

Classic Christian Writings:

The Church of God is called to be a militant Church, not a Church passive, nor a Church awake with the energy of the flesh; but a Church militant in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit. Yet numbers of believers have never grasped the aggressive note of Ephesians 6 and other Scriptures which show that we are to wage war on the powers of darkness – to “stand against” them, and to dislodge them.

We are to pray for the whole Church. This is seen in Ephesians 6, “praying always ... and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (verse 18). Ephesians 6 will wonderfully light up to you, if you look upon it as descriptive of the Church and not purely personal. The whole Church is to “stand” and “withstand,” to wear the armor, and wield the Sword of the Spirit. We need to make war against the enemy for the whole Church of Jesus Christ that she may be delivered from his power and be brought into triumphant victory.

Scripture Basis For Prayer Warfare

First of all, we have the fact that Satan is already a conquered foe. “Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out” said our Lord (John 12:31), “and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Myself.” At Calvary, the prince of this world was expelled. Satan is no longer the prince. He is a traitor, an usurper. He has been conquered by Christ, the true Prince, when He was lifted up on the Cross, and as that death is proclaimed He will draw all men unto Himself. That is the basic fact of the “war.”

The second basic fact is this, that Christ, this Victor Prince “spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly” (Col. 2:15). Not only Satan, but the entire hierarchy of evil powers under him, were put to open shame at Calvary. That is the ground of your right in Christ, to take the aggressive against the powers of darkness, to “withstand them,” and “having overthrown them all, to stand unshaken” (Eph. 6:13, Conybeare). It is as much your right as it is to have your sins forgiven.

Equally with that, it is your right to know that, when on the cross Satan was conquered, you were translated out of the power of darkness, into the kingdom of God, so that the evil powers have now no rights whatever over you. Many Christians talk as if Satan was almighty. He is not, and if the Church of Christ really grasped the full import of the finished work of Christ, she would turn on the enemy, prove for herself that Satan is under her feet – and be a power in the earth, instead of a weak, defeated Church.

The third basic fact is that Christ gave to His own, authority over all the power of the enemy. “I have given unto you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:19).

Christ is reigning! Because we are “joined to Him” the spirits are “subject unto us” in His Name (Luke 10:17,20). His reign has already begun in those who are to reign with Him through the Millennium. When the Lord returns – when He is publicly revealed and the world sees Him – it will be seen that He has already brought about His kingdom in the hearts of His children. The present dispensation is fading away, just as the Jewish dispensation faded away, and there is always a collision between the old and the new. The scribes and Pharisees belonged to the old, and they crucified Christ. Now apparently the Christian dispensation is becoming feeble and weaker, and breaking up. Nominal Christianity is losing its hold upon the nations. Governments are unable to govern the forces that are rising up.

Only those have the key to the situation who are joined to the coming Christ and reigning with Him now in spirit. They have the joy and triumph of the conquering Saviour. It is that spirit that will enable you to use the spiritual weapon of triumphant prayer in the Name of Jesus, against the adversary, whose power was broken at Calvary. Beloved friends, ask God to put within you the knowledge that all these evil powers are subject to the believer who will wield with real faith the Name of Jesus Christ.

An Unprepared Church

“The Lord reigneth,” His throne is above all, but Satan is still “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). Alongside the rejection of the true supernatural “from above,” there is a flooding of the world with the supernatural “from beneath,” often under a camouflage of Christianity, and the Church of God is unprepared to meet it.

The place and service of the Church, in regard to these evil powers, is to recognize them and testify against them. But you cannot testify against something you have a doubt about, neither can a Church living on the earthly plane, working in the energy of the flesh, take any part in this warfare.

Many of God's people throughout the world are praying for a quickening of the spiritual life of the Church in revival power, but wherever there is a mighty working of God, you may settle it that there will be a mighty working of the powers of darkness in opposition to it, and unless believers are awake to this, and become in truth a militant Church, any such awakening will be accompanied by supernatural workings which are not of God, causing it gradually to be discredited and to die away.

Too often in the past God's people have been so ignorant of Satan's "devices" that he has succeeded in stopping revival before they were aware what he was doing. The armor of God is designed that we may "stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11), and in order to do this, we must be alert and able to recognize them.

It is startling to see the power Satan has to build a big house of lies upon a foundation of truth. Alongside every truth of God, Satan has a counterfeit to fit it, even the truth of conformity to the death of Christ.

But you say, your spirit is the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit; where then does the counterfeit come? To the mind and body. For instance, what is the counterfeit of conformity to the death of Christ? It is the mental conception that your own personality is to be absolutely annihilated, your individuality done away with, and that you are not to have a wish or desire.

But the Lord Jesus redeemed man to be a man and not a machine. He gives him a "new spirit," takes the "old man" to the Cross that it may be every moment crucified, and in the redeemed personality of the man He desires to express the Spirit of Christ, with the body purely as an instrument. God says, "My child, I want your mind liberated from bondage, and all your faculties at their best, through which to express My Spirit." The devil says, "I want a slave, with no will and no mind, so that he will not reason about anything I tell him."

Everything God does in you ennobles you and quickens your desire God-ward, making you a better man in your business; more human, gentle and affectionate in your home. Whatever hinders your reasoning faculty, or destroys your power of choice and makes you irresponsible, comes from the pit, because it is contrary to the redemption of Christ.

The Armor And The Weapon

God has provided a complete armor for the Christian warrior, the parts of which are described in Ephesians 6. Notice that there are three items to be taken up in order to be ready for the fight: the loins gird with truth (the mind); the breastplate of righteousness (a clear conscience); feet shod as with the sandals of a Roman soldier, which were spiked to grip the ground, to stand unshaken.

Then three items are for active warfare: the shield of faith to throw off the enemy's arrows; the helmet to protect the mind from his suggestions; and "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," to cut and thrust. The latter is the only actual weapon provided, for in this warfare, prayer (verse 18) becomes more and more a using of the Sword, the Word of God.

"We Are Well Able To Overcome!"

"We are well able to overcome," said Caleb and Joshua to the fearful Israelites, on hearing of the giants in Canaan, for "they will but be bread for us," that is, the conquest of the enemies in Canaan would mean strength and vigor to the conquerors. Elijah went in the strength of the food provided for him by the messenger of God, "forty days" and there is "meat" now, and "bread" for the warrior servants of God, as they triumph over the invisible enemies of Christ and His Church, through wielding the Word of God.