

## Lord, teach us to Worship Part 5: Worship is Warfare

Today is our last in this series, “Lord, teach us to worship” and we are going to finish off this expansive study of understanding how the Bible defines worship, the goal of worship and the many expressions of worship that we can choose to express our gratitude and our love and affection for God; all Who He is and all that He’s done for us.

For this study, we are going to look at the connection between worship and spiritual warfare. You may be thinking to yourself, how do those two things go together? They seem so opposite. Well, I think you’ll be surprised at how much those two things are connected in the Scriptures. But before we get into that, I’d like to start out with a basic Biblical primer on spiritual warfare.

How many of you have either heard about spiritual warfare or are familiar with the Biblical concept? Obviously, there is a spiritual realm... God exists outside of our physical realm, but chooses to interact with us here; but this earthly realm is temporal and the spiritual realm is eternal. When we die or if Jesus returns in our lifetime, we will transition fully into the spiritual realm; but currently, we still have access to the spiritual realm in this life. I can’t deep dive today, for the sake of time and our current subject matter of worship, but I will do either a series on spiritual warfare later or a Bible study specifically on that subject.

But you do need a primer, because there is a war taking place in the spiritual realm and in it’s a war that spills over into our earthly realm. It’s a battle between the Devil and God. Satan attempted a rebellion against God with 1/3 of the angels and was forcibly removed from his position as an arch-angel and from heaven. Satan cannot attack God directly, so instead he chooses to attack God’s creation, mainly mankind. If you’d like a good recommendation for a book on this subject, read: *The 3 Battlegrounds by Francis Frangipane*.

If you are a person who thinks that the Bible’s mention of these things is hyperbole, or figurative language or metaphors or representative of some personification of a universal generic “evil,” you are sorely mistaken; and sadly, to your own harm and potentially harm to others around you, if you refuse to believe in it, or choose to ignore it or don’t understand your role or the church’s role in this ongoing, very real and dangerous conflict between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. Charles Baudelaire, a French Poet from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, made an especially poignant statement that still holds true for our days: “The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn’t exist.” The Apostle Paul makes us aware of this ongoing war in **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:3-5**:

***“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...”***

He also spoke of it again and elaborated on it, in **Ephesians 6:12**: ***“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”***

He continues on in this passage by describing the spiritual armor and weapon that we are to daily take up to fight in this war. The Bible says when we became Christians, i.e. were saved, we enlisted as a soldier into the Lord’s Army. Paul says we are soldiers (**2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:3, 4**) and one of the Church’s major identities in the Bible is as His *Army*. Jesus the Son, who is also the Captain of the Lord of Hosts, came to earth to continue fighting this battle over souls and even over the earthly realm itself; In **1<sup>st</sup> John 3:8** we read this: ***“...the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.”***

What are the works of the devil that Jesus came to destroy? Sin, sickness, unbelief, bondage, oppression, and so many more... Jesus wants to destroy them all. **Acts 10:38** tell us: ***“You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”*** (emphasis mine)

Satan is described as a “lion who prowls around looking for those he may devour” (**1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8**) and a thief who comes to “steal, kill and destroy” (**John 10:10**). We have been commissioned to continue this battle that the Devil started, but Jesus won on the Cross and by His victory over death and the grave; and that God will ultimately finish through final judgment. We fight this battle against our spiritual enemy with God’s strength, His power, His might, His weapons and His truth. We are victorious in His timing and with His wisdom and strategy.

We can however, experience attack from the enemy: spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, circumstantially, with other people we know and care about being attacked (family, friends, co-workers, fellow brothers and sisters) AND other people being used by the enemy to attack, many times unaware that they are being used in this manner.

What can we do when we see the enemy attack? There are a number of Biblical, Spirit-led possible responses, but I want to focus on just one this morning. And it is one that is mentioned quite a bit in the Scriptures, but one that is not overly familiar to the average student of the Bible; and practiced even less by those in the mainstream church world: Worship. Because, worship *is* warfare. We are going to see this strong connection in the Scriptures today. There are a number of prime examples in the Word, that might be a bit clearer for us once we point out that which often is hiding in plain sight: *Moses with Aaron and Hur (Amalekites), Jericho (trumpets & shout), David and the plague (worship/sacrifice), etc.*

Some of these examples involved both spiritual and physical warfare, while others were specifically spiritual in nature. Let us, however, look at the best example of this combination in Scripture: **2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 20** with King Jehoshaphat: **[READ KEY VERSES: v.14-30]**

They worshipped God *before* the battle, worshipped God *in the midst* of the battle and worshipped God *after* the battle. God fought for them, set ambushes against the enemies, confused the enemies, made the enemies turn on each other (this is a reoccurring theme in the OT / Remember: everything written in earlier times was written for our instruction).

Do you remember my good friend, the Rev. Oliver Lewis's testimony here a few weeks back? His message was titled "Unleashing the Power of Praise" and he shared how it was praise and worship, in the midst of his trials, losing his wife, that kept him going, gave him victory in the midst of his spiritual battle.

I've heard countless testimonies of how God brought deliverance and intervened in many circumstances through the power of praise, through the warfare of worship. And it shouldn't be any surprise given the prevalent examples in the Scriptures. When David, who had a revelation of worship before his time, played and sang for King Saul, the King would be alleviated from the torment of an evil spirit and the evil spirit would leave him when David worshipped.

Rick Sizemore shared a testimony with us one time about a lady in his church who was trying to quit smoking and she called Rick late one night and wanted to meet at the Church for prayer, and prayerfully deliverance from her addiction to cigarettes. **Tell the story**

**[SLIDE] Psalm 149: "Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise in the congregation of the godly ones. Let Israel be glad in his Maker; Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King. Let them praise His name with dancing; Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre.**

***For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation. Let the godly ones exult in glory; Let them sing for joy 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 punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the judgment written; This is an honor for all His godly ones. Praise the LORD!"***

***Isaiah 42:10-13: "Sing to the LORD a new song, sing His praise from the end of the earth! You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it; you islands, and those who dwell on them. Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voices, the settlements where Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud, let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains. Let them give glory to the LORD and declare His praise in the coastlands. The LORD will go forth like a warrior, He will arouse His zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against His enemies."***

***Isaiah 30:32: "You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival, and gladness of heart as when one marches to the sound of the flute, to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard, and the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger, and in the flame of a consuming fire in cloudburst,***

***downpour and hailstones. For at the voice of the LORD Assyria will be terrified, when He strikes with the rod. And every blow of the rod of punishment, which the LORD will lay on him, will be with the music of tambourines and lyres; and in battles, brandishing weapons, He will fight them.”***

Sometimes God empowers us to win the battles (ex: *David vs. Goliath*) and sometimes God Himself fights our battles for us (I much prefer the latter). When we choose worship in the midst of a spiritual attack or a challenging circumstance, God will either change us from a victim to a valiant, victorious warrior (see the example of *Gideon*) or He will change our circumstances Himself (see *Paul and Silas in prison*). Peter was delivered from prison through prayer (**Acts 12:5-ff.**) and Paul and Silas were delivered through worship.

No matter what is going on in your life, God is still worthy of worship. It's easy to worship when everything is going well, there are seemingly no challenges and you are experiencing blessing; but can you worship when it feels like *nothing* is going right?

**Habakkuk 3:17-19:**

***“Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places.”***

Can you worship God while the battle is raging all around you? **Psalm 23:5** says He ***“prepares a table before [you] in the presence of [your] enemies.”*** Hopefully, you are now beginning to be aware of the spiritual battles that are raging around you. If you not aware, maybe it's because you are not a threat to the kingdom of darkness, the enemy may not spend much time harassing you. Why would he, if you are MIA, POW or AWOL? But make no mistake, the enemy's goal in your life is to steal from you, to kill you and to destroy you (**John 10:10**).

There is no demilitarized zone in the spiritual realm, but God does not want us to ignore the fight, or to respond in fear, because He has not given us a spirit of fear, but of “power, love and a sound mind” (**2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:7**). We have a God who is a “shield” and a “strong tower” and our “rear guard” and He “trains [our] hands for war” (**Psalm 144 / 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 22:35**). He is always worthy of our worship, not just when circumstances are favorable; and when we do choose worship, it gives God the opportunity to arise as a Mighty Man of War and battle for us.

To conclude this series, what we've learned about worship is:

1. Worship is giving God the highest value and priority in our lives
2. Worship is not an event, it is a lifestyle
3. The goal of Worship is to experience His presence and have His presence among us
4. There are over 50 physical expressions of praise and worship in the Scriptures
5. Praise & Worship helps us to be victorious in our spiritual battles