Perhaps you are offended by that statement, but let's ex-

amine ourselves. Are we effective? Is there compromise and mixture in our hearts? The enemy has been manipulating the church for years, and we have been too blind to see it. He has substituted ritual for life. He has substituted structure for life. He has replaced God-appointed leadership with leaders who love money, prestige, fame, and honor above all else. The control spirit is heavy within the church. It has become about things. I am not against buildings or traditions, but they must be secondary. These issues of life, being Christ's representation here upon this earth, being companions of a heavenly calling, and being in fellowship with God and His Son, have fallen by the wayside. The focus has shifted from Christ and has become us-centered.

Are we commissioned by the Lord? That is a necessary question. I'm not asking if we were commissioned last year or last week. Are we commissioned now, today, or did the Lord ever commission us to lead in the first place? Why are we doing what we do? Is the Lord having His rightful place among us or am I in the way as a leader? Can we not ask ourselves those questions? Am I hindering the Lord from coming in fullness and glory? Do I still want something of self? Those are hard questions, but we must ask them.

I am not trying to be critical, but if we hope to enter into fullness, we must listen. We need the Lord to help us. We need Him to become our Supreme Commander again. We must allow Him to take His divinely-appointed place as our true leader, and all other leaders, having been commissioned only by Him, must come under his authority. In order to wage a good warfare, it demands that we bow before the Lord and submit to what He desires. We must take a good, hard look at our motives.

Listen, brothers and sisters, is there anything better on this earth to give yourself to than to the Lord Himself? Are you giving your time to "better" things, not to the Lord and His intent and purpose? Are our distractions really that important? Are our carnal lifestyles really that important? Are these temporal things really that important to us? Do they have so much sway and pull that we

are ready to quit, to give up, to go back? Will we settle for these useless, ineffective lifestyles? We're squandering time, squandering energy on needless, temporal things that have no weight in eternity.

We are in a war! Because we have given ourselves to the Lord, the enemy is attacking our minds and hearts, attacking our flesh and our souls and spirits. If the enemy is attacking you, be encouraged. It's because you have bowed your knee to the Lord and come out of that random, self-centered lifestyle, of living for yourself and giving yourself to entertainment. As weak as it may seem, our intercession and our travail and this growing burden is having an effect upon the lost, having an effect upon the church and Christ's own people. God is using it! Can we see that?

Longsuffering is a key fruit of the Spirit if we're going to see this thing through to the end. Anybody can say, "Hey, I'm on board," as long as it's over quickly. But understand the distinction between a battle and a war. My friends, we are not just in a battle; we are in a war made up of countless battles that have been going on for years. This war began before man was created. We might see the conclusion in our lifetime; we might not. Nevertheless, we must faithfully fight the good fight, partaking of the Lord's patience and longsuffering.

We need spiritual discipline in our lives. When discipline is lax in an army, defeat is not far behind. The army literally unravels from within. Military discipline is not an option; it is a demand. Spiritual discipline is not an option; it is a demand. Buffet your body and make it your slave as Paul advises in 1 Corinthians 9:27. By the Holy Spirit, may your soul come under the control of God. Be subjected to God. Do not give in to your fears and doubts and unbelief. Unbelief stops the Holy Spirit from pushing us into the deeper things of the Lord.

So fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the promises. Press into this place of intimacy, but not for the sake of what you might get out of it, like spiritual gifts or blessings. God wants to give us these things, but they are not the goal. Christ Himself is our

inheritance. Let Him be our goal. As we know Him, we are made one with Him, and that is how we become His instrument in this time. Seek to know the Lord and His will.

I could say much about this, but let me just say that in this time the church has known little of liberty, of victory, of fullness. Relationships, particularly in marriages and families, are constantly eroding. The enemy has usurped spiritual ascendancy in God's house.

This is a call from the throne of God, from the very throne of God, brothers and sisters. It is a call going out to all who will listen, all who will heed. It is a call for those whose hearts will respond to the Lord:

“We will throw ourselves in the gap. We will be part of Your army for the sake of Your name and for the sake of Your great eternal purpose. We desire for all of Your creation to come into Your fullness and the benefits of Your life, Your love, and Your grace. We desire for the lost to have the opportunity to know you. We desire for the church to be what it is meant to be in this time: God's representative on earth, a Light to the nations, a dispenser of life. We say yes to You, Lord, we willingly volunteer for this army in this time.”

Brothers and sisters, we are going to see real, grim battle. There are going to be casualties. We are going to be wounded, and we are going to need God's healing and God's restoration and recovery. But we are also going to see victory. We are going to see the enemy held at bay in people's lives, and we are going to see families brought back together and marriages restored. We are going to see life and light shining into homes where there has been such death and darkness. We are going to see the church become what it was meant to be: the true witness of Jesus Christ. Yes, it will be a remnant. Yes, there will be a group within. Yes, we will see it. We are meant to see it. These eternal purposes of God are worth fighting for!

May the Lamb receive the reward of His suffering! I'd say that is worth fighting for, wouldn't you? May all commanders come beneath the Supreme Commander, having been placed there by no one but Him. May they, first and foremost, be loyal to Him, allowing Him to have His way in His house, in His army. Be encouraged in this fight! As we submit to Him, may we all become true partakers of Him, learning how to eat, how to drink, how to feast upon the Lord in communion and intimacy. Then His strength will be made manifest through us, resulting in a warfare that the enemy and his camp cannot ignore. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

THE BATTLEGROUND OF RELATIONSHIPS

¹¹Put on God's whole armor [the armor of a heavy-armed soldier which God supplies], that you may be able successfully to stand up against [all] the strategies and the deceits of the devil, ¹²for we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the despotisms, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.

Ephesians 6:11-12 AMP

As we continue to point out the elements of our warfare, we come to this issue of the strategies and the deceits of the devil. I want to look at some of these deceits or as some of the versions say, "wiles of the devil," and his strategies against us. Paul is clearly showing here that we need to be aware of those strategies when he says "*For we are not unaware*

of his [Satan's] schemes? (2 Corinthians 2:11 AMP). We are at a great disadvantage, my friends, if we are unaware of the schemes of the enemy. The demonic powers have one overriding purpose in this conflict against the church, against Christ, against the very Godhead, and we need to be clear about it.

Jesus said very clearly in Matthew 16:18 AMP, *"I will build My church, and the gates of Hades (the powers of the infernal region) shall not overpower it."* I want us to take that passage into account. The church is going to be countered by the powers of darkness. It is going to be resisted, it is going to be attacked, and it is going to be in warfare against the powers of the enemy. This is the power of hell itself, but it will never prevail against the church.

What Is the True Church?

It is important to realize that Jesus there is speaking of the true church. This is not just something that masquerades as the church in name only. The true church is all who are under the absolute lordship and dominion of Jesus Christ, those who are aligned with God and therefore with the heavenlies and His great eternal purpose. The church is that which is in agreement with God's great, eternal desire to presence Himself specifically in this new creation and to reveal Himself—His excellencies, His glories, His life, His light, His love—at a depth, height, breadth, and width that has never been known before.

The invisible God is going to make Himself visible through that church in full expression, as the body, as the house, as an army, and as a bride. Each of those denotes different aspects of one specific vessel, so perhaps the ultimate vessel is the bride who is married to the Lamb. That is the Book of Revelation, and there you have the end of all things: this marriage supper and the bride who is married to the Lamb.

These things are not meant to be hidden from us but to be known by us. It is so important that we understand God's objectives and campaign in the heavens and on this earth. He has a two-

fold objective. First of all, God's supreme, primary objective is the rights, the claims, and the aims of the throne of God; the sphere and range of the throne's influence; the honor that is bound up with it; the government that the throne implies; and the prosperity and wellbeing of all the beings over whom that throne is set. All of this is wrapped up in the throne. The supreme and final objective of God revolves around the throne. God's great will, purpose and desire, His interests, His activity, and His campaign, all revolve around this issue. Therefore, the enemy's goal is the exact opposite of that. His aim is to resist it.

Second, and you must understand this in the eternal sense, the church is the instrument of the throne of God. That is the secondary part but equally important. For God to attain to His supreme objective, the instrument factors in directly. God Himself, His throne, is vested through Christ in His body, His house, His bride, the overcomers, His army, His church. He is making them the instrument of His great intention and great eternal purpose to bring forth the throne, to realize the throne's intent and purpose, its honor, the prosperity it is to all beings of the creation who love God and want God.

The vehicle that will be effective in bringing forth God's will in this matter is the church. But not the church that we have come to figure and reckon on, but the true church, the bride, the house of God, the overcomers. How's that for a rat sandwich? So much of what we call the church God does not even refer to as the church. He does not see it as the church. It is not on eternal ground, it is not moving onto eternal ground, nor does it want to move onto eternal ground. It is man-centered and human-focused. It is riddled with man's control, man's logic, and man's natural mind and thoughts. God does not call that the church. If He is not the head, it is not His. It's that simple. If the throne is not in complete command and control of what we call the church, then it is not the church. If it is not coming onto heavenly ground and thought and purpose and desire nor wanting that goal and desire of God,

then it is not the church that He is speaking of. May God give us understanding on how to war and how to fight in this.

Satan's purpose, therefore, can be brought down into one clear statement. His purpose in this battle against God and the church is concerning the lordship, or the rulership, of Jesus Christ. This is the overriding motivation behind his war against God and His church, the angels and beings in God's army, and those of God's creation who are standing with Him. Satan's desire is to be lord, particularly of this earth, so lordship is a key issue in this fight. There are many elements that need to be brought out that are linked to that issue, but in an over-arching way, lordship is at the heart of Satan's strategy. A people who are moving in the lordship of Christ are a great threat to Satan and his kingdom.

Who are those under the lordship of Christ? They are under His hand. They walk in His presence. They are heavenly companions of His. They are in heavenly fellowship with Him and bear His very name, making them His ambassadors here in this earth and beyond. In fact, other than God Himself, the church under His lordship is the single greatest threat to the satanic kingdom.

Some may want to disagree with that, but again, we see Matthew 16:18 AMP, "*I will build My church, and the gates of Hades (the powers of the infernal region) shall not overpower it.*" These gates represent the very forefront, the strongest part of the enemy's forces. We are going to be contending with the great powers of hell, and they will not succeed. Paul, Peter, and John all instruct us that we are fighting against the devil himself. There is no higher demonic power than the devil himself. He has arrayed his most powerful evil spirits and principalities against God's true church.

I am making a distinction between the true church and everything else. I am distinguishing between the true body, the true bride, the true army, the true house of God, the overcomers, and everything else, because only they will be faced with this enormous battle and prevail. The great threat to the enemy's kingdom lies with the true church, which is clearly under the lordship and

dominion of the Lamb and is expressing and representing Him. It is those who find themselves in the place of divine heavenly fellowship, a people of the name who are filled with the glory of God and are pressing on to ever-increasing fullness of the Lord. They are the great threat, and around them the battle will be heaviest. The less a vessel is under the lordship of Jesus Christ, the less they are going to find themselves in battle. Just being called the church does not make it the church. The true church is going to be in heavenly spiritual battle. That is a fact. There is not an option, there is not an out, and there are no shortcuts in this. You are going to find yourself up against the gates of hell.

The Attack on Marriage

So we understand that the adversary's main purpose is against the lordship of Christ. Satan is not captivated by simple elements. There are elements of his warfare against us just as clearly as there are elements of God's warfare through us. He attacks various parts and portions of the church; for instance, he attacks the home and relationships and marriage. Marriage is a very important illustration of God's eternal purpose with humanity, His desire to have a Bridegroom and a bride. Christ and the church are represented in the husband and wife relationship, as we know.

The enemy has a greater purpose in the battle over marriage that goes far beyond the surface. We must see that our marriages are under attack for spiritual reasons, eternal reasons. The attack on our marriages is an attack on the lordship of Christ, the headship of Christ. It's a direct attack on the Bridegroom Lamb. Can we see that? It is not just that he says, "I am going to attack these two people, this man and woman, because they are such a threat to me." He is after this issue of lordship.

The church is really off base in some areas of understanding relationships. We place greater value on human relationship than we do on relationship with the Lord. We place greater value on human relationship than on being under the hand of God. Do you

understand what I am trying to say? Any relationship, even and especially within the church, that is not under the hand of God is useless to the kingdom of heaven. If its purpose and reason for existing is not to show forth the glory of God, to point to the lordship of Jesus Christ and be absolutely engaged in the eternal realms under His hand, it is worthless to the kingdom of heaven. Our relationships are meant to show forth His excellencies, to represent Him as being companions of this heavenly calling. If that is not true of these relationships, they are ineffective for the kingdom of heaven.

We give intrinsic value to human relationships that are not spiritual. They have value if they are spiritual in purpose, intent, and desire. I know this is hard for some of us to swallow, and therein lies a part of our problem. I can't tell you how many people have fallen into the trap of putting relationships with people before relationship with God and allowing themselves to be brought down to low human standards, low human levels of purposeless, random, ineffective living. It is because God is not the dominating life in their relationships. A marriage and any other relationship must begin with God and have its goal in God if it is to be effective and be what God intended it to be.

My friends, we must be able to hear this. We place value in human relationships without the overriding value being the Lord and Him glorified and magnified in those relationships. We must allow Him to bring us all together into that place of the breadth, height, width, and depth of the love of God.

Let me say something clearly to us. Jesus never went back for people. They had to come where He was. We do a great disservice to people if we stop and go back to where they are (metaphorically speaking) thinking that is going to help them. Brothers and sisters, we are to call people onto heavenly ground. We will never help them any other way than getting them out to Christ, getting them out to wholeheartedness. Yes, even those within the church. It doesn't matter how long you've known a person or been in re-

lationship with them. If that relationship is not under His hand, it can be a great trap to your heart, to your mind, and to the will of God in both of your lives. We must reckon with this. I'm afraid that most of our relationships have not started in God, but do not let them continue that way. Come under the hand of God!

So let's go back to the strategy of the enemy. He is not just interested in a marriage because natural marriage itself is some great threat. Marriage is no threat unless the lordship of Christ is in that marriage. Can you hear what I'm trying to say? No marriage is a threat unless the dominion and lordship of Christ is in that relationship. No relationship is a threat to the enemy and he has no need to attack it if the lordship and fellowship of Christ, His eternal purpose, is not in that relationship. Satan simply will not mess with it because he already has us in a trap of deception at that point.

We think these elements, like marriage, are significant in and of themselves. Is marriage meaningless, then? No, marriage has great meaning if it is cultivated on God's ground, if it is engaged in as God intended for it to be, if it is filled by His indwelling presence, His life, His mind, His thought, His desire, His purpose. Therein is the threat.

What am I calling for? I'm calling for the church to be the church in its relationships and that those relationships be on heavenly ground. Make no mistake about this, brothers and sisters, the order of the book of Ephesians is a strategic movement by the Holy Spirit. Paul talks about marriage and relationships in chapters 4 through 6 directly after speaking in chapters 1, 2, and 3 about the heavenlies and the intent of God for the church. He defines the church in its relationships and shows that those relationships must be clothed with the armor of God.

Those relationships must have the lordship of Christ. Those relationships must be strong in the Lord, or else the enemy is going to have access to the entire church through the relationships. Our relationships matter that much. If they are not under the dominion

of God and the hand of God, they will be access points of the enemy right into God's own house.

That is why Paul talks about the armor of God. There are no chapters in the original text, and sometimes these chapter headings mess us up in our understanding of the whole message of the book. Paul would have us understand that the strength of God must be the strength of our relationships. What does it look like for God to be the strength of your relationships? It means God is the Alpha and Omega of those relationships, that God is the goal of those relationships, that we as a people—corporately, individually, in our marriages, in our homes, and in all of our relationships—are truly submitted and surrendered and dedicated wholly unto Him. And if this is not true of our relationships, they can become access points used by the enemy, and they certainly will if they are on soulical, fleshly ground. From my observation of much of what is called the church, I am afraid that is exactly where most of our relationships are.

The enemy is riding into our relationships and creating havoc in the church. We must have the whole armor of God. In other words, we must cut off the access points to the enemy in our relationships and be submitted to God completely and totally. We must understand that our relationships are on heavenly ground, not on earthly, soulical ground, and live accordingly. That is not just a matter of a simple declaration. Life proves this, brothers and sisters. It is not statements, not belief systems, not doctrines but how we live that proves this.

The True Purpose of Relationships

So to understand the strategies of the enemy, as Paul says in chapter 6, we need to see the whole book of Ephesians and understand that our alliances with others need to be formed according to eternal purpose. If they are not, we are living in contradiction to the will of God. The enemy is always trying to bring mixture into our relationships and cause alliances with people who do not want

God or at least do not want Him fully, who are mixed in their own hearts and are in confusion. If people are in confusion and wanting to be helped, the people of God are there to help them, but they must come to where we are. We must not go to where they are. Do we understand that? We are calling them upward; we are not going down after them. They must come to Him. God, help us to understand this.

What are our associations? Let's put it on a larger scale. Who or what are we leading people to? Love is not human compassion. The love of God is not human love that says, "Oh, if I show them kindness, they will turn to the Lord." Do we know that? Are you sure of that? Let's ask a simple question about each of our relationships: is God in this relationship at all, or am I moving in human compassion?

Jesus did only what He saw His Father doing. He was not random in choosing the disciples. He was not random in what He said to the rich young ruler in Matthew 19: "Do this one thing." And the rich young ruler left, and Jesus did not go after him. Do you understand that the Lord was not being unkind? The Lord was being merciful and kind. It is not merciful to lead people onto our own ground; it is deadly and destructive. That is not mercy. That is human compassion, and it will not help them. Let's lead people to Christ. We are here to be His representatives. We are here to be companions of a heavenly calling. We are here to be in a fellowship of the Holy Spirit and a fellowship of Christ and a fellowship of the Father in His great purpose.

We are here to be in the heavenly fellowship of God, aligned with God's very mind and thought, heart and intent. We are here for Him, brothers and sisters. Human compassion is behind too much of the church's so-called evangelism in this hour. I am not saying cram something down someone's throat without kindness; I'm saying give them the Lord, not our doctrines or foolish teachings, and more importantly, not ourselves. Give them the Lord! Offer them Jesus.

God may be leading you to a person, a group, a city, a community, or a nation. First, you must settle that question. Is He leading me in this? Is He speaking to me about this? Then if He is, you can go in life, not just in word, truly giving them the Lord Jesus. Then you are giving them much more than words. It is through living the life of the Lamb before them—in the conflict of battle, in the difficulties, in the sweetness of His presence, and in His life radiating from us—that we will make the difference. God’s Spirit in and through us will make the difference, and nothing else will. Human wisdom and logic or human compassion will never make the difference. The enemy is always trying to bring mixture into the church. I know way too many pastors who are counseling people who will never grow up, have no intention of growing up, and really do not want their problems solved. They want sympathy. I know I am talking about a few, but that few can dominate a pastor’s life, his family’s life, and much of what we call church. And is that right? Absolutely not! Is the system of the church that allows it right? Absolutely not!

Let me ask you this. Has the cross of Christ really had its work in us? Is it no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me? Are we still doing this thing in our own logic, mindset, and understanding with human compassion, or is it Christ living in us? Is it Christ working through us—Christ revealing, Christ directing, Christ instructing? Is it Christ sending us, even if it is to our neighbor, especially if it is to our neighbor or our fellow workers or even to our biological brothers and sisters and parents? Is the Lord sending us or are we out of His time, His will, and His intent? Are we following His purpose or moving in our own wisdom or intellect? Those are all important questions.

The cross must work in us so that it is no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me. That is verified in life, not by knowing certain Scriptures or preaching messages about them or teaching about the cross, but by the cross working in us every day until it

can truly be said of us, “I no longer live; Christ lives.” That is a telltale thing, is it not, brothers and sisters?

It saddens me that we are coming away from conferences blessed, when if the Holy Spirit were having His way, we would be coming away from conferences devastated, broken, emancipated, and severed over the state of the church in this hour. That is what should be going on, and it saddens my heart that it is not. You may say, “Terry, is there no place for joy”? Absolutely there is. There is joy in the Lord. I have never been so joyful in my entire life. I have also never been so under the hand of God and felt the intensity of the Holy Spirit and the fire of God and the pressing of God and the seriousness of the hour that we are in. We cannot remain in this condition and think it is just going to get better. The sovereign will of God must be matched by a people who are moving into the gap in this hour.

So be aware of the wiles of the enemy revolving around our relationships, particularly within the church, with the intent to divide, confuse, bring us down to earthly ground, and to introduce mixture. God is looking for those who have a real burden for the spiritual life of His people. It must not be mixed with the world or with compromise or defeat. God is looking for vessels who will allow Him to fill them with His heart and His burden. He will give us His true, genuine concern and fill us with His life that will go forth in demonstration and testimony. His testimony, which is His presence, can be seen, experienced, known, and witnessed.

The All-Consuming Burden

Listen, my friends, you cannot resign and get away from the real burden of God. Once you come under the hand of God, you cannot just decide, “I have reached a certain age and that is it for me; someone else is going to have to take my place.” You cannot get away from the burden of God like that. If it is real and you are truly responding to God’s plan, purpose, and will, there is no resigning and there is no settling for earthly ministry.

All true ministry has as its very heart God's great burden, God's great desire, God's great concern. You cannot resign from that and you cannot just quit and just walk away from it. His burden is a controlling thing. His heart, His mind, His desire becomes yours. Can you hear my heart in this? Do we really believe we can be filled with the burden of the Lord and simply walk away and let difficulties or disappointments defeat us?

John was right when he said, "*They went out from our number, but they did not [really] belong to us*" (1 John 2:19 AMP). You cannot leave something that is in your very being. I do not have any thoughts about retiring, and I do not want to entertain any thoughts about giving up. When it comes to the burden of the Lord in this hour, it has taken ahold of me. May it have a good, strong hold on your heart, mind, and inward being as well. We cannot be divided from God in this. We cannot go back. We cannot run away. Though it cost our very life, we are under the hand of the Lord, and we are to stand in the gap.

The enemy cannot do a lot with a people like that. He may try to murder them, but that is the extent of what he can do. It is a tremendous threat to the enemy when the Lord has a vessel in that kind of relationship, one who is with the Lord and aligned with His heart, thoughts, mind, and eternal purpose. It is a threat because of the lordship and governance of Christ in that vessel. God is present there. God is shining forth there. God is showing and displaying Himself in His own excellencies. He is representing Himself through that vessel, whether it is individual or corporate, and we need both. The enemy is going to come against that vessel every way that he can, even if it is murder. That is the way it is going to be.

Do not let your own personal interest get involved in this thing. Is there not something bigger than us and greater than us, something eternal and worth laying down our lives for? Do you know of anything greater to give your life away for than the Lord Himself? I appeal to you, do you have anything better to do? Do

you really want to go back to the useless, worthless living that many of us have been in? Do we really want to go back to the shallow lifestyles we were in? Is that where we are going? No, brothers and sisters, that is not where we are going.

I want to encourage us to stand our ground in this time and recognize the wiles, strategies, and lies of the enemy. The Lord is going to build His church. He is going to have a people. He is going to have a vessel. Don't you want to be a part of that? I do! I believe many of us do. So be aware, and be wise, and be forewarned about the attack of the enemy that is around each of us who have come into this great conflict raging in the heavens and on earth.

We have been brought into it, and we need to understand that the church will be the vessel in God's hand that will be the deciding factor in this conflict. But the gates of hell will never prevail against the church. That means God, through His true church, is going to defeat the gates of hell. I want you to understand that those gates of hell are going to be defeated by the house of God, by the bride, by the church, by the overcomers both inwardly and externally. I know it is beyond us right now. I know we need to be made ready. I know we need a deep work of the Holy Spirit, particularly for a release of fresh life. Are we crying out for that?

Cry out for the release of the Holy Spirit of life. Cry out for leaders who are worth their salt, who have been approved of God and have His concerns, desires, and motives, who have no thought for the ways and desires of the world.

Cry out for leaders who have revelation of the eternal purpose of God who can be a part of training and leading a people onto heavenly ground and bringing them out of this earthiness that has invaded so much of the church.

Cry out for true leaders in His body who are commanders underneath the Supreme Commander, the Lord Jesus Christ. Cry out that God will raise them up from the midst of our cities and communities and they will come forth in the Spirit of God and will

WHY WE FIGHT

remain humble men and women, servants of God, who allow the Holy Spirit to have His full way. Amen!

CHAPTER 5

EPHESIANS: GOD'S MILITARY BATTLEPLAN

¹⁰In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [be empowered through your union with Him]; draw your strength from Him [that strength which His boundless might provides].

¹¹Put on God's whole armor [the armor of a heavy-armed soldier which God supplies], that you may be able successfully to stand up against [all] the strategies and the deceits of the devil. ¹²For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the despotisms, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.

Ephesians 6:10-12 AMP

These are military words. In fact, the entire context is military. If you look at the whole book of Ephesians, it is like the outline of a military campaign.

It starts out orienting our perspective, shifting our focus from the earthly to the heavenly, so that we see God's over-arching plan for humanity. It is humanity as God intended it to be—humanity filled with Christ. That is not something new in the mind of God. That was always and forever in His mind before the foundation of the world was laid or any being, planet, angel, or earth was created. Humanity as God desired it is humanity filled with God's Son. Ponder that for a moment.

Ephesians 1-3: Found In The Heavenuies

When you look at Ephesians 1-3, you see that Paul lays out heavenly thought in military terms. He is saying that the church will make the manifold wisdom of God known to each and every ruler and authority in the heavenuies: the demonic, the angelic, and every created being. This is an issue of dominion—an issue of warfare. The invisible God will unveil and reveal Himself in a measure never before seen. The vehicle or the instrument of that revelation is the church, the new humanity.

We must understand that a humanity that has not come into the fullness of the divine purpose is not the new humanity. A humanity that is only satisfied by salvation and not interested in coming into their heavenly, eternal calling is not the new humanity. But the true new humanity will be God's instrument of declaring His authority throughout all of creation, and that is the ultimate threat to the enemy.

Ephesians 4-5: Proven In Relationships

After laying the foundation of our warfare in Ephesians 1-3, Paul goes on to address the importance of relationships in the plan of God and as a battleground in this fight. In the eternal mind and heart of God, human relationships were meant to be much more than many of us understand. The husband and wife relationship should cause terror in the enemy's camp. God should be fully in that relationship, manifesting Himself through it, completely in

control. Those two vessels are not to be a hindrance but an instrument of God's life and light and truth. They are God's representatives here on the earth.

The same is true of the family. If a family is manifesting the Lord, representing the Lord, a companion of the heavenly calling, and in fellowship with the Son and the Holy Spirit, then it is a threat. That is why the enemy attacks it. The enemy does not fear man in and of himself, but he sees a major threat when the new humanity is filled with Christ and pressing on towards ever-increasing fullness.

So it is the same with the congregations of God—every congregation, whether it is two or three or thousands. Satan will not mess with a congregation that is not a threat. He does not have the resources. He is not omnipotent, omnipresent, or omniscient. He is limited, and he has limited forces. His strength and authority can only go so far, so he will only attack what he is threatened by.

God, however, is limitless. He is unconquerable. God has never known defeat, nor shall He ever know defeat. The army He is leading will never taste defeat, not if it is His army drawing from His strength and might. If any army claims to be of God yet has known defeat, then they are not of God. They may have thought they were and even proclaimed they were, but they were not. A defeated army is one who is depending on human might and power, not God's direction and strength.

Ephesians 6: Effective in Battle

If ever there was a book on heavenly warfare, this book of Ephesians is it. Paul addresses spiritual warfare directly in chapter 6 only after laying the foundation for what causes spiritual warfare in the first place: God's great desire and purpose for the new humanity, the fullness of God in the church, the army, the bride, the house, the body. God's desire for a new humanity generates conflict and warfare.

And how does the enemy try to access that church, that army, that bride, that house, that body, that warring class of men and women? Through our relationships. Our relationships must be on heavenly ground, not earthly ground. If we are understanding and moving in earthly compassion and love rather than heavenly compassion and love, the enemy will take full advantage of it. That is one of his strategies I want to uncover.

The enemy strategically rides in on soulish, fleshly relationships that are not on heavenly ground. He does it every time, and he will continue to do it until we put on the full armor of God, clothing ourselves with Christ. We must come into His full purpose in our relationships. Our marriages, families, and the congregations of God must be reestablished on heavenly ground.

God's Provision for War

So after Paul lays all this groundwork in terms of the cause of our warfare and the primary battleground of relationships, we come to Ephesians 6 and the provisions God has made for us in the fight.

Put on God's whole armor; the armor of a heavily armed soldier, which God supplies that you, may be able successfully to stand against all the strategies and the deceits of the devil.

Ephesians 6:11 AMP

We are to be clothed in the full armor of God, and God has supplied that armor for us. He is the Supreme Commander of His army on this earth, in the heavens, and beyond. Every good commander supplies armor to his troops. Likewise, God provides what is needed to sustain His army. We are to eat of His flesh; we are to drink of His blood.

What does God's provision actually mean to us? What if a modern army embarked on a three-month campaign and had no provisions, no place for troops to rest and replenish their food and

water supply? In the natural, an army cannot fight without these things. What if that army had only one day's worth of ammunition for three-months? What if it had only hand guns and rifles and machine guns but no airpower or underground operations like the tunnel rats in Vietnam or other specialized forces to aid it in battle?

Do you believe there are such specialized forces in the angelic ranks? Do you believe God has such detailed assignments? I guarantee He does. How can I guarantee that? Because He has assigned some of them to me. They are angelic beings, and God is teaching me how to utilize them. God is a good commander. He supplies everything His army needs to be victorious. But we must be aware of what He has provided if we're to take advantage of His provision, if we're to defeat the enemy. God's provision encompasses more than we realize. Angels, as I mentioned, play a huge role in this war. They are warriors, employed to help us in our warfare. We can see how they operate by taking a look at earthly military structure. I can draw many parallels to help us understand.

God has set up brigades and divisions of angelic beings who are specialized in particular functions. Not all angels fight in the same way, just as not all humans are trained to fight in the same way. Militaries have airpower divisions and navy divisions, so God has distinctions among the angelic forces. There are aerial warfare angels, for example, and they operate in both strategic and tactical functions.

Strategic airpower is designed to preemptively take out the enemy's ability to wage war, whereas tactical airpower is designed to support ground troops in a particular battle. Strategic airpower strikes at the enemy's factories, his output, his gross national product, his weapons development, his military training, his intelligence network. We could go on and on.

Tactical bombing is when, in the midst of a battle, you need reinforcements to strike a particular target. If, for example, you are in a fight and the enemy has a tank coming up, you call in tactical

airpower to take out that tank and others like it. In that fight, you need tactical airpower, not strategic.

In spiritual warfare, there are angels who engage in this type of warfare, but many of us are unaware. Look at modern-day artillery. It's made up of a wide-ranging variety of weaponry and rockets with incredible advancements and capabilities, yet very few people know about them except those who are in the military.

Why am I saying this? Because we need to know what God has supplied for us. When we eat and drink of the Lord, we eat and drink of His provision, His life. If we are not eating and drinking of Him, we will have no life in us, and thus none of His provision. An army cannot fight if it has no life in it. The Lord's army is meant to take away the life of the enemy, his strategies and effectiveness. It is meant to render him useless and destroy his forces. Christ's life is the best weapon we have in this. When we talk about provision, which includes God's angelic forces, we're talking about life, His life.

So what if you are the general of a division whose capabilities include extensive strategic and tactical airpower, such as helicopters for all purposes including scouting and night missions and strategic transferring of troops. What an advantage it is when, because you have superior airpower, your troops can get behind the enemy and flank him quickly. God has provided us with angels to partner with us in this fight. Do you believe that God should have air superiority? He does not have that right now in the second heavens. That needs to change and God wants to use us, the church, to change that.

The Weapons of Our Warfare

"For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4 AMP). Paul says the weapon of truth, the Scriptures, the spoken word, the voice from the throne

make up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. They are divinely powerful.

What about defensive weaponry that shuts off the enemy's ability to hurt us? Jesus said that Satan is coming but he has nothing in Him. *"And he has no claim on Me. [He has nothing in common with Me; there is nothing in Me that belongs to him, and he has no power over Me]"* (John 14:30 AMP). Picture the Lord covering our minds with the helmet of salvation. You know how much the enemy attacks our minds, how he tries to convince us that we are worthless, ineffective, and useless, that we are never going to amount to anything, that God can't use us because of this, this, or this. These are the lies, the deceits that Satan throws at our minds. Let us be clothed in the mind of Christ, the helmet of salvation. It is neither by might, nor by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord. Let us encourage ourselves with the truth of the Scriptures that say it is the measure of Christ within us, growing in us and increasing in us day-by-day that determines effectiveness and usefulness. He gives us the strength and right weapons to stand up against the enemy, no matter his strategy.

What about the breastplate of righteousness, which is right-standing with God? The breastplate protects the heart. The enemy's assaults on your heart are meant to draw you into compromise, into mixture, into loving the things of this life more than loving Him. Putting the cares of this life before Him, putting the care of others before Him. Putting family and friends before Him. Not that we are not to love our neighbors, our friends, or our family. But those are secondary to loving God. Is there something we are putting before Him? Is God in perfect, first-place priority? Are we in right-standing with Him?

Refinement through Battle

In the book of Joshua, God told the Israelites that He had already given them Canaan. Every place the soles of their feet would rest was theirs. Already the land was their possession by God's gift

to them. Basically, the Lord told them their enemies were subdued. It was a concluded matter. God had already defeated them just as He has already defeated Satan and the demonic principalities, yet the Israelites still had to fight their enemies just as we still have to fight the devil. This is not a contradiction.

I want us to see clearly that though God declared the victory done, the Israelites had to fight to come into that victory. We are fighting in a victory, not fighting for a victory. It is a case of faith's possessing rather than faith's receiving. That is what the Lord was saying to the nation of Israel and that is what He is saying to us. He has won, but we must take possession of the land. They needed to come into the inheritance, the enlargement of the possessions they had been given.

Listen, Israel did not come to possess any part of Canaan except by meeting a challenge, by seeing that campaign through to the end. That is absolutely the truth. We must understand that from the very beginning the land was never taken without battle, though God said, "I have given this land to you." The victory was already present—God had defeated the enemy—but He was training Israel. He was using those conflicts with the Philistines and the Hittites to make them ready, transforming them from slaves into warriors. The Israelites were slaves when they came out of Egypt. That generation had to die in order for a new generation to come forth and be made into warriors. And how did God make them into warriors? By war!

Experience is what taught Israel to trust in the Lord and in His victory. They could believe that He would give them the land, but it wouldn't be without personal cost. Some would die. Israel did not march into Canaan without losing soldiers. Men died in those battles. It was grim, terrible war.

How many of us are signing up for battles instead of war? We do not sign up for individual battles; we sign up for a war. I don't know how many battles we have before us, but there are many, almost on a daily basis, in our personal and corporate lives. We

desperately need the Holy Spirit to give our spirits stamina to fight to the end. We need a measure of Christ in us, a measure of His increase, His fullness. We need the finished work accomplished in us so that we will not run from conflict. We must cry out to God to work His fruit of the Spirit, particularly patience and long-suffering, in our hearts.

God Uses the Enemy to Make Us Warriors

Cry out to God to train us for war, to train us how to fight. We are enslaved to our own desire for a life of ease, a painless, cost-free existence, getting it as cheap as we can. We must ask Him to free us! Let me tell you something: it will cost us if we want fullness, if we want to see what Joshua was meant to see. When God cleared Canaan of other nations, He was clearing the compromise that was within each of the Israelites. He was dealing with the issues that were inside the individual people themselves. Think that through. In fact, in type, and in picture, Canaan represented the Israelites.

God wanted the Amalekite spirit out of them as well as the Hittite and the Philistine spirits. He wanted these strongholds, like Jericho, out of their souls and their flesh. First, God moved them to take the land that was theirs. What if God said that to the church today? “I want you to take the land that’s inside of you, church. You are meant to be the habitation of God in the Spirit inside of and among you. I want that lens cleansed so that I can fully inhabit you, fully indwell and possess you.” That is what we see in the book of Joshua. Canaan was a picture of that.

Before they could affect the nations around them, the Israelites had to take their own land. God had to possess them internally. God wants you and me to see that before He could be the light to the nations surrounding Israel, He first had to be the light within Israel, driving out the Hittites (meaning “terrible/fearsome”), driving out the Jebusites (meaning “to trample down”), driving out the

Gibeonites (meaning “high hill” or “hill town”), and driving out the Philistines (meaning “that which is of the dust; the flesh”).

The same is true of us today. I am going to give you some strategy here. What is God’s first move in warfare? It is emancipation. He severs that which hinders us. I know many of us have been experiencing this, and we are going to continue to experience it. This is God cleansing the land of Canaan—us! Christ finished the work, but it needs to be made real inside of us, spiritually entered into. We must enter into that land and fight for it. We must allow God to remove the Jerichos, the Philistines, the Hittites out of us. I hope this helps you.

In the book of Joshua, we see God fighting with, through, and in His people the very things that are within them or within the land that He promised them. God is doing the same thing in the church right now. His objective is that Satan have nothing in us, just as He wanted to clear the resident tribes out of the land of Canaan. Those tribes were completely destroyed, subjugated, and taken captive so that the enemy would have nothing in Canaan, and nothing in us, brothers and sisters.

The Lord wants His fullness in His people. He wants to bring His people to a place of spiritual ascendancy over the enemy. He was and still is after a position of fullness in and among His people. That’s ultimately what the Israelites were fighting for, and it’s what we are fighting for as well. God and the Holy Spirit are working in us to build up a church possessed by the fullness of Christ at ever-increasing measures.

The Holy Spirit’s goal is not to possess a fragment of spiritual fullness. He is after perpetual, continual enlargement, and that enlargement comes along the lines of spiritual conflict. Can you hear what I’m saying? Spiritual enlargement, spiritual fullness comes by spiritual battle. Every battle is a part, an ongoing part, of going from glory to glory to glory. That is spiritual enlargement.

The Lord left the enemy in the land after telling Joshua that they were already defeated. God let His and Israel’s enemies stay in

that land, even when He said He had given it to His people. He left them there in the land for His people to fight. Christ has defeated Satan, but He has left the enemy in this earth with a measure of authority and power for us to fight. I am just rightly interpreting the Scriptures. This is not some great revelation. This is the Holy Spirit revealing things to us out of the book of Joshua. Both 1 and 2 Samuel all the way through 1 and 2 Chronicles, as well as other books, show how God takes a situation in which the priesthood is completely out of touch with Him and brings it to spiritual fullness.

How does He accomplish that? Through battle! Through conflict! Read 1 and 2 Samuel and tell me that is not true. You know it is true. How does He recover His testimony in the earth? How does He rebuild the house of God? The books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell us how. He begins at the altar, the cross. That is always true. They were building the altar long before they built the house of God. It had to be established before the rest could be built. Do we understand that? Do we understand that the house of God is contingent upon the cross? The Lamb is sacrificed upon that altar. The Lamb had to come back into view in order for the house of God to be built.

The Lord wanted the Israelites to drive the enemy out themselves. It was important that the enemy had nothing in the Israelites. There could be no compromise. They were not to make treaties with those tribes. They were to completely destroy them. Do not make treaties with your sins. Do not make treaties with the strongholds in your life. Do not make treaties with weaknesses in your life. Destroy them!

The Lord has left the enemy in the land, not to destroy us, but so that we, through His might and power, might destroy the enemy. We are meant to wage a good warfare in His victory. If we understand that and fight by the spirit of God and power of Christ within us, then we cannot be defeated. We will no longer be wimps

but be the warriors we were born again to be, expressing the nature of God.

Through battle, through conflict, through warfare, the Lord uses the enemy to bring His people to a place of fullness and spiritual enlargement. We need to know that the church is the Lord's inheritance, and the Lord is the church's inheritance. That's the priesthood for you. That is what God told the Levites: the Lord Himself was their inheritance.

Christ, Our Strength

What is needed now—and I am asking the Lord to help us with it—is spiritual strength. Not natural strength but spiritual strength. The extent of our spiritual strength is determined by the extent of Christ's measure in us. "*So be strong in the Lord,*" is what Paul writes, "*in the strength of His might.*" Spiritual conflict can serve as a way to see how much of Christ's strength is actually in us. I mean this: if we go down easily under opposition and pressure from the enemy, and we give up quickly and run because things begin to get difficult, then that in itself shows the measure of our spiritual strength, the measure of Christ that is in us.

I hope that doesn't sound too negative. But let's not leave it at that. Let us be challenged to move forward! It is not the will of God that we give up and run. If we give Him a chance, He will change us. He will turn us around completely, but we must let Him deal deeply with our hearts. Let Him go past the shallows, into the depths. No more surface issues.

Let Him deal with and root out our strong-mindedness, our unwillingness to humble ourselves. Submit to God, resist the devil, and draw near to Him. Let Him deal with our own human charisma and human strength, and recognize that that is not enough. We will tire quickly if we are fighting this in human strength. Let us humble ourselves. I mean that! Let us humble ourselves and go before God and tell Him, "God, I cannot do this. You have called me into an impossible situation!" Indeed He has. He has not called

us into the possible, brothers and sisters. He has called us to the impossible, and He is the great Commander who will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory. He will equip His own army. He already has the necessary provisions. He has won the victory in and of Himself, but that victory must be realized through us. He has left the enemy intact so we can fight, knowing it will train our hands not only for war but for reigning with Him, with the Lamb.

From one standpoint, we have to measure Christ by His contact with the enemy. So if we looked back at Christ in the flesh on this earth, back through the gospels when He came into contact with the enemy—which was practically every day—we do not see at any point or time the enemy gaining an advantage over Him, bringing Him onto earthly ground. Not once does Christ give in to fear or doubt His heavenly Father. Do we see Him doing that? Of course we don't; we never will. The enemy had nothing in Christ. He was not able to advance into His heart, His emotions, His soul, His flesh, or His spirit. Christ was continuously drawing Satan out into battle and defeating Him. Can you see that in the gospels?

“[Just] as the Father has sent Me forth, so I am sending you,” Jesus said in John 20:21. He did not send us out with, “Well, you may win or you may not.” If He is our strength, His victory has assured our victory. Is He the life and the light and the truth within us? Are we clothed in Him, are we abiding in Him, are we feeding on Him, are we eating and drinking of Him? This partaking of Him is true communion, true intimacy. The victory for the church depends on the measure of Christ's fullness in us. Spiritual smallness will mean spiritual defeat. At every point, the enemy was defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ. Why can't that be true of the church? Fear, doubt, confusion, faithlessness, accusations against and lack of confidence in God will cause defeat, brothers and sisters.

Jesus was not only standing and fighting with Satan and the demonic hordes. He was constantly confronted by the Hebrew religious rulers who attacked Him, citing the 39 books of the Old Testament and other non-canonical texts as their defense. The

Lord proved His own spiritual measure against all forces of spiritual opposition, physical opposition, man's opposition. Satan and His entire kingdom was matched against Christ, and yet the Son of Man overcame. Amen! He cast out the prince of this world. He subdued his kingdom, taking authority over that entire kingdom of darkness and antagonism against God. Did He not?

The measure of Christ is seen in conflict and battle, and so it will be with us. The measure of Christ formed in us, the measure of Christ established in us, will be most clearly seen in battle and conflict. We were meant for war. We were created after the war began—though we have always eternally been in the mind of God—but we will take part in finishing this conflict. Let that encourage you. Our spiritual strength is a matter of spiritual measure.

Understand that our Commander the Lord Jesus Christ has given us everything that is needed for life and godliness. Every provision has been made. We are well-supplied and well-armed, but we must understand the weapons of our warfare, that they are not carnal but divinely powerful. May God help us identify them. We are the best-armed beings in all creation. Christ is living in us; the Victor Himself is the life of the believer.

Christ could be as small as a seed in us, but we need Him in full measure, do we not? That means that we must move over and let Him grow. As the vessel, we are to get out of the way so the treasure can come forth, so that the seed can mature and come to fullness in us. Collectively and individually, we need Him to grow us, and we need a greater and greater increase of His fullness so that we can be truly effective warriors in this time.

An International Army

God has called me and others to raise up an international army of God. To me, that means raising up an army in the homes, in the local places of the congregations of God, in the families. It means raising up men and women warriors who fight on their knees, warriors who stand confidently before God, men and wom-

en, young and old. I do not believe I am the only one called to that; the Lord has made that very clear. But I recognize that call and have said yes to it. I also recognize this same call of God is unto different purposes in other men and women who are also helping to raise up the army of God. We will not all do it in the same way, and I honor them and honor God in that and appreciate what the Lord has been doing and is doing.

I think of my friend, Mike Bickle, who is raising up the International House of Prayer, and I love and appreciate Mike. We are friends and have been for years. I appreciate those who have been praying and are praying, but I want to share with you what the Lord has told me regarding the army of God. At a grass roots level, right where you physically are right now, the Lord is desiring to raise up an army. It is meant to be in the homes, in the husband and wife and family relationships, even in places of business. Out of these, God can bring forth His army. It is not always possible, but where it is possible it is very grass roots. God is not calling us out geographically; He is calling us out internally to a place of prayer and intercession, a place of His burden and travail. He has been very clearly speaking to me that this is in His heart for His army.

Listen, older folks, your best years could be before you if you do not slack off and believe the lies of the enemy that your life is useless and over. If we enter into a place of intimacy and prayer before Him, our best and most effective years in the Lord can be now. Young people, do not wait to grow old to enter into that. Enter into it right now. I'm talking about what Paul said in Ephesians 6:18, "*Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit.*" You may say, "Well, I don't know how to pray." Then pray in the Spirit. Pray in tongues. Pray with understanding.

God has called me to raise up an army. This book is meant to spark a measure of that, but it is in God's hands. My prayer is this: God, make us Your army in this hour, equipped and ready to fight on our knees. God, call us to the place of intimacy. God, call us to

the place of warring on our knees, not for earthly things but for the heavenly, for Your inheritance, for Your rights, that Your intent and purpose may be brought forth internally.

The Mighty Men and Women of God

In the coming days, there will be a group called the Mighty Men and Women of God, of which King David's mighty men were a type. They are those who will be completely sold out and given over to Him. God is calling us to be part of this people. I believe you are reading this because the purpose and calling of God is on you. This group of mighty men and women of God who are completely loyal to Him and His purpose will arise out of the nations of the earth.

These people are loyal to their commanders over them who are in turn equally loyal to God. That is how it must operate. To be a general you are going to have to be completely loyal to God, completely surrendered and submitted and yielded, not wanting your way at any time but only wanting the will of God, His way. That should be required of all leaders as far as I am concerned and as far as the Scriptures are concerned.

These mighty men and women of God are going to be led by other mighty men and women of God. I do not mean that you have to have been in the ministry for fifty years and have done this and that. This is a new day, brothers and sisters, and what has happened in the past is not going to help us in the present; God is doing a new thing. Does He forget our faithfulness? No, He does not! He never forgets it. But I tell you that now He is busy emancipating and severing us from man's "good ideas" that keep us from seeking and walking in God's desires and purposes.

Generals—not second-class privates—should be leading armies. I am sorry to say it that way, brothers and sisters, but we have a lot of drill sergeants leading the army of God. Drill sergeants are useful vessels and a much-needed tool, but they are not fit to lead armies. Many of the leaders in this day are more like drill

sergeants than they are generals. As leaders, we do not understand strategies, we do not understand the Lord's eternal purpose, and we are not really submitted to God. We say we are, but we want our own way. We want a good church and we want this and we want that. It is all about us.

Listen leaders, the stroke of God's hammer will fall hardest on you. You need to understand that within the church, the greatest refinement is coming to you. Do you think you can lead the people of God and not go through His ultimate refinement? I want to say this to those who are claiming leadership in the body: leading the Lord's sheep and soldiers (and they are His sheep and soldiers) will bring the ultimate refinement down on you. We must be ready and prepared for refinement, resolved to say yes to the Lord. Where are the men and women of God who want God to come into His place as the Supreme Commander? Give us that, God!

The Lord told me directly that these mighty men and women of God will change the history of the world in their time. They will make history, and they will create history. The Lord told me what is needed is an elite warrior class. This has been in His heart all this time, hidden, but He is making it known now. He told me they are the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation, an elite warrior caste of priests. They are priestly, and they are warriors. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes. We perhaps think of them as wimpy, but they are fearless, and they are fierce, and they are terrifying to the enemy's camp. They move in the strength of God, not their own strength, and so the exploits of God come through them.

I am not just talking about miracles, though that will be part of it. There is something these men and women are fighting for that goes beyond miracles and signs and wonders. They will be involved in the pulling down of demonic strongholds, and I do not mean by formulas or words. It will be through divine authority that can only come from fighting in grim, terrible warfare. At the end of that warfare, the enemy will be routed from some communities and some cities and some regions. Strongholds will be

broken. Giants, I mean spiritual powers, are going to be brought down in some of these places. And that is only a little of what I could say about the mighty men and women of God, and we'll see more later.

God, train our hands to war. Encourage us in this fight! We ask for spiritual strength and the measure of Christ to increase in us. May we understand that though our victory is assured and comes neither by our might nor our power, we must fight it out ourselves, empowered by the strength of Christ in us. You have left the enemy in the land so we will learn to war by the strength of Your might, applying the strength and victory of Christ in every situation.

War is not ethereal. This conflict with the devil and spiritual forces in heavenly places is grim. It is terrible. It is hand-to-hand fighting. We are called to do battle with these forces, but we must not be unprepared or spiritually ignorant, relying on our own strength instead of God's. That is why we have lost so many battles, brothers and sisters. We are spiritually ignorant instead of spiritually intelligent. We fought in our own strength because we thought it was about formulas and words, but it never was. It is about spiritual authority, which is wholly dependent on the measure of Christ in us. All authority has been given unto Him, so the measure of authority in us will be the measure of Christ established in us. Help us with this, Lord! Amen!

CHAPTER 6

OUR PREPARATION FOR BATTLE

Out of the overflowing love the Lord has for you, He has asked me very clearly to present you with a choice. I am calling you to enlist in His army. I believe the Lord wants to make this personally real to each of us. I believe we need to get before the Lord, alone in that place of intimacy with Him, and allow Him to bring up this matter of enlistment. He wants us to literally say before the Lord that we enlist in this army. Some of us will literally see the enlistment papers and sign them in a visionary realm. Let us not take this lightly. Remember Paul's words to Timothy:

³Take [with me] your share of the hardships and suffering [which you are called to endure] as a good (first-class) soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No soldier when in service gets entangled in the enterprises of [civilian] life; his aim is to satisfy and please the one who enlisted him.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 AMP

Active Duty Enlistment

I want to say some things about this enlistment. Most importantly, it is to active service. Are all of us called to active service? Yes, we are. Do all of us have a true understanding of that fact? I'm afraid not. You would probably agree with me that many of us don't even have that concept, but it is clear here in the Scriptures. The New American Standard Bible uses the wording "active service." There is a clear distinction here between being in active service for the Lord and being involved and entangled in the affairs of this life.

Being enlisted changes things. It changes our understanding of how life is to be lived. When you enlist in the military, your whole life changes. You put on the uniform of a warrior. You go into training for war, for conflict, for battle. That is what the Lord is after, and that is why I'm sharing this with you. I pray that the Holy Spirit would take these simple words and make the challenge of God real to our hearts as iron sharpens iron. God is enlisting a people in His army, and that army's primary mission is to be available to God and to live for His intents and purposes.

We are dealing with His eternal purpose and bringing a people into that reality of enlistment here on earth. In the Spirit, as we sign those enlistment papers, we enter into active duty. This is likely already true of many of us, but I am personally recommitting to this because of the intensity with which the Lord presented it to me. Like never before, I am realizing that I am not my own. I have been bought with a price, therefore, I glorify God in my body. It is bringing to me a greater realization of what He wants with me as a vessel, and it will do the same for you because it is meant to.

The training is necessary. I am not interested in any of us getting prematurely involved with demonic powers, particularly principalities, if we are untrained and unprepared. God is not interested in that. This is meant to be a time of training, and we are going to be in conflict and battle in this training. What is going to be the primary place of training? It is going to be through con-

flict and battle in our relationships, in our workplace, sometimes in our homes and marriages. Though there are external dynamics involved in these conflicts, we must learn to see past them and take responsibility for our own hearts and mistakes in repentance. But we also need to see that there is an enemy at work every time who means to stir up division and cause trouble. He is a troubler of God's people.

If God is really in us and we are truly born again and pressing on toward the mark of the high heavenly calling that is in Christ Jesus, believe you me, that means conflict. It means real battle, grim battle, terrible battle. It is battle that has a cost, casualties, wounds. We will not come out of it unscathed. Anybody who is telling you that you will come out of this without being touched or scathed is not telling you the truth. The Israelites went into battle. Some of them came out wounded and some of them did not come out at all; they died in those battles for the glory of God, for the sake of others, that they might enter into God's inheritance.

I want to say as clearly as I can that God is enlisting an army right now. May the Holy Spirit do His work in this worldwide. I would encourage you to ask for greater angelic assignment to your lives. But I want to say something to you and ask that you listen carefully. If we are questioning or wondering why God seems to be delaying His help, this may be key to our understanding. God is not just giving out angelic assignments or even an assignment of the great cloud of witnesses frivolously. There are those from the great cloud of witnesses who are particularly being sent to train us in this time along with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is using them, the saints, the great cloud of witnesses, to train parts of His body. It is real to me, and it has been happening to me for well over a decade. But the Lord will not assign them, or anything else for that matter, without responsibility. The tools we need to be effective and useful in this fight come to us as we believe and give our lives to active service.

Many want to stand on the sidelines uninvolved but still be arrayed in God's gift of battle armor. Why? If you have no plans for active service and enlistment, why would God give you the uniform? Why would He give you the armor? Why would He give you the divinely powerful weapons? If we are in doubt and fear, God will not come onto that ground. He will come to us and draw us off of that ground.

Spiritual Intelligence

Now that you're enlisted, let's talk about spiritual intelligence. So much is said in the modern military about the great need for intelligence. We have intelligence coming from every conceivable direction now. Things are being monitored by satellites, through the airwaves, and over the phone system. And not just strategic (advance) intelligence, but tactical (real-time response) intelligence as well.

Intelligence is extraordinarily important in this spiritual fight; knowing what the enemy purposes to do before he does it is key. You can at least counter his move effectively if you know what he is going to do. Ignorance in this arena means surprise, and surprise can mean defeat.

This is a very brief overview of strategic intelligence, but I think we understand how important it is. Essentially, military intelligence revolves around control of the battlefield. In other words, it is having the overall picture of what is going on in the air (including satellites), on the ground, and at sea. Knowing how much the enemy knows about us and our battle plans is also a part of spiritual military intelligence.

Let's think about spiritual intelligence for a moment. In 2 Kings 6, God showed Elijah the secrets of the commanders of the armies arrayed against Israel in a very military way. That was spiritual intelligence was it not? It gave great advantage to Israel. God desires to give us great advantage in this fight. Listen, we are dealing with the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent God here.

Our God is all of that and much more. It would take much more space than we have available to go into this thoroughly, but please understand the importance of it to our warfare. God desires to give us what we need.

Two things have to mark us if we are to be effective in this battle. We've talked a lot about being strong in the Lord, but not only do we need the strength of God, we also need spiritual intelligence. When we talk about the full measure of the stature that belongs to Christ, we have to look at these dual areas: God's strength and divine intelligence.

You will see this over and over again in the New Testament. Other words for intelligence would be "divine understanding" or "the mind of Christ"—understanding God's thoughts, God's purposes, and God's desires. But intelligence is not only that, it is also understanding the enemy's intents and purposes. Simply put, the enemy's intents and desires are the exact opposite of God's purposes and desires. It is very simple. But let's not focus on the demonic. This is not a study on Satan or demons; it is a study on God. It is a study on the One who called Himself a Mighty Warrior. God gave that name to Himself. By the way, He also said His name is Jealous.

So my heart is to understand God and the weapons of warfare and battle armor that He has given to us. We must understand that God Himself is the Supreme Commander of His army and all other commanders must be beneath Him, completely loyal, completely faithful, and continuously filled with His thoughts, His mind, and His purpose. They must be completely yielded and surrendered to that purpose so that none of their selfish, man-centered desires hinder in any way. It should be a prime objective of ours that God has His way.

He is the Supreme Commander, and He is the supplier of His army. No army can fight without food. No army can fight without weapons. No army can fight and win without supplies and resources. God is the supplier of all those things. We are meant to

be the best-armed army in the entire creation. Can you hear what I am saying? We have Christ in us. We have the Holy Spirit in us. God the Father is actually living in us!

⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, ⁵[Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 AMP

That is both in the heavens and in the earth. Does anyone hear a weakness in that? Did anyone hear a lack in that? Did you hear perhaps a supply problem or a resource issue in that? Did anybody hear that God does not have the right weapons or that God does not know how to arm His troops rightly? That is not what we hear. What we hear is the opposite of that. That should bring a confidence to our hearts. He knows what we have need of, and He knows if we plan on fighting or if we are just going to run. I hope that does not sound negative; I hope that spurs some of us on in the faith.

We may be strong in the Lord but not accomplish much because of a lack of spiritual intelligence. But it is also true that we can have divine understanding and know these things but not be fit to stand up and fight because we don't have His strength. Both of those things are true. I tell you, we are under a fierce onslaught of satanic power. I believe it is being unleashed in an unprecedented way in our time, historically speaking. His strategies and deceptions are going to greatly increase. His attacks are going to come more and more regularly with less and less time between them. The enemy knows where to attack us, and he knows how to make a specific assault against each of us individually and collectively. He will hit our unarmored areas and places where we have strongholds. He

can be effective in that. He knows how to set up situations to cause division, confusion, and every other evil.

God brings order to chaos, and the enemy tries to bring chaos where there is divine order. Can you hear that? That is one of his wiles. He brings chaos where God is on the move in divine order, where God is doing a new thing in the hearts and minds and lives of a people. He will always try to bring chaos into that. We cannot be unaware of his schemes. The enemy will get us moving in our own minds and thinking and reasoning. Sometimes he is moving in the realm of our emotions and feelings, stirring them up, using situations that touch or agitate us very deeply to send a very pointed blitzkrieg right at our hearts. At the very moment when our emotions are engaged to a dangerous point, he makes a tremendous onslaught. Often it works, and he is able to bring us down.

To counter these things we must have both spiritual intelligence and divine strength in equal measure. We need to be alert to the enemy's tactics. They are age-old tactics that he has used over and over. It is not enough to simply repent. It is not enough to confess. Let's grow! Spiritual intelligence becomes a matter of spiritual measure. How often does someone we know go down under the enemy's assault? They are neutralized after the enemy lands a knockout blow to them, and it's all too easy to say, "Didn't you see that coming? Didn't you understand the ways of the enemy"?

Far too often we do not understand the ways of the enemy. Perhaps we should, but we don't. We say, "Well, if I had known this is where that would end..." or "If I had seen that coming..." We have regrets. When we have relationships that are not sanctioned under God's hand or the will of God or they are premature, we go down that path and it leads to a place of sorrow. But let me ask you, did we learn from it?

We need spiritual intelligence. Being strong in the sense of just digging in our heels and clenching our fists is not the strength of God. That is human strength, and without the strength of God and divine intelligence, we are going to have it handed to us. A

strong man can be thoroughly overcome by deception, traps, and cleverness. That person can be completely beaten because the enemy is countering that strength with a scheme, a strategy, a wile of the devil. We understand that, do we not? The enemy comes in with a spirit of accusation against us or against others, and we jump right in and begin to accuse our brothers and sisters without really knowing the truth. He comes in with condemnation on our own hearts, bringing a sense of our own wickedness, unworthiness, unprofitableness, ineffectiveness, and we sink into despair because we live in a place of believing that lie no matter how many times the enemy tells it.

The remedy for that is the breastplate of righteousness right over our hearts and the helmet of salvation/deliverance over our minds. Meet the enemy with the righteousness of God in Christ. It is the only way to meet this assault. Do not give into condemnation. Do not give into accusation. The enemy is the accuser of the brethren. Do not go down that path with him of pointing the finger at others. Do not enter into what Isaiah 58 talks about. His purpose is to divide and conquer. His purpose is to render us ineffective by division.

Part of that division can begin with accusation and condemnation that traps us and keeps up from fighting the good fight in our own hearts. The first thing the Lord is going to do is drive those things out of us, deal with those things in us. James says to not think it strange when you are going through various trials. The trying of our faith is more precious than gold.

Listen, Christ is adequate in strength and in intelligence. He is our adequacy. We must learn to eat and feed on Him. Do not get in a battle and stop feeding. Do you hear what I am saying? Do not go down this path of going to a warrior's prayer meeting but then not feed on Him or drink of Him personally. There is no substitute in this. Communion is the foundation of intimacy. There is no substitution for submission prayers. I'm trying to help us point by point by addressing some of these things head on. You are not just

a warrior; you are a lover. Do not forget that! He loves you. You are to love Him back and respond to His love. Amen!

We need to understand what the enemy consistently does if we are to have spiritual understanding. He has done this for hundreds and thousands of years now. God's desire in this battle is also to build character through conflict. God aims to spiritually and morally build us up through conflict. God has so ordered His divine economy that although the Lord Jesus Himself has secured a universal triumph over all of His foes, those foes, including Satan, are still left behind for us to deal with.

Victory Through Conflict

I talked about this in the last chapter. In the book of Joshua when God told the Israelites that the victory was already secured and complete and every place the sole of their feet touched would be theirs, He also left the enemy in that land for them to conquer. The enemy, although defeated, has still been left for us, the saints, to battle with. The Lord has not put our foes out of this earth, but in and of Himself He has triumphed over them. The Lord has left our enemies for us to deal with in His triumph.

Let me say this clearly: it is in this way that you and I achieve our spiritual and moral development. It is through real, grim conflict. So do not count it strange that you are in battle, but count it joy, for the trying of our faith is more precious than gold. It is through conflict, it is by battle, it is by spiritual warfare that the moral excellencies of our triumphant head Christ are brought out in us.

Let me say it again, and please let it reach your heart. It is through conflict, it is by battle, it is by spiritual warfare that the moral excellencies of our triumphant head Christ are brought out in us. We literally triumph in His victory. Yes, faith is tested in conflict and deeply tried in battle. It is more than just holding onto something or just believing something. This has to get out of the ethereal and out of fantasy and into reality.

It is the exercising of faith that happens in conflict, in battle, in warfare that brings into our own souls the victory of the Lord. Can you hear that? We are made morally one with Him and His triumph by the testing of faith.

I hope that encourages us. It must be brought forth into our very being to be of value. It must be inwardly wrought within us to be real, and that is done through conflict. It is drawn out by warfare so that spiritually and morally we are being built, made ready, and prepared through the conflict and adversity. This is the divine, sovereign ordering of our lives.

It is one thing to have a theoretical understanding of Calvary's victory and in the hour of emergency make formulaic statements like, "I claim the blood of Jesus and the victory of Calvary," but it is another thing when you have been in grim, terrible warfare to the point that life itself was hanging in the balance and you stood in faith and fought it out on that very ground. When you have called upon the name of the Lord and exercised His victory wrought through you in the face of the enemy, resisted even to the shedding of blood, and still held your ground, His victory becomes real. When you have fought not just for 24 hours but for days and weeks and at times for years, His victory becomes real. When you have fought on that ground where faith is gravely tested, then Calvary's victory becomes something that is not theoretical to you anymore. It has taken hold of you and been inwardly wrought inside of you. It has been established in you. The victory of Christ has been established in you and every battle from that time forth is a further establishing of His character, His nature, and His triumph over the enemy. That is the kind of warrior God is looking for. Can you hear what I am saying to you? He is not after a theoretical army. He is not after an ethereal army who knows doctrines and Scripture—though that is so important—but has not been proven in battle.

That is when the qualities of His nature and character are established and formed in us—through conflict and warfare, not

peace and doctrines. These are not doctrines I'm sharing with you, brothers and sisters. What is in you will come out during warfare. What is in you will be seen by others when times get difficult. Is that not true? Christ— His life, His character, the fruit of His very nature—is being established in us. The goal of this warfare is that the morality of God, the strength of God, the intelligence of God would be established in us. We are going to reign with Him if we are overcomers.

The term “overcomers” implies battle and warfare. The promises to reign and sit with Him on His throne are to the overcomers through transformation and transfiguration. It comes through conflict, being molded internally and inwardly into His image, being conformed to His likeness and becoming His kind. That is not theoretical. That is the nature of God filling us to overflowing, ongoing, ever-increasing fullness. This is about the life of God being established in us. I know this is intense, but it must be. We are in a battle for character, for God's life, God's nature. We need to understand that, and we need spiritual intelligence. We need to understand the eternal purpose of God, His goal. And to do that we need to understand the goal and aim of the enemy.

PART II: LEARN TO FIGHT

CHAPTER 7

THE WEAPON OF RIGHT LIVING: WALK WORTHY OF YOUR CALLING

¹I therefore, the prisoner for the Lord, appeal to and beg you to walk (lead a life) worthy of the [divine] calling to which you have been called [with behavior that is a credit to the summons to God's service, ²living as becomes you] with complete lowliness of mind (humility) and meekness (unselfishness, gentleness, mildness), with patience, bearing with one another and making allowances because you love one another. ³Be eager and strive earnestly to guard and keep the harmony and oneness of [and produced by] the Spirit in the binding power of peace. ⁴[There is] one body and one Spirit—just as there is also one hope [that belongs] to the calling you received— ⁵[There is] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of [us] all, Who is above all [Sovereign over all], pervading all and [living] in [us] all.

Ephesians 4:1-6 AMP

Paul is challenging the people of God to live lives worthy of this heavenly call that is upon all of us. I believe these challenging words are important for a number of reasons, and as we move forward I hope you can see that as well. Whenever the testimony of Jesus that we speak is not matched by our life, we have a problem. The testimony of Jesus is not simply a doctrine. It is not just spoken truth. It is not simply knowing how to present something called a testimony of Jesus. The testimony of Jesus is a matter of life.

Life testifies to Christ more and better than anything else. Jesus said in John 10:10 AMP, “*I came that they may have and enjoy life.*” That is divine life, a specific kind of life—the very life of God. The life shows itself as light, not darkness. Divine life shows itself as light, as pure and peaceable, as meekness, as humility. I could go on, but I am saying this to us: the divine life that is meant to fill us individually and corporately has the very specific representation of God in it. It is the exact representation of His divine nature.

We remain in darkness if we say that we are fully the Lord’s when the life coming out of us is our own. It is self-centered, selfish, proud, and arrogant. It is a lie. We are to press on, yes, absolutely. A life worthy of the Lord is an always developing, always increasing dynamic. I am not talking about instant attainment, but I am talking about obtaining the goal of God in life. We who have been in the Lord for a while should be able to rightly tell someone the reason for the hope that is within us.

The more we allow the Lord to fill us, the more displaced our soul’s dominion becomes and the more we come under the dominion of God Himself, the Spirit and life of God. We know this: without the Holy Spirit within us, there is no divine life. We are to be completely taken over by the life of God. We are to be filled with His fullness.

God has sent His Son into our hearts crying Abba Father (Romans 8:15), and the same cry should be in us as well, the desire to be joined with Him, one with Him. Of course we don’t become

God—that would be heretical—but we are the children of God. His life and His nature should be filling us.

So let's look again at our relationships in light of Ephesians 4.

²⁷Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil [give no opportunity to him]. ²⁸Let the thief steal no more, but rather let him be industrious, making an honest living with his own hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need. ²⁹Let no foul or polluting language, nor evil word nor unwholesome or worthless talk [ever] come out of your mouth, but only such [speech] as is good and beneficial to the spiritual progress of others, as is fitting to the need and the occasion, that it may be a blessing and give grace (God's favor) to those who hear it. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God [do not offend or vex or sadden Him], by Whom you were sealed (marked, branded as God's own, secured) for the day of redemption (of final deliverance through Christ from evil and the consequences of sin). ³¹Let all bitterness and indignation and wrath (passion, rage, bad temper) and resentment (anger, animosity) and quarreling (brawling, clamor, contention) and slander (evil-speaking, abusive or blasphemous language) be banished from you, with all malice (spite, ill will, or baseness of any kind). ³²And become useful and helpful and kind to one another, tenderhearted (compassionate, understanding, loving-hearted), forgiving one another [readily and freely], as God in Christ forgave you. ⁵¹Therefore be imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father].

Ephesians 4:27-5:1 AMP

This closing of the doors, this leaving no room, or giving no foothold to the devil is key to our understanding of our relationships. We do not want to provide any opportunity for the enemy to ride our relationships into the corporate body and bring division. Can you hear that? If we allow an opening in us or in our

relationships, it creates an opening for the enemy to create doubt and confusion in the body.

It is very important that Paul talks about the eternal relationships and warfare all in the same book. This is not random or disjointed. This is the Holy Spirit inspiring Paul to show us a crucial part of our warfare. Warfare is going to come to our relationships, and it will come down to this: do we truly want the will of God for ourselves and our brothers and sisters more than we want our own way in our relationships with them? Do we want them to have the relationship they are meant to have with God no matter how that affects us or our ability to be in relationship with them? Are we willing to allow our relationships to be put on hold if they are self-centered, i.e. about us, about our wants, our desires, our purposes rather than the Lord's?

That is an important question. In my life I have seen into the realm of relationships and the shallowness of our relationship with God, and I have to say to us that most of our relationships are not built on God's ground. They are not built on good ground; they are built on the very soulical ground of what we get out of it or what the other person means to us.

We say we just want the best for people, but we really do not mean that. We prove that by our self-centeredness and selfishness in our relationships. If we really want the best for our brothers and sisters, we will wholeheartedly go after the Lord, otherwise we won't be able to really help them.

We will never be a true spiritual help to our brothers and sisters if we are halfhearted and double-minded, if we are not fighting the good fight of faith and laying hold of the promises. What help are we offering our brothers and sisters if it is not truly eternal and spiritual? A pat on the back is not the same as spurring one another on to love, faith, and good deeds. Just speaking a few kind words to our brothers and sisters is not the same as setting an example in our own lives with the Lord and going after Him in intimacy, purity, and language that is befitting the people of God.

I am amazed these days at how much cursing is going on in the body of Christ, how much language is being spoken that should be offensive to us on a personal level. I'm not saying we should be offended at others. I am saying that it should offend us to hear cursing coming out of our own mouths. Read what Paul says in the book of Ephesians about the tongue and grieving the Holy Spirit through our language.

It is amazing to me how much compromise and mixture is going on in the name of freedom. If we think that is freedom, we wouldn't know freedom if we tripped over it. Grace is not a freedom to sin; it is freedom from it. It is not freedom to act like the old man or the world; it is freedom from the old man, freedom from that fallen nature. If your inward man is cleansed and purified and there is no more salt water in him, only the pure and fresh water of God is going to flow out. We must understand that divine principle.

What comes out of us proves what is in us. The measure of Christ that is in us is proven by what is being seen, what is being released. That is true of me, and that is true of you. This is not about condemnation. Paul is challenging the church. The apostles and the prophets who wrote the New Testament were inspired by the Holy Spirit to both encourage and challenge us to press on. We are to make the most of the time because the days are evil.

We are not to waste time. That is what Paul says in Ephesians:

¹⁵Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, not as the unwise and witless, but as wise (sensible, intelligent people), ¹⁶Making the very most of the time [buying up each opportunity], because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is.

Ephesians 5:15-17 AMP

I want us to see that Paul is dealing directly with marriage and family relationships. He is trying to help us make sure that the enemy doesn't have a foothold or opening in our relationships to get among us and divide and conquer.

But there is a higher calling even than that. We can see this in Philippians.

⁸And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross! ⁹Therefore [because He stooped so low] God has highly exalted Him and has freely bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that in (at) the name of Jesus every knee should (must) bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue [frankly and openly] confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ¹²Therefore, my dear ones, as you have always obeyed [my suggestions], so now, not only [with the enthusiasm you would show] in my presence but much more because I am absent, work out (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling (self-distrust, with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ). ¹³[Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight. ¹⁴Do all things without grumbling and faultfinding and complaining [against God] and questioning and doubting [among yourselves], ¹⁵that you may show yourselves to be blameless and guileless, innocent and uncontaminated, children of God without blemish (faultless, unrebukable) in the midst of a crooked and wicked generation [spiritually perverted and perverse], among whom you are seen as bright lights (stars or beacons shining out clearly) in the [dark] world, ¹⁶holding out [to it] and

offering [to all men] the Word of Life, so that in the day of Christ I may have something of which exultantly to rejoice and glory in that I did not run my race in vain or spend my labor to no purpose.

Philippians 2:8-16 AMP

There is no better place I know of than in Philippians 1 to talk about this goal of honoring God and showing forth His nature through us, specifically in our relationships:

⁵[I thank my God] for your fellowship (your sympathetic cooperation and contributions and partnership) in advancing the good news (the Gospel) from the first day [you heard it] until now. ⁶And I am convinced and sure of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ [right up to the time of His return], developing [that good work] and perfecting and bringing it to full completion in you. ⁷It is right and appropriate for me to have this confidence and feel this way about you all, because you have me in your heart and I hold you in my heart as partakers and sharers, one and all with me, of grace (God's unmerited favor and spiritual blessing). [This is true] both when I am shut up in prison and when I am out in the defense and confirmation of the good news (the Gospel). ⁸For God is my witness how I long for and pursue you all with love, in the tender mercy of Christ Jesus [Himself]! ⁹And this I pray: that your love may abound yet more and more and extend to its fullest development in knowledge and all keen insight [that your love may display itself in greater depth of acquaintance and more comprehensive discernment], ¹⁰so that you may surely learn to sense what is vital.

Philippians 1:5-10 AMP

What if our relationships with one another were based around what is vital in God and proving and prizing what is excellent? What if they were built only on what has real value? Three things

here: the vital, the excellent, and the valuable. That is how our relationships are to be in Christ. They are to be centered around the eternal, centered around the heavenly, and centered around what is of real value and lasting value, not the temporal things of life.

So many of our relationships are centered around the temporal. We build on shallow ground indeed when we build on the temporal rather than the eternal, the vital, the excellent. We should be spurring one another on to God. We should be spurring one another on to intimacy and the life of Christ in God. If it is true that He is our joy, our source, our everything, then our conversation will be filled with Him and our relationships will exist to press one another further in Him. That is what Paul is describing here.

Is that not true that the very work of the Holy Spirit in us is to press us on into relationship with God? God loves us supremely, and the Holy Spirit is given to move us off the ground of childish mentalities and understanding and move us onto the ground of maturity—sonship. The Holy Spirit works so you may learn to sense what is vital and approved, prize what is excellent and of real value, recognize the highest and the best, and distinguish the moral differences. He comes so that you may be untainted and pure and unerring and blameless, so that with sincere and certain hearts, you may approach the day of Christ without stumbling or causing others to stumble.

I cannot tell you how important these passages are in our relationship with God and with one another. May you be filled and abound with the fruits of righteousness and right standing with God and right doing, which comes through Jesus Christ the Anointed One in the honor and praise of God, that His glory may be manifest and recognized.

So, brothers and sisters, we should be able to distinguish the highest and the best from the low, temporal, soulical things. We should be able to distinguish the eternal things from the temporal. We are to be involved in pursuing the heavenly, the vital, the excellent, the best. We are to be blameless in this when we stand before

the Lord, and we all will stand. I don't want the Lord to have to say to us, "You did not challenge your brothers and sisters on to their high calling. You did not press them on toward My goal for them. You missed the purpose of your relationship with them, which was to spur them on to know Me deeply."

The only way we can do that for others is if we ourselves are being spurred on to know Him. We must be spurred on to go after the best, after the vital, after the excellent, after that which is really valuable. We must distinguish the highest and the best. Amen! We must pursue and call others to pursue that which is pure, unerring, and blameless. What if this were true in the body of Christ because it was true in each of our relationships?

If it were true, the enemy would not have a foothold. The enemy would be prevented from coming up from within and bringing chaos and confusion to God's house and God's people. What if we were standing as one with the Lord in wholeheartedness of desire and purpose? What if our tongues did not give an opening to the enemy? What if our attitudes did not give an opening to the enemy? What if our desires were only toward the Lord, toward the best, toward the vital, toward real, supreme, eternal value and we were calling others onto the same dynamic in our relationships?

What are we calling people into now? What are we leading them to? Is it fun and games and having a good time, whooping and hollering like so much of the church? This is so very shallow. It destroys things. I have watched it destroy marriages and families. We have a part in it, and we need to repent. One might say, "Well, yeah, but I was praying!" But what were you praying for? Were you praying for the Lord's best, or were you praying according to natural thought, desires, and purposes, according to your own purposes and what you want in your relationships?

Most of our marriages are in a place of devastation because we are not spurring one another on in the Lord. We are not aligned with Him, and that is where true marriage and true family begins. That is where the real house of God begins. So, brothers and sis-

ters, may this challenge us but also encourage us in our warfare. Warfare is going to begin within us, within our families, within our own homes, our own lives, and relationships. My heart in sharing this is to help us understand how to truly resist. We resist with light. We resist with the eternal. We resist with divine purpose and thought. We do not simply resist by only saying no to the enemy but by saying yes to God and humbling ourselves and submitting to God and drawing near to Him, leading others by that same path. May the Lord help us in this.

An Army on Its Knees

The sections of the book of Ephesians we are talking about are an unveiling of God in a battle plan. We could use other words, but I am using military language because of this call of God to have His army who is also His body, His bride, His house, His church, His people, the sheep of His pasture, the overcomers. But I'm looking at the army aspect of this—warriors ready to fight.

This army that God is calling forth is an army on its knees, an army who knows how to stand before the Lord and take a stand in our generation and our time. An army who understands the mind and desire of God for a vessel for what He specifically wants to do in our generation. It takes an unveiling. Are we giving our hearts to Him for His purpose, or are we still doing our own things and asking God to bless it? I cannot express this strongly enough. We must align our hearts with the Holy Spirit, and we need the Holy Spirit to align our hearts. We are desperate, and we need the Captain of the Host to come take over! Get us out of this mess! I want to say as strongly as I can that it is going to take men and women, young and old, on our knees before the Lord.

God would mobilize us and call us to Himself. He would be our vision and give us His thoughts and desire to raise up the vessel for His eternal purpose. That is Christ and His body, His people, His church, His bride, the overcomers, His house, His army. How do we become part of this vessel? By relationship and fellowship

with God and allowing Him to presence Himself to a greater and greater degree. By representing Him in His nature and life and being filled with His fullness, the life of God. We make it all about salvation, but it is so much more than that. We make it universal, and everybody is saved. What a lie that is and what a misrepresentation of the truth of the Scriptures themselves and God's heart on this matter.

CHAPTER 8

THE WEAPON OF UNITY: SHINING FORTH CHRIST

The book of Ephesians lays out the subject of spiritual warfare more clearly than any other New Testament book. And as a whole, Ephesians proves to us that the Holy Spirit has an exact battle plan, militarily speaking. This divine battle plan begins in the heavenlies, then moves forward to encompass our relationships in a divine order: first, fellowship with God and then, fellowship with one another.

Following all of that, Paul specifically goes to the issue of our warfare. As you know, this is not random. The Holy Spirit has been very specific, and we will be helped greatly if we see the book of Ephesians in that light. Paul lays out God's objective, which is the preeminent beginning point. He clearly shows us, by the Spirit, God's intentions, desires, and purpose.

The conflict exists because Satan has asserted his own objectives, which are diametrically opposed to the objectives of God. That is a simple statement, yet something we must clearly com-

prehend. The primary objective of God is going to be that which Satan most heartily resists. Satan will direct his greatest antagonism and deception against God's purpose. He will array his greatest authority and power (although limited) to most vehemently resist the primary objective of God.

God is dealing with the eternals, and this is precisely where the apostle Paul begins in Ephesians 1-3. Take a few minutes and read these three chapters again right now. He begins in chapter 1 by declaring the divine thought of God, the divine mind of God, God's intention and His desires before the foundation of the world. We see this clearly in what we call Ephesians 1. (Remember that the letter was originally written without chapter delineation.) He moves forward to describe how that affects us not only individually but corporately. Then in chapter 2, he covers a subject paramount for the church to both see and comprehend.

We Boast in Christ, Not in Ourselves

In the eternal thought of God, we were brought into being on heavenly, not earthly ground; our beginning is heavenly and God sees the creation of man singularly and whole, without division. When Paul moves on into chapter 2, he begins to point out division in humanity and the remedy for such division: we must align ourselves with the original mind and intent of God. Paul describes the uniqueness of the new creation: a brand new humanity, born from above. Brothers and sisters, what we are in the natural makes no difference in eternity and should make no difference here!

Paul addresses perhaps the greatest issue of all, the Jew and Gentile issue, in Ephesians 2. He intends to help us understand that racial origins mean nothing in view of eternal thought and eternal purpose. What does our fleshly background (racial or ethnic) mean when compared to eternal thought? God's thought was humanity with no division. The new humanity was created to be an instrument, a channel, a vessel that would be filled with the very life and nature of Christ, that through that instrument God would

bring transfiguration and transformation to His entire creation. He would move His entire creation into a place of greater spiritual life through His body who has corporately been joined to Christ.

If this is God's eternal thought and God's eternal desire, why are we still looking at one another after the flesh? Why do we think that having a Jewish or Gentile background means anything? He has provided the only way back to original intent and purpose in Christ. Can we see that? God, the Holy Spirit, is working to that end and no other. He has forever been working toward the eternal plan and the eternal goal of God.

Let me say it plainly: you and I have no boast in this other than Christ. What God has purposed, what God has secured will stand. Despite our waywardness, stubbornness, and our own fall into sin, He has made the way for whosoever will come to Christ! Nevertheless, the fall ensured that only a portion of humanity will come into this great, eternal call and purpose. That is not the heart of God. God's original intent and loving purpose was that every one of us come into Christ. He desires that there would be no separation and division, that there would be no resistance to Him and His great, loving purpose. But even in His own people, our lack of dedication, our persistence in our own way, our own will, and our own things ensures that some believers are not going to come into the ultimate purpose and plan of God.

You know that I am not talking about being saved; that is not the great, eternal purpose. You and I being saved is not in and of itself going to fulfill God's purpose. He desires to move us on to greater spiritual ground in spiritual enlargement and increased spiritual capacity that we might be filled with the greater and greater measure of the life of God. No natural, soulical, or earthly thing can accomplish that.

Let me say it again. It does not matter what you are in the natural; you have nothing to boast about. You have no boasting rights regardless of whether you are Jew or Gentile. It means nothing; in fact it means less than nothing. It is the measure of the

stature of the fullness of Christ that means something in this. That is heavenly ground!

In chapters 1-3, Paul lays out this issue of the heavenlies; he sets forth heavenly ground, heavenly concepts, heavenly intention, heavenly purpose, heavenly thought. I am concerned that the church is still hung up on earthliness in its thinking and view and as its goal. I hear it all the time. We long to make a difference in the earth, and truly we should be affecting people, but how are we affecting them? How is the heavenly affecting them? Are we calling them and pointing them to the heavenly, or are we giving people boasting rights regarding what they are in their flesh?

I hear this a lot, and it is grievous to me. People are boasting about their backgrounds. They take pride in their lineage. Where is Christ in that? I'll tell you what we were without Christ. Without Christ, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. There is a whole world of humanity that is dead in its trespasses and sins. This is our state separate from believing faith in Christ. Apart from being born again, we are objects of wrath by nature. *"We were then by nature children of [God's] wrath and heirs of [His] indignation, like the rest of mankind"* (Ephesians 2:3 AMP).

The Testimony of Christ

Paul is laying out the battle plan for us by the Holy Spirit, and it begins in the heavens. If we are going to fight the good fight of faith and take hold of these promises, we must know that these promises are heavenly, although they will indeed effect this earth. The heavenly is going to invade this earth. Christ Himself is going to reign on this earth, and the overcomers are going to reign with Him. That is the promise of the book of Revelation. God's intention is for the heavenly to invade the earthly.

The earthly and the natural and the carnal in and of itself is nothing and has nothing to offer in this outworking of His purpose. The earthly must be overcome by the heavenly. We must be filled to the fullness of Christ. This is God's great plan, and Paul

lays it out in Ephesians. His plan is to fill the universe with Christ. Now that is a spiritual revelation and a spiritual experience. The Spirit is not talking about just anything and everything here. He is talking about the beings who fill the heavenlies and fill heaven. He is working to move all those beings into deeper spiritual life and relationship with God in Christ, through Christ and His body, His church, His bride, His house, His army, His overcomers! He is speaking of one entity and one body in fullness, and thus we begin to see our great need. Dedication is necessary to proceed.

Let me tell you what the lack of insight and dedication can cause in the house of God; it will create havoc in the body of Christ, in the temple of the Holy Spirit, in the bride of Christ. When there is a lack of obedience, division is the outcome. When we do not press on to the fullness, when we do not take hold of the promises, when we do not apprehend the heavenly purpose, we become divided and begin to wander.

The first three chapters of Ephesians are beautiful in their layout of the heavenlies. Then in chapter 4, particularly verses 1-3, Paul begins to talk about our personal lives before the Lord. Paul's revelation outlined in chapters 1-3 is to be realized and to become the testimony of Christ. What does that look like? Paul takes it up in chapter 4 and begins to describe it for us. His language here is very clear. We are to walk or lead a life worthy of the divine invitation to which we have been called with behavior that is a credit to our summons in God's service.

¹I therefore, the prisoner for the Lord, appeal to and beg you to walk (lead a life) worthy of the [divine] calling to which you have been called [with behavior that is a credit to the summons to God's service, ²living as becomes you] with complete lowliness of mind (humility) and meekness (unselfishness, gentleness, mildness), with patience, bearing with one another and making allowances because you love one another. ³Be eager and strive earnestly to guard and keep the harmony and oneness of [and produced by] the

Spirit in the binding power of peace. ⁴[There is] one body and one Spirit—just as there is also one hope [that belongs] to the calling you received—⁵[there is] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of [us] all, Who is above all [Sovereign over all], pervading all and [living] in [us] all.
Ephesians 4:1-6 AMP

Let us notice that Paul is listing some very powerful and real weapons of our warfare in Ephesians 4:2: humility, unselfishness, gentleness, mildness, patience. Let these qualities be seen in this light. We are dealing with the nature of God and His nature being established in us. God is humble, God is meek, God is gentle, and God is patient, is He not? He bears with us as we are to bear with one another, making allowances because we love one another. Does God deal with us in that way? He allows us time to repent. He allows us time to grow and mature. This is true. These are the powerful weapons of our warfare that Paul is articulating here.

Unity with God Leads to Unity with Man

In Ephesians 4:1-3, we see another component. The Holy Spirit is laying it out for us; this is how we wage a good warfare, fight a good fight of faith and take hold of the promises. This is the Spirit's encouragement to us.

Be eager and strive earnestly to guard and keep the harmony and oneness of [and produced by] the Spirit in the binding power of peace.

Ephesians 4:3 AMP

Paul is talking about what we would call the unity of the Spirit as a weapon, and we understand this because the age-old tactic of the enemy is to divide and conquer. He knows that if he can divide us, even over legitimate things, then he can take ground among us and in us to cause further destruction, separation, and division. So we must be eager and strive earnestly to guard and keep the harmony and oneness of the Spirit in the binding power of peace.

We are going to have to learn how to fight the good fight of faith. There are several key things at work against us: selfishness is one of them, pride rather than humility, arrogance instead of gentleness, self-assertiveness, impatience instead of bearing with one another. We must extend to one another the opportunity to repent. We show a great lack of His nature when we hold a standard over one another and say, "If you do that again, that is it!" Brothers and sisters, you and I know that is not the nature of the Lord.

Yes, we are to provoke one another unto faith and good deeds. We absolutely are to do that, but that word "provoke" needs to be understood rightly. We are not provoking one another to anger, are we? Are we pointing the finger? Are we condemning and accusing? Those are sinful activities that the Lord wants to remove from us.

In Ephesians 4:1-3, Paul begins to speak about how we walk, how we live, and he lays out this issue of walking in a manner worthy of this heavenly calling that we have received. In Ephesians 4:1, Paul is tying these three verses to the previous chapters by the word, "therefore." So he is directly tying the revelation of the eternal with our individual part in the corporate. He instructs us to correspond our experiential walk to God's eternal mind, thought, and purpose. If the first three chapters are true, then the church is going to express that truth. The church is meant to express the reality of the heavenly through living their lives in a manner worthy of the Lord's calling, of His life, and His intent.

If Christ is our life, then Christ is going to be our expression. If Christ is in us, then shouldn't Christ be made known and represented through us individually and corporately? I believe this is why it is extremely important for us to understand what Paul is saying. The truth the Holy Spirit lays out in Ephesians 1-3 is designed to be displayed in our walk upon this earth.

If God is going to be properly represented in a worthy manner, in a manner that is in keeping with His own heart, His own purpose and nature, His own life and holiness and purity, then we are going to have to represent Him both individually and corpo-

rately. We are to be a representation; we are to be His image; we are to be an expression of Him. His image is to be seen. His presence is to be experienced in us and through us to others so that when people are among us they experience the presence of the Lord. They experience that life, that light, that joy, that love, and that patience. They experience longsuffering. They experience gentleness and kindness, meekness and self-control.

There are absolutes in this. If Christ is truly in us, then Christ is going to be seen through us in an ongoing and ever-increasing manner. I am not talking about absolute perfection, but I am saying that the increase of Christ will bring a decrease of the expression of us. Rather, what will be expressed through us is the life of Christ. If the life of Christ is in your body and conquering your soul, if He is living in our spirit so that our soul is yielded and our body is yielded to the Lord, then we will express the life of Another!

We can humble ourselves and dedicate ourselves because the Holy Spirit is in us. Because the Holy Spirit is in me, there can be an expression of Jesus Christ in me. Without the Holy Spirit in me, there cannot be such expression. We must draw from His strength, not our own. We cannot simply pull ourselves up by our bootlaces saying, "I am going to be something." That will never work; that is an exercise in futility. It is useless Christian religion.

Satan Fears Christ in Us, Individually and Corporately

Now we must ask: on what basis do we fight the good fight? It is because of the Holy Spirit of God who is in us. It is because Christ is our life. It is because of the reality that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are making their abode in us! Greater is He who is within us than he who is within the world. Christ is our life, and Christ is our all in all. That life has to come into expression! That is what Paul is bringing out here.

What is the expression of the truth the Holy Spirit laid out in Ephesians 1-3? What does it look like? It is not rocket science. It is

found right here in these Scriptures. We must have an eagerness to maintain what God has put within us lest the enemy be allowed to come in and bring compromise and mixture. This will happen first in the arena of the mind. Satan will attack our minds and attempt to bring compromise, mixture, and doubt. He will bring confusion. He will interpose with errant doctrines in an attempt to stop the expression, the true representation of the exactness of the life of Christ.

Satan is going to battle us as we proceed upon the ground of the fullness of the expression of Christ. His objective is to keep the life from being expressed in us. It is not just about Terry or Donna Bennett or you. Why would Satan care so much to battle you? I can answer that for you immediately. It is because Christ is in you, if you are born again, and therein is the potential for God to presence Himself and to express Himself through companions of the heavenly calling (meaning you and I). He does this through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of Christ, the fellowship of the Father, through the fellowship in His sufferings, through the fellowship in the gospel. Can you see God's goal?

Why is Satan attacking us? I will tell you why he attacks and what he attacks. He attacks the potential and the reality of Christ in expression, in representation, in fellowship and companionship. That is what he is fighting; he is fighting God. He knows Terry Bennett is no threat without Christ in Terry Bennett. Christ in Terry Bennett means something totally "other than." That reality poses the threat. It means that God can presence Himself through the vessel.

Let us think of it corporately now. Let's think of it on a different scale. Imagine if there is a body who is going wholeheartedly after God; a body that is done with pleasing the flesh, done pleasing the soul; a body that desires the pleasure of God. Imagine that this body is so captivated by the power of His love for us and thus, is in love with Him. Brothers and sisters, that ground poses

a deadly threat to the enemy's camp. You find a vessel that is inwardly on fire with passion for the Son of God, one who possesses a passion for the Holy Spirit and passion for the Father, and that one will draw conflict.

When I say passion, I am not talking about just an emotional response, though this does affect our emotions. I don't want you to cut your emotions out. Your emotions, as well as your body, can be effective and a way of expressing the beauty of God now that Christ is in you. Your body is no longer some evil thing because Christ is in us. What must be put to death is the nature of evil and that nature of evil is put to death by the nature of Christ coming into us.

I want to be very clear with us. What is this great threat? Why is Satan attacking some portions of the body of Christ and not other portions? It all revolves around expression, it all concerns the fullness, it all deals with the representation of God. If our desire is just to live for ourselves, then there is no threat. If one chooses to simply go through life and squeak by and get to heaven one day, that person is not much of a threat. But if our desire is to be a representation of Christ on this earth, if our desire is to represent Him now, and if our desire is to become a many-faceted expression of Him, then I am telling you that you are going to have a tremendous battle!

How do we see that battle and what do we do with that battle? Well, let us regard the battle in a different light. Battle is the proof of the work of Christ in you. I am saying that you are being battled around this very issue of the representation of the life of Christ. If we are giving into sin and wickedness and evil without a care, we pose no threat. There is a difference between one of God's sheep being stuck in the mud wanting out and a pig that enjoys wallowing in it because he loves the mud! There is a difference between those two things. We are not born again to be pigs. We are born again to be sheep. Some people of God are stuck, but they want out. You have got to want out. You cannot

make excuses and you cannot come up with stupid doctrines to vindicate yourself. We must hear the call to humble ourselves and ask for the strength of Christ to rise in us by the Holy Spirit. He is our overcoming victory!

These three verses in Ephesians 4 detail how we are to walk that we might show the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Can you see that? The measure of the fullness which is Christ is an ongoing thing and can be clearly seen by the way we live. Who is being manifested? Us or Christ? Are we walking in a manner worthy of the Lord or not?

Let us examine the weapons that Paul is talking about in verse 2: humility, meekness, unselfishness—and what a weapon that is! We must determine that we are not in this for ourselves. Our desire is for Christ to be expressed. Our great joy and our love relationship with Christ leads us to this goal: that He be expressed! He is the answer and the solution to all who are lost. He is the answer for us and for all of humanity. He must be expressed! I want Christ to be released in and through me. My deepest longing and desire is for the expression of Christ in fullness. I desire the exact image of Christ to be manifest.

Thus, I humble myself, thus I repent when I fall short. I repent, not in condemnation, but because of love. Can you hear the distinction? I stop agreeing with my self-centered living, and I align my heart, mind, and inward man to Christ, whom I love and who loved me first. He is the one I desire more than breath itself. There is a passion to this, brothers and sisters. There is an internal passion to this. It is called love, and our motivation is born of love, which is greater than any other motivation. It has nothing to do with duty and condemnation. Both are put out of the way by this great life!

The Enemy's Tactics

Paul goes on to talk about the unity of the faith and the calling we have received:

⁴[There is] one body and one Spirit—just as there is also one hope [that belongs] to the calling you received. ⁵In this calling there are three things: one body, one Spirit, and one hope. “[There is] one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Ephesians 4:4-5 AMP

You might say, “Well there are two baptisms. One is the baptism of the Holy Spirit and one is baptism in water.” But I believe Paul is primarily talking about the infilling of the Holy Spirit here. You do not have to agree with me, but I believe this is Paul’s primary thought.

Being baptized in water may not mean anything to the one being baptized. That one may be without comprehension. But being baptized in the Holy Spirit cannot be faked. The infilling of the Spirit cannot be merely a ritual. The proof of being filled with the Spirit lies in the measure of the stature which belongs to Christ. The Holy Spirit is the great revealer of Christ:

One God and Father of [us] all, Who is above all [Sovereign over all], pervading all and [living] in [us] all”

Ephesians 4:6 AMP

It is evident to us that some of these very things have been used to bring division to the body of Christ. That is unfortunate, but that is what the enemy has done. It is important to us that we eagerly preserve this unity of the Spirit that is based around the life of God, and that is why I want to bring to light these few verses. Our unity, our oneness, is all based around the life of God, which is life not doctrines. Our unity is not found in doctrines; it is based on life. Our unity is not based upon what we believe. It is found in the person in whom we are believing. This unity exists in our relationship with this person and our partaking of His very life. There can be peril in making something extra to the person of Christ as a basis of unity. I have seen it, and I am sure you have as well. This

almost always leads to division. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

In chapter 4, Paul begins to examine what I will term holy living. He continues to talk about it not only individually, but also in our personal relationships relative to this call to holy living. How can we live holy? Because the one who is living in us is holy and that is the only way. That should be our experience. If we say that Christ lives in us yet there is no corresponding life, if Christ's expression is absent, then something is amiss. There is a greater work that needs to be done in us. The holy one, Christ in us, means that holy living is going to be expressed and the enemy is going to come against that expression and will fight to bring compromise into our lives. He seeks to get something out of order in us and thus to divide and conquer.

These little foxes are spoiling the vineyard. The compromise and division that the enemy wants to introduce is meant to spoil the vineyard. We see in the New Testament that the apostles and prophets are confronting people regarding lifestyles that are not worthy of the calling. Self-centeredness, arrogance, and wickedness—not the life of Christ—is being expressed. Sin has occurred, and the churches are not condemning it. Paul and others are challenging and calling for us to take hold of what is ours in Christ. They are calling for us to come into life. The proof of that reality is in an expression, in a life walked out that is worthy of the calling! We are invited to express a life that is called the life of Christ!

We look to a biblical example. Corruption and defilement in the Corinthian church's moral life showed the apostles and prophets that these brothers and sisters needed an increase of Christ and a decrease of themselves. They needed to come back to what Paul had originally taught them; he called them to the life he had lived among them.

Paul and the others had much to say on this matter of holiness, personally and then relationally. It is important how we relate to one another. If the enemy can touch us and spoil us on

the ground of compromise and mixture, then he can strike, so to speak, at the throne of God. He can bring accusation against God's people. God will not stand with me and you on the ground of compromise and mixture and sin. No, He will come to us in love and bring us off that ground and onto heavenly ground. Can you hear that from me? Does He love us? Yes, but He is not going to leave us on that ground. He is not going to come and stand with you and me on the basis of sin and wickedness. He is going to call us off of that ground unto Himself!

If in stubbornness we refuse, we can become hardened against Him very quickly. We can come into greater and greater deception very quickly. We can become those who call evil good. Evil is not good. It is destructive, and it is meant to destroy us and everyone around us. So if the enemy can touch us and get us into a place of compromise, mixture, open sin, and unrepentance, if he can keep us from confessing our sin, then he has something in us and he can come among us and continue that destructive pattern and behavior. Let it not be so! We are calling God's people to behavior that is befitting of our high calling.

Our human relationships become very clear in Ephesians 5:21-6:9. Paul examines our human relationships: domestic relationships between husbands and wives, servants and masters, parents and children. He really looks at these things. These relationships are meant to bring glory to God, as are all relationships. Here is the key: if He is the basis of our relationships, if He is the foundation of our relationships, if He is the life and goal of our relationships, then we will spur each other on to deeper commitment to the Lord. That is meant to be the case. We are not just spurring one another on to human pleasures, human entertainment, and human goals. I am just highlighting a few negative things here: compromise, mixture, and sin. May that never be the case! We are spurring one another on in the Lord.

Based in Love, Not Law

Now I want to make allowances for just a second. I am around young ones in the Lord, and by young I mean immature. What exactly are we giving them? Where are we leading them? What does our display or release of Christ really look like? Does it look like Christ or does it look like us? What are we corporately displaying: a life completely laid down, Christ being manifested, Christ presenting Himself in and amongst us? Are you behaving in such a way that people know you have been with the Lord Jesus? Is that what is going on?

Are we displaying an intimacy with the Lord that is the nature of Christ, the character of Christ, and the fruit of His very Spirit? Or are we only spouting religious talk in public and when we get alone feeding our flesh on what we really enjoy. Maybe that is too blunt, but I am sad to say that has been happening, and it is happening increasingly. I have watched this in people. They seem to need to get away from God to be at peace. God is our peace! We have not come into a proper relationship with God yet if that is the way we behave. If we have to take a vacation from God in order to take a rest, then we do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. We do not really know Him in the way He wants us to know Him.

I am not saying this in a condemning way, but too much of the body of Christ has gone at Christianity in a law-based way, in a performance-based way, and they think that is God. It is not God, so they have come away tired of God. If the relationship is not love-based, if Christ is not our rest (and He must be our rest), if He is not our peace and joy, then we are not in a love relationship with Him. We are still in a law-based relationship with Him that is deadly to the heart. We must experience a love-based relationship where He is formed in us and He is filling us and being expressed through us. Thus we find rest, brothers and sisters. The measure of Christ in us will directly relate to the measure of Christ released in and through us, and that is a matter of eating and partaking of Him. Our solution is to commune with God. What you want to

escape is performance and law-based activity because God is not performance and law-based. These things will only wear you out.

I want to clarify that law is not the nature of God. He is love-based. He is relational-based. That is one of the great revelations that came to me some 14 years ago, freeing me from performance-based dynamics in my own heart and life. Trying to grow through law or performance means that we have not yet come to see that it is Christ in us. The measure of Christ in me comes from this abiding and loving relationship. Is it an absolute relationship? Yes! Is it a defining relationship over and against everything? Yes, you know that it is! There is no one like Him. Who are you going to compare Him to? No one can be compared to Him. He is so awesome and so great and wonderful. Amen!

Can we praise and enjoy Him and realize that it is not our human strength, but it is by His strength? We simply have to be willing. I've learned this by coming into relationship with God; both the will and the doing are in Him. In other words, there is something greater than my own human will at work if I will allow Him to conquer my own will so that I can literally pray the prayer of submission, "Not my will but Yours be done." Can you hear the distinction in that? I am invoking the will of God for my life that His purpose may be brought forth in me.

Law is not going to help us in this, brothers and sisters. Performance is not going to help us lead the way. It cannot lead the way. We must press on to the level of love-based relationship, life-based relationship, so that the life being expressed is not my poor attempt to be like Jesus, but Christ expressing Himself through me. How does this poor motto "What would Jesus do?" help us if He is not the life within us? It comes down to the measure of life.

Earthly Relationships on Heavenly Ground

In Ephesians 5:21-6:9 Paul is touching this issue of human relationships. The full range of relationships is brought into view. We must understand this: in warfare we must not come down to

a human, natural, carnal level and attempt to wage war. That will bring disaster. We will simply be pointing our fingers at others, and they will be pointing their fingers at us. If we cannot see past our husbands and wives, thinking that they are our whole problem, we are wrong. We have an enemy, and we are going to have to resist that enemy in our relationships with our husbands and wives, our brothers and sisters, our children and families. We are going to have to learn to resist the enemy! We will need to be able to see him as he works to divide and conquer. He wants us fighting with one another so we will be distracted and unable to discern his evil work against us. He wants us to blame one another and never see that he is behind this upsetting activity.

We need to own our personal stuff, and we need to grow. We need the increase of Christ. We need to allow Him to come to fullness in us, and we need to decrease. I need things emancipated and severed from me. Do not forget that every situation in your home, with your children, with your family, in the body of Christ, has the potential to have demonic energy, intent, and focus behind it. Where there is battle and conflict, there is demonic energy and intent at work. We must look beyond the surface level. If we do not see beyond, we will continue down this path of battling in the natural and thus never overcoming.

Why? Let me say something directly to you. If all you can see is your husband's faults, you need to repent. Husbands, if all you can see is your wife's faults, you need to repent. I will tell you what that makes us: faultfinders. If all we can see in people is evil, we need new eyes. We need the eyes of God. If all we want to do is blame others and never come to grips with the real enemy, we have a problem. We need to say, "My problem is this: I do not understand warfare, and I do not understand how to fight. I am immature! I am immature because I do not know how to fight a good fight and how to wage a good warfare." Why can't we just humble ourselves and tell the Lord, "I need growth. I need you to grow in me. I need to grow up in this area of warfare. I need to understand

how to resist the enemy when he is coming in and lying to me and deceiving me, and I respond by finger pointing at my brother or sister, or my wife, or my children, and never come to understand the enemy's purpose and intent.”

If we only fight on a human level and never on a spiritual level, then we are never going to see God's victory in this. We will not succeed. As James said, I am going to humble myself and submit to God, and I am going to resist the devil and draw near to God. Peter basically says the same thing in 1 Peter 5. In this life, we go through sufferings and difficulties come upon us as the enemy attacks. But God's purpose in even allowing those sufferings and difficulties (as described in 1 Peter 5) is to perfect, to confirm, to strengthen, and to establish us in Him and Him in us.

In human relationships, the enemy has an uncanny way of dividing us and blaming us. Let me say that again. The enemy is superb at dividing us and provoking us to battle with one another. Instead, we must humble ourselves before the Lord and resist the devil. We will fail if we are pointing the finger at one another, accusing one another falsely, suspicious and believing lies and rumors about one another. When will this end? Let's humble ourselves and quiet ourselves before the Lord and ask for His help and guidance. Let us ask for His fullness.

There is something extra going on in these situations, something more than just natural things and natural people involved. There is the spiritual element every time, brothers and sisters! I will not make an excuse that I can behave any way I please and God is okay with that. No. I need to humble myself, and I need to own my short-comings and bring them into the light. Until I can own my own stuff and bring it into the light, I am not going to be free from the demonic powers that are influencing me. There are demonic intentions and schemes, and we must be aware of them.

Next we come to Ephesians 6:10, the great warfare passage, but I first want to lay out the book of Ephesians as a whole. Let us note the progression. We will see that God's thought concern-

ing His church is that of fullness. The expression of His purpose comes right to the individual and influences all of our relationships. In this way, the reality of the life is shown. A life is walked out that is worthy of His on-high calling. The life is proven. It is manifested and released through us, the people of God!

Fullness can be seen in life, in release, in manifestation, as well as in the life of the believer and in that believer's community together as a body. That generates incredible warfare around us! A commitment to fullness will generate conflict, and Paul wants us to understand that. Christ being expressed in and through us is going to generate warfare. We must learn that we are not just fighting flesh and blood here. Husband and wife, you are not just fighting flesh and blood. Family, children, and parents, you are not just fighting flesh and blood. We are going to have to fight this thing on our knees before the Lord. We are going to have to fight for one another and not against one another. We are going to have to stop falsely accusing and faultfinding. What if we humbled ourselves and did not allow our tongues to be a weapon against one another?

May you feel the love and favor of the Lord upon you. May you experience Him as life and fullness in an ongoing way. May He remove all condemnation and the accusing voice. May He remove law-based Christianity from us. May He expel performance-based Christianity from us. May He bring us into such a deep, intimate, ongoing relationship of fullness and passion that we really begin to learn—as we live by the life of Another—that greater is He that is living within us. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

THE WEAPON OF RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS: PROVING GROUND OF OUR WARFARE

Once again, we notice in Ephesians that the first three chapters deal with the heavenlies, chapter 6 deals with spiritual warfare, and sandwiched in between those sections, the Holy Spirit inspires Paul to unveil and present the church relationally, first with God and then with one another. Beginning in chapter 4, we see what it means to live a life worthy of the calling and what that looks like in marriage, family, and the household of God.

Some might say that does not seem to connect. Why all this talk about these relationships when He has been focusing on heavenly ground and spiritual warfare? The Holy Spirit is directly connecting our relationship with God and our relationship with one another to the plan and purpose of God from eternity. It is the Holy Spirit who inspired Paul even in how this epistle was written.

This middle section regarding our conduct and behavior is directly related to the preceding revelation of the heavenly.

The Holy Spirit is saying this to us: therefore (in view of chapters 1-3), unless you watch these relationships; unless these relationships are on heavenly ground; unless these relationships are a testimony to the Lord; unless their purpose is bound up first and foremost with Christ Himself, not just humans; unless they are an unveiling of His purpose and intent or of a nature of agape love, not just human love; unless these relationships are a revelation of God and His purpose and intent; unless these relationships are about the showing forth of His excellencies; unless they are about representing Him and His image, then you have missed the will of God in chapters 1, 2, and 3 and will not be able to fight the good warfare of chapter 6.

There will be tangible proof that this is working in you. It is not theoretical or doctrinal and certainly not just positional. This is not a position; it is a relationship. If it is just a position, it is only theoretical. This has to be lived out. It is meant to be seen, not just by other people but by every demonic power in the heavens and in the earth. God will be declared in a way that He has never been declared before.

Even Satan before he fell did not declare the nature of God the way that we can now. Satan is learning about God through you and me, if God's image is in us and He is being properly represented through the church. Paul says in Ephesians 3:10 that the manifold wisdom of God is being made known to the heavenly rulers and authorities through the church. The manifestation of God's nature and character in us is only going to increase and not decrease in us and consequently in the earth, the more we eat of Him, the more we come into intimacy, and the more we understand that our relationships are meant to bring glory to God and declare His excellencies.

If you want something to grab hold of as you ask what it realistically looks like to be seated in the heavens and battle it out

on earth, read Ephesians 4, 5 and 6. The Holy Spirit is explaining exactly what it looks like: relationships. God is relational; knowing God is a relational experience. Relating to God is learned in relating to others, as long as these relationships are watched and guarded so that our flesh and the enemy can't bring them down onto earthly ground. All the enemy has to do to drag our relationships down onto earthly ground is to make them all about us—selfishness. How does that happen? When I allow my will to overrule the will of God. If I'm in a relationship that is more about my needs than about the glory of God, then the secondary issue becomes the primary.

I know some of this is hard to swallow because it exposes us. It exposes our self-centeredness. We still want our way. We still want something for ourselves, and the Holy Spirit would correct us to show that our relationships are meant for the glory of God, to show forth His excellencies, to bring Him praise and adoration.

If you think that leads to dishonoring one another, you are wrong. Honoring God will mean truly honoring one another, loving one another, living lives together not in self-centeredness or seeking our own, but in seeking Him. The result should be honoring, preferring, and giving ourselves fully and completely to one another if our relationships are on heavenly ground. The Lord will test that. What if you are married to an unbeliever? You go after God first and foremost and that love of God which is released to you will cause you to love them in a new way. This does not mean you have an excuse for self-centeredness, saying in effect, "I'm just getting out because I am not getting my way." That is still self-centeredness. We could say a lot more about this and many other types of relationships, but what the Lord wants us to see is how important relationships are, how vital it is to have them on the right ground with the right intent and the right purpose of God.

And so we come to Ephesians 6:10 AMP, "*In conclusion...*" Paul is bringing together all the different sections that the Holy Spirit has been unveiling. He is gathering all that he has said in that

book about warfare, then saying that we are not only fighting flesh and blood—at times we certainly are fighting flesh and blood, and not only our own flesh—but we are also fighting an enemy who wants to stir up our flesh and our souls against God and influence us to assert our own will, mind, and heart. Then, only after all of that is Paul saying, “*be strong in the Lord,*” and let the Lord’s strength be in us. It becomes about measure once again.

We need a greater measure of Christ’s fullness, His life in us. This is about life, experiential life, relationship life. All that is being spoken of here by the Holy Spirit through Paul is a part of this tremendous fight to hold that ground of God in our relationships. It really should be God’s relationship in our relationships. If God is going to be in our relationships, He must be the center of those relationships for them to be effective and useful. Let me say this plainly: if our marriages are going to glorify God, He is going to have to be the center of the marriage, not the husband and not the wife. May that disrupt us off of natural ground. We need God, we need Christ, we need the Holy Spirit, we need the Father to be the center of our relationships. We bow to Him first because that is divine order. And then it comes to the husband, who has a responsibility to lead the family, only as he is bowing to the Lord in absoluteness. Is that not true?

There is a great responsibility on the husband to lead his family, not to what but to whom: to Christ in wholeheartedness and complete dedication. It is not the husband getting his way; that is self-centered living and it is not the ground of God. If you husbands think you have a positional authority over your wife and family to live like you want and for them to obey your every whim, you are not only absolutely wrong, you are in sin against God and His will and His purposes. God is not empowering you with any so-called position for self-centered living. It is against the new nature. It is against His will, especially for the husband and the wife and the children and the church. The empowerment of God, the ground of God, is heavenly, and if you are going to be the hus-

band God wants you to be, you have to come onto that ground. Self-focus has no place on heavenly ground. Can you hear that? We are in delusion if we believe otherwise.

We think a marriage certificate gives us the right to treat people who God loves a certain way. I do not care if you are a leader or not, if we believe any position gives us the right to treat people in a dishonorable way, to not treat them with honor or dignity and respect and genuine godly love, we are deluded and we are still functioning in our souls. Our flesh is still controlling us. Is that strong enough? I grieve over what I see going on in marriages. I see men who have their wives under their thumb where the wife has to obey them more than God. That is sin. I see the opposite where wives are doing the same thing. Both are sin. The Holy Spirit must be allowed to disrupt that. God must be the center of our relationships, and I am talking about Christ in the church as well, just as Paul is in chapter 5.

Christ must be the head of the church, not a positional rank but an experiential rank. He must be the head. Everyone, especially the leaders and those planning on becoming leaders, must be absolutely bowing in worship to Him. In fact, this is a true sign of leadership, that He absolutely has the sway over us, that He absolutely has us under His hand, and that He absolutely is getting His way with us and through us in His own house. If that is not true, we need to repent quickly. Repent, confess that to the Lord and to your congregation, and let the Lord drive a new stake in the ground signifying that from now on, the Holy Spirit gets His way.

I am not talking about irrational behavior; I am not talking about some outside outward experience of shaking under the power of the Holy Spirit. I am talking about the government of God. I am talking about the government of the Holy Spirit in us and among us. If God is not governing His people and man is, it is sin. I do not care how long you have been doing that, you do not have any credentials from God because of that kind of behavior.

The Holy Spirit had these very words put between what has to be the greatest revelation of God's eternal purpose and desire in the book of Ephesians, and I believe the greatest revelation of warfare in the New Testament. It brings the warfare of the Old Testament into its higher calling and fulfillment.

It is possible for us to have our doctrines and beliefs right in these things, saying, "Yes, I agree Christ is head of the church. Yes, the Holy Spirit needs to be in charge" but totally miss the reality. We can have all those things right but there is a greater implication to this. I am not talking about words; it is action. It is possible to hold to the doctrine of the church and at least feel like we understand the divine order in God's house and the need for apostles and prophets, evangelists and pastors, elders and deacons but miss their purpose. We think we have it all together and know everything, and we want to replicate the New Testament thinking that we'll get New Testament results. We are deceived. Life is the issue here, brothers and sisters, not doctrines. No doctrine of the church has the power to produce the church. No doctrine of divine order has the power to produce divine order; life does. Submission to that life is what is needed.

We may have all these conceptions of what we think the church should be, and we use all these beautiful analogies and terms and add all our ideas, and we can go on endlessly about these things. It seems marvelous. It seems fascinating. But without the life of God, it is useless and is in fact a stumbling block. It is delusional. This will be found in the life of God, in living relationships with God and with one another. That is what I am trying to share with us in this time. Real warfare against the enemy is when he has nothing in us because God has us. God has me in an ongoing way. This really matters, and this is really important. The answer for our hour is not found in the plans or strategies of man, the natural soulical mind; it is found in a daily walk. It is found in lifestyles that are worthy of the calling in conduct and behavior, in the everyday temptations, tests, and trials; lifestyles that are walked out that way

and lived out that way so that God can be seen and He is the one being manifested.

That is the true meaning of Paul's admonition to the Corinthians.

¹⁸For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it.

¹⁹For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.

1 Corinthians 11:18-19 AMP

Let me explain or clarify this. What does it mean to be approved of God in these difficult situations of doctrinal divisions and schisms? The church abounds in doctrinal schisms. What does it mean to be approved of God? Having your doctrine right? I don't think so, and neither do you. That will not change a thing. If a thing can be established by argument, then it can be destroyed by argument. What does it mean then? The question is this: who is showing the character and the nature of God in this issue? Who is representing Him in His character and divine nature and the fruit of His Spirit? That is where approval comes. These tests and trials are real. For every leader and for every person of every congregation, it is a test and a trial. We can either point our fingers at each other and thus be unapproved, or we can humble ourselves, submit to God, and resist the devil who is trying to use our tongues, attitudes, and actions for evil. We can resist him and his attacks against us. We can choose to not be mouthpieces for him, but rather instruments for God showing forth God's excellencies: His nature of joy, peace, love, patience, longsuffering, kindness, meekness, and self-control. Against such there is no law, and those are great weapons against the enemy. The peace of God that transcends understanding is a great weapon against the enemy.

So I want to say some very practical things to us. If we divorce all these practical matters of relationship with God and with one another from the interest of the church and from spiritual

conflict, we will have no way of dealing properly with them. If we fail to recognize that we are under an assault—a spiritual conflict designed against the throne of God, against God Himself, His nature, and His representation and presence on the earth—we will be powerless.

What if we dealt with divorce problems in this way, by looking at the eternal? What if we brought up the eternal plan of God to one another and pointed one another straight to God to humble ourselves and submit to Him? What if we got it off of the human grounds of finger pointing and demanding a change in behavior and determined to find our relationships on God's ground? Yes, God will deal with bad behavior; He needs to deal with these things. Your finger pointing, however, isn't going to help. Nor can there be finger pointing at the enemy and saying, "The devil made me do that." That is a lie! That was a ditch in our past.

I'm saying this to us: there is a higher ground in this fight that we must come onto, and it begins first by humbling ourselves. We must stop finger pointing against our brothers and sisters or against our husbands or wives or children. It requires taking responsibility for our own actions and humbling ourselves before God, asking for an increase of Him and a decrease of me. It also means recognizing the schemes of the enemy against our marriages. Are we standing for our marriage? Are we standing for our husband's liberty in Christ and for the fullness of Christ in him? Am I standing for the fullness of Christ in my wife, or am I finger pointing and accusing her? Have I sided with Satan in slander, accusation, and gossip against her? Or am I laying down my life for her? Wife, are you laying down your life before God for your husband, that he would come fully into the plan and purpose of God for both of you and as a family? Do I need to go on?

We are gravely mistaken if we think this issue of warfare is about shifting the blame onto the devil. No, it is about taking full responsibility before God. I am saying this to us: Satan has effectively disarmed the church so that it does not understand how to

wage a good warfare anymore. Haven't you had enough of that? Is the enemy not making great inroads into the church? In fact, I do not know how many more there are to make except for total domination. He already has great numbers of God's people under his absolute dominion. We are not fighting; we are not standing our ground. Most of us don't even have any known ground to stand on. The enemy has been able to deceive us and trip us up. We are asking God to come stand with us on evil ground. He will never do it, but He will bring us off that ground and onto heavenly ground. The only ground that God is going to stand on is heavenly ground. He is calling us to Him, not vice versa.

We have to grasp that truth. We cannot deal with domestic situations effectively unless we understand spiritual warfare. We are never going to help people who are struggling in these areas by weeping with them or compromising and siding with them. What if we refused to take sides like the Lord did when Joshua asked Him, "Are you for us or against us?" What if in helping people through tough marriage situations, we answered, "Neither. We come as representatives of the Lord's heart in this situation. That is the ground we are going to fight on. And you will not draw us off that ground onto your earthly ground of taking sides." It is so easy to say "Well you just don't know my husband. He is this, this, and this." And I am not saying those things are not true. I am saying that the solution is not in telling those things. There is no solution in that! There is no solution in finger pointing or slander. There is a solution in humility. There is a solution in fighting and standing for one another instead of finger pointing and joining in with the enemy in what he thinks about your husband or what he thinks about your wife or your children. The enemy will tell you all kinds of things to believe about them. He is a master of accusation and deception, and he is a master at division. I want this stuff to end. I do not want the church to be riddled with division any longer. I want the church to stand on heavenly ground, which happens to be holy ground. Amen!

The Lord's testimony is what the enemy is against. Do you think all this fuss is because he fears people? He does not! He is not afraid of us or our marriages or relationships. What he does fear is God achieving His objective. Satan does not want God to have a heavenly vessel. He does not want God represented. He does not want the eternal purpose brought forth. Do we understand that? He does not want the objective of God to ever be reached, and he is standing directly against it. Consequently, because we have said yes to the Lord, he is standing directly against us.

The threat is the measure of Christ in us. The threat is spiritual revelation. The threat is spiritual intelligence. The threat is holding spiritual ground. The threat is the heavenly realized in this earth. The threat is Christ being lived and expressed in and through a people. That is why we are being battled. Do not make this just about us. I am telling you this is about Christ in you. That is why you are in this battle.

What does God do? We might be tempted to say, "Well, He is just going to deliver us!" No, God is going to use it to test us. Do not fault Him in that. Yes, He is using the enemy to test us. He has promised that He will not allow the enemy to overwhelm us because He will be greater in us. But that means fighting, and it means standing and holding the ground. He is not just going to come and deliver us from every situation. We would remain infants and never grow if He did that. We are meant to be the most mature beings of the creation. Do you hear that? We are meant to be the most mature, God-filled beings of His entire creation. May the Lord encourage you, and may God train us again to war—and I mean on our knees.

CHAPTER 10

THE WEAPON OF PRAYER: FROM THE INTIMATE TO THE CORPORATE

¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸With 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, ¹⁹and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Ephesians 6:17-20

I want to speak to this issue of prayer and warfare and be as thorough and helpful as I can, knowing that God is enlisting us into an army, and many hearts, including my own, are responding. We are to be an army that has a single focus, singleness of heart and singleness of eye. The foundation of that

singleness comes out of our relationship with the Lord Himself and with His eternal will and purpose and desire.

We are in this for the Lord. I am not personally interested in drawing people to myself. That would be directly against God. I'm interested in drawing myself near to God and in others drawing near to God, as it says in James 4. We are to humble ourselves before God; we are to submit to God; we are to resist the devil; and we are to draw near to God. This is about drawing near to God. If we are going to be soldiers in His army, drawing near to Him is a necessity.

This army battles specifically in prayer. It is the utmost battle of our warfare. This is what Paul says in Ephesians 6:10 after he talks about warfare: we need the strength of the Lord. Listen, we need the strength of the Lord in our prayer lives, perhaps more than any other place, because prayer is the primary way we resist the enemy. Ultimately, the enemy's desire is to keep us from praying.

My encouragement to us is in this area of prayer. Paul talks about our warfare and the armor of God and that we are not wrestling against flesh and blood but against demonic powers, world rulers, spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. He comes to prayer warfare in Ephesians 6:18.

I want us to see clearly how he links the sword of the Spirit with the word of God. I do believe we can say the word of God is the Scripture, but it is also the voice of God in each of our lives. That voice should never go against what the Scriptures declare, though it can be more specific concerning us and how God wants to use us as instruments and vessels. We will find truth in the Scriptures—there is no doubt about it—but God wants a personal relationship with each of His children. His sheep should know His voice. The voice of God is not something minor that we can take or leave. The voice of God carries a great weight of importance, and when we hear it, we are to be obedient to Him.

I believe this sword of the Lord represents both the Scriptures and the voice of God in our lives, His spoken word to us, however that comes. Aside from the Scriptures, there is also the inward voice of God. There can even be the audible voice of God. I have heard that many times in my life. Yes, God still speaks audibly. It can come in visions. It can come in dreams. It comes in all types of revelation, but my real point in this is in hearing the voice of God and obeying it.

Paul links the sword of the Spirit to the word of God and then to prayer. Those two—the word of God and prayer—are, in fact, placed together in this passage. There were no chapters and verses that separated Paul’s thoughts in the original: “*with all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints*” (Ephesians 6:17).

He is calling for perseverance and prayer. I want to add that there has to be a battle in and of itself for prayer and the importance of prayer in our generation. There is a demonic ploy that has many of us saying, “Well, if it is God’s will, then it is going to happen no matter what.” That is not true. I’ve lived long enough to see the will of God missed in my life and the lives of others. I have seen it missed because of us. Concerning God’s sovereign will in these matters (not as Creator but as Father, and the human will versus the will of God), I am telling you sovereignty is not enough. Yes, sovereignty is enough for the Creator who is acting alone, but sovereignty is not enough for the Bridegroom. Sovereignty is not enough for God as Father. Our relationship with Him is mutual; it demands our willingness and cooperation.

Prayer makes a difference when that prayer is coming from the Holy Spirit and is directed by the Holy Spirit. When we bring prayer onto heavenly ground, then God has a vessel through whom He can manifest His prayers, thoughts, will, and desires. Then that corporate or individual vessel prays those things back to Him in prayer, aligning with His purpose, intention, and will. That is a very powerful thing indeed. It must not be overlooked, and I cannot

overemphasize how important that kind of prayer is. If you were to ask me if praying randomly is effective, I would have to say no. It is not very effective, brothers and sisters. When it is self-centered or random or earthly, it has almost no effect, and it is more useless to God than useful.

Does praying in the Spirit mean praying in tongues? Well, it can, and I certainly believe in praying in tongues. I want to say something larger, however. When the Holy Spirit is directing us in prayer, that is a beautiful and powerful dynamic, and yes, that can be in tongues or with understanding. We do not always pray with just human understanding, though. I'm talking about the mind of Christ and praying with the mind of Christ where it is God's will, interest, and purpose—the heavenly—that is our concern and interest, and that is the impetus and focus behind our praying.

Carnal Prayer

So that is a clear line of demarcation for us. What is it we are praying for? Well, all of that is determined by where our will is in relation to the will of God. Are our hearts and minds in complete alignment with His will? Do we have the mind of Christ, or are we operating out of our natural minds—or better said, carnal minds—as Christians? The natural mind would be more like the mind of an unbeliever.

Carnal-mindedness in a believer's prayer life usually manifests itself when that believer prays self-centered prayers. Have you noticed that very few of those prayers are answered anyway? James is very clear that God does not answer prayer when it is self-centered or prayed amiss. Many of our prayers are not being answered because they're focused upon us and the will of God for our lives.

I am not saying that there is nothing important in our lives. I am not saying that at all. I am talking about self-centered living and random praying. Its greatest effect would be in my life; nothing heavenly would be involved in it. That is carnality, and we need

the Lord to come in again and make prayer the holy thing that it is meant to be, which is on holy or heavenly ground.

Intimacy Prayer

First, I want to talk about the praying that leads to intimacy, because a personal prayer life must be implanted in us. I'm not talking about random, immature prayers. I am talking about intimacy and communion with God. Never allow the enemy to substitute—and believe me, he can—warfare, or any other type of prayer, for intimacy, for being alone with God.

Do you know the secret of Elijah? I believe it was twofold when you look at two declarations he spoke and lived by. Number one is: “*The Lord God before whom I stand*” (1 Kings 17:1). And the second is: “*I have been very jealous or zealous for God*” (1 Kings 19:10). That is the twofold secret of the prophet's life. And it should be true for each one of us. The secret to life in God is intimacy: standing before Him and ministering to Him. There is no substitute for just being with Him and adoring Him, loving Him, worshipping, and praising Him. Never get away from that, brothers and sisters.

Let's fight for our prayer life. Let's fight for alone time with God. People say, “I'm with Him 24/7.” I am not saying that I don't believe that, but what is the background of that? I believe God wants us to be with Him 24/7. He is with us, but to be able to be that focused upon Him demands a foundation of intimacy. We should look on these things and pray, “Lord, teach me to pray as Jesus did.” Though He had God the Father and the Spirit in Him, He would still remove Himself from everyone and everything and go be alone in prayer.

God, reestablish the passion of intimacy in us. I am not talking about duty and obligation. We must get away from that concept. We are talking about relationship. Isn't it strange that we can be alone with our friends and our wives and husbands and children and it is beautiful and wonderful, not a duty but a pleasure? Why is

being alone with God a duty? Part of the issue is conflict and battle around our being alone with God.

Let's identify this for each one of us. The enemy is resisting us in our prayer life. He is resisting our being alone and standing before God as Elijah did and as the Lord Jesus Christ did with His Father. Many men and women throughout the Scripture understood that the secret of the hidden life was time spent alone with God. I emphasize this to us not to get away from corporate praying. Corporate prayer is wonderful, and God is moving us into this arena. But we must not get away from intimacy in prayer and communion with God, ministering to the Lord first.

I know this is simple, but you know the battle each one of us is under and how the enemy does not want us to pray. Let's reverse that thinking and realize how much more we should pray. I'm not talking about rout prayers but intimacy. We must maintain an intimate place before God, especially in order to be an effective warrior. The more that private place is maintained, the more effective we will be in every other arena of prayer and the more useful we will be because we will be drawing upon His life and strength. Let's compare eating to praying. We cannot just talk about how good the food is; we must eat it. We must not just talk about how good prayer is; we must pray.

I want to say right up front that it is important that you and God establish a consistent prayer life and place before Him. Go to a quiet, isolated place to minister to Him, to be with Him. Sometimes we minister in silence, but the objective is not to be there with all these other things going through our minds. I have learned it takes about 30-45 minutes—it depends on the person—to allow the Holy Spirit to clear our minds from all the distractions from the day, week, or month. We come under battle when we set our hearts to pray. The enemy will bring up responsibility after responsibility, but let's be responsible as believers before the Lord more than we are in any other thing!

People can be way more responsible with secular things, like their job. Most of us would never treat our employer the way we treat our Lord. I see it constantly in our lateness, our tardiness, and our inconsistencies. Because God is not there like an employer threatening to replace us, we think it is not important to Him. But it reveals our heart and our commitment. It reveals our spiritual intelligence, spiritual-mindedness and understanding, or the lack thereof.

I do not want this to become duty. It is not meant to be. It is a relationship, but I know the battle and I know our flesh and our soul and our enemy. He does not want us to have a consistent—I mean daily—prayer life. It means we must humble ourselves and be with Him. It is such a joy and pleasure to be with God. The greatest joy a human soul can know is to be with God. It is so beyond any earthly distraction or food. The Lord is true meat, true bread, and true drink. I ask that by the Holy Spirit He would move upon us and, not in condemnation but with simple Spirit-led conviction and purposeful intention, reorder our lives and establish our place before Him to be of primary, daily importance.

Even in our intimacy God means for us to be seated in the heavenlies. We are to be seated in heavenly places. I'm not talking about being in heaven. I am talking about the God of heaven ruling us in this earth and manifesting, demonstrating, and releasing Himself through us now. So much of that is contingent upon the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ in us, and that in itself comes from being with Him, partaking of Him. We must view prayer as partaking of communion, of relationship, and being filled with His fullness in greater and greater degree.

Prayer is not simply asking God for more and more things. Self-centered praying is such a boring thing. It may feel good for a while, but we won't want to do it for long. Then, when critical times come in our lives and there is pressure from outside things, we are going to want the presence of the Lord there in the mo-

ment, yet because of our inconsistency in being with Him, we are going to pretty much have to fight that battle on our own.

God loves us. I am not saying that God is not going to participate with us, but He will teach us lessons so we know what is important. We do not want to get into a situation with a possessed person and suddenly find out that we don't know what to do because we don't spend enough time with the Lord and we don't know how to tap into His strength and let it flow through us. That is not the time to find that out.

There is the prayer of intimacy, which is communion-based, and the prayer of submission, which is, "*Not my will, but Yours be done*" (Luke 22:42). Intercession and travail is important because it concerns the burden of the Lord. All praying should be on heavenly ground, having God's great heart and eternal desire and purpose bound up within it. That kind of praying is absolutely true.

Submission Prayer

The prayer of submission is the prayer Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. He is in a situation where the will of God is dominating His natural will. We need that, brothers and sisters! What if we, even in the prayer petition, were to ask God for spiritual increase of Him rather than for things? I am referencing Matthew 6:8: "*Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*" "*Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*" (Matthew 6:33). We are not to seek first the natural things of this earth. We are to seek first the heavenly: the heavenly life, heavenly purpose, heavenly thought, and heavenly ground. We are to seek first the great I Am. Let's seek His purpose, desire, thought, and intention.

What if we prayed like that? What if we sought first God's will for humanity and His eternal purpose? What if we came back to heavenly ground in our praying in Western-culture Christianity, which is basically no different than Western-culture civilization. We basically turned Western-culture Christianity into Western-cul-

ture civilization. People say, “Oh yes! I believe in Jesus,” but it has no meaning for them on a personal basis or as a relationship. That sad reality begins to come out in what is released through these people, which is not life but death. Christ in you is not death; He is life. He is the life of God.

Let’s talk about the element of alignment, on which submission prayer is based. We get into this place of praying generally about things, when actually the motive within our being should be to be in a very specific place of cooperating with God Himself and His great purpose and intent. May God move us as a people onto this ground. When we are being filled with His thoughts and His mind, His understanding and His heart, His purpose, will, and intent, then our great prayer will be to be with Him in that.

Our great desire is that that motive be behind our prayers. First, we want to be in prayer for communion. Then we want to be in prayer for submission to God, asking Him for His burden, asking Him to lead us to the point where we want what He wants. When the burden of the Lord comes upon us, we are united with Him in what He desires. We come into this alignment, aligning our thoughts and desires with the eternal of God, and it is there that we stand.

If we really want to see effectiveness and usefulness in our walk with God, then let that become real to each one of us. Alignment will open up the realm of warfare praying more than any other realm, which the enemy does not want to happen. His objective will always be to stop that alignment, keeping us earthly minded, centered upon our needs or anything but the throne of God. That is what I am talking about when I am talking about alignment.

I am talking about the eternal throne of God and God’s right to have a people to presence Himself in and among. He is to possess that people who are set apart as instruments and vessels for His eternal use and purposes. He desires to have children He can release in an ambassadorial role here and now, on this earth and in the age of ages to come.

What if the church came back into that understanding and back onto that ground? God, help us here, and call us to this, Holy Spirit! That is my cry and prayer for this army. Call us to this, Holy Spirit. Call us back onto eternal ground, back onto a real, true warfare that centers on alignment with You. This battle is going to center around the great battle for true prayer.

When you read about the making of the incense in Exodus 30, you see nothing was random about that incense. Its ingredients and proportions were not random. It was very specific. The incense had to be made according to divine order and purpose and intent. What does that say to us about prayer? Prayer should be specific. It should involve some very specific elements, which is what we've been talking about. Some of those elements include intimacy, submission, intercession, travail, alignment with the Lord, and the burden of the Lord. True prayer is not earthly. True prayer is heavenly. Prayer should be on heavenly ground. It should be the heavenly mind, will, and purpose of God.

Prayer Must Be Spirit-led

God is calling for an army that will be effective and useful, an instrument of war in our times. It is extraordinarily important. What happens in the small prayer groups of twos and threes God would take to the larger prayer groups of twenty and thirty and then the even larger prayer groups of two and three hundred and then the thousands and thousands across this earth who have bowed their knees and come into the secret place with God, to a place of being before the Lord corporately and individually. When that happens, what is ascending is heavenly incense.

There can be no other incense like that, especially one made by man. Man cannot make for himself incense like unto that incense. Prayer was never to be of man. It was never to be placed in man's hands. Can you see that in Exodus 30? There is a divine principle in this. Prayer is not according to the mind or the will of man. It is according to the will of God and the eternal mind of Christ.

It is to be directed of the Holy Spirit. If it comes onto heavenly ground, then there is going to be a great increase of the release of the Lord in the nations and in our nation here in America. There are people around the world reading this. I want each of us to ask God for our nations, our cities, our towns, and our communities. But let's begin by asking Him to first invade the people of God and bring us to this kind of praying that is effective because it is on heavenly ground, because the mind and heart and thoughts of God are in it. The Holy Spirit is bringing forth that praying. It is prayer according to the Spirit.

That is what Paul is talking about here. Pray according to the Spirit. The Spirit should be leading and guiding our prayers. Yes, that can include praying in tongues, but it is bigger than just praying in tongues. All prayer should be directed by the Holy Spirit. So the great, eternal burden of God is in Spirit-led praying. The interests of God, the concerns of God, the desires of God are in that praying.

We think there is resistance to praying now, but what is going to happen when the church comes onto this heavenly ground? Do you see how this works? We are not just going out and picking a fight and looking for warfare. I want to teach you how to pray the will of God, according to the mind of Christ, led by the Holy Spirit in eternal matters and desires.

This is not a natural-minded thing. The Holy Spirit will teach us to pray and guide us in prayer. He will be the strength and direction of that prayer. It will come onto eternal ground really quickly if we allow the Holy Spirit to have great entrance in and among us. May the Holy Spirit invade our prayer meetings, our hearts, and our minds.

The Enemy Attacks Spirit-led Prayer

The battle we are faced with can only be won on the ground of prayer. These forces that Paul is describing here in Ephesians 6 are standing in direct antagonism against God. Through prayer,

Christ's victory will be enforced against the enemy, and it will absolutely be followed by action. In fact, this kind of praying is action.

Prayer is the battleground of the warfare we are in. The battle is won on the ground of prayer. These forces are going to be dealt with and defeated on the ground of prayer. So the chief objective of the enemy is to stop you and I from praying, to stop the church from praying. If he cannot keep us from praying altogether, he will infiltrate our personal and corporate prayer, making it ineffective because we are asking amiss, asking for self-centered things. He wants to take us off of heavenly ground. He does not want effective praying. We have to see that.

The focal point of the enemy's strategy is going to be taking out prayer. It is going to be against the very greatest weapon we possess in this warfare: true prayer, Spirit-inspired prayer, God's will in prayer. He will attack men and women who pray on the ground of intimacy, and then move forward onto the ground of submission, and then forward onto the ground of alignment with God. In that place, the burden of God and the travail of God begin to come forth, and they become captivated by God's interest and desire.

When we begin to bow our knees and stand before Him as a people who want His will, who want His rights in this earth, we will see action. When we stand and fight on that ground in prayer for God to have absolutely His rights on this earth and in the creation itself, we will see action.

The enemy's attention is going to be drawn to that kind of prayer, and he is going to come against us. We need to be ready for it. His strategy will be to withstand and destroy that kind of individual and corporate prayer. If he is successful, then he has great advantage over us. So what should we do? We should pray, but not randomly.

Intimacy prayer is not self-centered prayer, by the way. Intimacy is a place of union, a place of communion, a place where we find the mind and heart of God and the fullness of God and

where the increase of Christ comes into us. I want to make a distinction in this. Have you been resisted in prayer, and if so, why? Let's not get into finger pointing or condemnation. That is not helpful to us. The Lord convicts, but He does not condemn. Condemnation is a hopelessness that prompts us to either run and hide or just go die. Conviction draws us to God's heart and causes us to run to the Lord, not away from Him.

We are in this great battle for prayer, and we must see the importance of prayer. I am centering this on Ephesians 6:17-19. After talking about warfare, Paul gets to it. He talks about the great weapon, the sword of the Spirit, which encompasses the word of God and prayer. God's aggressive weapons are the word of God and prayer. Those are the aggressive weapons of God. Being rightly armored is important, but it is also important that we have that aggressiveness of God in us when battling with the word and prayer. As a people, we must come to a definite decision that we are going to fight for prayer, personally and corporately.

If the enemy can, he will use the issue of responsibilities to keep us from praying. Be careful what you say yes to in the arena of responsibility. We need to be responsible people, but our first priority should be to the Lord Himself. Let us be responsible children of God. Guard your prayer life. We are going to have to guard our praying. Know how to guard against the enemy. He will try to make our congregations a prayer-less people.

Having services and meetings is not the same as praying—and I mean real praying that comes onto heavenly ground where we are corporately crying out for the will and purposes of God, not necessarily for our own church, for extended lengths of time. Let's take it off the ground of "my church" and get it onto heavenly ground. "My church first" is not heavenly ground.

Don't the will of God and the purposes of God affect us as a congregation? Absolutely, but what I find in this that is so beautiful is that when the Holy Spirit directs us, He will have us praying over our regions and our nations, states, communities and towns,

and so much of it is not centered around us but around God's will and others. It is about God's heart becoming realized in others. It does not make us unimportant in any way, but if we get on that heavenly ground, what we find when the Spirit leads our prayers and we focus upon God's heart is that God comes among us and meets our needs.

The enemy is very capable of constructing responsibilities around our lives that are meant to draw us away from being with the Lord, from being in corporate relationship with Him and personal relationship with Him. He will give us business. He will give us spiritual things. He will give us anything but true prayer, anything but being alone with God, anything but standing before the Lord. Remember the secret strength of Elijah: "*The Lord God before whom I stand.*" Elijah knew a portion of the mind of God and what God would do in his day. He stood before Him for that very thing.

What if we took the principle of the tithe in the Bible and brought it into prayer. I am talking about 10 percent (and I do believe there is value to the financial aspect of that). What if we gave the Lord 10 percent of our time every day. That is just a thought. I do not want to create a law, but what if we took seriously being before the Lord and gave two or three hours a day to Him, even if it is divided up into hour segments? I will say that there is beauty in having extended periods in the presence of the Lord. I have experienced that on a very personal level with the Lord for years. If you are talking about transformation and transfiguration, we need to get before Him. First, for the sake of the Lord and this place of intimacy we must get before Him. But it is also beautiful to be in alignment with Him and understand our calling in the priesthood that we are meant to step into.

That priesthood revolves primarily around this issue of prayer. We are called to be a royal priesthood are we not? So the enemy is going to try to bring us into distractions and false responsibilities. There are legitimate responsibilities, but we should be able to have

legitimate responsibility and still have time with the Lord, just as we have legitimate responsibility and still have time for our family.

Passion-driven Prayer

It should be a loving thing not a duty. It must be on the ground of love, it must be motivated by the love of God, His loving us and us loving Him. Prayer of intimacy centers on this great love of God, and so does the purpose of God in heavenly prayer. It centers on the great, loving purpose of God in His entire creation.

Prayer should come from a passion, a communion, a place of love for Him and receiving His love and living in His love and growing in the love of God. Out of that place flows obedience. Obedience should grow out of love; that is the only right soil for obedience. The fruit of the Spirit of God's nature in us begins with love, then joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The first one mentioned should have great priority in us. The motivation of God and why He created was love.

Yes, there is purpose perfectly bound up in that, but God is not purpose-driven; He is love-motivated. He is not driven by some purpose. He is motivated from within His own person. He is motivated to love, but it is a love that is so much deeper than the human capacity for love. The Lord wants to lift our praying into this priestly arena and bring us into a place both individually and corporately of a priesthood that is standing before the Lord for Him and His purposes and what it is He desires to do. You know that doing relates to people and it relates to other beings in His creation.

The conflict we are going to experience in this is going to be great, but so will be the effectiveness in conflict and battle even to the pulling down of these demonic powers. I tell you, alignment in prayer, the burden of the Lord in travail and intercession, is a powerful weapon. Prayer is a powerful weapon. Standing before the Lord is a powerful, powerful, aggressive weapon. The Scrip-

tures are a powerful weapon. The word of God is a powerful and aggressive weapon. May God bring us back to that. In the name of Jesus I ask that He will teach us to pray. Remember what James said concerning Elijah: *“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly”* (James 5:17). He stood before the Lord, and God heard him because his praying was on heavenly ground. The Holy Spirit Himself wants to inspire the life in us and through us in prayer. He wants to be our prayer life, the life of prayer in us. You are going to want to be alone with God because you are going to so enjoy Him you will not want any distractions. Holy Spirit wants to be that kind of life to us in prayer.

Holy Spirit, be that to all of us. Raise up an army in the earth made up of men and women in small groups, in homes, and in congregations, a grassroots movement right where they live. May there be effective, God-centered praying going on. May the will of God, the intent of God, and the purpose of God out of the great heart of God be revealed to us and then released in prayer right in the face of demonic forces’ antagonism and even in the face of human forces that do not want us to pray. May we respond by praying even more.

CHAPTER 11

BATTLING ON HEAVENLY GROUND

It is a great joy to know that the Lord is getting a people out to Himself and the Holy Spirit is enlisting an army. It's not my army, but I certainly want to be a part of it. Many of us are enlisting again and in a greater way, and I'm truly thankful. My friends, I know this can be a very lonely fight in many ways. Many of us are experiencing this pull and call of the Lord, and currently it can be difficult to find many brethren who want to go with us in wholeheartedness after the Lord. I'm not saying they're not there, I'm saying it can be hard for us to find each other. I want to encourage you to press on. You are not alone. It's easy to say that, but know that first and foremost, the Holy Spirit is real in you. Jesus said He and the Father would come and make their abode with you (John 14:23). We have the Lord Himself within us. The Father, the Spirit of God, is living within us. We're not alone in that sense, and that's the ultimate. However, I also encourage you with this: spread across the nations, bigger than we can com-

prehend, God has His people. As the Lord was quick to correct Elijah saying, *“Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal”* (1 Kings 19:18), there are the thousands and thousands across the nations who have not bowed and are coming out to the Lord. They may be scattered, but they are there. We are not alone.

One of the tools of the enemy is to attack us in that arena and bring condemnation or the fear that we’re running in vain or have missed the mark. None of that is true. God’s people are there. I pray that God will help us find one another and corporately reveal His great heart, desire, interest, and concern to secure a vessel worldwide who is wholeheartedly given over to Him.

What Is the Priesthood?

We are to be that representation of what He wants. The priesthood was always a representation of what the entire nation was meant to be. It was always a representation of what God wanted for all people. Let us keep in mind that the priesthood is a representation of God’s full thought for all of God’s people. God’s intent is to get a people out to Himself in complete dedication and complete consecration. The priesthood was always a representation of what the whole nation was meant to be. It was never meant to be an elite group.

We must look beyond the fact and need of salvation and look unto fullness. What is God after in an eternal sense? His purpose is bigger than salvation. Thus God is showing “the House” to the house, to quote Ezekiel 43:10. He is showing the priesthood to His house, which is what he wants for all of us. We must keep that in mind. This issue of representation is key. He is representing Himself as the great High Priest and what His priesthood is to be: Christ Himself of the order of Melchizedek. He is showing to all exactly what He wants. He is doing this by His Spirit through instruments and vessels in this time. Our deep longing and desire

is to be a part of that instrument corporately, for the sake of the Lord and His inheritance and for the sake of His people.

God help our pursuit to never become self-centered. If it does become so, the Lord will judge and correct it. We must stay on the heavenly ground of the Lord's purpose and desire. First and foremost, this is for the sake of the Lamb and for the sake of His testimony in the earth. Without that, we will not be His representation. We press on to greater and greater fullness for the sake of our brothers and sisters and for the sake of the lost.

Where Does Our Warfare Take Place?

We must keep the focus of our warfare on heavenly ground. We need warfare on God's ground. There can be a warfare that is more fleshly or soulish than spiritual. I will try to define that as we go. If the Lord is going to reveal what He is after, there always exists the opposite as well, and we'll look at some passages of Scriptures that reveal that opposite. We must be aware and wary of falling into these deceptive traps. First, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 AMP:

³For though we walk (live) in the flesh, we are not carrying on our warfare according to the flesh.

Here we see the potential to war according to the flesh, which is not our objective.

⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds.

What are our weapons for? For destruction.

⁵[Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

We see in this passage that it is possible to be moved by flesh if we do not allow the Holy Spirit to move our inward man onto heavenly ground. To avoid this pitfall we need spiritual intelligence according to the will of God. We must come onto heavenly ground in our praying. It is fruitless to wage war according to our own minds and natural understanding as opposed to divine understanding. Prayer that is not sourced in the Spirit is not effective. Prayer that is not of the Spirit is not useful.

Spirit-directed Prayer

Let's look at Ephesians again.

¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation and the sword that the Spirit wields, which is the Word of God. ¹⁸Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit, with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints (God's consecrated people). And [pray] also for me.”

Ephesians 6:17-18 AMP

Paul is making it emphatically clear that we are to pray at all times in the Spirit. I do believe in praying in tongues, but that is not Paul's focus here. Praying in tongues is an effective method of prayer. I pray in tongues and with understanding, but my deep desire is to pray in accordance with the Spirit. I desire Holy Spirit-directed praying. It is evident to me that the Holy Spirit is contending for heavenly ground. He is not primarily battling for earthly ground. He is also contending for this earth, but to contend for this earth in a heavenly way is to contend on heavenly ground. It is the Lamb's right to rule this earth.

To contend rightly, we must understand whose right it is to rule and reign! Order is very important. It's not just semantics. We must understand the right order of God to cooperate in this

conflict correctly. Understand that we are not battling for a victory. We are battling from the place of victory! Christ has secured the victory! Just as certainly as He secured that victory, He has not removed Satan, the devil, and his forces from this earth. Christ is going to operate through us to both contend and remove those forces from this planet and from the heavenlies. Every antagonistic thing is going to be finished off in the victory of Christ through us, His body.

I want us to clearly see that the Scriptures back up this statement. After the cross, after His victory, we continue to wrestle, but not with flesh and blood! We are wrestling with spiritual forces of wickedness. We are wrestling, as James and Peter indicate, against the devil. I do not believe that each of us is wrestling against Satan himself, yet he is the federal head of the forces of evil in both the heavens and the earth. You and I are normally dealing with the forces marshalled under Satan. The devil cannot be omnipresent. He is a limited, finite being. He can only exist in one place at one time, therefore not all of us are wrestling against the devil. Very few times are we up against Satan, but we are always facing the devil's forces. Those demonic powers are on differing levels, and we are to be engaged against them. They are battling for the will of evil, opposing the will of God. Knowing the will of the enemy is easy: you find God's objective in His eternal purpose, and you will find that the exact opposite constitutes the will and purpose of the enemy. Thus we can ascertain the enemy's objective in light of God's eternal will and plan.

Praying "in the Spirit"—that is, Spirit-directed praying—is our objective. We are after a warfare that is on eternal, heavenly ground. Our prayer is to be directed by the Holy Spirit. I am not speaking of a general or ordinary conflict on the individual Christian life; this is a warfare that is connected with and related to the full testimony of Jesus in this earth. I'm concerned that the concepts of Christian warfare, for the most part, have been earth-bound. We have focused on the evils of this world, the wrongs

and vices of this world, the betterment of the human condition and such. There is even a mistaken view concerning unconverted men and women. God's people believe that the Christian army is to wage battle against these evils, to contend against these vices in this world. But when you come to view the full testimony of Jesus and the purpose that the Holy Spirit is working unto, we are going to find that God's viewpoint is altogether "other." He means to align earth with His will as it is in heaven. The Spirit of God is contending for the heavenly reality. We know the condition of evil in the earth, but we are not just here to battle evil.

Let me be more clear. Our awareness of God's desire in warfare needs to be on a heavenly, spiritual plane, not an earthly, natural plane. For example, we see these destructive things going on in the earth and we think we need to stop them. I'm not saying we shouldn't vote or anything like that, but I'm saying that we are mistaken if we think we can act at a natural, carnal level to deal with any of these issues. We cannot! At least not primarily.

I'm saying this to the church. When we're dealing with God's people, we shouldn't be dealing with just natural-mindedness. Natural-mindedness is simply the natural, unconverted man thinking naturally. But what we're dealing with in the church is spiritual people having carnal mindsets and understanding. The Scriptures are emphatic. We are not just wrestling against flesh and blood. When we look beyond people and see what is really going on, we find the spiritual forces that are controlling peoples and governments, seeking to control the present system of this world. Satan offered Christ that government. Satan knew that they belonged to him. If Christ would bow down to him Satan was willing to make Jesus second in command under Satan over this world. But, brothers and sisters, it is the right of the Lamb to rule, not only on this earth, but from this earth over the vastness of His creation. Satan's ploy got nowhere with Jesus. He knew to resist Satan and He did. In resisting Satan, which is the first step, He will bring down ev-

ery antagonistic force and every antagonistic being arrayed against Him, both in the heavens and in the earth.

We must see where the real battle lies. I know that we've gone into a ditch in times past saying, "Well, the devil made me do this." We mistakenly did not take responsibility for ourselves. I am not talking about that. We cannot make excuses; we must own our personal issues and repent. We have also crossed over the road and gone into another ditch, saying that the devil is not behind anything. The result is that the church is now attempting to fight in a carnal way against a spiritual foe, and we are not touching that spiritual foe. If we are merely focused on the events, on the circumstances or on the people of the earth, then we are ineffective and useless in warfare. I trust that is clear.

Authority in the Spirit Realm

Behind what is happening on the earth are spiritual beings who have intelligence. Remember that Satan is an intelligent spiritual being. He is not a mindless brute who doesn't have a plan. He has a scheme and a plan and has been enforcing that plan quite successfully in earth and in the second heavens. We are not to approach the reality of warfare with a formula or concept in mind that Satan is random. No military force will be effective if it functions in a random manner. A house divided against itself cannot stand!

No love exists in the so-called kingdom of Satan. There is no grace in that kingdom. There is no mercy in that kingdom. There is no forgiveness in that kingdom. Yet there is an order in that kingdom. The order is dealing with power. It deals with a measure of authority, Satan being the ultimate authority of evil in that kingdom. All those who are allied with him fall underneath his authority and command. I am saying that Satan is the supreme commander over the armies of evil, both in the heavens and in the earth. Satan and the forces with him are purposeful in the advancement of that evil. He perpetuates deception that operates through

a powerful control. Since there is no love in his kingdom, these beings do not love one another. They do not love Satan. Their allegiance has nothing to do with love, it has to do with power and their renegade measure of authority under Satan.

Understand this: all, every bit of authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus Christ. And they know that quite well. Oh, that the church would know this truth in a practical way rather than a formula-based way. We cannot combat these forces by formula; prayer formulas are not sufficient. Prayer statements are not sufficient. The enemies fear only the measure of the stature of the fullness which belongs to Christ functioning in us. We must understand this clearly: they do not fear you or me. They fear Him who has all authority. Therefore the measure of Christ in us can be easily recognized and understood by them.

When they see a measure of Christ released in us and through us in spiritual intelligence, they see reality in members of His body. They see a spiritual comprehension, and they know the One who is in us. It is one thing to have Him in you, it is another matter to have spiritual apprehension of the One in you. His significance comes to light as it relates to the eternals and His eternal plan. Christ's significance is known as it pertains to His right to rule over His creation. It is His right to govern all of it, including this earth. It is His right to cleanse the heavens of every evil thing. Apprehension is needed! Evil is not chased away because we can pray certain prayers. Formula-based prayers will not move those evil beings. I am talking particularly about spiritual forces of wickedness in the high places. They are not afraid of power, but they do recognize the authority of Christ in us and whether or not it is being released with spiritual understanding.

Oh that we would know in whom we have believed and become persuaded. Once again, this is not random. We are living in His life, and we are being formed and fashioned. We are being conformed to His very image. We are becoming bridal. We are formed into His very kind. There is a marrying into one life to-

gether! We are dealing with life. He is expressing Himself through us. The measure of that heavenly life is literally Christ in us. The rulers of darkness fear that! They fear His authority in us. They fear the fullness of life appearing. That life is light, and they can clearly see it, my friends. They can also see that if the light in us be darkness, how great is that darkness. Believe me, you do not want to go into a battle with these beings if the light functioning within you is darkness. They see the absence of life and light. They also recognize the life of Christ in us. They know the measure. They are spiritual beings and can see spiritual substance.

Let us not shrink back, but let us be sober-minded. We must not battle from a hypothetical position; we must battle from life. The measure of the stature of the life is Christ—Christ is the life. I am not speaking of life in a general sense. I am speaking of Christ our life, Christ our fullness, Christ filling our very being.

These spiritual forces are intelligent. They are cunning, artful, venomous, and malicious forces of evil. They have set themselves directly against the will of God found in the Son of God. They were glad to kill the Son, thinking they had done Him in, when in reality He arose on the third day completely victorious over every bit of their death and destruction. Therefore the manifestation of Christ in us has no concurrence with death. In Him there is no compromise or mixture. If you are saying, “Christ is in me,” and you are completely, forever, and utterly redeemed, then the proof shows up in what comes out of you. Who is being shown forth in an ongoing way?

The Battle Is Now

We are up against evil forces who are not battling the mundane. The Holy Spirit is contending for a warfare in the heavens. The Spirit contends for the heavenly thought and the heavenly purpose. He contends for the heavenly to be realized, through us, in the earth. And it begins now! The heavenly life of Christ is to fill us. His light is to be flowing through us. We must not put this

off into the future. It begins now. There will be increase as we move forward. We are going to come into an age of ages when evil is completely put away. But we are here for Christ's victory to be enforced through us against enemy forces right now. I am not day-dreaming about the future. I am here in a fight for the heavenly to be realized right now! I am not standing in defeat; I am standing in His victory. I am here to see that the victory of Christ is realized in the land of Caanan by driving every "ite" out of this land. By this I mean every foreign thing driven out of me personally by the Holy Spirit. I mean to see Him cleanse His house of these strongholds typified by the walled city of Jericho and the other fortress cities. He will cleanse us so that the testimony of the Lord Jesus may shine clearly forth now from the land of God (Canaan) to all the surrounding nations. I am speaking of the testimony of the Lord Jesus in fullness in us and through us.

Our warfare has become related to the relationship we have with Him. If our consciousness is only in the realm of the vices and the wrongs and evils of this world, we will fight on carnal ground in the earthly arena to no avail. We must not make this about the political construct of our day. We must go deeper and higher. I believe in voting, and we should vote. I believe that God meant for the United States of America to be a sheep nation—one that submits to the great Shepherd. But we cannot get there by proceeding on carnal ground! Our forefathers were not fighting on carnal ground. God was moving among those men and women. They understood the spiritual side of this firstly, and we seem to have lost that understanding. But we seem to think that recovering the republic and the Constitution is the objective. What good is the republic if we are still living for ourselves? We must understand God's right. The objective is His kingdom come, His will be done. And that within us! The kingdom is within us, brothers and sisters. That kingdom is constituted by His life within us and His light and release through us.

God-consciousness

Let us be moved by God-consciousness not just by an earthly consciousness. I am not fighting to stop murder. I am fighting for the eternal will of God and for the rule of Christ over this earth. I am fighting for the life of Christ to fill people, which is the true foundation of the house of God. I am fighting for the fullness of His light to be found within us as a people so to drive out this evil within us. This happens as the fleshly nature is overtaken and transfigured by the spiritual nature. This is divine order. It will do no good for our government to have a so-called “spiritual” government put in place if God’s people are not functioning in spiritual life, as pertaining to the infilling of Christ.

To say that one is a Christian means a variety of things in our day. I am sorry to have to say it that way. I am concerned that saying someone is a Christian means no more than saying that one is a republican or a democrat. The general sense of the title “Christian” means very little in this hour. But then we may truly be a Christian and be up against difficulties and opposition and adversaries in our lives which can be very strenuous. But here’s the real question: have we been connected by the Holy Spirit to the ultimate place of real battle and not just the temporal struggle? I am talking about the testimony of Jesus in fullness which is the ultimate realm of battle for the saints. The contest in the earth now is for the full testimony of Jesus, that He might have a people for His name. The God of glory would presence Himself again in and among and through a people so that He might have His representation in exactness in the earth right now. I want to ask: are we in that battle? Are we in that warfare? Are we battling for that in our prayer meetings? Are we battling for that in our cities? In our towns, communities, our regions, our nations? I ask, what level are we battling on?

Acceptable Prayer

We are going to find that there is a battle to be waged to get to the ultimate battle. That battle will be within us to come onto heavenly ground in prayer. God give us heavenly ground in our prayer meetings. God give us heavenly ground in our private times before the Lord. God teach us! We need Spirit-directed prayer.

In the Old Testament, the incense, which represented prayer, was made up of various elements. It was a recipe given by God and was never to be used for the people personally. It simply was not for individual use. It belonged to the temple. It was only to be burned before the Lord by the priesthood. The prayer that was represented by incense was to be used only for God, toward God, and unto God. The incense was formulated very specifically, exactly as God had prescribed and that alone was to be used as incense. They didn't offer something that man concocted. The holy incense alone was acceptable. He had given the recipe and the understanding of its make-up which was exactly according to His intention. Even the components of the incense spoke of the will of God in the matter of the offering. I believe that all prayer is not equally acceptable to God. The specific qualities of the incense bear that out. I am concerned that "prayer" has become a difficult word in our times because prayer has come to mean so many things to us. This underscores my point: the incense of the house was not of many varieties but one! And it was not to be in the hands of the people or for their own personal use. Can you hear that? Prayer must be Spirit-directed, not man-centered. Our praying must come under the hand of God and must be directed by the Holy Spirit, or it is not acceptable.

James gives us wisdom on this subject: "*You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures*" (James 4:3). God does not answer those prayers. And He has not been answering those prayers. You might say, "I sure see people getting what they want." Do you really think God is giving them what they want so it can destroy them? If He does, that is

a judgment, not a benevolent answer to prayer. I want to help us understand the specificity of prayer. We need to recapture God's meaning of prayer. We need to return to God's thought in prayer. We need to know this in our prayer meetings. What is the use of having prayer meetings if God is not listening because we do not pray on heavenly ground? Naturally-sourced praying is not the incense that He demands. Please hear God's heart in this. Why do we think we can offer any formula of incense up to Him? We think wrongly if this is the case.

I can feel the presence of the Lord as I am sharing this with you. Friends, this is not meant in any way to be condemning. It is meant to point to the absolute. It is meant to be the plumb line of God in our praying. Our logical human thought does not have bearing here. God, from the very beginning, gave them a formula for incense that could not be copied. It must not fall into the hands of man. It was to be offered before the Lord, and thus, it was a sweet smelling aroma to Him. Prayer that is a sweet smelling aroma begins with God's own heart and God's own mind. Here is the formula: prayer that is a sweet smelling aroma begins with the mind of the Spirit. It is directed by the Spirit of God and is absolutely on heavenly ground.

The activity is God establishing the heavenly here on this earth in a people. It is the heavenly coming forth that defeats the earthly and the antagonistic forces of the enemy because Christ has gained the victory. His victory can be enforced through His vessel (His instrument) if we stand with Him on His ground alone. It cannot be enforced on any natural ground. It cannot be enforced on earthly ground through earthly things. His victory is grounded in the heavenly realm of Christ's life and His great divine purpose being made manifest in prayer! In life! His expression through His vessel in this hour will make the difference. Remember, that alone will make the difference.

God's sovereign will is to obtain a vessel. His sovereign will is this people. His sovereign will is this bride, this body, this church,

this people of God! These overcomers! These set apart ones. Those not just set apart from things or even unto the things of God, but set a part to Himself, if you can hear what I am saying. If the “things” of God hold first place priority in us, we have fallen into idolatry. God Himself must be first place! Believers must come into the eternal revelation of the fullness of Christ’s life, His purpose, and His intent in the greatness of the cross which is to be applied in every realm. His cross emancipates by severing self-centered or natural living. He separates carnal life from the spiritual life of Christ.

Come onto Heavenly Ground!

When we come into the revelation of the heavenly and we come into agreement with God—that is, when we come to His mind, His will, His intent, His purpose in this and we bring that forth in our prayer meetings—then we will find ourselves in a new realm of conflict. The focus is no longer in battling against the wrongs and the evils and vices of this world but in battling for the purpose and the will of God. We are battling for Christ to be brought forth, for Christ to be expressed and released. We are battling for the lordship of Christ, the Lamb, in this earth. We are battling for the right of the Lamb to rule from this planet. We are battling on heavenly ground. When we come onto heavenly ground we will find heavenly conflict. We will find battle in a new realm. It will be in the heavens. The character of our praying will be changed from earthiness to heavenliness, right in the battle! We will begin to develop a whole new consciousness. It is a consciousness of the mind and desire and purpose of God that begins to grow internally. We come to understand that God must have His inheritance! And He must have His will and purpose in this earth. I am not concerned any more for just my little self and my little purpose. I’m not concerned for my ministry or for my little church. I am concerned for the coporate church! I am concerned for the ministry of Christ through the Spirit in this earth. I am concerned

for an instrument and a vessel that will allow His life and fullness to flow through it!

Therein we wage war! We battle. God deliver us from these secondary things. I am sorry to have to say this so bluntly to you. People talk about this warfare and that warfare. I listen to those statements, and it is so earthy. It is circumstantial. There is no reason or purpose for it. We are not filled with the mind of Christ. We are not battling on heavenly ground. Come on to heavenly ground, and I will warn you and encourage you in the same breath. Come onto heavenly ground, and thus, come into the battle of the heavens.

It is the deepest longing in my own heart in prayer for you and for myself that we would come onto heavenly ground. We must become increasingly conscious that this is where our warfare with the devil takes place. Look beyond people to see what is really going on. Quit focusing upon the people, and see what is really happening here. See something far more sinister than the people involved. See that there is an evil intelligence that functions behind these things that seeks to keep Christ from presencing Himself in this earth. The enemy deludes and deceives a race that is already fallen and thus can be easily deceived. The whole unregenerate human race is not allied with Christ. It is allied against Christ; it is aligned with selfish living and with Satan.

Our consciousness must become bound up with the heavenly and with Christ Himself, His life and light and the truth that He is. Truth is not our doctrines, therefore our doctrines cannot help us against the enemy. Truth is a person. Truth is Christ. He also said of Himself, "*I am the True vine*" (John 15:1). He is the true manna that came down from heaven. Father went beyond giving the natural manna that one could eat and still remain evil. To eat of Him is life eternal.

In our experience as believers, we should go on with the Lord which means going upward, away from the earthly to the heavens. We are moving more and more away from the old creation

to the new creation, away from the temporal to the life that is Christ. We move away from the old temporal existence to true life. We are moving from the flesh to the spirit, more and more away from the soul to the spirit. The more closely we come into contact with Christ, the more closely we come into fellowship with the Holy Spirit. The more closely we draw near to God, the more closely we come into the ultimate purpose of God's plan and into spiritual fullness. Also the more closely we come into conflict and battle with the spiritual forces of evil in the creation. Thus the battle assumes a new form. The warfare takes on a new character. That warfare is linked to a fuller measure of divine purpose. It presupposes a spiritual state on our part, that we are no longer of this earth. Jesus said that we have been born from above. This should be the progressive way of the journey: the more we come into the fullness of Christ spiritually, the more spiritual our warfare becomes. The more spiritual our warfare is, the more effective and useful is that warfare. The more carnal our understanding, the more carnal is our warfare.

My friends, my brethren, it is a true joy to me that you and I desire to be more and more effective. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. We cease to fight after the flesh. We cease to fight man; we cease to battle with and in the flesh. Our warfare is in another realm. This represents, to us, spiritual advancement and spiritual growth. It represents spiritual stability, and by that I mean standing on spiritual ground. We come into real spiritual warfare when we find ourselves allied completely with the Holy Spirit in contending for the heavenly. And we know this: in the heavenly arena, natural man's resources are useless to us. Our weapons are not natural and they are not carnal. They are divinely powerful to the pulling down of spiritual strongholds. Natural resources are ruled out as insufficient. We must have spiritual weapons, rather than carnal. We must be spiritually equipped in order to be effective. We are talking about the word of God, the sword of the Spirit in prayer. This entails both the Scriptures and the spoken word of

God. Quite literally, He who is the word of God: Christ! We must have Christ. He is our spiritual resource. Christ our life. Christ our strength. Christ our light. Christ our all in all. He must come to be all in all in us. He is the true fount of spiritual resource and equipment so that the principalities and powers see Him in us. They see Him expressed in us and see His authority in us. They see the measure (and it can be measured spiritually) of the stature of fullness which is Christ in us. This is our journey; this is our relationship. Christ in us!

God help us to come onto true spiritual ground. May the Spirit of God truly be brought forth in greater and greater fullness of life in us. May we not be found living in carnality with carnal weapons, veiled by carnal understanding. I say it again. There is a battle for us to get to the real battle. God give us understanding and revelation in our times.

Father, I ask for all who hear Your heart in this invitation. Fill us, Holy Spirit, with the mind of Christ. Fill us with the life of Christ in an ever-increasing way, that we may truly be effective, useful warriors; that we may be an effective priesthood, vessels made fit and useful in this time; that we may be found in the heavens, seated with You! Amen.

CHAPTER 12

THE PRIESTLY WARRIOR

My friends, God's dealings with us are not random. They are always unto something! No matter how hard that dealing may be. No matter how hard the circumstances that God allows to come, the purpose is always refinement. He is working upon a refining basis. He is always working toward releasing His testimony of light and life through us in greater measures that He might have a greater representation of Himself in this companionship He has called us to.

The reality of this companionship must be realized in the relationship. I mean this: salvation alone is not that relationship. There is a higher heavenly calling held out to us, the original intention being that we come into a relationship with God not based on man's fall (although the fall of man did occur). It is centered upon that intention, and it is there we will find fullness. In that relationship there is a full testimony of the Lord, a full representation of the Lord. This means that the invisible God can be fully manifested through us in this earth now! Not just in the ages to

come, but right here and now. His purpose is that we together—an elite fighting force—would be companions of the heavenly calling.

Come Out to the Lord

Let me begin in 1 Chronicles 11:10: *“Now these are the heads of the mighty men whom David had, who gave him strong support in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel.”* We see that these men gave David strong support in his kingdom. That signifies a very important detail. These mighty men understood that God had anointed David to be king over Israel. That anointing was specific; it was to further the purposes of God in Israel so that the nation would be the testimony of the Lord upon the earth.

When God places His hand on any person or people, it is always His desire to have an exact representation, a testimony of Himself upon the earth. That holds true in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Sometimes we forget that vital fact. The reason the loving hand of the Lord is upon us is for a fuller representation, an exact representation of the Lord.

But the mighty men of David understood the times in which they lived. That is clear. They understood that Saul was not anointed by God to lead Israel into fullness. The people had asked for Saul. God did not want them to have a king. Thus, Saul’s anointing was never to lead the nation to fullness. Saul’s anointing was to judge Israel’s sin, specifically, their sin of asking for a king. God showed Israel the folly of choosing a king instead of Him and what this choice would do to the nation. He had already spoken this through the prophet Samuel. Saul was demanded by men not by God. David would not touch Saul for this reason: God was not done using Saul to discipline Israel. David knew this and would not raise his hand to touch him. He would only allow God, when He was finished with His discipline of the nation, to bring Saul down.

Friends, this is true even in our churches today. Bear with me; this is generally true, but not 100 percent. Much of Western-

culture Christianity has asked (perhaps not with their lips but with their actions) for the leadership in the church that they presently have. As a result, God's appointment has been for discipline. He disciplines us by and through the leadership we choose. We find ourselves in the same dynamic as the Israelites of old who chose Saul. Until we repent and ask God to be our head again, we will continue to come under His discipline.

I encourage you to be like David, like his mighty men; don't put your hand on that leader to take him down. Let God do what must be done. God is not calling us to put our hands on leaders to bring them down. He is calling us, like the mighty men and others in 1 Chronicles 11, to simply come out to Him. Come out to the Lord. Come out to the Son of David, the rightful King! That is what we should be doing. That should be our focus, not the negative attempt to bring leadership down.

I hope you will take this word of encouragement. Take it before the Lord and ask Him about it. May God help us to walk these things out rightly, myself included. David's mighty men understood that David was the rightful king, but they did not try to bring Saul down. Instead, they came out to David so that the kingdom would eventually come out to David. We know that in due time after Saul was killed, David would come into the full kingdom, and those men were there to see that David fully received the kingdom. They fought to make sure that the throne wouldn't be seized by someone of Saul's lineage who imagined rights to it. David's men were present to prevent that. They understood that David, the rightful man, anointed by Samuel, would be king. These men understood the time in which they lived. They understood what God desired to do. They comprehended the word of the Lord: David was to be king.

Divine Order

I want us to notice this issue of the kingdom of God and its advancement into greater and greater fullness. In 1 and 2 Samuel

and 1 and 2 Chronicles we see that divine ordering. God purposes to bring His kingdom to fullness. It began with a woman named Hannah, continued with her son Samuel, then moved on to David, and then to Solomon. When God brings in David, we see that God, through him, is going to conquer the rest of Canaan. The various “ites” had not been completely driven out during the time of Joshua, nor had they been driven out during the time of Judges. But when David became king, he intuitively understood by the Spirit of God that he must drive out those tribes that remained in the land.

That would be like God saying to us individually and as a body: “My first work is to drive these things out of you that are hindering the full expression of Myself. This is necessary to have the fullness of My kingdom.” Isn’t that what God is doing amongst us now? Isn’t He driving out the Jebusites, the Amalekites? Isn’t He driving out these various elements and what they represent in demonic strongholds and powers? They possessed dominion in the cities and the regions and the areas they had taken and occupied. The Philistines, representing the flesh, occupied the land, and Israel had to drive them out. Isn’t that what the Lord is doing in us? Does He not want to drive these things out of us so there can be a full testimony of Himself in and through us? The Israelites are a picture of His unchanging purpose. He desires that the invisible God be rightly represented here upon this planet. I believe that is true.

David and his men are fighting for the fullness. They are fighting for the advancement of the kingdom. They are fighting for God’s full testimony. They are fighting for God’s representation upon this earth, in a people called Israel, a people meant to be under the hand of God. Not all of them would agree to be under the hand of God, but some of them surely would.

I will say this about the church right now: not everyone is under the hand of God currently, nor will they be. But some of us are going to come out to the Lord in fullness. Let’s be part of that. Let us not be simply negative, finger-pointing, standing on the outside

telling folks what is wrong and why we cannot be a part of it. Let's be a part of the solution and the answer to our dilemma. Let's be like David's mighty men who say, "We are here in this time to see that the kingdom comes to fullness." And that includes some responsibilities on our part to ensure that the kingdom comes forth under the Son of David.

The Priestly (Love-Motivated) Warrior

There was something extraordinary about these men. Externally we see the valor in their exploits. We see it through their actions, but it is the expression of a dynamic that is generated internally. And that is the dynamic of the priestly warrior. We see this in Zadok in 1 Chronicles 12. He was a priestly warrior. Verse 28 describes him as a mighty man of valor, and of course, he is referenced again in Ezekiel. He, and others, had the embodiment of the warrior spirit! A priestly spirit! We are talking about the Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit. That brings us to Ephesians 6:10: "*Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.*" We can clearly see this with David's mighty men. Their exploits were not merely human; we see the Spirit of the Lord operating through these vessels. But it was for a specific purpose. With the Spirit of God working through them, the purpose of these exploits was to secure and establish the kingdom, the safety of that kingdom and the endurance of that kingdom.

Within these individuals, we see the internal working of the Spirit of the Lord operating. There is a commitment within them. It is of this nature: they have a great love for a person. They are committed to David! They love David. In the Scriptures we find stories of their committal and allegiance to him. They are not only committed to David because he is meant to be king, but they love him intensely. It is this interior love for David that is the driving force of these mighty men of God. They understand that God has His hand upon David, His anointed, and he will lead the entire na-

tion into the fullness of the purposes of God. I want us to catch this!

Everything in us should begin in this same way. It must begin with a great love for a person, a deep love for the Lord Himself, the Son of David. If we miss this, we are missing, perhaps, the key ingredient. These men were not driven by simple duty. They were driven by love. Their motivation was love for a person. We can see this when David made a statement about his longing for a drink of water from the well at Bethlehem. Three of the mighty men go down to Bethlehem, take on a company of Philistines, break through their lines, draw water from the well, and bring it back to David. Now, my friends, that's love!

David was so taken back by that act of love that he did what a priest would do: he poured the water out before the Lord. We must know that David was priestly though he wasn't of the organized priesthood. Friends, the priesthood is not an organization! The priesthood is internal; it is of the Spirit. The dynamic is of the inward man. The royal priesthood that exists now is not a matter of bloodlines or natural descendants of men. The priesthood is of the heart. The priesthood is of the inward man. The priesthood is the embodiment of the Spirit of the Lord, and it is about commitment to a person. It is about devotion to and loving that Person! When David's mighty men perform this great act of love and kindness for David, he then offers it to the Lord, pouring it out as a drink offering, which is a priestly act.

I don't want to spend too much time on this one point, but it is important to understand that these men loved David. They were committed to him and stood by him. This underscores the intensity of David's sin with Bathsheba and his act of having her husband, Uriah the Hittite, murdered by Joab, for Uriah was one of David's mighty men. Thus, the depth of betrayal generated by David is enormous because these men were utterly committed to him, their leader. We can see Uriah's great love for both God and

David when David brings Uriah home after his sin with Bathsheba. My point here is to show their strong committal of love to David.

It is also important to distinguish that these men are committed to God's king, not man's king. You know I am speaking in spiritual terms now. They are committed to the true king. Not to the king that the people have requested. Not to a human king that man has desired. They are committed to the one that God raised up and anointed to be king. Therein is our commitment, brothers and sisters. Our commitment is to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

This needs to be worked deeply within us. We must be committed, in love, to a person. God, give us leaders who have this kind of commitment, then we will have true leaders.

The mighty men of David are distinguished from the general company attached to David. The same distinguishing mark holds true for those who are completely committed to the Lord in this hour. These mighty men speak of those who go beyond the point of personal consideration, concerns, and purposes. Such a people enter into a relationship with the King, with the one they love, where their personal considerations are laid down. Their interests, concerns, and purposes are for the Lord, His King, and His Kingdom. This is the nature of a warrior-priest spirit and is the embodiment of that spirit. To define it further, it is His Spirit working within us for the very purpose of God, the very desires of God. The warrior priest comes under the dominion of God's desires.

We can cry out for such a dynamic working in our lives. You might recognize, "I'm not there!" Well, cry out for that! He longs to give us that heart. David had a heart after God. These committed men were following him, and God was using David to work His heart in others, including some of these mighty men of God. Thus, these men took on the interests of God, and they did not run or shrink back no matter what the odds were against them. They stood their ground and fought it out because that kingdom and ground was worth fighting for! Their king, his purpose, and his

desire was worth fighting for. The purpose and intention of God is worth fighting for.

Will that be true of us? Are the concerns, interests, and purposes of God worth fighting for? Are they worth our full commitment, our full dedication, and our full consecration and devotion, up to our last measure, including death? We must determine that we will not relinquish any ground to the enemy in this fight. We will not relinquish the ground of our families, our marriages, our homes, or our brethren. This is the ground that Christ, in His own sacrifice, lovingly paid the price to obtain. This love compels us, as Paul would say. We too are driven inwardly like these mighty men. We are compelled by a great love. Our lives are literally laid down for the sake of God's kingdom and God's purpose.

These mighty men were David's ultimate secret weapon in that hour. Out of the entire army, these dedicated ones stood out, and it is no different in our day. Friends, it has always been true that there are ones who stand out because they are wholehearted. It is the will of God that all of us be wholehearted! The will of God is for all of us to be completely given over to Him. It is His will that we all become His inheritance and share in His heritage fully. It is His will that we all see the fullness of His testimony and His representation, that we live in that relationship of full companionship with Him.

That is God's desire for every believer and for all of humanity, if they would come to Him. Yet some simply are not going to come to that place of dedication. They refuse to pay the price. Many refuse to embrace that life. They refuse. That's their choice. But some of us are going to give ourselves fully and completely to Him and come into the fullness of the relationship that He desires with us. We can come into His purpose, His desires, His interests, and His concerns. I want to spur us onto this: what better prize shall we give ourselves to?

Note 1 Chronicles 19. Here we read that David's envoys were mistreated. And David acted quickly. He acted in a way consistent

with the sin committed against his messengers. It says in verse 8, “When David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army, the mighty men.” Make a note. David went after them with the best of his weapons. I mean this: he sent those men who were filled with the Spirit of God, along with the entire army, out to fight.

Now, the offending people had summoned all kinds of warriors from other nations to help them combat David and his company of men. Ammon sent 1,000 talents of silver to hire horsemen and chariots from Mesopotamia. Another 32,000 chariots came out to fight with them. But it didn’t matter. We can see in the outcome of this fight that they were overwhelmed by the army of God and His mighty men. So it doesn’t matter the odds. If God is with you, the odds aren’t going to mean anything. One will be a match for 1,000, and two for 10,000 in this fight because the Spirit of the Lord is in operation in and through His people. Be encouraged!

Our Corporate Purpose

Before I end, I want to point out one other aspect of these mighty men that is key for us to understand. They go beyond the principle of simple devotion to one person. They are not only devoted to David, they are devoted to God and to the purpose of God through the whole of His nation. There is a corporate purpose that propels them, and the mighty men understand, as does David, that for the corporate purpose of God to be established, they must help David. David could not take the corporate purpose of God fully upon his own shoulders and carry it. Others had to come around him to help that corporate purpose be established and realized. And those who came around him were these commanders of the army, these mighty men of David.

So when we come to 1 Chronicles 20, we find Israel at war with the Philistine giants again. Now you know as I do that David’s life of notoriety (if you can call it that) began by killing Goliath the giant. For David this was no big thing. God had already trained

him through his killing of the lion and the bear. I want you to think that through for a moment.

When a lion or a bear comes in among a shepherd's sheep herd and snatches one of the young ones and crushes it in its mouth as they normally do, killing that lamb and then proceeding off with the lamb, how many shepherds have you ever heard of who chased down that lion or that bear, snatched the dead lamb out of its mouth, and then killed the beast? I don't know about you, but I have never heard of anyone doing that except David. That's not natural, brothers and sisters. That's not normal. That's not human. That's the Spirit of God in a man. I think we can all agree upon that.

How we need the Holy Spirit in this hour! If our expectation is only natural, we are completely missing the Lord. In this battle, this fight, if we are just relying upon our own strength and not being strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might, we are completely missing the will of God. God would be in us unto exploits. The Spirit of God would be in us unto the impossible made possible by the Holy Spirit. We mustn't expect God for the possible in this fight; we must expect God for the impossible.

We say, "Well, nothing can ever change in this city." Well? Why not? Why can't we believe God for the impossible in our cities, in our communities, in the congregations of God? Why can we not believe that God's will is a full testimony of Himself in the congregation of God? God's will is for a full testimony of Himself in our town, in our city, in our community. Let's believe the Holy Spirit to be in us as the Holy Spirit was in these mighty men, to make us to be those types of warriors and those types of priests.

We find the purpose of God working in David to kill the giant Goliath, then we find a corporate purpose of God here in 1 Chronicles 20, when they war with the Philistines again. As you read this passage, notice it was David's mighty men who were killing the giants. I want us to note that fact. David could not kill all the giants. Not only that, David shouldn't kill all the giants.

I want to say this to us as churches now: one man is not supposed to take on all the spiritual forces of evil in the high places or to confront all of these giants of demonic powers in the heavenly realms. There is a corporate purpose, in addition to the individual purpose, of God through us as well. Yes, David had his part. Some of us are going to have that part where God uses us to take on some of those demonic powers, but it eventually must advance to where the corporate body, not one man, is taking on these powers. That is what we see in 1 Chronicles 20.

We see Abashai taking on a giant. We see others taking on these giants. Jonathan is taking on the giants. What we are seeing then is this: it moves from a single vessel to a corporate vessel. Isn't that what God is after now? He seeks a corporate, worldwide, international vessel. Isn't that what the Lord has been talking about? He wants an international army.

What He has said to me, and what He is saying to others is that He wants an international army, warriors in the Spirit, priestly warriors, who know how to stand before the Lord and stand before the enemy. By enemy, I mean the real enemy, these spiritual forces of wickedness in high places. Isn't that true? Isn't that what He is wanting? He wants men and women who know how to be before the Lord and know how to fight on their knees in prayer. He wants men and women who don't run away from the enemy but stand in the name of the Lord, vessels who are filled with the Holy Spirit like the mighty men. They are like David, filled with the Holy Spirit, through whom God wins a great victory. These vessels stand against these spiritual giants, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in high places. God is after that dynamic in this day, brothers and sisters. I say this with the fire of God upon me right now. God is after that!

For too long, friends, the enemy has gone untouched! He has operated against us unchallenged and with impunity. Now I don't want us to be foolish in this fight. But God is looking for an international army. He is looking for men and women, young and old,

who will again bow their knees before the Lord and win the fight on their knees so that they can stand before the enemy. We may stand before him practically and spiritually in our churches, in our homes, in our marriages. We can stand before the enemy and see him routed. We mean to see the enemy's power broken. The realization of that begins before the Lord. To be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might is to be in that place of relational intimacy with the Lord, to make that place before Him a priority of life. God, move us onto that ground.

Make Time for the Lord

You know, if the enemy has his way in this, friends, you will never have a prayer life, you will never have a quiet time before the Lord, you will never have that place of intimacy. But that is not the will of God. Let's refuse to give that ground away to the adversary anymore. Let's allow the Holy Spirit of God in us to take that ground again regarding our own hearts, regarding our own time. Let's reprioritize our very lives to make time for the Lord. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to sever, emancipate, and cut away needless distractions.

If we are battling with no time for the Lord, we need a severance. We need an emancipation. We need God to swoop into our hearts and reorder our priorities. We need to make time for the Lord. Cut off the TV. Cut off the distractions and get before the Lord. Wouldn't you say that that's worth it? To be before the Lord more than in front of a TV? I am not saying it's evil. TV is not evil, although it can be. I'm telling you it is a huge distraction. People are saying, "I have no time," but we need to ask ourselves how much time are we giving to other unnecessary things. What I am saying to us is this: allow God to reprioritize. There is time.

You may say, "Well, I have this responsibility and that responsibility." My question to you is this: is it God who is giving you that responsibility, or are you taking that responsibility upon yourself? Is your job dominating you to the point that you don't have a

prayer life, you don't have a family life? Get a different job. You are not here just to work a job. That is strong language, isn't it, brothers and sisters? Bear with me for a second. I would rather have a job that allowed me time with the Lord and my family than be dominated by a job that does not allow me to have either of those. God can help you find that job, but if you are already capable of setting your own hours in your job, then you need the priority of God in your heart. The job is not the problem; you are.

God is looking for mighty men and women—like David's mighty men and women—who are completely loyal to God first and foremost. He seeks those who have in their hearts the kingdom. Their desire, their interests, their concerns, their purposes are completely aligned with the Lord's. The Lord has filled them with His mind, His heart, His interests, His concerns, His desires, and they lovingly devote themselves completely and fully to His intention and purpose. That is motivated by the inward Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord within them who has a hold of them and who has given them the mind of Christ and the heart of God.

David was a man after God's own heart, and I want you to note how that is phrased: David's heart was after God's heart. What was in God's heart? Note that David's heart was after what was in God's heart. That means this: God's interests and concerns were the burden of David's heart. And it is true with the mighty men. God's interests and concerns, God's heart in the matter had become the burden of their hearts. Now, God give us that! Can you pray that with me? I'm praying that. God give me that burden of the Lord, to where Your desire and concern eternally is my desire and concern. Keep me from anything other than that.

As we progress forward in these days, we are going to see more and more this great need for—let me say it in military terms—an elite military unit. I do not mean this as spiritually elite, but militarily proven. I am speaking of God's mighty men and women. They have their heart in the kingdom. Their heart is firstly for the King. They are in love with the King, and He is in love with them. They

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want that King to rule over them, and they want that King to bring them, as a corporate people, into the place of His full heart, His full desire, His full intention, and His full purpose. Brothers and sisters, we can fight for that, and we must. The enemy would keep us in a place of compromise and mixture, less than fullness. Let's fight the good fight of faith and take hold of the promises. Are you with me? Amen.