

Spiritual Warfare: Questions and Answers

by Stephen Kaung

Stephen Kaung explores the complexities of spiritual warfare, emphasizing the necessity of understanding our identity in Christ and the importance of spiritual integrity in various life contexts.

Duration: 1:31:56

Scripture: Psalm 127:1-2, Matthew 16:18-19, Matthew 18:18, Ephesians 6:4-9

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the spiritual principle of God's purpose and plan for the world. He refers to Matthew 25, where Jesus speaks about the last days and gives a parable about the sheep and the goats. The speaker suggests that this parable is not about individuals, but about the judgment of nations based on their morality and treatment of Israel during the messianic reign. He also references Romans 13, which emphasizes the importance of being in subjection to governing authorities as they are established by God. The sermon concludes with a prayer for the gathering and a plea to fulfill our calling as believers.

Transcript

I have two questions. Question number one, it seems that Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis said that it was only after a believer had experienced the cold death and cold resurrection with the Lord Jesus Christ was he or she able to start to engage the real spiritual warfare. Could you elaborate on this point? I will answer it very briefly just using the experience of the children of Israel as an example.

We find that after the children of Israel left Egypt, they crossed the Red Sea. And in typology, as you'll find in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, this going through the Red Sea, they are being baptized unto Moses. So in a sense, to us, you know, after we are redeemed by the precious blood, we are separated from the world by baptism, and we are being baptized unto Christ.

But after that, you'll find that the children of Israel were in the wilderness. And as we have already explained, that the wilderness is a place where our flesh is being revealed. Because oftentimes we think that after we are saved, then we are perfect.

Not knowing that our flesh is still flesh. It hasn't changed. That which is of the spirit is spirit, and that which is of the flesh is flesh.

So the Lord has to reveal to us our flesh. He has to test us, to prove us, to humble us, that we know what our flesh really is. And even though after we are saved, we are in the war already.

Because we do not belong to the power of darkness. Now we have been translated to the kingdom of the Son of God's because we belong to another kingdom. So the God of this world will begin to attack us.

He will hate us. And warfare began at the very beginning of our Christian life. But as we have mentioned, even though there are, there were wars.

It is mainly war against sins, against the world, against our flesh. And so far as strict spiritual warfare is concerned, these are just skirmishes, testing of grounds. And they are real, but they are not in the very center of spiritual warfare.

Not until the children of Israel, they cross the Jordan River, and they were in the land flowing with milk and honey, that the real battle began. Now we know that the crossing of the river Jordan is also a type of baptism. Because baptism really has two meanings.

One is we are being baptized unto Christ. Formerly we belong to the world. Now we belong to Christ.

But baptism also means we are dead in Christ, buried with Him, and being raised together with Him into newness of life. And this is typified by these two crossings. The crossing of the Red Sea is that we are being separated from the world and being baptized unto Christ.

We belong to Christ now. And in crossing that you find it is by the power of God. Moses lifted his rod and the Red Sea was divided.

But in crossing the Jordan is entirely different. We find that the ark of God had to enter into the river first. And then the water divided.

And the children of Israel, they went through the dry ground. So it is a going together, the ark together with the children of Israel. So it represents co-death, co-burial, and co-resurrection.

We are being dead with Christ, buried with Christ, and are now being raised together with Christ into newness of life. And in doing that they enter into the promised land. So it is true that unless we really know what is meant by co-death, co-burial, and co-resurrection with our Lord Jesus, we are not really in a position for real spiritual warfare.

So it is true what Mrs. Penn-Lewis has said is really scriptural. Because unless we are in that resurrection ground, we are not really in a position for real spiritual battle. Because spiritual warfare is not against flesh and blood.

Spiritual warfare is against principalities, authorities, and universal Lord of this darkness, and the spiritual power of wickedness in the air. So that's where the real warfare begins. So I think this should be enough for the first question.

Because it is more or less academic, you know. Now the second question I feel is a real one. King David was not allowed to build God's temple because he was a man of war.

It seems that long-time engagement in spiritual warfare deprived him some spiritual character, which will otherwise make him a man of peace, like Solomon. This sometimes make me hesitate to enter into active

spiritual warfare, fearing that it will make me too aggressive and even frightening to others, and losing the good image of a peaceful land we all desire. Could you comment on this? I think that's a real question.

David and Solomon, in typology, both represents our Lord Jesus. He is our David. He is our Solomon.

So in a sense, trying to divide David from Solomon, and Solomon from David, I think it is a wrong perspective. And if you have the wrong perspective, then you come to the wrong conclusion. So we should see that David and Solomon, they represent our Lord Jesus.

The two faces in the work of our Lord. The two aspects of our Lord Jesus. David is a man of war.

He sheds much blood, and he was not allowed to build a temple. But we must remember that it was by the wars that David fought, that he was able to gather the spoils of the war, and then using these spoils as materials for the building of the temple. So in other words, you'll find these wars that David fought, were not in any sense, contradict this matter of the building of the house of God.

Because his work is preparation. To prepare for the material of the house of God. Then after the war was over, and there was peace around, then you can really begin to build.

Because you cannot build when there is a war going on. But after the war is won, and then you gather the spoils, and use these materials to build the house of God. So in a sense, you'll find engaging spiritual warfare will never take away any character of Christ in us.

As a matter of fact, our Lord Jesus, he overcame the enemy as the Lamb. Because he did not fight the spiritual warfare with weapons of the flesh. He fought it with spiritual weapons.

It is as the Lamb that he overcomes. Now you remember in Revelation chapter 5, when John saw in a vision, there in heaven, one who sits upon the throne, in his hand a scroll, and then the proclamation, who is worthy to take the scroll and to open the seals, in heaven, upon earth, underneath the earth. No answer.

No one is worthy. No one is able to defeat the usurper. And you remember John wept, because he felt it was a hopeless case.

Then he was comforted by the elder and said, no, behold the Lion of Judah, he has overcome. But when John looked around, he didn't see a Lion. He saw the Lamb, newly stained, standing before the throne.

And then the song, Thou Art Worthy. So brothers and sisters, you find that our Lord Jesus, he overcame the enemy as the Lamb. His tactic is not earthly, worldly, flesh.

No. On the contrary, you find he overcame, because of his humility, of his meekness, of his denying himself, of his sacrificing his own life, in obeying his father. So you find that our Lord, he really overcame as the Lamb.

There is a Lion character in him, but it does not contradict with his Lamb character. And eventually you'll find the Lamb in the midst of the throne. So in a very real sense, you'll find that in engaging in spiritual warfare, you will not lose.

Your Lamb character. There is a Lamb character in us. You know, in a sense, it's wonderful because in our thinking, a Lion cannot be a Lamb.

A Lamb cannot be a Lion. And yet you find in spiritual reality, the Lamb is the Lion, and the Lion is the Lamb. There is the strength of a Lion expressed in the life of a Lamb.

So he does not fight with fleshly weapons, but with power according to God. So, brothers and sisters, I think it is because we, in our thinking, we, when we think of spiritual warfare, immediately we think, well, we have to be aggressive, we have to be overpowering, and actually we fight with weapons of the flesh. So that would be really frightening.

You know, you see people, they think they are engaged in spiritual warfare, and they go around and try to bind the enemy and say, I rebuke you, Satan. Now, Satan would say, who are you? You know, just like the seven sons of that high priest, in the name of Jesus, that Paul preached, I command you to leave. And the evil spirit said, now, I know Paul, but who are you? And they jump upon him.

So, brothers and sisters, if you try to fight a spiritual warfare with weapons of the flesh, it is terrible. People will be frightened, you know, because you have to put up a kind of attitude as if you are a superman, you know, and you have to shout so loud as if you are in real battle, but you are defeated. So, I think we need to realize that this spiritual warfare has to be fought with spiritual weapons, and the most effective weapon is the character of our Lord Jesus, because the enemy recognizes the Lord, and when they see it is the Lord, they flee.

But if they see it is you, you are not his match. So, do not be afraid that when you are engaging spiritual warfare, the man character will suffer. As a matter of fact, it actually is strengthened.

So, I hope that will answer the question, and I have to leave more time to my brothers. Evidently, in the last two days, I wore down the saints, and there were really no questions for me. However, being the youngest of the three brothers speaking, that means I'm on the bottom of the totem pole, and there is a question for Ephesians Heil, which was passed on to me.

I mean, Ernie Heil. So, first we need to turn to Ephesians chapter 6, and I will try to answer, and then you check with Ephesians Heil and see. Let's read the first nine verses.

Here's the question. In the passage before Ephesians 6, 10 through 20, there's an extensive discussion on family relationships. How important is that in regards to spiritual warfare? Now, perhaps somebody's having some spiritual warfare in their family, which makes it a good question.

Ephesians chapter 6, verse 1, Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of your heart as to Christ. Not by way of eye service as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will, render service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with him. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. And then this matter of spiritual warfare comes into focus.

Well, I wouldn't say that there's a direct relationship here. That is to say, Paul, speaking about the family, remembers the intensity of spiritual conflict. Paul is finishing up a section on the outworking of our Christian lives based upon our calling, our worthy calling, and based upon the vision of who Christ is and what he's doing in his church.

Then we are called upon to live a life through Christ, not lying, working with our hands, edifying one another in speech, not living as children of darkness, but children of the light, and so on and so forth. And eventually he comes to these matters domestic and brings these up. I wouldn't say there's a direct relationship here, but there is definitely a relationship.

It goes without saying, and all of us know, that probably the primary training ground for spiritual warfare is truly trying to deal with our own families in a godly way. And in fact, the same thing applies. Of course, we usually take this masters and slaves section, because we don't have slavery per se, as interpreted as understanding that how we deal with our employees or how we work upon our jobs as employees has very much to do with training that comes over into spiritual warfare.

Now, I don't know if you know this so much, but I went to a Baptist college. And in this Baptist college, there were certain kids marked out from the very beginning, and they were called P.K.'s, preacher's kids, or M.K.'s, missionary kids. And they were always the wildest.

They were the ones that struggled with the faith. They were the ones that struggled with the staying out late, being generally rebellious, and all of this kind of thing. And it was my first beginning insight.

While I was in college, I was saved. And while I was there, and so I was just saved. And back in those days, I was a Baptist.

So, I was a good Baptist. I mean, you know, I'm just reading the Bible for the first time. And here, all these kids who grew up as preacher's kids were just living a life that was far away from the Lord's purpose.

I didn't understand at that time something I understand now. When somebody steps up to serve the Lord, the enemy goes after his kids. If you have a heart that's merciful, would you please pray for the brothers who are responsible where you meet? Because their children are assaulted especially if in some way it can so embarrass or disqualify their brother and sister that they feel they cannot possibly serve God.

We see that right from the very start, how much spiritual warfare is involved with raising a child. But it isn't just with those who are responsible or those who serve the Lord. It's with every brother and sister.

Your heart is set on really serving the Lord. You know the enemy is going to go after our kids. And the Lord forgive us for not seeing that sooner.

There is spiritual warfare. And the old saying goes, we get too soon old and too late smart. And many times we as young parents don't realize all of the spiritual flack in the atmosphere that our children are being raised in.

And sometimes Christians are the most naive, I suppose. Because we're trying to live in a godly way and unaware of what our kids are addressing as they go out into the world and go out to school and all of this. I've been recently resensitized a little bit about this.

You know, I have some grandchildren now. And one of my grandchildren is a borderline autistic child, which means that she cannot communicate verbally yet, even though she's five years old. But she's relatively smart.

But the thing that I've noticed about her, because she hasn't had the usual sort of training and communication skills, is her tremendous sensitivity to traumatic things on television. She picks up immediately when one of those stupid and sometimes even demonic cartoon shows on Saturday morning as her brothers and sisters are sitting there just watching some kind of a big klopsy, cyclops, enemy monster with these big teeth. Looks like a jack-o-lantern, you know.

And they play loud music as this monster strides on the seat. And all of my grandchildren are sitting there just watching it. But this girl is traumatized.

Because there is something evil behind the music and the tempo and this rawr, rawr animal, you know. But, you know, we become so inured to this. We don't even realize the traumatic nature of this kind of thing.

No wonder our children's souls sometimes have been calloused to what the enemy can do. Well, I just say that as one little example as to say, may the Lord help us and open our eyes to see that it's only by his mercy that our children will be kept. A parent can almost, almost, well actually the parent cannot in the end keep your child from the world's influence is what I'm trying to say.

Some parents I feel almost try to smother their child just to keep them from these things, but you cannot. And so even though you try to send them to the better school and you may do these kinds of things, which I, you know, I have no problem. Your conviction and leadership I trust.

But even with all of that, still, we really need to pray for our children. Now, if parents can learn to pray for their children and take hold of the unseen things that are spiraling around our children in such a way, bring them through. I tell you, they've learned much in the area of spiritual warfare.

Because the same thing happens on a larger scale in our assemblies as is going on in the church. The young people, of course, they're always getting shot in our assemblies, aren't they? The teenagers are always getting shot, pulled away from the fellowship, finding reasons to be offended or this and that. And so much of that is not flesh and blood.

There are spiritual things under there. There's ground being undermined and all of this. But you see, we'll learn that at home, won't we? So there is spiritual warfare at home.

And sometimes, you know, I mean, I hate to say this. Ernie's in enough trouble already for talking about women being all emotions. So I don't want to go into too much of this.

But, you know, sometimes the godly woman has to, in a way, pray for her husband because he's under some kind of influence. Sometimes the godly husband has to pray for his wife because she has fallen under some kind of a spiritual influence. Sometimes you find yourself, as it were, as a child and servant of the kingdom, standing against, if I could put it that way, your very beloved own because they're not doing something that's really in the will of God.

Now, you don't stand against flesh and blood. You know what I mean? You don't chuck your wife out and say, you know, when you stop this, you can come back home. But no, you can't do that.

And really, with your children, you know, this passage is very clear. You can't exasperate your children by holding them down, holding them down, holding them down all the time, holding them down. They become exasperated with that.

We have to trust the hand of God to preserve and help them after a while. I mean, it is God's mercy that gets us through. But we all learn these things and how merciful we have to be to one another.

I just can't believe what the children are going through these days. I cannot believe. I speak occasionally with teenagers and hear what they experience every day in the hall of the junior high.

It's unbelievable. So, anyway, is there a connection here? Yes. And it's the same thing applies about work.

And you know that. Those of you who go into the workplace that's ungodly, it's almost a torment for you, I'm sure. And the temptations and the undermining for you to go ahead and curse like everybody else and you to go ahead and have the attitude that everybody else has about the bosses or whatever these things are.

But, you know, you have to do your own spiritual warfare there. Be sure when you come home at night you ask Jesus to cleanse you by his precious blood and wash your feet from the filth of the day. But even there, you know, those of you who have small businesses and all of that, now I think you go through spiritual warfare too.

There are times when you realize that there are circumstances that are more than economic or circumstantial behind the sudden, I don't know, rebellion of the employees or behind the sudden unreasonable demands of the boss. And, you know, these things become so real at times that a person has to leave a job as a godly Christian. Because you know in the world, in the world system, it wants your soul.

If it can get you day and night and working 80 hours a week, it will do it. And hold out a carrot or more money or something. It comes a place where you need to realize there's something behind that.

That the demands are unceasing. It's not just a season of extra work. They're laying off somebody and making you do two man's work for the same money.

Now we have to watch that bondage that can come upon us even in the workplace. And so I think, so can I just say, I think there's a connection here. We'll find if you work on a job in the regular world that even that is not neutral.

It isn't a question. It's no longer a question. Here in the United States it used to be a question.

If you do a good job, they'll keep you forever. And you'll get promoted and people will realize your value. Now, if you don't compromise somehow, they'll kick you out or push you aside or harass you or do something.

And so there's conflict involved. So I do think that there is this kind of connection. Surely the things that we learn in our regular life opens our eyes to the fact that there is no regular life, even on our jobs and even in our family.

There's spiritual conflict. And God bless the husband and the wife that can learn to stand together and raise their children through all of these spiritual attacks that they will go through. God bless you.

And remember to pray for one another in this matter. You can see them. You can see the teenagers when they start getting out on the outskirts and start kind of going away.

Pray for the parents. Some of the parents are doing all they can in their godly wisdom, but still the enemy is so strong in these things. We can stand for the victory of our children.

We raise them, pray for them. They'll come back to the Lord and stand with the Lord. So that is this one question.

Now, the second question I have, I think we all have two questions. And this is relevant to our present situation, although it wasn't really touched on in the messages this weekend. As a nation, what would be a biblical way to deal with terrorism? Now here's where sometimes the redneck Christians flush out of the woods.

And we could get into a real debate on this. You know, of course, down through the centuries, this has been one of the great ethical debates of the Christian church. Just what our position is regarding warfare, retaliation, revenge, turning the other cheek.

I mean, there's tons of stuff written on it. I don't even want to touch on it. But as a nation, what would be a biblical way to deal with terrorism? Well, I'm going to suggest the first thing we do is find a biblical way of defining the nation.

Because I think all of us must feel a little reticence about the United States being called a Christian nation. I don't think we could really say that. However, I'd like to look at nation in terms of three things, just very briefly.

One, the nation as seen under the judgment of God. Second, the nation as a minister unto us. And third, ourselves as the nation and the response to terrorism.

If you'll turn to Deuteronomy chapter 32, I just want to show a verse and say something about the nation under God. Nation under God. You know, we are a nation.

Of course, the United States is a very visible political entity. It has geographical boundaries. It is a nation.

But do you know that every nation is actually a vessel of God? By the sovereign hand of God, he builds up nations. And by the sovereign hand of God, he destroys nations according to their probationary response to God's will. I just look in verse 8 of Deuteronomy 32.

It's a most amazing statement. When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, now that would include us, meaning our size and boundaries and blessings. And when he separated the sons of man, he set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel.

Now, just very simply, what this is saying here in this song and revelation of Moses, is that when God set the boundaries of the United States, it's in terms of how they treat Israel. The whole boundaries of all the nations of the world are set according to his purpose in Israel. Now, of course, I'm not being Zionist here, but there's a spiritual principle there.

God has a purpose and a plan for this whole world. And behind the scenes, he's fulfilling this plan. And according to nations and how they respond toward God's plan, they're either ejected or exalted.

In Matthew chapter 24, or sorry, chapter 25, in these messages where Jesus is speaking about the last days, his final parable that he gives in Matthew 25 in this particular section, is about the sheep and the goats on the left and the right. And the king comes to his throne and sits down, and then the nations come to him. And he judges the nations as to what they did with the cup of cold water and what they did to the prisoners.

And many interpret that this parable is not about individuals, but that in the messianic reign of the Messiah or during the millennium, the nations of this world will be judged according to their morality, according to their treatment of Israel, and according to their treatment of the poor and the neglected and those in jail. There is some kind of a righteous judgment that will be meted out based on the nation's response during this present time, in the millennium. Now, this puts every nation on probation.

Although most nations don't see this. We think we're entities within ourselves, and we have our own plans and purposes. The United States has its own goals, and et cetera.

But you know what? The Lord says, well, whatever your goals are, if they don't fit in with mine, you're out. And in this, I am very thankful. I am very thankful that the United States has found itself, for whatever reason, entangled with Israel.

Then Laden, in his announcement yesterday, you know, he videotaped after the bombing, supposedly. And in his announcement, he said, may America not rest until there's not a Jew in Palestine. So he came out and said what he meant.

Until there's peace in Palestine and all the Jews are out, may America find no rest. Now, we've got ourselves in this. And it isn't for spiritual reasons.

You see what I'm saying? What are we as a nation? It isn't because, oh, we're such a Christian nation. But it's because there are Christians in the nation who care something for Israel. And now we're in a position where we're being attacked.

I mean, if you are a Christian, then you should probably see that the reason those planes went into the Twin Towers had to do with Israel. And we find ourselves in a position where, of course, most Americans really have no care about Israel at all. But as a nation, we're in such a place.

And we will be judged by the Lord. And I think perhaps rewarded as a nation, if you want to say, if there is a rewarding of nations, because we're standing with Israel, sometimes all alone. They're the Lord's people.

As blind as they are, as much as so many of those people in Israel are unbelievers, but there's something that God wants to do. And it has to do with that property there. And you can see that property is hated by the enemies of God.

And so we're caught in a kind of a thing. So how does a nation respond to terrorism? We already have. We're standing with Israel and we're a target.

But you see, what I'm trying to say is, as we read in Daniel chapter 4, where Daniel was speaking to Nebuchadnezzar and he said, Nebuchadnezzar, your kingdom is exalted or abased based on whether you realize that the sovereign God rules. If we truly are in some measure, a nation under God, it will make a lot of difference for this nation, because the nation is more than just its boundaries. The nation is a vessel for

the service of God for his purpose.

Then on a second level, if you turn to Romans chapter 13, now let's just read through the first five verses. I don't want to go into verse six, it has to do with taxes. The first five should be sufficient.

Romans 13. Now, every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God and those which are exist are established by God.

Therefore, whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God. And they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause for fear for good behavior, but for evil behavior.

Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you'll have praise from the same. For it is, now here's a definition of nation, it is a minister of God to you for good. Now, here's the nation, it's a government, and it's a minister of God to you for good.

But if you do what is evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword for nothing, for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. So now, first we looked at the nation as an entity to serve God's purpose. Now, we see the nation as a government set up as a minister.

Now, you must be amazed that Paul is writing this and telling these Romans to be subject to their government, which is the fourth beast. But however, within the context of the world, the Roman government administered justice, and it was a minister of justice. And so, in a second sense, a nation has a government that's supposed to be a minister of justice.

Now, how does this government deal with terrorism? As you cannot be a nation that's going to exist for more than six months, unless you go by the natural law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. And preserve your borders and retaliate with revenge. The most faithful to that law is Israel.

If you kill an Israeli, they kill two Palestinians. That's the deal. And they're not kidding.

They don't make idle threats. They do it. I understand when they found out those those terrorists who killed the Jews in Munich, Germany, you know, the Olympic team.

And when they found out who killed them, somebody just told me recently, they just went around quietly and killed each terrorist one by one back in their home in Paris and Frankfurt and other places. That is how governments work. You don't have a Christian government.

Now, Geneva tried to be a Christian government under John Calvin. But the problem is power corrupts. Even Christian elders get corrupted if you're running a country.

And next thing you know, it's an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Our government is presently giving an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But we are privileged to be in a country, I don't know if this has ever been done in a war before, that while it's dropping bombs, it's dropping food.

The most unusual situation. Quite a paradox. But you know, thank God we have some people who are Christians and some people who care for humanity.

And of course, Afghanistan's a shipwreck. And I feel compassion upon those people. They've been cursed by drugs.

You know, their whole country's economy is drug trade. Heroin is their biggest product. They were cursed by that.

And now by this regime. Well, anyway, let's not get into the politics. But what we need to do, of course, our response as Christians need to be to pray for wisdom for our government leaders.

We do thank God that some of them really seem to be godly and are God-fearing. We need to pray for wisdom because they do need wisdom. The enemy's very shrewd.

They caught us completely blindsided on this thing of using planes as weapons. Nobody was ready for that. And the enemy always is one step ahead of worldly wisdom.

So it's good that we pray for wisdom and pray that the measure of justice by this minister, this government, be balanced and not just terrible. It would be awful if we just did something terrible. But so far it seems to be wise and measured, the response.

So we need to pray for the government. It'll maintain this course in this present act of terrorism. I think that's all I could say.

Then I'd just like to speak now about how can the nation as a nation, how can we in a biblical way deal with terrorism? And that means us now. How can we as people, what's our response? And as soon as this thing hit, you know, Luke chapter 13 came to my mind and it's still on my mind. So maybe we could just finish with a look at these few verses.

In Luke chapter 13, there was actually a terrorist and a tragedy. And Jesus responds to these things. Luke 13, verse 1. Now, on the same occasion, there were some present who reported to Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

What a terrorist that Pilate was. He took some Galileans and mixed their blood with their sacrifice. And Jesus said to them, now, do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this faith? I tell you, no.

But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those 18 on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who lived in Jerusalem? Now, there was a tower in Siloam, maybe by the pool, and it collapsed and killed 18 people there in Jerusalem. And he answered in verse 5, I tell you, no.

But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. As a nation, as Christians, as the people of the nation, how do we respond to this terrorist moment? I think the word is repent. I mean, if Jesus is saying anything here, he says there's no time to start doling out judgment.

We find comfort in saying how evil Ben Laden is. We find comfort. Even some people had comfort.

Some Christian ministers had comfort saying, well, we deserved it because we're such an evil nation. Assessing judgment. These people are more sinful than these people.

These people are more sinful than I am. Jesus said that's not even the point. When a tragedy happens, it's a wake-up call to all of us of the shortness of our life and the need for us to be serving in the kingdom of God.

And so this tragedy, if it does anything for us, should do at least two things, and both of them have to do with spiritual warfare. In this tragedy, as open for us in the New York area, a sovereign season where people are so shaken, they're open to the gospel. And if we have our heads in the sand and don't realize it and miss the opportunity, we have really need to repent.

This is an amazing time. There's brothers and sisters from Huntington, where I live, who couldn't be here this weekend because they had a conflict of dates. Once a year, there's a fair in our town of Huntington where we have a booth and we hand out tracts and speak the gospel and whatever.

So there's some brothers and sisters in Huntington, and we just got a report. We called and found out how this fair went this weekend. Many people stopped because we had a sign up there, anybody who wants prayer who's been touched by the tragedy, and people came in.

Julia, help me out. Was it a woman who's lost her husband? A 14-year-old was going by the booth whose father had died in the tragedy, came in and prayed. There's such openness.

I made a little tract. We handed out a thousand of these tracts. And the other thing, because in this time right now, people are so shaken.

Unbelievers have no foundation. They're shaken. They don't know what's going on in New York.

There's still people who are wandering down over there by the tragedy site. They're just wandering. They don't know what to do.

And it's a time for us to wake up and use this time to bring people the comfort of Christ and salvation. Thank God there are brothers and sisters. David Wilkerson, I know, is sweeping many people into the kingdom right now.

He's down there on the street. They're preaching the gospel. They're helping the people.

They're serving the coffee. They're doing everything they can. Thank God for that.

So when we see a tragedy like this, we have to say, what time is it, Lord? What time is it? This is what I think. And the second thing, repent, is this. Our brother Christian Chen, I heard a message he spoke of last week.

And it was a very wonderful message. And one of the things he said is, you know, really, he was speaking to brothers and sisters there in New York City. He said, really, you know, we need to repent.

He says, you know, we're the only people who understand that there are spiritual forces opposed to New York. And we, as God's people, should be binding the strongman from terrorizing our city. But we were asleep.

The enemy came in and hit us. We should repent. Only the brothers and sisters in Washington have the right, just like you and I, we talked about doing spiritual warfare for our children.

See, this is our authority. This is our right. I mean, this is our family.

We can pray for them. I can pray for your children, but especially I have authority dealing with my children before the law. And if I live in New York, especially, I have something to do with this testimony over the city

and the need for spiritual protection.

The very fact the enemy just came in like this. And the brother just asked the question, were we praying for God's protection from the spiritual enemies? Will we do a spiritual warfare on behalf of our city? And of course, the same could be held in Washington, D.C. But it should be a wake-up call for everybody in every city to realize that though governments can set up, put air marshals around and try to block the roads for inspection, they cannot do anything about spiritual warfare. This is the one realm that the church actually has something very important to do in our area.

So I feel like, by God's mercy, may we be awakened that we have fallen down on our job. Spiritual warfare is almost an unknown commodity in the church today. And may it be that we start taking this seriously.

In this place that we live, we have a measure of authority. As we come corporately before the Lord, we should be praying for the Lord's protection over these places and stand for the Lord. Psalm 127.

Okay, it sounds like you want to preach on it, brother Joel. Psalm 127. Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.

Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. Well, brother, I think that verse preaches for itself. That's right.

The Lord, of course, wants to guard the city, but who's willing to stand with him with those keys? And actually pray to him. I must confess to you, brothers and sisters, that these times of questions and answers are a time when I don't feel comfortable at all. I was in Singapore a few years ago, and at the end of their conferences, they also have a question and answer time, and they put a big table up on the platform and set you up there as experts.

And I asked them the last time I was there, please don't ever do that to me again. I would rather you put me in a barrel of tar and send me back to the U.S. And I've been thinking about why. Why do I feel that way about these times? You know what I feel like the Lord said to me? You're afraid.

You're afraid that your ignorance will show. So, I come with fear and trembling to try to even think in terms of answering the questions that you brothers and sisters have presented. I also have two.

Actually, one of them says to Brother Kong. So, the person who wrote this question, please know that I did not steal it. I didn't take it out of the basket.

My brother insisted that it was my area, so I will try to have some response to it. So, I'll try to briefly share about the questions and try to avoid preaching again today. The question says, for us to be effective in prayers, to bind and to loose, do we need spiritual wisdom and understanding? Is this related to the prophetic gift or ministry? And then there are two other parts of the question.

How can we be specific in our prayers in anticipation of God's interest? And how do we have spiritual intelligence in prayer? First of all, how to be effective in the binding and loosing? As our brother mentioned in his response this morning, I think there may be a great deal of misunderstanding in this area of binding and loosing. And as Dana was sharing about the different things about family life and our jobs and all of that, I think that what we see in these two passages in Matthew 16 and Matthew 18, where we have the references to binding and loosing, to my knowledge, those are the only two places that we find them. They were both spoken by our Lord Jesus, and they both have to do with a matter of the church.

In Matthew 16, the Lord Jesus is saying, upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And also I have given to you the keys of the kingdom, and whatsoever shall be bound in heaven shall be bound on earth, etc. Then over in Matthew 18, the issue is concerning a brother who has sinned, and we are seeking to bring reconciliation, to deal with the sin that he committed and bring in full restoration.

That is the burden that our Lord seems to be addressing. And so he says, there is a procedure that you follow. You first go to the person in private, you seek for reconciliation.

If he refuses, then you take a couple of other people with you. And then if he persists in not being willing to be reconciled, then you take it to the church. In that context, our Lord Jesus talks about loosing and binding.

I think we need to see, brothers and sisters, that there is a very important role that the church has to play in this period of human history. I don't know if you have given much thought to it. Even maybe you have at some point, but there is a tendency that somehow the reality of what the church is gets hidden behind so many other things.

And just somehow by being involved, we lose sight of what the church is and what its responsibility is. You see, most of us, even as those who ought to know better, we fall into a way of thinking that allows us to think that the church is for us. It's for our benefit, for our good.

We even call it ours, our fellowship, my fellowship. We don't call it a church, most of us. But in our thinking, it's something that belongs to us for our benefit.

Now, the Lord Jesus didn't say, I will build your church. He said, I will build my church. And when he's speaking about his church, we can talk about our Lord Jesus in this way.

He's talking about his own interests. Now, his interests, brothers and sisters, are perfect. That is, his ultimate intention is to bring the whole created order, I know you must get tired of me saying this, but to bring the whole entire order back into perfect harmony with his Creator.

Now, I can tell you without being critical of us, that's not what we have in mind. Our focus is, sometimes we do what we call navel-gazing. Our world is only as big as ourselves, and then sometimes it expands a little bit bigger and then a little bit bigger.

But it never becomes cosmic in the sense that our Lord is involved in this mighty work of bringing this whole universe back into perfect harmony with the will of his heavenly Father. And with that in view, he said, I will build my church. I told you I wasn't going to preach, but it sounds like I'm going to anyhow.

So, when he talks about binding and loosing, it's in that context. We are not given this kind of authority to go around doing things that benefit us. Our interests are to be focused on the fulfillment of God's heart, his interest.

And so, it's a very unfortunate thing in my estimation that some of God's dear people have somehow taken these verses in Matthew 16 and 18 and have reduced them down to them having authority just to do things the way they think they ought to be done. There's a poison that's gotten into us as a human race. I think we all want to be authoritative.

Some of us express it in different ways. Because we want to be in charge. We want things to go the way we think they ought to go.

It's part of our makeup as human beings, just true of every one of us. Just in the same way that Lucifer was a rebel that has come into us and we are rebels. And yet the Lord has decided that the way he's going to bring this about is by having on this earth, on this rebellious planet, a people who have direct link to him at the right hand of majesty on high.

And the reason they are here is not for themselves. The reason they are here, the primary reason they are here is so that he will have a people here who represent and can execute his will. And in that context, he gives this authority to bind and to loose, to permit and not to permit, to prevent things from happening as well as to see to it that things happen.

Now, Brother Dana touched a little bit on this, but let me just quickly say that there's a sense in which as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, every one of us have a measure of authority. I don't know if our brother Gary Bufkin is still here or not. I think he's gone home.

But our brother Gary is from Louisville, Kentucky, and he's a good old Kentucky boy. And he has a lot of unusual things, how he tries to express and say what he wants. He just has simple ways of saying what he wants to say.

And a number of years ago, probably 25 years ago, I heard him say, every tub sits on its own bottom. Now, most of us, what does that mean, every tub? It means that we're all responsible for our own life. And when we believe in the Lord Jesus, we have a measure of authority.

There are spheres of authority. We have authority over our own life. That is, in a sense, even though we do bow our knee and we absolutely should bow our knee to the Lord Jesus Christ, there's a sense in which I have to make decisions regarding my own life that nobody else can make.

So in that sense, there's a sphere of authority. If there are things going on in my life, if the enemy comes and attacks me personally, I can take the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and I can resist him, I can bind him, I can do it regarding my own life. Then you take the sphere of our family unit.

And here's where I think that there is something about this matter of spiritual warfare in the family. Because if somehow the family unit can be undone, weakened, dissipated, it has to have an impact on the larger sphere of the church. And so it is in the family unit that the husband and wife, and ultimately the husband, has the responsibility for that sphere of influence.

And if there are situations going on in their family life, then I think that he can legitimately take these words of our Lord Jesus and with the authority, with the name of the Lord Jesus, take charge, resist the enemy, stand against him, bind up that which is not of the Lord, and loose things that have been bound by the enemy, so that the Lord is free to come into that family unit and manifest, that is, establish the reality of his kingdom in that family unit. And then we have the issue of the church. And this is the bigger issue.

So that in the sphere of the church there is a realm of responsibility that we have that is bigger than individual, it's bigger than the family unit, and it is the agency here on the earth that our Lord Jesus has chosen to use as a way of bringing influence into the world. And I agree with what our Brother just shared with us. As assemblies, we've been asleep regarding some of these issues.

And it ought to be a time for us to change. That's what repentance really means. It doesn't mean just feeling sorry for what went wrong.

Certainly we need to have that. But that feeling sorry needs to result in a change of the way we do things. It means an inward attitudinal adjustment that results in an outward manifestation, where something changes on the outside.

It begins on the inside, but it has its effect on the outside. So I would want to caution us, first of all, that we learn how to function in our own sphere, that we learn to deal with the things that we need to deal with in our own lives in an authoritative way, with what our Brother Stephen sang this morning, both as a lion and a lamb. That we deal with it on the basis of the finished work of Calvary.

My brothers and sisters, when our Lord Jesus died on that cross, he did a work, and he released a life that enables you and I to be victors, to be overcomers. We overwhelmingly conquer in all of these situations through him who loved us. And so only you can do that for yourself.

And then we can include the family unity and husbands and wives. Interesting, I think it's in Peter. Maybe it's Paul, I've forgotten right now.

You can help me with it. But where he points out to us that our prayers are affected when there's not harmony between the husband and wife. And so what we find, my brothers and sisters, is that our Lord wants to manifest his kingdom.

And in the church is another place where it should be the ultimate place. That's why the Lord Jesus says to us as his people, you are the salt of the earth. You are stationed here as an embassy of heaven.

And your responsibility is to bring an influence of righteousness into that community that restrains evil. So if the salt loses its saltiness, what happens? Then it allows the enemy to come in. I mean, without being judgmental and critical of anybody, brothers and sisters, we can talk until we're blue in the face about America.

But the church in America is a very weakened entity. We are hopelessly divided. Even among those of us who know better, who stand for the oneness of the body of Christ, we're having a tremendous struggle.

And we need to see that behind death, it's not just flesh and blood. It's not just human interactions and conflict. But behind it, there's something spiritual.

And there are those who are in places of responsibility among God's people who need to see this and who need to learn to rise up and bind it and lose it under the direction of the commander-in-chief. And so I would say to us that we don't need to get so enamored with the authority. We need to maintain that lamb nature.

And yet at the same time, take the finished work of Calvary and bring it to bear on the situation that we face. Well, it's hard not to get to preaching when you are fellowshiping about something like this. Now, one other part of the question, how do we have spiritual intelligence in prayer? I think we touched on this a little bit last night.

But my brothers and sisters, may the Lord in his great mercy register something deep within us that we can never forget. And that is our Lord Jesus is at this very moment and for the last 2,000 years is seated

at the right hand of majesty on high. Given the name that is above every other name, he is the highest position in the universe, and he is the all-wise one.

And you and I, as God's redeemed people living here on the earth, have access to him who has all wisdom. How does he communicate it to us? By his Spirit. So we need to look back to the day of Pentecost and rejoice greatly that the Lord has made himself available.

His fullness is now available to his redeemed people who gather here on the earth. And he is the one who can impart intelligence. What is going on? What are we supposed to do? What is to be the practical response? How do we stand and resist? The thing is, if we don't find a way for the Holy Spirit to consistently communicate these things to us, then when we are faced with these battles, we only have one other option, as I can see.

That is to revert to our fleshly activity, putting our heads together, our fleshly minds together, and coming up with conclusions that are wrong. And so how can we have the intelligence? Well, first of all, for us to be sure that we do everything that we can possibly do by the grace of God to keep our own relationship with the Lord living and alive and real day after day. There is a price to be paid there.

And then in our assemblies and in our homes, brothers and sisters, we need to have times when we are certain that there is a clear line of communication. You know, I understand I didn't get to hear the report, but from my son, he said this morning that what they attacked in Afghanistan was primarily their capacity to communicate with one another. That is the Taliban.

Well, do you think our enemy is not trying to break down the communication between us? Oh, it's a big problem. Because where there is no communication, all kinds of crazy things begin to happen. We have all these imaginations about what other people are thinking when reality they're not.

And when we start to think that the enemy comes in with a magnifying glass there and that thing has become so big that after a while you conclude it's impossible. But we have come to those conclusions without consulting our Lord. Our brother Stephen took the book of Joshua and helped us see some of the matters related to spiritual warfare.

But you know when Israel got into trouble? You know when Joshua and the armies of God got into trouble? When they failed to consult the Lord. When they took it into their own hands. When they went to AI, they didn't stop and ask the Lord, but they just assumed.

And this is a real problem. It's a problem for us. We conclude, hey, we are educated, intelligent people.

And we hear it all over the place. Just use your common sense. But common sense is fleshly sense.

It's fallen sense. And that's why we have direct access through our living head, the Lord Jesus, who has absolute wisdom. My brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus designed the church in such a way, if we can put it this way, he designed it in such a way that it can't function without him.

If it starts to function without being related, it becomes something other than the church. It becomes something earthly, not something heavenly. And we all have to be alert to this.

So that the binding and loosing, brothers and sisters, there's something that originates with the Lord Jesus Christ, is communicated by the Holy Spirit to the assembly on the earth. And he awaits for them to act.

And when he acts, he backs up the action.

But the initiative is never given to us. The starting of the binding, we are at his mercy. We understand, brothers and sisters, there are situations in every one of our communities that in the Lord's timing, he wants to have things done about.

There are things that are happening that, oh, my brothers and sisters, I think we need to let ourselves get free of some of the callousness that has come upon us. When we live in the kind of world we live in, there's a callousness, an insensitivity that settles upon us that doesn't allow us to respond in the proper way to the suffering humanity that is around us. I mean, we just see it.

I mean, I noticed in some of the interviews they did with people in New York. You know, New Yorkers have a reputation for many things. But one of the things is they never talk to one another.

When they're walking down the street, they never see one another's eyes. They look off to the side. Now, some of this is self-protection.

I thought about this a number of years ago, and part of it is self-preservation. That is, if you respond to everybody that you face in New York City, you'll get exhausted within a few blocks. So it's self-preservation.

But you know what's happened now since September 11? The whole atmosphere has changed. Now people are responding to one another. They're actually engaging each other as human beings.

Well, you see, it can happen to us. What our Lord Jesus, I think, in this passage Dana was talking about was alerting us that when these kinds of things happen, we need to be sensitive to the people who have suffered. We haven't, you know, hardly any of us have had any direct impact upon our lives.

It's been indirect, and I'm sure that those who lived closer to it, they feel the impact more than others. But my brothers and sisters are saying the kind of thing can happen to us. There are situations in our communities as assemblies that deeply grieve our Lord, and he wants something to be done about it.

But he has given the keys to his church, and if they don't use the keys, then he has chosen. And it causes a lot of misunderstanding. He gets falsely accused of a lot of things of not caring, but he has put the responsibility of the caring into the lives of his people.

And so it doesn't mean that we just respond by doing good, kind things to them, but we seek to get behind that whole thing and bind it. If the enemy has set up a headquarters, we undo it under the direction of the Lord Jesus, not on our own, not as some zealous soldiers misguided, but know those who have heard from the Lord, and who are acting according to his direction, who are using his name, and then we begin to see the kind of results that he wants. Now, this is a tremendous need among God's people, for there to be an assembly of people who are consistently in a place where the Lord Jesus can communicate his mind, his heart about things, and then lead them to take some kind of action that originated from heaven.

Do you think for one moment, my brothers and sisters, that our Heavenly Father is blinded to the things that have happened, that he doesn't care? Not even a sparrow falls from the air, but what is I see? Six thousand, seven thousand so-called innocent lives snuffed out. You think he doesn't care? He cares very deeply, and he cares about the situation that you and I are faced with in the different communities and different situations, and he wants us to learn how, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Why does Paul

say, praying at all times in the Spirit? We don't know.

We have to acknowledge, we don't know. Is there anybody who is so fully educated that they know everything that's going on in this world, that they can give advice on how is the best way to approach the situation? We don't know, but there is one who knows, and he is the head of the church, and he wants to communicate his heart and mind to us. Well, let me try to quickly answer this last question.

We saints are citizens of this world, even as we prepare and train for the life everlasting in heaven. When we see how America has slid from the founding principles of, in God we trust, to the secularism and the monetarism, I'll just pronounce it as it's written, do we, one, keep to ourselves and nurture our own personal relationship with the Lord, two, turn to the church and pray corporately for America, three, work towards revival of America at the local, regional, and national level. I hope the person who asked the question, wrote the question, is still here.

It's a very important question from the vantage point that it gives us opportunity to get our focus clear once again. You know, one of the saddest things that happens in human history is when religion and politics get all mixed up together. Men have done some horrible things to human beings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it has come, in my estimation, as a result of not maintaining a distinction between that which is spiritual, that which is heavenly, and that which is earthly.

The fact is, brothers and sisters, this person who wrote this question, I think, needed to read more carefully what the word of God has to say. We are citizens of this world. Well, that's true, but that's not where our primary citizenship is.

It's a secondary citizenship. Where is our first citizenship? Where is our primary citizenship? That's right. Philippians chapter two, I think it's chapter two.

Our citizenship is in heaven. We are here as ambassadors in this world. When you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you became a citizen of the heavenly realm, and this is your primary citizenship.

And when you get that confused, when you somehow allow yourself to think that your primary citizenship is here, then you have, in a sense, been disloyal to your primary citizenship. We are here, living in the earth. We're living in the, I guess most of us are either residents or something in terms of living here in the United States of America.

But because God has been so good to America, we have come to some false conclusions about America. Now, this person asked the question, when we see how America has slid from the founding principles of in God we trust to the secularism and monetarism that we see all around us. Now, I have no doubts, not a little bit I remember of American history, that the people who were the founders of this nation had great ideals.

I think they were godly people in the sense that they sought to do what was the right thing. But I think it's wrong. It's a false statement to say that they were Christians.

Some of them were deists, but they were not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, as I said last night, brothers and sisters, it is wrong for us to take the name of our blessed Lord and put it on something that doesn't belong to him. This is not a Christian nation.

It has never been a Christian nation in the truest sense of the word. And it hasn't been established fully on Christian principles. As far as I know, Matthew 5, 6 and 7 is not written into our constitution.

That's the constitution of the kingdom of God. And I don't find it anywhere in the constitution of the United States of America. Now, I know it's not easy to say some of these things, because people take it the wrong way.

I'm glad I'm an American. I can't say I'm proud to be an American. I'm glad to be an American.

I'm privileged. It's easy in a sense, in one sense, of living in America. I spent time in the military.

I'm patriotic. Sometimes when I cry, when I hear the national anthem being sung, I'm patriotic. But my brothers and sisters, that does not mean that I've concluded that this nation or any other nation on the face of the earth is a Christian nation.

It's not. And it's good for us to face it. Because when this whole matter of our loyalties gets brought into this picture, we come away with some very bad ways of approaching it.

You know, there was an instance in Matthew 22. Some people were trying to trap our Lord Jesus. And they came to him and said to him, who are you supposed to be loyal to, Caesar or God? And you remember what he did? He said, anybody here have a coin? So he took the coin.

And he showed them the coin. He said, now whose inscription is on the back of this coin? And they said, Caesar's. And the Lord Jesus, with such perception, said, then you render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's.

And you render unto God that which is God's. Don't mix the two up. This becomes our problem.

And so the perspective of this question, and I'm not trying to be critical of anybody. I'm not being critical of the person who asked the question. I just want to appeal to you to go to the word of God and discover that this is the wrong way to view things.

The issue is not whether or not America is going to be brought back into a revival. That's not the issue for us. It's not the issue.

The issue is, are we being a living entity here on the earth as a church that can be the salt and be the light and be the agent that the Lord wants to use in these most difficult times? Our Lord is very clear, brothers and sisters, there's going to be wars and rumors of wars. It's never going to end. Why? Because we are the kind of people we are.

And if we had not been laid hold by the mercy of God, we would be a part of it. We'd be part of the problem, not a part of the solution. And the Lord wants us to be a part of the solution, not by becoming better Americans, but how? That's right.

Having a clearer, fuller, richer relationship with him as an assembly of people. Now, that we can respond to. The person asked the question from the perspective that our experience here on earth is to train us to live in heaven.

Again, I think it would be well if we would take a careful look that that's not what the Bible teaches us. This is not a training ground for heaven. I'm not saying it's not the Lord's way of producing character and

training us for living in the kingdom, but not heaven in this mushy way that we're just going to float around on a cloud.

No, my brothers and sisters, he's interested in building real character, the character of our Lord Jesus Christ firmly, permanently into our lives. This is what he's after. So we need to get beyond some of the sentimental ideas that we have about heaven and some of these sentimental ideas we have about any nation.

We have to be very, very careful. We're not any different than Israel. When God blessed Israel, they became so proud.

Well, we become proud, too. We need to be humbled before the Lord. And we, as God's redeemed people, need to be the ones who lead in this way and be sure that we maintain that kind of living relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ from his heavenly position to where he's free to live his life through us and able to do what he desires to do through any given assembly of his people.

Again, forgive me for preaching, but my brothers and sisters, these are trying days. These are difficult times. And we need, more than any other point in my, that I can remember in my lifetime, we need to get down to the business of being what we're called to be.

May the Lord be merciful to us. Can we pray together? Lord, again, we want to lift our hearts to thank you and bless you for gathering us together for these few days. Lord, once again, it just seems to me you go beyond yourself every time.

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