

## 9. The Offensive Weapons of the Believer

### The War Against Satan and Demons

In the previous study, we looked at the defensive armor that God has given us. Today we look at three offensive weapons of the Spirit of God that the believer can use in warfare against our evil enemy. There are two that Paul mentions in his letter to the Ephesian church and one that I see elsewhere in Scripture that also causes chaos to the unseen realm of evil spirits. These three weapons are the Word of God, Prayer, and Praise/Worship. We will look at the sword of the Spirit first, the Word of God.

#### 1. The Sword of the Spirit

Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus while chained to a Roman soldier under house arrest. This soldier's task was to guard Paul and ensure he didn't escape. As Paul observed the Roman soldier's armor, it is possible he was inspired to think of the armor God gives us for our spiritual battles as he pens the following words:

<sup>17</sup>Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

<sup>18</sup>And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:17-18).

The sword attached to the soldier's belt served as a metaphor for the Word of God. Paul mentions the kind of sword is the *machaira*, the short, double-edged sword, usually only eighteen inches long, razor-sharp, and very light. It was most effective in hand-to-hand combat with your enemy, something that, as believers, we must do when we "wrestle" with our enemy, the evil spiritual forces in the unseen realms (Ephesians 6:12). This sword was used to parry or deflect every sword thrust by an adversary and used as an offensive weapon in the hand of the Roman soldier. We have our Lord Jesus Christ as a model in using the sword of the Spirit as a defensive and offensive tool against the enemy. When the Holy Spirit led Christ to battle Satan in the wilderness, in each of the three temptations, Jesus used the sword of the Word of God to parry each attack of the enemy.

Do not make the mistake of underestimating the power of this weapon. First of all, it is not a weapon of your own making. It is not, for example, the "sword" of Keith Thomas (you may enter your name here), but the sword of the Spirit. Think about that! Unlike an ordinary weapon, this weapon is divine and not dependent upon your strength or ability but on the power of the weapon itself. This power is directly connected to the King we serve, and He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! His words used in His name carry His authority. Under the Spirit's direction, the Word of God applied to a specific situation in which you find yourself has great power.

God's Word is authoritative. Period. He can give you a word for a specific situation just when you need it. For instance, in my early twenties, I lived for myself and followed my fleshly impulses and desires. Out of nowhere, it seemed, thoughts about eternity started to surface. (I later found out that people were praying for me during this time!). I began to question all sorts of things, e.g., for what was I living? What was I to accomplish while I was on earth? I tried

brushing these thoughts aside, trying my best to ignore them, but it was frustrating because I had no answers that satisfied me.

Then one day, I discovered a book which spoke about the last days, something in which I was highly interested. God used my curiosity to open my heart to His reality. In that book, the writer described the return of Christ and the separation of believers from unbelievers. Because I was born in a “Christian country,” I thought that I was a Christian, but the writer used one Scripture that hooked me in the heart. It was, **“He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathers not, scatters” (Matthew 12:30)**. The writer explained that there is no fence on which to sit. You are in God's Kingdom, or you are outside of it. There is no middle ground. All of a sudden, I saw that, when Jesus would come, I would not be in God's kingdom, for I did not know Christ. I was like a fish caught on a hook of Scripture. No matter how hard I tried, I could not get off that hook! God used that Scripture in my life to prod me to seek the truth, and the Lord did not let me have peace until I finally gave my life to Christ. The truth of God's word was like a sword that pierced me. That one Scripture woke me up and caused me to continue to search. It changed the course of my life.

Martin Luther, the great reformer, had a similar experience with the Word of God stuck in him. He read the Scripture, **“The just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17)**, but the church he was in at the time believed that a person could enter into eternal life by his good works. As a religious work to earn peace and forgiveness, he visited Rome and was told that he would get peace inside his heart by climbing on his knees the twenty-eight white marble steps of the Lateran Staircase. As he moved from step to step, the Holy Spirit would not let him go, but at each step, the thought came to his mind, “The just shall live by faith,” repeating with each step, “The just shall live by faith!” He saw that justification [God's act of removing the guilt and penalty of sin] was by faith alone and not by a man's works. These truths were contrary to everything taught at the time, and God called Luther to raise the banner of God's Word over the traditions of men. This revelation was a turning point for him, and in turn, for those who heard his words when he returned and preached at his church in Germany a changed man, ignited with a fresh revelation of the Word of God. Again, God's word was like a sword that entered his inner being and changed his life.

We have a further example of the power of the Word of God in Scripture. After the resurrection of Christ, on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples came out of the Upper Room where the Holy Spirit filled them, and with several thousand Jews gathered, the Apostle Peter preached the Word of God to them. **“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37)**. The Word of God spoken by Peter was like a sword that cut to the inner core of their hearts.

**Question 1) Has there been a Scripture the Spirit of God has used in your life? Share how this happened and how you responded to it.**

Do not underestimate the power of the Word of God at work in and through the believer in Christ:

<sup>12</sup>For the word of God is living and active. *Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12 Emphasis mine).

God called and filled Charles Finney with the Holy Spirit in nineteenth-century America. He was a man that gave himself to prayer and the ministry of the Word of God. The Lord used him much in preaching from church to church. The presence of the Spirit was on him to such a degree that people that heard him would come under great conviction of heart and feel cut to their very inner being. On one occasion, when Finney was preaching in a schoolhouse, "Suddenly an awful solemnity fell upon the assembly, and the congregation fell from their seats, crying for mercy." Finney said, "If I had had a sword in each hand, I could not have cut them off as fast as they fell. I think the whole congregation was on their knees or prostrated in two minutes." The crying and weeping of the people were so loud that they could not hear Finney's appeal for them to receive the mercy of Christ. "Finney seemed so anointed with the Holy Spirit that people came under conviction of sin just by looking at him. He visited a large factory when holding meetings at Utica, New York. At the sight of him, one of the workers, and then another, and then another broke down and wept under a sense of their sins, and finally, so many were sobbing and weeping that the machinery had to be stopped while Finney pointed them to Christ."<sup>1</sup>

When we speak forth the sword of the Spirit, the authority and presence of God disrupt Satan and his demons. The enemy must bow to a higher authority. As disciples of Christ, we are His ambassadors, and God's authority and government are behind us. We all have people around us, e.g., spouses, family, friends, and co-workers that have resisted our biblical worldview. They are under the deception of the enemy and have a veil over their hearts: "**The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light** of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Be open to the Spirit of God. He can give you a word that will "pierce" through the lies and deceptions which blind your loved ones from the light of God's truth. The Spirit of God knows their inner-most thoughts, defenses, and unanswered questions. Ask God to give you an inspired word that will get past the defenses the enemy has set up. The more you spend time in the word of God and soak up His words, the easier it will be to have the Spirit of God bring these words to your remembrance. Jesus said: "**The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you**" (John 14:26).

We need to be acquainted with the Word of God. When Satan came to Jesus, saying, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread" (Matthew 4:3), Jesus replied by quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3, "**It is written: Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God**" (Matthew 4:4). Just as the physical body needs bread, the staple diet of the Israelite, the believer in Christ needs to grow and be sustained by daily meditation on the Word of God to be spiritually healthy and overcome the evil one. The Word of God is heavenly bread for our spirit.

## 2. Prayer in the Spirit

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from: <https://hopefaithprayer.com/prayernew/charles-finney-intercessors/>

In his letter to the Ephesian church, Paul only mentions one offensive weapon, but it is possible that the offensive weapon of prayer could not be typified by any part of a Roman soldier's armor. Here is Paul's second offensive spiritual weapon:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:18).

Question 2) What do you think is in Paul's mind when he instructs us to pray in the Spirit with all kinds of prayers and requests?

Some among the Church worldwide say that Paul is talking about praying in an unknown tongue. They would remind us of two verses from Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers:

<sup>2</sup>For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit.

<sup>14</sup>For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful (1 Corinthians 14:2, 14).

In talking about offensive prayer (Ephesians 6:18), it is my personal belief that Paul is talking about all kinds of Spirit-led and empowered prayer that break down demonic strongholds, not only in people but also in territory dominated by demonic spirits. Some may be individuals led to pray in an unknown tongue but do not discount prayer in your own language, as the Spirit influences you. Paul writes that not all Christians speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:30). The Corinthians were a very gifted group of people, but I can't see him telling the believers in Ephesus that praying in the Spirit was to pray only in tongues. The Body of Christ is a multi-faceted spiritual organism that uses the gifts and talents of all to pull down spiritual strongholds through many different kinds of prayer. Spirit-led prayer is backed up by the authority of God and the presence of the Spirit.

We have an example of this type of prayer in Acts 4:23-31 after Peter and John were put in jail by the Jewish leadership for the "crime" of healing the lame man at the gate called Beautiful. At their court appearance, under the influence of the Spirit, Peter spoke fearlessly and told the Chief Priests, Scribes, and leaders that they would not stop talking about Jesus. They were released after many threats. Notice what happened when Peter and John returned to the body of believers:

<sup>23</sup>When they had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup>And when they heard *this*, **they lifted their voices to God with one accord** and said, "O Lord, it is you who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, <sup>25</sup>who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David your servant, said, 'why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things? <sup>26</sup>the kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ.' <sup>27</sup>"For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup>to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. <sup>29</sup>"And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, <sup>30</sup>while You

extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” <sup>31</sup>And when they had prayed, **the place where they had gathered together was shaken**, and **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:23-31).

The early disciples saw that their fight was not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces. How did they respond to this demonic persecution? They prayed passionately with voices raised to God. They didn't take turns to pray; they all prayed aloud in unison in various languages as the Holy Spirit led them. In this instance, their meeting place was shaken after they raised their voices to God in Spirit-empowered prayer. The believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the message of God with boldness.

We have a modern-day example of Spirit-led prayer overcoming demonic strongholds over a city in Argentina. In the book by C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer* pages 30-34; there is the story of a strategy to reach the city of Resistencia in the northern province of Chaco, Argentina. Ed Silviso, an Argentinean evangelist, initiated a three-year plan to change the spiritual atmosphere over the city so that people could hear and respond to the Gospel. As of the beginning of 1990, fewer than 6,000 of its 400,000 population were evangelical believers, a mere 1.5 percent. Silviso moved his Harvest Evangelism team members into Resistencia and laid a foundation of prayer, spiritual warfare, and leadership training for over a year. The people responded well and wanted to take authority over their city the following day.

Silviso writes,

A group of 80 showed up and marched into the Plaza de Mayo of Buenos Aires, praying for five hours of intense battle against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. Among other things, the group sensed a spirit of witchcraft and a spirit of death in the Ministry of Social Welfare building where President Peron's notorious warlock, Jose Lopez Riga, had maintained his office. When the group left the plaza, they felt a sense of victory. The principalities and powers were not destroyed, but warfare prayer had in some measure begun to weaken the evil hold on Argentina. Over the city of Resistencia, the people all knew the names of the spirits ruling over the city. San La Muerte, the spirit of death, was perhaps the most powerful.

A large number of citizens of Resistencia were so devoted to San La Muerte that they had tiny bone images of his idol surgically implanted under their skin or their nipples, believing the false promise that this would assure them of a "good death." Other spirits of equal rank turned out to be Pombero, a spirit of division who brought terror, especially to children during the siesta time and at night; Curapi, a spirit of sexual perversion, the Queen of Heaven, a religious spirit, who perverted the true character of the traditional church; and the spirit of Freemasonry, a cleverly disguised form of occult power. Surprisingly, the images of these spirits and their activities were depicted on several large folk art murals in the city's central plaza.

What was the outcome? Ed Silviso reports that the growth graphs of the churches in Resistencia took a decided turn upward beginning in April when the group prayed in the plaza. In one public

event, 250 people were baptized in portable pools. Crowds of almost 17,000 packed into an open field for evangelistic meetings where they burned objects used in occult rituals and witchcraft in a fifty-five-gallon drum each night. Hundreds were healed physically and delivered from demons. At least eighteen new churches started. Most significant of all, the evangelical Christian population of Resistencia virtually doubled in the calendar year of 1990. Perhaps, a weakening sign of the territorial spirits over Resistencia was the tragic fate of the high priestess of the cult of San La Muerte, the spirit of death. Two weeks before the massive evangelistic thrust and after the prayer in the center of the city, her bed caught fire. For some reason, the flames seemed to be selective. They consumed only the mattress, the woman, and her statue of San La Muerte!<sup>2</sup>

I certainly do not encourage any person on their own to take on evil spirits in this way. These believers were over eighty people in one accord and Spirit-led in what they did. I am using the story to illustrate that these things are real and that Jesus has won the victory over them at the cross. When the Body of Christ works together under godly inspired leadership, whole towns and cities can be won to Christ. Are you a part of a biblical expression of Jesus Christ in your town or city? If not, begin to seek the Lord to show you where you are to fellowship. We need each other. It has always been the pattern. Something special happens when God's people stand together in unity. You must have other believers in Christ around you. Being accountable somewhere is a solid defense for you as a believer. It keeps you from being isolated and vulnerable.

Question 3) If the church leaders in your city or town called for massive intercessory prayer, such as that spoken of above, would you go? Would you be reluctant to pray out loud? What would it take to move you to a place where you would cry out to God in prayer with others as described in the above passage in Acts?

### 3. The Weapon of Praise and Worship.

Although Paul does not mention this weapon of the Spirit in his letter to the Ephesians, I think there is a case for bringing it into view when talking about the believer's weapons.

<sup>1</sup>Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod, the tetrarch) and Saul. <sup>2</sup>While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." <sup>3</sup>So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:1-3).

In the Scripture above, worship is not used as a weapon but as a means of drawing close to God and listening for direction from the Holy Spirit. We need God to direct us and empower us in our labor for Him. Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail" (Matthew 16:18). We should not abandon listening to the Spirit in favor of "big business models." Many pastors have been disappointed that what works in one church does not work for them. God has a strategy for your city, town, village if we only listen to His voice.

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<sup>2</sup>C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, Regal Books, Pages 30-34.

Worship was a weapon used against a demonically inspired attack on Israel by a large army formed by a union between the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites in 2 Chronicles 20. Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah at the time, gathered all the people to Jerusalem, and they all began to cry out to the Lord in intense prayer, confessing their inability to defend their families against the attack. God spoke prophetically to them while fasting and praying to God for deliverance.

Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. <sup>16</sup>Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. <sup>17</sup>You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you (2 Chronicles 20:15-17).

What was God's plan? The direction was to have their army have the worship team lead them against the enemy. They were not to fight this battle—God was going to fight for them. Under the direction of the Spirit, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and praise Him for the splendor of His holiness as they went out at the head of the army:

**<sup>22</sup>As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes** against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. <sup>23</sup>The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another. <sup>24</sup>When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, **they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped** (2 Chronicles 20:22-24).

At the Lord's direction, Spirit-inspired worship took place with the result that the demonically inspired attack was broken down by God moving on behalf of His people, not requiring them to fight at all physically. They were not to compete in their strength but rely on His power. The Lord set an ambush for Israel's enemies, and the enemy fought against one another and destroyed themselves.

At different times in my life, I have sensed God pushing me into situations where I have had to look to Him to take the controls and for me to stand behind Him and watch Him control the situation.

In 1984, while living in Israel, Sandy, my wife, fell pregnant with our first child. During the early stages, bleeding and other symptoms caused us to seek a doctor in Bethlehem. He had all the latest equipment and used ultrasound to listen for a heartbeat. However, after his tests, he could find no heartbeat and concluded that it was a tumor mimicking pregnancy symptoms. He scheduled us for an operation to remove the tumor for the following week. We went home devastated, not knowing what to think. The confusing part was that we felt that we had a word from God telling us the name for this baby! She was to be called "Anna," after Anna, the prophetess mentioned in Luke 2: 36-38. The enemy was quick to drop the thought in my mind, "Hah! You asked bread of God, and He gave you a stone!" Why would God give us this word,

this hope, only to take it away and replace it with what seemed like a stone? We thought that we had received a blessing from God, only to be faced with a “mountain” of a problem! Sandy and I called friends at the church we attended, and they stood with us in prayer. God spoke to us from a Scripture from the Old Testament Book of Zechariah. I will quote from the King James version as that is how God gave it at the time; “**Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone of it with shoutings, crying Grace, grace unto it**” (Zechariah 4:6-7).

I am fully aware that this Scripture speaks of a specific time and a particular act in Scripture. However, this is the marvelous thing about God's Word. He can take a word like this and ignite your heart for a particular situation, and that is what He did. Sandy and I stepped out in faith and obedience to what we perceived to be God's Rhema word to us. We laid hands on Sandy's abdomen and spoke the words of the text, "grace, grace," loudly!

Afterward, we lifted our voices together in praise and proclamation. We felt a sense of peace about the whole thing and proceeded with our appointment for the operation, trusting that the Lord had it in His hands. The doctor expected to continue with the procedure, but before doing the DNC operation, we asked him to check by one more ultrasound before the surgery. He could see that Sandy was very distraught, so he agreed. When he did, he was astounded to hear the heartbeat and see the amniotic sac, something not visible before. I do not know if the doctor was wrong the first time or God gave us a creative miracle. All I know is that we were given hope through God's word, and our daughter is a miracle to us!

Not every story in our lives has had a triumphant answer like this one. Sometimes, we suffer and do not understand why. In everything, God can be glorified, and in this, there is always victory. When we realize that He sifts everything that comes to us through His own hands, we can trust in His love. Our success is the victory He has already won for us. His strength is our strength; His armor is our armor. He does not ask us to fight this battle by ourselves but offers us His power and His peace amid the storm. The battle indeed does belong to the Lord.

\*We named our daughter Anna Grace Thomas. Anna is the Latin form of Hannah's Hebrew name, which means “favor” or “grace.” We settled on the name “Anna” before this experience as we chose it from Luke chapter 2 before Sandy even became pregnant. That is why we chose the middle name, Grace, so that her name, in its meaning, is "*grace, grace.*" It reminds us of how He gave us grace in this situation.

Prayer: Thank you, King Jesus, for being the Captain of our Salvation, our High Tower, our Fortress, and our shelter in the storm. For all that You are and for every spiritual weapon you put at our disposal, we thank You and give You praise!

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