

Not Against Flesh & Blood



A Seven Week Series on Spiritual Warfare
Week Seven: Hell Will Not Prevail

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Paul, Ephesians 6:12 NIV

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1. Creation & Chaos
2. Cruciformed Sovereignty
3. Prayer as Holy Resistance
4. Prayer in Imagination
5. Sword of the Spirit
6. Worship as Warfare
- 7. Hell Will Not Prevail**



Sermon audio & slides in PDF can be downloaded at:
www.christiansburgmennonite.org

Why Talk About Spiritual Warfare?

- It's the language and worldview of Jesus (1 Jn 3:8), the New Testament, and of the early church
- An awareness of the unseen spiritual battle puts things into perspective and empowers our faith
- If individuals and churches want to experience more of the Spirit, a *holistic* approach is critical
- Our picture of God, prayer, worship & evangelism ought to be shaped by a warfare worldview if we want to be a church on passionate mission
- In response to the recent church survey, the series addresses key areas and personal struggles

Revelation 12:10 NLT

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice shouting
across the heavens,

“It has come at last—
salvation and power

and the Kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Christ.

For the accuser [Satan] of our brothers and sisters
has been thrown down to earth—
the one who accuses them
before our God day and night.

Revelation 12:11-12 NLT

¹¹ And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony.

And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die.

¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens!

And you who live in the heavens, rejoice!
But terror will come on the earth and the sea,
for the devil has come down to you in great anger, knowing that he has little time.”

Mark 3:22-27 NIV

²² And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

²³ So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. ²⁷ In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house.

Rethinking Evangelism

- The spread of the gospel / good news (*euangelion*) implicitly involves resisting & rebuking Satan
- Since we don't battle against flesh & blood, the use of fear, coercion, and force is not good evangelism
- Religious people (law-minded & hypocritical) see the lost as merely objects of conversion; Jesus saw people wonderfully made in God's image, but taken captive and blinded by the flesh & the devil
- Evangelism is then about expanding the Kingdom by unmasking the powers—dispelling the darkness!

Matthew 16:13-15 NLT

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴ “Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.”

¹⁵ Then he asked them, “But who do you say I am?”



Caesarea Philippi—25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee ; source of the Jordan river; ancient site of Baal worship

Greek god Pan—the goat-man (satyr) god of fertility, shepherds, the wild of nature, music, and of desolate places



Matthew 16:16-19 NLT

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. ¹⁸ Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.

¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven [God]. Whatever you forbid [bind] on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit [loose] on earth will be permitted in heaven.”

“...I will build my church; and the gates of hell [hades] shall not prevail against it.”

Matthew 16:18b KJV / NRSV

“The words used here suggest that death itself assaults Christ’s church, but death itself cannot crush God’s people. The church will endure until Christ’s return, and no opposition, even the widespread martyrdom of Christians... can prevent the ultimate triumph of God’s purposes in history.”

Craig Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew* (A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary) pg. 429

Matthew 24:3-5 NRSV

³ When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” ⁴ Jesus answered them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah!’ and they will lead many astray.

Matthew 24:6-8 NRSV

⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: ⁸ all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

Matthew 24:9-14 NRSV

⁹ “Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. ¹⁰ Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹² And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

“The signs of Christ’s victory are all around us. They can be seen in the conversions that take place daily, in the healing of lives and homes, in the faithful and sacrificial service of millions of Christians, in the renewing of old churches and the planting of new ones, the growth of trust and confidence, the thoughtful engagement with the world. *There are indeed setbacks and failures, but Christ is building his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.* Those who know this should bear it in mind. The time will soon dawn when Christ’s victory will finally be revealed and the power of darkness will have had its day.”

Nigel Goring Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side*

Not Against Flesh & Blood—*A Summary*

- The primordial chaos that infected the cosmos and curbed creation in the way of sin and death is being judged by Christ and the church with light and love
- Christ & the NT worldview is a warfare worldview where the forces of evil are being driven out—via prayer, Scripture, worship, and evangelism
- Jesus has promised, and confirmed through his death and resurrection, that the gates of hell will not prevail
- The church is called to rebuke the powers of darkness through active obedience and Kingdom building—living lives that reflect the truth of what is promised

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