

## Going Into Battle 8-18-02

"We are not wrestling against flesh and blood but against spiritual powers," the Apostle Paul warns us. One of our most common downfalls is not recognizing this distinction. When you entered into a relationship with Christ you deserted from Satan's army and joined the army of the LORD of hosts. You might have seen the poster, Father God wants you! It's not that He just needs another soldier but He wants you on the winning side. He wants you personally to be redeemed from the ownership of the enemy and your mind set free from his lies. Not only does the Word of God wash your mind, but the on-going relationship with Christ continues to transform your life, bringing you into greater freedom and usefulness for the Kingdom of God.

This subject of prayer that we have been studying over the past several weeks has been a primer for basic warfare. Learning to pray is our boot camp. If you can't keep your prayer life in order and consistent, you are not going to be very effective in battle, or in your spiritual life. In fact, you'll probably end up a casualty. We can go through the motions of religion and all the attached ritual but if we are not under the instruction of the Captain of the Hosts, we are in trouble spiritually.

Some of you don't know who I'm referring to, this Captain. Look in Josh 5:13-15 (NIV) *13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" 14 "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" 15 The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.*

He is Jesus! He says the same thing the voice from the burning bush said. He's the one that will physically lead us from the Marriage Feast of the Lamb into the battle of Armageddon. He'll wield a sword then too. (see Rev 19:11-16) Is He for us or for them? Neither! He is for the glory of God! He is for every soul that will come and submit to His love because that brings glory to the Father. One day there will be an earthly battle against heavenly forces. Until then, we fight on entirely different plain, not against flesh and blood. Flesh and blood still has time to repent and change sides like you did. This is a great delight to the Captain of the Hosts. Don't attack them or speak with animosity against them, love them into the Kingdom of God to bring glory to the Father. That is what this battle is all about, bringing glory to God. Every redeemed and delivered soul brings glory to God. The enemy is out to steal worship and glory from God.

Understanding who the enemy is, and what makes him tick, helps us see what is behind some of the conflicts we face! If you can hold bitterness against your brother and speak evil of your neighbor, Satan steals some of that glory away from the Father. If you treat your New Age neighbor like he is the enemy, he will never be attracted through you to your Savior! If you bad mouth all religious groups but your own, are they seeing the value and truth of the love Jesus has for them or are they

**Commented [Q1]:** 11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.

12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.

13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.

14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Rev 19:11-16 (NIV)

seeing what they have come to expect, critical dogmatic religion, attacking instead of drawing? Jesus didn't say, "When I am lifted up I will blow all the false teaching away." No! He said, "If I am lifted up, (I, not you or your organization) I will draw all men unto me." He draws not herds. He leads not drives.

I'm not saying to back down from the truth or compromise your stand, but I am saying to express yourself in love. Don't hammer on the differences, but instead show them the love of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 13 says that love never fails. You are much more likely to win them with sincere love from God than with any literature, video, witnessing technique, coercion or program. We'd rather attack because it costs a lot less than genuine love. But never forget we have a secret weapon in this war being waged for the souls of men. Prayer!

What would happen if the body of Christ prayed for the wounded Christians, the unbelievers, and the deceived people that live in our city, consistently, with faith and conviction as directed by the Holy Spirit? What if we devoted ourselves to pray for a change of the spiritual climate in this city? Some churches tried to hand out the 'Jesus' video in neighborhoods here and got a 10% response rate. That is one-third the national average. In Colorado Springs churches prayed and for an extended period of time ask God to make hearts hungry for Him and they got a response rate of 90%! Every church in the city grew at a healthy rate. I'm not suggesting we do any particular program, but I am suggesting we pray and ask God what His plan is to reach this city. Begin, if you haven't already, to pray for God to plow the hearts of everyone that lives here so that a spiritual hunger for the truth of Jesus Christ will develop.

I want to share two things Christ told us to pray for. We have the Lord's prayer that we have gone over in the last few weeks, but we also have a few specific prayer requests from Jesus. Last week's sermon we went over the need to be led by the Holy Spirit to pray God's will. Jesus revealed a few specific things that you can pray and be sure are the Father's will. The first is the need for laborers. Matt 9:36-38 (NIV) *36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

This year at Slide Rock we have a bumper crop. We were able to keep the bugs down and the trees watered and God gave us a huge crop. We have one problem. I have no idea where we are going to find enough affordable laborers to pick it all. Jesus looked out on the crowd listening to him and told His disciples, "Look at the huge harvest! Ask the Lord of the harvest to send some workers into the field." Every redeemed soul brings glory to God and sets a prisoner free. Pray! Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send you, to send others, to harvest this huge crop. We look out and we see weeds. He looks out and he sees wheat. We need to see like Jesus does, with eyes of faith.

I think the Jews had some of the same problems we do. We think the city is full of weeds. The Jews thought the Samaritans were weeds, unredeemable. They thought they would never bring glory to God. One of Jesus first stops during His

ministry was Samaria. One of the first places to have mass conversions after Pentecost was Samaria. When man says, "Impossible", God says, "For my glory!" People say Sedona is impossible – a graveyard for pastors. God says, "For my glory!" Pray for harvesters. I think the Lord has been answering prayers for harvesters in Sedona already. You can still get in on it though. Are you willing to pray Jesus' prayer request? We have millions of tourists here every year – look at the crop! The branches are breaking under the weight of the fruit to be picked. Pray!

You say, "I don't know how to harvest." All of you have a neighbor. Have you prayed with persistence for them to come to know your Savior? He is the great Harvester! He is the One that draws when He is lifted up. How do you lift Him up? He was lifted up on the cross. We need to lift Him up in our dying daily with Him so that we serve, in the love of God, those we come in contact with. Do that and they will see Jesus. Pray for their hearts to be drawn. Pray for God given opportunities to share your ongoing dependency on Jesus. Pray for God to be glorified through their conversion and you will know you are praying God's will. Everyone you come in contact with on a regular basis is in your life by design. There are no coincidences, only 'God-incidences'. Pray for them to come to know our Savior. Putting yourself in their place and asking for their needs is called intercession. Jesus always does this for you. He's doing it right now. We need to assist in this great call and intercede for others He lays on our hearts. We need a harvester that can play the piano and lead music – so let's pray. Ask and you shall receive. You have not because you ask not. Pray and keep your eyes and ears and heart open to God's answer. We need the fire of the Holy Spirit – pray!

As we sang earlier, we enter the land in heavenly armor. We're here in Sedona to claim souls for the Kingdom of God. The battle is the Lord's, not ours. We go into the battle with prayer. You need your armor on because the enemy will resist those who claim what he thinks is his, so don that Ephesians 6 armor when you head off to battle. If you never associated the armor with prayer, you need to. The armor passage is immediately followed by these verses: Eph 6:18-20 (NIV) *18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (those are the other harvesters) 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.* Paul is asking for prayers for the same purpose we've been going over. Why does he want to boldly proclaim the Gospel? His desire is to see souls won for the glory of God! He is in the battle fighting for the eternal destiny of those he comes in contact with and through that to bring glory to God.

One more instruction as to what to pray for comes from Luke 11:9-13 (NIV). 9 *"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. 11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good*

*gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

Notice, first of all, Jesus' emphasis on the Father child relationship? We really need to let that sink into our hearts, because it helps us understand our relationship in prayer. He wants to meet our needs and give us what is good for us.

Second, notice the word 'given'. Ask and it will be given to you. That word in Greek is the same word Jesus used at the Last Supper when He said, "Take, eat" or on resurrection morning when He said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Ask and you will take it, or receive it. God gives but we must be willing to receive. Are we willing?

Right at the end of this instruction we see what Jesus is asking us to pray for, the Holy Spirit. All good things are in Him. He is not a thing but a person. In Him are all the gifts and wisdom needed to reach out to those who are lost. The unconditional love we need to show them Jesus is found in Him. The wisdom of what to say or what not to say, is in Him. The direction for perfect timing, the wisdom as to how to pray and who to pray for are all found in Him. Pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit. You have the Holy Spirit with you when you come to Christ as your Savior so what is it we are asking for? We are asking for our hearts and minds to be submitted to his working, receptive to His voice, and yielded to His will. If I pray for the Father to give me the Holy Spirit, I am asking to yield myself more fully to all that the Spirit would do through me. I have to empty my selfishness to make room for Him. I have to open the locked doors of my will and my rights, and yield those areas for His use. When I ask, He comes flooding in. I may need to ask for my heart to be enlarged to receive Him in a greater way.

Then I can be a better harvester and pray for other harvesters. I can be a better soldier, more in tune with the Captain's instructions. Acts 1:8 says the Holy Spirit empowers us to share Christ. I need to be equipped with Him, yielded to His command, to be an effective soldier in this battle. You can pray this prayer with faith too, because we see it is the instruction and desire of Jesus. When was the last time you prayed, "Let the Holy Spirit come and take control, and send a great revival to my soul?" This is the prayer that really sends us into action, for it links us up with the Captain. Pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit again and again. You will always need Him more fully each passing day. The fullness of the Spirit in you will lift up Jesus to those you come in contact with. They will see peace and joy and love that is uncommon and be drawn to Him.

The last topic in regard to prayer I want to speak on is persevering in prayer. We bring someone's situation to the Lord. He heard it the first time, even before we asked, but Jesus encourages us in a parable to bring it again and again. Luke 18:1-8 (NIV) *1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" 6*

**Commented [Q2]:** 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."  
Acts 1:8 (NIV)

*And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"*

It is not as if God is like the judge in the parable. A contrast is being made. If an unjust judge will do it, then how much more would our Father be willing when we keep something before Him. Sometimes we need to be reminded He knows. If our hearts are right before God, then we just need to wait for His perfect timing. Jesus closed that instruction with a sobering remark. Will there be any faith in the earth when He returns. Man is so focussed on the visible, and his own explanations, and so called intelligence, that faith is vanishing. Faith moves heaven through our prayers, but at the Second Coming so few will have the faith to ask God for their needs because unbelief will be so rampant.

Today we have looked at three instructions in prayer from Jesus. Jesus' prayer request is for laborers for the harvest. Will you honor that request and see the need like He does? Look out over Sedona. It is loaded with fruit that will be harvested if we will pray. The pastors are coming together because we realize that if God moves here all of our churches will be full. If we will obey Jesus and let Him work, we'll all be busy nurturing new lambs. We are asking ourselves some tough questions. Would we be pleased if Sedona came to Christ and our church dwindled? If our heart can say, "Yes, by the grace of God", then God can fill bless us all with all we can handle.

We need to continue to ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is the One that empowers and enables, leads and directs. I need to receive more of Him by yielding up more of myself. He will express the love of Christ through me and that is what will win people for the glory of God.

And our last lesson was to not give up too soon. Keep on praying. Some people I know gave up praying for Sedona to change. Some people gave up being serious about God. Don't give up. It will come in His perfect time and you'll be glad you persevered until it came!

Praying like Jesus has been teaching us to pray will change our lives. It will change our homes and that will change our city! Let us not lose sight of what it is all about. This whole battle is the issue of all glory going to our heavenly Father, who loved us and redeemed us to be His treasured possession. It is a battle against spiritual powers and is won in prayer. I'll close with a quote from Corrie ten Boom:  
"Prayer is powerful. The devil smiles when we make plans. He laughs when we get too busy. But he trembles when we pray – especially when we pray together...  
When man listens, God speaks.  
When man obeys, God acts.  
When man prays, God empowers."

Pray, House of Prayer, to the honor and glory of the One who set you free. Pray!