

(Ephesians) Ephesians 5:21-6:11

by Zac Poonen

The fullness of the Holy Spirit must be seen in home and workplace relationships, and it's impossible to live in these relationships without being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 47:03

Scripture: Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 4:1, Ephesians 5:22, Ephesians 6:10

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Holy Living"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of building a strong foundation in our personal walk with God. This foundation is built on God's perfect love for us and is the basis for our relationship with Him. The speaker then discusses the three stories or levels that we should build upon this foundation: our personal walk with God, our home life, and our ministry. The sermon also highlights the significance of living in purity, humility, and love, both in our homes and in our workplaces, as a reflection of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

To Ephesians and chapter 5 and verse 21. In our last study we were considering the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 5.18, resulting in a spirit of thankfulness in our hearts for everything at all times, verse 19 and 20. Such exhortations were never found in the Old Testament, to always give thanks for all things, because they did not have the fullness of the Spirit in their hearts.

The Spirit only came upon them, anointing them from outside. But now that the Holy Spirit's filled our hearts, it's possible for us to live a life where we always, always means 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, verse 20, give thanks for all things. All things means 100% of things, because they all work together for good to those who love God.

And we also saw that the fullness of the Holy Spirit brings a spirit of subjection, submission, humility, verse 21, and the fear of God into our lives, verse 21. Now we come to a section beginning with chapter 5, verse 22, on to chapter 6, verse 9, that deals with home relationships, wives and husbands, children and parents, and servants and masters. These are the three groups that were found in homes in those days, and they apply to us.

We are also masters and servants in the offices in which we work. We have people working under us, perhaps, or people above us. So here is a section which is very important that relates to our home life and

our work life.

And those are the two areas where Jesus lived for 30 years. 30 years He spent in His home and in His workplace, the carpentry shop. We also spent 90% of our life, Jesus spent 90% of His 33 years in these two places.

We also spent 90% of our time in these two places. He spent only 10% of our time in church meetings and other things like that. Now this is a very, very important area, because if Jesus spent 90% of His time at home and in His work spot, and we spend 90% of our time in our home and in our workplace, it's there that the results of the fullness of the Spirit must be seen, not just in the meeting, which is only 10% of our life.

A lot of people give a great emphasis to the meeting. Now the meeting is important, but that's not where we spend 90% of our time. The fullness of the Spirit is not meant just to praise God in the meeting.

It's meant to lead on to the way we live at home, wives, husbands, children, parents, and the way we work in our workplace, masters and servants. If it doesn't affect these areas, the fullness of the Spirit we have is a counterfeit. And let me point out this other thing to you, that two very, very important subjects are dealt with only in Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

One being filled with the Holy Spirit, which is of fundamental importance to every Christian, and the second is spiritual warfare. You never find another book, another letter that explains so much about spiritual warfare as Ephesians. The fullness of the Spirit is described in Ephesians 5, verses 18 to 21.

We've already seen that. Spiritual warfare is described in Ephesians 6, verse 10 to 19. Now between these two very vital, important sections, one on the fullness of the Spirit and the other on spiritual warfare, what do we find in between? What do we find sandwiched in between? This section on life in our home and in our workplace.

So, remember this comes sandwiched between these two other important subjects, teaching us that if we are filled with the Holy Spirit, it will manifest itself in the way we live as husbands and wives, and parents and children, and the way we live as masters and servants in our work spot. And the subject following this section on the home and the workplace indicates that this is the area where Satan is going to fight his battle the most, in our home and in our work spot. I don't think Satan spends a lot of time fighting things in the Sunday morning meeting, unless it's an amazingly anointed speaker, which is so rare nowadays.

Otherwise, Satan doesn't bother much about the Sunday morning meeting. He doesn't care what you listen on Sunday morning, provided you don't live all that in your home and your workplace the remaining seven days. And very often this is a vicious circle.

If you don't live right at home and in your workplace, you don't have an anointed ministry on Sunday morning, if one follows from the other. And so we see Satan is primarily out to attack the home and our conduct in our workplace. This is where we have to be on our guard.

This is why we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, in our work spot and in our home. And then we will have authority in the meetings. If you are to speak in your meetings, you'll have authority.

God will back you up. This is so important for us to recognize. So let's turn to Ephesians 5, verse 22.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord. Now that's a favorite verse for a lot of husbands, but it is not written for husbands. It's written to the wives, to be subject to their husbands.

And it's very interesting to see that before the Holy Spirit writes that verse, He said something else which a lot of Christians, a lot of husbands haven't noticed. It says in Ephesians 5, verse 21, Be subject to one another. What does that mean? That means the husband must be subject to the wife as well, in the fear of Christ.

It's not just one way. So what does this subjection mean? It doesn't mean blind obedience like a slave. Certainly it doesn't.

That's heathenism that reduces the wife to a position of a slave. Subjection means recognizing the boundary God has drawn around you. And in that sense, a husband must be subject to his wife too.

That God has given a certain measure of independence to a wife. She's supposed to be a helper. Like someone said, God didn't pull Eve out of Adam's head to rule over him.

Neither did God pull her out of Adam's feet so that he tramples over her. God pulled Eve out of Adam's side, a rib near his heart. So that he would always keep his wife by his side, near his heart, equal to him, even though he's the head.

So, God has given a certain area for a wife to work in, to live in, and the husband must recognize that. And he must be subject that he doesn't trespass into the area God has given to his wife. The husband is the head of the wife.

That's very important. God appointed Adam to be the head, and he didn't exercise that authority as a head. He allowed his wife to sin, and the Lord told him, because you listen to the voice of your wife, you're being punished.

The husband is the head of the wife, just like Christ is the head of the church. But how is Christ the head of the church? Does he cast the church by the neck and make it obey? No. He tells the church to do things, and if the church says, well, I'd like to wait, God doesn't force.

Christ never forces us to do anything. Did he ever force you to do anything in your life? Never. He's always so gentle.

He gives you his command, and sometimes he waits five years before you obey him. So that's the type of leadership that a husband has to give to his wife. Give direction, but no compulsion.

The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. He's also the savior of the body, and as the church is subject to Christ, so the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. So we can ask ourselves, how is the church subject to Christ, just like I told you right now? Voluntarily, joyfully, we obey the Lord at our own pace.

Many people, for example, take years to obey a certain command they see in Scripture, and God never forces them, and he doesn't punish them when they don't. They lose out spiritually, but that's another thing. The point is, in God's dealings with man, there's no compulsion.

And in man's dealings with his wife, there must be no compulsion either. But the wife must voluntarily take that place. It doesn't mean she has to violate her conscience.

It doesn't mean that she has to do something her husband tells her which goes against her conscience. No. And the husband must love his wife as Christ loved the church.

In fact, that's a more difficult command than the command given to wives. It's easy to be subject to a husband, but much more difficult for a husband to love his wife like Christ loved the church. How did Christ love the church? He gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her with the washing of water of the Word.

In other words, a husband must give himself totally to sanctify his wife, so his wife becomes holy. And, just like Jesus longed to present the church, verse 27, in all her glory, without any spot or wrinkle or any such thing, a husband must be willing to lay down his life in order that his wife might be glory, without any spiritual spot or wrinkle, but wholly unblameless. And then it says in verse 28, So husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself, or as the Living Bible says, When a man loves his wife, he is really doing himself a favor, when he loves his wife, because it's like caring for his own body. Don't we all care for our own bodies? Oh, how we care for them! No one ever hated his own flesh, it says in verse 29. We nourish it and cherish it.

So the relationship that a man should have towards his wife is like the brain, the head, caring for the body. If there's a little injury on my finger, the brain is immediately aware of it and is concerned about it. Are you concerned when your wife is hurt in some little way? That's headship.

Headship is not just giving orders. Headship also means being concerned about pains and sufferings. Now, if a husband and wife live like this, in this type of relationship, tremendous glory is brought to God.

And it's impossible to live this life without being filled with the Holy Spirit. And that's why it says first, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and then it says, husbands and wives, this is how you should live with each other. I'd like to turn to Ephesians in chapter 5. Last week we were considering this section from verse 21 onwards, referring to the relationship between husbands and wives, and I mentioned how this follows on from the exhortation to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

So, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, it leads to a life of praise and thanksgiving. First of all, verse 19, not just in the meetings, but always, it says in verse 20. And it leads on to Christ-like relationships in the home between wife and husband.

And this is a very, very important part of the testimony of the body of Christ. Remember, one of the great themes of Ephesians is the church, the body of Jesus Christ. And that body begins to be built, first of all, at home.

Because that's where two people must be one, husband and wife. So, when a church comprises of a number of homes, a number of families, where husband and wife have denied themselves and become one with each other, that will become a body that is also one with each other. Because it's comprised of homes where the individual units in the home, husband and wife, have become one with each other.

So, this is why the individual life and the home are foundational to building the church. We could say the church is like a three-story building. The foundation is God's perfect love for us.

On that, we build the first story or the ground floor of the first story, which is our personal walk with God with all the exhortations that we read in chapter 4 and the first part of chapter 5. And then we go on to the second story, which is our home life. Now, you can't build a second story unless you build the first one, which is your personal walk with God. On top of that, you build a second story, which is your home life.

And on top of that, the third story is your ministry, your preaching, your serving, your church activity. Now, the trouble with a lot of people is they're trying to build the third story, but their first and second story is pretty weak. And so what happens? Their whole ministry comes crumbling down because the first and second story are weak.

And the devil knows that. If he wants to destroy your ministry, which is the third story, all he's got to do is attack the first and second story of the building. And the building will collapse.

That first floor and second floor is the support for the third floor. And so, it's very important for us, particularly those of us who serve the Lord in some way, to safeguard our relationships at home. Husbands and wives, parents and children.

Fundamental. Absolutely fundamental. The husband must seek with all his heart to love his wife as Christ loved the church.

He must pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit because the Bible says it's only the Holy Spirit who can shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, it says in Romans 5. And verse 5. And without that, it's impossible to live in home relationships. That's where two must become one. And if you go to the average husband and wife in the world, even the average Christian husband and wife, and even average believer husband and wife, and even the average husband and wife who claim to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, etc.

Go and ask them whether they've become one with each other. And if they're honest, more than 90% of them will tell you no. They're still grumbling.

They're still fighting, yelling at each other, in spite of all their Christian claims. And so you see, the devil's done such a tremendous work there. The children are wayward.

How can we build the church of Jesus Christ if this is the condition of our homes? We need to take seriously our responsibility as husbands. Wives, you need to take seriously your calling to be subject to your husband. What about if your husband is an unbeliever, doesn't obey the Word? Peter says very carefully, very clearly rather, in 1 Peter chapter 3, that if your husband is an unbeliever who does disobey the Word, you must still be subject to him.

You can win him without preaching when they see your respectful behavior. Your godly life can speak better to them than any words. And so submission is taught throughout the New Testament is the calling of a wife.

And that's why a wife is not supposed to have authority in a church. She's not called to teach or to exercise authority in a church. The wife is to be subject, and it's supposed to be a beautiful relationship.

And it's described most excellently in verse 28, where it says it's like the head and the body. So when we think of submission, we're not talking about the submission which a slave has to a dictator. No.

What type of submission? There are various types of submission in the world. And Jesus said to the disciples, you must not exercise authority like the people in the Gentile, like the heathen do. No.

The type of submission that the Bible speaks about is the submission of the body to the head. Which part of your body is afraid to submit to the head? Are your fingers or your toes or your eyes or tongue or anything afraid to submit to the brain? No. They're happy to submit to the brain.

And that's how it should be in a home too. A wife's happy to submit to her husband because he cares for her just like the brain, the head, cares for the members of the body. Cherishes it.

Nourishes it. Takes care of it. Feeds it.

Is sensitive to its hurts. And at the same time, the obedience of the members of the body is absolutely total. Instant, immediate obedience.

What a beautiful picture. Husband and wife, like the brain and the body in our human body. And it goes on to say, this is also a picture of Christ and the church.

It says in verse 30, we are members of His body. For this cause, a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This is one of the commands which is almost not obeyed by most married couples in India.

And that's why we have such a lot of problems. Many husbands are more attached to his own parents than to his wife. And many a wife is more attached to her parents than to her husband.

This causes lots of problems. This is the first command given in the Bible. Genesis chapter 2. The very first command even before sin came to the world.

A man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. Psalm 45.10 tells the woman, forget your father's house for your husband is now your king and your lord. So this is God's will that in marriage, the man and the woman now emotionally detach themselves from their parents and seek to love one another and to cleave to one another and to become not only one flesh, but also one in spirit in the new covenant.

In the Old Testament, they could only be one flesh, but in the New Covenant, they can be more than that. And then he goes on to say, this is not just referring to husband and wife. It's also a picture of Christ and the church.

He says this mystery is great. Verse 32. Now there are only two places in the Bible, in the New Testament, where we read of a great mystery.

The first is 1 Timothy 3.16 where it says Christ came in the flesh, was pure in His spirit, and so on. That's a great mystery. And here it says, the church is one flesh with Christ.

This is another great mystery. But he says, I'm speaking with reference to Christ and the church. This is amazing that the relationship that Jesus wants to have with every one of us is exactly like the relationship that a man has with his wife.

In the spirit, of course. He who is joined to his wife is one flesh with her, and he who is joined to the Lord, says in 1 Corinthians 6, is one spirit. So the spiritual unity that we as God's children are to have with Jesus

Christ is exactly identical to the physical unity that a man and his wife have with each other.

The physical relationship that a man and a wife have with each other is a perfect picture of the spiritual relationship that Jesus Christ wants to have with us. And from that relationship, from that oneness of spirit that we have with Jesus Christ, fruit is to come forth from us, just like fruit comes forth from the physical unity of a husband and wife. They become one flesh and they have children.

That is their seed, fruit, that comes forth out of their union. And this is God's will for us too, that from our union with Jesus Christ will come forth fruit, the fruit of the spirit, first of all, and character, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and so on, and also fruit in our labors, others being blessed. Not necessarily just souls being saved.

Very often people think of souls being saved as the only fruit of ministry. Now, that will be the fruit of your ministry if you are an evangelist. But very few are called to be evangelists.

We are all called to be witnesses, but not all are called to be evangelists. Fruit will be the fruit of blessing to other people. If you are an evangelist, you will bring people to Christ.

If you are a teacher, you will edify people. If you got the gift of giving money, you will give money for the spread of God's work in the world. If you got the gift of hospitality, you will bless God's people with hospitality.

Everything is fruit. It is not by counting statistics, the number of people you brought to Christ, that you find out whether there is fruit in your ministry or not. Don't ever get discouraged with that.

If your life is a blessing to other people, you are building up the body of Christ, even if you don't have statistics to show for it. And that fruit can come as you seek to walk with the Lord. And it says here about Jesus, let me say this in closing, that Jesus washes the church with the washing of water, with the word it says in verse 26, in order that He might present us one day to Himself as His bride without spot or wrinkle.

What a hope we have to be united with Him and to be like Him in that day when He comes to take us to be Himself. And in conclusion, verse 33, that every individual love his own wife as himself and that the wife see that she respects her husband. Turn to Ephesians and chapter 6 and verse 1. In our last study, we were saying about the relationship between husbands and wives in the home.

Be filled with the Holy Spirit, be subject to one another, Ephesians 5, 18 and 21. And then, wives be subject to your husbands, husbands love your wives, and so on. And then it speaks about the next relationship in the home, which is children and parents.

And like it spoke to wives first, in Ephesians 5, it speaks to children first. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. This is because God has placed them in authority over you.

Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise. That means it is the first of the ten commandments that ends with a promise. There were ten commandments that God gave Israel, four of them related to man's relationship with God, and the remaining six related to man's relationship with his fellow man.

And the first of those six was this one, honor your father and mother. And it was the first commandment which had a promise attached to it. That if you do this, it will go well with you, verse 3, and you will live

long on the earth.

Your life will be a life full of blessing to other people. So, since we all want our lives to be full of blessing to other people, and we all want our lives to go well with us in our lives, we must start as children. And we must teach our children to obey their parents.

That's the very first thing that we have to teach children. To teach them to honor their parents, to speak respectfully. Notice the last verse of chapter 5, verse 33.

It says about the wife needing to respect her husband. It's pathetic to see the way some husbands and wives speak to each other. Without any respect, a wife must speak respectfully to her husband.

How must the husband speak to the wife? Well, exactly the same way. It says in 1 Peter, in chapter 2, that we must honor all men. 1 Peter 2.17 We must honor all men.

The Old Testament command was that you must honor the aged. Those who are grey-haired, older than you. But in the New Testament, the command is honor all men.

Speak respectfully to older people. Speak respectfully to younger people. Speak respectfully to the king.

And speak respectfully to the beggar on the street. That's a true Christian. A true Christian is seen in the way he speaks.

He has a deep respect for human beings because he recognizes that human beings are made in the image of God. That's what James says in James chapter 3. He says you bless God with the same tongue and curse people with the same tongue who are made in the image of God. So speaking respectfully is one of the most important things that must be found in every Christian home.

And if the husband and wife do not speak respectfully to each other, how in the world can they expect their children to speak respectfully to them and to one another and to other older people who come to the home? If your home is not like that, my friend, this is where you should begin. Humble yourself. Confess your sin.

Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Be subject to one another. Respect one another.

Speak respectfully always. And teach your children to speak respectfully to their parents. To speak respectfully to the older brothers and sisters when they come and visit you.

To speak respectfully to their teachers when they go to school. And then you will be raising a son or a daughter who is going to be a credit to the name of Jesus, a blessing in the home, and a useful member of society. So, it will also go well with them.

Don't you want it to go well with your children? If you want it to go well with your children, teach them to be respectful to their parents. Don't let them disobey. Disobedience is very serious.

And then it speaks to fathers. Don't provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Now notice, this command is not to parents.

It's to fathers. The father has the prime responsibility in the home to bring his children up with two things, instruction and discipline. We must teach them God's ways when we sit around the table, not just when we

have a Bible reading in the morning, but throughout the day whenever you get an opportunity.

Share something about God's ways and principles. Why we don't do certain things as Christians. Why we don't go and watch movies that will pollute our mind as Christians.

Why we must be modestly dressed as Christians. Why we must be upright and honest and don't cheat in examinations as Christians, etc., etc. That's the instruction of the Lord and discipline.

Discipline means when they do something wrong, train up a child in the way it should go, the Bible says, when he's old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22 also says, foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will remove it far from him. The foolishness is in the heart, but the rod of correction applied to the bottom drives it out of the heart.

It's amazing. That's God's way. And we should not think that we can do it a better way.

That's discipline. The Lord disciplines His children. And if you don't discipline your children, father and mother, especially father, you are failing the Lord and producing a person who will be a rebel and a nuisance in society when he grows up.

So you need to instruct your child and discipline your child. And negatively, don't provoke your child to anger by constant nagging. Nagging is something that must never be found in a Christian home.

Husband to wife, or wife to husband, or parents to children. To keep on saying negative things to them. To say to them, you're useless, you're good for nothing, etc., etc.

That's the voice of the devil. Don't provoke them to anger. Be patient.

Long-suffering. Just like God is with you. As a father, you're supposed to represent God to your children.

They must see in you the kindness and the severity of God. Kindness and strictness. Compassion.

Put your arms around your children. Love them. Hug them.

Pray with them. Even when they're grown up, put your arms around them and pray with them. That's how a father should be.

There must be a closeness between fathers and children. That is God's will for us. We live in a day and age where the devil's brought a separation between parents and children.

This is not God's will. Our homes must be living testimonies to the goodness of God. To the happiness that God brings when He's made Lord of a home.

So fathers have a very big responsibility in this area to bring up their children in a godly way. And then it goes on to speak about our relationship in the places we work. Servants.

Now you work in an office. You've got a boss above you. Here's how you should work.

Be obedient to those who are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling. Don't just be casual and careless. Don't gossip and criticize and accuse your masters.

Nobody's perfect. And you don't need to have a perfect master before you obey Him. Jesus obeyed imperfect Joseph and Mary for 30 years.

And follow His example, even if your boss is imperfect. With fear and trembling and sincerity of your heart as unto Christ. The meaning of that is you've got to serve them as you would serve Jesus Christ.

What an exhortation for a Christian working in an office. And not only when they're looking. Don't work hard only when your master is watching you and shirk when he isn't looking as men-pleasers.

But work with gladness of heart as slaves of Christ. As though you're working for Christ. Doing the will of God with all your hearts.

Do Christians work like that in their offices? Very few do. But that's how a Christian should work. The way we work in our secular jobs is to be a testimony of our faith.

And here again, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Fathers need to be filled with the Spirit. Children need to be filled with the Spirit.

Servants working in offices need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. All the service we do, we are to do with goodwill doing it as unto the Lord. All our service must be as unto the Lord.

And not as unto men. And it says here that if you serve in your office like this, everything you do, one day, God will reward you. God rewards you not only for going out and preaching the gospel.

He'll reward you for the way you work in your secular job. That's what it says. Whether you're a slave or a free man.

Here it says even slaves must work like this. And then a word to masters. If you're in a position with authority, if you've got servants working in your home or you've got people working under you in your office, here's how you must behave towards them.

Give up threatening. That's a bad, demonic habit that a lot of masters have. Because they have power over those who work under them, they threaten them with all types of consequences.

Remember, he says, that you've got a master, too, in heaven. Does he ever threaten you? If you slip up somewhere and you make a small mistake, does he threaten to send you to hell immediately? No. Let there be no threatening.

Don't ever threaten people. Saying, if you do this, I'll do this. Don't frighten people.

God doesn't call us to obedience like that. Be gracious. Be gentle.

Be firm. Sometimes, there may be a need to raise our voice, just like with our children. That's not anger.

That's just making it known to our subordinates or to our children that we mean business. We are permitted to raise our voice, but we are not permitted to get angry with our children or our subordinates. But we are permitted to raise our voice if that's the only language they understand.

But we must not threaten. We must always treat those who work under us the way our heavenly Master treats us. And there is no partiality with Him.

And there must be no partiality with us in the way we treat people who work under us. No partiality. Reflecting God to the people who work under us.

This is how a Christian must work in his office. To Ephesians in chapter 6 and verse 10. Now he's coming to the concluding section of this wonderful episode.

And if you remember what we said when we were studying the first three chapters, we said in the first three chapters there were no exhortations. It was all doctrinal. The foundation on which the remaining three chapters are built.

And the first three chapters dealt with our position in Christ. The position of authority. Our union with Christ.

And our being blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. Our being made members of His body. Where He is the head.

In Paul's prayer that we might get the revelation of the Holy Spirit in chapter 1. And the power of the Holy Spirit chapter 3. We saw in chapter 4 onwards first of all how we must walk as individual Christians in purity, humility, putting off the old man, putting on the new, walking in love, walking in the light, filled with the Holy Spirit, with a life of perpetual thanksgiving, humility, the fear of God. And then we saw how we should live in our homes and in our offices. And now in conclusion, he says, there is something more about the superstructure, he says, I want to say.

And that is, you must know how to fight the devil. How to engage in spiritual warfare and overcome Satan and having overcome all, to stand. This is the theme of the closing section of this letter.

Now, don't ever go into this if you are not established in Ephesians 1 to 3. If you don't believe that you are blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, if you don't believe that you are united to Christ, if you don't believe that Jesus Christ has overcome the devil, has got everything under His feet, if you don't believe that you are part of His body, that His authority flows into you, don't even try to go into spiritual warfare, because you'll get discouraged and defeated. But if you know your position in Christ, you see, this is to be built on the foundation of chapters 1 to 3. Finally, brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Don't ever seek to go into this if you are not filled with the Holy Spirit, if your conscience is not clear.

But it's a wonderful thing to engage in spiritual warfare, to deliver people who are in bondage to Satan, to deliver people who are possessed by demons, to know our authority in Christ, to dislodge the devil from a church or a home where he has established himself since a long time, to set people free from the bondage of the devil, to stand against his wiles yourself. It says here in verse 11, Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Notice, the devil has got two ways in which he comes to us.

One is as a lion, and the other is as a serpent or as an angel of light. One, when he comes as a lion, it speaks of his fierceness and speaks of persecution and violent attacks. The devil uses that against Christians, against Christian churches.

He has always done it through 2,000 years, and it has never succeeded in destroying the church in 2,000 years. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, and the church has flourished in every country, in every place, where it has been persecuted. And the devil knows that.

And so he has got another tactic, and he is more successful there, when he comes like a serpent, pretending to seek your good, like he came to Eve. When he comes as an angel of light, quoting the Bible, like he quoted the Bible to Jesus, trying to lead you astray. When he comes through a cult that speaks about love and family values and leads you astray from devotion to Christ and makes you a slave of a cult group.

When the devil comes at you like that, he is more dangerous. And so, in verse 11, we are warned to stand firm, not primarily against the persecution of Satan, but against the wiles of Satan, the deceptions of Satan, the schemes of Satan, because he is more dangerous when he comes to us like that. Now, in the Old Testament, they did not fight against the devil.

You never hear of a single case from Genesis to Malachi of any servant of God, any prophet, anyone fighting the devil. The closest to it you see is in Daniel chapter 10, where Daniel was praying and he wasn't even fighting the devil there. And the prince of Persia, the evil prince of Persia, was resisting the angel who came to speak to Daniel.

And Michael had to come and fight there. That was in the heavenlies. But it had nothing to do with Daniel himself.

Daniel wasn't fighting those spiritual forces. But here, in the New Testament, now that we are filled with the Holy Spirit, now that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and united us and made us members of His body, then we, as the body of Christ on earth, do the same thing that the body of Christ did in Nazareth and Jerusalem during the 33 years He was on earth. And that is fight against Satan.

That's part of our ministry. Just like building up our home, fighting against Satan, is just as important part of church life as our home life, our life in our workplace. It says here in verse 12, Our struggle is not against flesh and blood.

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against powers, against the world forces of darkness, the rulers of the unseen world, mighty satanic beings, great evil princes of darkness, huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world. These are the ones we are fighting against. Not against persons with bodies, but people without bodies.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against these evil spirits. So that's the first lesson we learn in our battle against Satan, that if you want to fight against Satan and his evil spirits, you have to make a decision in your life that you will never fight against a human being. Are you willing to make that decision? Are you willing to say, I do not wrestle against flesh and blood anymore.

A lot of Christians are fighting against other human beings. And that's how the devil makes them useless for spiritual warfare. The number one condition for spiritual warfare is this, we wrestle not against flesh and blood.

Show me a believer who has made that decision in his life. And there is a man who has taken the first step to be prepared for spiritual warfare. You must have a testimony, my brother, sister, that nobody can ever pick a quarrel with you.

Just like it takes two hands to clap and make a noise, it always takes two people to have a quarrel. If one person refuses to cooperate, there is no quarrel. And you got to be that one person always.

So that you have a testimony that no one can ever pick a fight with you. Because you refused to cooperate in that fighting. You pull back.

Because you made a decision that you are not going to wrestle with flesh and blood. Don't even argue. Don't get into heated arguments about doctrine.

Even with believers. It always leaves a bad taste. If people don't agree with you, just leave them.

Love them and leave them. But don't get into fights and quarrels. What a lot of disputes there are among even so-called believers in the world today.

No wonder the church is so powerless. No wonder the church doesn't have the ability to fight Satan because they are accusing one another. They are doing Satan's job for him.

Satan is the accuser of the brethren. But he doesn't have much to do these days because the believers are doing his job for him. Accusing one another.

So Satan is just accusing them to God. And he is using us to accuse ourselves to one another. If you see the evil of this and see the hindrance it brings to the work of God on earth, you will make a decision that from now on you are going to fight against Satanic powers.

That you are going to have all your guns trained only against Satan. Not against your wife or husband or neighbor or the person in the other group or that denomination. No.

You are going to have all your guns trained on Satan. You are not going to accuse the brethren because that is Satan's job. Let him do it.

He doesn't need your help. What does Jesus do all the time for the believers? He doesn't accuse them. He prays for them.

And that is what we are supposed to do too. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against rulers, against powers, against world forces of this darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. It is in the heavenlies that we carry on this battle.

Satan was cast out of the third heaven but yet, this verse tells us he is still in the heavenlies. 2 Corinthians 12 says the immediate presence of God is in the third heaven. The first heaven is the sun, moon stars, the planets and the stars in space that we see.

The universe. Psalm 8 says the heavens declare the glory of God. That is the first heaven.

The third heaven is described in 2 Corinthians 12 as paradise, the immediate presence of God. So somewhere between the first and the third must be the second heaven where Satan was cast down. From the third heaven he was cast down to the second heaven.

And that's why we have a problem getting through to the third heaven when we try to pray. You notice how you feel sleepy? Notice how your thoughts begin to wander? That's because you're trying to get through to the second heaven, to the third heaven, through the second heaven. And the only way to get through is by praising God, proclaiming the victory of Christ on Calvary and you break through the second heaven to get into God's presence.

Praise takes you through the second heaven into God's presence. And that's why the devil hates a true spirit of praise. I don't mean praise with lips.

Praise that comes from the heart. It's there in the second heavens that we are to battle. And we battle establishing the victory of Christ on Calvary in the second heavens in the way the devil seeks to exercise that authority here on earth in a particular situation.

Let's prepare ourselves in the days to come. And we're going to have more of this for spiritual battle.

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