

Spiritual Warfare: Establishing Our Identity in the Truth

I. JESUS' INHERITANCE: VOLUNTARY LOVERS OF GOD

- A. God's plan for the human race is to provide an eternal companion for His Son as His inheritance (Eph. 5:31-32; Rev. 19:7-9). Every person, angel and demon will bow their knees in obedience to Jesus (Phil. 2:9-11). The Father has planned something greater than this. The inheritance that the Father promised Him is that He would utterly possess the heart of the people. In other words, God promised to raise up a people who voluntarily choose to be equally yoked to Jesus in love.
- ⁸ I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. (Ps. 2:8)*
- ⁷ For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7)*
- B. Satan is also raising up a worldwide worship movement (Rev. 13:4, 8).
- ⁴ They worshiped the dragon (Satan)...⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him (Antichrist), whose names have not been written in the Book of Life... (Rev. 13:4, 8)*
- C. Satan wants to steal Jesus' inheritance. He offered Jesus the political authority over all the kingdoms of the earth if He would worship him.
- ⁸ The devil...showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." (Mt. 4:8-9)*
- D. There is a great war in the spirit realm over who will be worshipped or who will possess the passion of the human heart. We can only walk in wholehearted love for God as we have revelation about our identity in God. The enemy is waging this war by attacking our heart and spiritual identity. The war in the spirit is for our hearts and our passion.

II. THE WAR FOR OUR SPIRITUAL IDENTITY

- A. Our identity is determined by the way we define our value or measure our success. If established in a biblical way, then we experience God's power on our hearts even in difficulty. If established wrongly, then our lives are filled with strife and fear even with prosperity.
- B. The most important questions in our life are questions about our identity. They include questions such as "Who am I? How do I become successful? Why am I important? What is my worth? The questions about our function (life/ministry) and circumstances are important but second to this. The four seasons of life affect our circumstances so that we grow more in love and meekness.
- C. The truth about our identity in Christ requires supernatural revelation. As Peter understood Jesus' identity by the revelation of the Spirit so also we only understand our identity in the same way.
- ¹⁶ Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus said, "Blessed are you...for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father in heaven..." (Mt. 16:16-17)*

- D. Our primary identity (value/success) is found in who we are in three issues: intimacy with God, meekness before people and cultivating the spirit of revelation. We measure the success of our life in context to how much we grow in intimacy with God, meekness and revelation.
- E. Our intimacy with God consists of being loved by God and in being a lover of God. The foundation of our identity in life is in being loved by God and in loving God. It takes revelation to see the nobility of loving God. It really matters what we do with our heart or how we carry it. I confess, **“I am loved** (by God) **and I am a lover** (to God/others) **therefore, I am successful.”**

III. WARRING FOR THE HEART: PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS OF OUR MIND

³ For though we walk in the flesh (natural provision, opportunity, circumstance), we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ 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. 10:3-5)

- A. We can only understand spiritual warfare in the full context of 2 Cor. 10-11. Paul said that we do not war according to the flesh. He was not referring to the flesh as sinful activity but that which is merely natural (new opportunities, circumstances or provision). We cannot solve a problem in our heart by improving our circumstances. The greatest attack in our personal lives is against our hearts so that they are held in bondage and dullness so that we do not love God with all our heart.
- B. Strongholds of the mind consist in a collection of ideas or lies that agree with Satan and accuse God, our heart and the value of our life. We pull down spiritual strongholds by casting down arguments that are lodged in our heart against the truth as we expose and renounce these lies.
- C. The arguments that must be cast down involve three revelations about our identity in God.
² I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. ³ I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ ⁴ For if one preaches another Jesus...or you receive a different spirit...or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. (2 Cor 11:2-4, NAS)
- D. **First, that I may present you a pure virgin:** is the truth about how we stand in God’s sight. We are as pure virgins who are made clean by the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). This relates to how we carry our heart in our failure. We stand in the truth as we refuse condemnation.
- E. **Second, I have betrothed** (promised, NIV; espoused, KJV) **you to one husband** (Jesus): we are those He wants and longs for. He chose us as His eternal partners in betrothing us as His bride. This relates to how we carry our heart in our pursuit of our ultimate importance. We must stand in the truth that we have great importance in being desired by God as we refuse rejection.

- F. **Third, simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus:** we are to find our identity or success in loving God instead of seeking our primary value in how much we accomplish or the impact we make. This relates to how we carry our heart in our labors as we pursue success. We stand in the truth that we are most successful as we choose to walk in love as we refuse fear of failure.
- G. **Satan's strategy:** is to seek to deceive us with craftiness so as to subtly lead our minds astray from the purity of devotion to Christ. We must not bear this as the Corinthians did.
- H. How will he attempt to do this? By raising up preachers who proclaim Jesus and the gospel in a way that leads us to pursue the "**America dream**" more than the Sermon on the Mount. This results in living by a different spirit or by striving to establish our own importance.
- I. The "modern gospel" proclaims wrong ideas about "what makes our life valuable before God." If we feel that we are not accomplishing anything important, then we live aimlessly. **We win the war over our lives by living in the clarity of a lifestyle devoted to loving God with all our heart.**
- J. **TEST:** How do we know if our minds have been led astray by Satan? We have more pain related to our function (in ministry) and the state of our circumstances than in the condition of our heart.

IV. BEING A PERSON OF EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION

³⁷ *Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment." (Mt. 22:37-38)*

- A. Loving God with all our heart is the first commandment because it is the first priority to God. Jesus did not call it the first option (it is a commandment). God sees this as the highest lifestyle that we can choose. Loving God is a glorious end in itself. We need revelation of its supremacy.
- B. Loving God with all of our heart is the great commandment because it always is great in the impact it has on God's heart and our heart (eventually others). It is a dynamic means to an end.
- C. The power of our life is found in being aware that we live before a God who cares about the smallest movements of our heart toward Him. He esteems, remembers and rewards them. The Lord deeply values the effort we make in cultivating a responsive heart of love to God.
¹ *Elijah the Tishbite...said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word." (1 Kings 17:1)*
- D. The power of Paul's vibrant heart was found in the revelation that he felt well known by God.
¹⁰ *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body...11 Knowing, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God...16 Therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. (2 Cor. 5:10-16)*

⁸ *You...put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book? (Ps. 56:8)*

V. THE EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION OF MARY OF BETHANY: FILLED WITH THE WORD

³⁸ A certain woman named Martha welcomed Him (Jesus) into her house. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. ⁴¹ Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. ⁴² But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Lk. 10:38-42)

- A. Jesus declared the wisdom of Mary's life as she sat at His feet. Mary is described three times in Scripture. Each time she is sitting at Jesus' feet (Lk. 10:39; Jn. 11:32; 12:3).
- B. Martha was distracted (v. 40). Martha appealed to this legitimate call to meet humanitarian needs by serving in the kitchen. Jesus did not correct Martha for serving but for serving with a wrong spirit. Being distracted is not the trouble but staying distracted is after the Lord confronts us.
- C. Jesus said to Martha that Mary did the one thing needed (v. 42). Mary took serious the call to cultivate the ability to respond to God in love with extravagant devotion.
- D. Mary has chosen that good part (v. 42). We must choose this part. No one can choose it for us. Jesus forever settled the debate about the importance of sitting at His feet by calling it the "one thing needed" and the "good" way to live.
- E. Jesus prophesied that this good part would not be taken away from Mary (v. 42). Her decisions had eternal implications. They will be remembered by Jesus and will affect her life forever.

VI. THE EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION OF MARY OF BETHANY: WASTING HER LIFE

³ As He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard (perfume). She broke the flask and poured it on His head. ⁴ Some were indignant...and said, "Why was this...oil wasted?" ⁶ Jesus said, "She has done a good work for Me...⁹ Wherever this gospel is preached...what this woman has done will be told as a memorial to her." (Mk. 14:3-9)

- A. The woman is identified as Mary of Bethany in Jn. 12:3. Jesus vindicated Mary (v. 6) and her lifestyle that cultivated a heart that is responsive to God in love. Mary's act of devotion is remembered through all history. Mary was a young single woman who was not mentioned in the Book of Acts or in Church history. She had not known public ministry, yet she was known in the courts of heaven though unknown in the courts of men during her lifetime.
- B. We must have a sustained vision to go deep in God by walking in intimacy with Him. We must set our heart like Mary of Bethany and David did. We must learn to live before an audience of One. In other words, we live as those who most value receiving the nod from our Master. This has great power in the hearts of those who love Him. It has more power than the approval of all others. There is no rest until we conclude the highest purpose of our life is intimacy with God.