

Soldier Up!

Saints & Spiritual Warfare

"The Commission is Our Mission"

Matthew 28:18-20 Matthew 12:26-29 Luke 10:18-20

Is the best offense a good defense?

Or is the best defense a good offense?

So far we've talked about our part in spiritual warfare as mostly mounting a good defense. Taking a stand... resisting... Things like that.

Truth is, we are always to be on the offensive - but maybe not the way you think.

Our offensive strategy isn't to go about demon-hunting and conducting exorcisms. As we saw last time, it doesn't involve things like spiritual mapping.

Our great spiritual offensive is simply, but powerfully, the sharing of the Gospel in a world ruled by Satan.

Is it not by receiving the Gospel that a person is set free from sin, transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light?

Nothing seems more on-offense than to share Christ and see those held captive set free.

Along those lines I'd like to string together three separate passages:

- Matthew 28:18-20 is what we call the Great Commission. It is our marching orders as soldiers of the Cross.
- Matthew 12:26-29 describes Jesus as binding Satan in order to plunder his possessions.
- Luke 10:18-20 is Jesus' assessment of the success of 70 soldiers He sent out to preach the Gospel.

The Great Commission:

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Mat 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Mat 28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

We aren't going to spend too much time on these verses. There are two take-aways we always need to be reminded of:

1. "Go" is *as you are going*. It's not describing a missions trip you "go" on, but rather your life as a mission to share Jesus as you are going through it.
2. The Lord will be with you by His indwelling Spirit, and by the baptism of the Spirit, to empower you as you're going.

The single point I want to make tonight from these verses is that we start thinking of the Great Commission as an offensive battle strategy.

It might be better to call it the Great Mission. Left in enemy territory, we are to go through it sharing the Good News about Jesus as we encounter people who are in Satan's kingdom of darkness, being held captive by him.

The offensive against Satan continues after a person is set free. We are told to "make disciples" of the converts. In a nutshell, it means we are to build them up so they, too, go about sharing the Gospel.

The gates of Hell have not, and can not, prevail against our offensive. Everyone we share Jesus with isn't saved, but many are, and the Gospel marches on right to the coming of Jesus to resurrect and rapture the church.

I like to reference D-Day when discussing spiritual warfare. As I've said in the past, the successful invasion of Normandy by the Allied forces effectively ended World War Two.

The war went on for almost another year; but the enemy was routed, defeated, and our victory was assured.

There were significant casualties after D-Day and until the war was ended. It's similar to our spiritual warfare in that Satan and his minions were defeated by Jesus but continue to fight on - and will fight on until the Second Coming of The Lord.

The thing about D-Day is that we had to take the five beaches or the whole thing would have failed. It was from those beach heads that the Allied forces were sent out to cement the victory.

Jesus invaded earth and took the beaches for us. A pivotal battle took place in the wilderness where Jesus was tempted by the devil for a period of forty days.

It was like champion warfare in which each side sends out its strongest soldier - its champion - in a winner-take-all match.

Jesus soundly defeated Satan. You see the extent of His victory in His literal beach landing at Gadara. As recorded in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus was approached by a demon-possessed man. In conversation with the man, Jesus learned he was possessed by a legion of demons.

That's a lot. A Roman legion was one thousand men.

He cast out the demons; they entered a herd of swine and rushed headlong over a cliff into the sea.

Jesus took the beach! He established a beach head for us, from which we venture out with the Gospel, on offense.

The Lord described His victory over the devil by telling a quick parable - The Parable of the Strong Man.

Mat 12:26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?

Mat 12:27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.

Mat 12:28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

The religious leaders were astonished at Jesus' authority over Satan and demons, but they didn't want to give Him any respect. They attributed Jesus' power over the devil to His being in league with him.

It was stupid. When you reject the truth, any lie will do - no matter how stupid.

Jesus pointed out why it was a false accusation, then said,

Mat 12:29 Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

Jesus pictured the world as Satan's house, and Satan as a strong man guarding his house. The devils "goods" are a reference to people held captive by him. Not just demon possessed people, but everyone who is not saved. By default, if they are not saved, they are lost and will perish eternally.

Scholars debate when, exactly, Jesus first 'bound' Satan. Best guess: When He defeated the devil in the wilderness, it put everyone on notice that Jesus was and would be victorious. From that moment forward, the devil was on the run whenever Jesus was around.

Jesus went about setting free the captives. He exorcised demons... And He also set men free from all their physical ailments and disabilities - many caused by demons.

One way to categorize Jesus' entire three and one-half years of ministry was that of a plunderer who went about setting free those previously held bound.

Jesus sent out His followers to do what He had been doing. In one such mission, He sent out seventy disciples. Upon their return, they said to The Lord,

Luk 10:17 ... "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

To which The Lord responded,

Luk 10:18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Luk 10:19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Luk 10:20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

It's unlikely Jesus was referring to Satan's original fall when he sinned in the past and led one-third of the angels with him. The context here is a fall that is the result of his having been defeated by Jesus.

Is it his future fall at the return of The Lord? Probably not, because The Lord was describing something that connects to the success of the seventy in their mission.

I think Jesus was describing His victory over Satan in the wilderness as a precursor of His final victory over him at the Cross. The devil came at Jesus with his best shot, but he went down in flames (as we might put it).

The point we want to make is that, because Jesus took the beach, we have authority on earth to battle the devil and his demons in our mission of going with the Gospel.

And, as is usual in our spiritual warfare, we are to not concentrate on them being subject to us, but on our salvation, and on sharing it with other captives.

I keep saying 'we,' when clearly this was spoken to the seventy. It was also spoken to every disciple - in the last chapter of Mark's Gospel:

Mar 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Mar 16:16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Mar 16:17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;

Mar 16:18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

A few quick observations:

- These signs did accompany the early disciples in the Book of Acts. They are present throughout church history. They happen today, too. **They don't need to happen in every instance in order for this to be true.**
- "New tongues" may be a reference to the supernatural gift of being able to speak in a language you've never learned, in order to preach the Gospel. It happened at Pentecost, and I've read of it happening in church history.
- As to deadly serpents, the sense of the words are, "if you are *compelled* to pick up serpents..." or "if you are *compelled* to drink poison..." then God is more than able to protect you.
- "...they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." God still gives gifts of healing to His body of believers on earth. He is sovereign as to who and how and when He heals; whatever He does, in your sickness or in your health, He does to bring glory to His Name.

Going with the Gospel **is** spiritual warfare - it is us on the offensive, setting free captives because the strong man is bound.

Had the Jews received The Lord, He would have established the kingdom. Satan would have literally been bound, and thrown into the abyss.

They didn't and he wasn't, so he goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

The devil is like the Axis forces who fought on after D-Day.

Our mission - Go with the Gospel.

Not everyone is saved; but neither was everyone saved when Jesus was on the earth.

Just go, and, as you are going, in the power of the Spirit, share Jesus.