

Bondage Breaker - Part 2

by Neil T. Anderson

We have been given authority and power over the kingdom of darkness, but we must believe, be humble, and be bold to exercise it.

Duration: 44:43

Scripture: Ephesians 4:6

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Overcoming Fear"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a testimony of a woman who found freedom from paralyzing fears through the guidance of the pastor. The speaker emphasizes the existence of a spiritual battle and the need for believers to be equipped with the armor of God. He uses the analogy of soldiers going into battle unprepared to highlight the importance of being spiritually equipped. The sermon also highlights the power of God and encourages believers to be bold and courageous in their faith, as fear is a common obstacle. The speaker references biblical passages such as Joshua 1, Proverbs 28, Acts 4, and Revelation 21 to support his points.

Transcript

Let's back up here a little bit, because when the Lord in the Gospels trained the twelve, in Luke chapter 9, verse 1, He sent them out. And the first thing He said to them, He said, Behold, I've given you authority and power over demons. That's the first thing the Lord told those twelve.

And then in Luke chapter 10, after the seventy had come back, same kind of a training mission, the first thing they said was, Lord, even the demons are subject to us. And the Lord responded, Don't rejoice in that. And let me say the same thing, don't rejoice in that.

That's not the issue, people. Rejoice in the fact that your name is written in the last book of life. We're not trying to dispel the darkness, we're trying to turn on the light.

And the difference is profound. The Lord went on to say, Behold, I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning, but I've given you authority and power over serpents and scorpions. That's not snakes and bugs, that's the devil and his angels.

And that's what you and I have, because you and I are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. What's the difference between authority and power? Well, authority is the right to rule. It's because of a position that

we have.

For instance, you could be a rookie cop and just graduate from academy, and your first assignment is to go down into some intersection where there's four lanes one way and four lanes going the other way, and for whatever reason the signal light isn't working. And you're supposed to go out there and direct the traffic. Now, as a rookie cop, that could be a little intimidating.

I'm just going to walk out there and somehow direct that traffic, and that Mack truck is going to stop for me? What would a seasoned cop do? Well, he'd just walk out there, he knows he has the authority to do it, and he would just blow his whistle and direct the traffic, and after a while the rookie cop would establish the same confidence. Now, does he have the power to stop that? The answer is no. He may be tempted to pull out his 41 police special and shoot a few radiators, but truth of the matter is, the truck would probably still keep coming.

Now, what if I went out into that intersection in the middle of the night and put a huge cement block? It would stop the traffic, too. Not because I have the authority to do it, but because it has the power. Guess what every child of God has? Well, we all have both.

We have the authority because we're in Christ. Now, that authority is not over each other. There is that kind of authority, too.

We're dealing with the authority that the Church has over the kingdom of darkness, and we have the power, as long as we continue to operate according to the Spirit. That's why Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10 says, Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. It's not our might, nor is it our position, but because we're children of God, and we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies, then we occupy that.

Now, the Great Commission says, Go unto all the world and make disciples, but people don't ever read that without the preceding verse. All authority has been given to me in heaven and upon this earth. Go therefore.

Well, the Lord understands management 101. You can't delegate responsibility without authority, and so you and I are to carry on the work of Christ on planet earth, and he has limited himself to work and operate through that church. That's the divine purpose.

We are clearly told that, by the way, in Ephesians chapter 3, verse 8 and following, it says, To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given to priests to the Gentiles, the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church. To whom? To the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. That's the spiritual realm.

So here's the eternal purpose of God, to operate through the church and to make his wisdom known to the principalities and powers of the spiritual world, and if that be the case, how are we doing? Well, let me go on. Verse 11 says, This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which he carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and competent access to faith in him. And so, here's the work of God.

First John 3 says that Jesus came to undo the works of Satan, and now he's going to make that wisdom known around the world through the church. Again, you'd have to ask the question, how are we doing? And frankly, not very well. Half the church doesn't even believe the devil exists.

We're operating as though we're a hospital where sick people go, when we're not. We're a military outpost that's been called to storm the fortresses and tear down those strongholds that thank God has an infirmary. But we don't exist for the infirmary.

The infirmary exists for the military outpost. I spend a lot of time in the infirmary because we've got a lot of wounded warriors out there. But we want to nurture them back in health, present a complete, pure, spotless, undefiled in Christ, and help them find their rightful position, free from their past, alive in him, so they can carry on the work of God on planet earth.

Well, such is our battle. What qualifies me for this authority? Well, three things. This power that's been extended towards you who believe.

See, everything is conditioned by how we believe. The Lord would say to the church today, be it done to you according to how you believe. Believing it doesn't make it true, therefore I believe it.

We're not New Agers. We don't create reality with our mind. We respond to reality in an appropriate way.

So we've got to believe. Secondly, humility. Now, this is a tough one, because about the time you think you've got that one licked, you're probably going to lose it.

But what is humility? Humility is confidence, properly placed. So Paul says, put no confidence in the flesh, but we ought to have the greatest confidence in God and who we are as children of God. That's why he says, you come before him with confident access, through faith in him, with boldness.

And thirdly, boldness. That's a tough one, because fear is such a critical part of this problem. But listen to what the word of God had to say to Joshua before he went into the promised land.

Joshua chapter 1, four times he says, only be strong and courageous, only be strong and courageous, only be strong and courageous, only be strong and courageous. Proverbs 28, verse 1 says, the wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are as bold as a lion. In Acts chapter 4, verse 31, it says, the place where they prayed was shaken.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. God hasn't given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind. In Revelation chapter 21, verses 6 through 8, it says, and he said to me, it is done.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.

But for the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and immoral persons, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Now, if you were going to make a list of a rogues gallery, would you have the list with cowardly and unbelieving? God did. See, I don't believe the Lord looks with favor upon a church that acts in unbelief and cowers as though we don't have an answer.

We can't significantly contribute to what is taking place in the world. Paul writes to Timothy, the church is the pillar and the support of truth. We've got to take our rightful place.

Do you know the passage well where the Lord fed the 5,000, and then he went up to the mountain to pray, and he sent his disciples across the Sea of Galilee, and they were just rolling against the storm, and they weren't getting anywhere. And then the Lord came walking by, and the text says in Mark that the Lord intended to pass them by. I believe that the Lord intends to pass by the self-sufficient today.

Go ahead, roll against the storm if you want to, but the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. You will never accomplish anything that way. And when they call upon the Lord, as we must today, when we call upon the name of the Lord, then we shall be saved.

And we have to have a strict dependence upon God throughout all of our life. Now, if boldness is a problem, then fear is a major, major issue. And I want to submit to you that it is.

Anybody caught in a spiritual conflict is probably going to struggle with fear. Fear is a little bit different from anxiety. Anxiety has sometimes been understood as fear without an adequate cause.

And so, if I'm anxious about something, it's because I don't know. That's why scripture says, don't be anxious about tomorrow, because I don't know what tomorrow is going to bring forth. The answer to that is, we've got to trust God.

If he takes care of the lilies of the field, etc., then much more so will he take care of us, because we're of infinite more value than a lily of the field or the bird of the sky. Fear is different from that, because fear has an object. In fact, fear is categorized by its identifiable objects.

For instance, agoraphobia is fear of the marketplace. Claustrophobia is fear of enclosed places. Now, in order for a fear object to be legitimate, it has to have two attributes.

Somehow, that fear object has to be present and potent. Now, let me illustrate. I don't like rattlesnakes.

I never have liked rattlesnakes. But I sit here right now, I have no fear of rattlesnakes. The reason is, there's not one present here right now.

But if you were to open that door and throw one of those babies through that door, and it landed at my feet, from a scale of zero to ten, I'd be at a ten and exit stage left immediately. Because in my mind, it is now both present and potent. It has a power over me, because I would fear it could bite me, and I could potentially die.

Now, if you open the door and throw a dead one in, it is also present. But it's no longer potent. And I would no longer have to fear it.

I probably wouldn't go to zero, because you'd always have that lingering doubt. Is it really dead? But the point of it is, all you have to do is to remove one of the attributes, and that fear object is no longer valid as a fear object. Now, we are told in scripture that we're to fear neither man nor death.

Let's look at death for a moment. Death is still imminent. It's appointed unto every man that one day he shall die.

Now, how then has God removed fear of death as a legitimate object? Death is a legitimate object for a fear. The answer is, he's removed his power. It is no longer potent.

That's why in 1 Corinthians 15, it says, where, O death, is your sting? And so, he has removed that. That's why Paul could say, for me to live is Christ, to die is actually gain. I've asked some people, I said, tell me what's the worst thing that could happen to you? Well, I could die.

Well, actually, biblically, that may not be the worst thing that could happen to you. It could be the best thing that happened to you. Well, that's not advocating suicide or something, but it's just simply saying that if I have today no fear of death, then I'm really free to live today.

Man. Why is man such a fear object in our life? Suppose you're a secretary and you're just intimidated by your boss. And whenever he's around, what controls you is not faith or responsible Christian living, but fear of your boss.

But you're probably listening right now and you're not afraid of him. The reason is, he's not there. But if he walked in the room, suddenly he would be there.

But the question is, what power does he have over you when he is present? Well, he could fire you, I suppose. How would you resolve that? Well, quit, or better, be willing to quit. I'm not advocating that we are not to be submissive to our masters.

What I'm saying is, when we give somebody that kind of power over us, it is really going to wreak havoc with our Christian life. I honestly believe that's why it says in 1 Peter chapter 3, around 14 and 15, it says, we are not to fear their intimidation, but we're to sanctify Christ as the Lord of our lives. Now, the moment we do that, then there's only one legitimate fear object in our life.

Now, what two attributes of God make him the ultimate fear object in our life? Well, he's omnipresent and he's omnipotent. Now, if we keep that in mind, that becomes the one fear object that expels all other fear objects. Let me read to you Isaiah chapter 8, verse 12 and following.

It says, you are not to say it is a conspiracy in regard to all that these people call a conspiracy, and you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it. It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy, and he shall be your fear, and he shall be your dread. Then he shall become a sanctuary.

When you sanctify Christ as Lord of your life, when the Lord becomes the ultimate fear object in your life, then it expels all other fears. You'll stop a problem like this. Whoa, there's something in my room last night.

I said, no, God was there. No, something else. No, God was there.

See, God is always there. He's here right now. He's omnipresent.

He's omnipotent. See, people caught in spiritual battles, they get a posture after a while that they see Satan over there, kingdom of darkness, battle of Satan, and good old God over here, poor little me, caught in between these two equal and opposite powers. If that's what you believe, you're defeated.

You couldn't help but be defeated. The truth is, and what the New Testament is trying to tell us, is that God is off the charts. He's omnipotent.

He's omnipresent. He's omniscient. He's kind.

He's loving. And Satan is a defeated foe, and I'm in Christ. I'm seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

And you realize because of that position you have, because of your dependency upon the Lord, you can say to Satan any time, take a hike, submit to God, resist the devil, because you have that authority because of your position in Christ. Two cautions here, though. One, this is not an independent authority.

I can't just go out and do what I want to do. It's determined by my position in Christ and my dependency upon him. And you think this is some ritual or magic formula, you might find yourself like the seven sons of Sceva in Acts chapter 19, when they try to somehow effect some spiritual deliverance just by some ritual or slogan or using the name of Jesus.

And the demonic person looks back and says, Jesus, we know. Paul, we heard of. Who are you? And stripped him of the clothes, beat him up and kicked him out.

But if that confronted you today, how would you respond? Well, I'd say I'm a child of God. That's what I would say. Now, let me illustrate that, because when people are under that kind of an attack, pressure come upon them, overwhelming fear, whatever else, in our secular world, they call that a panic attack or an anxiety attack.

Why do they do that? Because they cannot identify the fear object. Well, if you cannot identify what it is, you're overcome by a wave of fear. I'll tell you what it is.

It's spiritual. As I do conferences, I ask thousands of people around the world three questions, and I caution them because the answer to all three questions has been yes for me a number of times. You can't do my kind of ministry and not have that kind of opposition.

But ask yourself some questions. Number one, have you ever personally had some direct encounter with some presence or struggled with thoughts in your mind and just seemed to be paralyzed by that kind of a problem, didn't know how to get out of it, knew it was spiritual or suspected that it was? And the answer, if not for you, in the general population is always between 50 percent and much, much higher than that. In some Christian leadership circles I've been in, when I ask that question, the percentage is usually around 95 percent.

Let's go one step further. Have you ever awakened, either terrorized or alertly awake at some precise time in the morning, like three o'clock? And if you respond to that, you say, what was that? What happened? Usually the response to that, the minimum response is 35 percent. The maximum response I've seen, again, about 95 percent amongst Christian leaders.

And you say, what is that? Well, I didn't know what that was. For me, it was three o'clock. I don't mean 2.59 or 3.01. I mean, bam, I was awake at three o'clock.

And I started to see that in some other people's writings and experiences. And I had the privilege several years ago, people in ministry full time came to me after conference and shared their story, which is remarkable of their involvement in Satanism as little children and by the grace of God coming out of that years ago. And I asked them, I said, what's with three o'clock in the morning? And they said, well, that's prime time.

They didn't hesitate a moment. Satanists meet from midnight to three in the morning, according to them. And basically, we've been targeted.

Well, that's the fiery darts of which we put up the shield of faith. Just remember that greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. For me, that's just a nuisance.

I may wake up. Typically, I go right back to sleep or I know how to pray. But let me move one step further.

Let's ask the question. Have you ever had a wave of fear come over you? It could have felt as though you were half asleep or just coming out of your sleep. You felt a tremendous sense of fear and couldn't respond physically.

You tried to say something like Jesus and just couldn't seem to get it out. If you ask that question in any place in America, you will get about a third of your population saying, yes, that's happened to me. Now, you describe that symptom.

You have probably described what the secular world would call an anxiety or panic attack. How do you respond to that? Well, the order of scripture is critical here. In James 4, 7, it says, submit to God, resist the devil.

You try to resist the devil without first submitting to God. You probably won't get out of that. Now, realize that you could not, for some reason, call upon the name of the Lord.

The reason is that the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. We try to always physically respond to something like that. And we can't seem to do that.

Inwardly, God knows the thoughts and intentions of your heart. So you can respond back to him freely. Inwardly, God knows that always.

And as soon as you acknowledge his authority, he is Lord of your life. You will be freed up. All you'd have to say is Jesus.

That's all you'd have to say. And that attack would stop immediately. Let me illustrate how transferable as well as universal this is.

Every child of God is in Christ, and seated with Christ in the heavenly, and has the same authority that I do. Some people wrongly think, well, God has called you into this, or you're unique, or you have a strong personality, or a big body. That has nothing to do with what we're talking about.

I was the speaker for a national convention of churches, and the pastor went home, and just based on the information in this book, sat down with one of the dear people in this church, and led her to freedom. I want you to hear her testimony. For the past 35 years, I have lived from one surge of adrenaline to the next.

My entire life, the portion I can remember, has been gripped by paralyzing fears, which seem to come from nowhere and everywhere. Fears which made very little sense to me or anyone else. I invested four years of my life obtaining a degree in psychology, hoping it would enable me to understand and conquer those fears.

Psychology only perpetuated my questions and insecurity. Six years of professional counseling offered little insight and no change in my level of anxiety. After two hospitalizations, trips to the emergency room, repeated EKGs, a visit to the thoracic surgeon, and a battery of other tests, my panic attacks only worsened.

By the time I came to see you, full-blown panic attacks had become a daily feature. It has now been three weeks since I've experienced a panic attack. I have gone to malls, church services, played for an entire worship service, and even made it through Sunday school with peace in my heart.

I had no idea what freedom meant until now. When I came to see you, I had hoped that the truth would set me free, but now I know it has. Friends have told me that even my voice is different, and my husband thinks I'm taller.

When you live in a constant state of anxiety, most of life passes you by because you are physically, emotionally, and mentally unable to focus on anything but the fear which is swallowing you. I could barely read a verse of scripture at one sitting. It was as though someone snatched it away from my mind as soon as it entered.

Scripture was such a fog to me. I could only hear the verses which spoke of death and punishment. I had actually become afraid to open my Bible.

These past weeks, I have spent hours a day in the Word, and it makes sense. The fog is gone. I am amazed at what I am able to hear, see, understand, and retain.

Before the bondage breaker, I could not say Jesus Christ without my metabolism going berserk. I could refer to the Lord with no ill effect, but whenever I said Jesus Christ, my insides went into orbit. I can now call upon the name of Jesus Christ with peace and confidence, and I do it regularly.

That kind of freedom is something that we would like to see every child of God around the entire world experience. Not only that, but every church could help that kind of person find their freedom in Christ. One would have to wonder how a defeated fool like Satan could carry on such an effective work.

If he has lost that sense of power, then why isn't this working for us better than it should be? Well, we have been talking about deception. We have been talking about fear. Let me illustrate in a childhood story.

When I was a boy, I was raised on a farm in Minnesota. We had some Norwegian bachelor brothers who we used to share product and labor and service with, and my dad, my brother, and myself would get in our old pickup and drive over there. As we entered their barnyard, they had this yappy little dog that would come barking around the corner.

As we got out of our pickup, that dog would start chasing us, and I ran. Guess who he chased? He didn't chase my brother. He didn't chase my father.

He chased me. He chased me right up on top of the pickup cab, and I would sit down and look at that ornery little mutt barking at me, and my brother standing right beside him, and my dad standing right there. It wasn't bothering them a bit, and one day dad said, son, this is kind of embarrassing.

That's just a little dog. Why don't you stay on your ground? And so we went over another time, and I worked up my courage, and great big beads of sweat welled up in my forehead. As that dog came barking at me, I kicked a rock at it.

Guess what happened? He took off. You resist the devil, he'll flee from you. Well, one would ask the question, what power did that dog have over me? And the answer is only what I gave to it, and what he used was fear.

How did I get up on top of that pickup cab? That dog used my mind, my will, my emotions, and my muscles. That's how I got up there, and we literally have Christians all around the country on top of a pickup cab, frightened to death of things that go bump in the night, and oftentimes no fear of God. Something is radically wrong in our orientation and in our understanding.

The practicality of this cannot be overstated, because everybody struggles with thoughts. Everybody has tempting thoughts and accusing thoughts. The tragedy of some of this is that we just think maybe we're weird, and so we can't bring it out into the open.

Suppose you're driving down a freeway, and suddenly you have a little thought, drive into that railing, or jump over that cliff. Or as we found out amongst our teenagers, that grab that knife and stab somebody, and you ask the question, man, where did that come from? Is that me? Am I feeling this way? And if you don't realize that that's just a spiritual battle, you will personalize that yourself, and then suddenly you'll freak out. It's like the horrible problem that some of our wives face after they've had maybe a second or a third child in postpartum depression.

As I've shared this across the country, I'm amazed at how many ladies have come up and said, that's exactly what happened. Here is a mother, she's depleted physically, she's come to the end of her resources oftentimes, and the other kids are maybe raising a fuss, and then a little thought, kill your baby. Kill my baby? How could I be thinking that? That's not you, ma'am.

That's not you thinking that thought. But if you think it's you, then suddenly you just overcome by a wave of depression. And the answer, of course, is to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

This is so profound when we start realizing that that battle is there for a mind, and the fear that induces. We had a dear colleague in ministry who has a wonderful wife, wonderful marriage. He's very educated, very mature, very pious.

Suddenly his wife became sick with pneumonia, and got to the point after a while where she could really not function. And so they took her in surgically, removed a liter and a half of fluid from her lungs. And then they found the cancer, a big mass of cancer.

And when I come back from a conference tour one summer, he called me and asked if I could speak with his wife. And so we went over to her house and sat down. She wanted to see me alone.

She pointed to her Bible and said, see my Bible there? I said, yes. And hanging out of it was a piece of paper. She said, that's a list of who I am in Christ.

I heard you speak two years ago, and I just want you to know that that has really kept me going for these two years. Then this very lovely, pious woman looked at me and said, Neil, I'm not sure I'm a Christian. I was shocked.

I said, ma'am, if you're not a Christian, I'm in deep trouble. I said, why would you ever even think that? She said, well, I go to church and I struggle with these blasphemous thoughts and foul thoughts go through my mind. I said, that's not you.

You see, how do I know that's not her? Well, what we read earlier, Romans chapter seven, you joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man. That's the real you. Well, with her maturity and love for the Lord, within a half an hour, she is free to those kind of thoughts.

And she went on through the most horrendous year of physical treatment to try to recover physically. And the last I heard, she was doing very, very well. Well, I remember the first time I encountered this.

I was a young pastor and this gal was classified as paranoid schizophrenic and fear was just plaguing her life. She finally told me one day of the snakes. I said, well, tell me about the snakes.

She said, I go to sleep at night and the snakes crawl over my bed on me. I said, what do you do? I go running into my mother. I said, well, this is years ago now.

And I said, well, try this. Just say, get behind me, Satan. She came back the next week and I asked her how it went.

She said, I couldn't say it. I said, why not? She said, I didn't want Satan behind me. I laughed.

I said, well, that's just a figure of speech. And you learn after a while and trying to deal with people's fears and phobias like this. I said, well, you just call upon the name of the Lord.

And she did that, came back the next week and said the snakes were gone. Now, people, if that's neurological, if there's a chemical imbalance here, that isn't going to work, obviously, but it doesn't cost you anything to take that position in Christ and to exercise your authority. I remember a gal that was referred to me by a local Christian counselor.

Actually, I went to his office to provide some sense of diagnosis. He had been counseling her for four years. I was with her about five minutes.

And I said, there's a battle going on for your mind. And she said, oh, thank God. Somebody will listen to me or believe me.

She had been given EKGs and CAT scans. And her counselor was a very fine Christian man. He just never had any experience in this at all.

And when I walked in, I saw a pentagram cut into her skin. I thought, gee, there's a clue. So, anyway, the next week she came into my office.

And she was a very large girl. And halfway through our conversation time, she got up out of her chair and started to walk towards me. What would you do? Well, I looked at her and I said, I'm a child of God.

The evil one can't touch me. She stopped right in her tracks. And listen to me carefully, people.

Authority does not increase with volume. We're not called to shout out the devil. If we're in that mode, you're probably operating out of the flesh somewhere you've already lost control.

It's the same thing when we're dealing with parents with our children. When we start screaming and yelling at our children, chances are that's just a deed of the flesh. We probably ought to stop, ask God for forgiveness, and maybe our children too.

Maintain that sense of control by not losing our position in Christ, which you can't really lose anyhow. But you start operating as a deed of the flesh instead of operating by the fruit of the Spirit, which is the whole intention of this fear. And so I am powerless then to deal with this as an issue.

I had a man who was a doctoral student on the East Coast, had heard that illustration and said, I want to thank you for that. I said, why? He said, well, he said, I went to the train station to come and catch a commuter train and three thugs came up and demanded my money. He said, Neil, it's like I could see right through them.

I said, what did you do? I said, I looked at him and said, I'm a child of God. The evil one can't touch me. They said, what? And he repeated, I'm a child of God.

The evil one can't touch me. They said, oh, and walked away. I had a very disturbed husband, was really creating tremendous problems for his wife.

And I suggested that she respond to him if she ever had that sense of discernment that there's something more going on here than just a difficult husband. Well, one morning he started to come after her when she was in the shower and she looked at him and said, I'm a child of God. You can't touch me.

And he got disoriented and actually ran out of the house. Well, people listen, we do have that position in Christ. We are alive.

We're seated with Christ in the heavenlies. Don't let anybody take that away from you. Otherwise we have no power to stand against the God of this world.

But because we're seated with Christ in the heavenlies, we have a position to do this. And, and we are not left down here on planet earth without some sense of defense. I want you to hear a tremendous letter that was shared with me by a gal who attended one of our conferences.

Dear Dr. Anderson, I attended your Sunday sessions, but while waiting to talk to you after the Sunday evening meeting, I suddenly felt ill. I was burning up like I had a fever and I got so weak. I thought I was going to faint.

So I went home. I need help. I've had more trouble in my life since I became a Christian than I ever had before.

I've overdosed on alcohol and drugs so many times I can't count them. I've cut myself several times with razor blades, sometimes very seriously. I have thoughts and feelings and ideas of suicide weekly, like stabbing myself through the heart.

I'm a slave to masturbation. I'm out of control and I don't know how to stop. On the outside, I appear very normal.

I have a good job and I live with an outstanding family in our community. I even work with junior hires at my church, but I can't really explain my relationship with God anymore. I've been seeing a psychiatrist for two years.

Sometimes I think I'm this way because of a messed up childhood, or maybe I was born this way. How can I tell if my problems are in my mind or the result of sin and disobedience against God or the evidence of demonic influence? I would like to talk to you during the conference, but I don't want to try any more remedies that don't work. Well, it did work for her.

She found her freedom that week. She wrote me a letter a year later. She said she could not believe that somebody who had all of her troubles in life could ever again serve the Lord.

I went back to that same location about a year later and she came up to me and I said, how are you doing? She said, great. This is my friend. She's living with a youth pastor now.

She's got the same problem I had. And indeed she did. And that Saturday afternoon, I think it was, the youth pastor's wife and I helped this woman also find her freedom in Christ.

Since there is a God of this world and a prince of power of the air, and he's roaring around like a hungry lion seeking for someone to devour, are we defenseless in opposition to that? The answer is, of course not. God has supplied us the armor of God. Suppose that you were a foot soldier in Desert Storm and you were called into action and you found out that the next morning your platoon was going to have to go behind enemy territory.

And so you'd cautioned all of your men to come tomorrow morning with their full equipment on and their headgear and whatever. And you showed up in the morning, you were ready to go, but all your troops showed up and all they had on was their skivvies. What would you think of those guys? You would be inclined to say, where's your helmet? Oh, Sarge, I sweat under that thing.

Well, where's your gun? Carry that thing. You don't know how much that weighs after walking a few miles. It really gets burdensome.

Where's your gas mask? I mean, what would you think of these people? I mean, you'd be inclined to say, you idiots, get back there and put your armor on. Well, I think sometimes the Lord has to look at the church today and said, you don't seem to realize what the real battle is here. If you did, you'd put on that armor of God.

Let's read it. It's in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10 and following. It says, finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Let me say again that our position in Christ is really dependent upon him. It's really his strength. It is not ours.

Then he says, put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. That's the spiritual realm.

Now, since we are down here on planet earth, one would have to ask the question, is it really out there? Since you don't see those kinds of opposition. Well, it's a little bit like saying, are there germs in this world? It's amazing how many people have never seen a germ, but without question believe what our microbiologists are telling us. Well, I believe that too.

I've never seen a germ, but I believe they're out there. I've seen a few Germans. But what are we to do in response to the fact that there are germs in this world, not only in the world, but frankly in us? And the answer is to be germ oriented.

No, you do that. You'll be a hypochondriac. The only proper response to the fact that there are germs in this world is to live a balanced physical life.

Get enough sleep, eat right, exercise, diet, et cetera. And your immune system will take care of itself. There's demons in this world.

Yes, and the only appropriate response to that is to live a righteous life. See, that is really the thrust of this. There are two things we want to point out in reference to that armor of God.

Number one is it requires an active participation in our part. In fact, Jesse Penn Lewis, who wrote War on the Saints around the turn of this century, said, really, the chief condition for Satan operating in the church is our passivity, just failing to assume our own personal responsibility. Let me highlight some of the things that it says here.

It says, be strong, put on the armor of God, stand firm. Verse 13 says, therefore, take up the full armor of God that you may be able to resist in the able day and having done everything to stand firm. Stand firm, therefore.

Verse 16 again says, and taking up. Verse 17 starts out, and take, and to pray at all the times. You see, the point of it is it requires us to assume our responsibility.

Now, let me illustrate this. As I've talked with people over the years who are in deep problem spiritually, don't know how to get out of it. And before I even start, I always will sit down and explain.

There is a line drawn. It's a very important line that is drawn. On one side of the line, God's responsibility exists.

You can't do that. You can't create anything. We cannot save ourselves.

We shouldn't be in another person's conscience. You just have to trust God for what he said he has done and will do on our behalf. On the other side of the line is my responsibility.

And if I don't do it, God won't do it for me. Let me illustrate that. Suppose you've got a problem person in your church.

And so a few of you get together and you start praying and ask God to remove them from your church and nothing happens. And really to your horror, he ends up to be chairman of your board or something. And you say, well, God, don't you care about your church? Why don't you do something? And the answer is he won't, because that's our responsibility.

We're first to go in private, then bring two or three witnesses, etc. And if we don't do that, he won't do it for us. Now, when people come to me, they've been caught in bondage for so long and struggling in their life.

They don't know how to get out of it. They cry out to God. God, you're all powerful.

You could do something. Why won't you help me? And then they start struggling. Well, maybe it's something odd.

Maybe I'm not a Christian. And so by the time I get to talk to them, they are so ticked off, burned out towards God, frustrated, can't trust him anymore, or burned out at themselves. You say, what's wrong with this picture? What's wrong with this picture is that God loves us.

And there have been thoughts raised up against the knowledge of God. And if the only two players that you have in your world view is yourself and God, then either God or yourself is going to take a bad rap for this. But why wouldn't God do something? It's like the person who feels under attack at home, and he pulls the sheets over his covers and calls upon the name of the Lord, and nothing seems to happen.

You go, why? Because it's my responsibility to resist the devil. And if we don't do it, he doesn't necessarily have to go. Well, why won't you accommodate me one time, God? Why won't you do that for me? You realize he can't do that.

If he did that, he'd no longer be God. He must stay true to himself and true to his word. He said, not one yad or tittle, not one identifying Hebrew mark in the alphabet will change in my word until all is come to pass.

And so God is restricted in that sense in himself to work which is consistent with his word. And I've often had to tell people, if you want to get ticked off at somebody, get ticked off at somebody like me who taught a seminary at the church who hasn't adequately equipped our people to deal with the reality of the spiritual world, because when those battles come, they don't know how to stand against them. Well, what is the armor of God? Well, first of all, not to put anybody down here, but to recite some ritual or slogan like while I pleaded the blood of Christ over something is not necessarily putting on the armor of God, people.

There's nowhere in scripture that that is given as a carte blanche protection over the matters that we have to deal with. When we look at the armor of God, in essence, what you're really putting on is Christ. Let me read out of Romans chapter 13, verse 12 through 14.

It says, And the night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

So when you put on the armor of light, what are you really putting on? You're putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. Our sanctuary is not a building that we go to. Our sanctuary is in Christ, to be seated with Christ in the heavenlies, to be a child of God.

So if we will assume our responsibility to take an active role in this process, it begins then by putting on the belt of truth. Now, why is truth so prevalent? Why is it first and foremost? Well, it's truth that stands up against deception. We're going to look at in a moment the issues of temptation and accusation, but let's put this in balance for a moment.

If I tempt you, you know it. If I accuse you, you also know it. If I deceive you, you don't know it.

Now listen to the logic of scripture. If you know the truth, the truth will set you free. He said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

In the high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus prays. He said, I ask not that you take them out of the world, but you keep them from the evil one. How? Sanctify them in thy word.

Thy word is truth. Now, the first thing you do when you put on the armor of God is you gird your loins with truth. When God intervened in the early church, I mean dramatically so, and struck down Ananias and Sapphira, we read that passage and we go, oh, dear God, don't do that next Sunday.

I mean, who would survive? What was their great sin? They gave half of everything they owned to the church. Well, I bet every pastor in the country would like the people to sin that bad. Now, that wasn't the real issue, people.

They gave half, but they allowed people to think it was all. Well, that was their idea. That's not what scripture says.

What scripture says is, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? So what was the issue? The issue is still there and still prominent. God knew that if the enemy could go into your home, your family, your life undetected and get you to believe a lie, he knew that he could control your life. If I could somehow cleverly, by persuasion, get you to believe a lie, something that wasn't true and you believed it, would that lie control your life? And the answer is, absolutely it would.

I mean, there's nothing new here that I'm sharing with you. Eve was deceived and she believed a lie and consequently, Abeneath fell into sin and we are living with the consequences of that today. When we talk about truth, we're talking about it in a comprehensive way.

It's thy word is truth. Certainly, the only way you're going to overcome the father of lies is not even by research, not even by reasoning, but by revelation. Thy word is truth.

We have to study, to show ourself, to prove as a workman who needs not be shamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. There is no substitute for that. We must assume responsibility for our mind.

Listen to several scriptures. In your evil, be babes, but in your thinking, be mature. Think, therefore, as to have sound judgment.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. How are you going to do that? Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.

Or out of Psalm 119, how shall the young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to thy word, that word of I hid in my heart that I may not sin against you. And so, we've got to know the truth. And it says in Ephesians chapter 4, 6 through 8, be anxious for nothing.

Don't be double-minded about anything. Return to God is his point there. And the peace of God that paths us all understanding will guard your heart and your mind.

But it doesn't end there. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is right, pure, lovely, etc., think on those things. We must assume our responsibility for our own thought life.

We've got to choose the truth. Because it's that truth that's going to set us free. The Holy Spirit is first and foremost a spirit of truth.

And the Lord said he would come and he would lead us into all truth. It's that truth that sets us free. And that's the first part of the armor of God that we put on.

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