

WINNING SPIRITUAL BATTLE Mark 14:27-31

Our text described how Jesus predicted the falling away of all His disciples after His arrest later that night. Peter replied that if everyone else falls away, he will not. The Lord told him that actually, before the rooster crows twice that night he would have disowned Him thrice. Peter insisted emphatically that even if he had to die, he will not disown Christ. All of them said the same thing.

At that point in time, these disciples, who later became apostles, undermined the nature of spiritual conflict that ordeal of the cross presents; so they lost out. As the pressure mounted, they all abandoned Christ, Peter denied Him. But after resurrection, the Lord came to Galilee and gathered them together again and they were fully restored. The energy of the flesh failed them but grace met them in their fallen state and lifted them up.

Like these disciples, many believers today do not understand the nature of spiritual conflict and how to enter into it and win. This is what today's message is all about.

We shall consider three topics:

1. The nature of Spiritual Conflicts
2. The necessity of spiritual weapons
3. The stand and fighting strategies of victorious believers

1. The nature of spiritual conflict

Mark 14:27, Luke 22:53, 1 Chronicles 21:1, 14, Acts 5:3, 2 Corinthians 2:11

Jesus said "Every day I was with you in the Temple courts and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour – when darkness reigns" Luke 22:53 (NIV). According to this statement made at the time of Jesus' arrest, the chief priests, officers of the Temple, their guards and the elders, indeed, the entire Jewish council are being remotely controlled by powers of darkness but they did not know it. They thought they are in charge, and are the ones to determine the nation and people's destiny but they are wrong. They are under the influence of powers of darkness; the powers of darkness reigns over them, controlling their thought, choices and decisions. Even the average Jewish citizen who came to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover feast that year did not know that their leaders are in devil's pocket and captivity; and they are acting his scripts. Even the disciples never knew.

When unusual things begin to happen around us where we live or work, when individuals or ministers we have always known to be gracious, peace-loving and zealous in the things of God begins to misbehave, when confusion reigns in a peaceful and orderly society and there is terror and fear everywhere, when decisions or policies of

community, church or national leaders towards individuals and institutions does more harm than good, do we ever consider the fact that Satan may be behind it all?

Physical battles are fought in physical space by soldiers and weapons that can be physically seen but which weapon can counter ideas, suggestions, imaginations and thoughts that the devil infuse into people's mind or restrain the demons he assigns to them to ensure that they carry out his ideas and suggestions?.

One single individual – Simon the sorcerer cast a spell on an entire city – the city of Samaria Acts 8:9-11 this is what spiritual conflict is all about. It is about fighting forces, powers, influences and rulers that we cannot see, using weapons that are not obvious. How do we fight and win in such battle; how do we ensure that we become victors and not victims?

2. The necessity of Spiritual weapons

Mark 14:40-41, Ephesians 6:10-18

The response of Christ's disciples to His prediction of their apostasy and backsliding reflected their self-confidence and natural human courage, whereas what they need is spiritual weapons. They need God's armour and Spirit's empowerment – the weapons of faith, fasting and prayer, salvation, preaching of the Gospel and zeal in our service to God, righteous living, watchfulness and vigilance, praise, love, truth, the name of Jesus, the blood He shed for our redemption, the anointing of the Spirit, powerful testimony of past victories and the promises of the scriptures. These cannot be physically seen but are nonetheless powerful. The power of God works through them to demolish strong holds; cast down imaginations and make men's thoughts, imaginations and ideas to submit to the counsel of God and Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Much of this is what we need today to ensure orderliness and peaceful coexistence among men at home in the family, among colleagues and co-workers and among citizens in the nation. They are the weapons that will make righteous living and expansion of the kingdom of God possible. By them we can overthrow Satan; set demons' captives free and claim our friends, family members, neighbours and nation for Christ and His rule.

The greatest battle which has ever been fought in the world in the past and will be fought in the future begins and ends, are won or will be won or lost in the human heart. The man may be a family head, church or community leader. It may be woman too; a mother, wife, sister or a daughter. Once Satan reigns over them and begins to control their thoughts hearts and minds, it affects everyone and everything around them. Life runs true to the heart; whatever controls a man's heart will rule his life and affect others within his realms of influence. Believers have work to do, to ensure that the activities of Satan and demons are paralyzed in their environment, in our time and in our generation.

3. The stand and fighting strategies of victorious believers

Ephesians 6:11-12, 13, 1 Corinthians 16:13, 1 John 5:4, 4:4, James 4:7

God through the Holy Spirit not only provided weapons with which we can fight and win. His word prescribed strategies that guarantees success in our warfare against the hordes of hell. The first of such strategies is the need to “*Stand*”. A fallen warrior fighting against a standing opponent is defeated already. To win in the battles of life, you must hold your ground and defend your territory.

Standing in Christian language refers to keeping your place and position in the kingdom of God. It is keeping your salvation, living godly, being faithful and truthful in all God-honouring relationships; it means believing God and continuing to believe for victory no matter what is happening around you or how you are feeling in your body. We stand and keep standing when we confess and keep confessing the promises of God and of the scriptures. Your victory is sure when you remain addicted to divine service and would not give place to fear, discouragement or idleness.

We fight to win by abiding in Christ, remaining in fellowship with other believers, setting our affections on heavenly things, walking in the Spirit and practicing the presence of God. When we do these, we make it possible for God to walk and work with us. He supplies the grace and strength we need for every battle and in every hour. Our enemies become His enemies and He gladly accompanies us at all times and in all that we do. He constantly watches over us. Hence, our victory is assured, I don't know what you are going through right now but I want to assure you that Jesus is right there by your side. He is waiting for you to pray; for you to call upon Him. Your trials will turn to testimony.