

Spiritual Battles

Message 05 of the series, "Sent"

I. Sent people rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8 (NLT)

Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them. "No," they replied, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." "Then what baptism did you experience?" he asked. And they replied, "The baptism of John." Paul said, "John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus." As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

Acts 19:1-7 (NLT)

Life Application: "God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."
Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

II. Sent people will fight spiritual battles.

"I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one... Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world... I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message." John 17:15,18,20 (NLT)

- a. Sent people will battle unseen demonic forces that influence people, cultures and nations toward evil.

Then Paul went to the synagogue and preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. But some became stubborn, rejecting his message and publicly speaking against the Way. So Paul left the synagogue and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for the next two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord. God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. When handkerchiefs or aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits were expelled. A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, "I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!" Seven sons of Sceva, a leading priest, were doing this. But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?" Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered. The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike. A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored. Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices. A number of them who had been practicing sorcery brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars. So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect.

Acts 19:8-20 (NLT)

Life Application: We must be prepared to engage in spiritual battle.

"Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere." Ephesians 6:10-18 (NLT)

"We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We

destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NLT)

- b. Sent people will battle those who profit from sin.

About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way. It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis. He kept many craftsmen busy. He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows: “Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren’t really gods at all. And he’s done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! Of course, I’m not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I’m also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis—this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her great prestige!” At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia. Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers wouldn’t let him. Some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, also sent a message to him, begging him not to risk his life by entering the amphitheater. Acts 19:23-41 (NLT)

Life Application: God will send us to bring light into dark places.

“Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said, ‘Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light.’ So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.” Ephesians 5:11-16 (NLT)

“And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18 (KJV)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever felt like you were in a spiritual battle? What were the circumstances?
2. What are some ways that demonic powers try to influence you and your family today? How can you protect yourself and your family from these influences?
3. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. To help us better prepare to engage in spiritual battle during everyday life, discuss each part of the spiritual armor. (Read the verses and ask these two questions for each: “How do we implement this in our lives?” and “Why is the piece of the armor important?”)

How to put on spiritual armor:

The belt of truth: We need to think about things that are right and true (especially Scripture). We must NOT dwell on falsehood (lies, gossip, false assumptions, hearsay, etc). We must seek wise counsel and invite accountability. (Phil. 4:8, Psalm 141:5, Eccl. 7:21-22)

The body armor of righteousness: We must embrace (remind ourselves of) our identity in Christ. Because Christ saved us, we have become new creations. Our sins have been forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Christ’s righteousness has been credited to us. We have been adopted into God’s family, and we are heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ. (Psalm 103, Romans 8:15-17, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:26-27)

The shield of faith: Satan’s attacks can sometimes cause us to doubt God. By faith we affirm our trust in God even when His promises may not be readily visible to us or His timing may be completely different from ours. We pick up the shield of faith by intentionally stating our faith in God’s promises during difficult/trying situations. (2 Thess. 1:11, 1 Timothy 1:19, Hebrews 11, James 1:)

The helmet of salvation: We must surrender to God’s leadership and direction daily. We must allow him to change the way we think. (Isaiah 55:8-9, Romans 12:2, 1 Cor. 2:13-16)

The sword of the Spirit: We must read our Bibles daily, meditate on what we learn and seek to apply biblical truth to every situation. We must use Scripture to combat doubts, fears, and attacks from others. We must also use Scripture to encourage and build each other up. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12, Psalm 1)

The shoes of readiness to share the Gospel: We must always be ready to explain the Gospel message and why it's Good News. We must also be ready to share how and why we became Christians and describe the differences a relationship with Jesus has made in our lives. We must also get rid of anything that keeps us from sharing our faith. (1 Peter 3:15-16, 1 Cor. 9:22, 2 Tim. 4:2-5, Hebrews 12:1)

Prayer: When we pray, we align ourselves with God's plans and purposes. Through prayer we also bring all of our anxieties and worries to Him. (We can ask God for forgiveness, courage, strength, protection, guidance, provision, opportunities, etc.) When we stay connected to God, we don't need to fear anyone or anything else. (Psalm 27, Phil. 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:7)