

Engaging in Spiritual Warfare and Exercising Spiritual Authority

Skills for Spiritual Warfare and Spiritual Authority: **Joining Jesus in His Work**

Sermon Series Starting February 2, 2025

Thesis: **We are a people who want to grow in our capacity, skill, and desire to reach others with the love of God.**

Text: John 1:1-42; Acts 26:12-18; 1 John 5:21; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

In this sermon series, we are talking about *Engaging in Spiritual Warfare and Exercising Spiritual Authority*. Spiritual warfare is part of our current context as we reach others with the love of God.

Our desire is to develop new *Skills for Spiritual Warfare and Spiritual Authority*.

We are making a journey together with the Lord and with each other in 2025 in reaching others with the love of God.

Spiritual Warfare: It Is a Part of the Works of Jesus

Jesus tells his disciples that the works he had been doing, we would do. Let's read John 14:12-14 in the Message. Keep this reality in mind as we talk about spiritual warfare today.

*The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, **am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing**. You can count on it. 13 From now on, whatever you request along the lines of who I am and what I am doing, I'll do it. That's how the Father will be seen for who he is in the Son. I mean it. 14 Whatever you request in this way, I'll do (John 14:12-14 MSG).*

Jesus said that he was giving us the same work to do that he had been doing. The work of Christ includes advancing the kingdom of God and defeating darkness, disease, and the devil.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me **to proclaim freedom for the prisoners** and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19).*

*The reason the Son of God appeared was **to destroy the devil's work** (1 John 3:8).*

God is raising up an army to advance the kingdom of God, empowering and authorizing disciples to defeat demonic enemies, to heal people of diseases, to overcome darkness with light, love, forgiveness, and to wield other weapons of the kingdom of God. Therefore, we must conclude that spiritual warfare is a reality for Jesus and his followers (Ephesians 6:10ff).

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 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 6:10-18).

Since spiritual warfare is a part of our reality, we need to learn how to fight. We need to get equipped to do warfare, which means that we need to get trained in the principles and weapons of spiritual warfare.

It might be helpful to consider a brief survey of Matthew, looking specifically at the confrontation between the kingdoms of light and darkness. In a quick overview of Matthew, we can learn many principles about spiritual warfare.

Overview of Spiritual Warfare from the Gospel of Matthew

1. **The birth of Jesus takes place in a historical context**, showing that everything before Jesus is fulfilled and completed in Jesus, and everything after Jesus finds meaning, fulfillment, and completion in Jesus.
 - a. *Eugene Peterson, Introduction to Matthew.* The story of Jesus doesn't begin with Jesus. God had been at work for a long time. Salvation, which is the main business of Jesus, is an old business. Jesus is the coming together in final form of themes and energies and movements that had been set in motion before the foundation of the world. Matthew opens the New Testament by setting the local story of Jesus in its world historical context. He makes sure that as we read his account of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we see the connections with everything that has gone before. "Fulfilled" is one of Matthew's characteristic verbs: such and such happened "that it might be fulfilled." Jesus is unique, but he is not odd. Better yet, Matthew tells the story in such a way that not only is everything previous to us completed in Jesus; we are completed in Jesus. Every day we wake up in the middle of something that is already going on, that has been going on for a long time: genealogy and

geology, history and culture, the cosmos—God. We are neither accidental nor incidental to the story. We get orientation, briefing, background, reassurance. Matthew provides the comprehensive context by which we see all God's creation and salvation completed in Jesus, and all the parts of our lives—work, family, friends, memories, dreams—also completed in Jesus. Lacking such a context, we are in danger of seeing Jesus as a mere diversion from the concerns announced in the newspapers. Nothing could be further from the truth.

2. The world view of Scripture shows the intersection and interaction of the spiritual and material world.

- a. See Matthew 1:18-15, for example, where God speaks to Joseph in a dream to keep in relationship with Mary.
- b. In the early part of the Gospel of Matthew, look at the number of dreams and angelic visitations. God is very active in this world.
- c. In Western thought, the material and spiritual worlds are separate and never meet.
- d. But, the Biblical world view is different.

3. We are all born on a battle field (Revelation 12:1-17).

- a. Satan tried to destroy the Son of God at the time of his birth through public and government policies (Matthew 2:18).
- b. At the time of commissioning to ministry, Jesus fought a spiritual battle with the enemy (The Wilderness Temptation, Matthew 4:1-11).
- c. Point: If Jesus had to fight, so must we as his followers.
 - i. *A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master (Matthew 10:24-25).*
 - ii. *Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 12:17).*

4. God uses warfare to teach us how to rule, reign, and overcome. (See Matthew 10.)

- a. In commissioning and sending out the disciples, Jesus made them aware of conflict ahead with authorities, religious groups, and even their own families (Matthew 10:17-26). He sent them out as sheep among wolves (Matthew 10:16).
- b. Warfare is a part of life in the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:13).
- c. Warfare is a tool which God uses to shape our lives into the image of Christ, that we might rule, reign, and overcome with him.

- d. **Why doesn't God simply wipe out all our enemies?** God knew that if he had wiped out all of Joshua's enemies before they got to the promised land, the land would have been over-run by weeds and wild animals (Exodus 23:29).
 - e. God's people had to learn how to defeat their enemies, possess the land, and occupy their territory one step at a time (Deuteronomy 7:22).
 - f. Part of growing up strong in Christ is learning how to overcome the evil one (1 John 2:13).
5. **There is an enemy who seeks to destroy us** (John 10:10).
- a. In the Lord's Prayer, **Jesus assumes the reality of warfare as he teaches us how to pray.**
 - i. *But deliver us from the evil one* (Matthew 10:13).
 - ii. We have a real enemy of our souls, and we are involved in a real war.
 - iii. We have an enemy who sets traps, tempts us to sin, and seeks to kick us when we are down (especially after we fall into temptation).
 - b. **But, God wants to deliver us and to teach us how to overcome.**
 - i. God wants to show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are inclined toward him (2 Chronicles 16:9 NKJ). (See Deuteronomy 5:28-33.)
 - ii. God wants to teach us how to believe right, live right, and fight right. (See the book of Ephesians.)
6. **The enemy looks for opportune times to attack.**
- a. **Vulnerable moments**
 - i. Attacked Jesus at the end of a 40 day fast (Matthew 4:1-11).
 - ii. Attacked Peter at a low point, in the midst of confusion and despair (Matthew 26:69-75).
 - b. **Pre-emptive first strikes**
 - i. A territorial spirit caused a storm targeting Jesus and the disciples prior to the victory over Legion in region of Gadarene (Matthew 8:23-34).
 - c. **Mountain tops**
 - i. Peter's confession was followed by the rebuke of Peter by Jesus (Matthew 16:13-23).
 - d. **Counter attacks**
 - i. *When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation"* (Matthew 12:43-45).
 - e. **Be aware and alert, but don't be afraid** (Matthew 10:26-33).

- i. Don't let the enemy outwit you. We are not ignorant of the schemes of Satan (2 Corinthians 2:11).
7. **We use kingdom weapons to wage war against darkness (sin), disease (sickness), and demons (satanic opposition)** (Matthew 4:19-24).
 - a. **What do we wage war against?**
 - i. **Against darkness:** proclaim truth, invite people to repentance from sin and to experience change, preach hope, loving our enemies, etc., demonstrate righteousness and good works before others, live as salt and light in the world
 - ii. **Against disease:** heal sick people by using spiritual power, treating people with medicines and medical help, discovering treatments and cures for disease
 - iii. **Against demons:** set captives free (Matthew 4:23-25, 8:16, 32-34), help the harassed and helpless (Matthew 9:35-38), defeat principalities and demonically inspired disasters (Matthew 8:23-34)
 - b. **Jesus fought the enemy with weapons of the Kingdom of God. So must we.**
 - c. **What are some of the weapons of the kingdom which we use in warfare?**
 - i. Anointing and power (the Holy Spirit came upon Christ and empowered him for his conflict with the enemy like in Matthew 4:1-11)
 - ii. Word of God (Matthew 4:1-11)
 - iii. Proclamation and demonstration, including healing and deliverance (Matthew 4:23ff)
 - iv. Spiritual disciplines like prayer (Matthew 6:10ff)
 - v. Spirit of God (Matthew 12:22-28 "drive out demons by the Spirit of God")
 - vi. Bind the strongman (Matthew 12:29)
 - vii. Revelation of God (Matthew 16:13-20)
 - viii. Keys of authority (Matthew 16:19)
 - ix. Faith (Matthew 17:14-20)
 - x. Prayers of Jesus (Matthew 26:26ff): like in the Garden of Gethsemane; for Peter (Luke 22:31-32)
 - xi. Authority in Christ (Matthew 28:18-20)
 - xii. Abiding presence of the Lord (Matthew 28:18-20)
 - xiii. The name of Jesus: Jesus gives the right to use his name to those who are in relationship with him (Acts 19:13-16)
 - xiv. The blood of Jesus (Revelation 12:11)
 - xv. The word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11)
 - xvi. Willingness to die for Christ (Revelation 12:11)
 - xvii. Armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18)
 - xviii. Fasting (Mark 9:29)
 - xix. Worship (2 Chronicles 20:1-30)
 - xx. What are other weapons of our warfare that you have used?
8. **The kingdom of darkness uses weapons, too.**
 - a. Abortion and culture of death (Matthew 2:1ff)

- b. Temptations and shortcuts to meet legitimate needs and to achieve legitimate purposes (Matthew 4:1-11)
 - c. Judgment (Matthew 7:1)
 - d. Slander and defamation (Matthew 10:25): calls Jesus and the members of his household "the devil" (Beelzebub)
 - e. Murder (Matthew 10:28)
 - f. Fear and intimidation (Matthew 10:31)
 - g. Hatred and division (Matthew 10:34-36... turns family members against one another)
 - h. Possession (filling empty places) (Matthew 12:43-45)
 - i. Stealing the seed of God's word and work from people (Matthew 13:19)
 - j. Sowing weeds among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30)
 - k. Attacking at moments of victory through open doors (like pride) (Matthew 16:21-23)
 - i. Satan attacked at a great moment of victory in order to try and steal the celebration.
 - ii. Satan used the words of a close friend to distract from the things of God.
 - l. Vows (Matthew 26:33, 35): the enemy has the right to test vows, like when Peter vowed, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will..... Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."
9. **Jesus raised up appointed and anointed laborers to do the works he had been doing in defeating darkness, disease, and demons** (Matthew 10:1-8).

Application

- 1. We need to ask God to help wake up his people to the reality of the current war with the kingdom of darkness.
- 2. We need to ask God to help us rise up as overcomers.
- 3. We need to ask God to set us free from every hook of the enemy.
- 4. We need to ask God to equip us to fight the good of faith using the weapons of his warfare.
- 5. It is time to rise up and fight.
 - a. The enemy has targeted some of us in order to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).
 - i. To steal
 - (1) our passion
 - (2) our hope
 - (3) our resources
 - (4) our energy
 - (5) our promises
 - (6) our finances

- ii. To kill
 - (1) to crush our faith in God
 - (2) to get us out of God's protection in order to take us out
 - (3) to use wounds and vows to kill our ability to love and forgive
 - (4) to abort God's purposes in us
 - (5) to shut us down
- iii. To destroy
 - (1) our families
 - (2) our testimony
 - (3) our usefulness
 - (4) our church and ministries
- b. The enemy is the dragon, who wants to be a drag on your faith, to wear you down (Francis Frangipane).
 - i. To give in to enemy schemes
 - ii. To give up and get run over by the enemy
- c. It's time to rise up.
 - i. God wants to show himself strong on our behalf.
 - ii. God wants to cause us to overcome by the power of his strength and grace.
 - iii. God wants us to fight the good fight of faith and to overcome our enemies, to take back territory, and to enter into our inheritances in Christ.

Spiritual Warfare: It Includes Bold Declaration, Overcoming Power, and Authority to Bind and Loose

A part of warfare is fulfilled in worship and in speaking out the written judgments of God through bold declaration and command (Psalm 149). We have the privilege to declare the promises, purposes, plans, destiny, desires, and decrees of the Lord.

*Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints. 2 Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. 3 Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp. 4 For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation. 5 **Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds.***

*6 May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, 7 to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, 8 to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, 9 **to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints.** Praise the LORD (Psalm 149:1-9).*

1. **We start at the place of focusing on the Lord.**

- a. We praise the Lord, worship the Lord, sing to the Lord, and embody expressive worship to the Lord.
 - b. We acknowledge and declare that God is our creator and king.
 - c. We rejoice in the Lord.
 - d. We declare that the Lord delights in his children. He is not angry or against us; rather, God is for us.
 - e. We declare that the Lord rewards the humble with rescue, deliverance, redemption, and saving grace.
 - f. We rejoice in the honor of knowing our God and making him known from the place of intimacy.
2. **Warfare takes place in the context of and from the foundation of intimate worship and knowledge of the Lord our maker, king, and savior.**
- a. Worship both honors God and strikes a blow to the enemy; the enemy is displaced by our worship of the Living God. As we worship and make bold declaration, the Lord strikes blows against the enemy.
 - b. It is our honor, joy, and glory to declare and carry out the written declarations and judgments of our God.

In Luke 9 - 10, we see that **Jesus gives to his disciples authority and power** over all the power of the enemy.

And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. 2 And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing (Luke 9:1-2).

Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. 2 And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. 3 Go..." (Luke 10:1-3).

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." 18 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

21 At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. 22 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows

who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” 23 Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. 24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it” (Luke 10:17-24).

1. **Jesus gives his followers power and authority to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel of the Kingdom of God** (Luke 9:1-2).
 - a. Power: dunamis; ability to act or produce an effect; ability
 - b. Authority: right; authorization; backed up by governmental structure
 - c. Proclaim what it is like when God rules and reigns. Jesus is king and there is a coming kingdom.
 - d. Demonstrate what it is like when God rules and reigns. Manifested in healing, deliverance, and other activities of the kingdom of God (Luke 4:18-19, et.al.).
2. **Jesus calls us and authorizes us to use his power and authority in his Father’s harvest fields** (Luke 10:1-3).
 - a. Our authority is delegated for the plans and purposes of God.
 - b. We are an answer to the prayers of Jesus and saints throughout history.
 - c. We are transformed so that we can join Jesus on his mission in this world.
3. There will be impact when we move in the power and authority of Jesus in our assignments and spheres of influence. “Even the demons submit to us in Jesus’ name.”
4. **Jesus gives us overcoming authority and power over demonic realms.** Our obedient service for Jesus displaces the enemy from lives, areas, regions, and territories as the kingdom of God advances. “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample... and to overcome all the power of the enemy.”
5. **Jesus reminds us to recalibrate our focus upon intimacy with God, rather than getting intoxicated by demonstrations of power and authority.** Never lose focus on Jesus.

Believers have the right to loose on earth what God has loosed in heaven and to bind on earth what God has bound in heaven.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” 14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the **keys** [representing authority] of the kingdom of heaven; **whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven**" (Matthew 16:13-19).

1. Again, binding and loosing are accomplished through bold proclamation and declaration, especially through the spoken word and songs of intercession. We know what to bind and loose because of our intimacy with the Living God.
2. We carry out the written judgments (declarations) of the Lord (Psalm 149:9) in the context of worship, adoration, and recognizing that the Lord takes delight in us. It is an honor that the Lord delights in us and that we get to partner with him to carry out his declarations and judgments through our priestly ministry of worship and intercession.
3. Rebuking, breaking, or cutting off the supply line of oppression or demonic influence is also permitted. For example, Jesus did that with the woman who is afflicted for 18 years by a demon (Luke 13:10-13).
4. So, we must learn how to command and declare as a part of our ministry, which Jesus modeled for us in numerous places (Luke 4:41, 10:17; Matthew 4:1-11).