

9. What Are the Believer's Most Powerful Weapons?

Spiritual Warfare: Overcoming Evil

YouTube Video Link: <https://youtu.be/mW0srpqCn5Y>

In the previous two studies on spiritual warfare, we examined the authority that God has given His people and the defensive armor that protects us. Today, we will explore three offensive weapons of the Spirit of God that believers can wield in their battle against our evil enemy. Paul mentions two of these weapons in his letter to the Ephesian church, and we will also identify one additional weapon in Scripture that creates chaos in the unseen realm of evil spirits. These three weapons are 1) The Word of God, 2) Prayer, and 3) Praise and worship. We will begin with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

1. The Sword of the Spirit

While under house arrest and chained to a Roman soldier, Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus. The soldier was responsible for guarding Paul and preventing his escape. Observing the armor of the Roman guard, Paul might have felt inspired to contemplate the armor that God equips us with for our spiritual struggles, leading him to write these words:

¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:17-18).

The sword attached to the soldier's belt symbolizes the Word of God. The type of sword Paul envisions is the *machaira*, a short, double-edged weapon typically only eighteen inches long, razor-sharp, and very lightweight. It was most effective in hand-to-hand combat against the enemy, which as believers we must engage in when we "wrestle" with our enemy, the evil spiritual forces in the unseen realms (Ephesians 6:12). This sword was used to parry or deflect any thrust from an adversary and served as an offensive weapon in the hands of the Roman soldier. We have our Lord Jesus Christ as a model for employing the sword of the Spirit as both a defensive and offensive tool against the enemy. When the Holy Spirit led Christ to confront Satan in the wilderness, during each of the three temptations, Jesus wielded the sword of the Word of God to counter each attack from the enemy.

Do not underestimate the power of this weapon. First, it is not a weapon that you have forged yourself. It is not, for example, the "sword" of Keith Thomas (you may enter your name here), but the sword of the Spirit. Think about that! Unlike an ordinary weapon, this one is divine and does not depend on your strength or ability, but on the power of the weapon itself. This power is directly connected to the King we serve, who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! His words spoken in His name carry His authority. Under the Spirit's guidance, the Word of God applied to your specific situation holds great power.

God's Word is authoritative. Period. He can provide you with a word for a specific situation just when you need it, as well as drop thoughts about eternal matters into your mind. For example, during my late teen years, I lived for myself. I followed my fleshly impulses and desires, but thoughts about eternity began to surface. (I later discovered that people were praying for me during

this time!). I started to question various things, such as: what was I living for? What was I meant to accomplish with my life? I tried to push these thoughts aside, doing my best to ignore them, but it was frustrating because I had no answers that satisfied me.

Then, one day, I discovered a book that discussed the last days, a topic I was highly interested in. God used my curiosity to open my heart to His reality. In that book, the writer described the return of Christ and the separation of believers from unbelievers. Because I was born in a “Christian country,” I thought I was a Christian, yet I had no understanding or peace within. However, the writer used one Scripture that resonated deeply with me: **“He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathers not, scatters” (Matthew 12:30)**. The writer explained that there is no fence on which to sit. You are either in God's Kingdom or outside of it; there is no middle ground. Suddenly, I realized that when Jesus came, I would not be in God's kingdom because I did not know Christ. I felt like a fish caught on the hook of Scripture. No matter how hard I tried, I could not escape that hook! God used that Scripture in my life to prod me to seek the truth, and the Lord did not grant me peace until I finally gave my life to Christ. The truth of God's word was like a sword that pierced me. That one Scripture woke me up and drove me to pursue eternal things. It changed the course of my life. This is the power of the Word. The Word and the Spirit work together to bring the Word to pass. Years later, after I became a Christian, I met the people who had been praying for me during that time. I hope this can encourage you as you think of loved ones or family members for whom you may be praying. Trust that God will use the power of His Word and the Spirit to draw them to Himself.

Martin Luther, the great reformer of the Christian faith, had a similar experience with the Word of God lodged within him. He read the Scripture, **“The just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17)**, but the church he attended at the time believed that a person could attain eternal life through good works. As a religious act to earn peace and forgiveness, he visited Rome, where he was told that he could find peace in his heart by climbing on his knees the twenty-eight white marble steps of the Lateran Staircase. As he moved up each step, the Holy Spirit would not let him go, and with every step, the thought echoed in his mind, “The just shall live by his faith,” repeating with each step, “The just shall live by faith!” He realized that justification [God's act of removing the guilt and penalty of sin] was by faith alone, not through a man's works. These truths contradicted everything taught at that time, and God called Luther to raise the banner of God's Word over the traditions of men. This revelation marked a turning point for him and for those who heard his words when he returned to preach at his church in Germany as a transformed man, ignited with a fresh revelation of the Word of God. Once again, God's Word acted like a sword that pierced his inner being and changed his life.

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

Has there been a verse from Scripture that the Spirit of God has used in your life? Share how this occurred and how you responded to it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Prayer in the Spirit

In his letter to the Ephesian church, Paul only mentions one offensive weapon, but he may not have had a mental image of the Roman soldier's armor that represented his second offensive weapon: prayer. Paul continues his thoughts by writing the following words:

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

What do you think Paul has in mind when he instructs us to pray in the Spirit with all kinds of prayers and requests?

Some members of the global Church assert that Paul is discussing praying in an unknown tongue. They highlight two verses from Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers:

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

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

In discussing offensive prayer (Ephesians 6:18), I believe Paul refers to all forms of Spirit-led and empowered prayer that break down demonic strongholds, affecting both individuals and territories influenced by demonic spirits. Some may be guided to pray in an unknown tongue, but don't overlook the power of prayer in your own language as influenced by the Spirit. Paul notes that not all Christians speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:30). The Corinthians were a gifted group, yet I doubt he would tell the believers in Ephesus that praying in the Spirit meant praying solely in tongues. The Body of Christ is a multi-faceted spiritual organism that utilizes the gifts and talents of all to dismantle spiritual strongholds through various types of prayer. Spirit-led prayer is grounded in God's authority and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We have an example of this type of prayer in Acts 4:23-31, after Peter and John were jailed by the Jewish leadership for the "crime" of healing the lame man at the Beautiful Gate. During their court appearance, influenced by the Spirit, Peter spoke fearlessly and told the Chief Priests, Scribes, and leaders that they would not stop talking about Jesus. They were released after receiving numerous threats. Notice what occurred when Peter and John returned to the body of believers:

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

that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, ³⁰while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:23-31).

The early disciples recognized that their struggle was not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces. How did they respond to this demonic persecution? They prayed passionately; their voices raised to God. They didn't take turns praying; instead, they all prayed aloud in unison in various languages, guided by the Holy Spirit. In that moment, their meeting place was shaken after they lifted their voices to God in Spirit-empowered prayer. The believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim God's message with boldness.

We have a modern-day example of Spirit-led prayer overcoming demonic strongholds over a city in Argentina. In the book by C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, pages 30-34, there is a story about a strategy to reach the city of Resistencia in the northern province of Chaco, Argentina. Ed Silvano, an Argentine evangelist, initiated a three-year plan to transform the spiritual atmosphere of the city, enabling people to hear and respond to the Gospel. In 1990, approximately 6,000 evangelical believers in Christ lived in a city of 400,000 residents, representing only 1.5% of the population. Silvano brought a team from his Harvest Evangelism organization to Resistencia and established a foundation of prayer, spiritual warfare, and leadership training for over a year. The people responded positively and were eager to take authority over their city the following day. Silvano writes:

A group of 80 gathered and marched into the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, praying for five hours against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. Among other things, the group sensed a spirit of witchcraft and a spirit of death in the Ministry of Social Welfare building, where President Peron had a notorious warlock who maintained his office. When the group left the plaza, they felt a sense of victory. The principalities and powers were not destroyed, but the warfare prayer had begun to weaken, to some extent, the evil hold on Argentina. Over the city of Resistencia, the people were aware of the names of the spirits ruling over the city. The spirit of death was perhaps the most powerful. ²

Many residents of Resistencia were deeply devoted to a folk saint of Death known as San La Muerte. They had tiny bone images of this idol surgically implanted under their skin or nipples, believing the false promise that this would guarantee them a "good death." God revealed other spirits of equal rank, such as a spirit of division, which instilled terror, especially in children during siesta and at night; a spirit of sexual perversion; and a religious spirit, which distorted the true nature of the traditional church. These were the main strongholds in the city. All these spiritual forces had names that God revealed. Surprisingly, images of these spirits and their activities were depicted on several large folk art murals in the city's central plaza.

What was the outcome? Ed Silvano reports that the growth graphs of the churches in Resistencia saw a significant upward trend starting in April, when the group prayed in the plaza. During one

² C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, Regal Books, Pages 30-34.

public event, 250 people were baptized in portable pools. Crowds of around 17,000 gathered in an open field for evangelistic meetings, where they burned objects associated with occult rituals and witchcraft in a fifty-five-gallon drum each night. Hundreds experienced physical healing and deliverance from demons. At least eighteen new churches were established. Most importantly, the evangelical Christian population of Resistencia nearly doubled in the calendar year of 1990. It seems evident that this group of praying believers had a significant spiritual impact. Their powerful collective prayers paved the way for the Word of God, and following their time of prayer, an evangelistic campaign was held to proclaim the Gospel.

I am using this story to illustrate that these things are real and that Jesus has achieved victory over them at the cross. When facing powers and principalities over cities or nations, God leads His people to come together in this type of prayer, often including fasting as well. When the Body of Christ collaborates under Spirit-inspired leadership, entire towns and cities can turn to Christ. Even if you are struggling with your own strongholds, it can be beneficial to reach out to a trusted friend to stand with you in prayer. This emphasizes the importance of being part of a biblical expression of Jesus Christ in your town or city. This has always been the pattern. Something extraordinary occurs when God's people stand together in unity. You must have fellow believers in Christ around you. Being accountable somewhere serves as a strong defense for you as a believer, helping prevent isolation and vulnerability. Remember that when our Lord sent out His disciples, He did not send them alone. He sent them two by two to heal the sick and cast out demons.

3. The Weapon of Praise and Worship.

Although Paul does not mention this weapon of the Spirit in his letter to the Ephesians, I believe there is a good reason to highlight it when discussing the believer's arsenal of spiritual weapons. For example, when Paul (formerly Saul) was in a time of worship, God spoke to him about using him to advance the Gospel to other areas. God transformed his life through a time of worship:

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

In the Scripture above, worship is not used as a weapon but to draw closer to God and seek direction from the Holy Spirit. We need God to guide and empower us in our work for Him. Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail" (Matthew 16:18). We should not stop listening to the Spirit in favor of "big business models," for Christ is the builder of the church, and we need direction from Him. "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1). Many pastors have been disappointed because what works in one church does not work for them. God has a strategy for your city, town, or village if we only listen to Him.

Worship served as a weapon against a demonically inspired attack on Israel by a large army formed by a coalition of Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites in 2 Chronicles 20. Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah at the time, gathered all the people in Jerusalem, and they began to cry out to the Lord in

fervent prayer, confessing their inability to defend their families against the assault. God spoke prophetically to them as they fasted and prayed for deliverance.

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

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

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

Under the Lord's direction, Spirit-inspired worship took place, leading to the collapse of the demonically inspired attack as God intervened on behalf of His people, requiring no physical fight from them. They were not to depend on their strength but instead on His power. The Lord set an ambush for Israel's enemies, causing them to fight against each other and ultimately destroy themselves.

A Personal Story of Worship and Prayer

Throughout my life, there have been times when I felt God guiding me into situations where I had to rely on Him to take control, allowing me to stand behind Him and observe how He manages the circumstances.

In 1984, while living and serving the Lord in Israel, my wife, Sandy, and I discovered that she was pregnant with our first child. We were thrilled and grateful to God. During the early stages, several worrying symptoms prompted us to seek medical attention in Bethlehem. We chose a doctor who was highly experienced and had access to the latest equipment and used ultrasound to listen for a heartbeat. However, after his tests, he found no heartbeat and concluded that it was not a baby, but rather a tumor. We found this hard to believe, as Sandy had tested positive for being pregnant. The doctor told us it was a "molar" pregnancy, which, although not cancerous, was a tumor that could become cancerous and would need to be removed. This tumor mimicked the symptoms of pregnancy. He scheduled us for an operation to remove the tumor the following week. We returned home devastated, unsure of what to think. The confusing part was that we felt we had a word from God giving us the name for this baby! She was to be called "Anna," after Anna, the prophetess

mentioned in Luke 2:36-38. The enemy was quick to drop the thought in my mind, “Hah! You asked bread of God, and He gave you a stone!” Why would God give us this word, this hope, only to take it away and replace it with what seemed like a stone? We believed we had received a blessing from God, only to be confronted with a “mountain” of a problem! Sandy and I reached out to friends at our church, and they joined us in prayer. God spoke to us through a Scripture from the Old Testament Book of Zechariah. I will quote from the King James version, as that is how God revealed it to us at the time: **“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone of it with shoutings, crying Grace, grace unto it” (Zechariah 4:6-7).**

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

Afterward, we lifted our voices together in praise and proclamation. We were in the company of other believers in a meeting. As they gathered around us to pray, we felt a sense of peace about the whole situation and proceeded with our appointment for the operation, trusting that the Lord had it in His hands. The doctor expected to continue with the procedure, but before performing the DNC operation, we asked him to check with one more ultrasound before the surgery. He could see that Sandy was very distraught, so he agreed. When he did, he was astonished to hear the heartbeat and see the amniotic sac, which had not been visible before. I do not know if the doctor was mistaken the first time or if God performed a creative miracle. All I know is that we were given hope through God's word, and our daughter is a miracle to us!

Not every story in our lives has a triumphant answer like this one. Sometimes, we suffer without understanding why. In everything, God can be glorified, and through this, there is always victory. When we realize that He filters everything that comes to us through His own hands, we can trust in His love. Our success is the victory He has already won for us. His strength is our strength; His armor is our armor. He doesn't ask us to fight this battle alone but offers us His power and peace amid the storm. The battle indeed belongs to the Lord.

* We named our daughter Anna Grace Thomas. Anna is the Latin form of Hannah's Hebrew name, meaning “favor” or “grace.” We settled on the name “Anna” before this experience, having chosen it from Luke chapter 2 before Sandy even became pregnant. That is why we picked the middle name, Grace, so that her name, in its meaning, reflects "grace, grace." It serves as a reminder of how God bestowed grace upon us in this situation.

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

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