

The Authority of the Believer

Spiritual Warfare, Session 5

Warm-up Question: Who was your favorite action hero as a kid and what particular strength or talent did you admire in him or her?

Ambassadors of Christ

Being small, thin, and bullied often as a kid, I have always wanted to be like Superman. At every sign of trouble he would just find the nearest telephone booth (something that is fast disappearing due to the widespread use of cell phones) to quickly change from being a regular guy to our super powered hero. At different times in my life I have sensed God pushing me into situations where I have had to depend on Him to get through. I remember the time when Sandy, my wife, and I went on a short-term trip to Israel with a return ticket for a year. When Sandy became pregnant with our daughter Anna, we came back after staying just over seven months. Our mission in going was to love on Jews and Arabs and reveal Jesus to the people in that beautiful land. We went with only one hundred dollars to our name. God had spoken to us about it and we knew that He could and would provide for us. We were not disappointed! God met us supernaturally in so many ways especially as we were not allowed to work. We lived by faith, trusting God to meet our needs just as He promised in His Word (Matthew 6:31-33). God uses our difficulties and trials as a way of forcing us to step into a 'telephone booth' where we are to learn to depend on God to transform us from ordinary men and women into men and women of a supernatural God, Supermen, so to speak. It is one thing to intellectually know God as Jehovah Jireh (The Lord who provides) but God wants to teach us truth experientially. His desire is to bring His Word from our heads to our spirit. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place (Psalm 51:6). Peter knew intellectually, just like the other eleven disciples that Jesus could stop him sinking into the water if he got out of the security of the boat, but he was the only one of the 12 that got out of the boat and experienced the Lord in a new way. I have to admit though, that too much of my life has been lived as Clark Kent rather than live up to the supernatural calling that God has gifted each

of us with. The Bible says that God has given to each of us that are born-again believers a measure of faith (Romans 12:3), and along with it, to each is also given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). After Paul goes through a list of different ways the Spirit manifests Himself in a number of gifts, he says:

¹¹ "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and **he gives them to each one**, just as he determines" (1 Corinthians 12:11).

You and I that are Christians are powerful instruments of God if we can view ourselves the way God sees us and step out of the security of our boats. The enemy's hand is heavily involved in seeking to persuade each of us that we are just another Clark Kent. There is a tight lid clamped down on us from ever believing what the scripture says about us, that we are more than mere human beings, we are saints of the most High God, sons and daughters of the Living God. We are invested with authority and power to destroy the works of the devil just as our Master did. The scripture says,the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work (1 John 3:8). We are representatives of Christ, called to be ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) and just as He was called to destroy the devil's work, as His ambassadors so are we. The authority and power of our King, Jesus Christ, is behind us as we represent Him in this world, speaking His Word and doing His works. Today we want to look at the power and authority that Christ has given us to oppose and overcome the evil one:

²¹ Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." ²³ Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." ²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. ²⁶ He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." ²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she said, "but

even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."²⁸ Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour (Matthew 15:21-28).

The previous passage to this (Matthew 14:34) indicates that Jesus was in the region of the Sea of Galilee (Gennesaret is a town on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee). The city of Tyre is around one hundred miles North West of the Sea of Galilee. How wonderful to think that Jesus would travel that many miles to listen to a Gentile woman plead on behalf of her daughter, heal her from afar (we are not told that the daughter was actually present with the mother), and then return to Galilee afterward (Matthew 15:29). What a model of ministry is the Lord Jesus! How this challenges me! I have to ask myself—how far would I go to meet the need of a person in the grip of demons?

In this long trek to Tyre and Sidon, presumably walking, a Gentile (a non Jew) woman came to Him pleading on behalf of her daughter, who was suffering terribly from being demonized. One wonders as to how a demon found an entrance into this young girl's life. In my experience and from things that I have read, it is more than likely through something that the parents did that caused the child to be demonized (Exodus 20:5; 34:7). Jezebel, the queen of the occult and Baal Worship was from Tyre, the same city where this woman and her daughter were living (1 Kings 16:31). Although Jezebel lived a few hundred years before Jesus showed up, it is possible that children were still being dedicated to the false idols of the area, which were demons (Deuteronomy 32:16-17), this dedication of children to idols/demons would have given an entry point to demonization.

When the woman appeals to Jesus on behalf of her daughter, Jesus says nothing. Isn't that unlike Him?

Why did Jesus respond with silence (Verse 23)?

Why do you think the Lord is sometimes silent when we pray?

Jesus responded to the woman by not answering her. When prayers that you pray are seemingly not heard, it is wise to persist. This woman persisted for her child. Even the disciples came and complained about

her incessant cries, heartlessly telling Jesus, in front of the woman, to send her away. Let's get the picture clear in our minds of what was happening here. First this woman had come to the disciples seeking help. When they showed no apparent desire to help her, she came to Jesus. It seems weird, I know, but Jesus didn't say a word. On top of that, the disciples came and now asked Him to send her away because she was bothering them. Jesus finally spoke into the situation by telling her that His primary mission is to another people group, the Jewish people.

What would you have done if you were in her shoes? What do you think kept her persisting?

Instead of going away, she came closer:²⁵ The woman **came** and knelt before him. She would not be put off! She must have been even more deflated when Jesus told her that it was not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs (Verse 26). I have to believe that there was a twinkle in His eye and a loving smile on His face when He said it, because her response was one of great faith, which was surely what He was looking for. How delighted He was at her response! Faith honors and pleases God more than anything else (Hebrews 11:6). Her daughter's deliverance and healing was given at that very instant. How often we don't get what we want from Him simply because we don't persist in going beyond seeming barriers to what we need from the hand of God.

What is Jesus referring to when He talks about the "children's bread?" (Verse 26).

Bread is a word that is used in scripture to describe the staple food of the day, bread. "Give us this day our daily bread" is what we pray in the Lord's Prayer. Perhaps if Jesus had been teaching the Lord's Prayer to Asian people it would be, "Give us this day our daily rice." How do we interpret what Jesus is saying to the woman? Surely He is intimating that the works of power, deliverance and healing is the staple bread of the child of God. She wasn't a child of God because she wasn't born an Israelite, although since the cross any Gentile can become a child of God through faith in the finished work of Christ. At that time the woman didn't qualify for the children's bread, the staple food of being in right relationship to the King of Heaven. If you are a child of God by faith in Christ—you do qualify for the children's bread! The manifestation of the Spirit's work

is available to each blood-bought child of God, as we said in the beginning of this study. We have not because we ask not (James 4:2). If this woman, who is outside the family of faith, can appeal to the king of Kings for her need for the miraculous power of God to be manifest, how much more should the child of God ask and receive? The problem is not on God's end. He has told us that He will confirm His Word with signs that accompany it (Mark 16:20). We have not because we do not ask in faith. Demons shudder every time a child of God begins to pray asking God to move. When you begin to pray all hell breaks loose to hinder your prayer life. We must persist in prayer as the woman in the story did. Once a child of God really begins to see what power and authority is available to him, the demons and their deceptive game of keeping you believing that you are just Clark Kent is over. Power and authority over demons is your right as a child of God!

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you (Luke 10:19).

¹⁷ And these signs will accompany **those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons**; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; **they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well**" (Mark 16:17-18. Emphasis mine).

It doesn't mean that we are to go looking for demons. This promise of God is given in case demons ever manifest in someone when we are praying for them. We are to know who we are in Christ and the power and authority we are given to do His works and speak His Word.

What would it take to overcome the Clark Kent world view that is prevalent in the Western Church?

The faithless disciples

¹⁴ When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵ As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. ¹⁶ "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked. ¹⁷ A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth

and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not." ¹⁹ "O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." ²⁰ So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. ²¹ Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. ²² "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." ²³ "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." ²⁴ Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" ²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." ²⁶ The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. ²⁸ After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" ²⁹ He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer (Mark 9:14-29).

How do you feel about Jesus' statement in verse 23? Is it possible that everything is possible to him who believes?

What hinders this kind of faith in your life?

Again we see a case of the disciples being powerless or faithless to minister to a man and his son's need. In this case we are also clearly told that it is a demonic spirit that was destroying the boy's life.

If you could have been a fly on the wall in the scene we read about in the passage above, describe to one another the symptoms that you would have seen.

- 1) The boy cannot speak due to the spirit controlling his vocal chords (Verse 17).
- 2) The spirit is seizing him at times and throwing him to the ground (Verse 18).
- 3) He is grinding or gnashing his teeth and his whole body becomes rigid and foams at the mouth (Verse 18).
- 4) As soon as the spirit in the boy sees Jesus he begins a new convulsion in the boy and rolls him around foaming at the mouth (Verse 20).
- 5) The confession of the father is that the boy has been like this from childhood. He cannot ever leave

him alone because the spirit tries to kill him by making him throw himself into fire or water, perhaps into a cistern, a well or river seeking to drown him.

How would the medical establishment treat this scene today?

Symptoms of demonic influence

In the passage above we see a number of symptoms of demonization in the boy. It would be a mistake to believe that demons only operate in a person's life in this way. I thought that it would be helpful to list various symptoms of demonization. We need to take care with a list like this, as many of the things that are mentioned could be manifestations of our own unchecked sinful nature. This list is taken from the notes of a Spiritual Warfare seminar by John Wimber. John mentions that the list is from an unpublished paper by Tom White:

1) Spirit

- a. Powers of mind, ESP, pre-cognitive abilities, occultic dreams.
- b. Inner perception of a separate personality, name, voice, or a "friend" who serves as a guide.
- c. Sense of being "different" or "special." This may connect with an interest in reincarnation.
- d. Fearful, bizarre dreams and/or night experiences.

2) Mind

- a. Confusion, cloudiness of thought.
- b. Separation of mind from body—spacing out, memory lapses.
- c. Inability to concentrate on scripture.
- d. Blockage in hearing and participating in prayer.
- e. Uncontrolled images and thoughts, i.e. sexual fantasies, cursings, obscenities, violent thoughts.
- f. Persistent dreams related to bizarre sex, occult, fear.
- g. Persistent battle with doubt (usually regarding scriptural truth).

3) Will

- a. Uncontrollable, compulsive behaviors, most commonly sexual sin, anger, hatred, fear.
- b. Different personalities, "voices," other identities.
- c. Uncontrolled surges of rebellion against authority.
- d. Intense urges toward violence.

4) Emotions

- a. Severe depression apart from an identifiable cause.
- b. Uncontrollable, sudden fears.
- c. Unusual and not typical emotional experiences, i.e. laughter, sadness, crying, anger, etc.
- d. Intense guilt, accusation, worthlessness.
- e. Hate, anger, bitterness (inability to conquer through confession.)
- f. Severe depression and/or drive towards suicide.

5) Body

- a. The eyes: fear, anxiety, anger...difficulty getting eye contact.
- b. Unnatural nervousness: especially at the mention of Jesus' name, reading scripture, or direct prayer.
- c. Headaches, dizziness, shifts in body temperature, difficulty breathing.
- d. Persistent bodily ailments that elude medical diagnosis.
- e. Hallucinatory or auditory interference.
- f. Extreme, medically undiagnosed fatigue. ¹

Again, we must be careful in reading such a list for some things can be our own sinful nature, natural sicknesses and diseases, and also chemical dependencies. These symptoms can also result from a damaged emotional history. It is unfortunate though, that the medical establishment, for the most part, do not accept that mankind is made up of a body, soul and spirit, something that scripture is very clear on (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Anything of a spiritual nature is not even considered. When we close our eyes to what the author of life has to say about how He made us, it is easy to dismiss spiritual symptoms. Most medical doctors would say that Jesus got it wrong and that He was treating a person wrongly, that he should have diagnosed certain drugs to heal the man's son, which is how he would have been treated in most hospitals today.

What strikes you about verse 19? 19"O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

Doesn't it seem as if Jesus is upset and frustrated at the disciples? Why could that be? This incident is after the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-13) which seems to have taken place just before Jesus leaves for Jerusalem to be crucified. He had already trained the disciples to

¹ Spiritual Warfare with John Wimber, Demonization, Published by Mercy Publishing, 1988.

do the very same things that He has been doing, modeling to them how to heal the sick and cast out demons. By this point the disciples had gone out by six pairs and healed the sick and cast out demons (Luke 9:1-2). He had already trained and sent out 72 others to do the same thing (Luke 10:1, 9, 17). Now, just before He departs for Jerusalem, and with it His departure from this Earth, the disciples are incapable of casting out a demon in front of Him. Let's not go by this quickly. This tells us a lot about the character of Jesus. What a person gets upset about reveals what he cares about. Jesus really cares that His disciples (us included) really understand and avail themselves of God's power to heal the sick and cast out demons. He longs that His church should move under the power of the Spirit and be His hands and feet to a needy world. He feels compassion for the man and His son, and frustration toward His disciples being unable to help them. Where is their faith? They had ministered in this way before, so why could they not cast out the spirit out of the boy? It is important to Christ that His Church gets a hold of this fact that we are a supernatural people invested with divine power and authority to do His work in the world.

We live in a day where the Church in the West relies more on the intellect of man than the power of God. But the time is too far gone for business as usual, resting on just what we can do in our own strength to get the gospel out. We need the whole church to preach the whole gospel to the whole world! Do you know that the population of the world only passed one billion in the year 1830? Then it took 130 years before it got to two billion people. The world population is now over six billion people (2008) and growing at the rate of one billion every ten years. More than half the amount of people who have ever lived are now alive. Think on that! Only as we step out in the power of our God, exercising His authority, will the church ever get into multiplication mode where we see whole cities come to Christ. Is that not possible? If it was possible in the Book of Acts why would it not be possible today?

Peter and Paul share their 'bread'

³² As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda. ³³ There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. ³⁴ "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up. ³⁵ All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw

him and turned to the Lord (Acts 9:32-35).

Two whole towns came to Christ because of Peter sharing his 'bread,' his God given birthright, the "children's bread" (Matthew 15:26). God has no favorites (Acts 10:34), just as He used Peter to the salvation of two whole towns or villages, can He not use us in the same way? Is His arm too short to save? When I came, why was there no one? When I called, why was there no one to answer? Was my arm too short to ransom you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you? (Isaiah 50:2). What happens when a body of believers gets free of demonic interference and starts to serve under God's power and authority?

When Paul the apostle visited the city of Ephesus, he started preaching in the synagogue. There was opposition to his work there in the synagogue so he started holding discussions daily in a public lecture hall. Look at the result of God showing up in power over a two year period:

⁹ But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. ¹¹ God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. ¹³ Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." ¹⁴ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵ (One day) the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" ¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. ¹⁷ When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. ¹⁸ Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. ¹⁹ A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. ²⁰ In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power (Acts 19:9-20 Emphasis mine).

*What caused the Word of the Lord to spread widely?
(Verse 20)*

The Word of God was taught and believers began to see the miraculous hand of God at work. God can do more in ten minutes than we can in ten years. Believers got their lives right with God, confessing evil deeds that held them to demonic powers and influences. A number of them realized that their books about sorcery needed to be destroyed. There was a public burning of books that were occult in origin. The power of the enemy over the city of Ephesus was shaken and diminished. Even the enemies of the church confessed that, “Paul has convinced and led astray **large numbers** of people here in Ephesus and in **practically the whole province of Asia** (Acts 19:26). What would it look like if a bunch of believers in your city began confessing their sins to God, and turning their backs on those things that have held them back in their walk with God? What would it look like for the Word of God to spread widely and

grow in power in your city? Don’t limit the Lord your God but place your lives fully into His hands and ask Him to show you anything that is hindering you to fully walk with Him. God is not looking for supermen, but ordinary men and women of a supernatural holy God who wants to move in power in us and through us. Be His ambassador, and wield His authority on enemy-occupied territory.

Homework: After prayer and dedication of your lives and home, go throughout your home asking the Spirit to show you any books, music, or anything that displeases Him in your home. Destroy it and ask the Spirit to bless your home with His peace.

Prayer: Father, I pray that you would fill me and equip me to be a person ready to take the staple food of the child of God, the power and authority that you have given me, to a needy world. Come afresh to me, Lord Jesus, I believe, help me overcome my unbelief.

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