

## 7 PART STUDY ON “SPIRITUAL WARFARE”

**SESSION FOUR:** How are we called to fight? What is our role in spiritual warfare?

### Introduction:

Up to this point we have talked in detail regarding Satan; his origins, his armies in the form of fallen angels and demons. But after 3 sessions split over 4 lessons, we are now going to embark on the questions that directly affect us both in our walk and in our understanding of what we are called to do in this war. How are we called to fight? How are we called to engage the enemy? Are we called to engage the enemy at all? These are all interesting questions but questions that need an answer. And so session four will be solely focused on trying to clear up and clarify our role within this spiritual war raging on around us...but we must first understand the war itself.

When engaging any enemy we must understand the objective. It may seem simple - the objective is to defeat the enemy. But what happens when the enemy you are fighting has already been defeated? What does it mean to war against an enemy who has already lost? This is the situation we find ourselves in; not engaging enemies that have a chance in winning but instead engaging spiritual enemies that are truly doomed with no chance of victory no matter what they do. This is a strange battle to fight in and yet for some reason there is still a battle. This enemy, which has no chance of victory, has either done one of two things: convinced itself that it can win (i.e. lied to itself) OR is simply wanting to bring as many down with it as possible. I actually believe it is both. Satan in the bible is called a liar “[When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.](#)” (John 8:44). There is strong evidence to suggest that one of the curses of having an addiction to lying is that the person begins to actually believe their own lie. I would not be surprised in the slightest if the universe’s greatest liar, who has lied from the beginning, is so deluded that he believes victory is still possible, despite all of the evidence to the contrary.

My point in saying this is that before we can do go any further, we need to understand the VICTORY that Christ has won for us. The reason this is so important is that we are not meant to fight as if there is a chance of the enemy winning, instead we are meant to stand victorious in Jesus Christ knowing that the enemy is defeated. When we learn to live a life of VICTORY in Christ we will truly then be effective in the battles we face. It is when the Christian faces spiritual forces or spiritual battles already with a defeated understanding of the cross and salvation that they falter and bend under the oppression. The devil is a liar and so why are we surprised when the enemy comes against us first with lies of defeat, weakness and loss. Christ preaches a victory, strength and glory all through him and in him. As always, it comes down to a simple crossroad - who do we listen to? Who do we believe...the lies of Satan or the truth of Christ? Based on what camp you fall into, the result will either be victory or defeat, not defeat in terms of salvation but defeat in terms of your effectiveness against the spiritual darkness of this world.

## THE WAR HAS ALREADY BEEN WON

Before ANYTHING! Before any lessons or advice or direction. We CANNOT afford to enter spiritual warfare without understanding this absolutely key and important point. The war has already been won! This is of the utmost importance for us and for our paths going forward. We know that one of the areas in which the enemy manipulates and comes against us most is our minds and so it shouldn't surprise us when the enemy and his forces try to change our perspectives and outlooks on life. It is sometimes through these perspectives and outlooks that either faith can be built, or doubts can arise. Depending on how we look at a situation will influence how we handle it.

For example, we have the story of the 12 spies going into the promised land ([Numbers 13](#)). Let's take a look at what the two different 'perspectives' were of these 12 spies:

Numbers 13: 30-33

But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it." <sup>31</sup>Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are." <sup>32</sup>So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. <sup>33</sup>And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

Here we see two different outlooks upon a situation. God has commanded them to go out and retake the promised land and he has told them prior to this that HE will give it into their hands. However, he commands spies to be sent out. Why? Did God not know what was there? Of course he did, but the Lord wanted to test the faith of his people - when they see the giants, when they see the many fortified cities and people will they either trust me and my ability to win this war for them or will they trust their own human understanding and weigh things up on the scales of human ability?

**But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it."**

Out of this story we want to be like the Caleb and Joshua's of the world. Caleb says to the people:

**Let us go up at once:**

Let's go right now! Caleb had no doubt, he simply knew one fact...THE VICTORY WAS ALREADY WON. Why? Because God had given these people into their hands, it wasn't a question of IF

but instead a question of WHEN. Caleb and Joshua's perspective was not one of human strength or human reasoning but instead one of faith, not in their own ability but in the ability of their God. If their sovereign God had said something was going to be done they trusted that it indeed was going to be done. Why doubt? Why hesitate? Caleb and Joshua understood that they already had the victory in God, they just needed to go and claim it. How often in our Christian walk do we understand this truth; that our victory is certain, it is not up for debate or argument, it is a fact? How do we know this? Because our God tells us so and we will look at how God tells us later on.

### for we are well able to overcome it:

We are able to overcome it. WE. Now Caleb and Joshua were not under the illusion that in their strength they were able to but instead they were faithfully understanding that if God is with them who can be against them? Giant or not giant. There are countless stories of men and women whose faith led them to do mighty works which from a human perspective would have been impossible. Our God makes the impossible possible "For with man this is impossible but with God all things are possible." (Mathew 19:26).

**Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are."**

### for they are stronger than we are:

Now here we see another 'we' but it is taken instead from an unfaithful understanding, the WE here refers to only the soldiers and the capability they have, purely based on human understanding. They have taken God and the victory they have in him out of the equation and are instead focusing on the overwhelming odds that face them. In short, they already feel defeated. They do not see victory through God; their hearts, minds and perspectives have all been led to doubt and defeat BEFORE the battle has even started. We as Christians can NEVER hope to see victory in any area of our lives, whether to do with spiritual warfare or even to do with sinful tendencies, if we approach those areas already defeated, focusing on our own strength rather than the victory we already have in Jesus Christ.

### for they are stronger than we are:

They are stronger than them, yes but are they stronger than God? Now this is so crucial for us going forwards in our spiritual warfare study. I have said this before that from a human standpoint we are not able to contend with any spiritual being, they have so many advantages over us. Firstly, they are unseen and it is almost impossible to defeat an invisible enemy. Secondly, they are far stronger in almost every area from their knowledge, understanding, physical strength and abilities. They are neither fazed by weapons of man, nor by man's strength, nor by man's intellect, nor by man's knowledge or fury. No weapon of war made by man has ever or will ever be able to defeat them - a nuclear bomb does nothing just as a bullet

does not touch them. Even if the person within whom a demon is dwelling is killed, the demon lives on. And so **THEY ARE STRONGER THAN WE ARE.**

However, they do not even come close to being stronger than God. Now, in the same way that we have two examples here showing us faith and doubt, we too must decide where we stand. We can either look at the sinful areas of our lives which the enemies take advantage of and the spiritual oppression and possession in the world with a perspective of doubt, fear and weakness, in essence being defeated before we even start. OR we can face it as Joshua and Caleb did, trusting not in their own strength but instead in the strength of the one who has sent them, the strength of the one who has said they will have victory. When facing these things, we must understand first and foremost that the Lord has already defeated them.

**So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height.”**

And here we see the effect on the people of God when instead of faith, victory and trust is preached - doubt, defeat and fear is instilled instead. These 10 spies came back already defeated with no understanding or trust in God and spread this fear among the people. Something that is commonplace today when teaching and preaching about spiritual warfare and sin. It is taught among the wider Christian church that dominion over sin through the holy spirit and Christ is impossible and so don't bother, be defeated before you even try and so why bother trying. Just don't even go into the realm of it being a possibility. We are taught regarding spiritual warfare that the enemy is too vast, too great, too many and so from a human perspective, if we have been inactive in this area for so long, why start now? We are defeated before we even start. Fear and defeat spread quickly. But so do faith and victory. I hope by the end of this document you will have received the latter.

We are in a war yes, but it is a war in which God has already given us victory.

#### **AN IMPORTANT NOTE:**

Notice something here, that when Caleb and Joshua did eventually go into the promised land with the new generation of Israel after 40 years in the wilderness, they did have to fight, they still had to take up sword and shield and engage the enemy. They knew the victory was certain, but it wasn't a sitting back sort of victory, it was a victory they had to go and take in faith and in trust of the God who was sending them. We are not called to be laid back and wait, we are called to engage and fight. However, before we ever get to the front lines, we must first understand and believe that God has given us victory already through Jesus Christ and the cross.

## HOW HAS THE WAR BEEN WON?

So the spiritual war has already been won, but how? How has it been won? Where has our victory come from and where does it continue to be from? What does our victory look like in the spiritual realm and what does it look like in our personal lives? These are all questions I hope to see scripture answer for us now.

1 Corinthians 15:57

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

One thing we know for certain is our victory is THROUGH our Lord Jesus Christ. Made possible by him but also only made possible through him. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Now many when focussing on this victory may say “yes Aaron I know that I now have victory in terms of having heaven and eternal life but how does that help me while I’m here?” Well to that person my first answer would be that they have seriously misunderstood Christ’s work on the cross. They have not grasped the full magnitude of what happened on that day at Calvary and have not understood the freedom Christ has bought for us, not just for the next life after death but for the life we are living right now. All of which is essential to our role in spiritual warfare and our understanding of it.

I would like to take us through some of the VICTORIES we have through and in Jesus Christ so that we may better understand how this impacts our approach to the spiritual battle. That like Joshua and Caleb we may approach the battle with a faithful courage rather than a doubting defeat.

Below are what I see as 7 victories we have through our Lord Jesus Christ; they are in no particular order of importance and there are more which we could add to this list:

### **1. NO LONGER CONDEMNED**

Romans 8:37

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3

**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.**

**now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus:**

One of the greatest weapons the enemy uses against us is that of condemnation; in our fallen state and because of our weakness we can fall into sin and have to turn and repent and be forgiven. However, the enemy's forces waste no time in whispering in our ear all sorts of guilt inducing condemnations. This can lead to a sort of spiritual depression and make us very vulnerable to not only demonic oppression but also further temptation and sin as our strength fails.

However, look at what is being declared here, there no longer is any condemnation. Why? Because Christ has taken all condemnation on the cross, we are now able to come before God, repent and have clear conscience before him with no fear of condemnation but rather a healthy God-fearing understanding that we are corrected and disciplined by our loving Father in heaven. When we as Christians have the full understanding of what it is to live a life free of condemnation, we rob the enemy of one of his greatest weapons, it is through this understanding that we are able to be at peace with clear consciences.

**For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death:**

This is so important to understand in terms of our victory. Once again, the question could be asked what all of this has to do with spiritual warfare. Well actually it is crucial, we must first understand our position before God so that we are able to enter into the battle with a clear understanding of the victory we have in Christ. Here we see that death and sin no longer have any hold over us. Our sin has been defeated by Jesus on the cross and the sting of death removed through Jesus's victorious resurrection. When the enemy comes reminding us of our sin and reminding us of death, we are able to remember and call upon the great gifts of Jesus Christ and remind ourselves that actually through Jesus Christ both sin and death is defeated in our lives. True victory in every way starts with that realisation.

## **2. THE SPIRIT OF GOD**

John 14: 26

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Romans 8:11

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Through the sacrifice of Christ, we are blessed with yet another gift, the Holy spirit. Jesus told us in his word that the spirit was not able to indwell man until he had ascended to the Father, it was only after his glorification and ascension that we see the day of Pentecost happen where the first human beings are fully and completely indwelt by the spirit of God. This is HUGE for our understanding of victory. The holy spirit is one of the factors that separates us from all other people in the world void of a faith in the living Jesus Christ. It is through this spirit that we are granted spiritual gifts and it is this very spirit that the demons recognise in us. It is the seal, the Christian identification which solidifies our place in Christ.

**he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you:**

HE WILL TEACH YOU ALL THINGS – we have the very spirit of God leading us, teaching us, comforting us, guiding us, protecting us, correcting us and loving us. We do not enter the battle alone, we do not face the enemy weapon less or defenceless, we have the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead with us.

**If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you:**

A big IF indeed. I do not think we have come close to recognising or understanding the power which resides inside of every spirit filled believer; if we did I doubt we would walk in such doubt and fear so much of our lives. It is time for God's people to wake up to the realisation of the gifts Jesus has given us and made possible for us to receive. Joshua and Caleb understood the power that accompanied them, when they looked out at their circumstances around them physically the circumstances paled in comparison to the realisation of the invisible might and strength of God. Now, whereas that strength was EXTERNAL to them in that time, in our day and age that power is now INTERNAL inside of our very bodies. not that the strength resides in any power WE possess. But rather the fact we have God the spirit living within our mortal bodies, communicating with us, and guiding us in every good work God has for us.

We have to first acknowledge this mysterious and quite incredible truth; this all plays into a change of our understanding and perspective of life around us. How can we walk in victory when we have yet to understand the presence of God inside of our very bodies?

### **3. NO LONGER ENSLAVED TO SIN**

Romans 6: 6-7

We know that the person we used to be was crucified with him to put an end to sin in our bodies. Because of this we are no longer slaves to sin. <sup>7</sup>The person who has died has been freed from sin.

The devil has the whole world under his dominion and under his limited will; he is able to tempt and manipulate whole entire nations who are all under the slavery of individual and communal sins. There is no hope in defence or fighting back as they are dead in their sins; their sins have dominion over them and not the other way around. This is another one of the enemy's greatest weapons against humanity and the way in which he corrupted God's creation in the first place. However, we have yet another victory already won over the kingdom of darkness, once again bought for us through Jesus Christ (as all of our victories are) and therefore we are no longer enslaved by sin.

### **We know that the person we used to be was crucified with him to put an end to sin in our bodies:**

It isn't that the old us has now been released from sin and now we are free. It is far more severe than that. The old us has actually been crucified with Christ, no longer alive, we are now a new creation. We may look the same, sound the same, talk the same and walk the same but we are not the same. Spiritually, an entire change of heart, mind and character has taken place, a new creation born of God has been made with that person. With that new creation comes a new spirit which we just talked about and a new destiny, not one for hell and suffering but instead one for heaven and peace with God. And sin, although still in existence and with the possibility of being brought in through temptation, no longer has dominion over the life of a born again Christian.

### **The person who has died has been freed from sin.**

An amazing shift has taken place; whereas before in our old selves sin had dominion over us, now as new creations we have dominion over sin. Through the power of the holy spirit, we are now able to overcome temptation and place the sinful areas of our lives under the sanctifying power of the holy spirit and see true, consistent change happen in those areas. The greatest lie ever told among the saints is one of defeat before an attempt of victory. The lie tells us that we are simply sinners and that we will always just continue to sin in the areas we struggle in, and nothing will ever change. This is the same as the 10 spies coming back and saying "we are defeated, God is not able to overcome these enemies." What we are saying when we profess that lie is that the holy spirit is not strong enough to overcome the sinful areas of our lives through his incredible work in our lives.

However, HE IS. God is greater than us and stronger than us and he is able to build in us, through discipline and correction, a greater strength against temptation and a greater dominion over sinful tendencies. Now I'm not saying we will be perfect as there are far more aspects of being perfect than just sin; however, I am saying we need to understand that victory, along with the others. So many believers stumble in all kinds of sin defeated in their understanding and perspective not realising the power of God living within them and the fact they are no longer the old but made anew in power and glory by Jesus Christ.

## 4. DEATH DEFEATED

1 Corinthians 15:55-57

<sup>55</sup> “O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We see in the book of Job where Satan says to God “Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life.” (Job 2:4).

Why did Satan say this? Because Satan has been able to use the fear of death and loss to dictate to so many human beings over history. The fear of death can be so overwhelming that people don't leave their homes, don't associate with anyone, spend their lives trying to prolong their lives or even avoid any sort of faith in order not to be confronted with the fact that one day they will die. Death is seen as the ultimate devastation in our world today. Death is both fascinating for many but dreaded by most; the devil knows this and uses that fascination to create all sort of occult practises in the world today mixed with all sorts of false spiritualism while also using the fear element to make people curse God and rebel even more with an attitude of “I only live once so I may as well do what I want before I die.”

**O death, where is your victory?**

**O death, where is your sting?**

However, this is not the Christians walk. We are called to no longer live under the oncoming fear of death but instead to understand death has now become to us simply a doorway home. We are not called to run toward it as fast as we can as life is a gift in itself but, at the same time, we are not called to run away from it as fast as we can as if it was something to be scared of. One of the greatest victories we have through Jesus Christ is our victory over death as the greatest and most terrifying enemy of humanity has become to us nothing more than a confirmation of our belonging in heaven. It has gone from a lion to a puppy all through Jesus Christ on the cross, no longer intimidating but instead bringing upon us thoughts of eternity with our Lord.

However, for how many Christians is this the case? Does death still have a victory over you? Does it still sting to consider or think about? Are you living a lie in being defeated by an enemy that has already been beaten by Christ? Once again this is about understanding, perspective and belief. Do we truly believe the full scale of Jesus's victory on the cross in our lives TODAY or do we sing the songs, read the verses but when it comes to our own reality we quickly

surrender to doubt and defeat. Are you fully assured? Fully confident? Fully faithful in this area?

If the answer is YES, then amen! However, if you're being honest and it's a NO, that's ok... before we can grow, first we must know we need growth, before we can be helped first we must know we need it. The bible says *"ask and you shall receive, seek and it shall be found, knock and the door will be opened."* (Mathew 7:7). Pray to your Father in heaven and through the Lord Jesus Christ ministering to you via the holy spirit that he will bring you into that fresh understanding of victory through and in him.

**But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

And here we see again, the VICTORY through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is only through him, in him, by him that we can see victory. Caleb and Joshua did not see victory in anything other than the fact that they knew that God was with them. In the same way we cannot find victory in anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ and his sacrifice. HE IS OUR VICTORY.

## 5. GOD'S FAVOUR AND STRENGTH

Psalm 44:3

For not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm save them,  
but your right hand and your arm, and the light of your face, for you delighted in them.

A lot of spiritual warfare for the believer is a constant state of renewing our minds to the truths we have in Christ. Truths that can be the difference between us having a victorious or defeated attitude towards our walk in the Lord. One of the greatest comforts I find in the daily battles I may face or even the monumental moments of oppression or suffering that I may come across in others' lives or even my own is this: By God's strength and not by my own.

Now if a Christian is able to understand this simple lesson then in much of their spiritual walk they will find peace and joy regardless of what it may be they are called to face. The Lord tells us *"his burden is light and his yolk is easy"* (Mathew 11:28). But sometimes it can seem quite the opposite; it can seem overwhelming, stressful and burdensome. However, in the times that I have felt like that, the Lord has often bought me back to my knees and reminded me that THE BATTLE IS HIS. I may be the soldier on the ground but it is the Lord who does it through me by his power, his strength and his might. Now I don't know about you but I would much prefer to be using the power of the almighty God, creator of everything and Lord of all than just my own strength.

Now some may say, “Aaron I have heard the saying ‘use the Lord’s strength’ so many times but what does that look like?” That’s a great question and a great point. There are several ways to ‘use the Lord’s strength’.

- *Prayer – laying down our burdens before the Lord, seeking him in prayer regarding EVERYTHING, asking for his strength.*
- *Faith – seems like an obvious one but like much of what we have talked about, it is futile if you don’t first believe in the fact that the Lord’s strength works through you. If your faith in the indwelling of the holy spirit and of the Lord’s presence in your life is filled with holes of doubt, how can you expect to be assured of his strength working through your life?*
- *Understanding of scripture – the Holy spirit uses the scriptures of God to build our faith as we learn more about our God and his work in our lives, given fresh revelation from scripture as to how he works in and through us. This will of course help change our perspectives and views on life itself.*

**For not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm save them:**

In the same way that the psalmist writes that the battle was not won by him nor was anyone saved by their own arm is the same way we ought to look at the spiritual battles of our lives and the people we lead to the Lord. It is only through the Lord that we are able to have victory and only through his mighty hand that we are able to be bold, courageous and stand for what is true in a world which wants to bow to what is false.

**but your right hand and your arm, and the light of your face, for you delighted in them:**

It is of course by God’s right hand and arm and the light of God’s presence that we are able to overcome the enemies of our war and see the captives set free.

**for you delighted in them:**

God delights in his children. It is an amazing part of our faith to realise that our God delights in his children. Now when we maybe walk astray or stumble the Father can correct us and discipline us in any way he chooses; however, even when we are corrected the bible says [“he disciplines those he loves and corrects those he takes pleasure in.”](#) (Hebrews 12:6). Our God delights in us because of Jesus Christ and him bringing us into the family of God and making us children of the same Father. This delight is unchanging, his love is unchanging and his favour over your life through Christ is also unchanging. It is a dependable truth that we are able to cling to in times of suffering and need. That we have God in heaven who cares for us and loves us. A God who desires our best and has our lives in the palm of his hands.

## 6. ULTIMATE VICTORY – PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

Romans 8: 35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Potentially our strongest source of comfort during times of bereavement, suffering, persecution, trials or spiritual warfare is the above fact that nothing is able to separate us from the love of God. Now it is no coincidence that for centuries men and women have debated the age-old question of “can you lose your salvation?” I find it interesting how our enemy would love nothing more than for us to be uncertain toward our future, uncertain of our assurance in Christ and continually debating amongst ourselves our own salvation rather than outwardly looking for the salvation of others. It is no coincidence that the enemy has planted seeds of doubt throughout history of how salvation works and its longevity. If Satan is in any way able to take our focus off the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and place the emphasis on us, he will. Because Satan too knows that our victory is solely found in and through Jesus. If he is able to bring any sort of works-based mentality to our faith we immediately are defeated as our victory no longer rests on Christ but on ourselves. Just like those 10 spies - when our victory depends on us, we have lost.

**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?**

When it comes to spiritual warfare against the believer one of the most common tactics I have witnessed is that of ISOLATION. The enemies will lure the believer, whether through condemnation or guilt or self-confidence / pride or sometimes just a disconnected Christian, to an isolated place and then begin to beat them down and torment them. If you think of sheep in a field, it is not the pack of sheep the wolf goes for but instead the one on the outskirts, the one which has the least support and is most isolated, this is the sheep which is easiest to kill. Wolves are not particularly brave hunters unless they outnumber the prey in a pack, but when by themselves they are more scavengers going for the easy kill. In the same way, our spiritual enemies are not truly courageous in their attacks but instead subtle, sneaky and opportunistic in how they go about beating us down.

Now while it is important to discuss the importance of us staying together as the household of God, which we will talk about later in this document, it is also worth noting that a more dangerous isolation the devil brings about is an isolation from God. When we have neglected to pray or read the word due to a “leading away” (demons do the leading away) we often fall prey to a feeling of depression, hopelessness, sadness and all-round fleshly behaviour. Our relationship with God suffers and for some we can even be led so far away we end up in a spiritual desert, feeling absolutely alone and almost so far from God that the very thought of praying or attempting to get back feels pointless and impossible.

However, a lie has been told in this situation. The lie is that the devil is even able to separate you from God’s presence. Now while I do believe that there are differing degrees of closeness we can have to God, for example the bible says, “draw close to God and he will draw close to you” (James 4:8), it is a lie when the devil tells us there is no way back. God is ALWAYS with us and ALWAYS looking for the believer who desires to be closer to him. God has never turned away a humble or contrite heart (Psalm 51:17).

### Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

**Tribulation:** Trials / tests / suffering / tough times / spiritual oppression etc.

**Distress:** Emotional struggles / physical illness / loss or mourning / relationship problems etc.

**Persecution:** Hated for your faith / rejected / gossiped about / shunned / beaten etc.

**Famine:** physical hunger / lack of provision / lack of wealth / poverty etc.

**Nakedness:** Symbolic for poverty / shame / shunned by others / weakness etc.

**Danger:** Accidents / physical harm / human danger / natural disasters / injuries etc.

**Sword:** War / violence in society / human ability to wound and kill etc.

NONE of any of these things are able to separate us from the love of Christ and the lives we have in Christ. His love and care for us surpasses all things and all aspects of life that we could possibly imagine.

### For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered:

The apostles and the martyrs of our faith understood that they could not be separated from Christ no matter what came their way. They were able to walk in victory because they not only knew their own personal victory in Christ had already been won but also, that no matter

what this world threw at them, it could do nothing to hinder their relationship with God. A Christian with this understanding will NOT be isolated due to the fact they are so grounded in their understanding of God's love for them. Their understanding of God's love for them is what drives them in return to love God the way they do.

**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us:**

MORE THAN CONQUERORS...how?

Through him who loved us. We are conquerors through Jesus Christ; it is only through him that we can say this but it is also the understanding these men had and the confidence they had in their relationship with Jesus Christ that led them to be conquerors. They understood that death could not separate them and neither could anything else and so they went forth with a boldness and courage that reflected that faith and understanding in their position before God. That is what we are called to.

**For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,<sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**Death:** Death's sting has gone, even death itself cannot separate us from our Lord. He has overcome death, he holds the keys of death, death submits to him. Death is not a separating of a believer to Jesus, rather a door opening to him.

**LIFE:** Just one word and yet it encompasses everything – what Paul is saying here is LIFE is not able to separate us, everything that comes with life, in life, through life, ups and downs, trials and tribulations, good and bad, people and even ourselves. Life is not able to separate us from the one who gave us life.

**Angels:** Neither angel of God or fallen angels have any power over us in form of separating us from our Lord; it was a fallen angel who led to the first separation between humans and their creator but no more. Jesus Christ has destroyed the works of the devil and in doing so destroyed any possibility in a believer's life of him separating us once again.

**Rulers:** Rulers in the spiritual kingdom have no power in separating us from Jesus Christ neither do rulers in the worldly kingdom. Both are allowed their power by Christ, how could something under the dominion of Christ dictate to Christ the state of his own followers? Jesus Christ is the ruler of all and so if there is no ruler above him, who can separate us?

**Nor things present:** Once again how all encompassing is this...what are you going through right now? What is going on presently in the world or in your personal life? Whatever it is, however, good, or bad, nothing in your present is able to separate you from the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Nor things to come:** The future is always uncertain and yet here Paul tells us regardless of what the future brings it will never be able to separate us from the love of Christ. We are eternally connected to him, it goes so much further than just our understanding of time - our connection to Christ from the day he set us free is an eternal one.

**Nor powers:** Spiritual / physical / worldly / natural – no power on earth both visible and invisible are able to separate us from Christ. An important fact to realise especially when broaching the subjects of spiritual warfare where the powers can seem so fierce and deadly; however, they can do nothing to break for good your bond with the Lord.

**Nor height nor depth:** Fly to the moon or dive down into the abyss of the ocean, reach the sun or make your way to the centre of the earth. In all places you will still be in Christ Jesus, and he will still be in and with you. No distance can separate us from him.

**Nor anything else in all creation:** Nothing which has ever been created can ever separate us from the love of Christ. Now let me take this further...WE ARE CREATED. People talk about losing salvation but how, if we are creation, are we able to separate ourselves from Christ? If we are in Jesus Christ, it is a done deal, neither we nor any other aspect of creation can separate us. However, it's not a question of losing our salvation, it's a question of ARE we actually saved?

**Will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord:** Nothing can separate us from the love of God toward us made manifest through his son Jesus Christ. It is the relationship founded on the sacrifice and work of Jesus Christ orchestrated by God the Father that can never be broken. Why? It cannot be broken because salvation is not a work of man that can fail, instead it is a work of God in our lives. When has God failed? When has God broken a promise? God promises to see our sanctification completed and us glorified. If we are indeed his children, he will NOT break his promise. Why are we so confident? The same reason Caleb and Joshua were; they were not confident in themselves but instead in their God. I am confident in my salvation because it is not based in what I have done but instead what my God has done for me. The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## 7. THE ENEMY DISARMED

Colossians 2: 13-15

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup>by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>He disarmed the rulers and authorities<sup>[b]</sup> and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

**And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses:**

Here we see an approach to the work of Jesus Christ from a legal standpoint, we are seen many pictures of salvation but one of the clearest we can learn from is that of a court room. We see here how God has made us alive whereas we were before dead in our sins, completely under the yoke of sin and slavery. But through Christ, God has made a way for ALL of our trespasses to be forgiven and has give us a way to now be alive in Jesus.

**By cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.**

Like I mentioned earlier, one of the clearest ways to understand the work of Jesus Christ is by comparing it to that of a court room. The prosecutor or accuser, as the Bible calls him, is our enemy Satan - he comes to condemn and accuse the brethren of their sin and trespasses, to almost try and to force God's hands in destroying his own creation. The devil loves to accuse us and all of humanity, to keep us as slaves one day destined for destruction under the judgement of God.

But here we see another aspect to that court case – our defender, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the ultimate defender because when Satan comes against us with his court case of our sin and our past and even our current stumbling, Jesus has the ultimate defence. His defence is this: I have taken their sin upon myself. Jesus's ultimate defence of his people is that he has paid the price, there is no longer anything to judge regarding sin, no punishment to offer out as it has been taken by him. Jesus took our place in that court room and the full wrath of the law was handed down upon him in our place. Notice how it says he cancelled the record of debt. This means that not only does the prosecution in the court case now have an answer to their challenge but beyond that, Satan's whole case has now been thrown out. He no longer has a case to begin with because the record of wrongs has been cancelled, the case has been thrown out.

And what is even more interesting is that it says all of the LEGAL DEMANDS which come with that record of debt is also thrown out. What are the legal demands? Well this means the legal consequences. What are legal consequences? Well in a human way of thinking it would be prison, community service and even in some countries, it could be the death sentence. However, in the context here the 'legal demands' means judgment and hell. For those in Christ, those legal demands have been taken away along with the case itself as Christ paid the price for our sin, he took upon himself our legal crimes and washed us clean of them.

**He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him:**

In doing so the prosecutor of our lives, Satan, is left without a case, without an argument, he is embarrassed, leaving court with no further action to take because there is simply now nothing he can do. He can try and lie to the defendant and convince them that he still does

have a case but even that itself is deception, a lie. We are now innocent in Jesus Christ. Christ has disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities in this world. How are they disarmed?

1. They can do nothing to affect our eternal salvation, we are hidden in Jesus Christ. Any and all accusation against us can now be nailed to the cross, the cross has taken it all. So when the enemy has his forces come against us with condemnation and accusation we are able to look to the cross and see that same condemnation and accusation hanging up there on that curses tree. They no longer can bring anything against us; their greatest weapon, the downfall of man through sin, has now been turned against them. Christ has made a way that the weapon of sin and death is no more danger to us than a feather or a soft pillow wielded by a toddler. It has no affect on us anymore.

2. The spiritual bondage is over – the weight of that case against our lives is over with, we no longer are burdened by our past or present or future, instead we are set free to focus on the things of above. We are enabled to live lives for Christ and no longer for flesh, bringing others into that same court room that Jesus may acquit them also.

3. Once we have been deemed innocent through Jesus Christ, we are then given eternal life, what can the devil and his forces do now? Sure, they can bring persecution, they can bring suffering, they can bring trials and tribulation but what else? How long will it last? 80 years? 60? 40? What is that to an eternity? When we go through these hard times, we are able to face these spiritual rulers with the knowledge that we are indeed saved and while the tormenting may be difficult, this is as bad as it gets. They can do nothing to take away our salvation or hinder our eternal life with Jesus Christ.

## **WHAT DOES ANY OF THIS HAVE TO DO WITH SPIRITUAL WARFARE?**

You may be thinking while reading this “what does this have to do with spiritual warfare?” We have just come from a study on demonology but now we seem to be veering quickly off track. So, what does this have to do with our spiritual warfare?

The answer: **EVERYTHING.**

This is going to be the building blocks of our armour, of how we stand and fight. Without understanding these absolute fundamentals of victory in Jesus Christ, when we do face the powers of darkness in this world, we will quickly be overcome as the 10 spies of Israel were when they saw the giants. This information and understanding are no less important than me taking you though a step by step guide to casting out demons. Why? Because if you are not able to say YES AND AMEN to each and every point above that I have just made, then are you really equipped in your faith to deal with the forces of darkness? Are you able to stand when Satan comes if you are unsure or untrusting in any of your own personal victories in Christ?

We MUST face the battle understanding one important fact – IT IS ALREADY WON. Any other approach is neither biblical nor correct. Now whilst the battle is very much real, and don't get me wrong, it requires effort and fight and courage, we must also realise (just like Caleb and Joshua did) that while we might have to pick up the swords and shields and fight and even that some may die, THE BATTLE IS ALREADY WON. Those people had been given into their hands and my desire for us to understand is that Jesus Christ on the cross is and was and will always be already victorious over the forces of darkness in OUR lives. That is why he was able to exclaim:

**“IT IS FINISHED”** – (John 19:30).

We are combatting a defeated enemy, an enemy who when faced with the above victory can do nothing but flee before it. And the same stands for those forces that follow him. Now, while we will go into the more practical approaches to the individual weapons of attack and defence and how to use them, we must first learn about the victory already won so that we do not fall into the deception that there is still a chance for the “giants” in this world to win and also that the war and battle DOES NOT depend on us but rather on God.

## **HOW ARE WE CALLED TO FIGHT?**

Now there are a few descriptions placed upon believers by scripture in order to show how we are to engage with enemy spiritual forces in this world. We will now go through the list of descriptions given and work our way through them.

### **RESIST –**

James 4:7

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Firstly, I recommend you do what I have done before going into this explanation and go and read James chapter 4.

We see in the context that James is addressing a particular issue, the issues seem to surround division caused by pride, a desire to have what others have and a prideful exalting of themselves rather than a humble care for each other. Just before the verse we see James ask for humility among them and to not be proud. We then see him say what is written above.

### Submit yourselves therefore to God:

Here we see the connection between the context of pride and humility, James starts by telling the believer to SUBMIT themselves to God. Now any sort of submission, whether to God or to man, requires one essential ingredient: humility. And so when someone submits themselves before God and before his commands, no matter how contrary they be to the person's desire, they are indeed exhibiting humility. The same can be said for one who under God's commands submits to church or government authorities, or within a household, wives to husbands and children to parents. Each requires a level of humility. True submission is not done out of a slavery or compulsion but rather out of a humble choice to place one above ourselves in authority. It is humility that God seeks in all of us and it is through that humility that we will see a big part of our RESISTING take place.

### Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

It is not a coincidence that resisting the devil should be so closely connected with submitting ourselves before God. They go hand in hand; we are only able to resist the devil when we are drawing close to our God, when our eyes are set on him and nothing else. A Christian whose heart is focussed on the Lord is a Christian in whom the devil will not be able to find any foothold or weakness. Not because that Christian is so much stronger than his siblings in Christ, more so because the Lord is seemingly drawing closer to the one who draws closer to him.

It is also not a coincidence that the context of this chapter is all to do with pride and humility. It seems to me that the suggestion is the "resisting" element is the resistance of pride, which just so happens to be the original sin of Satan. Now while I do believe there are other aspects to resisting (temptation / sinful desire) I do also see in the context a parallel between a resisting of pride. A Christian submitting humbly before their God is going to be far more attuned to the word and voice of their Lord, after all ["God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble"](#) (James 4:6). A believer trapped in pride is going to be easy pickings for the enemy's forces as pride is one of their most foundational ingredients; however, it is the humble who submit to God in whom they will have the greatest difficulty leading away from their Lord.

There are of course other ways of resistance we are called to, resisting temptation is one of the main ones. A huge part of our spiritual warfare is not to do with others but instead to do with ourselves; after all, the bible tells us ["abstain from the passions of your flesh that wage war with your soul"](#) (1 Peter 2:11). A large part of our spiritual warfare is within our own selves. We have to resist every day our sinful desires and urges that our very own fallen flesh prompts us to act upon. The bible teaches that, unlike the unbeliever, we now have the ability to resist these temptations and overcome them, through the holy spirit. Although many a time we may fall short, there are many victories as well and we should most definitely not approach this particular area of spiritual warfare with a defeated mindset. After all, we should not look for deliverance in everyone else but ignore our own battles. We must engage on two fronts, the one inside of our very bodies and the one in the world around us.

The bible teaches us regarding resisting sin that it is only possible through the holy spirit of God and in the life of one saved by Christ Jesus but for believers it does give us this solemn statement “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

## STAND –

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the whole Armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

The word STAND here is an ACTION. There is a purposefulness to this, it is not just a lazy kind of standing up but instead a reactive, strong, immovable action. If you imagine a room of 500 people, all sitting down, everyone is doing the same thing, comfortable. The false teacher in the message says, “if anyone disagrees with me STAND”. You have a choice. Stay seated and avoid embarrassment, persecution, being the only one, ridicule OR STAND. Despite it being scary, despite it putting you on the spot, you STAND for what is right and what you know is true. It is in your love for the truth found In Christ and your faith that you stand. The reason for that example is because many believe that this is a passive command. It is not. It’s an action. God will call you many times to STAND and it will require some sort of action from you to do so. Below we will take a look at what those actions look like in our day to day lives.

Although similar to the word “resist” there are some differences; it is in those differences that we find the importance of what we are to “stand” against and for.

**AGAINST:** Schemes of the devil.

So, the question is, what are the schemes of the devil? To know what we stand against we must also know what his schemes are. The difficulty we have is there are so many. The list seems exhaustible. However, I believe we can make a list based from Satan’s schemes we see in the bible.

- **Temptation** (1 Thessalonians 3:5 / 1 Corinthians 7:5 / Luke 4:2).

It is against temptation that we have to stand; we are told in the bible that our enemy is a “crafty” enemy and will use all sorts of wicked and subtle ways to try and bring us into sin. The devil knows that sin is the great divider between God and his people and as we have seen time and time again, Satan loves nothing more than to divide and conquer. It is through temptation and sin that he does this in our walk with the Lord. Now, while we do not believe in a spirit filled Christian losing their salvation, we do believe the Christian can stumble and falter in their walk. Even bridging a distance and a gap between themselves and God which can only be solved through the cleansing blood of Christ given through repentance. We are

to stand against all temptation in the same way Christ did – by the word of God, speaking it out. We will learn in much more depth how to do this in session 5.

➤ **Deception / heresy** ([2 Corinthians 11:14](#) / [2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:3](#) / [Galatians 1:8-9](#)).

The devil has hidden a needle in a needlestack. There is only one gospel and one Lord and yet the enemy is a counterfeit and a creator of counterfeits. It is our job to STAND against these lies and deceptions. It is not enough to simply ignore them nor is it enough to cower under them, no matter the world's momentum behind them. We have to STAND. Say it for what it is and expose it by the light of scripture. It is through the light of the word of God that we are able to “[tear down every lofty opinion](#)” which rises against the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is only through standing against these false teachings and heresies, which are bought on by deception from the devil, that anyone is ever able to see what is true and repent from following what is false.

This stand action will require confrontation; although the word stand suggests a standing still, it does also suggest a “standing against something”. That means as things move toward us or by us, we will need to stand against whatever that is. A picture the bible paints is one of a wave or a river and we are having to stand against that river of sin, temptation, deception and heresy. We don't move against it so much as we do stick to our ground refusing to be moved. And so it will require us being put on the spot sometimes. Imagine, the whole world is flowing down that river and when they come up against you standing in the truth, the whole world will try to force you downstream, whether through intimidation, persecution, bribe, gentle coercion and even the false sense of love and acceptance. In session 5 we will take a deeper look at the armour that we wear that helps us to STAND.

➤ **Spiritual oppression:** ([1 John 4:4](#) / [Mathew 15:22](#) / [Acts 14:22](#)).

Now to start I would like to explain that this is NOT spiritual possession. Spiritual possession is internal; however, what we are looking at here is external from us. We see in Ephesians 6 how the enemy “[fires fiery darts](#)” at us. Notice how he fires them “at us” from a distance, from the outside, not the inside. Now much of the time he will fire it at our mind as the mind has long been the battleground that we fight in. However, a big part of our defence is first understanding that so much of spiritual warfare is EXTERNAL to us. I say this for this reason, many Christians will condemn themselves for the thoughts which pop into their heads, temptations, evil and violent thoughts, overtly sexual thoughts etc. And we think to ourselves “why am I thinking that?” or “where did that come from” and we make the conclusion that it is just us being sinful. However, may I suggest, that while yes our flesh can bring about sinful desires, many of these thoughts that randomly pop into our minds are in fact being fired at us from the OUTSIDE.

You see, our enemies would love for us to ignore the fact that they are indeed the ones firing them at us because when we do, we are defenceless against them. However, when we acknowledge the spiritual attack of temptation and random sinful thoughts, we are far more equipped to then combat them. Understanding something external from me is trying to lead me astray. It almost fills you with an unrighteous anger. The same can be said for when out of nowhere we start to feel fearful, anxious, depressed, angry etc. Now we do have to be SO

Careful because I have witnessed many Christians simply blame their own sin and their own flesh on outward oppression. But I have also witnessed Christians condemn themselves continually and never acknowledge the possibility that they are feeling anxious or depressed because of something external from themselves. It is often a mix of the two aspects but when these things do happen, we must remember to be spiritually minded, we must remember to always have the perspective that the Lord had while on earth...He saw behind the curtain at what was lurking in the spiritual realm. Oppression can come in many forms but it is always with the aim of hindering the work of God, distancing the Christian from their Father in heaven, breaking down defences and spiritual strength and altogether tormenting the one whom they are oppressing. From what I see, one of the first “oppressive” symptoms is actually a leading away from prayer and our bible reading. The enemy takes away our armour and then attacks.

There are other aspects of STANDING AGAINST which we could add to this list but to be honest I think we will cover most of the ones not mentioned here as we continue with our descriptions of how we are to fight below:

## WRESTLE –

[Ephesians 6:12](#)

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Wrestling, above all combat sports, is by far the most exhausting and cardio filled; it requires extreme fitness, strength and endurance and a lot of mental durability. It is one of the hardest sports to master and one of the easiest to lose in. There are so many components to wrestling that it takes someone years to be a top-level wrestler and for most professionals they have been doing it since they were children. Now all of that relates to the physical aspects; however, I do not think it is any less difficult spiritually as it requires the same determination, endurance, and hard work THROUGH and IN our Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual wrestling is exhausting and as we grow in Christ our endurance grows with us and we are able to wrestle at a better and higher level.

### **we do not wrestle against flesh and blood:**

Paul introduces us first, not by telling us what we wrestle against but instead, starting us off with what we DON'T wrestle against. Flesh and blood we can safely assume is ALL flesh and blood. This means we do not wrestle against any human beings. This may be difficult to understand due to how many evil deeds we see done by humans but the idea here is that we are to wrestle with the spiritual forces behind them, through them and using them and not

the humans themselves. That isn't to say they are not responsible for their sin; however, the bible teaches that those in the world will be judged by God, not us. And so, in the meantime, it is our job to keep spiritually minded and wrestle with the spiritual darkness in this world.

**but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places:**

Although it is my conjecture, I do see here a hierarchy of power within the kingdom of darkness. For example, from my own opinion I would see it as written below:

**RULERS:** Satan and his chiefs. Like the fallen angel we see in Daniel 10 (prince of Persia). In control of entire empires and more than one country. Creating one world orders and putting in place empire-like movements in the world.

**Authorities:** These I would say are the next tier down; unlike the prince of Persia in Daniel 10 these would be the "kings of Persia" described by the angel in Daniel 10. These are in control of single nations or areas - England / America / Russia etc.

**Cosmic powers:** These powers are in control of communities, cities and towns. Strongholds placed within nations which lead occult practices, witchcraft and make their way into communities, bringing with them destruction and death etc.

**Spiritual forces:** Lastly, I would say these are the ground forces of Satan; demonic forces which focus much more on individual possession and oppression. These would be the demons that session 3 (part 2) mainly focused on.

Notice how with each group they are described in the PLURAL. There is more than one of each of these beings. Now Paul here tells us we are to wrestle with these forces, whether on the main stage of ministry and on a national / global platform OR in our individual lives, in our smaller communities and families. The basic notion is this, regardless of wherever God has placed you, whether to wrestle on a global stage against the rulers or whether to wrestle in your homes against those more individual attacks, we are still called to wrestle against all and every spiritual enemy we have. So, what does this look like? Well to be honest, with each stage of hierarchy there are different tactics of wrestling we use. It's a different match for a different level of enemy. However, one thing is for sure, we do so through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In our own strength, wrestling wouldn't even be possible, it would not even be a match. However, with the strength of Christ, we are indeed able to wrestle with these beings through the power of our testimony, the holy scriptures, our communion and connection with God in prayer and a faithful mission to see the kingdom of God advance. Now for this session, the idea is to highlight the ways in which we are called to fight. The actual weapons we use to do that fighting will be studied in depth in session 5. For now, we must first understand why these descriptions are given and what they mean for the daily spiritual battles we face and wrestling among all of the descriptions given brings about the most amount of work and requires the most endurance. It is gruelling and time consuming, hard and never ending and yet we wrestle on refusing to submit or surrender to the enemy.

## DESTROY STRONGHOLDS –

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10: 3-5

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

### For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh:

Now this description of our weapons tells us two things: firstly, human weapons are useless in this battle...our fists, guns, swords and bombs will not be able to even make a dent in the kingdom of darkness. No number of human forces could do anything to destroy any stronghold of the enemy and no amount of firepower could stop it from advancing. Secondly, what this tells us is that any sort of human teaching which talks about overcoming or defeating the weapons of the enemy are actually deception in themselves. Self help is not going to help. These strongholds are not defeated by any sort of human effort but instead through the spiritual weapons of warfare we are to wield.

### but have divine power to destroy strongholds:

The word used here is “destroy” – there is no remnant of them. They are destroyed, these strongholds are obliterated through these divine weapons we are given. So first of all let’s take a look at what strongholds are:

**Global stronghold:** the Bible says “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” (James 5: 19). And so, there is a global stronghold, the earth. It is a stronghold of the enemy. One which won’t be destroyed until Christ comes and destroys the enemy himself along with creating a new heaven and a new earth. However, we are able to still make advances in this global stronghold on a smaller scale with collective victories across the world. We have to remember, in our battles we are not looking to earthly territory, instead our kingdom is made up of people, no land, or borders. Souls won for Christ. So, while the earth is in the enemy’s grip, it is not the earth we want to be saved for that will be destroyed and made again; rather, it is the people on the earth.

**National strongholds:** the Bible says “the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” (Mathew 4: 8-9). Now some would say the devil is bluffing here; however, I do not think that whatsoever. A temptation that is a bluff has very little power, for this temptation to be legit the devil would have actually had the power to give over these kingdoms. And so we see here the different kingdoms of the world are also under the control of the evil one. We see a national stronghold here within the kingdom of darkness. In fact, I would go as far as to say that every nation apart from ONE has a demonic ruler over it. The nation that doesn’t as you might have guessed is ISRAEL which has instead the Archangel Michael over it, appointed by God, as we are told in [Daniel chapter 12](#).

**Local strongholds:** these are more specific strongholds which are situated in communities, large strongholds in cities, towns and smaller ones in villages and communities. These strongholds can have been there for many years. A biblical example of a more zoned in local stronghold is mentioned in the book of Revelation when it says, “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.” (Revelation 2:13). Here we see when Christ is addressing the church in Pergamum that he refers to the church being located where Satan’s throne is and on top of that actually suggests that he understands how difficult it is being there. This implies that because of the location of that church there was a higher level of spiritual warfare due to the fact Satan’s throne was on their doorstep. So, from this it is safe to assume that this particular stronghold was a literal area which had a different level of demonic activity than others.

**Family strongholds:** a much-disputed topic is the one of generational chains and curses. However, strongholds don’t always correlate to this type of bondage. For example, a stronghold may be sinful tendencies in a household, learnt behaviour and patterns of sin which are handed down via the generations. Not necessarily spiritually but instead simply through cyclical repetition of the same stronghold such as divorce or addiction. We often do tend to over-spiritualise these things when actually a lot of these can be attributed to learnt behaviours and nurture rather than a curse or a chain from birth. However, even with learnt behaviour and nurture there is always a spiritual element. For example, a demonic force that tempted and led a parent astray may desire to do the same with the child - it’s not that the sin of the parent is passed down, simply that the enemy wants to destroy generations of people. There can also be curses which have been spoken over families, for example, a witch may curse a parent and their child. The curse now needs to be broken by the power of deliverance by Jesus Christ through one of his ambassadors / followers. Curses are very real and can be used effectively against other people. Although it is debated whether a person mixed in with the satanic is able to curse a Christian, this I would disagree with. I do not believe a Christian can be cursed.

We then have the topic of generational curses and chains, now once again we have to be careful, much of this teaching is about a person having sinned and the curse of that sin being handed down. But this is in contradiction to many of the bible’s teachings for example, “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.” (Ezekiel 18:20). And “Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” (John 9:3). Now this does not mean that a child cannot suffer because of the sins of their parents, for example, a parent has an addiction to drugs, the child grows up in that environment, the child will suffer in a way of having to live through it, witness the sin, be surrounded by the sin and potentially a high chance of being influenced themselves by the sin. It is not a curse over the child but instead the affects of that sin are felt by not just the one engaged in the drugs but the child in the household as well.

**Individual strongholds:** Now this really can be a wide-reaching type of stronghold, from depression to anxiety to addiction all the way to demonic possession and demonic forces controlling the mind and actions of the person. And while I do believe that the believer is immune to some of these (possession) there are still strongholds that can exist even in the believer’s life.

Below are some examples of strongholds in people's lives:

- Fear
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Lust
- Addiction of any kind
- A particular sinful tendency that creates a pattern of behaviour
- Pride
- Demonic possession
- Occult worship
- Idol worship

There are many more I am sure and even within each of these descriptions there is a broad range of different issues. The Bible tells us that Christ wants to DESTROY these strongholds not just in others' lives but in our lives too. The process of sanctification is one of God taking apart the different strongholds in our lives and reshaping us into the image of his son, Jesus Christ. We must be careful to ["remove the log from our own eye before we remove the stick from our brothers"](#) in this area. We all have baggage from our old lives and our natural flesh which Jesus Christ wants to destroy and give us victory in but it will take prayer, devotion, time and the power of the holy spirit. The issue arises when we take a "sit back" kind of attitude and simply accept the areas of our lives that are not acceptable.

These strongholds can be destroyed through God's sanctifying spirit, through prayer, the scriptures and through a faithful desire to change and become more Christ-like. The more we open ourselves up to God and make ourselves available for his work to be done, the greater the victory of Christ in our lives. This also applies to bringing people to the faith from the outside. We wish to see all people set free from strongholds in their lives and this means that we need to also be praying and working through God's word toward their lives as well. The weapons of our warfare are far superior to that of any other weapon. Prayer, fasting, biblical reading, memorising of scripture, stepping in faith, deliverance ministry etc.

## DESTROY ARGUMENTS AND LOFTY OPINIONS –

[2<sup>ND</sup> Corinthians 10:5](#)

[We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God.](#)

Following from the breaking down of strongholds we also see here a combative destroying of all and any arguments raised against that of the truth. Now in essence, even when it doesn't always feel like it, there is no argument made by man that can stand against the truth of the Bible. How can lies stand against truth? And yet so many seem to be battered down in their apologetics (defending of the faith) when confronted with knowledgeable atheists, other

religions or scientific arguments. This is for one simple reason, it is not due to the inefficiency of scripture but instead due to a lack of faith in the scriptures themselves.

Here is what I mean. Many may try and destroy arguments and lofty opinions using the very same weapon back, they may try to argue through history or science or experience but all the time neglecting to use the ultimate weapons God has given us. Scripture! The reason for this is because they seem to think “scripture isn’t enough” or when truly facing the hard fact their faith in the scriptures and them being the very word of God is not as deep as the believer would like. And so, they tackle worldly arguments in a worldly way, which will ultimately lead to defeat. But when the word of God in our lives is absolute truth and we believe that we are able with confidence and conviction to stand against all and any argument simply by using the Bible. It is the sword we are called to use, within the Bible there is self sufficient power to destroy all strongholds and arguments. Apologetics isn’t about being the smartest person in the room, its trusting and believing that scripture is victorious over all opinions and worldly truths.

The Bible is the knowledge of God and so when opinions and arguments are made against the knowledge of God what better source to use other than..... the knowledge of God. In the pages of the Bible there are secrets that men to this day have not discovered, how then can we even suggest that a man’s knowledge could compete with God. And so, I would much rather depend on Gods knowledge of life, history, philosophy, morality, justice, love, and creation than try to, in my own strength, reason out of my human ability. I will fail every time. However within the Bible is the power unto salvation, the power unto destroying strongholds and the power to tear down all false lies spewed by the enemy. We only have to place our trust in the scriptures. However, it does raise a good point.

How well do you know your Bible? If the Bible is a sword, how well practised are you? Can you barely lift it? Or do you know how to handle it well? Is it a familiar feeling to have the sword in your hand wielding it or is it strange, unstable, unbalanced and not normal? We do have a part to play in this battle and it’s called TRAINING. Biblical training. I want to be a good swordsman, a master swordsman if possible. But that will take time, dedication, devotion, endurance, commitment, spiritual training, mental training, love for the word, trust in the word, faith in the word. All of these are crucial to our “swordman” abilities. Don’t be surprised if when faced with lofty arguments and opinions that you find yourself unable to defend the faith if your devotion to Gods word is subpar. How can you wield a sword you have never picked up before? It is of course the Holy spirit who helps us wield that sword and yet it is also the same Holy who reminds us constantly to be in the word of God in building our understanding and wisdom of scripture.

## TO CONQUER –

### **1 Corinthians 4:20**

For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.

### **Mathew 11:12**

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.

We are called to be conquerors; in the book of Revelation chapter 2 and 3 we see 7 encouragements for the believers at the end of each letter, each encouragement revolves around one aspect. Being CONQUERORS. I would encourage you to take a look. Now the world would view conquering as world domination or taking over countries and creating empires, however, for us the world we are called to conquer is the spiritual one. As the Lord said when addressing Pilate “My kingdom is not of this world, if my kingdom were of this world my followers would be fighting that I may not be handed over to the Jews.” (John 18:36). And so we see our aim in Conquering is not found in worldly battles but spiritual ones. We are called to gain ground for the kingdom of God, not in soil or land but instead in souls and people as the kingdom of God is made up by the very living temple of believers.

We see in the above scripture it is written:

### **For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power:**

A powerful statement made Paul the apostle to the Corinthians. Now the Corinthians were known for their knowledge, wisdom and understanding and yet also for their prideful acceptance of sinful behaviour within the church and their arrogant view of themselves. A similar example can be also found in Revelation when Jesus rebukes the church in Laodicea “For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.” (Revelation 3:17). What do both these churches have in common? Their power was in their words, in their talk, they had lots of conversations, lots of debates, lots of talk amongst themselves and they built up their own perception of “conquering” based on their many words. But both Jesus in Revelation and Paul in Corinthians expose this. They show them, your words and apparent success is nothing, you have lied to yourselves about your own Christianity and settled for weakness rather than power.

We are called to be conquerors, gaining ground for the kingdom, leading souls to the kingdom, reigning down the righteous anger on the spirits and evil demonic forces that would stand against the kingdom. God wants to raise a family but at the same time an army, and many Christians are more than happy to play a part in the family where it is safe and enjoyable but reluctant to recognise that the same family they love is also an army. And we as Christians are all called to serve in that army in various different ways according to the gifting God has given us. I wonder, how would we approach Church meetings? Prayer meetings? Worship evenings? Bible studies? If we understood the army that we are a part of, if we understood the battle which is raging and how when we meet together, we fly the flag of our God in the face of the enemies’ faces. How many would rush off after church afterwards? Or arrive on time? Or even arrive early? To get as much time together as possible. We have in this country spent a lot of time building family (and that’s great) but have neglected to preach and teach the spiritual military service we have all been inducted into as soldiers of our king, Jesus Christ.

### **“and the violent take it by force.”**

Now this has been translated in many different ways but how I (and many others) interpret this verse is that it is describing the character of a person who progresses the kingdom of God across the nations. It is a description of how the kingdom of God is not advanced through

passivity nor is it advanced through a lacklustre perspective of faith or our walk with Christ. Instead, it is those who are passionate, zealous, faithful and driven who see the kingdom advance in the lives of those around us. The lukewarm have never advanced anything in terms of the kingdom of God, aside from their own advancement into lukewarmness. Jesus tells us to repent of being lukewarm and to buy from him “gold refined by fire” (Revelation 3:18). The idea here is that gold refined by fire COSTS something...notice Jesus never tells us to BUY salvation – salvation is a gift. However, this is not referring to Salvation, this is referring to the reward based work we do for the kingdom AFTER we are saved. It is a separate thing altogether. And like Christ teaches, it costs something – time / energy / sacrifice / money / suffering / persecution and the list goes on. A Christian who is truly advancing the kingdom of God can ultimately expect to have to BUY gold refined by fire from Christ in terms of what the person is willing to give up and lay down for that work of the kingdom.

The problem for our modern-day saints is many are willing to give up their Sunday morning as long as they get back in time to enjoy the afternoon. And maybe, at a stretch, give up an evening for a bible study. Notice in the book of ACTS that they were meeting every day, praying together every day, fellowshipping every day, worshipping every day. They were much more than a Sunday gathering, their lives no longer meant what they used to, now they were consumed by one passion - the advancement of the kingdom of God. So much so, they sold all their belongings and laid them at the feet of the apostles. We often look back at the early church and think or say “I wish we could be like them” or “if only we could see miracles how they saw miracles.” But we are not truly willing to LIVE how they lived with the same passion, zeal and determination to see the gospel go out. Notice in the stories their characters, hearts and lifestyles were changed before any miracles took place in their gatherings. Their hearts were those that were “violent” toward the kingdom advancing, anything in life not to do with Jesus was secondary. Now in modern day circles those early Christians may have even been called “radical” or “cultish” because we often attack what we don’t understand. But they were holy, spirit led and passionate for the Lord Jesus Christ who has saved their lives for all eternity and now they wanted to give it all in service toward him. Maybe, before we go about praying for miracles and gifts, we should first pray for our own hearts and minds that we may have the conqueror attitude we need. That we would be so full of passion and love for Jesus that it would overflow into every area of our lives.

## SOBER & WATCHFUL –

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

We are called to be SOBER AND WATCHFUL.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5 the whole chapter is about one subject – HUMILITY - and it is only through humility that we are able to be sober and watchful. I think we can categorise how we are to be sober and watchful into two different sides of the same coin.

### Be sober-minded; be watchful – INTERNALLY

So, the first aspect is to be sober and watchful INTERNALLY. What I mean by this is that we are called to be humble and to humble ourselves before God in understanding and knowing our own weaknesses. In the same way that if we know in detail how the enemy attacks, we will be best prepared, the more we know of the areas we are vulnerable to attack, the more we are able to prepare as well. If a commander of an army is defending a city and sees a vulnerability at a particular point in that city, he will reinforce it to a greater extent to make sure the weaker area is protected. The same can be said of our internal struggles. There are many practical ways in which Christians can protect the “weaknesses” they identify in humility. For example: confession to a brother or sister / counsel from the church family / accountability partners with regular check ups / an avoidance of triggers depending on the weakness etc. All of these to start with and be saturated with prayer toward our God and be faithful and diligent of scripture in those particular areas. Personal devotions around those topics help the light of scripture to shine in our lives.

Notice the description **SOBER MINDED**. We think of someone who is drunk, they are not able to practise the same self-control, awareness and discipline as one who is sober would be able to. We as Christians are called to be sober minded, not just in the physical sense in terms of alcohol but also in the spiritual. For example, not allowing our emotions to cloud our judgments or dictate our decisions – emotions can bring about a spiritual drunkenness if not careful, clouding our self-control, perspective and reactions to different situations. The second word used is **WATCHFUL**. In our Christian walks we have to be very watchful of many things, first and foremost, ourselves. Our walk with the Lord. The Bible commands us to “**Work out our salvation in fear and trembling**” (Philippians 2:12). Some have taken this as a works-based salvation but it is not, it is a command for us to be serious about the sanctifying work of the holy spirit in our lives. To aid him in any which way we can in his work of transforming us into the image of Christ. One of the ways we can do this is by being watchful...of our sinful tendencies, of situations we may be put in, in the environments we choose to spend our time in, in what we place into our minds and hearts through media, television, film and music etc. There are so many things for us to be watchful of in this world when it comes to the schemes of the devil against our lives.

### Be sober-minded; be watchful – EXTERNALLY

We are also called to be sober minded and watchful when it comes to the ways of the world. We are not to be obsessed or overcome by the evil of the world but if we see the enemy preparing a new wave of sinful leading in the world which looks like it could impact our lives, the church and society, we should prepare for it. Looking to meet it head on at our pulpits and in our individual lives, not intimidated to simply stay quiet and remain silent but instead read as the bible teaches “**always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect**” (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:15). It is with love we are to battle against this world’s views and attacks; however, it is also with a zeal for our kingdom and the Gospel that lays at the centre of it.

Many churches have been caught off guard throughout different seasons of this world due to a lack of wisdom and watchfulness. Even in recent times, many churches and even our own to an extent, failed in having the wisdom to foresee the danger of division caused by this worldwide pandemic. We were not watchful enough in our looking out to see the dangers that lurked behind this pandemic, not physical dangers of sickness but something much worse, spiritual dangers of division, anger, gossip and more within the church of God. Entire families of Christ who had been side by side for years split in an instant with little or no leadership from the pulpits to combat this attack of Satan head on. However, a positive has come from all of this – church leaders have been woken up. Christians have been woken up. And now there is a new sober mindedness and a new watchfulness that we didn't have before, understanding now that it is only a matter of time until the next issue arises, large or small, worldwide or local.

### **Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

What are we to be watchful for? Who are we looking out for? Our adversary the devil.

#### **HOW DOES A LION HUNT?**

The word the Bible uses is “prowls” around. This in another descriptive word would be referred to as “stalking”. Now don't get me wrong, when a lion attacks it does not do so quietly. It is quite a spectacle. However, the lead up to the attack is the opposite, not spectacular but instead sneaky, not elaborate, instead subtle. They track their prey, observe their pray and when the opportune moment arises, they attack. When the prey is least ready and at its most vulnerable, they will go in for the kill. Well, our enemy isn't much different. It is no coincidence that the term lion here is used to describe the predator of this world. He too observes and tracks his enemy, sneakily observing them, learning their weaknesses and vulnerabilities, before attacking. Now when a lion does attack it is ferocious and with vengeance, a true desire to kill and destroy. Likewise with our enemy it is the same. When trying to spot a lion hunting it can be very hard to do, they are camouflaged. And so it is no wonder that we are told to be sober minded and watchful – we have to keep an eye out for the prowling and sneaky devil who, whether through him actually doing it himself or through his army, sneaks and stalks us looking for an opportune moment to strike.

#### **like a roaring lion**

It's an interesting contrast here between the subtle and sneaky lion prowling and yet at the same time the roaring aspect. The roar is used for intimidation, to show his greatness and superiority, it's a thing of pride. The lion has long been known as the king of the land it occupies and likewise, when Satan roars, he desires for us to know he is also the king of this land. However, he is not. We are not to be fearful nor intimidated of his roar; despite the real threat that is there, we are to be like Daniel whom when in the lion's den had the jaws of the lion shut by the angels of the Lord. Likewise, Satan can only roar as long as God allows him

and even when he does, God is able to shut his mouth whenever God chooses. We have nothing to fear for when God is for us, who can be against us. Even Satan can be an instrument in the hands of our God in order to fulfil the mighty and great plan of our God, for example, see the book of Job.

### seeking someone to devour

Now although Satan has no dominion over us anymore, our salvation is secure in Christ, and we have no need to fear of Satan's ability to come between us and God. HOWEVER, he IS still a threat. We would be foolish to think he isn't. Why else would the Bible teach us to be so on guard against him, to resist him and stand against him. Why else spiritual armour? The devil is a real threat and should be treated in such a manner. A Christian who feels invincible and discredits the threat is just as vulnerable as the one who simply denies Satan's existence altogether. He may not be able to take our salvation but as we can see from the bible, he is able to destroy churches, divide churches, invade churches, persecute churches, comes against the individual in all manner of ways from persecution to illness and even, in some cases, death. However, as scary as all of this seems, we do have a beautiful understanding to fall back onto...whatever the devil or his minions can do to us, it is only because they are ALLOWED to do it. And if they are ALLOWED by God, it is for a higher purpose. The book of Romans explains this well when it says ["rejoice in your sufferings. For we know that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character and character produces hope. And hope never fails."](#) (Romans 3-5).

Despite there being times when the enemy is ALLOWED to come against us to refine us, there are many cases where we are able to resist him and he will flee. Even in the times when it does seem like we are going through a "Job like" experience, we are still called to stand firm in our faith and stand for what is true, despite what we may be going through. In fact, in many cases, it only heightens the power of that testimony and brings even more glory to God when we, in the face of the devil, are able to continue in the way despite his attacks and harassments.

## **CONCLUSION**

The first part of session 4 was all about knowing that we are called to a war in which we already have the victory. Not to approach spiritual warfare as defeated or even thinking we have to win but understanding that we have already won through and in Jesus Christ. He won the victory for us, he has defeated the devil and he has overcome sin and death. All of those victories are now given to us if we are in Jesus Christ and he in us. Truly an incredible and wonderful truth. One which God doesn't just want us to know intellectually but one he wants us to live out in our lives every single day.

The second part was looking at the descriptive ways in which the bible calls us to engage in this spiritual warfare. Now for some, you may still be asking "but HOW do I do this?" To you I will say, don't worry, the best is yet to come. While session 4 is a far more explanation-based study on what the descriptions mean, we will now move into the actual reality of our application in spiritual warfare. The armour of God we are called to wear. Without these foundations to our understanding, I truly believe we will not be able to wear the armour God has for us. Without these foundations we would be ill-equipped. And so, I can only pray and hope that, as we head into session 5, you are feeling prepared and excited after the previous studies to move onto the walking out of our faith in this area.

All praise be to our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ in whom there is eternal victory over all darkness and evil in the world. Amen!!