

NCMI EQUIP South Africa 2013

Session 4



Spiritual Warfare

by Grant Crawford

For a very wise man, Solomon did a very stupid thing - he married 700 women. These women came from foreign lands and brought with them their foreign gods. Solomon introduced these into his very home and his land. And for a season of his life it took his heart away from God.

It seems that in God's grace he straightened out in the end (read Ecclesiastes) but his kids weren't so fortunate. With all this syncretism they grew up confused and ended up being delinquents. Eventually he died and his son Rehoboam took his place. He never listened to the wise old men that were around his dad but rather some young blokes, which caused him to be harsh on his people and they wanted to revolt.

But in Egypt and in exile was Jeroboam who now saw his chance to take over the Kingdom. You'll see in 1 Kings 12 that the result was a split in Israel and from that point onward the kingdom was always divided. Jeroboam ruled over ten of the tribes in the northern areas – which is called Israel in our Bibles – while Rehoboam ruled the two remaining tribes down south – which is called Judah in our Bibles. But Judah had Jerusalem, a place of worship and pilgrimage, and this worried Jeroboam. So he declared that two cities – Dan and Bethel – would be replacements for Jerusalem and his people could worship there.

It didn't take long for these places to become debauched and full of idol worship. God saw that the northern tribes were in a shocking state and so sent his prophets to them – Elijah and, later on, Elisha.

Jeroboam was succeeded by a succession of bad kings until Ahab was crowned. If you look at Israel's history there are two very conspicuously bad kings - Jeroboam and Ahab. Ahab's big mistake was that he followed the advice of his great, great grandfather Solomon - he leaned over the Phoenician fence and got himself a wife by the name of Jezebel.

She was a nasty piece of work and they formed a toxic combination. She dragged his heart after Baal worship and even to massacring his own family. She was the one who really ruled Israel and you see her pulling all the strings. Jezebel weaved a spell over the northern tribes of Israel even up to her death.

2 Kings 9:30 – 37

“30 When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it. And she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out of the window. 31 And as Jehu entered the gate, she said, “Is it peace, you Zimri, murderer of your master?” 32 And he lifted up his face to the window and said, “Who is on my side? Who?” Two or three eunuchs looked out at him. 33 He said, “Throw her down.” So they threw her down. And some of her blood splattered on the wall and on the horses, and they trampled on her. 34 Then he went in and ate and drank. And he said, “See now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter.” 35 But when they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. 36 When they came back and told him, he said, “This is the word of the Lord, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, ‘In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel, 37 and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as dung on the face of the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, This is Jezebel.’”

Here's the macro picture – Israel is in a mess, just like the world we live in today. So what does God do? He sends his prophets and he brings in his Kingdom. If you look at Israel's history you see several high watermarks of the supernatural. Sometimes Israel doesn't hear from God for 100 years, but sometimes there are supernatural outpourings where God's Kingdom is breaking out. This was one of those times.

God calls his prophets to speak into this messed up context and bring in his Kingdom and his glory. But while that is busy happening there is a resistance against the supernatural – a counterfeit. We see it in the spirit of Jezebel which even intimidated Elijah.

Jezebel walks off the pages of history here but this isn't the last time we hear about her in the scriptures. Jesus referred to a prophetess in the church of Thyatira (Revelation 2:19 - 21) and links her to Jezebel. He says this:

“19 ‘I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. 20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practise sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.’”

He wasn't talking about a re-incarnation, but the same spirit that was behind Jezebel seemed to be behind this woman in the church who called herself a prophetess. Often opposition to the supernatural comes under the guise of those in the church who may even be teaching others.

Jesus says he gave her time to repent. Isn't that gracious? He sees his church being dragged down into immorality and he sends Elijahs and Elishas into that, putting sign posts up, saying 'repent'. But she refuses to repent. And then he goes on to say how he's going to sort her out.

In spiritual warfare circles, Jezebel has probably become the most talked about Old Testament figure, wouldn't you agree? I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I think Jesus in this scripture is allowing us to see that there is a spiritual dimension. Let's look at that spiritual dimension.

Ephesians 2: 1 & 2

“1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience...”

Ephesians 3:10

“...so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”

Ephesians 6:12:

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

We can see that the Bible acknowledges we're in a spiritual war. Rulers and authorities here don't refer to presidents. Evil forces – Satan and his minions – are biblical and they're working.

But **Colossians 1:16** says:

"For by him [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him."

Even the evil authorities have their origin in the great Creator. But they turned their back on God. This is what the Christian church believes about demons:

- When demons afflict people, we have the authority to cast them out in Jesus' name.
- There are demons but they are of similar ilk and power to angels, not to God. Hollywood would have us believe there's a cosmic war between light and dark and God and the devil. But they're hopelessly wrong. It's demons versus angels and God presides unflustered above the lot.
- If every sangoma in this country plus every white witch were to curse you, the blood of Jesus and his name is sufficient to hold you and keep you. The power of God can do that.
- Whom the son sets free is free indeed. We no longer have to be afraid of being slaves to demonic power.
- Strongholds exist in people's minds. They can be fortified bastions of thinking against God and they *can* be torn down.
- Jesus became the curse so that you do not have to live under the curse.

But sometimes just a little bit of information is dangerous. I don't think this is because some parts of the Church are evil but rather ignorant. In this realm of spiritual warfare, let's have the Kingdom invade our thinking and expectation.

Weird stuff

The church has done some pretty weird stuff in the name of spiritual warfare. I'm going to provide several examples to illustrate this point. Let's look at them in the light of Scripture.

Demon-centred warfare rather than Christ centred warfare

There is a kind of spiritual warfare which focuses on the demonic rather than on Christ. Am I splitting hairs? Well, I know a church where the leadership noticed there was divisiveness going on, so they thought that there must be an evil spirit behind it. So they called a fast for a few weeks with the purpose of casting out Jezebel from their midst.

The problem with demon-centred warfare is it takes your eyes off Christ and onto demons. Instead of faith arising, fear sets in. After their fast the church actually split. Why? Because they weren't looking for Jesus, they were looking for Jezebel!

I can remember a time when I was about 19 years old and Ray Olivier, who was leading our church in Pietermaritzburg at the time, was leading a prayer meeting and he gave me the mic to pray. I laid hold of the spirit of Islam that night! I bound him; I cast him right over the border, through Malawi; he

bounced somewhere I think in Egypt; and then I chucked him into the Mediterranean sea! And I said "Glory!" and my veins were popping out. I chucked the mic back and the crowd was going for it and I thought "Boom! 'Maritzburg is free!"

Ray came up to me and, in his usual gentle way, put his arm around my shoulder and whispered into my ear: "Grant, next time you get the mic, my boy, pray to Jesus, not the devil."

I've got a friend who has a church with a war room. They've mapped zones where Jezebel sits and where the spirit of abortion sits and where even death sits. Now what's wrong with this? The focus.

I've got another friend who, when he planted his church, dug holes in the yard around the church building and buried stacks of Bibles because he wanted a safe zone where the devil couldn't come!

This is a serious matter. Have you heard guys praying and cursing the devil, shouting at him and calling him things like a 'toothless lion?' I have. Well, we read in Jude (vs 9) that, "...when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgement, but said, '*The Lord rebuke you.*'" Even the archangel Michael says, "God, sort the devil out." He doesn't swear and shout at him.

2 Peter 10 & 11 says the same thing: "...bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not heap abuse on such beings when bringing judgement on them from the Lord."

Is it wrong to cast out demons? No, of course not. When you see a demon you cast it out. When God gives you discernment about a principality or power, you deal with it. But God is speaking to you to do it; this isn't ghost-busting. In Acts 16:16 you see Paul being bugged for several days by a slave girl with a demon and he didn't just turn around and deal with it at her first comment. He wasn't focused on her. Eventually, when he got fed up, he cast the demon out of her.

There are two extremes. One says demons are so powerful that you don't address them and cast them out. Nonsense. Under the covering of Jesus and being seated with Him, you cast them out, and you wage war, but your eyes are on the throne. The other extreme is all about the demons.

I know some people who do 'house cleansing' – as if Jezebel has taken up residence in a house. If you feel God saying to you that you should take oil and anoint your house and pray, then of course do it. It's a prophetic thing God's asking you to do. But it's not a doctrine you set in place for the whole church to do! As if every time some real-estate changes hands, we've got to call in the Ghostbusters!

I had a guy once ask me to bless his new Mercedes and anoint it with oil. As if oil was going to provide some invisible protection. I said no and he left the church. It took ten years and he came back

again.

Sue and I travel a lot like many of you do. But when we go into a hotel room I don't say, "Wait at the door. There's a hotel bed here. Who knows what went on here? Maybe the people left but the demons stayed." No, as Anton Keyter put it*, when the room's dark and light comes, darkness flees!

If you really feel God is saying to you that you should pour oil onto something as a symbol of his presence, then I would never say that's wrong. God really does make us do some strange prophetic things sometimes. But what I'm saying is you can't do this and then make it a doctrine for the church. That's weird.

I went to an ecumenical prayer meeting once and they made all the men repent for all the sins that men have done against women all over the world. That's taking John 20:21 out of context, where Jesus said whoever you forgive he'll forgive. The proper context is when they persecute you and you look up to heaven and say, "Hold this not against them," it opens the grace of heaven for God to come deal with them, like it happened with Paul.

Generational Curses

Have you ever heard people saying something like, "The reason you keep getting caught up in porn is because of the curses of your grandfather?"

I once saw a family tree that came out of a deliverance counselling book. A friend of mine was filling it in and you had to identify your ancestors and their sins so you knew what to break. I asked him how he knew what sins his grandfather and great grandfather were involved in. He answered that he had discerned it and the Holy Spirit had told him. Well, I tore that thing up and said this is unbiblical – it's dishonouring your father! Noah had a son who did stuff like this and God wasn't happy with it.

The problem with all these things is there's an element of truth in them. But if you go wonky on them, fear sets in. This teaching of 'generational curses' comes from the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20: 4 – 6 where it says:

“4 You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation...”

* Also see <http://ncmigauteng.co.za/ordinary-to-extraordinary/>

But finish the sentence! It goes on to say, “...of those who hate me.” Of the household that hates God, sin is visited down the generations. You can often see addictions or abuse perpetuated. Secular psychologists say it's hereditary or it's because of the environment people grow up in, but the Bible suggests that there is a spiritual aspect to it. Sin is spiritual – it's contagious.

But the passage doesn't stop there either. It says “...but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

Even in Moses' day there was a distinction between the family that hated God and the family that loved God. Those that hated God experienced a perpetuation of a curse. Those who loved God saw his blessing.

My grandfather was a Freemason and my great grandparents were spiritualists. My grandfather used to tell us some weird stories! The teaching about generational curses says that the sins of the fathers are passed down to the third and fourth generation and in my context, that's me. So what happened to my family?

Well, my grandpa got saved at the end of his days and his wife gave her heart to the Lord when she was 35 years old – thanks to a Methodist midwife. From that day on she prayed over her family and every single descendent under my grandmother is born again, spirit-filled and loving Jesus. My brothers are both pastors. Yet we're the third generation, who should have been cursed. So what happened? The cross of Christ happened! He took the curse and broke it in our family!

I'd like to give you another illustration from **Ezekiel 18**:

The *word of the Lord* came to me:

2 ‘What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel:

“‘The parents eat sour grapes,

and the children’s teeth are set on edge”?’

3 ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. 4 For everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child – both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die.

5 ‘Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right.

6 He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel.

He does not defile his neighbour’s wife or have sexual relations with a woman during her period.

7 He does not oppress anyone, but returns what he took in pledge for a loan.

He does not commit robbery,
but gives his food to the hungry
and provides clothing for the naked.
8 He does not lend to them at interest
or take a profit from them.
He withholds his hand from doing wrong
and judges fairly between two parties.
9 He follows my decrees
and faithfully keeps my laws.
That man is righteous;
he will surely live,
declares the Sovereign Lord.

Then we see, in verse 10, it says:

10 ‘Suppose he has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these other things 11 (though the father has done none of them):

And it goes on to explain the evil things this son does. What does it say in verse 13?

Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he is to be put to death; his blood will be on his own head.

And then it talks of the third generation.

14 ‘But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things:

What does it say the outcome will be in verse 17?

*He will not die for his father’s sin; he will surely live.*¹⁸ But his father will die for his own sin, because he practised extortion, robbed his brother and did what was wrong among his people.
19 ‘Yet you ask, “Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?” Since the son has done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my decrees, he will surely live. 20 The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.

21 ‘But if a wicked person turns away from all the sins they have committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, that person will surely live; they will not die. 22 None

of the offences they have committed will be remembered against them. Because of the righteous things they have done, they will live. 23 Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?

24 'But if a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked person does, will they live? None of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness they are guilty of and because of the sins they have committed, they will die.

Even before we get to Jesus taking our curse we see the love and justice of God shining in the Old Testament. Proverbs 26 says, "An undeserved curse does not come to rest."

Jesus came to destroy the works of the evil one

1 John 3:8 says, "The reason the son of God was manifest was to destroy the works of the evil one." Then in **Colossians 2: 13, 14** it says:

"13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

Jesus put away the legal demands that have a right over you when you follow the prince of the air. He set them aside and nailed them to the cross. You've been made alive with the one who has triumphed over the evil rulers and authorities!

Ephesians 1 talks of how everything has been put under Jesus' feet and then in the very next chapter it says you're seated with him in heavenly places. It's only at the end of Ephesians, at chapter 6, that it talks about putting on the armour of God. We have a problem when we do it the other way around, where we think we can sort out the devil by ourselves. You are hidden in Christ – in him you take your stand and then everything is sorted.

You might say it's not that simple because there are patterns we sometimes see – a born again Christian sometimes looks like a bird who's been set free from a cage and flies around but then comes back to the cage and does the things his dad did. I can give you one or two cases like that. But this is what the Word says - the cage door is unlocked.

In Ephesians 4:26 – 27 Paul says, “...do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” (NIV.) He's talking to believers here. Now we heard from Alan Parfitt that just because you're running with Jesus it doesn't mean the water's always calm*. The forces of darkness are still coming up against you. So while you're never ever again the victim, having to helplessly submit to the curse of sin, it is possible that you can give the devil a foothold or that a stronghold can develop.

2 Corinthians 10 talks about a stronghold. It says:

“3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have *divine* power to demolish strongholds.”

Our war is not against that alcohol bottle or that image on the TV screen. There is a stronghold and our warfare is able to destroy it.

But what's a stronghold? It's not being possessed by a devil. 2 Corinthians 10:5 explains what a stronghold is:

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

A stronghold is a fortified argument against God. So while we're completely set free in Christ and are going to heaven, it's possible - because you're not perfect over night - that you can entertain thinking and arguments against God.

For example, with your finances you might really disagree that you should give people anything. You develop and fortify arguments against God. It's a stronghold that he wants to invade. You're not demonised, you're just not perfect. But if you leave those strongholds unattended they get stronger. Look how James talks about sin - you entertain it and when it's fully grown it gives birth to death (James 1:15). In other words, it kills the life of God in that area of your life.

How are strongholds broken down? Well, let's go back to this text in 2 Corinthians 10:4:

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have *divine* power to demolish strongholds.”

* Also see <http://ncmigauteng.co.za/getting-to-the-other-side/>

It's by the Spirit that we put to death the misdeeds of the flesh. (Also see Romans 8:13.) God leads us on a path of repentance. You don't need to go to another ten Bible studies to know you have an argument against God. You repent, that's all. Repent means to turn away from that way of thinking and looking at God and saying, "I trust you." That's where faith comes; you say, "I can't fix this, God. But you can. My life is in your hands."

When you pray for someone and are dealing with them, if they don't repent, that stronghold is going to stay no matter how much you scream.

There's a teaching that flutters around the world now and again that says Christians aren't convicted by the Holy Spirit about sin. It's nonsense. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, of righteousness and the judgement to come. And as he convicts us we turn to him and he allows us to put our faith in him. And he bursts into our world.

God's intent

We live in a darkened world and there *are* territorial spirits and all sorts of demons out there. But they are *under Jesus' feet* and *our position is in Christ*. Jesus has made a public spectacle of the devil – you're not the one that did that, Jesus did. So you can't go screaming and shouting at the devil and saying he's got no gums and that sort of thing! However, you can say, "The Lord rebuke you!"

The world in the 21st century is a mess. God's intent is that the manifold wisdom of God, the presence of God, would be ushered into this dark world by his Church – just like he sent Elijah and Elisha into the land of Israel in their time of darkness. A fortified way of thinking in the realm of fear holds back a lot of God's people. They ask: "What if God doesn't come through? What if he doesn't want to? What if I just make a fool of myself? What if the devil's stronger than I think he is?" God wants to break those arguments down. Because when fear sets in it stops all manner of prayer and calling out to God for his intervention.

His intent is that his Kingdom would come into this darkened world, where he will stretch out his hand and heal, set free, save and liberate.

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