



*Every Spiritual
Blessing*

EPHESIANS - WEEK 16
Spiritual Warfare (Part 1)

3. THE TITHE IS INTRODUCED AS LAW
(LEV. 27:30–34)

Here we see Moses giving the tithe as a law. The first 10 percent is called “holy,” or set apart, as belonging to God. The Israelites were to return to God what was already his, and in doing so, recognize the Almighty’s provision.

If for some reason someone needed to “redeem” or keep all or a portion of the goods he was to tithe, he could just give money instead. However, the cash would need to be equal to the tithe’s value, plus an extra fifth. In other words, Israelites could give 10 percent in produce, or 12 percent in

cash.

When it came to livestock, a shepherd had to set aside every tenth for God. It was decided by simply counting the animals and consecrating every tenth. The shepherd was not to be deciding based on the quality of the animal.

4. TITHES ESTABLISHED FOR THE LEVITES (NUM. 18:21)

The Levites served a special function in Israel; they ministered before God as Israel's priests. At God's command, the Levites didn't share in the other tribes' inheritance. The Lord was their portion and inheritance (v. 21).

Here we see the Lord establishing that Israel's tithe would operate as payment to the levitical priests for their services.

Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

Here

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brother Ricardo Mercado who started a church in El Valle De Guadalupe.

Closing prayer

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual war entered our world back in Genesis 3:15, after the serpent tempted and deceived the first couple, God then issued a judgment.

Genesis 3:15

15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

This is the first promise of the gospel, that God would send Someone to deal a crushing blow to the enemy's handiwork, to bring God's will back to earth, in a manner of speaking. And this has been the spiritual war ever since. Now if that's a

little bit of a stretch for you, hear me out.

“Worldliness is what any culture does to make sin seem normal and righteousness seem strange.” (David Wells)

That’s what spiritual warfare is about — normalizing sin in the lives of saints and sinners, believers and unbelievers.

Ephesians 6:10-20 (ESV)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

1 We're in a Spiritual War

THIS IS WHAT THE PROBLEM IS - There is a spiritual war going on. Are you prepared? We are commanded to be strong in the Lord, not in our own strength. So, the good news is that God wants to share His power with us, in a manner of speaking. He wants us to minister effectively by His Spirit by His power.

One of the challenges is living in a culture that is decidedly anti-supernatural, except when it comes to movies. Satan, as a personal spiritual being, is still a hard sell to the majority of Americans. According to an older poll (1992), two-thirds of Americans did not believe in Satan, though the same people did believe in God. This shows a little bit of an inconsistency. If you believe there are spiritual beings who are good, why would you discount the possibility of spiritual beings who are bad?

Many people see demonic possession as “an ancient culture's attempt to grapple with mental disorders like epilepsy.” It is actually considered unscientific in the therapeutic community to consider there might be a spiritual component to a person's problems. The problem is all in your mind. There is a natural explanation to all issues is the line of thinking.

If that is so, then there is no need for a supernatural explanation. Unless you have a soul and your mind is not separate from your soul, which many people also believe.

This leads to a kind of tension in the secular mind. It leads to a kind of belief in spirituality, but not a belief in deceptive and evil spiritual forces. Many people don't even like to use the word evil because it implies a moral responsibility measured against an absolute moral standard.

If there is a spiritual side to human problems, then how do we overcome those problems if we don't understand the spiritual side?

It has long been maintained by the Christian church that all of our problems can have a physical element, a moral element, a circumstantial element or a demonic element. Generally, our problems are a combination of these elements. To limit human issues to only one of these is to be simplistic and naive.

Of course, in a Christian worldview, the spiritual side is the primary side to focus on. Whatever else you do to increase your wellbeing, the most good will come when focus on your spiritual life,

meaning your relationship with Christ. And to that end, Paul tell us to...

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

2 | You Must Prepare

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS - Put on the whole armor of God.

Again, the Bible's story is not one story among many stories. It's the story that defines all other stories. This becomes problematic when culture builds in an intellectual prejudice against the supernatural worldview of Christianity, which often seeps right into the church. This intellectual prejudice simply means people aren't getting the help they need.

The biblical claim is that whoever you are, whatever you believe, wherever you live, you are in a spiritual battle. There is a spiritual dimension

to reality that is malevolent = mean, vicious, sinister, in a word — evil.

To engage in this spiritual battle, Paul tells us to...

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

The devil has schemes, plots, designs, aims, goals, systems, etc. That's the reason we can't

stand in our own wisdom, strength or power, because we're fighting a spiritual enemy who is stronger and more cunning than we are in every way.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood,

It's a spiritual wrestling match. It's not against humans per say, but humans are involved. He's not saying humans are not involved. He's saying it's not against humans alone that we're battling.

There is something behind the human element. We're battling against the influence of false ideas, false views, false concepts about God that come from the very pit of hell through the agency of humans.

This campaign to normalize sin is carried out by Satan who is referred to in Scripture as "the god of this world" and who has both fallen angels and fallen humans working along side him. (John 12:31) But only insofar as God allows. (Daniel

4:17; Psalm 33:10)

Yet, we're to be reminded Satan is only a created being and is limited by God's purposes. In other words, Satan is bound. He is on a leash. Satan is not like God. Satan is not everywhere at once. He is not all-powerful. And he cannot read your mind. But we should not underestimate the damage he can do. He is "the god of this world." Not the God of the universe, but he does exercise an authority in this world.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

Every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God. That's what we're battling. And these false ideas become wedged in society and that's

how you can tell you're dealing with a stronghold. A stronghold is a prevalent view that is directly opposed to Scripture.

How do we win this battle? Not in our own power, but with divine power, with God's power.

3 You Can't Win On Your Own

WHY WE CAN'T DO IT - This is not a battle that you can win on your own. I am constantly amazed at the scope of human arrogance, such as when a psychiatrist reluctantly admits, "I

guess we don't know as much about the human mind as we thought we did." Humans have an unlimited capacity it seems to overestimate themselves.

It is too much for many who have a materialistic view of reality to think that our thoughts and ideas can be influenced by unseen forces. But that is exactly the biblical teaching. This war on our thinking is against...

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.

It is a battle in the spiritual realm around us. Do you know the first thing about these spiritual forces of darkness in this present age? The battle is to keep you from understanding and believing that you are blessed with every spiritual blessing! That's one front of the battle. Another is to distort the truth.

- Over-realized eschatology

He wants the message of the gospel to be misunderstood or misapplied or ignored.

SATAN'S DAY PLANNER: THREE GOALS

1. To keep the gospel from going out.

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians shows us that a major front of this spiritual battle is to keep the good news from going out. Paul writes of those

who drove him and the other missionaries out of town, and he said those who drove them out “displease God and oppose all mankind...

1 Thessalonians 2:16

¹⁶ by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!

Then he goes on to say:

18 because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.

Satan uses people to hinder the gospel from being spread. At one time, that was you.

Ephesians 2:2

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—

“Worldliness is what any culture does to make sin seem normal and righteousness seem strange.” (David Wells) Because when sin is normalized human beings confuse evil with good and good with evil. In other words, we call things that God clearly condemns good things. And we call what pleases God evil. That’s the culture we live in now. It’s a difficult culture to be a Christian in. Because the result of this goal is wickedness.

One of the devices of Satan is to “pollute the souls and judgments of men with dangerous errors that lead to looseness and wickedness.” (Brooks, Thomas. *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*)

- Self-deception of Romans 1

1 Thessalonians 3:5

5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

2. One of the ways he keeps the gospel from going out effectively is to make the lives of Christians ineffective.

The most frightening thing of all is that Satan can tempt you to the point that your Christian walk is a useless one.

It's sad to think that you could pour so much of your life into someone else's life only to have that person tempted by a falsehood to the point that their profession of faith would no longer glorify God. This is the purpose of growing into spiritual maturity.

Ephesians 4:14

¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by

human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Not only is mature faith not tossed about by every new fad, it's not tossed about by every old fad. Here he mentions three different ways you can be deceived.

3. To distort the gospel

Paul talks about different ways the truth of God is

distorted. In Galatians he tells us that the good news of Jesus is twisted by different gospels, distorted gospels and contrary gospels.

Different gospels — is there anything about another gospel that's different than the one in the New Testament? The easiest test is the divinity test. If someone is proclaiming that Christ is not God come to earth in human form, that is a different gospel, whether it's Mormonism, Jehovah Witnesses or Buddhists, because none of those groups teach that Jesus is the image of

the invisible God.

Distorted gospels — are you saved by anything other than by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone? Do you have to add something to the mix? Do you have to be baptized to be saved? That's a distortion of the gospel, even though baptism is an act of obedience for the new Christian. It is not a saving act. It is an identifying act. Through baptism you identify with Christ and His church.

Contrary gospels — well, they're exactly that — they get everything backward. Human beings are basically good. God accepts you because you try your best. He would never send people to an eternal hell. Everything a contrary gospel states is almost always the exact opposite of what Jesus teaches us in the New Testament about the gospel.