

Spiritual Warfare

by Glenn Meldrum

The war for souls is a real conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness, and our active participation in this war through prayer, intercession, and evangelism is the most important thing we can do with our lives.

Scripture: Psalm 34:18, Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 59:19, Isaiah 66:2, Matthew 12:30, Luke 18:1, Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 10:3, James 5:16, Revelation 8:3

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Prayer Intercession"

Description

Glenn Meldrum preaches about the intense spiritual warfare for the souls of men, emphasizing the eternal significance of choosing between God's camp and Satan's army. He challenges Christians to actively engage in this crucial battle, highlighting the importance of surrendering selfish living to join the fight for souls. Meldrum stresses the need for believers to equip themselves with spiritual weapons through prayer, intercession, and evangelism, urging them to abandon self-centered lifestyles and embrace reckless abandonment to God. He calls for a revival of purposeful, passionate, and persevering prayer, emphasizing the power of intercession in transforming individuals, societies, and nations.

Transcript

At this very moment a war is raging across the planet. Its battles are ferocious. Lives are lost, prisoners are taken, defections occur, atrocities abound and strategies are executed. The hostilities rage endlessly--it is a war to the bitter end. There is no demilitarized zone and there can be no compromise. This is the most important conflict the world has ever known, a war over the souls of men, women and children. Eternity hangs in the balance for billions of people. Satan has raised a coup d'etat against the Almighty. The devil must be put down!

Whether or not we believe this war is real does not alter its existence. Every human being is an active participant of this conflict by the simple fact that we are alive. We are either in God's camp or in Satan's. This is a conflict between two kingdoms where there can be no truce. Those who have not surrendered their lives to Christ are by sheer default soldiers in Satan's army. The unsaved are blind to this war and their part in it. This is true with most Christians as well. The majority of which choose to ignore the spiritual conflict that rages around them because they are consumed with their self-centered lifestyles.

Men will fight and die in war when they deem the cause worthy. Is there a more worthy cause than to rescue those rushing to damnation? Our active participation in this war is the most important thing we can

do with our lives. This conflict is of such importance that the Father sent His Son to die on the cross so men could be delivered from their bondage under Satan's tyrannical rule. Yet Christians will not join the fight until they are liberated from their selfish living.

The advancement of Christ's kingdom is the responsibility of every believer. Our weapons are not worldly in origin or design, nor are they used for the destruction of life. They are supernatural gifts to transform individuals and secular society (2 Cor. 10:4). They are deployed through prayer and can only be controlled through that same discipline. Every saint is obligated to learn and practice spiritual warfare. This begins with their reckless abandonment to God and is furthered through prayer, intercession and evangelism.

The majority of our conferences, programs and church activities leave the world untouched. Millions rush to hell while we hide in our sanctuaries, rejoicing over our prosperity. Those that strive to reach the lost often do so with meager results. From businessmen to gang-bangers, the majority of the unsaved does not know, nor care, that the church exists. The raw truth is that in recent years Western Christianity has done little damage to Satan's kingdom. Our catchy slogans, conferences and campaigns will never transform cities and nations. Nevertheless, average people who are full of faith and the Holy Ghost can turn their world upside down (Acts 6 & 7). Let a few men or women like Stephen, Paul, Wesley or Finney loose on our modern cities and they will never be the same.

This chapter is not about methods to spiritual warfare, but about the condition of our hearts. Intercession is a heart issue. Set the heart on fire for the souls of perishing immortal souls and intercession will take place. Genuine spiritual warfare begins by sitting at the feet of Him who vanquishes every foe and then rushing into the city with a baptism of Holy Ghost fire.

WAR FOR SOULS

It is time we take this war out of the church and into the enemy's camp. "Our biblical story demands an offensive rather than defensive posture of the church" (Hauerwas, 51). Where does the church's offensive strategy begin? On her knees! How is the church to advance? On her knees! How are the battles fought? On her knees! "Prayer is part of the primary business of life, and God has called His people to it first of all" (Bounds, Weapon, 64).

The war for souls is waged, advanced and ultimately triumphant through prayer. All that Christians do, corporately or individually, must flow out of vibrant prayer. Whether it is evangelism, discipleship or business, our lives should be saturated with prayer.

Ezekiel 37 is a vision of a valley full of very dry bones. The bones are the remains of a conquered army. After their defeat they were left to be devoured by scavenging animals and to decompose through the natural forces of the world. The unburied bones are a testimonial to their total demise. This vision graphically illustrates the spiritual death of Israel due to idolatry. It also prophetically speaks of those seasons when the church is defeated through compromise with the world. For the Spirit of the Lord to breathe new life into these bones presents a profound hope that God can resurrect the spiritually dead.

What defeats a spiritual army? Sin! What opens the door for idolatry? Compromise! How does this spiritual death begin? Prayerlessness! Whenever prayer ceases to be the church's primary function, she becomes nothing more than a defeated army in the valley of dry bones. Churches then become mausoleums--monuments to the spiritually dead.

The Lord designed prayer to be our most formidable weapon to transform society. It is an offensive weapon for taking the kingdom of darkness by force. Through prayer we can move heaven to shake earth. John the revelator was given a wonderful vision of the power of prayer:

Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake (Rev. 8:3-5).

This vision vividly reveals that our prayers can move the heart of God. After the prayers of the saints are mingled with holy fire from heaven's altar, they are hurled back to earth with such force that men and kingdoms are shaken. This is the result of Spirit filled believers who come before Christ's throne of grace with passion, purpose and faith. The picture of Almighty God shaking earth is an awesome representation of what revival actually accomplishes.

The time will come when the Lord will rend the heavens, not only in revival, but also in judgment. "I will take vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations that have not obeyed me" (Mic. 5:15). The prophet Haggai declared, "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory'" (Hag. 2:6-7). The Lord will shake earthly kingdoms so the "desired of nations" will turn from their rebellion against the Most High and know His tender mercies.

What solution does the church offer to America so that her judgment may be averted? We need to answer this question. It is not too late for us to arise from our valley of dry bones to become a living army. Joel cried out, let those "who minister before the LORD, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, 'Spare your people, O LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?' Then the LORD will be jealous for his land and take pity on his people" (Joel 2:17).

Revival can come either through times of peace or judgment. Both are expressions of God's love and mercy that brings to people the life changing power of repentance. The idea of revival in times of peace is far more attractive than as a byproduct of national calamity. If the saints will not arise to the occasion in times of peace then the Lord will allow disaster to overtake a nation so that revival may fall. In the end, revival will come either through peace or through judgment.

INTERCESSION

The revelation of God's glory is released through prayer. When the church fails to pray, His glory is withheld from the land. Divine glory falls on the church only in proportion to her hunger for His presence. True intercession flows through people of prayer who share in the passion that drove Christ to the cross. As Oswald Chambers penned, "The great difficulty in intercession is myself, nothing less or more." (Chambers, 74).

Peace Or War

Paul admonished every believer to pray, "...that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (I Tim. 2:1-8). Unique to civilization during Paul's epoch in history was Pax Roma, or the "Peace

of Rome." Because this peace predominately covered the known world, the Roman armies were free to build roads and police them. These roads allowed the quick deployment of Roman armies to areas of conflict. This in turn advanced international commerce by securing relatively safe and easy travel for merchants.

This peace was essential for the rapid expansion of the early church. Without it the Gospel would have never spread with the ease and speed by which it did. In spite of localized outbreaks of persecution, Christians had relative liberty to travel for commerce and for preaching the Good News. Free trade allowed the Message to reach Rome before any apostle even visited the city.

The days of Elijah stand in stark contrast to the Pax Roma of Paul's era. During this epoch in Israeli history peace was not the avenue to revival. Israel needed divine discipline so she might repent. Peace in this situation would have been spiritually catastrophic. Therefore the Spirit instructed the prophet to pray according to their genuine need. Jehovah had respect unto Elijah's prayer because he was a man who deeply knew his Lord. "Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years" (Jam. 5:17). The man of God prayed a dangerous, yet merciful prayer of judgment so the descendants of Abraham could receive another opportunity to turn from her wicked ways.

The Lord was good to judge Israel. The judgment came according to the entreaties of an intercessor. Such prayers bring men and nations to their knees. C. E. Autrey expounded on the use of such drastic petitions, "The prophet had to pray such a prayer. It is always better that a famine stalk the land, that people thirst, that the nation be torn limb from limb, than that the people decay spiritually; better that a depression come and twenty million people walk the streets jobless than that the people, choked on prosperity, forget God and worship at the altar of crass materialism, drinking rivers of beer and champagne rather than the wine of holy communion. Physical destruction is a smaller calamity than moral delinquency. The love of God does not shrink from inflicting such suffering if by such judgment the plague of sin may be wiped out. It was a terrible prayer to pray, but it was necessary" (Autrey, 71).

Intercession that comes from hearts ablaze will be bold and radical. Prayers that cost us nothing are worth nothing. Prayer that costs us our blood, sweat and tears will change the world. Elijah was a courageous man of faith who unselfishly prayed that God would judge the rebellious nation he loved. The prophet knew he would suffer along with his people, but he loved them more than his own comfort.

In our day and age we are more concerned about our happiness, prosperity and ease of life than with the horrifying reality that hell grows larger by the second. It takes men and women of courage, fortitude and compassion to pray that the Lord would judge a godless nation. True intercessors learn how to pray prayers that change men and nations, whether the need of the hour is for peace or judgment. Today, America is spiritually bankrupt under her peace and opulence. Now may be a season for the Lord's disciplining love. True peace can fill a nation or city after they have humbled themselves before God through repentance and loving obedience, but not before.

Intercession And Compassion

The All-Merciful One longs to demonstrate mercy in spite of the fact that we deserve judgment. Israel grievously sinned against Jehovah by worshipping a golden calf after they were miraculously delivered from their slavery in Egypt. The Spirit moved Moses to intercede on their behalf (Ex. 32). This man of God learned the power of intercession. "Persevering prayer always wins; God yields to persistence and fidelity.

He has no heart to say no to praying such as Moses did. God's purpose to destroy Israel was actually changed by the praying of this man of God. This illustrates how much just one praying person is worth in this world, and how much depends on him" (Bounds, Weapon, 19).

Moses prostrated himself before the LORD for "forty days and forty nights because the LORD had said he would destroy you" (Deu. 9:25). How many of us would pray like that for an obstinate rebellious people? His intercession was so passionate that he was even willing to suffer eternal judgment if only the Lord would spare the people. The justice of God decreed both mercy and judgment. Those who refused to repent would pay for their crimes; mercy would only be extended to the contrite. Paul prayed in like spirit, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3; KJV).

People who think that the Judge of all the earth is harsh in His dealings do not understand His goodness and holiness. Jehovah has chosen to work in the world through broken people who learn the discipline of prayer. He seeks for those who will intercede for a disobedient people so He can hold back His wrath to demonstrate mercy. In our day, the Savior is looking for a people of prayer who will intercede on behalf of a backslidden church, a sinful nation and a perishing world. He is calling the saints to do whatever it takes to bring salvation to the land, even if the intercessors themselves must suffer.

Two of Charles Finney's intercessors were Father Nash and Able Clary. Both were ministers who received a powerful anointing for intercession. Neither of them normally attended Finney's services because the spirit of prayer was so heavy upon them that they would break down with loud weeping for the unconverted. At times they would seek the face of God for twelve hours a day. One Sunday Able Clary happened to be in a service with his brother Dr. Clary. Afterwards, Finney was invited to Dr. Clary's home for a noontime meal.

"After arriving at his house we were soon summoned to the dinner table. We gathered about the table, and Dr. Clary turned to his brother and said 'Brother Able, will you ask the blessing?' Brother Able bowed his head and began audibly, to ask a blessing. He had uttered but a sentence or two when he broke instantly down, moved suddenly back from the table, and fled to his chamber. The doctor supposed he had been taken suddenly ill, and rose up and followed him. In a few moments he came down and said, 'Mr. Finney, brother Able wants to see you,' said I, 'What ails him?' Said he, 'I do not know, but he says; you know. He appears in great distress, but I think it is the state of his mind.' He lay groaning upon his bed, the Spirit making intercession for him, and in him, with groanings that could not be uttered. I had barely entered the room, when he made out to say, 'Pray, brother Finney.' I knelt down and helped him in prayer, by leading his soul out for the conversion of sinners. I continued to pray until his distress passed away, and then I returned to the dinner table.

"I understood that this was the voice of God. I saw the spirit of prayer was upon him, and I felt his influence upon myself, and took it for granted that the work would move on powerfully. It did so. The pastor told me afterward that he found that in the six weeks that I was there five hundred souls had been converted" (Torrey, 22-23). Finney accredited the success of the revivals he experienced to praying saints such as Able Clary.

Those who follow in the spirit of Moses will endeavor to hold back the hordes of people rushing headlong into judgment. And those who walk in the spirit of Elijah will cry for the Great I Am to judge a people so mercy may be revealed when they repent. Compassion must be the underlying motive of true

intercession. Unsaved multitudes desperately need those who will prostrate themselves before God's throne of grace until the fires of revival burn throughout the land no matter what their personal cost may be.

Intercession and Perseverance

Revival came to the Scottish Hebrides because many saints began interceding for an awakening. As stated in chapter four, after the elderly Smith sisters began praying for revival they compelled their pastor to gather some men to intercede until God would rend the heavens. The pastor secured seven men to pray in a barn while the elderly women interceded in their home. They prayed two nights a week from ten o'clock in the evening until four or five in the morning. They persevered until the Lord poured "water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground" (Isa. 44:3).

D. L. Moody received his baptism in the Holy Spirit because two elderly women refused to stop praying that he would receive the power of God. The results were tremendous. Nearly one million souls were saved through Moody's ministry in America and England. Revival after revival has been birthed because saints became burdened enough to persevere in prayer until the Lord parted the heavens and came down.

Jesus taught about the necessity of persevering prayer through the parable of the unjust judge (Lk. 18:1-8). In the account, a widow kept pleading with an unjust judge to avenge her of her adversaries. Her persistence finally won the justice she sought. The Savior then made this startling statement, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" The Christ was establishing that persevering prayer is an expression of authentic faith. If we desire to see revival sweep our land then it is extremely important that we express our faith through persevering prayer. We must give the Lord no rest until He rains presence down upon us. Persevering faith is the true spirit of intercession that refuses to quit until the answer comes. There is no other way for revival to come. Jesus is asking us today if we will have persevering faith when He returns.

Jesus And Intercession

Christ's love and intercession was wonderfully portrayed while He hung upon the cross. In agony He cried, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." What was taking place in the heavenlies that compelled the suffering Savior to so pray? It may be suggested that the Father was ready to destroy the entire human race for the atrocities committed against His Son. This would have been a fitting act of justice for the wickedest crime ever committed. It was the Son's intercession that held back the Father's just wrath. This was the truest act of mercy ever preformed. Directly, the Jews and Romans were guilty of crucifying the Messiah. In reality, all of humanity is guilty because it was each of our sins that nailed Him to the cross.

In Jesus the power of intercession was manifested in its purest form. He was the embodiment of absolute authority as God incarnate in flesh and blood. He retained that authority through His unbroken fellowship with the Father. Because of that relationship, Jesus received whatever He asked of the Father.

The same is true with us. The Lord responds to our intercession according to the quality of our relationship with Jesus. Our fellowship with the Redeemer determines the authority He grants us. Through intimate fellowship with the Savior we can know His will and pray according to His good pleasure. Then miracles happen. Perseverance in prayer is faith in action. If we desire to be imitators of Christ, then cold-blooded

prayers have no place in our lives.

PASSION IN PRAYER

Prayer must come from wholehearted devotion to the Lord. "He who prays without fervency," stated Spurgeon "does not pray at all. We cannot commune with God, who is a consuming fire, if there is no fire in our prayers" (Spurgeon, Praying, 36). Our prayers should never be lifeless and formal, but animated and alive. Yet, the only place to get a passion in prayer is to sit at the Savior's feet. At His feet intercessors are born and the prayers of saints become the birth pangs for revival. "For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (Isa. 66:8). We have not brought forth children at altars of repentance because we have not wept at His feet over our spiritual barrenness and the lostness of the world.

Our tame services and lifeless prayer meetings have accomplished little or nothing. There is a reason for our spiritual poverty and a remedy. Leonard Ravenhill offers a powerful answer, "Revival tarries because we lack urgency in prayer. . . . The biggest single factor contributing to delayed Holy Ghost revival is this omission of soul travail. . . . We will display our gifts, natural or spiritual; we will air our views, political or spiritual; we will preach a sermon or write a book to correct a brother in doctrine. But who will storm hell's stronghold? Who will say the devil nay? Who will deny himself good food or good company or good rest that hell may gaze upon him wrestling, embarrassing demons, liberating captives, depopulating hell, and leaving, in answer to his travail, a stream of blood-washed souls?" (Ravenhill, Why, 59-60).

Passionate, persevering prayers can break open the heavens so the fires of revival burst forth. Such prayers come from people who know how to sit at the Savior's feet and are consumed by His holy fire. During the Hebrides Awakening the Holy Spirit was phenomenally present to convict men, women and children. People could be found walking the streets weeping over their sins. In deep anguish of soul some even cried out, "O God, hell is too good for me! Hell is too good for me" (Woosley, 130).

The revival had not reached one particular island where the minister, church and community were unconverted. As Campbell was driving a motorcycle to the church he found a teenage girl weeping along the side of the road. The evangelist stopped to minister to her and see what the Spirit was doing. He found that she was a Christian who had been praying with another teenage girl that revival would come to their godless island. Campbell knelt with the girl on the side of the road and began to pray. By the time they finished, three hours later, revival had swept the island. Young and old were driven to their knees with sobs of repentance. Not a home was left untouched and even the minister was soundly born again.

Those young girls heard the Savior's voice because they sat at His feet. While they were in prayer, God gave one of them a vision. She saw Mr. Campbell driving by that afternoon and the Spirit let her know that revival was finally coming. So she waited for the evangelist by the side of the road with tears coursing down her cheeks. The island was transformed through the persistent and impassioned prayers of two teenage girls.

PURPOSE IN PRAYER

Passion in prayer is the direct result of purpose in prayer. Christians without purpose offer passionless prayers that are always powerless. At times, the fervor in our prayer comes from the trials of life. However, as soon as the pain passes so does the enthusiasm. God desires to fill people with divine purpose so they will possess Spirit inspired passion.

For the most part, born again believers have no idea what their purpose is on earth. They wander aimlessly about driven by little more than their selfish pursuits of life. Few Christians know their calling and even fewer have a passion to see the Lord powerfully fulfill His will in their lives. If we do not know our God given purpose then we will never have passion in prayer or service. Every follower of Christ is called to minister the Gospel in one manner or another. There are no exceptions! Any saint that is not active in Christian service is in rebellion against the very One they claim to serve.

Scripture commands us to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. This means that we can no longer live according to the standards of secular society but must be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 12:1-2). When a person becomes a living sacrifice he will know "what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will." We can deduce from Paul's statement that the reason we do not know God's good and perfect will is because we have not surrendered our all to Him. Our lack of surrender may be the result of hurt, fear, worldly ambitions, indifference, a busy life or just plain rebellion. Nonetheless, whatever keeps us from fully surrendering to the Lord, and knowing His will, is sin.

Knowing God's purpose for our lives and abandoning ourselves to His will produces passionate prayer. For example, many people teach Sunday school only because the church needs teachers rather than to fulfill a calling. This produces boring little lessons that are incapable of changing anyone. When a believer knows he is called to teach, and properly accepts that calling, he becomes passionate in prayer for those divinely entrusted to his care. Only through prayer will a teacher, preacher, parent or witness have anything of eternal worth to offer others. Purpose in life produces purpose in prayer, purpose in prayer produces passion in prayer, and passionate prayer can set our world on fire.

BROKENNESS IN PRAYER

Brokenness and prayer are irreplaceable ingredients to revival and spiritual warfare. George Otis Jr., commenting on James 4:6 stated, "God opposes [or resists] the proud but gives grace to the humble." This proverb, quoted twice in the New Testament, is linked contextually in both instances to spiritual warfare. And for good reason! If we want to resist the devil, we had better make sure God is not resisting us" (Otis, 244). This presents the potent truth that we cannot advance the kingdom of heaven if we are at odds with Savior because of an unconquered character filled with pride and self-will.

Smith Wigglesworth taught, "To be poor in the spirit is when the human has been brought into helplessness. You are never rich to distribute until you are brought to poverty in yourselves" (Hacking, 62). The Lord wants us to see the depths of our spiritual neediness so we cling to Him with all that is within us. Because "God opposes the proud" the proud cannot bring revival. "The usual thing with pride [is] you are quite unaware of it until the Holy Spirit shows you; then you see you are full of it. . . . Pride, always an unpleasant thing, becomes particularly odious when it expresses itself in the realm of morals and religion" (Hession, When, 36 & 40).

In contrast to the ugliness of pride is the beauty of brokenness. Brokenness makes a people beautifully attractive to Almighty God. "The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit" (Ps. 34:18; NKJV). To become broken before the Lord we must see the truth about ourselves through the eyes of Jesus and His Holy Word. We are frail, needy people who can no more save or change ourselves than a leopard can change his spots. However, there is power with God.

From the altar of brokenness we obtain answers to our petitions and pleas for revival. Brokenness in prayer is as the incense that billows from the altar before God's throne and fills His senses with holy

delight. The Lord loves the prayers of those who comprehend their neediness and cry to a merciful Creator to demonstrate His power on their behalf. "Prayer that does not stem from a life of humility before God is powerless, and is little more than a waste of valuable time. It is only as the Christian goes down in humility before God that his prayers will rise and be effective" (Paul Smith, 32).

The Lord demonstrates unique favor to those who live a life of brokenness. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps. 51:17). Again the Lord establishes, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isa. 66:2b). It is from the place of brokenness that true intercessors are born. Their small embers of passion for the Savior and a perishing world can burst into the consuming flames of revival.

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