

Resistance

There Is an Unseen Realm • Message 3

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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

1. Pray that our eyes will be opened to understand the spiritual battles we face daily.
2. Pray for the courage to stand firm in your faith.
3. Pray for a heart that seeks God in prayer continually, in all circumstances.

A. Introduction

There is an unseen realm... and today, I want to help you understand more about it...

There was a story about Martin Luther being tempted and spiritually attacked... Luther was at Wartburg Castle translating the Bible. He was tempted by the devil, and one night, he threw his ink pot at the demonic spirit, and there was a spot where it hit. Many people believed this story... You can go visit Martin Luther's room, where the story happened, and he translated the Bible...

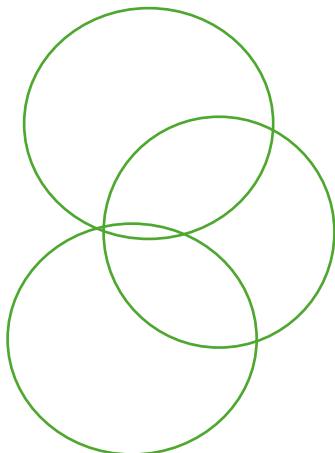
But over the years, the tour guides now don't mention the ink stain. The stain has either faded or been removed because many think it's silly, or superstitious, or naïve...

What I find interesting is... there is an increasing interest in the supernatural... movies today, and books, and superpowers, and vampires, and spirits... but yet many see the spiritual realm as a fairy tale and story... and this is deadly for Christians to fail to understand the unseen realm, or to cover it up or explain it away because of how it may look...

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)

So, I want to give you a picture to help you understand this whole talk... Paul is saying we are here on this earth, but there is an unseen realm with two forces that are at work...



Heaven

Gods will

Earth (your will)

Demonic will

Hell

If you give the spiritual world a piece of your mind as much as you give the physical world your mind, we would still have our minds, because we lost them...

Tony Evans

Lean over to the person next to you and say... *You look good, but you've lost your mind...*

Because you are a child of God, it's the image of God that Satan hates... and causes Satan to hurl his mightiest weapons at us.

So here is the really simple concept I want you to see today... in everything you do, everything you say, every thought, every action, you are either pulling heaven down in your life or pulling hell up.

Jesus, when He was teaching the disciples to pray Your kingdom, what? ...Come on Earth as it is Heaven...He is showing us this concept...So, when you forgive, pray, worship, abide, love God and Love People... keep Jesus at the center... God has His way and will...

But the opposite is true...

You can pull hell up... when you harbor bitterness... sin... when you pull away from God. You are pulling hell up... so that's why you can be here with a hard heart... because you've given the enemy a seat at the table, you allowed him to influence...

Guard your heart. (TV shows, movies, etc.)

This cracked something open for me. For years, when people talked about purity, I thought... *Oh, be pure God... My purity connects my ability to see Him...*

So today, I want to give you some truths that will help you pull heaven down and keep the enemy from pulling hell up in your heart and life.

B. Today I want to talk about: Three ways we pull heaven down:

- 1. Let go of ANGER and BITTERNESS.**
(Ephesians 4:26-27)

Have you noticed how anger and bitterness doesn't make you happy? ... It actually blocks you from loving God and others...

There are certain sins we tend to justify in the church... and one that has been glanced over even more in our culture is anger. But listen to what Paul says two chapters earlier about anger.

And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

Ephesians 4:26-27 (NLT)

The word for *foothold* literally means a place or room... notice what it's saying: don't give the enemy any room or space in your heart or soul. You are pulling hell up and giving Satan a home base if you do.

Karl Payne, in a book about spiritual warfare, says this.

Imagine you have a home, and God is the owner, and you are managing it. You lease out certain rooms to different people. If you are a believer, Jesus is the owner, but you have the ability to let demonic into your life when you entertain a sin or believe a lie that can cause destruction of life.

And this verse says when you hold onto anger, you are giving the enemy and the demonic a place to cause destruction in your life... you are letting him occupy certain places in your heart and mind...

We don't believe a demon can possess a Christian, but I like how JD Greer says it:

Demonic Activity:

- 1.) Possession – can't happen to a believer.
- 2.) Oppression- a demonic influence, which is everywhere. (Sometimes you walk into a room... witchcraft...I walked in a place that was Muslim faith and felt it.) Oppression is more external... you can feel darkness and evil.
- 3.) Occupation- which is where you give the enemy a foothold or stronghold in your life... (I told you when I was addicted... I had no hope, and one day God showed me the enemy had a stronghold; he occupied this part of my life, influence)

So church, anger can be dismissed when you do... you are pulling hell up and allowing the enemy to create real division. That's why Paul says: *Hey, don't go to sleep angry... don't hold onto anger for a day...* because the enemy will occupy room in your heart and life... and he can cause real destruction.

Think about how anger pulls hell up even in the church... through anger and bitterness caused by division and fights... I shared this earlier, but if I were Satan, this is what I'd do...

If I were Satan, I would have worship wars where preferences become a right and wrong way to do church. I'd have people focused more on their wants than serving and loving others. I'd have people debate Bible passages rather than allowing the Word to cut or search them and transform their life. I would divide them over political issues that cause division...

I would fill them with hatred and fear toward anyone who votes differently than them. I'd bring up racial tensions and just keep others arguing about their point of view without really working toward unity. I'd get people so focused on the End Times that they forget the mission to reach those who are far from God now. I'd convince those in the church who've been hurt by someone to hold on to the pain, so it keeps them from God and others. I'd get church people more aware of the sins in the world than the logs in their own eyes.

Simply put, my number one tactic to divide the church and disrupt her from the mission of making disciples would be.... *Anger.*

And sometimes, it feels like Satan is winning.

The pleasure of anger-the gnawing attraction which makes one return again and again to its theme-lies, I believe, in the fact that one feels entirely righteous when one is angry. Then the other person is pure black, and you are pure white.

C.S. Lewis

2. STAND in the power of the Spirit.

(Ephesians 6:11-13. C/R: Acts 19:15-16; Ephesians 1:22)

When I started dating Steph, she used to have a Great Dane at her house... it was a great animal, but the thing was like a small horse... and what would happen is... when you were outside, it would charge you... but at the last moment, it would veer off to the side...

The point is, as long as you stood your ground, you were fine... a friend came over one time, and I forgot to give him a heads up about what the dog would do, so it started charging, and he was freaking out, and I said don't move... whatever you do, don't move... and so he tried to stay still, but in the last minute he took a step over and right when he did that the dog veered in the same direction and caused him to flip in the air... and when he was on the ground I went over and said *I told you not to move!*

Notice this...

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Ephesians 6:11 (NIV)

Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Ephesians 6:13 (NIV)

In verse 14, it starts off with the following: *Stand....* Don't go anywhere Christ hasn't told you to. Don't veer off to the right or left. Stand...

God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made Him head over all things for the benefit of the church.

Ephesians 1:22 (NLT)

Your power does you no good in the spiritual realm. Jesus has already won the battle. Your job isn't to take new ground... Jesus has already won. Your job is to stand!

About 5 years ago, at my old church, a group of us got together to pray on Tuesday nights in the chapel at our church. As we were praying, I sensed the Spirit of God fall on us in some mighty ways... I'll never forget one night we were praying. I looked up, and there was a woman in the back of the room. I went back to talk to her. As I got there, I asked her if she needed help. She said... *He's here too now, and he's going to kill all of you.* She had a darkness all over her, and she just kept saying... *Tell them to stop praying. Or I'll hurt them....* The truth is, I was a bit overwhelmed. It was the most blatantly obvious encounter with a demonic spirit I had ever had. They also don't train you on how to handle a demonic spirit in a prayer meeting in seminary, so for a minute, I was taken aback.

Then I thought of the verse in 1 John 4:4- *Greater is He who's in you.* I told her *Jesus is here and He's stronger. In Jesus' name. In Jesus' name.* I just kept saying it, and every time I said: *In Jesus' name,* she would have this jolt in her body, and finally, she ran out of the room. I went outside a few minutes later to find her, but she was gone. It was one of the most

eerie experiences I have ever had. I told the group what had just happened and prayed for an hour or so the authority of Jesus over those spaces.

You must stand in the power of God... and this armor you don't take off. You stand in God's power all the time.... Why stand in God's power?

Because you have limitations that the demonic doesn't have. Have you ever said *I can't handle anymore*, or *The stress is killing me*? Ever been tired and exhausted?

The demonic and unseen realm doesn't have those limitations. They don't get worn down, and they don't need sleep and rest. They don't have the same emotional or physical limitations you and I do. And if you fight in your authority or power, you won't make it...

One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all.

Acts 19:15-16 (NIV)

See, there is a power and strength in the demonic realm... and listen to this...

So, stand in the power of the Holy Spirit. Be filled up every day and draw near. That's how you fight in Jesus' name...

3. PRAY in the Spirit.

(Ephesians 6:18-20. C/R: Matthew 6:10)

Whenever people teach on the armor of God, they usually leave out the part at the bottom that says this...

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Ephesians 6:18-20 (NIV)

Notice what it says: *Pray in the Spirit*... Does anyone ever pray in the flesh?

Fleshly prayer is where you pray, but your mind and soul aren't there. It's where you pray with selfish motives... it's where you pray just to get things from God, but you don't want God Himself... It's where you pray to be seen like Pharisees... you want to be seen by man more than God...

Sometimes, when I speak at conferences... I secretly hope the person isn't that great in front of me... now I don't want them to be awful or preach heresy, but I just don't always want them to preach so well that I have to follow them... and then I start praying in the Spirit, and God convicts me, *who is this about*...

Praying in the Spirit is where my will and God's will align... and this is where power is given.

Fleshly prayers don't pull down heaven. There isn't power.

So, pray in the Spirit and notice on all occasions...

The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray. – Samuel Chadwick

Pray when you do laundry, pray when you sit down in that meeting, pray when your kids are great, pray when they are awful, pray when you are tempted to swear on Woodruff Road, pray over your food. Pray daily, thank God for His promises, thank God when you get up, and thank God you can get up even if you have to roll out of bed.

When you're tired, pray! When you're happy, pray! When you're sad, pray! When you're filled up, pray! When you're on empty, pray! When it's morning, pray! When it's night, pray! When you feel like it, pray! When you don't feel like it, pray!

Think about it when Jesus is teaching the disciples to pray... He tells them: "*Pray like this...*"

"Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Matthew 6:10 (NIV)

How much do your prayers revolve just about you? I was challenged to not talk about myself, and I was surprised at how little I had to say... God wants to hear from you... He loves you... but what I'm finding is the healthier I get, the more I'm focused on others.

Prayer is Earth giving Heaven permission to interfere in Earth's affairs. – Tony Evans.

What he's saying is...God has designed it to where when you pray in the Spirit.... When your heart is wanting, draw near to God... you are literally pulling heaven down...

And for whatever reason, God has designed it so that some things don't happen or won't happen with us pulling heaven down in prayer.

When you pray, you are literally bringing heaven into your world. You are pulling it down, and your eyes are becoming open to the power and life of the Spirit.

I said this in a previous sermon, but... the moment you start to pray, you fall asleep, or you get distracted... It is because the enemy knows what happens when churches begin to pray.

The greatest gift you can give your family and friends is prayer... We think our job is to provide, to protect, to educate... but listen, that's great in the physical realm... No good parent would neglect their kid in the physical realm... they would make sure they are cared for.... that they have food, shelter, and clothing...

But listen, the greatest threat to your family and friends isn't in the physical realm... it's in the spiritual realm... and Paul says: *You don't fight with physical weapons...* the most loving thing you can do, the most powerful thing you can do for our church, for your family, for your community, is to pray.... Because you're pulling heaven down in their life!

I'd like you to reflect on these questions before the Super Bowl...

- 1.) What are you doing that is pulling hell up?
- 2.) What are you doing that is pulling heaven down?

Make church a commitment, meeting with God.