

Taking the Offensive



Spiritual Warfare (Part 11)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys To Successful Living that God has placed in my hand through many years of personal ministry and Christian ministry.

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we will be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please, take time to write, even if it's only a brief note.

This week I will continue with my theme from the previous two weeks, "Spiritual Warfare." Last week I dealt with the six items of defensive armor listed by Paul in Ephesians 6:14-17: the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the preparation of the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. I pointed out that, with the exception of the sword, all these items listed are essentially for protection or self-defense. And even the sword can reach no further than the arm of the person who wields it. In other words, there is nothing in this list of defensive equipment that will enable us to deal with Satan's strongholds as Paul describes them in 2 Corinthians 10:4 and 5, where he speaks about our obligation to cast down Satan's strongholds or fortresses.

So, in my talks this week I want to move from the defensive to the offensive. I want to deal with weapons of attack, weapons that will enable us to assail and cast down Satan's strongholds. It is important that we see our obligation to take the offensive, to move out and actively attack Satan's kingdom. It is a fact of history and experience that no army ever won a war on the defensive.

Somewhere in the early part of this century, someone asked a well-known French general, "In a war, which army wins?" The general replied, "The one which advances." Now, that's probably an over-simplification, but at least it is true that we will never win a war by retreating or even by merely holding our ground. And as long as Satan keeps the church on the defensive, his kingdom will never be overthrown. Therefore, we have an absolute obligation to move out from the defensive, from mere self-protection, to attack.

When Jesus first unveiled His plan for the church, He envisioned it going out on the offensive and attacking Satan's strongholds. The first time the word "church" is used in the New Testament is in Matthew 16:18. Jesus is here speaking to Peter and He says this:

> "You are Peter, a stone; and upon this rock I will build my church; and all the powers of hell shall not prevail against it." (TLB)

An alternative reading is "all the gates of hell shall not be too strong for it." Hell is, in Greek, the word "Hades." The root meaning of the word "Hades" is "invisible, unseen." So Hades, or Hell, is the unseen world of Satan's kingdom.

Now Jesus pictures His church in the light of two primary activities: building and battling. These always must go together. It is no good battling if we don't build. But on the other hand, we cannot build if we don't battle. So we have got to think always in terms of building the church and battling the forces of Satan.

Now many people have interpreted these words of Jesus incorrectly? They have somehow assumed that Jesus pictured the church on the defensive, being besieged in a city by Satan's forces. And they have taken His promise to mean that Satan would not be able to batter the gate of that city down before Jesus came and caught the church away. That is really a totally defensive concept of the church in the world but it is completely incorrect. If we really analyze what Jesus meant by His words to Peter, we find that Jesus pictures the church on the offensive, attacking the gates of Satan and His promise is that Satan's gates will not hold out against the church, that Satan will not be able to keep the church out. It's not the church trying to keep Satan out, it's Satan failing to keep the church out. Jesus promises us that if we obey Him as our commander in chief, we will be able to move out, storm Satan's citadels, break through his gates, release his captives, and carry away his spoil. That's the church's assignment. It's essentially offensive, not defensive.

The word "gate" has a great deal of meaning in Scripture. First of all, the gate is the place of council and rule. For instance, in Proverbs 31:23, it says of the husband of the ideal wife, the faithful wife:

> "Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land." (NIV)

Notice the city gate was the place where the ruling council of elders sat and ruled and administered the city. So when the Scripture says that the gates of Satan will not prevail against the church, it means that Satan's councils will not prevail against the church, that Satan's councils will be frustrated and brought to naught.

Then again, in attacking a city, the natural place to attack is the gates; they are weaker than the walls. In Isaiah 28:6, we have this promise:

> "A strength to those who repel the onslaught at the gate." (NAS)

So you see the picture. The picture is the church making an onslaught on the gates of Satan's citadel and the promise of Jesus is that the gates of Satan will not be able to keep the church out. So we have to have an adjustment in our thinking. We have to stop thinking on the defensive and start thinking on the offensive.

My experience is that most Christians have got the kind of attitude, "I wonder where the devil is going to strike next?" I suggest to you that the boot should be on the other foot. The devil should be wondering where the church is going to strike him next.

I want to continue with this theme of the church taking the offensive and I want to explain the scriptural basis for our doing so. It is really found mainly in one verse, Colossians 2:15, which describes what God accomplished through the death of Christ on the cross on our behalf. It says this:

> "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities..." (NAS)

Now, the rulers and authorities are the same spiritual forces of Satan that are referred to in Ephesians 6:12, it's Satan's spiritual kingdom. So, through the cross God disarmed those rulers and authorities. I wonder if you have ever thought about that, that Satan has been left without armor. He's been stripped of his weapon. God, through the cross, disarmed the rulers and authorities. Then it says:

> "...He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him [that's through Jesus or through the cross]." (NAS)

Either translation is permissible. So God, through the cross, disarmed Satan's kingdom, He made a public display of the representatives of Satan's kingdom, and He triumphed over them in the cross.

I have pointed out before that a triumph is not so much winning a victory, it's the celebration of a victory that has

already been won. It goes beyond victory. It's a public demonstration that complete victory has been won.

Now, Jesus on the cross did not win the victory for Himself. He always had the victory. He was our representative. He won the victory on our behalf, thus His victory becomes our victory. We see this in 2 Corinthians 2:14, where Paul says this:

> "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place." (NAS)

Notice those two phrases: "always," "in every place." "Always" and "in every place" we are to represent Christ's victory. God is going to demonstrate publicly the victory that Christ has won through us. That is, the victory over Satan's rulers and authorities or principalities and powers. This victory is to be worked out through us.

Let us look at the final commission of Jesus given to His disciples in Matthew 28:18-19:

> "Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. [If Jesus has all authority, that leaves none for anybody else, except as He yields it.] Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit…'" (NAS)

You notice the "therefore," it is significant. Jesus said, "All authority has already been given to Me. You go, therefore…" What does the "therefore" mean? I understand it to mean this: "You go and exercise, on My behalf, the authority that I have already won." So our assignment is to administer the victory, demonstrate the triumph and exercise the authority that Jesus has won on our behalf. You see, authority is only effective when it is exercised. If we do not exercise the authority that He's given to us, it remains ineffective.

Secondly, the world can only see Christ's victory when we demonstrate it. Christ has won the victory but our assignment is to demonstrate the victory over Satan and his kingdom, which Jesus has already won and this we can only do when we move from the defensive to the offensive.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. For the rest of this week I will be speaking about specific weapons of attack that God has made available to us. Tomorrow I will deal with the weapon of prayer.

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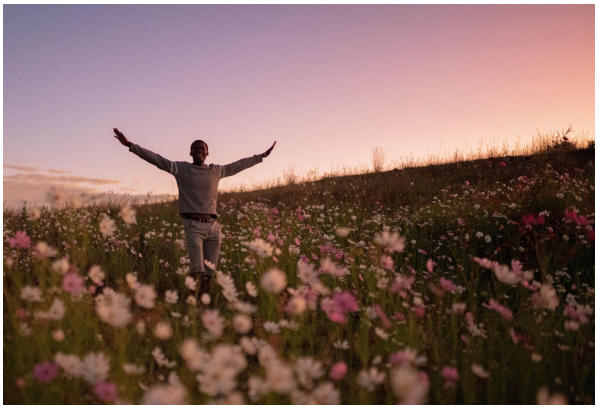

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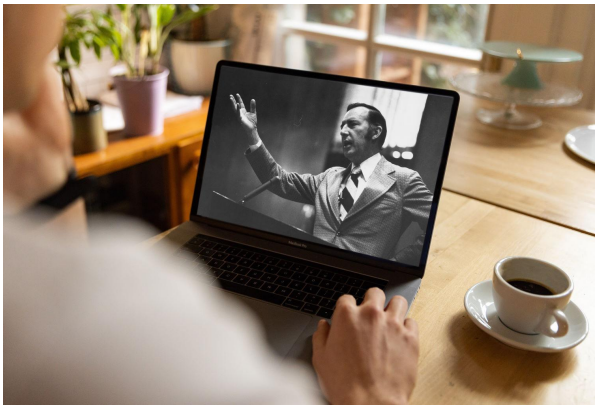

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