

Counseling God's Way

V. Major Threats to Counseling God's Way

Lesson 20 - Victory in Spiritual Warfare

By

Bob Hoekstra

[Living In Christ Ministries](#)

Brought to you by...

[The Blue Letter Bible](#)

www.blb.org

and

[The Blue Letter Bible Institute](#)

www.blbi.org

©2015 [Living In Christ Ministries](#)

P.O. Box 2848

Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2848

Phone: (877) 600 – 5426

URL: [Living In Christ Ministries](#)

Email: office@livinginchrist.org

All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

Permission is granted to copy for noncommercial personal use.

[Matthew 10:8](#)

All right let's continue on the matter of spiritual warfare. We've looked at kind of the heavier side of spiritual warfare. That is, the fact that we have an enemy and all the ways he works through the world system. Actually now, we're going to look at the more exciting side. We've had a couple of glimpses in expectation of victory, but our subject now concerning spiritual warfare is victory in spiritual warfare.

Romans 8:37 is a great spiritual warfare victory verse. “Yet in all of these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

Listed here are many difficulties in the “all these things”—tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword (Romans 8:35). Verse 36, “killed all day long, like sheep led for the slaughter.” These are pretty tough things to think about and talk about. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors. Not, if we can just get out of them. But in all these things, right in the middle of them, we are already more than mighty winners. Not through ourselves, but “through Him who loved us.”

And consider the way the enemy works throughout the world system and comes at us using deceit and disguises and lies and temptation and condemnation and on and on, that's part of all these things in which we are more than conquerors. Even while he is flailing away at us, or trying to, we may know it or not, but through Christ we're already more than conquerors. And we'll see how that unfolds in a tremendous way in these passages that we look at in this section. It is through Him who loved us because Christ was victorious, we can be too.

Let's look for a while now at Christ's victory. We looked at the battle, our enemy and his techniques and all, and some anticipation of victory. Let's read for a while about the great victory that's ours in Christ.

Hebrews 2:14-15,

Inasmuch then as the children [that is the children of the family of man that God created] have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself [Christ] likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

All of the children of the family of man, and we even of the children of God, if it were not for the work of the Lord, would live in the fear of death. By dying for us, which Christ did—He died for us—and by His rising victoriously, Jesus took away Satan's “death weapon,” you might say. You know, his neutron bomb. The Lord just took it away from him. The threat of death is kind of the ultimate weapon of the enemy.

The fear of death is the ultimate fear of man, though he tries to avoid it and not talk about it. Or if he talks about it, come up with deceitful philosophies that make it the greatest adventure in life, you know. You hear about things like that on the news. You get some weird philosopher that's facing death, and “Oh, this is the most exciting adventure of my life.” It very well may be in the most critical point in his existence ever, but if he doesn't know the Lord it's not going to be what he thinks it is.

By dying for us and rising victorious, the Lord took away that fear of death. Without this everyone would be slaves to the fear of death. But the Lord took away that heavy weapon of the enemy, holding it over our head. "You cooperate or I'll kill you. As a child of God, you wouldn't be flippant and cocky, but in a sense you could say, "You mean and then I'd go straight to the Lord, right?" There is something missing in that threat. Not that we're looking for our own exit time. But when it does come sooner or later, it's not like a dreaded thing. I mean, that's what we are looking forward to, is being in the presence of the Lord.

So the Lord, by dying and rising victoriously on our behalf, where death can no longer conquer us, what is a weapon that has been taken out of the arsenal of the enemy! Death for us is not separation from God forever. It is entrance into the very presence of God. And for those without Christ, who don't have that victory, it's the most dreaded thing of all, where you have to either ignore it, scramble up crazy philosophies to kind of talk yourself into a comfort zone.

Colossians 2:13-15, more about Christ's victory and in the realm of spiritual warfare, I hope we understand we are talking right now about the critical arena of it. Yes, it's important to know we have an enemy. Yes, it's important to know we are on a battleground. And we are not to be ignorant of his schemes and we don't have to be. The Lord has revealed them, exposed him right in the Word. However, that's all kind of preliminary for what really matters. And that is, Christ has won the battle. That's the big issue. That's where it all hinges, right there.

Colossians 2:13-15,

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, [verse 15]...Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it [that is, in the cross].

In this same cross and resurrection victory, the Lord triumphed over all demonic forces, "having disarmed principalities and powers." That is, the hierarchy of fallen angels and the evil cohorts of Lucifer himself. And all the while He is granting us forgiveness and new life in Him at the same time. What a great victory!

Yes, the cohorts of the enemy will not admit their defeat yet. But the cross, burial and resurrection of Christ, and ascension, guaranteed that He and His kingdom would end up ultimately, and forever far above all principalities and powers.

In John 16:33, Jesus said,

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; [There's another one of those promises of God you can just stand on], but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Sure, you're going to have trouble there, but I've already whipped it. You know, so it can't ultimately take you down and overcome you and take you as its own. I've won.

In Me and in the world, two interesting phrases there. In Christ, knowing Him, living in Him, related to Him, we can have peace. Even though while we're still in the world awaiting to be with Him face to face, we will have tribulation. There will be plenty of troubles. But we don't have to be all bummed out by it. Oh no, troubles, be of good cheer. The Lord has overcome this very world that is troubling us.

The god of this world system fired all of his weaponry at the Lord Jesus Christ, but He overcame it all. Never caved in, succumbed, or lost one confrontation within or without.

There's a lot of victory here already we've just read in these few verses. If you add to it Romans 7 and 8, where we saw victory over the flesh by the work of the Spirit of Christ in His children, we already see here that there is victory available in Jesus Christ over the world, the flesh, the devil, sin, self and death. It is astounding the victory that is available in Jesus Christ.

Revelation 20 is talking about victory, the final eternal victory that is guaranteed for us. It's always great, as they say, "Read the end of the story." Though we know, don't we, this is really the beginning of the story. Revelation. I mean, the story is eternal. So much of the Bible is about sort of the prelude to the story, in a sense. Like the preface to a book called *Eternity*. We are living in now to get entrance into the rest of that book, which is ours through Christ.

Revelation 20:1-3

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up and set a seal on him so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things, he must be released for a little while.

What a wonderful demonstration of the victory that is available in Christ during the millennium. Where, for a thousand years the enemy is put into a practical, personally experiential place of defeat for him, not just certainly of ultimate defeat, but for a thousand years. And yes, he's going to come out briefly. The Lord lets him out again to show the heart of man. And some will even choose unrighteousness and the flesh and man's way, even when the enemy is locked up. And their hearts will be revealed when he is released. They will have the leader they want, to serve self instead of Christ.

However, verse 10 says,

The devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

And the torment may take all sorts of shapes. But obviously the greatest torment of all in hell is not to be able to know and enjoy the presence of the true and living God. Now, He's present throughout His entire creation. God is omnipresent. David said, "Where ever I go, if I even go to the depths of hell, You would be there." But here is the thing, He cannot be known there in His love and grace and mercy and glory. But rather can only be

known in the consequences of rejecting His righteousness and holiness. Total defeat is coming for the enemy. I mean of the most severe kind.

Here's the question for us and for our perspective of thinking together through the Scriptures in counseling God's way, because spiritual warfare is such a big issue in counseling ministry. In our own lives, all of us as Christians, but in ministering to people personally, spiritual warfare is a big issue. So often people going through very rough things, a lot of it is related to the enemy just pounding on them, shooting darts at them, trying to trip them up, pull them back and wipe them out. We can often help one another in reminding each other of that.

Here's the question, though, at this point: How are we to benefit now in the victory that Jesus Christ offered in the cross and the resurrection?

Well, certainly not by becoming expert in psychological theory. Can you imagine throwing psychotherapy at Satan? "Like ooh, let up. Please, no!" No, It's like, "Yes, give me some more of that! I think you're improving in fact." The only time he's encouraging us is when it's a path that doesn't lead to life. It's not going to be psychological theory of man. How sad when many Christians seeking a word of counsel end up often in the so-called "Christian integrative psychotherapeutic clinic." And what they are really suffering greatly in, maybe, is the enemy planting a defeat of lies and deceit and domination and temptation and accusation and condemnation. And if those hurting believers are given maybe some Scripture...but so often they get heavy, heavy doses of humanistic theories and philosophies and ideas on how to make your life what you want it to be. How sad. It doesn't even begin to get to where the issues are.

We want to be able ourselves, to the glory of God and what He's offered in His Word; and for the help of others, as we minister one to another, to help people see in the Word how to benefit now in a godly, Christ-like, God-pleasing, life-developing, church-building way. They need to see how to benefit now in the victory that Christ has already won.

And basically you can bring it down to a short phrase. Stand in that victory that's already been provided. Let's think for a little while of our next heading: Our Stand in His Victory.

Ephesians 6:10-12 is our stand in His victory,

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God [Why? To what end?], 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*.

This is talking about all the hierarchy of evil cohorts the enemy has. Verse 13, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God [Why? To what end?], that you may be able to withstand in the evil day." Literally, withstand is "stand against." This is the same exact word we saw earlier concerning standing against in verse 11. Withstand. It is just a little bit different form. "In the evil day," when, as they say, "all hell breaks loose." The evil day is when evil seems to overwhelm and surround.

"... and having done all, to stand," Ephesians 6:14 says, "Stand therefore." I think the point is pretty strongly made. Verse 11 says, "stand against." Verse 13 says, "withstand and having done all, to stand." "Stand therefore." I mean, that's the point the Lord wants to get home to us. In the warfare we take what God has provided—which is victory—and stand in it.

Having girded your waist with truth. Having put on the breastplate of righteousness, all of the provisions of the armory of God in this great victory that's our in Christ.

Ephesians 6:15,

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 end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

Verse 10 calls us to trust in the Lord and His strength. Not our own strength. Not the strength of man. Not the strength of impressive looking theories and ideas. But stand in the strength of the Lord. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. There is no strength or might that will ever be sufficient for the battle, short of the Lord's strength and might itself. That is what we must be strong in, trust in, lean on, and count on.

Verse 11, "Put on the whole armor of God." Count on that armor. Use with reliance God's battle resources. Why? It is so that we might be able to stand against the wiles, the schemes and tricks of the devil.

Verse 13, Stand or, it could be translated, "stand firm." What's involved in standing spiritually on the battlefield, in the victory and the provision of the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, some aspects of it would no doubt include being alert. Christians who just kind of drift through life with their eyes closed, paying no attention to what is going on. It's like the enemy is looking for them. "Hey, there is a good morsel to chew on." They are not even paying attention. "They don't even know or have forgotten I'm around. I think I'll start chewing on their life." Being alert is part of it, standing, you know. You can just see someone on the battlefield standing. They're alert! This is a battlefield. They're not swinging in a hammock, thumbing their nose at the enemy or saying. "Oh you believe in that fairy tale?" They're standing and they're paying attention. They are ready. They are certainly not cowering or fleeing either, but standing and not running from him.

Also, interestingly enough, they are not chasing him down either. If you've already won, why chase a loser? A lot of the spiritual warfare examples in the American church is kind of chase the enemy until you get a death grip on him, and choke him. No, he's lost; we've won. Stand in the victory.

Knowing we are at war, that would certainly be a part of standing in this context. Not being shocked when there is attack. That would be part of it. You know, can you imagine a soldier, all outfitted for war. He's on the battlefield and he goes, "What are those noises? Why is the ground shaking? What is that smell of explosives and all?" You're at war! You thought there'd be no bombs? No attacks? Certainly not being shocked when

there is an attack that is just part of it. It's part of standing. Absolutely though, being increasingly certain of victory in Christ. That is part of standing in what Christ provides. And taking our place on the battlefield, knowing that He has won and we can be instruments of the application of that victory in people's lives.

Aware of our position in Christ, that's certainly related to standing. How are you going to stand there if you don't know you stand there in Christ? If it's just us against him, standing won't do it. He will just trample us down. If it was just us, running would be better. Hiding would make more sense, but being aware of our position in Christ. We're in Christ; He has won. Hey, we can just stand here. Sure, he may flail away. He may throw darts. He may lob bombs at us. But we can stand knowing our position in Christ.

It is being about the business of serving and witnessing and edification. Doing what soldiers are called to do in this battle that's certainly a part of standing.

It is being ready to persevere. No one said the battle would be over in ten days. I was in Israel years ago, just a few weeks after the Six Day War, they called it. There was the uprising and they took much territory, including the old city of Jerusalem. I had a Friday night Sabbath meal in the home of a Jewish family. The daughter had been working with my dad over here and had come to know Christ as Messiah, and had just gotten back home and hadn't told her family yet. But she told them that the son of this man who had been such a gracious employer and that she had worked with in some ministry and translation things was in town, and they had me over. We had a tremendous evening. The father took me in the den after the meal—which was quite an event in itself—and was pulling out all of their pictorial magazines. And included a lot of the Six Day War. And he'd show me a page and point up. He'd turn another page, he would point up again. He didn't know the Lord personally, but he knew enough to know where that victory came from.

But not every war is a six-day war! Some feel like a six hundred year war. So being ready to persevere, sure that is part of standing. We don't know. "I'll stand but only 72 more hours." Wait a minute, who is the Commander in Chief? To whom does the battle belong? There is only one who will tell us when there is some respite even on the battleground.

And certainly it includes paying attention to our Commander, listening to Him and asking Him by His Spirit and His Word to sort out the accusations and confusion of the enemy. It is because he will want to be talking to us too. "Hey, let's think about this battle together." And he's got it. He can really reason to conclusions of our defeat. Be listening to our Commander. Just abiding in the Lord and abounding in the work of the Lord. That is all part of standing.

A little side-note question: When we're standing there in the battle, where does this warfare often surface or make its appearance? Not maybe like a Hollywood producer would show it, with smoke and noise and all that, and advancing troops. But it does appear, and it appears in a lot of forms and places. It often appears in heavy measures of fear or anxiety or doubt or confusion. See these are all things the enemy loves to do. These are all things he's master at stirring up. Boy, when those things seem to cloud over us it's like the battle's intensifying. He will want to point it all to us. "That's just you. You can't get your head straight. You can't get your act together." And he's the one shouting and screaming confusion and kicking and tripping and shoving, and going,

"What is it with you?" You can't seem to get it together. He knocks us down and he goes, "Boy, you're clumsy." Accusation and condemnation! And it is often enticement to indulgence in wrong goals and wrong priorities. It is the enemy pounding away to get us to move in the wrong direction for self.

Often strained relationships and resentment and vengeance is a sign of intensive spiritual warfare. And a person may be caving in a bit to it. It is because these are not the things that the Lord produces. These are things the enemy magnifies. They are already resident in the flesh of everyone.

Distraction. We just cannot keep our attention on what the Lord has for us and what He's doing and what He's saying and where He's leading. It is because the enemy is working hard on us. "No, no, no, think on this. No, no, no get into this."

Disappointment. That's an interesting warfare thing. A symptom of warfare is disappointment. The Scripture says whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed. When the enemy comes hard and gets us hoping in ourselves or others and we or they let us down and waves of disappointment sweep over us, it's like the enemy's on the prowl.

Now all of these things can be stirred to some degree, just by the flesh of man. If the enemy left us alone our own flesh could conjure up a lot of this, you know. But the intensifying of these things, where they just become major and kind of overwhelming or seem like they're about to, is an absolute sign of the enemy stirring up the things of the flesh to a crisis crescendo.

Discouragement. "Those who wait [hope] in the Lord, shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31). They mount up with wings like eagles. They draw on the victory that's in Christ. When discouragement overwhelms us, it's usually sign that warfare is just raging.

False teachers and false teaching, absolutely is where warfare often surfaces. I mean, what better way? The enemy will send out people in the name of the Lord Jesus who might be teaching, as we were talking before, all the way things from just self-worship, to New Age—which is kind of cousins together anyway. But we're going to be the god and then go through all kinds of bizarre ways to manipulate reality in our thinking. False teachers and false teaching, definitely is where the warfare often arises, surfaces, and can be seen.

Also in a sense of oppression or depression, coming upon the children of God, who have eternal life and forgiveness and have every right, spiritually, to have abundant measures of joy often. Well, when heavy doses of oppression or depression kind of hit, where do you think that is coming from? You know, right out of the pits of the enemy's camp. He who came only, John 10:10 says, "...to rob, kill, and destroy."

Now there are all kinds of other arenas. That's the marvel of it all. You know, we have covered a lot of territory there in a few minutes, but that's not all of it. But it can surface in ways that don't look like warfare. Just looks like bad circumstance or having a bad day. Someone tells you have a nice day, and you're thinking, "Yeah, that's what I'll do." And the enemy's going, "Yeah, you'll have a nice day. Not if I can help it."

If we're not standing in the victory of the Lord we probably won't have a nice day. And even if we are standing in the victory, the day might not have the nice circumstances

we'd like. But we can rest assured the victory is available. These things do not have to wipe us out and pull us down. And to stand there in all this work and provision of Christ, let's us draw on, believe in, thereby, as it were, wear the armory. We need the whole armor of God.

Ephesians 6:14 says, truth is a great part of the armory. Certainly that would include the truth of God's Word, but also living out the word in truth. You know, living truthfully. See, this part of the armor protects us from lies, and deceits from the enemy. Boy, what a great part of the weaponry and the armor truth is when you're dealing with the father of lies!

Also in verse 14, righteousness. The righteousness of Christ, of course, this would be. Both imputed and imparted. Imputed, that relates to justification, a stand before a holy God. Imparted, that relates to sanctification, righteous growth daily. All of that—I mean, "none is good but God alone." If our life is going to develop in good things, where is it going to come from? First the imputed righteousness, credited to our account, so we can even begin to relate to God. But day by day we need to draw on that imparted righteousness, given to us and through us for a godly life.

And that righteousness resists things like condemnation and accusation. When the enemy tells us how awful we are, we don't have to try to do verbal battle with him and convince him and us and others how great we are. It is like, "Hey, you haven't even touched on half of it. I'm far worse than that. But, that's why Christ died for me." And "in my flesh dwells no good thing" (Romans 7:18). And "Christ in me is my hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). Christ is my righteousness, so I can deal with that condemnation and accusation from the enemy.

Ephesians 6:15, the Gospel of peace. The Good News that is in Jesus Christ that brings us peace. First of all, of course, it is peace with God. But it can go beyond that too. It can flow down into relational peace with others and all the while, inside, peace within. Peace from worry. Peace from strife.

Verse 16, faith. That is, trusting God. Oh how this combats fear, doubt, and despair. Just thinking again, is God trustworthy or not? Oh yes! Then I think I'm just going to trust Him. Not pumping up something that looks like faith, but trusting in God. "I don't know if I can." Well, consider the Lord. Just consider who He is and what He's done and faith grows. Oh yeah, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, my heavenly Father, Lord God Almighty. What has He done? He sent His Son, the cross, burial, resurrection. We're joined to Him. "Oh yeah, I think there is a lot there I can depend on." Faith combats fear and doubt and despair.

Then in verse 16, of course that is faith, the reason we need it is that fear and doubt and despair comes from all these, verse 16, all these fiery darts of the wicked one. I don't believe the Scriptures at all indicate that Satan can read our minds. God absolutely can. We can, but we misread them. But the Lord can read them. And I don't think the enemy can. But he can put in our heart, in our thinking—He put in David's heart. Hey, count Israel. God didn't tell him to. It was kind of like a numbers thing, you know. God didn't tell you to do that. God at times said to number. And there's nothing right or wrong, essentially in numbering things or people. It was like David was apparently kind of, "I wonder how strong we are? 480,000 troops! Oh yes! Maybe it was sort of that kind of trip. God took census of His people and often, for many different reasons, including the

land He would give and other things. And how many would be chosen to serve and this and that. And the Scripture says Satan put that in David's heart. He can't read our minds, but he can provoke our minds. He can shoot fiery darts, kind of like our mind is like a target. And it's kind of like, okay, think about that for a minute. At that time he has a pretty good hunch what is on our mind, even though he can't read our mind. Well, he's not omniscient like God. He is a creature. But he can provoke our minds. He can make us think about certain things or try to get our minds on such things.

But faith is just like a shield. I'm going to trust God. I am not going to get caught up in that dead thought, that life-destroying, life-shredding thought. The shield of faith is trusting God.

Verse 17 is salvation, the helmet of salvation. Salvation, assurance of, and hope in God and His delivering work on our behalf, which gives great hope and assurance God has saved us. We need that protection in our thinking and wear that everywhere we go.

Then the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. I think the word here is actually *rhema*. If fact, they can speak it quite dramatically, actually, at times. It's like it's supposed to have a special power in it. There's a bit of a difference between the written and spoken word, but if it's the Word of God they are both backed with the life of God. It's not like one's weak and the other is mighty. Probably the best example of *rhema*, God's word spoken for the occasion, would be, remember Matthew 4:4, 7 and 10, when Jesus being tempted by the enemy said, "It is written." I think that's the ultimate example of what *rhema*, the eternal incarnate Word, speaking the written Word. Now that is the *rhema*. It's the Word of God spoken by the will of God with the power of God behind it for the occasion. It is not some spoken, great pronouncement some man makes. That is kind of back in that "Word of Faith Movement" that believes the words of your mouth create your reality and all.

The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, led by the Spirit, fitly applied to a given occasion. What a great weapon that is! It is inspired by the Holy Spirit. That is why it is the sword of the Spirit, it is empowered by the Holy Spirit, not by us. It is written. In that situation with Jesus, it drove away the enemy. The same thing can happen to us, as we minister to one another and rescue captive lives. Speak forth the word of the Lord as the Spirit leads and as it's built into our lives. It seems like it's a part of the offensive weaponry here, as well as being defensive.

Then in verse 18, we are to wear and use all of this armor at all times with all prayer. That is, calling upon the One in whom is the armor and the might and the victory and the life. In the Lord's might and in His armor, that is how we can stand in the battle in Christ's victory. We take, believing what He has offered and provided and just stand in it, rely upon it, and count on it. And when the moment calls for it, in the proper sense of the word, use it. When the enemy is lying to us, turn back to the truth of God. When he is intimidating us with fear, again, think of why we can validly hope in the Lord. And just right down the line. Whatever he is doing, God has provided in this victory and resource of Jesus Christ that which will let us stand in the victory and not get blown away.

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, we pick up this very language and make some powerfully insightful statements.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty in God for the pulling down of 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.

These are powerful words on spiritual warfare. It speaks of the weapons of our warfare.

Verse 3 says yes, "...we walk in the flesh." That is not according to the flesh though, Galatians 5, and Romans 7, where you are drawing on human resource. But we do walk in the flesh. That is, in human flesh and bones bodies. Yes. Unlike this part of this crazy Toronto Blessing thing and all, that has kind of got the manifest sons of God built into its doctrine, where the time is going to come pretty soon where it will manifest who the real sons of God are. They will be walking on water and raising the dead. No, we are not some kind of super-saints that, just stand out. We walk in fleshy bodies, human bodies. But we do not war according to the flesh. We do walk about in human bodies, but we don't fight the battle drawing on human resources.

And the world doesn't understand that and sometimes we forget it. They look at us and see human people. "Oh, you are just religious weirdos." Well, we may look weird to the world. And they say, "You are just human too. What are you talking about, God's children, living forever, and victory over the devil and all that? Look at you." They might even pinch us, you know. "Look, you say ouch just like I do."

Well, though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. Yeah, we have this same physical tent we walk in that the world does, but the resources we draw on are not human ones. "For the weapons of our warfare," what we draw on, and by faith use and stand in and on, to fight the good fight of faith, they "are not carnal." They are not of the flesh. They are not human.

Again, this is another of the how many hundreds of warnings we have had along the way not to put our hope in human psychological theory. I mean, think of this, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Psychological theory, at best you would have to say it's carnal. It came from man. It didn't come from the Bible. It didn't come from the Spirit of God. It came from man's best ingenuities. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They are not human, but mighty in God, divinely powerful for pulling down strongholds, (2 Corinthians 10:4).

For the destruction, the tearing down of strongholds could be translated "fortresses." Think of the strongholds, the spiritual fortresses that are in people's lives and the enemy wants to build around our lives, or over our lives, or mar our lives. Think of the strongholds that the weaponry of God can pull down. Strongholds, we might call them collections of, developments of, deeply entrenched ungodliness. Fortresses. Not just a passing unrighteous act or thought or issue, but deeply entrenched, demonstrations, developments, accumulations of ungodliness. Like perversion.

You get into Romans 1 and sinful man is rebelling against man and suppressing the truth in unrighteousness and it just goes downhill from one degree to another. And the end of the chain there is really human sexual perversion, now called "alternate lifestyle." Now we are supposed to recognize a marriage union in what's on the bottom of God's scale of ungodliness in Romans 1, where His wrath is poured out against man. That is how blind

we can get in our sophistication. What is that? All of that? That's a fortress of evil. It's not a sociological development. It's a fortress of evil, perversion.

Prejudice. I was watching a bit of the news and I saw everything all the way from burning church buildings, to hate music and the skinhead movement and all that, with the white supremacy and all. It's pathetic. It's tragic. It's just another demonstration of self-exaltation though, which was the enemy's original sin. And he's been enticing people into it ever since. Prejudice. What a wicked fortress of unrighteousness and deeply entrenched ungodliness. Drugs would fit that category, which are habits and addictions that overtake people. It is not just that they have a proclivity, a tendency, or weakness or struggle, but it just all of a sudden dominates their whole being. That is a fortress, spiritually speaking.

Well, praise the Lord, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They are not fleshy. They are mighty in God, divinely powerful, for the destruction of fortresses, pulling these strongholds down. They don't have to keep dominating lives. Some of these things probably dominated our lives. Some of these things dominated my life before I came to Christ. Probably you too, but the weapons of our warfare are mighty of God. They can tear down these strongholds.

Casting down arguments in 2 Corinthians 10:5, or it could be translated "destroying speculations," that is, vain imaginations, rationalizations, even systems of it like evolution and humanism and psychology. The weapons of our warfare can cast down such arguments, destroying speculations.

"And every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God," could be translated "every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God." That is every lofty thing, rebellious, prideful, self-sufficient, self-exalting, self-esteeming thing of man. These are lofty things, prideful things raised up against God. "Who does God think He is? I'll be my own god, I will," as Satan said in Isaiah 14 and also in Ezekiel 28. He was exalting himself like God.

The weaponry of God can destroy these things and pull down lofty things in our lives. And we can go in in the name of the Lord and see them pulled down in other lives. Some of counseling God's way is, in the name of the Lord, sharing the resources and the salvation and the victory of the Lord, and seeing strongholds pulled down and high lofty thoughts of man yanked off of human pedestals. These are things raised against the knowledge of God, against the truth of God, with Jesus at the core of it all, allowing us then to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Not humanism or human thought or self, but taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

"Taking every thought captive"—again, here is another clue how much of the battle is in the mind. No doubt for most Christians, most of the time, the place the spiritual warfare arises, appears, surfaces the most is right in the mind. It can appear in a lot of ways, but you can just see it again and again in the Scriptures that the battle rages between the ears. The battle is in the mind, you know. It's like sometimes World War III is going on in there. And you wonder if everybody walking by is hearing it. "Why aren't they all looking at me? Don't they know what's going on in my mind? This is raging warfare in here." And everybody just calmly walks past.

But we can take those thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ, by reevaluating every incoming thought, every internal thought, by Christ's way of thinking. It is rejecting thoughts or embracing thoughts on the basis of His truth and bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

This is God's description for us of standing in the battle by His resources because He's already won the victory. The 1 Peter 5:5-10 and James 4:6-10, they're pretty long passages. But I'll just make a comment about them and you can look at them as you have time. The context and the focus of those two passages both include resisting the devil. But the context of the verses has to do with spiritual life, humility, purity, knowing God, growing in God, being alert. The focus isn't rebuking and shouting at the enemy. The context is spiritual life. The focus of these two passages is the Lord not the devil, though we are told to resist the devil in both of them.

Resisting the enemy is sort of an outgrowth of walking a godly life that is focused in on Jesus Christ. And again, too much of the caricatured spiritual warfare in America kind of comes from religious television, which is the biggest broadcasting operation in the history of the world. There is nothing to match it ever; it goes all over the world now. You know, the program comes on and they come marching in and right away start screaming at the devil. And it's like the louder you can yell or the more you can insult him, because that's how you get the victory. What a distraction. What an off-center perspective.

We are to focus in on the Conqueror, the Victor, in whom we have victory. And then stand there. If there's going to be yelling and berating, let's let the loser to that. Let the enemy yell. "If I could just get my hands on you." These are religious programs that start with, "Oh, we're going to get the enemy mad tonight. Oh, we're going to get the enemy on the run tonight." It's like, he's whipped. What do we care if he's happy, sad, glad, or mad? Just tell me this, is he whipped? I don't care about whether he's having a nice day or not. Is he whipped? And don't teach me how to bait him and yell at him. Just tell me, who has won? That's the ultimate issue in the New Testament when it comes to spiritual warfare.

Sure there are times when we are out there in the world where there are deep, dark entrenchments of wickedness and demonic forces. In the name of the Lord we can rebuke demonic forces and in the name of Jesus they'll be gone. But that is kind of an exceptional aspect of the Christian life. You see it in the New Testament, but it's not the central focus. And sure there may be times when that's appropriate, but every day it's not, "let's go chase down the devil." We'll have some brushes at times that we will be calling on the name of the Lord and "get thee behind me, Satan," maybe. But we are not to be out chasing after him, rebuking him, yelling at him and obsessed with him.

And I think these two passages, I commend them to you. They are classic. They both exhort us to resist the enemy. But it says, "...and he will flee." You are in the victory and in the armor. If you are being hassled, just say no to him. You don't have to scream an orator's curse at him or something. Just say, "No, I'm not taking part in that. My Lord has won. I'm standing in Him."

Stand in the victory. Yeah, there is a battle and it rages, but Christ has won the victory. He wants us to learn to stand in it.

Let's pray together.

Lord, we thank You so much for being the mighty Conqueror, the Victor. Teach us more and more, Lord, what it means to be more than conquerors in all these things we face in life. Lord Jesus, we honor You, even right now, as the mighty Conqueror, the Victor, the King of kings, the Lord or lords. And we want to learn to stand in that great victory and from that position of victory, to please You, serve You, be used of You; not drug down by the enemy, not reduced in effectiveness by the enemy, and not obsessed with the enemy, just standing in Your victory. Teach us that, Lord, and make us instruments of sharing it with others, as they come to us for counsel. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.