

WAR – GOSPEL OF PEACE

Last week I mentioned that the first time I really heard anything about Spiritual Warfare was from a church seminar at Chartwell Baptist when I was in seminary. Growing up I had really never heard anything about it. There was the movie *The Exorcist*, which I did not see. I knew that the bible spoke about demonic possession but that was about all I knew. It was not until I went to Kuwait that I had my first face to face encounter. One of my first weeks there we were praying with a woman who suddenly began to manifest a demon. It totally freaked me out and I was unprepared for it.

This stuff is real. It is happening all around us. A few years ago I got a call from someone in Orangeville. Someone from our church had a house that they were renting there, and the person responsible for renting out the house was having a problem. It seemed that there were all kinds of weird things happening and the current tenants were about ready to move out. Shirley and I went up for a visit. The tenants took us around the house and told us about hearing footsteps when there was no one home, banging cabinets and closet doors when no one was in the room and voices. We walked into one bedroom and they said it was a center for the weird noises. I asked if they knew who lived there before them. They said they did not know, but in that bedroom when they moved in there was a big upside-down star painted in red - a pentagram. Obviously the people who had lived there before had dabbled in the occult and now there was a demonic presence there.

We prayed against the spirits in Jesus name. We anointed the house with oil. We asked God to protect the people who lived there and claimed the blood of Jesus over their lives. From that day, they never had another problem in that house.

There was a very real spiritual war raging in that house. Most people just driving by would have no idea, but the people who lived there certainly knew it was happening. It was only through Jesus that there was finally peace. We are continuing our series today on the armour of God.

Eph 6:14 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.

A great many people are trying to make peace, but that has already been done. God has not left it for us to do; all we have to do is to enter into it. -- Dwight Lyman Moody

The third piece of armor are the shoes or boots of peace. It has been said that the Roman soldiers boots were the secret of the Roman conquest. The boot that a Roman soldier wore was an open toed, spiked shoe which laced up past his ankles. It could be compared to the shoes that football players wear. Any football fan knows the need for a player to have shoes that can grip the different types of turf that they play on. Without the proper shoes, a football player will slip and slide and be unable to evade or fight off a would be tackler. It was very similar to a Roman soldiers need for firm footing. A soldier must traverse different terrain, climb rocks and trees, walk over sharp jagged stones, wade through ponds and swamps, and have sure footing during combat. Most battles were hand-to-hand and a soldier could not afford to be pushed backwards or slip. The soldiers boots helped a soldier stand his ground and advance on his enemy.

So what does it mean to have our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace? Why is peace so important?

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

1. Peace with the Law – justified through faith

This passage says that we are no longer at war but now stand in a position of peace. The word justified is a legal term. It does not indicate true innocence - only judicial innocence. Someone who goes to trial for a crime is found guilty or innocent based on the prosecution and defense. There are times when an innocent person is found guilty and a guilty person is released. Likewise God knows you are guilty when you stand before Him. He makes no attempt to change that. Instead, He has found a way to declare you legally innocent in Christ by paying for our sins through the cross.

In early Greece in about 500 B.C. Zaleucus was king and judge over Locri on the western coast of Greece. He established the first Greek written law. One of the laws in his kingdom was if you committed adultery you would have both of your eyes plucked out. One day the king's own son committed adultery. What was King Zaleucus going to do? He loved his son, but he wanted to be a just king and judge. The king, "in order to maintain the authority of the laws, and to show at the same time parental leniency, shared the penalty with his son, by causing to be thrust out one of his own eyes and one of the eyes of his offending son. In this way, the majesty of his government was maintained, and his own character as a just and righteous sovereign was magnified in the eyes of his subject

Rom 7:2 For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. 3 So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. 4 So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

Through Christ the legal requirements of the law have been fully met. We are no longer under the law since Christ has paid our debt. We belong to Christ. This is an important truth when it come to spiritual warfare.

Last week we talked about the fact that we can have demonic strongholds in our lives. One of the things you deal with when you are involved in deliverance is the fact that demons are legalistic creatures. They can only do what they have been allowed to do in your life. If there has been sexual immorality, if you have been messing around with the occult, this opens your life to demonic influence. Demons can use this as an excuse to be there. If you have opened a door to demonic attack in your life, you need to close that door first. The way you do that is to confess your sin and proclaim the lordship of Christ over that area of your life.

A person who has accepted Jesus into their life cannot be 'possessed' because they are already owned by God. When you make Jesus Lord of your life you belong to Him. While you cannot be possessed, you can still be oppressed.

Deliverance is simply identifying areas in your life where you or others have given permission to demonic influence in your life and then closing those doors and applying the sacrifice of Jesus. It is claiming His lordship and authority.

It starts with justification. It begins with a relationship with Jesus. This is the foundation. In cases where a person does not have a relationship with Christ, this is impossible.

When we lived in Kuwait I was friends with a guy who had a strong prayer ministry. He and a team would meet and ask God where he would like to send them. They would wait until they had an image of where God wanted them to go and then go there. One day they felt like they should go across town to a certain area. They went. When they arrived they were looking around and saw two men sitting in a small café. They felt like God was telling them to speak with the men. They were from Iran, and the one man had his leg bandaged. In speaking with him, they found out he was suffering terribly from an injury to his leg days before. They asked if they could pray for him and his leg. As they prayed the man's leg started to feel better. When he removed the bandage, it was totally healed. He began jumping around in excitement. They got the man's number and kept in touch for a few weeks.

They were then asked by the man if they could come to his house. I was asked to come along. When we arrived we were greeted. After some time he told us that he had a little sister who had never spoken. He asked if we could pray for her. What followed was a real eye opener!

Matthew 12:43-45 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."

It starts with justification. It starts by giving your life to Jesus. It starts by accepting the gift of salvation that He offers through the cross. You cannot find peace in life without a relationship with Jesus. You can only give what you have first received.

2. Peace with God – through our Lord Jesus Christ

Peace through forgiveness is a more personal thing than a pardon. While one deals with a violated law, the other deals with a violated friendship. It is one thing to declare a person legally not-guilty but another thing to treat them like they are not guilty. In many cases a person may be taken to court and eventually declared not guilty of the crime yet they are still treated as a criminal. The relationship broken by the crime never mends.

Have you ever seen the show Peoples Court or Judge Judy? It often involved two friends who, at some point, fell into conflict. They appear before the judge, a judgement is given, but they do not walk out friends again. The relationship is still broken.

God has done more than simply pardon our sins. He has forgiven us and welcomed us back into loving fellowship with Him. Yet even this isn't enough. You can forgive someone while still remembering the hurt you have been through. Have you ever had someone say that they forgive you but you know that the issue is still not settled? They say "I forgive you, but if you ever do that again..." "I forgive you, but you really hurt me..." They remind you constantly of the fact that they have forgiven you, so you know it is something that continues to weigh heavily on their minds?

Hebrews 8:11-12 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

What does it mean that God not only forgives our sins but no longer remembers them? Is God forgetful?

A young nun once claimed to have had a vision of Jesus. Her bishop decided to test her truthfulness and ordered that the next time she had a vision she should ask Christ what the bishop's primary sin had been before he became a bishop. Some months later the nun returned and the bishop asked if she had asked Christ the question, to which she affirmed that she had. "And what did he say?" the bishop asked, apprehensively. "Christ said..." and the nun paused a moment... "He said, 'I don't remember. '"

What does it mean that God does not remember our sins? It means that he does not call them to remembrance. Paul said in Philippians;

Philippians 3:13-14 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Does that mean that Paul no longer remembered his early days when he was persecuting the church? When he was putting Christians in prison and watching them stoned? No, he still held those memories, but he was no longer dwelling on them. He had moved on. Those memories no longer had any hold over him. As so it is with God.

Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, was reminded one day of a vicious deed that someone had done to her years before. But she acted as if she had never even heard of the incident. "Don't you remember it?" her friend asked. "No," came Barton's reply, "I distinctly remember forgetting it."

Psalms 103:12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

God reconciled us to himself in Christ. We have been credited with the righteousness of Christ. We have not only been forgiven a debt but we have been credited with the righteousness of Jesus. When he looks at us He chooses not to see what we have done. He chooses to see us as the righteousness of His son.

I once heard Tony Campolo talk about the fact that one day in heaven we will stand before God and the books will be opened. He will turn to the page and begin to read everything we have ever done. Instead, He will read all the wonderful things Jesus did. If someone says "Hey, you never did any of those things" he will say "It's His book!"

3. Peace with Ourselves and Others - this grace in which we now stand

One we find peace with God we can finally find peace with ourselves and peace with others. You cannot give what you have not first received. It says in this scripture that we stand in a position of grace. That means that, because God has forgiven us, we can finally find the grace to forgive ourselves and others.

When Leonardo da Vinci was painting The Last Supper, he became angry with a man and lashed out at him. He even threatened him. Then he went back to his fresco and tried to paint the face of Jesus. He couldn't for there was too much evil stirring inside him. The lack of peace forced him to put down his

brushes, go find the man, and ask his forgiveness. Only then did he have the inner calm needed to do the face of his Master.

It is possible to be found legally innocent and even restored in relationship without finding true inner peace. There are many who, though declared innocent and restored to their previous way of life, never find peace from their conscience. Likewise when we are justified in Christ we find a release from the guilt and bitterness of a sin-stricken conscience.

Phil 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Have you ever heard someone say “get a grip” when life’s problems cause them to fall apart. But how can someone “get a grip” if they have nothing to grip onto? Knowing Jesus gives us something to hold on to, to have something to grab when problems arise. Putting on the boots of peace enables us to stand firm, It gives us traction in our life. It’s a way to plant our feet against Satan’s attacks and climb and walk on uncertain ground. When we wear the boots of peace, we can face any attack Satan may throw at us and be able to stand firm and have a peace about everything, knowing that we have the strength and power of Jesus within us.

Hab 3:17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. 19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

The storm was raging. The sea was beating against the rocks in huge, dashing waves. The lightning was flashing, the thunder was roaring, the wind was blowing; but the little bird was sound asleep in the crevice of the rock, its head tucked serenely under its wing. That is peace: to be able to sleep in the storm! In Christ we are relaxed and at peace in the midst of the confusions, bewilderments, and perplexities of this life. The storm rages, but our hearts are at rest. We have found peace-at last! -- Billy Graham

When we find this inner peace even in the midst of pain, then we are able to become peace givers in the world around us.

First keep the peace within yourself, then you can also bring peace to others. -- Thomas À Kempis

There is a spiritual war that is raging all around us. Peace starts with a relationship with Jesus. By accepting the gift of salvation and peace that Jesus purchased on the cross for us. Only through Christ can we be at peace with the law, peace with God and ultimately peace with ourselves and others.

It was great to spend 2 weeks with Petra on the Logos Hope. We met up with the ship in Conception and then sailed with the ship down to Puntas Arenas – right at the bottom of South America. I was reminded again of the power of the ship ministry. There are almost 400 young people from 58 different countries all working together. None of them are paid, all have to raise their own support to work on the ship. During the official opening I was speaking to one reporter. He asked how much the students on board were making. I told them that they were all volunteers, raising money to serve on the ship and he was amazed.

He asked the logical question, “Why? Why would all these young people from all around the world come here and work in the engine room, serving food and cleaning bathrooms – and pay to do it?” I said to him that there was only one reason, and that is Jesus.

More than a century ago Argentina and Chile were almost at war over a border dispute between the two nations high in the Andes mountains. War was a very real possibility in 1902. Christians around the world urged these nations to encourage their governments to settle matter in a friendly way and without the use of swords. The governments of Argentina and Chile listened and agreed to submit the matter to arbitration. When an agreement was reached it was decided that a statue should be placed on the border to remind the people that they should work together for peace. The statue is a 26 foot high bronze Christ holding his right hand out to bless the two nations and a cross in his left hand. The statue is called 'Christ the Redeemer of the Andes'. The bronze out of which the statue was made came from old canons. A plaque at the base of the statue reads in Spanish “Sooner shall these mountain crags crumble to dust than Chile and Argentina shall go to war again with each other”. Jesus stands today between us and Father. Because of the cross we have found peace with God, peace with ourselves and peace with others.