

RECLAIMING SURRENDERED GROUND

- Freedom in Christ

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” 2 Corinthians 10:3 – 4

As Christians we are engaged in an intense spiritual warfare. *“Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* 1 Peter 5:8

The devil is a shrewd enemy who has been tempting God’s people for centuries, placing snares and traps in our path to distract, deviate, discourage and defeat us. The devil knows our weaknesses, whether pride, greed or lust, dishonesty, immorality or bitterness. If we do not deal with sin and fortify our areas of weakness, we will continue to experience spiritual defeat.

If we harbour and nurture our sin, we will give the devil a foothold in our lives. Once we have surrendered ground to satan, it is vitally important that we learn how to reclaim it, how to put on the whole spiritual Armour of God and successfully resist the tempter. The weapons that God gives us are able to tear down satan’s strongholds and replace them with fortresses of faith.

“Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.”

Ephesians 4:26 – 27

If we cultivate any known sin, we are giving satan an opportunity to gain a foothold, a beachhead in our life. Satan will then use this opportunity to invade and take over other areas. It is crucial that we, in the power of God’s Holy Spirit, reclaim and retake the ground that we have yielded to the enemy.

The Apostle Paul said that he didn’t want us to be ignorant of satan’s devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). But most Christians today are willfully ignorant of the tactics and strategies of the enemy.

As John Bunyan’s *Pilgrims Progress* so eloquently portrays, Christians are involved in a daily battle against *“all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.”* 1 John 2:16

Satan’s plan is to steal, to kill and to destroy (John 10:10) *“The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.”* 1 John 5:19

TOTAL WAR

Not only has the enemy enslaved many to false religions, sinful habits and addictions, but he is also waging an all out war against the forces of Jesus Christ. Satan aims to undermine the Church and frustrate the Divinely appointed rescue mission entrusted to it.

Just as our Lord Jesus Christ is dedicated to the saving of lost men and women (Luke 19:10), so too satan is dedicated to damning and destroying everyone in this strife torn world.

Just as it is God’s plan for the Church to take the precious life giving Bible, the Word of God, to all peoples everywhere, so too satan seeks to prevent this.

Just as Jesus has commanded Christians to be a light to this world, radiating God’s love to those trapped in the darkness of sin, so also the enemy continually seeks to dim, divert or destroy that influence.

The only hope for this lost world is the Good News of Jesus Christ, and God has entrusted this message to the Church. God’s plan is for Christians to be His freedom fighters in this sin enslaved world. As God’s guerillas, Christians need to be undermining satan’s forces, the false religious cults and sects, Communism and the occult. The whole Church needs to be involved in this war of liberation to free the whole world from the devil’s deceptions and the snares of satan.

The only reason why the devil is so often winning, is that the church is so seldom fighting!

“Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” James 4:7. If the devil is not fleeing from us, then either we are not submitting to God, or we are not resisting the devil, or both.

“He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world.” 1 John 4:4

“We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” Romans 8:37

Yet, most in the church prefer to retreat into our barracks to sing battle songs, rather than follow our Commanding Officer into the fields of battle. We teach about our wonderful weapons, but they are seldom used. We praise our Commanding Officer, but we don't obey Him. We know He commands us to attack, but we choose to consolidate. He says move forward, but we decide to dig in. He leads us into battle, but we stay at home and watch T.V., read romance novels, mix it or play video games.

The enemy has tricked many into the ambush of pride, and thousands have triggered the landmines of lust. Others have been discouraged by the bombardment of criticism, and many have retreated before the poison gas of gossip. The booby traps of bitterness have crippled the critical and those who have straggled behind their units have found themselves captured by the diversions of the world. Propaganda has led some to surrender to the army of unbelief.

We are in a spiritual world war and the fight is to preach the Gospel to the millions living under communist oppression, to smuggle Bibles to those living under severe persecution, to save the lives of the millions trapped in satanic deceptions, and false religious cults and sects, to free the drug addicts and liberate the alcoholics. The church must reach everyone in this needy world with the powerful love and liberty of Jesus Christ. And our primary targets must include the seemingly impenetrable Communist and Muslim areas. These strongholds must be reached for Christ – no matter what the cost.

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:4 – 5

But to do so, we need to be free. Ephesians 4:27 warns us: *“never give place to the devil.”* The NIV calls this a *“foothold”*, the NASB an *“opportunity”* and the TEV: a *“chance”* to the devil.

THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF SIN

If satan gains a firm enough foothold in a person's life, he can turn an act of sin into a regular practice of sin, and from there it can degenerate into a habit, which leads the person downward into bondage. ***“His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin.”*** Proverbs 5:22

No alcoholic starts by announcing: *“I plan to ruin my life and my family by drinking as much alcohol as I can everyday from this day forward!”* No, it begins with a single drink, then a second, then a third...the downward slide can be traced from the initial act, to a regular practice, to a habit and to bondage.

The counselling psychologists tend to use the word *“addiction.”* This suggests that we are powerless victims of our problem. God calls it sin. ***“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...most assuredly I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin...therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”***John 8:32 – 36

STEPS TO FREEDOM

1. The first step towards genuine freedom in Christ must be wholehearted repentance from sin. ***“For Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation...”*** 2 Corinthians 7:10

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:5 – 9

The truth is that we are not just victims of satan needing deliverance, we are guilty sinners needing forgiveness.

2. The next step to freedom in Christ is taking back the ground that we have yielded to the enemy. If we have given satan a key, or a foothold, in our lives through bitterness, unforgiveness, pride, immorality, idolatry or rebelliousness, we need to command the enemy in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ to leave.

Satan is a liar and a deceiver (John 8:44), he is the “*accuser of the brethren.*” Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). It is the truth that sets us free. We need to renew our minds (Romans 12:2) meditating on “*whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy.*” Philippians 4:8

We need to tear down the strongholds of satan in our life (2 Corinthians 10:4). In its place, we need to build towers of truth, reprogramming our mind with the life giving and liberating Word of God. We need to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, bringing our thoughts and lives in line with God’s Word and God’s Will.

THE OCCULT

God’s Law forbids us to give attention to “*mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.*” Leviticus 19:31 “*When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. These shall not be found among you: anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practises witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are abominations to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you.*” Deuteronomy 18:9 – 14

1. Ask God to reveal any and all occultic activity that has taken place in your life.
2. Renounce the seeking of power as sin and commit yourself to the empowering of God’s Holy Spirit.
3. Renounce the seeking of guidance from evil spirits and commit yourself to the guidance of the Scriptures.
4. Renounce all occult healing involvement and commit yourself to the God who heals.
5. Renounce the use of all mantras, charms, fetishes or any object that you may have trusted in for protection and commit yourself to God’s protection.
6. Remove all occult material from your home. Burn what can be burned and break and bury what cannot be burned (Act 19:19).
7. Ask God to take back all ground given to satan through your involvement in darkness and worldly or occultic music.
8. Determine to only listen to music which is thoroughly Christian, God honouring and edifying. Remove and destroy all music that does not glorify God. Music is one of the tools that the enemy uses to entice people into occult and the effects often stay with these people long after their conversion to Christ.

God instructed Israel: “*You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covert the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.*” Deuteronomy 7:25 – 26

David said that he would even take the names of false gods upon his lips (Psalm 16:4).

Getting in to the occult is relatively easy. Getting out is very traumatic, but it is absolutely essential for spiritual health. We need to destroy all occult materials. “*If you bought it, you burn it.*” (See Acts 19:19-20)

“*And they overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb and by the Word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*” Revelation 12:11

BITTERNESS

Bitterness can be another stronghold of satan. If you have not forgiven someone, then it is likely that you harbour an unforgiving spirit and a resentment that will deepen into bitterness. Ask God to reveal to you the people against whom you are holding feelings of bitterness and resentment. Be aware that you could also be harbouring feelings of bitterness against God. Make a list of the names that God reveals to you. Start at the bottom of the list, with those people who are easier to forgive, and work your way up to the more difficult cases. Repent of the sin of unforgiveness. Forgive each person from the heart. Ask God to take back the ground that you have given satan through unforgiveness. We are to forgive wholeheartedly *“lest satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.”* 2 Corinthians 2:11

The Apostle Paul said that: *“I myself always strive to have a clear conscience without offence toward God and men.”* Acts 24:16

If someone you knew was making a list of people who had hurt them, and had never asked for their forgiveness, would you be on that list?

Make a list of all the people who God brings to your mind whom you have offended and whom you have not sought forgiveness from. Contact those individuals by letter or telephone if possible, and be brief. Tell that particular person that you have been looking back over your life and you realised that you had failed him/her in the specific way that God revealed to you, then ask for his/her forgiveness. Make restitution where needed.

If certain people have benefitted you, but you have never shown appreciation, express gratitude to them for what you have gained. Send thank you notes, or cards, to people who have blessed you, showing how God used them to build up, strengthen or challenge you.

Ask God to guide you as to everything that you can do to make things right, do restitution, apologise and restore relationships.

REBELLION

Another key area where satan gains a foothold, and strongholds, in the lives of Christians is in the area of rebelliousness. *“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.”*

1 Samuel 15:23

Ask God to forgive you for not respecting and submitting to the authorities He has placed in your life. Determine before God to be in submission to the authorities that God has placed over you, whether your parents, your husband, your educational institution, your mission, your church, or your employer. Ask forgiveness from those authorities that you have rebelled against and tell them of your renewed commitment to be in submission under the Lord.

PRIDE

Pride is repugnant to God. In some ways pride is one of the worst sins anyone could commit. Pride is a fist of rebellion in the face of the Creator and Ruler of the universe. In Proverbs 6:16 – 17, pride is at the top of the list of the seven sin that God hates most. Pride was satan’s original sin that caused him to be cast down from Heaven as Lucifer. *“Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.”* Proverbs 16:5 *“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”* Proverbs 16:18

Every day make a conscious decision to die to self and to be committed to God’s Will and His purpose for your life. Ask God’ forgiveness for areas of your life that you have built around self and surrender them to God. Ask Him to take back any ground that you have surrendered to satan.

IMMORALITY

Sexual bondage is one of satan’s chief ploys in undermining Christians. Ask God to reveal to you the first time you violated His moral Law and began to give satan ground in your life. Confess every sin that the Lord brings to your memory and ask God to restore your fellowship with Him in that area. Ask God to take back all ground given to the enemy through moral failure. Dedicate your body to the purpose of glorifying God (1 Corinthians 6:19 – 20). Be on your guard for the traps and temptations of satan and be prepared to resist him.

THE ARMOUR OF GOD

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the Heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. Stand them, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace; above all, taking the Shield of Faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this and with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” Ephesians 6:10 – 18

SET FREE TO SERVE CHRIST

Humble yourself before God (James 4:6). Acknowledge your need of God’s grace, His Divine power and guidance.

Submit yourself to God (James 4:7). Dedicate your body to glorifying God (1 Cor. 6:19 – 20), your mind to thinking His thoughts (Phil 4:8), your emotions to loving Him (Matthew 22:37) and your energy to serving as unto God and not unto men (Ephesians 6:6 – 7).

Actively resist the devil (James 4:7), in the Name of Jesus (Phil 2:9 – 11). Overcome satan by the Blood of the Lamb and by the Word of your testimony (Rev. 12:11). Counterattack with the Word of God and prayer (Ephesians 6:18 – 20). Draw near to God (James 4:8). *“Cleanse your hands,”* asking forgiveness for every violation of God’s standards. *“Purify your hearts,”* get back in the race and keep your eyes fixed on Jesus on whom your faith depends from beginning to end (Hebrews 12:1 – 2). Reclaim all surrendered ground and enjoy full freedom in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here is a suggested prayer that you may find helpful as you wholeheartedly turn from sin and place all your trust in Christ alone:

Heavenly Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I come before You desiring to be free from all bondage and sin. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sin, for Your mercy and grace and for cleansing me from my sin. I am sorry for my sin and I pray Lord God that You would wash me and cleanse me and free me from all consequences of my iniquities and rebellion.

I now confess and repent of all my sins, both known and unknown. I confess and renounce the sins of my forefathers. In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the power of His Blood shed upon the cross of Calvary I break and renounce the power of every demonic curse that has been passed down upon me by the sins and actions of others, or by myself.

In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ I renounce, break and loose myself and my family from all demonic subjection and bondage. I claim release through the Blood of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour. By Your Grace may You bless me and use me and enable me to serve You faithfully, to Your honour and glory and for the extension of Your Kingdom.

Amen.

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