

OpenTheo

Spiritual Aggression



Spiritual Warfare - Steve Gregg

In "Spiritual Aggression," Steve Gregg discusses the aggressive and forward-moving aspect of spiritual warfare. He highlights the need for Christians to adopt an aggressive attitude towards the invasion of the devil's territory, with the support of scripture that emphasizes the importance of perseverance and prayer. By pleading the blood of Jesus and engaging in two-way conversations with God, Christians can access the power and will of God to triumph over the enemy's will. The lecture also stresses the importance of praise and seeking God's kingdom to advance over the darkness.

Transcript

In this final lecture in our series on spiritual warfare, I want to talk about the more aggressive, forward-moving aspect of spiritual warfare. I've made reference to this before, but I want to close the series on more of a focus on this point. We've talked a lot about defending oneself, for example, against temptation and deception, and recognizing the devil's devices when it comes against you, and that kind of thing.

That is certainly an important part of spiritual warfare. To that category belongs the whole consideration of the armor of God, and our standing in Christ, and our security, and so forth. Yet, our security is not an end in itself.

Putting on the armor is not just so that we won't get hurt. Of course, armor is there so we won't get hurt, but the reason we need armor, and the reason we might otherwise get hurt, is because we're supposed to be out engaging the enemy, actually out attacking the enemy. When a football team goes into the locker rooms before the game and puts on all their armor, all their padding, and all their equipment, they don't just sit around in the locker room and have their armor on just in case the enemy team comes and invades the locker room.

They actually then go out with a mind to make goals, to actually go out and win a conflict, and this at the expense of their opposing team. We have to have more than a self-centered desire to survive spiritually. We can't have less than that.

If anyone is not committed to personal spiritual survival, they're going to lose for sure.

But once that commitment is intact, and we know basically what to do about that, we have to realize that we are part of an invasion force in a world that is in rebellion against God, but which has been conquered, that is still under the deceived allegiance to a conquered foe, and the world awaits knowledge of the victory of Christ so that they can be set free from the power of Satan. It says of Christ in Isaiah 42, which by the way is quoted also in the New Testament as being about Christ, Isaiah 42, the opening four verses, says, This is Christ.

Until he has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands shall wait for his law. This scripture is quoted in Matthew 12 as fulfilled in Christ, or at least begun to be fulfilled. He is the servant.

He is the one that will bring forth justice to truth, and justice to the Gentiles, and the islands await his law. In other words, every remote region of the world ultimately will hear, and will succumb to his rule, and they'll just have to wait until he gets there. He will not fail though, and he will not be discouraged, and there will be nothing that will turn back his effort.

There may be things that will slow it down, that is the lack of cooperation on the part of his soldiers, but it's not a question of whether he will someday win. All that remains to be considered is that the islands are waiting, that the regions unreached are waiting to be reached. Now, as I said earlier, quoting Paul in 2 Timothy 2, although we are to deliver Satan's captives from Satan, and trust that our efforts may result in God granting them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, so that they may deliver themselves from the snare of the devil who has taken them captive to do his will, so the closing verses of 2 Timothy 2, that is verses 24 through 26 tell us, yet in the same context, which tells of our aggressive seizure of the devil's domain, and taking his captives from him, the same passage says the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle toward all, apt to teach, in meekness instructing those who are in opposition.

The outward disposition of the Christian warrior is that of gentleness, just like Jesus. What does it say about him here, even though it's talking about his conquest, it's talking about him going out and establishing justice in an unjust world, and bringing forth truth in a world that's in deception, yet what is his manner? Well, he doesn't cry out or raise his voice, he's not shouting, he's not noisy, a bruised reed he will not break, a smoking flax he will not quench, a smoking flax refers to a candle wick which is made of flax, smoldering, smoking, not burning, a light that had almost gone out. One might see a smoldering wick and just say, well, let's just put that all the way out and snuff it out.

He's not that way. When he sees somebody who's damaged, he doesn't just finish them off. He's not rough, he's gentle.

This is talking about the gentleness of his manner. He will bring forth justice for truth and will not fail or be discouraged. Jesus, though he was meek and gentle, and is, and though

we, his servants, are to be meek and gentle, yet we're promised that the meek will inherit the earth, not those who are self-assertive and aggressive in a worldly sort of way.

But the invasion, nonetheless, is an invasion. And we see that when Jesus was born, the devil interpreted this as an invasion into what he had come to regard as his territory. In Revelation 12, where we started this series, we saw the woman about to bear a child, and in verse 5 we saw that the dragon was poised to destroy the child at its birth.

He recognized that the birth of this child was a serious threat to his activities, to Satan's kingdom. And rightly so. The angel announced to Joseph, when he had learned that Mary was pregnant and did not yet know the cause, but had his own suspicions, the angel who cleared things up for him in Matthew chapter 1 said, of the child that would be born of her, in Matthew 1.21, his name should be called Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Sin is the bondage from which people need to be saved. Sin is the grounds for Satan's claim upon people. If people are forgiven of their sins and saved of the power of sin, there is very little else that the devil can lay claim to in them.

And Jesus came to save or to rescue his people from their sins, it says in Matthew 1.21. In Luke chapter 1, when Jesus was born, certain prophecies were uttered over him. When John the Baptist was born, Zacharias uttered some prophecies that were relevant to the coming of the Messiah shortly thereafter. And of course, old Simeon prophesied with reference to Jesus when Jesus was born.

But Zacharias, when John the Baptist was born, prophesied in these words in Luke chapter 1, verse 69. He said that God has raised up a horn of salvation, the word salvation also can be translated deliverance for us, in the house of his servant David, referring of course to Jesus, who actually was not yet born, this is on the occasion of John the Baptist's birth, that this prophecy anticipated the next birth, that is of Jesus. As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

And a few verses down further, verses 74 and 75, to grant us that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. Now, I suggest that if you had asked Zacharias, or Zacharias, as the Greek form of his name said, what he meant by this, he probably would have said, well, what I meant was that the Messiah is going to drive away the Romans, our enemies. He's going to deliver us out of the hands of those who hate us, these Roman oppressors of ours.

Remember the Bible says the prophets barely understood what they were talking about. They spoke as the Spirit moved them. And in this case, Zacharias was speaking through

the Spirit of God.

And the Spirit of God was not prophesying that the Romans would be driven away by the Messiah. But the Spirit of God did mean something. It may be that the prophet himself, when he heard his own words being spoken by the Spirit of God, thought, ah, that probably means our political enemies.

But we know that in fact he came to save his people not from the Romans, but from their sins. Delivering us from the hand of all those who hate us. Delivering us from our oppressors, from those who have taken us captive.

We know Jesus came to deliver us from our enemies. That's true. But these enemies are of a spiritual sort.

And he came to grant us, it says in verse 74, that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. This is what Jesus came to accomplish for us. That we might be delivered from our enemies and serve him fearlessly, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives.

This is the victory that Christ came to bring. And the appearance of John the Baptist, and shortly after that the appearance of Christ, and shortly after that the commissioning of the church, all represent stages in the invasion of the devil's territory. In Luke chapter 4, Jesus was in the synagogue of Nazareth.

Luke chapter 4, Jesus was preaching there in the synagogue of his own hometown, and he was given some scriptures to read. They happened to be scriptures from Isaiah chapter 61. And so he read them.

In verse 18 he read, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. For he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Then he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down.

And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to him, Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. In other words, what I am doing right now as I speak to you is a fulfillment of this scripture.

He said, What does this scripture predict? That the Messiah, anointed by the Spirit of God, would be anointed to come and proclaim a message of liberty to those who are captives, who are oppressed, deliverance to those in prison. Of course, Jesus' message had nothing to do with political freedom, or the liberation of actual people who were in jail, but had to do with spiritual liberation. So Jesus indicated that he was sent as a liberator.

And we know that that's how, from a scripture we've looked at already several times in Matthew 12, that's how he interpreted his ministry, even of casting out demons. It showed that he had entered the domain of Satan, he had bound Satan, and was now liberating those who had been the prisoners of Satan. And that is what we are doing.

I've said earlier that we are simply mopping up what Jesus has done. Jesus has conquered Satan. And to do so doesn't mean that Satan is doing nothing.

As I said, when David killed Goliath, the Philistines still survived and ran away. The Jews had to pursue them and conquer them. So also, the demons are not simply shriveling up and disappearing just because Jesus has conquered Satan.

But they are shrinking. They're shrinking back in horror. They're fleeing.

They're trying to hold the fort. But they can't hold the fort, because Jesus said, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. And they may slam the gates if they wish, but those gates cannot prevail if the church is moving forward.

If the church is pursuing, as Israel had to pursue the Philistines, so the church has to pursue the objective of bringing every thought into captivity to Jesus Christ through the preaching of the gospel and through the pressing of the claims of Christ upon every creature and every nation, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he commanded. The devil, therefore, is operating in the world, but he's operating without legal warrant. Jesus, when he rose from the dead, in Matthew 28, said in verse 18, All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Now, all authority means all of the right to rule. And if all authority has been given to Christ in heaven and earth, that means that none remains for the devil. He doesn't have any authority.

The devil has not authorized the devil. God has not authorized the devil. The devil is not authorized.

He is operating without a license, very much like a person driving without a driver's license. Can it be done? Can a person without a driver's license drive a car? Apparently. People do it all the time.

Well, how can this be? They're not licensed. Well, if no one challenges them, they can do it all they want. They don't have the right.

They don't have the warrant. They are doing it illegally, and they can be forbidden and stopped from doing so, but they can continue doing so until someone does come in the authority of the law and say, sorry, you can't do that anymore. You're going to jail or whatever, you know.

It is in fact the case that the devil has had his license revoked. All authority now belongs to Jesus Christ. If Satan had any rightful authority over the race before, that is canceled.

And any power he exerts over people is illegitimate. It's illegal. And all that remains to be done are for those who have the authority of the king to go and to basically enforce the king's domain.

Satan cannot really effectively resist. He knows he's driving without a license. He doesn't have a clean conscience about what he's doing.

He just has to convince the world, or keep them convinced, most of them already are, that they are doomed to follow him. And it is our message that they are not doomed to follow him. They have the opportunity, in fact, to obey Jesus Christ.

Not only the opportunity, but the responsibility. They belong to Christ. He has purchased them.

He has commanded that they all turn to him, and that they submit to him, and that they obey all things he has commanded. Therefore, our message is the message of a king imposing his rule upon those subjects who have rebelled, and who are following a leader who has no authority to lead them, or to control them. Knowing this should cause us to be the more encouraged and the more aggressive in our mission efforts, whether we're talking about foreign missionary work, or simply holding down the fort and advancing the claims of Christ in the place where we live.

As I said in an earlier lecture, the real objectives of spiritual warfare are to press further into every spiritual and geographical region, for Satan's rule has not yet been challenged. And, in those places, to establish the rule of Christ. Those regions include the spiritual realms of our own hearts, and the spiritual realms of the hearts of those who live around us every day.

Jesus is being deprived of his rightful claim upon the lives of people that he purchased, every day. That is why the missionaries who left from the Moravian community, I forget what year it was, it was a century or two or more ago, I think it was about two centuries ago, the Moravian missionaries that actually sold themselves into slavery, because that was the only way to get access to an island where there were un-evangelized slaves. The owner would not allow missionaries to come, so they sold themselves into slavery to the owner.

Of course, that was a life commitment. Once you're a slave, you don't get out of that again. In fact, in those days, the owner could do whatever he wanted to his slaves, so they took the risk of even being abused or killed once their activities were discovered.

But that didn't matter. As they left the dock and the ship, and on their way to never see their families again, and as their community in Europe watched them leave, it is reported

that one of the missionaries, on his way to be a slave, in this remote island that was awaiting the rule of the Messiah to be declared there, he shouted out to the friends on the shore, he said, May the lamb that was slain receive the reward of his suffering. In other words, he didn't see himself as doing anything except seem to it that Jesus had a chance to be rewarded for what he had purchased, that he received the purchased possession.

Christ suffered. Christ should receive something back for his suffering. If a payment is made, the product should be delivered.

And there's no way that Jesus will receive his rightful due unless the church goes into all the world and impresses the world with the fact that Jesus, in fact, is their owner and Lord, and brings them into captivity, brings their thoughts into captivity, Jesus Christ, even as our own have been. That is what we're about. There are indications in the scripture that the general attitude of the Christian needs to be that of aggression.

On an earlier occasion, I called your attention to Matthew 11, 12, where Jesus said that the kingdom of God suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. Joshua was told, as he was to go in and take the territory from the enemy for God, that he must be strong and courageous, and do not tremble or be dismayed, because the Lord his God was with him wherever he should go. Jesus said the gates of Hades will not prevail against the church.

And all of these things suggest that the church is to be moving forward. Now, when we talked about Ephesians 6, I spent most of my time talking about the armor that Paul listed there, the five items that Paul mentions, but we spoke only briefly on the two weapons that are mentioned in that list. One is the word of God, and the other is prayer.

And it says in Ephesians 6, 17, Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. We did talk a little bit about how the word of God serves as protection against personal deception, since the word is truth, and since the devil seeks to attack our minds through lies and deception, we need the word of God to defend our own minds against deception. And I spent some time talking about some of the specific lies and some of the specific scriptures that may serve that purpose.

But I suspect that when Paul said, Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, he did not have primarily in view the defensive use of the word of God, but the offensive. It says in Revelation 12, 11, They overcame him, that is, the believers overcame Satan, by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death. Though we've looked at that verse and quoted it a few times this week, I've not really told you exactly what I understand to be the meaning of that verse.

When it says, They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, I believe Christians have often greatly misunderstood what is meant by this, to overcome by the blood of the

Lamb. This statement has led many to believe that the blood of the Lamb is some kind of a super weapon of some kind in the spiritual realm, which, I don't know, just is a superpower or something that just torments Satan, or that builds some kind of a barricade around the believer or against things that he pleads the blood over. You no doubt have been around people, maybe you are one of them, who plead the blood.

There was a book that came out years ago, I saw it back in the 70s, I think it came out long before that, I believe it was called *The Power of the Blood*, by some, I presume, some Pentecostal author. I don't remember who the author was. But basically this book talks about the blood of Jesus.

You plead the blood over everything and then it's immune from satanic attack. Like you can plead the blood over your car, and then you won't get in an accident, it won't break down. You plead the blood over your wallet, you'll never run out of money.

You plead the blood over your children and they'll never get sick, they'll never have an accident, they'll never, I don't know, they're just safe. Somehow just pleading the blood over everything, somehow was imagined to create some kind of an invisible canopy of protection against any kind of satanic intrusion. And I don't know where this idea came from, it certainly didn't come from the Bible, unless the author was misinterpreting the meaning of they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.

Now I suppose if we had no other biblical information on the subject, we could maybe understand that to mean that the blood of the Lamb is some kind of a powerful weapon of destruction. Some kind of a power, mystically activated, so that the power of Satan simply cannot resist it. But I don't understand from the rest of scripture anything like that to be taught about the blood of Jesus.

What the Bible does teach about the blood of Jesus is that the blood of Jesus was shed for the remission of sins, that through the blood we have remission of sins, that he purchased us by the blood, and those kinds of statements, the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, these statements are made, but everything I read in the scripture about the blood of Christ and its effect on the believer has to do with legal standing. It's not so much that the blood is sort of like a hand grenade that you throw at the devil, as it is something that accomplished and acquired a legal standing for the believer, which benefits him greatly in terms of spiritual warfare, but maybe not in exactly the way that some people have thought. I mean, some people talk about the blood of Jesus as if it's just kind of a magic spell, and you just have to say, I plead the blood, and that's like some incantation that builds a sudden wall that the devil can't do anything through no matter what you plead the blood over.

It's almost like, you know, I guess maybe the idea comes from putting, in the Jews, putting the blood on the doorpost of their house and the destroyer didn't come in through it, like maybe they, perhaps they saw that as like creating some kind of an

invisible barrier. Actually, the way I understand it, pleading the blood of the Lamb, which by the way is an expression not found in scripture, but scripture does speak of overcoming by the blood of the Lamb, has to do with the overcoming of a particular activity of the enemy, which is in the immediate context in Revelation 12, that of accusation. It says in Revelation 12.10, the accuser of the brethren has been cast down.

Satan is not called by that label anywhere else in scripture. If you've heard the devil called the accuser of the brethren, it comes strictly from that one verse, and that is in fact a legitimate name for Satan. He is called the accuser of the brethren.

It's interesting that this passage, and no other, refers to him by that name. The reason is because it's not so much a name as a description of his activity. He accused the brethren before God day and night in Old Testament times, but he's cast down as of the time of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, and Jesus ascending to be our advocate before God, and because of the blood of Jesus, those accusations do not stick against us.

Not because the blood of Jesus is some kind of invisible barrier, but because the blood of Jesus has accomplished or acquired or purchased the forgiveness of those sins for which we might otherwise be accused. If the devil accuses you, the blood of the Lamb answers him, answers his accusation. It's not so much that the blood of Jesus is a magic thing or power that you can invoke over your wallet or your car or your children, but if there's any legitimate sense in which we plead the blood, we plead it in the sense that a criminal, or I should say a person on trial, enters a plea.

Are you guilty or are you not guilty? Well, my plea is not guilty. Why? Because God has declared me not guilty because Jesus died for me, because his blood was shed. I plead on my behalf the merits of Christ's blood, which covers all of the things that I was formerly guilty of.

Therefore, I can enter a plea not guilty by the blood of the Lamb. Now, by the way, the Bible does not ever talk about pleading the blood, but I suspect that the expression, as it's come to be used by Christians, was originally used by someone who used it probably in a theologically sound way. Because, although the Bible doesn't use the terminology, there is certainly the imagery in Scripture of a courtroom in heaven and accusations against the elect, and those accusations being answered or countered by what Jesus has accomplished at the cross to cancel the legitimacy of those accusations.

And that I could imagine some evangelists, whoever originated the idea of pleading the blood, perhaps talking in terms of this courtroom sort of scene and how the believer stands on the day of judgment, otherwise condemned, but can enter the plea, I plead the blood. I don't plead myself guilty. I don't plead myself really not guilty.

I just plead that the blood of Jesus has changed my circumstance of guilt. What plea do you enter? I plead the blood of Jesus. Now, I suppose, I don't know who first used that

expression, some evangelist probably used it in that connection.

It was probably a legitimate illustration. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line, you probably heard that expression, yeah, I'm going to plead the blood over this, I'm going to plead the blood over that, I'm going to plead the blood over that, and they totally misunderstood what it means to plead the blood. Some people think it means to invoke the blood, almost like a spell.

And that is certainly not what it meant. When the Bible says, they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, it is in the immediate context of, he is the accuser of the brethren. The pleading the blood, or overcoming Satan through the blood of Christ, must necessarily mean that as the accuser has been cast down, and we read, Woe unto those who inhabit the earth, because he is cast down, and he knows his time is short.

He can't accuse you before God anymore, because of what Christ has done, but he can accuse you to your own conscience. He can make you feel condemned. He can make you feel guilty, and therefore your plea, your overcoming of his accusation, is, Ah yes, Satan, you may be quite right, that I have done all those things, but that is old news, that is past history, that is cancelled, that is no longer valid.

The blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed me from all sin. End of discussion. And therefore when the enemy comes to attack the heart of the believer with accusation and condemnation, which he does, the Christian counters with, Ah no, it's the blood of Jesus that covered all of that.

End of story. Next subject. And they overcome the accusation, but obviously the blood of the Lamb then, is part of our spiritual defense over the integrity of our heart, and the protection from condemnation and so forth.

But what does it mean, secondarily, they overcame him by the word of their testimony. It seems to me like I've heard as many different ideas about this statement, as I have about the blood of the Lamb. And I can appreciate the fact that the term is not self-explanatory, if the context is not taken into consideration.

What does it mean to overcome Satan by the word of your testimony? Well we usually think of the testimony, and this is just the way that 20th century Christianity uses the term, my testimony is the story of how I got saved, right? If I said, would you please tell me your testimony, wouldn't that immediately suggest to you that I want to hear the story of how you got saved, what you did before you were saved, and how you heard about Jesus, and what struggles you went through to accept the gospel, and what's happened since then. Isn't that your testimony? Of course, that's the way we always use the term, my testimony. However, in the book of Revelation, the testimony of Jesus is a phrase that occurs many, many times.

It's one of the main strands of vocabulary that runs through the whole book of Revelation. The word witness and testimony are used almost interchangeably. There's the two witnesses, and when they finish their testimony, the beast that comes out of the pit makes war with them and defeats them.

And John, right at the opening chapter, says he's on the island of Pampas for the testimony of Jesus. And twice, or no, once we'll read that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. The testimony of Jesus, and the testimony of the saints about Jesus, is a common term and theme of the book of Revelation.

It's all about preaching the gospel. The church bears testimony to the world, like a witness in a courtroom gives testimony about how a case occurred, how a thing occurred. We stand as witnesses, those who bear witness, those who bear testimony of what God has done, the gospel.

The testimony of Jesus in the book of Revelation, more often than not, just refers to the gospel itself. It's the testimony the church bears about Jesus. That's why John says, I was on the island of Pampas for the testimony of Jesus.

It means because I was preaching the gospel. Because I stood for the gospel and preached the gospel, I got in trouble and got arrested and got sent to the island of Pampas. It was for the testimony.

And you'll find, if you would do your own reading of the book of Revelation, taking mental note of all the times that you read of the witness or the testimony, which are, by the way, interchangeable concepts, that it's one of the principal concerns in the book of Revelation. And the testimony of Jesus in Revelation generally means the gospel. And so when it says, they overcame him by the word of their testimony, it's not likely that it's specifically referring to they overcame him by telling their story to people.

I don't want to diminish the value of doing that. Frankly, I think that telling your testimony should be done as often as you have opportunities, as often as anyone is interested in hearing it, because your testimony is your bearing of witness of the power of God in a first-hand witness. You know this.

It's not just that you know by faith that Jesus died for your sins and rose again. You also know from experience that God has had an impact on your life. There's nothing wrong with that.

And by the way, I consider that the bearing of testimony as a part of sharing the gospel is the one thing that every Christian can do. Not every Christian is a theologian. Not every Christian can answer all the questions about how Jesus is going to judge the pygmies who never heard the gospel when asked, or all the other conundrums that may be brought up by a skeptic.

But like the man who was born blind in John 9, they might be able to say, I can't tell you all these things about Jesus you're inquiring about, but I know this. I was blind and now I see. That's all he knew.

He didn't know anything else about Jesus. They said, we know that this man Jesus is a sinner. The man said, I don't know if he's a sinner or not.

I don't have the first... I don't know anything about Jesus except that I was blind and he made me see. What else can I say? Well, they couldn't argue against that. People can argue against your philosophy, even if you're right.

Even if you've got the truth and they've got error, they always feel the liberty to argue with their philosophy against yours. But your testimony, how can they argue against that? If you say, well, I was totally in bondage to this behavior and when Christ took over my life, he just kind of swept that right out. I've been liberated from that from that day on.

How can anyone say, no, you're not telling the truth there? I mean, they could say that, but they have to say you're a bold-faced liar. See, a person could argue against your theology without being personally insulting. They could say, I don't agree with your philosophy because I've looked into that too and I've got a different opinion.

You've got yours, I've got mine. We're all entitled to our opinion, etc. But if you say, I was blind but now I see, how can they argue against that without saying it right to your face? You're a liar.

Now, some people may go so far as to do that, but most people are not so bold. How can they, unless they know you're lying? Your testimony is one of the most effective things you have in sharing the gospel. But at the same time, I'm not sure that that's really what is meant by the word testimony in this place.

They overcame by the word of their testimony. The word of their testimony is their preaching of the testimony of Jesus. They're testifying about Jesus.

They're preaching the gospel. And what I understand this brief statement about spiritual warfare to mean is this. The devil accused them, but they overcame those accusations by appeal to the blood of the Lamb.

They defended themselves against these charges by the blood of the Lamb and they overcame them. But furthermore, they pressed into his territory with their message, with their testimony, and they overcame him aggressively, offensively, taking his territory out of his hands by the word of their testimony. See, the devil would like to take territory from you.

Take your confidence. Take your boldness. Take your assurance of salvation from you by

accusation.

Well, you can overcome that. That's offensive on your part. But then you've got to not just be satisfied there.

You've got to say, but I need to go and take territory from him. There are many captives he holds wrongfully without any right to do so. And all they need is to be informed of the truth.

They need to hear about Christ. And the church has been doing this ever since the days these words were uttered and even before that, in Revelation, they have been overcoming him, the devil, by the word of their testimony. This is the preaching of the gospel.

And when Paul, in the context of talking about spiritual warfare, said, take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, my impression, and I can't prove this beyond a shout-out, my impression is that he's talking in terms not of using the Bible to defend yourself against temptation principally, but taking the word of God forward like a sword, which a sword is not basically a defensive weapon, but an offensive weapon. It is therefore harming the enemy. Your shield is not there to harm the enemy.

Your helmet is not there to harm the enemy. It's to keep you from being harmed. But the sword is there to damage the enemy.

So when Paul says, take the sword of the Spirit, I believe he's referring to taking the word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ. The commands that we are to disciple people to obey, and take them out, and pierce, and intrude, and conquer, and invade the territory of the enemy, and take the word of God there too, so that people might be made free by hearing the gospel preached. Romans 1.16 says, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

It is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe. The word of God is a powerful weapon. The word of our testimony about Jesus is a powerful weapon.

And it is something we need to have enough confidence in to figure that we can go right into the midst of the enemy, and the word of God will be more powerful than what they have. And I don't think we should be stupid. In other words, I don't think that a person, especially if someone's got a particular weakness, and they're a new Christian, that they should go back to the parties they used to go to to try to witness to their friends.

That might be just stupid. It might be presumptuous. I had a friend who had, after he was saved, he still was greatly tempted with drugs, which he had taken before, and he was invited to a birthday party of one of his old friends, where he knew that all of them were going to be there smoking dope.

On one hand, he wanted to witness them, but on the other hand, he didn't want to expose himself to temptation too great, so he asked me to go with him. So I went with him to the party, and we ended up witnessing some of the people until they threw us out. But the fact is, he was smart enough to know that even though he'd like to witness to his friends, there were situations that would not be very wise for him to go into.

But to say that going to a certain situation may be dangerous, physically dangerous, should not scare us. We realize that everyone's going to die anyway, and many of the people that we need to go to are not prepared for that. And that's why we go and bring them the Word of God.

They desperately need it. There is also, among the weapons that Paul lists, although he doesn't liken it to any particular weapon, he certainly lists it in the context of spiritual warfare, after he talks about taking the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, in Ephesians 6.18 he says, and pray. Praying.

And he modifies it, or he amplifies it, with a number of phrases and expressions to help us know what kind of praying is going to get results. He says, pray always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit, being watchful to this end, losing sleep for that purpose, with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Man, there's so many modifiers here.

We all pray, but do we always pray? Always. That's what he says, pray always. Not giving up.

Having a continuous domination of our life by the activity of prayer. He says, with all prayer and supplication. I don't know what he means by all prayer and supplication.

There are perhaps various kinds of prayer. Prayers for all occasions. But whatever kinds of prayer there are, we're supposed to employ them all.

With all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit. Now, that's another modifier. Our prayers have to not only be constant and varied in form, but they need to be spiritual.

They have to be motivated and energized by the Spirit, and led by the Spirit. What else? Losing sleep for that. Being watchful to this end.

Okay, making some sacrifices. Miss a few meals. Miss a few hours of sleep.

With all perseverance, which suggests that if you don't get results right away, you don't quit easily. You just keep persevering. You keep pressing in.

You keep attacking. And supplication for all the saints, which means that you need to pray for every Christian you can. You don't know all the saints by name.

And I don't know if it's so effective to just say, God bless everybody. Good night. You

know.

I just prayed for all the saints. I think that prayer has to have a little more intelligent content than that. But I think what he means is, as you become aware of the needs of saints, no matter who they are or where they are, they are to be your concern.

Their needs, their interests, their welfare, their success, should be part of what you are concerned enough to pray about. You should pray for everybody whose needs you are aware of, or even you suspect to be in need, or that God lays on your heart, somebody. You may not know that they are in need.

I've on numerous occasions, I've been either awakened from sleep, or I've been impressed suddenly with an impression, to pray for somebody. I didn't know why or who they, I didn't know what they would be going through at that moment, but I've done so. A few occasions, I've had occasion to learn that that probably was God, because of what they were doing at the time or going through.

It was a case that they needed to be prayed for at that time. If you pray in the Spirit, I believe this means not only praying motivated and directed by the Spirit, and empowered by the Spirit, but I think also this could include praying in tongues. I say that because Paul seemed to use that expression that way in 1 Corinthians 14, when he was talking about tongues.

He talked about praying in the Spirit, and singing in the Spirit, and blessing in the Spirit, and in the way he used it there in that context, he seems to refer to speaking in tongues. I don't know that everyone needs to speak in tongues, but if you do speak in tongues, it should be part of your prayer life. I believe you should pray in the Spirit, any way that the Spirit enables you to pray, and that would include in tongues, if that's one of the ways that you pray.

I have, the Bible says when you pray in tongues, you don't know what you're praying. You don't know what you're saying. Your understanding is unfruitful, but your spirit prays.

And as I understand it, when I pray in tongues, I don't know what specifically I'm saying, or what's being communicated, but a lot of times I have an impression of the general subject that I'm praying about. At least I know what burden is on my heart. I know who's on my mind.

And I don't know, but I suspect that when I feel burdened by the Lord to pray for somebody, and when I pray in tongues, that I'm sure that God wisely puts into those prayers the content that is relevant to the burden that I have. And therefore I suspect, because Paul talks about times when we don't know what to pray for as we ought to, about the Spirit intercedes through groans and utterances too deep for utterance,

probably not specifically referring to tongues in that place, but nonetheless speaking of the phenomenon of the Spirit burdening our hearts for certain things that we don't even know how to articulate prayers for. And yet the Holy Spirit formulates petitions according to the will of God concerning those things that we groan over.

And I personally would extrapolate from that that when there's a burden, and we're speaking in tongues and don't know what we're praying for, we don't know what we're praying about, I would think that even through that means, the Holy Spirit is also addressing those burdens according to the will of God. And I've said earlier, the need for prayer, and even to fast and pray and to lose sleep and pray and so forth, but what are we supposed to pray? And what relevance does prayer have to warfare? Well, look over at Matthew chapter 6 where Jesus taught us what we sometimes call the Lord's Prayer. You'll see that when Jesus taught about prayer, he taught about prayer largely with a warfare motif dominating it.

In Matthew chapter 6 we have Matthew's version, Luke also has a version recorded of what we usually call the Lord's Prayer. It's been pointed out that it probably shouldn't be called the Lord's Prayer since the Lord didn't pray this prayer. He taught the disciples to pray it, but I won't be picky about that.

Luke's version is in Luke 11, verses 2 through 4. It's almost the same with a few variations in wording. But in Matthew 6, 9 it says Jesus said, In this manner therefore pray, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Now I might just add that that last sentence is not found in the Alexandrian text.

Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. There are some manuscripts that omit that entire sentence. However, whether Jesus included that sentence or not, we can't prove from the available text, but those very words, or very similar words to those, are found in David's prayer when he dedicated the stuff that had been donated by the people for the building of the temple.

David didn't build the temple, but he did take a collection among the people to leave it to his son, Solomon, to be able to build the temple. And David prayed on the occasion of this donation. And in 1 Chronicles chapter 29, verse 11, David said, Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty, for all that is in heaven and in earth are yours.

Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head over all. You'll find there, yours, or thine, is the kingdom. Thine is the power.

Thine is the glory. He says this to God. David says that in 1 Chronicles 29, verse 11.

If Jesus did not repeat those words at the end of the Lord's Prayer, at least they are biblical words for praying. David prayed them. And therefore, I will not try to settle the question, which can probably never be settled sufficiently, as to whether those words are originally part of Matthew's Gospel or not.

But they are biblical words. They are used in prayer elsewhere in Scripture, so I don't have any problem including them when I pray this prayer. As a matter of fact, this prayer that we call the Lord's Prayer, itself, I believe you can pray these exact words effectively and powerfully, and just recite that prayer.

But one of the problems with it that I personally have found, and I suspect I'm not alone, is that once you memorize any prayer, even the best of prayers, it's hard to say it and keep your mind on what you're saying. Whether it's, now I lay me down to sleep, or God is great, God is good, thank you for this food, amen. I mean, these kind of things that little children memorize to say.

I mean, you say, okay, it's time to pray. Who wants to pray for food? Okay, you do it. And if a child rattles off a memorized prayer, they might mean it or not.

In fact, they might not even know whether they mean it or not. I've noticed this because I grew up with memorized prayers at mealtime and so forth. Our children, by the way, all know how to pray, and we haven't taught them any memorized prayers.

Although we have taught them the Lord's Prayer, we don't use an exact recitation of this prayer in our prayer lives, generally. Although I sometimes do myself. But it is a challenge to me.

When I pray this prayer, I have to say, okay, let me think about this. What does this mean? What does this line actually say? What is it meaning? And sometimes it's easier just to make up a prayer along the same lines than to even just pray this prayer and make sure I'm not slipping into the mode of just rattling off something long ago memorized. And we know very well that, for example, in the Catholic Church, where they refer to this prayer as the Our Father, sometimes for penance, or sometimes in order to have some confession of fault to the priest, they might be informed that in order to get right with God, what they need to do is say, let's say, for example, 20 Hail Marys and 30 Our Fathers.

And what that means is they rattle off this memorized thing, this Hail Mary little saying, and then this prayer also, 30 times. You know, I mean, talk about vain repetitions. In this context, Jesus said, when you pray, don't use vain repetitions.

He said that just in his teaching on prayer in this very place. Verse... Where does he say that? Is it verse 5 or 6? 7. 7. When you pray, do not use vain repetitions, but pray like

this. And so they take the prayer that he taught us to pray and make a vain repetition out of it.

And by the way, Catholics are not alone in this. Protestants don't just rattle off 30 Our Fathers in order to, you know, get total forgiveness for sin or something. But many Protestants do pray this prayer routinely.

And while I say pray it routinely, I don't mean that negatively. If you prayed this prayer every night before you went to bed or every day or every week at church if it was prayed by the congregation, this is not necessarily a bad thing. It can be a very good thing.

But the question is, are you thinking about what it's saying? Because there's a difference between praying and just saying a prayer. To say a prayer that you memorize is not necessarily praying. Now, I look at this prayer not so much as a prayer that Jesus wanted his disciples to memorize and recite the exact words, but he actually said pray in this manner.

In this manner means along these lines, like this. He didn't say pray this prayer. He said pray in this manner.

This prayer provides a sampling, a pattern, of the kind of prayer that you're supposed to pray. Now, I've learned a great deal about prayer just from meditating on this particular prayer and seeing what kinds of things are included and what things are not included. I find it interesting that you do not find in it the phrase, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Just a plain Amen. That doesn't mean that we're not supposed to say in Jesus' name. I've talked about that earlier.

But I just find it's interesting what's not in the prayer. There's not much in the way of direct intercession for other people. And there's nothing, as far as I can tell, in terms of exactly Thanksgiving for anything specific.

Though I must say that in my own prayer life, Thanksgiving plays a major role. In fact, the Bible says enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise. But there are times in which prayer and thanksgiving are mentioned together as if they're two different things.

I think that offering prayer is one thing and offering thanksgiving is another, but they should be done together at times. You know, it's interesting how many ideas there are people have about prayer. There's something I've heard for years, and I heard it recently again from someone just the other day, and I've just noticed how normative this idea is when people say, well, prayer is a two-way conversation.

I'm sure you've all heard that somewhere because everyone says this. Prayer is a two-way conversation. Why do you do all the talking when you pray? Why don't you give God

a chance to talk back, etc.? I mean, this is a... I've heard this for years and years, and for a long time I thought, oh yeah, that makes sense.

It's a conversation with God. You talk a little, then you be quiet and let him talk a little, then you talk a little, and that's what prayer is. Well, let me just say that after hearing that for many years, I decided to find out if there's a biblical warrant for that statement, and to my knowledge, there is not.

Now, there is biblical warrant for God talking to people, and I have no doubt that God talks to people, and I believe he's talked to me. But I don't know anywhere in the Bible where it's called prayer when God is talking to someone. And nor do I ever read in the Bible that people's prayers were always accompanied by God answering back.

Many times God spoke to people when they weren't praying, and many times people prayed and there's no record of God talking back to them. You can read the actual prayers that are recorded in the Scripture, and I don't know that you will very often find God actually answering back. On occasion it happens.

On one occasion, Jesus prayed out loud, Father, glorify thy name, and a voice right out of heaven said, I have glorified it, and I'll glorify it again. But that's an unusual situation. Most of the prayers that you read of the apostles, the only answer God gave to the prayer of the apostles was He shook the room and filled it with the Holy Spirit.

But what I'm saying is that this classic teaching that prayer is two-way conversation with God, the Bible nowhere defines prayer as two-way conversation with God. I'm not saying that two-way conversation with God is not possible. I believe it is.

But that's not what the Bible calls prayer. Prayer is talking to God. Prayer is asking for things from God.

God may choose to speak back on the occasion that you're praying, or He may not. He may choose to speak to you on occasions when you're not praying. That's fine.

He does that in the Bible too. But what I'm saying is without seeking to diminish the fact that you can hear from God and God can speak to you, I don't want to perpetuate this, I think, false notion that you haven't really prayed unless it's been a two-way conversation. That's not the way prayer is used in the Bible.

The Bible does not speak of prayer as a two-way conversation. Prayer is what we do to God. God doesn't pray back to us.

Prayer is when a person comes to God with requests and needs and asks God to fulfill them. That's prayer. There may be other aspects of our relation with God which include God speaking to us and us offering Thanksgiving and us doing other... I mean, there may be a whole complex of activities that go on in a person's interaction with God, but not all

of them are called prayer.

Prayer is when you ask God for something, principally. That's principally what prayer is. It appears that praise may well be part of prayer because the opening and closing lines of this prayer seem to have more of the... more of the nature of praise than of petition.

Petition is when you're asking for something. The prayer opens, Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name. Now, hallowed be your name sounds like a petition.

He's asking for something to be a reality, that God's name would be hallowed. On the other hand, it's a petition that kind of is more of an... more of an exclamation than it is a request. In Old Testament times, we find there were very typical ways of addressing a king.

Typically, in the Persian and the Babylonian empires, when anyone addressed the king, they'd say, Oh, king, live forever. Well, that wasn't really a true petition. It was more of an expression that I am so loyal to you, I wish you would never die.

But it doesn't really translate into a real petition that the king will live forever. No one really expected that to happen. We need to recognize the usage of figures of speech and so forth.

And hallowed be your name might be an actual petition, but it might also more be a declaration that I regard your name as hallowed. I want to honor your name. I declare the sacredness and the honorableness and the loftiness of who you are.

An expression like hallowed be your name could be more of a declaration in a sense, than a petition. It's really hard for me to know. I'm not sure which it is.

But nonetheless, what I'm saying is hallowed be thy name sounds a little bit more like an utterance of praise, an ascription of glory to God, or of hallowedness to God, than an actual request for something. On the other hand, there's certainly no reason why we shouldn't pray that God's name would be hallowed more than it is among the men and women that he's created. We certainly would desire that God be hallowed in our own hearts and in the hearts of others.

But likewise, the last line of it, yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, isn't so much a request for something as a declaration. It's as if the prayer opens and closes with some kind of declaration, some kind of a faith thing, before and after the petitions are offered. Now most of the Lord's Prayer, as we refer to it, is asking for stuff, asking for specific things to be done, to happen.

But it appears that prayer begins with some form of acknowledgement of God's sacred uniqueness and so forth. I mean, to call him our Father, which art in heaven, is itself a radical thing to say at the beginning of a prayer. The Jews didn't talk that way.

They didn't call God our Father, not in their prayers. But Jesus introduced that idea, that we come to God as one would come to a father, one who actually cares for them, one who actually is not, you know, wanting to have you bend his arm to do the right thing for you, but like a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him. And if your earthly father's being evil and how to give good gifts to your children, how much does your heavenly father want to give good gifts to his children? These are the things Jesus taught.

So coming to God as to a father, as one who's not going to be a reluctant giver, as one who's already mindful and eager to fulfill the kinds of things that we need, acknowledging him as a father, and yet one who's in heaven. He's not an earthly father. He's not down at our level.

He's not our pal. He's not our buddy. He's as high above us as heaven is above the earth.

He is lofty. He is exalted. He is higher than we are.

He's a father toward whom reverence is owed and hallowedness in the way we speak of his name. All of these things are simply telling us how to think about God and how to acknowledge God when we come to him in prayer. We think of him on one hand as one who's got our interests at heart, like a father, but not too chummy.

Not too irreverent. Not too down to earth. He's our father in heaven with a very sacred name, a very sacred title and rank.

He's much higher than we, and we acknowledge this at the outset in our prayers. We don't come to him demanding. We don't come to him saying, OK, God, here's my shopping list, and I expect you to have this done by later today.

I mean, some people talk as if that's how we're supposed to act. Lay claim on the promises of God. Demand it.

Don't let God say no on this matter, or whatever. As if you're supposed to be aggressively twisting God's arm and saying, God, I'm not going to let you go. Now, I have said that Jacob's wrestling with God and saying I won't let you go unless you bless me is in the context of a situation where God wanted to bless him.

It was a very mysterious thing that happened there. I have said that there are times when we need to wrestle with God as it were too, but it's not so much that we're wrestling to persuade God. God would not be persuaded no matter how we wrestle.

We're not strong enough to break God's arms if he doesn't want to do something. That wrestling is more of a figurative thing. It has to do with wrestling in our own soul in prayer with God.

It means that we're trying to overcome some particular obstacle that stands between us and the blessing of God, and that we're not going to be content. We're not going to relax our efforts until we have the blessing that we know God wants us to have. But our approach to God must in fact be reverent, must be submissive, respectful.

Now, when we actually begin praying for stuff, what comes first? Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Now, does this have anything to do with warfare? Well, it certainly does if earth is the domain of the kingdom of darkness and we're praying that the kingdom of God and his will will be manifest on earth as it already is in heaven. You know, that's an interesting thing in light of the fact that Jesus said to the disciples that they would bind on earth but has already been bound in heaven.

There are things that are now a reality in heaven but are not yet made real on earth. There are accomplished facts in heaven, but those facts have not been realized. They've not been made to be acknowledged.

They've not been enforced on earth yet because that's the task of the church to do. And part of the way we do it is by prayer. And what do we pray? We pray your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The things that are already your will that's accomplished in heaven, we want to see that accomplished down here. We want to see the things that are bound in heaven, we want to see them bound on earth. We want to see the things that are loosed in heaven, we want to see those loosed on earth.

And by our prayers, and by our petitions, by our inviting God to come and do his will on earth as it's already done in heaven, we are bringing to pass something. We need to realize that prayer actually is getting something done. It's not just an exercise in stress management.

I've actually heard people say, well, when you pray it doesn't change anything but it just changes you. And that's good. You know, you kind of get all stressed out and you forget about important things and you get your focus wrong.

And if you just go spend a little time in prayer, kind of get refocused things and remember there's a God out there and kind of resubmit yourself to his will and you just get feeling better and stuff. And when you come out of there you feel all encouraged and that's what prayer is for. It's sort of a therapeutic for the soul.

It's not really supposed to get anything done. It just changes you. I've heard many Christians tell me that.

I'm amazed. I've read this in books from Christians. As if there was some biblical basis for what they said.

There is not. Prayer is asking God for things so that he will give them. You have not because you ask not.

Means that if you had prayed God would have done it. If you don't pray he doesn't do it. Doesn't that mean that prayer is supposed to change something? That the results of prayer are to be realized? That when you pray you are accomplishing something? I think Christians often devote very little time to prayer these days.

Partly because there are so many other activities calling for our attention. And prayer is the one thing that when we are doing it it seems like we are not doing anything. I mean I know that when I'm out taking care of business and doing my responsibilities I know I'm getting something done.

I know there is another thing on my list of things to do that gets checked off. That's done. That's done.

I'm getting stuff done. But when I'm praying it seems like I'm taking time out from getting anything done and just you know certainly the devil tries to put it in my mind this is just a religious exercise. You don't need this right now.

You're doing okay. Let's get back to business and get some stuff done. Let's go out and get some work done.

And it's such a lie of the devil because you never accomplish more than when you pray. If you pray in faith. We are expected to work.

We are expected to get stuff done by our activity. But there are things that have to get done that we can't do. Only God can do.

There are things that go beyond the power of human beings to accomplish but they have to get accomplished. And we're commissioned to see to it that they do get accomplished. But how can they without us praying and asking God to do it.

And when if prayer moves the hand of God as the Bible indicates and God's hand holds the world then we do more to effect change in the world and to accomplish victories when we are praying than when we're doing virtually anything else. We are activating as it were God's power in a situation where His power might not otherwise be operating in order to accomplish something. By all means resist the temptation to think when you're praying that you're wasting time and there's so many important things that need to be done.

How dare you spend so much time doing nothing here just praying. Well if prayer was nothing but a personal therapeutic if prayer was just something to get your heart refocused then it might be a good argument. If you're doing okay don't bother with prayer.

There's a lot of things to do. You're focused okay. Forget about wasting time doing that.

But if prayer is actually getting something done in the spiritual realm actually by inviting God to have His will on earth is going to change the fact of whether it is or isn't. You know a lot of people just assume since God is sovereign everything that God wants happens anyway. God's in charge.

He makes everything happen. But why then would Jesus teach us to pray and presumably on a regular basis this kind of prayer. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Why bother expending so much breath and time and energy saying that if it's going to happen automatically whether we say it or not. Why bother to pray for that which is inevitable anyway. It seems evident that Jesus is teaching us to pray for that because that is the way that it will be done.

If we don't pray it it might not be done. If we don't ask we might not have. The will of God may not be done if Christians don't pray for it to be done.

Now when we pray Thy kingdom come and Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven it is implied that none of these things necessarily would happen if we didn't pray this. If it's going to happen without me praying it why bother praying it. But if I pray it it will happen.

If I don't pray it it might not happen. Someone else will have to pray it. But if the kingdom is to come we know the Bible teaches the kingdom already has come but it keeps coming.

It's growing. It's spreading. It's coming more all the time.

The kingdom will not have fully come until such a time as the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and He reigns forever and ever. That has not occurred yet. The kingdom has been planted like a mustard seed and it is continually spreading and growing and our prayers are to be to encourage and bring about the further advance of the conquests of the kingdom of God that the kingdom may come into this region where it has not yet happened.

In this area where Satan's dominion has never been even challenged may the kingdom of God come there. May God's rule extend thus far. And by praying it we bring it to pass.

I'm not saying that saying it one time makes it happen instantly. I'm saying that it is through the faith prayers of God's people that these things that God has determined to be accomplished will be accomplished. Without the prayers there will not be the same results.

The Bible says that Jesus went to Nazareth and He marveled that they had so little faith and He could do no mighty works there because of their lack of faith. There wasn't anyone who believed God. There wasn't anyone who was moving God's hand.

And therefore it didn't move. There were few things that He was able to accomplish there. He was limited by the lack of faith on the part of His people to expect and to pray for things to happen.

And so the Christian by being instructed to pray for God's kingdom to come what does that mean? Your kingdom come. Well, that's always going to be at the expense of the kingdom of darkness. The kingdom of God is simply the rule of God over individuals.

But before the rule of God comes over those individuals they are ruled by Satan. If the kingdom of God takes over that person Satan loses somebody. As the kingdom of God takes new territory the kingdom of Satan loses territory.

This is warfare. This is expansion. This is invasion.

This is conquest. Prayer is a tool of conquest. We pray for the advance of the kingdom of God and for His will to be done where currently the devil's will is being done instead.

Where is the will of God done today? Well, it's done in heaven. That's one thing. Where is the will of the devil done? Well, wherever it's done it's on the planet earth.

But if we pray that the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven that's going to crowd out the will of the devil. Big time. If God's will is thoroughly done on earth as it is thoroughly done in heaven there won't be much room left for the devil's will to be done.

This is crowding out the powers of darkness. This is taking territory from the enemy. This is spiritual aggression when we pray.

Now, he does allow us to pray give us this day our daily bread. I've heard people say I'd never pray for anything for myself. I've heard people say I really desperately need a car.

And I say have you ever prayed about it? And they say oh no, I'd be selfish to pray for a car. I'd never pray for anything for myself. I wonder why they say that.

I wonder what teaching they've been under. I'm not sure what kind of teaching would be out there that makes people think they can't pray for something for themselves. I've actually heard people say that when Jesus was tempted by the devil to turn rocks into bread because he was starving and in trying to answer the question why would that be wrong? What's wrong with Jesus turning rocks into bread? Is that a sin? Is there some law in the Ten Commandments you shall not turn rocks into bread? Why shouldn't Jesus do that? Why is that a temptation to sin? And the answer that many commentators have given was simply well, he would then be using his miraculous power for a selfish reason.

That's what they actually say. They say that Jesus' power was never used to meet his own needs. It was always used to meet other people's needs.

I've heard this talk so many times that I suppose other people have heard it a lot. Maybe that's giving the impression that oh it would be wrong for me to use the power of prayer to meet my needs. It must be just only for other people's needs.

Well let me tell you something. Jesus sometimes used the miraculous power for his own needs too. Once there was a temple tax payment needed to be paid.

He told Peter go out and throw a hook in the water. First fish comes up, there's a coin in his mouth that paid my tax and yours. Jesus used a miracle to pay his own taxes.

And there'd be no reason in the world why he couldn't use a miracle to feed himself if he's starving to death. The reason it was wrong for Jesus to turn rocks into bread was because he was supposed to be fasting. The Holy Spirit had led him into the wilderness to fast and to be tempted.

And the Holy Spirit had not instructed him to stop fasting. The Father who gave him the command to fast had not given him the command to break the fast. The devil was giving him the command to break his fast.

That's what would have been wrong. That's why Jesus responded by saying man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. I'm not going to live simply to keep my body alive by putting bread in my stomach.

More important I need to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. God has not sent any word to me that I should break my fast yet and therefore I'm not going to turn these rocks into bread and eat them. It had everything to do with submission to the will of God.

In that case fasting was the will of God. Turning rocks into bread would have been a wrong thing to do when God wants you to fast. But it's not wrong for the power of God to be invoked by the believer for his own needs.

Jesus specifically said pray this prayer. Give us this day our daily bread. I'm praying for my food.

I'm praying for my needs. And by extension I think any other thing I need I can pray for. As a matter of fact there are two ways of getting something done.

One is to do it yourself and the other is to pray. As I understand it we are as Christians committed only to the will of God. Therefore I don't want to obtain anything that God doesn't want me to obtain.

If he wants me to have money perhaps he wants me to go out and work. I can get money

that way. If he doesn't want me to go out and work and he still wants me to have money I have to pray and ask him to give it to me.

But if I don't think God wants me to have money I shouldn't pray for it and I shouldn't work for it either. But if I do believe God wants me to have it I should be willing either to work or pray for it whichever is appropriate to my calling. What I'm saying is if I need a new car or I need a car which I by the way don't but if I had a sense need and I really believe it's the will of God if I should have a car there should be no reason I shouldn't pray for God to give me a car.

Why not? I'd work for it and earn money and buy a car. Why shouldn't I pray for a car? On the other hand if I felt like having a car was a selfish thing and wasn't the will of God well I shouldn't pray for it and I also shouldn't work for it. I shouldn't buy one either.

Even if I could earn the money I shouldn't. Because I should neither work nor pray for what isn't the will of God but I should work and pray for what is. And to have daily bread I have reason to believe is the will of God.

I'm a soldier. I'm a soldier asking for my rations. It's interesting that he tells us to pray for our daily bread not our monthly or weekly or yearly supply.

Many people store up food for very extended periods or have goods laid up for retirement or something like that for years in advance. And I don't know that it's always wrong to do that but Jesus didn't indicate that that's what we are allowed to pray for. I shouldn't be able to pray God please provide enough that I can have several T-bills waiting for me when I retire.

That's not what I'm supposed to be praying for. I don't know that God wants me to retire. I don't know that God wants me to live long enough to retire.

I don't know that but I know I need bread today. I know I'm here now. I know that today I have certain needs.

I can pray for those. Tomorrow if I wake up in the morning and am going to survive another day I know I'll have needs then. I can pray for those too.

I don't know that for God to provide for me for the next 25 years is His will. I'm not sure I'm going to live another day. But I know I'm alive now and I know I need to eat.

I know I have responsibilities. I know I have to get somewhere. I need a car.

I know I need clothing. I know I need to feed the family. I need to shelter my family.

These are my responsibilities. For me to pray about these things is quite appropriate. It's not selfish because everything I do and everything I have is for the Kingdom of God.

Therefore I'm only asking that I be given the adequate equipment and supplies to carry out the will. That's not selfish praying. Now it is selfish praying if in fact that first premise is not the case.

That is if everything you do and everything you have is not for the Kingdom of God well then of course that changes the whole picture. But why should there ever be a Christian of whom that could be said? That everything they have and everything they do is not for the Kingdom of God. Christianity is total commitment.

And if every moment of mine is God's moment if every dollar of mine is God's dollar if everything I have is the Lord's every talent, every gift, every skill then I have no shame in asking God to sustain my life to give me more of those dollars to give me more opportunities to give me more skills to give me more of whatever I need to do His will. Soldiers have to be fed on the battlefield and there is nothing selfish about them eating the rations that are given to them. And for a Christian to pray that God will continue to supply his daily need in the context of his service to God that is not selfish praying and in fact it is praying for the will of God to be done.

If it is the will of God for you to live it must be the will of God for you to have food today. And therefore it is continuing to pray in the will of God. Now when he says pray forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors we already have examined how that relates to spiritual warfare.

If we don't forgive we give advantage to the enemy. And if we aren't forgiven we also give advantage to the enemy because he can accuse us and he is the accuser of the brethren he neutralizes us he condemns us. We need to have forgiveness received from God and we have to have forgiveness extended to others.

Both of these have very central ramifications in terms of our struggle against Satan as we have sought to observe. Also do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. Now that too has very obvious ramifications about spiritual warfare.

The whole prayer is about spiritual warfare. The whole prayer is an act of spiritual warfare. Praying that we will be led out of temptation delivered out of the power of the enemy.

We are praying that God's kingdom will advance. That is the offensive. Later we get around to talking about the defensive.

It is interesting that we ask for our own forgiveness for our own protection last. We pray first of all for the kingdom of God and the will of God to be done worldwide. We pray for the world mission before we even pray about our own survival and participation in it.

But we get around to both. The fact of the matter is that prayer as Jesus taught it is an exercise of spiritual warfare. It is an engagement of the enemy.

It is an attack against the enemy. It is an invoking of God's power and God's will to move in where the enemy's will has previously been done. This is what spiritual aggression looks like.

And what it is. This last line, assuming it is authentic and original. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

It is almost an affirmation of faith that what we prayed for is in fact reality. It is almost like we are laying claim on it as a fact. That it is true.

That what we have asked we know to be the will of God because it is His to do. It is for His glory. It is for His kingdom's sake that we do this.

It is His power that we are invoking. And it is a statement of assurance. You know many times people are driven to prayer by despair or by a crisis.

We see it in the Psalms all the time. David starts the Psalm out saying How long, O Lord, will you hide from me? How many are those that rise up against me? Those that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head. Why do the wicked prosper? Why is the righteous driven under their feet? You can see that David is driven to prayer by crises.

That is pretty normal. We should pray whether we are in crisis or not. But it is a pretty universal thing.

Even atheists pray when they are in crisis. Prayer is often legitimately motivated by a crisis. But what is so interesting in the Psalms if you have paid attention to them and studied them is that in all those Psalms that start out with David complaining or begging or fearful and crying out in a crisis almost every one of them I think I found two or three exceptions out of maybe probably over 100 Psalms almost all of them end up with what? Some kind of a statement of affirmation.

God will redeem his people. God is faithful to those who call on him. I mean these are the kinds of ways that he closes these Psalms.

I wish I could instantly turn to one of them that I know to be like this. I am speaking more of a general trend which is observable. And I have at other times actually read the Psalms seeing if there are any that are not this way.

And there are a few. There are a few. But in general what you find is that David starts out in something very close to despair and calls out to God lays his petitions out to God makes his case and then closes with affirmations that God is going to take care of this.

Feeling much better now. Know that God I know that I prayed God's will. I know that he is going to do his thing.

He is going to take care of this business. And that is kind of how I understand this last affirmation in the Lord's Prayer. After you have prayed for the kingdom after you have prayed for God's will and by the way many times you will be praying that in a situation where it does not seem very encouraging at all.

We pray these things often because it does not appear that these things are happening now. But the prayers ended with an affirmation of faith just like many of the Psalms are that God is in control of this situation. God is sovereign.

God is taking care of it. We are releasing him. We are inviting him.

We are begging him to do it. And then we leave the place of prayer with the burden lifted. Many times I have heard someone describe it this way that God allows us to be heavily burdened with some need or some crisis or something someone is going through that we care about.

So the burden becomes so great that we cannot stand it. It drives us to our knees. And we get on our knees and we pray and we pray until the burden is gone.

And that is how kind of very typical prayer life is. That God puts his burden on you. Burdens for his kingdom.

Burdens for his people. Burdens for your own needs. For those of people you love.

And those burdens are there to drive you to prayer. They are in one sense just an awareness of the power of the enemy and the need to invoke the power of God. When you are burdened about something you are seeing usually something where the enemy appears to be winning.

And it drives you to prayer. And you should pray until that burden is gone. Some saints not in the Bible but in Christian history have referred to that phenomenon as praying through.

I don't know if that I think that might be kind of a Pentecostal expression too. Although I am not sure it is restricted to Pentecostals. I have heard a lot of people talk about praying through.

And it is not just praying. It is praying through. You pray all the way through the thing.

You are going through a situation where you pray about it and you pray until you get all the way through it. When the burden is lifted. When you are given the assurance that God has answered.

That is what I read in this statement. Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. That is a very affirming positive encouraged attitude expressed there.

And rightly so. It is not a wrong one. It is totally in agreement with reality.

But the suggestion here is that we begin by praising God. We lay our petitions out which happen to be petitions all concerned with the fortunes of His kingdom and the advance of His purposes. And we end up by an affirmation of praise and what? Assurance that God has under control.

Praise by the way is often misunderstood. Praise I believe is largely just affirming God's attributes. Praising God for His greatness.

For His power. For His holiness. For His goodness.

For His mercy. Whatever. I mean praising someone is talking about them.

Sometimes thanksgiving and praise may be confused with one another. You thank somebody for something they have done. You praise them for what they are.

There is a place for both in our speaking to God. We enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. At one level people are required to be thankful to God.

God does all kinds of things for us and we should thank Him for them. But at a deeper level of intimacy we are not just aware of all the nice things God has done. We are aware of the kind of God He is.

And we express appreciation for that in what is called praise. It is one thing to say thank you God for meeting my needs. It is another thing to say God you are so merciful and generous and so gracious toward the undeserving person like myself.

To speak of God's own traits is what praise is I believe. And praise is a powerful thing. The devil just does not respond well to God being praised.

I am not sure really what happens in the spiritual realm in praise. I do know that it says in Psalm 22 that God inhabits the praises of His people. I don't know exactly what all that means.

But it certainly suggests that it invokes the presence of God. Perhaps the power of God. When we pray.

Where is that verse? It is in Psalm 22. It says in verse 3 you are wholly enthroned in the praises of Israel. The King James says you inhabit the praises of Israel.

The point is however that the praises of Israel are effective somehow in invoking God's power and God's presence into the battle. We know of at least the case of Jehoshaphat who was surrounded by enemies too numerous to fight. And God through a prophet said just send out the musicians and the singers and I will take care of the rest.

So they went out and they praised God in the beauty of holiness it says. This is in 2 Chronicles chapter 20. And God routed the enemy as He was praised by His people.

You know in Psalm 8 it says of God that God out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has ordained strength because of the adversary and the enemy. God has ordained strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. And when the children of Israel the little children were praising Jesus and the Pharisees rebuked Jesus for this He said have you not read in your law out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.

Interestingly in Psalm 8 it actually says out of the mouths of babes and sucklings you have ordained strength. Jesus said out of the mouths of babes and sucklings you have perfected praise. Perfected praise is equivalent to ordaining strength against the enemy.

If you compare Jesus quotation of that Psalm which is Psalm 8 with its actual wording He indicated that strength against the enemies is related to the issue of praising. Praising. There is an interesting Psalm maybe we can close with this Psalm 149 I don't know if we have time to do this.

Got only about a minute left I think. But in Psalm 149 look at verse 2 and following Let Israel rejoice in their Maker. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

Let them praise His name with the dance. Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and the harp. For the Lord takes pleasure in His people.

He will beautify the humble with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory. Let them sing aloud on their beds.

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron to execute on them the written judgment. This honor have all His saints. What honor have the saints got? To bind the rulers of the Gentiles.

We don't do that physically. But there are spiritual rulers in heavenly places. We enforce the binding of Satan that is accomplished in heaven.

We enforce it on earth. Through spiritual warfare I believe. Not by saying I bind you Satan but by directing our comments to God.

By the high praises of God in our mouth and by the two-edged sword that is in our hand. We execute on them the judgment that is written. God has already written their epithet.

God has already written the doom of the powers. But we execute upon them that written judgment by the praises of God and by the word of God in our hand. And this is our

aggressive posture in warfare that is essential if the job is going to be done anytime soon.

Well we've run out of time. Many more things to say but not necessary that they have to be said. We'll consider that's all the time we can devote to this subject.

Enough to get you started at least.