

Little by Little - Part 2

“Training for Reigning”

Romans 5:17 NKJV

Last week, we talked about God's unique three-phase process in our lives from the point of being born again to the point of taking us to everything he wants us to experience and have in this life on this side of eternity - it's three phases. Phase One of that process is when he saves us from sin. He rips us out of the kingdom of darkness. He saves us from judgment and punishment, and he does it all by the blood of a spotless Lamb - Jesus Christ. Phase Two of God's process is when he takes us out into the wilderness, into the desert, into his presence to establish both his authority and his relationship with us, because until those two things are established, we will never be ready for what he really has for us in our life.

Everything God does has to flow out of a place of established authority. We are under his authority and established a relationship where we know we belong to him. He is *for* us. He loves us. We're his sons and daughters. Everything has to flow from there. Once that's established, we enter into Phase Three where he leads us into fully possessing our inheritance in Jesus Christ. And that inheritance is an inheritance of complete and total freedom and victory. He didn't die to set us *kind of free*. He died to set us totally free - body, soul, and spirit. Scripture tells us that he does it little by little, step by step, victory by victory, and one battle at a time.

Every new layer of breakthrough and victory that God is bringing to us is guarded by an enemy giant that is meant to intimidate us into backing off and settling for less. But God has promised to deliver those enemies - those giants - into our hands one by one, and little by little, if we will *cling* to him and stay on his pace of grace in our life.

What Phase Three life in Christ is supposed to look like

Romans 5:17 NKJV

“For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign [rule] in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”

We have to receive the things that God has for us. God's plan for us is that we would not be ruled by life, but that we would rule in life through Jesus Christ - that the testimony of our experience on this earth would shout to a hurt and lost and dying world that there is freedom in Jesus Christ. God wants to put his glorious power, grace, freedom, victory, and righteousness on display in us. *That's the plan.* And Satan really does not want that to happen because stuff gets real when people start looking like Jesus. We are destined to be over-comers. Scripture calls believers who follow Jesus "*more than conquerors*". Not *just* conquerors - more than conquerors. Decisive victory - that's what it's supposed to look like.

Training for Reigning

We need to understand that we were born into a world at war. Not *physical* wars, but we were born into the middle of a cosmic conflict between light and darkness - between Truth and lies, between good and evil, between God and what the scriptures call the prince of the power of the air - the prince of this world. We know him as Satan or the devil. We have a very real enemy and adversary according to Scripture, and we need to begin to wake up as the Church and realize that we don't live in *peace* time - we live in war time.

From global politics, to marriages, to our personal walk with God, there is an unseen war happening at every level all around us all of the time. There is a war in this room over our heart, soul, mind, our attention, our affections, our authority, and submission to God. The battle is happening right now, right where we sit, and it happens largely in our own minds through our thoughts, feelings, and the things that we experience, and how we interpret everything that's happening in our lives. *It's a war.*

Recent surveys say that 40% of American Christians don't believe in the existence of Satan or his fallen angels (demons). And out of the 59% who *do* believe that we have a very real enemy, most of *those* people live practically as if it's no real actual threat to them that they need to be that worried about - "*It doesn't really have a whole lot of relevance or impact on my daily life. Yeah, I believe there's evil and maybe there's a devil and some demons out there somewhere, but it doesn't really have much to do with my personal experience.*" You're already on the losing end of this thing.

Theologian Dr. Marcus Warner said, "*Spiritual warfare is the worldview of the Bible.*" We can't be a Christian and say, "*I believe the Bible,*" and not understand that we're in the middle of a massive spiritual war. CS Lewis said, "*There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch and every split second is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.*"

That's an illegitimate counter claim, and there is no equal rivalry going on here. God is God, and Satan is a created being. He only thinks he's a big deal in his own mind. Like any of us who get into pride, we make ourselves up to be big in our minds when really we're not. But it doesn't negate the fact that a war is going on. So what do we do about this?

Ephesians 5:11 NLT

"Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them."

As those who have the light on the inside of us, we want to shine a light on what's really going on and expose it so that people are not deceived. We want to shine the light and expose what's going on, but we have an enemy and an adversary who is a "schemer" (2 Corinthians 2:11). He's constantly working strategies and plans to subvert, divert, pervert us and our heart to get us as far from God as possible and from everybody in our family. We're to expose these things so that he can't take advantage of us, but many Christians are ignorant to how they're being manipulated in the spiritual war.

Two big errors that most Christians in America make when it relates to Satan and demons are, first, that Satan and demons aren't real and they're not an active threat, and the second is to think that demonic forces are so powerful that we should run and cower in fear, and that they can't be stopped. Like what always happens with the evil monster in a horror movie, they kill it and then five minutes later it somehow pops back to life and it's so big and so scary and it makes it look as if evil can't be defeated. *But that's a lie!*

The Bible says in the book of Proverbs that though the righteous fall seven times, yet they will rise again, and also, *"But when the wicked stumble, they stay down in their calamity."* So, actually, Satan's supposed to look at us and go, *"Oh my gosh, I keep killing them and they keep getting back up. I keep knocking them down and they won't stay down. The power and the grace of God in them is too much. I can't stop them."* We should put *him* in utter horror when he sees us."

This all began with an archangel named Lucifer who led a failed rebellion along with one-third of the angels against God. *Bad idea.* God cast them down from heaven in immediate and utter defeat. Satan was then jealous of the image of God that God placed in us - in mankind - and coveting the authority that God gave to man to have dominion over the earth, got a new plan in mind to entice mankind to sin. When he did that, he was able to get Adam and Eve to legally hand over the authority given to them by God to the enemy of our souls. And Satan took that authority and ran with it - he and all his minions.

We're responsible for our sin. The devil can't *make* us do anything, but he can influence and entice us if we allow it. And if we let him trick us, he will trick us into handing over everything that God has given us to take for himself. For a time, Satan operated as the prince of this world in complete authority that he had stolen legitimately from mankind by enticing them to sin. And so God sent Jesus Christ as a man. A man *lost* the authority - so a man had to *take it back*, and there was only one man who could do it - the perfect man, Jesus Christ, who was also fully God.

So Jesus came and he took back the authority that man gave up in the garden all the way back then, and then he established and commissioned his Church to advance his kingdom in his delegated authority little by little, bit by bit and across the earth as we proclaim the victory of Jesus Christ and make the forces of darkness back up everywhere that we go. That's the plan. 1 John 5:19 says, *"We know for a fact that we [Christian believers] are in God and the whole world around us lies in the power of the evil one opposing God and his precepts."* So there are two categories right now. There's people who are in Christ who have been set free, and then there's the rest of the world who still live under the sway, the influence, and the misleading of Satan and all of his demons.

Ephesians 6:10-12 NKJV

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles [schemes and strategies] 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."

Our battle is not against our spouse - it's not against our mother-in-law. Our battle is not against our boss, and the battle isn't one country battling another country. There is an unseen war happening underneath the surface of all of these conflicts driving and influencing them. And to the degree that we can be influenced by the enemy is the degree that we will enter into all kinds of physical conflicts on this earth at every level.

Every form of wickedness is sponsored - there is a demonic host who sponsors it. Every type of sin, every type of addiction out there, whether lust, anger, or pride - every one of those things is hosted and sponsored by demonic forces of darkness who live and exist to promote that and use it to influence the hearts, minds, and lives of any human who is not submitted to God and protected from it.

Based on what the Bible says, there is absolutely no question that a demonic assignment is on our life. For every one of us, at some level, there is a host of spiritual forces of wickedness assigned to us to study our patterns, weaknesses, and the parts of our life and heart that aren't submitted to God yet, and they use that to divide us from God - to pervert the character of God in our eyes, and to get us to run from God and blame him for everything in life. There's an assignment on our life to distort, to disrupt, to pervert, and to destroy the image of God in us.

We are created in the image of God. Satan hates that and wants to destroy us. The failed rebellion that he led left him with no other way to get back at God than to attack what and who God loves. That's us - and God's image in us. It's like some sort of perverse evil villain who can't get their enemy, so he goes after his enemy's kids instead. It's sick and twisted, but it's reality. John 8:44 says that Satan was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The lies about our life that we believe in our heart and mind began with a suggestion - a whispered influencing thought that we bought into and then took to become our own. It then took root in us and began to produce bad fruit in our life. That's all from the father of lies, not the Father of Heaven.

John 10:10 ESV

"The thief [our enemy] comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I [Jesus] came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

1 Peter 5:8 ESV

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

Our adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking somebody to devour. He can't just go around devouring anybody who wants. Some of us are more *devourable* than others, but there are things that we can do so he *can't* devour us, and there's things, that if we don't do them, we become an easy target. So, it says, *"Be sober. Wake up. Be alert. Don't live like this isn't happening, because it's going to happen whether you acknowledge it or not."* He's looking for somebody to devour, but if there's a way to not be devoured, that's where we want to be. An ignored adversary becomes a silent assassin.

1 John 3:8 AMP

"The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil."

If this devil thing is not real, then what the heck did Jesus come for? The Bible says he came to destroy the works of the devil.

Luke 10:17-19 AMP

"The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like [a flash of] lightning. Listen carefully: I have given you authority [that you now possess] to tread on serpents and scorpions, and [the ability to exercise authority] over all the power of the enemy [Satan]; and nothing will [in any way] harm you.' "

Jesus said, *"You need to understand something. I've given you authority right now [that you already possess] to deal with this, to deal with him, to deal with every attack."* Satan has no direct route to destroy us. If he could kill us, he would have done it already. And so, how does he come? Satan comes and he traffics in threats, lies, accusations, intimidation, isolation, temptation, legalism, and whispering - trying to discourage, distract, defeat, and destroy the image of God in us to get us to back off, quit, lay down, and just stop. Because, unless he can get us to stop, we can't be.

Colossians 2:15 AMPC

"[God] disarmed the principalities and powers that were ranged against us and made a bold display and public example of them, in triumphing over them in Him and in it [the cross]."

Revelation 12:10 NLT

"...the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth—the one who accuses them before our God day and night."

Before Jesus came, Lucifer, and to some extent his demons, had access to heaven and what they would do day and night, the Bible says, is he would accuse people to God's face. He'd go to the throne room of God and accuse us day and night. But when Jesus came and threw him down to earth and he fell like lightning, he lost his access to be able to accuse us directly to God. So now what does the enemy and his demonic spirits do? They come to *us* to accuse us *directly*. They have no access to accuse us to God, so they have to try to get us to believe their lies. But, we can throw them down "on earth as it is in heaven". Just like they fell like lightning, they can fall before us, if we get under the covering of our God.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 AMPC

"For though we walk in the flesh [as mortal men], we are not carrying on our [spiritual] warfare according to the flesh and using the weapons of man. The weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood]. Our weapons are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses."

These are strongholds of bondage and sin - mental strongholds of lies and accusations of *"You're not good enough. God doesn't really love you. You're not really saved. You'll never change and you've messed up too much."* - the fortresses that array themselves against our life and our ability to step into our inheritance and see God defeat our enemies "little by little." Our weapons in God are mighty to break down every fortress and stronghold. Some of us are dealing with a lot of strongholds and fortresses that have boxed us in and make us feel like we can't get anywhere, so let's deal with it *today*.

Ephesians 6:13 NKJV

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

It's the *whole* armor - not some of the armor - *"that you may be able to withstand in the evil day,"* not some random 24-hour period, but *waves* of moments and days that come against us. There are periods of relative calm and then all of a sudden, like a demonic wave, something just tries to roll over us and it's like boom! - here's the evil day. The thoughts of depression just start coming like a wave. The thoughts of isolation start pushing us away from people. The thoughts of accusation make us want to just give up and quit because we feel so ashamed.

And God says, *"I've given you armor that you can put on so that you'll be able to stand against that evil day when the wave comes."* - that we may be able to *withstand* in the evil day. The goal is for us to stand - to stand firm, to be *unmoved*, to not be shaken - to be so rooted and established in who we are in Jesus Christ that no matter what wave comes against us, we don't even budge. We don't have to defeat or *kill* anything. We just have to be unmovable - to stand after we've done all to stand in who we are in Christ. The key to spiritual warfare is standing, because the Champion of the battle is the Lord, not us.

2 Chronicles 20:15,17 AMP

"Be not afraid or dismayed at this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. You need not fight in this battle; take your positions, stand and witness the salvation of the Lord who is with you."

The enemy's goal is to get us to run, but the Word of God says that if we'll humble ourselves, we can resist him and he will flee. Before we even begin to put on our armor, the Bible says in 1 Peter 5:5 that we should clothe ourselves in humility. Then it says in Ephesians 6:14, *"Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one, and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication."*

Every piece of armor must be put on in a specific order to provide access to the next piece. It starts with the belt of Truth. Truth, according to Scripture, is Jesus. He said in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. Nobody comes to the father except through me."* The only source of Truth that we have is the Word of God, and the Bible tells us that Jesus was the Word made flesh - never changing - "the same yesterday, today, and forever" - beyond what the winds of culture are saying.

Putting on the breastplate of righteousness is putting a reminder over our own heart that righteousness, goodness, and holiness are only found in God - and they cannot come from us thinking that we can earn it on our own, or find our own way to God. That breastplate is meant to protect our heart from deceiving us into a demonic self-righteousness, which is the very thing that will separate us from God. We eagerly put on our shoes of the readiness of the Gospel of peace and run to Jesus, embracing the message that peace between us and God has been purchased by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Next is the shield of faith, which is our total trust and confidence in Jesus and in his Word. It's where his Word begins to get activated in our heart and life and our trust goes completely in him. That begins to form a shield over and around us, a shield over us. Scripture says that He is our shield and our strength. The shield of faith extinguishes every fiery dart that the enemy tries to throw at and accuse us with. When we put on the helmet of salvation, it totally guards our mind with the total assurance of our salvation - we belong to him and nobody can tell us otherwise. We are blood-bought, fully adopted children of God - redeemed, accepted, beloved, and empowered with the delegated authority of Jesus Christ to represent him as heavenly royalty on earth because of his mighty work in us.

The sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God, is the only piece of armor we have that's meant to go on the offense to attack. This is where we put the Word of God into action as it starts to come out of our mouth out loud. Revelation 12:11 says, *"And they overcame and conquered him."* Who? - the devil and all his demons because of the blood of the Lamb. That's where the power comes from, and because of the word of our testimony where we're speaking with power as armored up soldiers of Jesus Christ!

How To Put On The Armor of God In Prayer

Make it part of your daily time with God to put on each piece of armor so that you can “take your stand”. Begin by clothing yourself in humility before God, then Suit up and show up using these prayers as a guide!

The Belt of Truth:

“Lord God, your Word is Truth and Jesus demonstrates your Word. I put on Truth by renouncing agreement with every thought, idea, philosophy and encounter that stands in opposition to the Truth.”

The Breastplate of Righteousness:

“God, you alone are righteous, good and holy, and I am not. Apart from you my heart is desperately wicked. I put on the breastplate of righteousness by renouncing all self-righteousness and every vain attempt to justify myself before you or the world.”

The Shoes of Readiness of the Gospel of Peace:

“Jesus, I am blown away that you have come to me with an offer of peace with you. I put my shoes on and run, not walk, to you fresh today in repentance and joy that you have chosen to love me and welcome me home even though I have previously rebelled against you!”

The Shield of Faith:

“Lord Jesus, I make a firm decision to place all my hope, my total Trust, and my complete confidence in you and your Word alone. As I saturate myself in Truth, may the protective shield of faith form over my entire being. May that shield put on full display for the enemy your pleasure in me and your powerful grace towards me, and may it utterly extinguish every flaming arrow of accusation hurled against me.”

The Helmet of Salvation:

“Lord Jesus I, by faith, cover my mind with the helmet of the confidence that I am totally and forever yours! I am a blood-bought fully adopted child of God. I am redeemed, accepted, beloved and empowered with the delegated authority of Jesus Christ to represent You as heavenly royalty on earth because of Your mighty work in me.”

The Sword of the Spirit:

“Lord Jesus, I take up the sharp sword of Your Spirit by choosing to speak Your Word out loud into my life, my circumstances, my thoughts and directly to the enemies of my soul arrayed against me. I boldly declare that because I am in Christ, demonic spirits and forces of wickedness in the heavenly places shall have no authority to afflict and affect me with lies, manipulations, accusations or distortions of Truth. I command that every evil scheme against me be exposed, revealed and judged by Jesus Christ and His holy Word. Thank you Jesus that I am empowered today to live in the joy of your presence, the power of your Spirit and the totality of your freedom!”