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A Bible Study

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The Weapons of Our Warfare

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There was a group at Corinth that evidently took great delight in belittling the Apostle Paul. In defending his apostleship he declared to them:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh" (II Cor. 10:3).

Though the apostle still had a sinful nature like others, he did not *wage war* with its weapons,

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (II Cor. 10:4).

THERE IS A WAR GOING ON

Many believers do not seem to realize that the Christian is engaged in a warfare, but Paul's words to young Timothy are clear enough:

"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy. ...that thou by them mightest WAR A GOOD WARFARE" (ITim.1:18).

"FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH..." (ITim.6:12).

"...endure hardness, as A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST" (II Tim. 2:3).

To the Ephesians he wrote:

"Put on the whole ARMOUR OF GOD..." (Eph.6:11).

Why "*armour*"? Because we are in a battle, a war! But this is not a physical war against *people* with bullets, bombs, missiles and tanks, or political organization. Rather it is a spiritual war against supernatural spiritual forces:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph.6:12).

Because our warfare today is on a spiritual level rather than a physical, many mistakenly suppose that it is not actually *real*. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

THE LION'S MOUTH

Psalm 22 is an intimate prophetic description of the events surrounding our Lord's crucifixion. The Lord's anguished cry of Matt.27:46 is a quotation of Psa. 22:1, and no doubt the words of verses 1-21 were on the lips of His heart as He poured it out to His Father! This whole section makes a blessed study when compared with the Gospel accounts, but note especially verse 16-21:

"For dogs have compassed Me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed Me; THEY PIERCED MY HANDS AND MY FEET.

"I may tell [count] all my bones: THEY LOOK AND STARE UPON ME.

"THEY PART MY GARMENTS AMONG THEM AND CAST LOTS UPON MY VESTURE.

"But be not Thou far from Me, O Lord: O my strength, haste Thee to help Me.

"Deliver My soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

"SAVE ME FROM THE LION'S MOUTH: for Thou hast heard Me...."

The "*lion*" in this passage is easily identifiable, for Peter declares:

"...YOUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL, AS A ROARING LION, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8).

On the cross our Lord was, as it were, in hand-to-hand combat with Satan. Having total confidence in the Father, He says to Satan, "*Let us stand together*", challenging the prince of darkness boldly: "*Who is Mine adversary? Let him come near to Me*" (Isa.50:8).

And what was the outcome of this ferocious spiritual combat? Paul gives us the answer in Col. 2:15:

"And having spoiled principalities and powers, HE MADE A SHEW OF THEM OPENLY, TRIUMPHING OVER THEM IN IT [i.e., IN THE CROSS]."

But although Satan has been defeated, the sentence of doom has *not yet* been fully executed. (This waits the second coming of Christ (Gen.3:15; Rev.20:1-3, 10). In the interval God has interrupted the prophetic program for a season and in its place has introduced the dispensation of grace. Hence there is still a further need to engage this dread foe. The Apostle Paul said:

"[I] now rejoice in My SUFFERINGS FOR YOU, AND FILL UP THAT WHICH IS BEHIND OF THE AFFLICTIONS OF CHRIST IN MY FLESH FOR HIS BODY'S SAKE, WHICH IS THE CHURCH:

"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God:

"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints" (Col. 1: 24-26).

Thus Paul bore the sufferings of our Lord's continued rejection in order that the truth of the mystery might be made known. Near the close of his ministry he wrote to Timothy concerning this:

"Notwithstanding THE LORD STOOD WITH ME, AND STRENGTHENED ME; THAT BY ME THE PREACHING (i.e, the preaching committed to him (Acts 20:24, Rom.16:25, Eph.3:1-9) MIGHT BE FULLY KNOWN; and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I WAS DELIVERED OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE LION" (II Tim. 4:17).

Today we, like Paul, are engaged in a spiritual struggle with the forces of evil-supernatural forces that operate in the realm of spiritual darkness. How this should keep us from folding our hands and "taking it easy"!

WE HAVE THE WEAPONS

It is a great encouragement to know that our Lord has not placed us in the battle without providing adequate weapons with which to fight! But:

“THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE *NOT* CARNAL”.

Paul did not depend on human means to recommend himself or to gain ground for his Lord, and neither should we. We cannot win spiritual battles with "carnal" or fleshly weapons.

What then *are* our weapons? After listing for us the various parts of “the whole armor of God”, the Apostel tells us take

“.....the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God:

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching there unto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints:

“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

“For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Eph.6:17-20).

THE WORD

Imagine having to tell a soldier to take his sword with him into battle! Yet how many sincere believers, instead of using the Sword of the Spirit, are trying to engage our enemy with human means: gimmicks to fill the building, promotional experts to raise funds, beautiful edifices, winsome personalities to make impressions, professionalism in the ministry, etc.

“The sword of the Spirit.....is *the Word of God*”. When our Lord went into combat with Satan (Matt.4:1-11), He countered each attack with “*It is written.*” He knew that this is where our power lies and our victory is gained!

It should be noted, however, that Satan also used the Word in *his* attacks:

“[The devil] saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: FOR IT IS WRITTEN, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Matt. 4:6).

There is a great lesson here, for while Satan quotes Psa. 91:11, 12, he purposely *omits* Verse 13. Why? Read it for yourself and see-it clearly predicts his doom and destruction! Satan’s method is to *take what he likes from God’s Word and ignore the rest*. He takes Scriptures out of context and certainly does *not* rightly divide the Word.

From this can be seen the profound importance of an *intelligent* use of the Scriptures, studying the Word *in context* and “*dividing*” it aright. Satan and his ministers quote Scripture “by the yard,” but not “rightly divided.” Only as we clearly understand the Word, rightly divided, are we equipped to do battle with “His Majesty the Devil.”

And was not this the very thing that invested the “grace movement” with such power from its beginning? The “grace movement” was not established by seeking to become part of the “main stream” of religious thought, or by soft-pedaling the truth of the mystery. Rather it was through *a clear, bold, energetic preaching of the unadulterated and undiluted gospel of grace* that clear light was shed on the Word of many believers, and multitudes came to rejoice in “*the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery.*”

With the revelation of the mystery given through Paul we are “in the know,” as it were. We now has a full revelation of the purpose and plan of God. Eph. 1:8, 9 is clear as to this:

“Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

"HAVING MADE KNOWN UNTO US THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL, ACCORDING TO HIS GOOD PLEASURE WHICH HE HATH PURPOSED IN HIMSELF."

It is as though God Himself has taken us into the council room of eternity past and given us the "minutes of the meeting." Thus equipped with such "insider information" we are "*thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (II Tim. 3:17).

We are the first age to have a *complete* Bible and the *full* revelation of God's will and purpose. Today we can look into the past and future with equal clarity and light. Therefore we can solve any problem and answer any opposition because we have the capacity in our *hands* to do so. Thus the rightly divided Word is "the sword of the Spirit"--a formidable weapon, indeed!

PRAYER

"Praying always with all prayer...in the *Spirit*", says the Apostle. John Bunyon calls this the weapon of "*all prayer*" and identifies it as the seventh piece of the believer's armour. We concur.

Paul's specific purpose in the request links prayer with the empowering of the believer as a soldier of Jesus Christ:

"...THAT UTTERANCE MAY BE GIVEN UNTO ME THAT I MAY OPEN MY MOUTH BOLDLY TO MAKE KNOWN THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL.

"For which I am an ambassador in bonds: THAT THEREIN I MAY SPEAK BOLDLY, AS I OUGHT TO SPEAK" (Eph. 6:19, 20).

The lack of true spiritual power in a believer's life is directly traceable to a lack of understanding of this vital weapon. The basic fallacy of most modern prayer preaching and practice is a failure to obey II Tim. 2:15's injunction to "rightly divide the Word of truth."

Most believers seek to practice a message that has nothing to do with the age of grace, but is in reality Israel's kingdom message--and that hasn't come yet. Claiming

promises like those found in Matt. 21:22, Mark 11:22-24, John 14:13, 14, Matt 18:19, James 5:14, 15, II Chron. 7:14, etc. only causes frustration and confusion. When these promises do not come to fruition, theological gimmicks are developed to excuse the failure.

The truth is, however, that these promises do not work today because they are not for this dispensation--they are not the basis of God's dealings in the dispensation of grace. The first key to unlocking prayer is recognition that the present dispensation was a *mystery "hid in God"* until revealed by our Lord from heaven to Paul (Eph. 3:1-9, Col.1:24-26). Only when we recognize this basic fact of Scripture are ready to appreciate the role of prayer--*Pauline Prayer*, if you will--in our spiritual lives.

"*Praying in the Spirit*" is a divine operating asset of great importance. Simply put, "praying in the Spirit" is praying in line with the Word rightly divided--praying in unison with what the Holy Spirit is doing in the dispensation of grace.

Pauline Prayer--in distinction from the way prayer operated in Israel's prophetic program--is vital to the function of the Christian life. In fact it is clear from the constant emphasis Paul places on the role of prayer that to seek to live the Christian life without Pauline Prayer is to live it in the energy of the flesh. What then is Pauline Prayer?

We use the term Pauline prayer to distinguish the way prayer works today in the dispensation of grace from the way it was designed to operate under Israel's prophetic program. It is vital that we *apply* the practice of right division to this important aspect of our spiritual lives.

In reality, Pauline Prayer is "*praying in the Spirit.*" It is not an emotional experience--whether fanaticism or solemnity; it is not a process of guess work--praying by chance; it is not intellectual recall, nor a positive mental attitude--or any other type of visualization; it is not praying by sight and/or impressions--thus dealing primarily with temporal matters and needs; most importantly, it is not Israel's law motivated, performance-oriented communication with God by which a believer obtained blessing by divine intervention in the circumstances of life as they stumble from one crisis problem to the next.

Pauline Prayer--praying in the Spirit, praying in line with what God is doing today--activates our "*all spiritual blessings*" in the details of our life and the results are as full as the outworking of God's will.

It is only natural that such prayer would "get results!". First, there are *spiritual* results--the personal edification that results in the appropriation of the whole armour of God along with all the ministries of the Spirit in our behalf. There are also *emotional* results--the personal stability that "keeps our hearts and minds" in whatever situation we face. Then there are the *physical* results--the visible manifestations and outworkings that result from the Holy Spirit's activity and our own resulting emotional stability.

This, in a nutshell, is the fullness of the Christian life: the life of Christ deposited in us and manifesting itself through us--"*Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.*" (Gal. 2:20).

Pauline Prayer--"*praying in the Spirit*" is, indeed, a potent and important weapon.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

One other thing should be carefully noted: The Word of God is "the sword of *the Spirit*" (Eph.6:17), and we are to pray "in *the Spirit*" (v.18). Both the Word and prayer must be energized *by the spirit* in order to be effective. It is important to understand the relationship between the Word, prayer and the Spirit.

First, "*the sword of the Spirit*" is obviously the "business end" of the Spirit. In other words, the Scripture is the instrument the Spirit uses to accomplish His work in and through the believer. This empowering by the Spirit is provided *indirectly* (This is in contrast with the *direct* empowerment channel of power given to Israel in the kingdom programme under her New Covenant. See Ezk. 36:27, Act. 1:8, Heb.8:11, 1John 2:20, 27. We must not confuse these two different programs.) through the Word as the believer daily and diligently executes the task of storing that Word, rightly divided, in their soul and responding to it by faith. 1 Thess. 2:13 is very important here:

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is

in truth, THE WORD OF GOD, WHICH EFFECTUALLY WORKETH ALSO IN YOU THAT BELIEVE.”

The word translated "worketh" is *energeo*, from which we derive our English word *energy*. Be-lievers are energized by the Holy Spirit working *through the Word* as we focus on its sound doctrine. This empowering and energizing takes place in the “*inner man*”and is the means whereby God works in and through the Body of Christ. This brings us to the importance of our responsibility to *pray “in the Spirit.”*

In this dispensation, prayer is a supernatural work of the Spirit effected through our response of faith to the sound doctrine resident in our inner man. In a word, it is the catalyst that releases the power of the Spirit to apply to the details of our lives the tremendous blessings of our positions in Christ.

The Holy Spirit motivates and energizes by His power in our inner man an effective ministry of prayer and intercession that penetrates to the deepest levels of human need. The mechanics of how prayer works today is detailed in Rom.8:26:

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: BUT THE SPIRIT ITSELF MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US WITH GROANINGS WHICH CANNOT BE UTTERED”.

Thus as we pray the Spirit works in us through the Word. It is the Holy Spirit and His great power that strengthens us for the battle as we study theWord and prayerfully apply it to our lives. He makes our weapons "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." He is the giver of *all* power and might for the believer today. Hence Paul prayed for the Ephesians:

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT BY HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN." (Eph.3:16)

We need never quake, nor fear, nor be embarrassed in the presence of the enemy,

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but [they are] mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds”.

GOMER SAYS, “HEY!”

Tuesday, October 2, we watched with rapt attention as the clock ticked past midnight and the reunion of Germany became a reality. The celebration was appropriate for Germany and the world for this is the first time the Twentieth Century has seen such a border change without warfare. The new Germany is not only the largest but without doubt also the most powerful nation in Europe. Its future role in the European community will be watched with great interest by the whole world.

This event is of interest for Bible students because Germany is generally identified as the modern descendants of Japheth's son, Gomer.(Gen, 10 :2). "*Gomer and all his bands*"--could it be that Germany is to be the leader of the European nations?-- are identified as participants in the end-time invasion of Israel from the North (Ezk. 38:6), and thus much speculation about the prophetic significance of the German reunification abounds.

While such sensationalism is tantalizing-as is the current turmoil in the Mideast-we must remember Paul's declaration:

"And now YE KNOW WHAT WITHHOLDETH that he [i.e., the Anti Christ] might be revealed in his time" (II Thess. 2:6).

Aknowledge of the rightly divided Word gives us a basic appreciation of the fact that the dispensation of grace has *interrupted* the prophetic program. God's purpose in the present dispensation-"*the mystery*"--literally "*with holds*" the outworking of the details of the prophetic program-in the above context, the specific reference is to withholding the revelation of the AntiChrist (II Thess. 2:3-9).

As long as the day of grace continues, the appearing of AntiChrist with his ten kingdom confederation is effectively hindered. Thus the possible prophetic significance of current world events is not only unknown, it is really irrelevant. The truth is we *do know* what God is doing today: He is saving lost sinners through faith in the finished work of His Son at Calvary and placing them into the Body of Christ, there blessing them with "*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.*"

Instead of being caught up in what Gomer/Germany may or may not seem to be saying, let's focus our full attention on what God *is* doing, dedicating our time and talent to filling our role as "*ambassadors of grace and peace*" in a world of sin and woe.

