

The New Testament Model for Spiritual Warfare

I. THREE TYPES OF SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS TO PULL DOWN

- A. One expression of prayer is commonly referred to as “spiritual warfare” because it contends against spiritual strongholds affecting the culture along with the government of specific cities and nations. These are (1) personal strongholds [strongholds of the mind], (2) cultural strongholds [strongholds of laws and regions], and (3) cosmic strongholds [territorial, spiritual in nature over governments and regions].
- B. Paul exhorted us to pull down spiritual strongholds; three strongholds are commonly identified. Paul used the analogy of a stronghold, or fortress, to describe how we overcome Satan’s attack. A stronghold in the ancient world was a fort or fortified city, which was often surrounded by a large stone wall. The purpose of a fortress wall around an ancient city was to keep an invading army out.
- ⁴***For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down 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. (2 Cor. 10:4-5)***
- C. Spiritual demonic strongholds are established when people in a city individually or collectively open the door to Satan through embracing ungodly belief systems, values, or actions. When people receive demonically energized lies, it results in their lives or city being held a measure of bondage.
1. These evil spirits are called principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness (Eph. 6:12).
- ¹²***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. (Eph. 6:12)***
2. They are high-ranking demonic beings that dwell in heavenly places (in the air), not in human beings (Eph. 2:2). These “*disembodied demonic spirits*” powerfully affect humans, but are different in function from demons who *dwell in humans*.
- ²***...you once walked...according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience...(Eph. 2:2)***
- D. Just as there is a human hierarchy in the government of nations, so there is a demonic hierarchy of above each region of the earth that affects the city and/or nation under them (Dan. 10:12, 20-21). These spirits are sometimes referred to as “territorial spirits” since they influence specific areas.

II. CASTING DOWN SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS IN THE CULTURE

- A. Whole cities, nations, or geographic regions can be affected by the same lies and assaulted by the same demonic activity. One way that we can recognize this is when we see a large amount of people in a region embracing the *same patterns of darkness* in their beliefs, values, and actions.

- B. **Every high thing:** We are to cast down every high thing that exalts itself against God. This speaks of demonic activities and ideas that are like a powerful wall, hindering God’s blessing in the cities.
- C. Ways in which we cast down “high things” that are against God in the culture:
 - 1. **We proclaim the truth about Jesus and God’s victory:** We publicly proclaim the truth of Jesus’ supremacy, victory, leadership, promises, values, etc. We expose the lies lodged in the culture. The declaration of truth is essential in dismantling cultural strongholds.
 - 2. **We do the works of the kingdom** as we confess our own sin and sin in the culture. We act in the opposite spirit of the evil that permeates a geographic area by doing godly deeds, calling the people and lawmakers in that region to repent of lies that they embrace as reflected in their ungodly beliefs, laws, values, and actions.
 - 3. **We pray, asking the Father** to intervene with His power and great mercy as we prophetically declare the truth of Jesus’ supremacy, victory, leadership, and promises. We pray the prayers of the Bible, remind God of His promises, and make prophetic decrees related to the supremacy of God and His purposes. Corporate prayer with fasting is helpful (Joel 2:12-17).

III. THE PRINCIPLE OF AGREEING WITH GOD

- A. Engaging in spiritual warfare is essentially agreeing with God and disagreeing with the enemy in our beliefs, values, and actions. It involves reminding God of His character and covenant promises, agreeing with His Word, and declaring the supremacy of Jesus. It involves confessing sin, rejecting the works of darkness, and acting in the opposite spirit by doing the works of the kingdom.
- B. The method of “warfare” emphasized in Scripture is to agree with God in worship and intercession.
- C. **Worship is agreement with who God is.** In worship we declare truths related to who God is such as “Holy is the Lord,” “You are worthy,” “The Lord is good, and His mercy endures forever,” etc.
- D. **Intercession is agreement with what God promises to do.** In intercession we speak truths related to what God promises to do such as: “Lord, release a greater measure of Your Spirit’s activity to revive the church. Release the power of Your Word as confirmed with signs and wonders.”

IV. NEW TESTAMENT MODEL OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE PRAYER

- A. There are differing views on “spiritual warfare prayer.” Some focus on God, while others focus on the demons attacking God’s purpose. The New Testament model is to *direct our prayers to the Father*, instead of demonic principalities, as the primary way to wrestle with the “disembodied” evil spirits in heavenly places (Eph. 6:12). Daniel prevailed over the principality of Persia (Dan. 10:12-13) as he fasted and prayed, *focusing on God* (Dan. 9:4-23), not on the demonic being itself.
- B. All the prayers that are recorded in the Bible teach us to address the Father when we pray. In the “warfare epistle” Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he addressed all his prayers to the Father (Eph. 1:16-17; 3:14, 16, 20). The apostolic prayers are positive prayers asking God for the *impartation of positive things* instead of the *removal of negative things*.

V. WHAT HAPPENS IN THE SPIRIT REALM WHEN WE PRAY? (DAN. 10)

- A. Daniel 10 gives us a snapshot of what happens in the spirit realm when God's people pray. It reveals intense conflict between high-ranking angels and demons that is manifested in earthly spheres of government.
- B. In the spirit, angelic and demonic authority structures exist over each city and region in the world. There are high-ranking angels that serve God's purposes, and there are high-ranking demons that fight against His purposes. The conflict between these angelic and demonic beings is dynamically related to the prayers and deeds of the people in the city or region over which these beings preside.
- C. If we could see into the spirit realm, I believe we would be amazed by how much the heavenly host is involved in earthly affairs and how they respond to our prayers.
- D. Political leaders and the governmental infrastructures under them are deeply affected by the activity of angels and demons, though many of these leaders are completely unaware that they are wrestling against, and being oppressed and influenced by, demonic powers and principalities (Eph. 6:12). Whether kings, presidents, or prime ministers, they have high-ranking angels and demons related to their political sphere of authority. The result of the conflict between these good and evil forces affects many events, political decisions, and the spiritual culture of the cities of the earth.
- E. When we pray, the Holy Spirit and the angels increase their activity on behalf of all those for whom we pray, and the result ultimately benefits us. Paul understood this truth, so he encouraged the body of Christ to make it a priority to pray for all in authority:
¹I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, ²for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. (1 Tim. 2:1-2)
- F. Paul knew from the Scripture that the heart of a king or political leader is in the hand of the Lord. The Lord can turn it like channels of water, and He can use angels in this process.
The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. (Prov. 21:1)
- G. Consider how our prayers might affect a political leader. Sometimes when the leader of a nation feels oppressed, it is due to the influence of a demon.
- H. One purpose of the oppression is to get the leader to establish new laws and make decrees while under the oppressive influence of a demonic power. As a result of our prayers, angels drive back demons and hinder their negative influence on a political leader.
- I. Just as demons can influence leaders to make poor decisions, angels can influence them to make wise decisions. When an ungodly king or president feels a sudden surge of peace in his heart, I believe is often related to the prayers of the saints.

- J. If the demonic hierarchy is not hindered sufficiently, then the human leader is influenced to make evil decisions. The leader has a free will, but if he or she has a mindset of peace, even though they may be an unbeliever, their decisions will be different from those made when angry, fearful, jealous, or oppressed.
- K. Our prayers for kings, presidents, and others in authority really matter, and they can affect the decisions that our leaders make. Their decisions can affect our lifestyles, families, and economies.

VI. DANIEL'S EXPERIENCE IN DANIEL 10

- A. When Daniel was probably in his mid-eighties, he set his heart to pray for the Jews in Jerusalem. He prayed for twenty-one days with fasting because of the resistance against the remnant in Jerusalem.
²I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. ³I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. (Dan. 10:2-3)
- B. In response to Daniel's prayer a mighty angel came (Dan. 10:10-14). This high-ranking angel (Dan. 10:5-6) was similar in stature to the angel that John later saw (Rev. 10:1). The angel said to Daniel:
¹²Then he [the angel] said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. ¹³But the [demonic] prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael [the archangel], one of the chief [angelic] princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone [without the aid of a high-ranking angel] there with the kings of Persia. (Dan. 10:12-13)
- C. The mighty angel pulled back the curtain in the spirit realm to allow Daniel to see a glimpse of the angelic and demonic authorities that are over the natural authority structures of the nations. He told Daniel that the "prince of the kingdom of Persia" withstood him when Daniel first began to pray.
- D. The prince of Persia is a reference to the demonic principality—a high-ranking demonic power—that was exerting his influence over the region of Persia (modern-day Iran) and was affecting the human prince of Persia in a negative way.
- E. ***From the first day:*** This is an important passage for understanding the theology of prayer. A mighty angel told Daniel, in essence, "From the very first day, twenty-one days ago, when you set your heart to humble yourself, I was sent to you."
- F. Daniel's experience proves that there is a dynamic relationship between our prayers and how God visits a city or nation. This is not about "earning" anything, but about coming into agreement with God's will.
- G. The spiritual events of Daniel 10 were recorded in the Scripture to give us a model of what God wants to do in our day to hinder the demonic principalities over Iran, Iraq, and every other nation.
- H. Demonic principalities can be withstood as the Spirit raises up a "corporate Daniel" to pray for angelic help to overcome the demonic powers assaulting Israel (Rev. 12:7-9).