

03 – WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE

- ✓ If you search the term “Spiritual Warfare” on Amazon, it returns over 80,000 entries. (Clearly, this is a popular topic.) Sadly, not everything that’s written about Spiritual Warfare is Biblical. There are at least two common mistakes I see in Spiritual Warfare teaching.

Mistake #1 – Adding to the Word

- ✓ A while back, I introduced you to two words – Exegesis and Eisegesis.
 - a.) **Exegesis** comes from a Greek word which means “to bring out of”. (When you exegete a passage, you read the text, you see what’s there, and you “bring out” certain ideas and talk about them.)
 - b.) **Eisegesis**, on the other hand, means “to read into”. (You read the passage, then grab some ideas “out of the ozone” and force them onto the text. And you teach those “ozone ideas” as fact.)
- ✓ The Truth Is: A *lot* of Eisegesis takes place when people teach on Spiritual Warfare. Let me give you an example.

Luke 11:21-22 – “When **a strong man**, fully armed, guards his home, everything he owns is safe. But if **someone stronger** attacks, defeats and disarms him, then the stronger man will do what he wants with the other man’s things.”

- ✓ The “strong man” in the verse is Satan, and the “stronger man” who defeats him is Jesus. (Because Jesus was stronger than Satan, He could disarm him and plunder his “house”.)
- ✓ **That’s the ONLY mention of “the Strongman” in the Bible.** (What we just read is *all there is*. Literally, two verses.)
- ✓ Now, let me quote from a book on Spiritual Warfare: **“There are sixteen strongmen in the Bible, each having ‘lesser demons’ under them. A strongman is a keeper of confiscated goods and has enough power to confront the angel of blessings ... First you need to bind the**

strong man & place the Blood at the root where he came in. Close those doors and seal them with the Blood of Jesus. Then send those demons to Jesus for judgment.”

- ✓ Let me ask you a question. In order for an idea to be “scriptural”, what do you need? Scripture! (If there’s no Scripture, then your idea isn’t scriptural.)
- ✓ Look again at the passage I just quoted. There’s not one verse to support any of those statements. (The entire paragraph came straight out of the author’s imagination. Yet, he’s teaching it as fact.)

Mistake #2 – Acting Weird

- ✓ For some reason, when people talk about Spiritual Warfare, they get weird. Read the gospels! Jesus wasn’t weird. (Children were attracted to Jesus. Think About It: Kids aren’t drawn to “weird”. Kids *run away* from weird.) Jesus wasn’t weird. The Apostles weren’t weird. Don’t you be weird.

How Does the Bible Define “Spiritual Warfare”?

- ✓ I think our definition of warfare has been too narrow. (If something horrible happens – if we get cancer or go broke – then we’ll consider it “warfare”. But the Bible’s definition is *much* broader than that.) There are at least six things that the Bible calls “warfare”.

1. Controlling Your Thoughts is Called “Warfare”.

2 Cor. 10:3-5 – “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not **war** after the flesh: (For **the weapons of our warfare** are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds) ...

- ✓ What are strongholds? I’m glad you asked! Some warfare teachers define strongholds as “areas of your city where the devil has gained control”. As Christians, (they say) we’re called to pull those demons down through intercession. That might sound good, but it’s nowhere

in the passage!

- ✓ Remember exegesis and eisegesis? Our job is to “pull out” of the passage what’s actually there. (If *the verse* doesn’t mention demons, then I have no right to “grab them out of the ozone” and put them into it!) **This passage deals with thoughts**, not demons.

Three Kinds of Thoughts

- A. **Strongholds** – **Strongholds are patterns of thinking** that you’ve built up over time. (“I’m stupid, I’m ugly, I’m worthless, I’m a failure.”) Satan fed you those lies, you believed them, and over time they became a stronghold in your life.
- ✓ The Greek word for stronghold (*ochuróma*) has two meanings. It can refer to a prison or a fortress. What’s the difference? A prison keeps things in, and a fortress keeps things out. **Wrong patterns of thinking do both**. They **lock you into a lie** (that holds you like a prison), and they stand as a fortress, **keeping God’s Word out**.
 - ✓ I’ve seen so many people in that condition. They sit in church and *hear* the Word, but it never *penetrates*. That fortress of lies stands strong, and the Word just bounces off them. **A huge part of spiritual warfare is pulling those strongholds (mindsets) down**.
- B. **Imaginations** – “Casting down imaginings ...” (v. 5)
- ✓ What does it mean to “cast down imaginings”? Suppose you go to the doctor, and he suspects you may have cancer. So, he runs a few tests and sends you home to wait for the results. As soon as you get home, what happens?
 - ✓ If you’re like most people, your imagination starts to run wild! (You *imagine* yourself getting a bad report. You *imagine* yourself dying. You *imagine* your funeral & your children growing up without you.)
 - ✓ **Part of Spiritual Warfare is casting down those “imaginings” and replacing them with the Word of God**. (Don’t *think* that won’t take

some effort! It’s warfare!)

- C. **Ideas** – “Casting down imaginings and every idea that exalts itself against the Word of God.” (v. 5 – Barclay)
- ✓ This Greek word can also mean “reasonings”. When human reasoning rises up to challenge the Word, you need to **cast down reason and stick with the Word**.
 - ✓ **When Satan brings thoughts, and you resist them ... that’s also called “Warfare”.**

2. Controlling Your Flesh Is Called “Warfare”

- ✓ When we think of spiritual warfare, we tend to think of something that happens on the outside. But the Truth Is: There’s a tug-of-war that happens daily, inside every believer. (The flesh is pulling one way, and the spirit & renewed mind are pulling another.) Paul described it this way.

Romans 7:23 (EXB, ESV) – “But I see a different standard working in my body, waging war against the standards that my mind accepts.”

1 Peter 2:11 – “Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”

- ✓ Every day you choose whether you’ll follow the flesh or obey God. Resisting sinful desires is *also* called warfare.

3. Soul-Winning is “Warfare”.

- ✓ In several places, Paul refers to ministry as “warfare” (1 Cor. 9:7, 1 Tim. 1:18, 2 Tim. 2:3–4). **Never will you come into more direct confrontation with the powers of darkness, than when you start to fulfill the Great Commission**.
- ✓ When you start pulling people out of the devil’s kingdom (and winning them to Christ), you’re right in the thick of the battle!

- ✓ William Booth, (founder of the Salvation Army), said this: “While women weep, as they do now, I’ll fight! While little children go hungry, as they do now, I’ll fight! While there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I’ll fight!” That’s a warfare mentality. We could *all* use some of that!

4. Prayer is “Warfare”

- ✓ Eph. 6:12 reminds us that we wrestle against principalities and powers. Where does that wrestling take place? Primarily in prayer.

Col. 4:12 – “Epaphras, who is one of you, always **laboring** fervently in prayer.” (Other Translations say he was “wrestling”, “struggling” or “contending” in prayer.)

- ✓ Paul concludes his discussion of the armor of God by saying, “praying always with every kind of prayer”. Prayer is part of our armor!

5. Praise is “Warfare”

- ✓ Do you remember in 2 Chron. 20, when they sent the singers into the battle before the army? I know they only did that *once*, but it *does* make a point – Praise is warfare! When David played his harp, **the evil spirit departed** from Saul (1 Sam. 16:23). Isa. 61:3 tells us to put on the garment of praise to **drive out a spirit of heaviness**. Praise is a weapon!
- ✓ Psalm 8:2 says, “Out of the mouths of children and babies come songs of praise to you, **in order to silence the enemy.**” (If you’ve ever wished that the devil had an “mute” button, praise is it!)

6. Exercising Your Authority is Warfare

- ✓ This refers to “rebuking”, “binding”, or “resisting” the devil – (all of those are Scriptural terms). Finally, you have the “granddaddy” of Spiritual Warfare – casting out devils. We’ll look at that one last.