



**Defeated...
No More!**

Win the struggle God's way.

John Matthews

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It is amazing how difficult it is at times to spend time with God and enjoy His presence. Why is it that something so simple as prayer and worship is at times so hard, especially when you are alone? “Pray without ceasing” is like commanding someone to breath. Prayer is the very breath of a Christian. Why do we need a command to breath?

The answer lies in two directions: one, the selfish and spiritually dead condition of our natural self, the flesh. “The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so...” (Romans. 8:7) Your flesh wants nothing to do with God. It is your spirit

that wants God.

The second answer lies in the direction of the devil. Satan hates your prayer life. He hates your communion with God. Maybe he's jealous of it, since he lost his own intimate place with God eons ago when he led a heavenly rebellion.

If you are in communion with God, Satan is in trouble. Imagine what God might download into your spirit? Faith, perhaps. Wisdom. The joy of the Lord, which is your strength. An idea might come to you – one that might change the world you live in, one that might relieve someone's suffering – even your own!

Satan wants to stop your fellowship with God at all costs. Consequently, he

has developed and launched the most devilish set of obstacles and weapons against your private life with God. It is all out spiritual war, and the battlefield is in you.

Satan tricks you...

Don't be surprised at the fact that you have temporary setbacks in trying to have time with God. Don't be surprised that, once you have committed yourself to prayer, it seems to get harder rather than easier. It just means that Satan plays his tricks and you must learn to expose them and get past them.

Tricks may seem the wrong word, but the fact is that he is an old trickster, doing his best to deceive you. He's very good at this, having been at it for thousands of years. But the fact of the

matter is he is not creative and uses the same old tricks that he has always used. He can be exposed, and he can be defeated in your life.

The first thing needed is to recognize his activity. He does not show up at your door announcing that he's the devil and that he has come to torment you. He is a thief and a robber and his ways are criminal. He comes by deception, and he does the best he can to make his entry and his influence seem like God. Otherwise the average believer would not believe him and receive him. Often what he offers is an element of truth stuffed with lies.

This level of spiritual warfare is frequently not seen as a spiritual battle. On this mental and emotional level of war, we may neither see it as a spiritual

problem nor employ spiritual weapons. Consequently we put up with things in our mind and emotions that pull us away from God and keep us away from His presence, and we accept this condition as normal. We think it's just the way we are. But this cannot be true, because we were made to have fellowship with God. We were created to enjoy Him and His presence forever. We were fashioned to be continuously in touch with heaven, always “online and connected” with God!

It is a war.

It is a war of the highest magnitude, fought at the most intimate level of human existence – your soul. It is there that we are engaged, like it or not, in a

wrestling match with beings far beyond human comprehension, described in Ephesians 6:

“A final word: Be strong with the Lord’s mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.

Use every piece of God’s armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness. For shoes,

put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you will be fully prepared. In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere.”
Ephesians 6:10-18 NLT

That this battle is fought on a personal level is indicated in 2 Corinthians:

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments

and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” 2 Cor. 10:3-5 NIV

Paul speaks of us being in war almost as an assumption, a fact not needing an explanation. He simply goes on to point out the place of the war, the nature of the strongholds, and the way to fight it. The place of the war is in our thoughts and it is in our mind that the enemy develops strongholds. Only by using divinely powerful weapons can the strongholds be removed. And with those weapons our thoughts are to be taken captive. Only by fighting a spiritual war with spiritual weapons will our private world be brought under submission to Jesus. Only this way will we find ourselves in fellowship with

God and have peace of mind.

Don't be surprised...

Let me say it again: don't be surprised at the struggle for a prayer life. Don't be discouraged and embarrassed at your failures in prayer. In fact your discouragement and embarrassment is evidence of the battle. Discouragement and condemnation are two of the enemy's most effective strategies to eliminate your communion with God!

I have learned the reality of Satan's strategies over the years. I also learned the effectiveness of God's divinely powerful weapons against the enemy. You can learn too. You can start employing your divine weapons and no longer tolerate the enemy's tactics. You can wise up and start living like

a soldier in your spiritual armor. You can win this war, because Jesus already defeated Satan and has given you the power and the weapons to enforce that victory in your life!

Some Christians deny the reality of spiritual warfare. Let me say that this is probably Satan's most effective way to keep the church defeated. Anything that keeps us from fighting the fight of faith serves Satan's plans well. Passive religious thinking leaves the church weak, easily succumbing to the devil's strategies.

Satan is a defeated foe, and does his best to keep this fact hidden from Christians. He knows that he has been defeated at the cross, but deceives many into thinking he is still the powerful one. He has some power, but he has

no authority. This has all been given to Jesus. (Matthew 28:18) Jesus gives this authority to every believer. The minute we know this, we can stand up in that authority and enforce the victory already won through the blood of the cross. Satan is a criminal. He will not yield the territory he is camping on unless someone forces him out — through faith in the finished work of Christ and the power of the written Word. That is why the Bible says to resist the devil, and he will flee. (James 4:7)

Don't be passive...

Passive religion leaves us assuming God is doing all the fighting. After all, as some say, "God has everything under control". I would say it this way: "Yes, God has everything under control — wherever people yield to the Lord-

ship of Jesus Christ, where His Word is being preached and believed, where the authority of Christ's name and blood are being exercised in faith, and where the people of God are on the job praying that God's will would be done on the earth as it is in heaven!"

If these things are not happening, it is deception to think that God has everything under control. This kind of thinking has kept the church in an ivory tower quoting religious platitudes while Satan has free reign in much of the world.

And free reign in your head.

Without putting on God's armor, and using the weapons of warfare divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses, you can have the kingdom of dark-

ness at work within you, and you will experience little of God even though you may be a Christian.

There have been several crises in my life that have shown me the reality of spiritual warfare. I slowly came to know how Satan affects me, how to stop that influence, and how to experience the inward presence of God.

It was my first overseas mission trip...

Twenty five years ago, five of us, including Jackie and me, headed to India to minister in pastors' conferences and churches. After a month in India, Jackie returned to the USA and I went with the others to Sri Lanka.

Emotionally, I was ready to go home after a month, and would rather have returned with Jackie. To the others,

however, it didn't seem right for me to leave, since it would change the plan we had committed to, and I yielded to their perspective. I did not fully agree with them, and continued the trip with doubts. This opened the door for what I now call spiritual warfare.

When Jackie returned home, the rest of us left for Sri Lanka. Actually, only two of us left at the scheduled time. It turned out that the Asian airline had lost our reservations, and only two seats could be found, one for me and one for my partner Wes. The two ladies would come later; one was a seasoned missionary and knew India well.

As we boarded the plane, my partner began to get ill. By the time we landed in Sri Lanka (a short flight), he was very sick with a high fever. Neither

of us knew Sri Lanka or the people we would meet. We got in a taxi and headed across the island of Sri Lanka as Wes became sicker by the minute.

Something unexpected began to happen inside of me. My anxiety level began to rise, and by the time we arrived at our destination on the other side of the island I was in a state of panic. It made no sense to me at the time. Now I know it was triggered by a combination of culture shock and a fear of having missed the will of God. And there was a third element: spiritual attack. At the time, however, I did not know it was a spiritual attack. It just felt like I was coming emotionally unglued. I didn't know what was happening to me. I felt inexplicable terror. (Years later we learned that many people experi-

ence night terrors when first arriving in Hindu or Muslim cultures.)

We arrived at a house in the dark where no one spoke English, and were shown to our bedroom. My friend was so sick he now had become delirious. I got him into bed and under his mosquito net. I then got into my bed and under my mosquito net. We were in the dark, with no electricity. My panic level was rising.

I thought I was going to lose my mind. I was a pastor, and I had a vision of myself being loaded on a plane and arriving home to the church in a straight jacket. God's man of power home from his first mission trip early! Gone mad! I don't have the words to fully describe my inward state that evening,

as the minutes crawled by in the darkness, as I sat under my mosquito net. I was irrationally terrified and alone in the dark. My friend could not help me. No one could help me. I didn't know how I could make it through the night. Sleep was not an option in such a state of panic.

Several hours later, near midnight (according to my glow-in-the-dark watch), a thought came to me — in the middle of my emotional agony. A thought came to me. I had been plagued with thoughts — all dark and foreboding, all tormenting. The strength of those dark thoughts was beyond what I had ever experienced. But this new thought was different, and it suddenly arrested my tormented mind.

The thought was this: “I am a child of

God.”

Yes, that was the thought. “I am a child of God.”

When I thought this new thought, when I remembered who I was, it dawned on me that I was in a spiritual battle. I can't really tell you why it dawned on me, except that I was thinking a spiritual thought, the truth from God's Word. It seemed to invade my torment and shine the light on my problem.

After realizing that this was a spiritual battle (that's a big step towards victory!), I had another thought: “I might be in bad shape, but the devil is in worse shape than me.” And then another thought: “I might even be outside the will of God. Maybe I should have gone home. Maybe I shouldn't be here.

But I am still a child of God.” And then another thought: “Maybe I am so bad off that I am the lowest of the low members of the body of Christ. If so, I’m still higher than the devil! Maybe I’m the skin on the bottom of the feet of Christ’s body. (That’s as low as I could get...) I’m still higher than the devil! He’s still under me. I am a child of God!”

Then a stream of thoughts came about the truth of who I am in Christ. I don’t remember all that came to me, but I knew it was time to go to war. I did what I call spiritual street fighting. I didn’t know what was tormenting me, but I knew it wasn’t God. I began to declare all the truth about my salvation that came to me, and I knew I had to speak it out in order to fight this battle.

I recall saying “Satan, in the name of Jesus, get off my bed and get out of my mosquito net! This is my bed. Get off! I plead the blood of Jesus Christ against you! I am not going crazy! I rebuke this tormenting presence in Jesus’ name!”

I said and shouted a lot of other things that I don’t remember, every thing in the Word about my authority and identity in Christ that I could remember, and all the promises of God that I could remember. It seemed I was in a life and death battle.

After some time, I shouted “Satan get out of my bedroom! This is my territory, and I claim it in Jesus’ Name! Get out of Wes, get out of his body!” He was delirious and in a fitful sleep. I had suddenly realized that his sickness was

also a spiritual attack. I claimed victory for him, and then welcomed God's presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in our room.

My panic subsided, and I was finally able to drift off to sleep with my mind focused as best as I could on the promises of God. It was a spiritual battle, for sure.

When I awoke the next morning, my friend was conscious and feeling much better. He soon returned to normal. I felt better too.

However, I found that I was not yet "out of the woods". I could not really describe the problem well to my teammates, and they did not understand the desperate level of what I had gone through. Though I had gotten victory

over the torment, it was right outside the door of my mind, so it seemed. I knew that if I allowed any passivity in my mind I'd be right back into high anxiety and panic. What was I to do? I tried listening to Christian music and teaching tapes, but that didn't help. I asked my friend to pray for me, and he did, but he didn't understand what I was going through. His prayer didn't seem to do much. I was fighting an internal war. I knew the victory was secured, but still felt highly vulnerable to the tormenting thoughts.

I had to be aggressive...

We had about three days until meetings were to start. The time was theoretically for rest, but I couldn't rest. If I was mentally passive, the torment would re-

turn. I knew I needed to be active, even aggressive somehow in dealing with this, and I asked God what I should do.

Here's what came to me to do: I would schedule each hour of my day in fifteen-minute increments. For the first fifteen minutes I would memorize a Scripture. I chose Romans 8:31-39.

“What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?

Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No,

for he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us.

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened with death? (Even the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow,

and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord”
(NLT)

This Scripture was a good choice, better than I knew at the time. It proved to be God's divine weapon for the destruction of fortresses. The fortresses were the lies that the enemy was bringing in order to capture my mind.

I had to focus my mind...

It took all my power of concentration to focus on the verses. One word at a time. One phrase at a time. Back to the first word. Say the phrase again. Now the first verse. Repeat it out loud. Think

about what it means. Do it again until I remember every word.

On to the next verse. One phrase of it. Now the first verse again and add the first phrase of the second verse.

For the second fifteen minutes of each hour I would speak out loud the verses I was memorizing, and other promises of God about who He is and who I am in Christ.

For the third fifteen minutes I would sing Scripture songs and other songs that declared the truth of God and my relationship to Him

For the fourth fifteen minutes I would walk, and think about the same scriptures, speaking them out loud if my mind started to wander.

This went on for most of three days. I

was able to sleep, but the battle had been so severe that I entirely lost my appetite. I had to force myself to eat a little. It was probably two weeks before my appetite returned. I lost about fifteen pounds in the process.

Finally after three days I was scheduled to preach. I had learned already that preaching the Word was good for me as well as for those who listened. I knew I'd get better once I started preaching.

The Lord gave me one Scripture to begin preaching, 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." As I preached it, I could feel the strength of the truth straightening out my soul. And then I just got better and better, still memorizing Romans 8:31-39 several times a day, shouting it, singing

it, meditating on it, and reading it. It was God's medicine for me. It was His divine weapon in my heart and in my mouth that pulled down the strongholds in my mind and brought my thoughts into submission to the truth.

I'm glad there was no one to help me...

I thank God for that experience twenty-five years ago. I am glad there was no one to help me. I had no CDs to play, no counselors to consult, no anointed church service to attend, no prayer line to get in for help, no friends to solve it for me. I am glad I was stuck on the other side of the world, forced to find for myself something from God that would help.

I proved that the power is in the covenant Word of God, especially the truths

about Christ, about our redemption in Christ, and what His word says about us His children. I proved that it is this Word in my heart and on my lips that gains and maintains the victory and gives me the peace and the joy that I so desperately need. It doesn't come from my mind; instead it subdues my mind to the reality of the spiritual truth of the Word. That produces peace – mental and emotional well being.

Having faced this crisis, I learned the reality of spiritual warfare. I proved that God's word works. It is THE weapon of our warfare, the sword of the Spirit.

One other note: when I arrived home, people said I was radiant, that I never looked better in my life!

I also discovered an interesting thing. Remembering the Sunday night in Sri Lanka when I was in torment, and how things began to change near midnight, I realized that it had been Sunday morning at home, and my church had been meeting. “Did anything happen at that time?” I asked an elder. “Oh, yes,” he recalled. “About that time I led the congregation in prayer for you. It wasn’t anything remarkable; we just asked God to bless you and meet your need.” How amazing this seemed to me! At the time the church prayed a simple prayer for me, on the other side of the world I had a thought... in the middle of torment: “I am a child of God.” And things began to change.

Have you learned the reality of spiritual warfare and the power of God’s divine

weapons?

My first lesson in spiritual warfare...

The first lesson I really learned about the reality of spiritual warfare was several years earlier, soon after I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The thing I noticed most as the result of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was the light that began to shine on the Scriptures.

I had learned much of the Bible as a child. I had even memorized several books of the Bible when I was a teenager participating in a ministry called Youth For Christ. But the passages were not alive to me, and much seemed hidden from my understanding. Even my later training in Bible College left me with limited revelation on the Word, though I was taught many great things.

It was upon receiving the baptism in the Spirit many years later that my spiritual eyes seemed to open. The Scripture I had learned as a youth and in Bible College came alive to me. I felt like a kid in a candy store, daily seeing new things in the Word!

A big change came when I began to understand the source of a long-standing problem in me: chronic depression. After Bible College I had entered graduate studies to become a medical doctor. I had been called by God to the ministry at age eighteen, and medical school proved a side track. In my third year of medical school, I resigned my studies in frustration and unhappiness. (The happiest place is to be in the will of God!)

Disappointment and depression stayed

with me for the next five years. When those five years ended, I experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit (alone, in my home.) The depression immediately lifted, and I felt like I was walking six inches off the floor! Jackie noticed the difference right away. (She was not yet filled with the Spirit). Two weeks later, however, I awoke on a Saturday morning with the old depression back.

I had been avidly listening to Spirit filled preaching by then. I had heard about the need to put on the armor of God and to resist the devil. Though I was raised on the Scripture, somehow this had never made sense to me, until now.

“Maybe I should try this...”

We were scheduled to go to a birthday

party that Saturday, and I was deeply depressed. Jackie had been in a similar frame of mind for some time. It was not a happy morning. I recall going into a grocery store to get something for the party. As I walked down the aisle I had a thought.

Walking down the aisle feeling severely depressed, having thoughts of suicide, I had the thought. "Maybe I should try this "authority- in- the- name- of -Jesus- thing". So I whispered the words: "Spirit of depression, I command you to leave in the name of Jesus!" And it did! Instantly! I could almost hear the hiss of it evaporating! Suddenly I was light and happy and joyful again, like I had been for two weeks after being baptized in the Holy Spirit! I came out of the store singing, and jumped happily into

the car with Jackie — who had watched me go in depressed.

I was free, but she was still trapped in her depression. She got mad. And madder. And madder. By nighttime she was furious. She should tell her own story, but to me it was like the devil's last stand in her before she too received the baptism in the Spirit.

The next morning, Sunday, she walked right up to the church altar in the middle of the message (there had been no invitation) and said to the pastor “I want the baptism in the Holy Spirit right now! I need this power for living!” And she got it, of course.

You see, she was not amazed that I had fallen back into depression. What amazed her was that I snapped out of

it in that grocery store. She knew me well enough to know that I would be in that depressed state for weeks, if not months. She knew then that this Holy Ghost thing was real. And she was as desperate as I was!

Since those days I've learned many other things about dealing with depression. But often underneath everything is the reality that depression is a spiritual problem, a spiritual force with a spiritual solution, and the prevention of it is in the use of God's spiritual weapons!

I hit a wall...

After fifteen years of pastoral ministry the Lord called us out into a ministry to the body of Christ at large, which has mostly emphasized prayer and mis-

sions. Our theme Scripture has been and still is Psalms 2:8: “Ask of Me, and I will give the nations as an inheritance for You.” It is a call to prayer and to the nations.

It is also a call to live by faith, trusting God to meet the needs of our home and our ministry. He uses churches and friends to support us, but for a large part of our financial support each month, we do not know from where it will come.

A few months into this new way of life, I hit a wall in my mind. It looked impossible, especially when I saw that God wanted us to focus on mobilizing prayer in the Church. There were few prayer leaders in those days, and mentioning the call to prayer fell on deaf ears with most churches. I could not understand how God could provide

if we responded to this call to teach and lead in prayer.

During the work of rallying prayer in our city, I happened to be in the office of a pastor friend. I somehow expressed my personal doubts about whether we would survive in this ministry. He told me, “John, you’re going to have to get your act together, and go out and promote yourself!”

I quit!

He was a promoter by gifting, and I knew it was the best advice he knew to give, but for me it was horrible advice. Sitting in his office, I felt like I died on the inside. I said to the Lord, “If that is what is needed, I am done. I quit.” I left his office in total dismay. I went home having quit. There was no

organization where I could hand in my resignation, however. I just told God I give up.

When I arrived home, I told Jackie I quit. She saw me depressed like I had been in earlier years. She said: “Before you quit, why don’t you call Fred?” Fred was a pastor, a friend, a praying friend. I really saw no point in it. All was lost. There was no hope. I couldn’t get my act together, I guessed.

Well, being a good submissive husband once in a while — I thank God for Jackie, who has spoken the truth to me countless times, saving me repeatedly from destruction of some sort — I shuffled into my office and shut the door, considering her counsel halfheartedly. After six hours of doing little except staring at the wall, I finally

dialed Fred's number. He answered. I said about three or four words. He interrupted and began to pray...well, not really prayer...he was rebuking Satan. He saw that I was in a spiritual battle and immediately went to war on my behalf. Finally he was through, and then he prayed one sentence for me: "...and Lord, give him a laughing spirit." Then he hung up the phone without even saying goodbye or finding out how I was! Heavenly laughter...

I sat there momentarily with the phone in my hand, for some reason unable to move or speak. Before long I felt a deep rumbling in my belly. Without my direct permission, I started laughing. It rose from deep within, bursting out of my mouth with screeches and sputtering, and finally literal roaring! I roared

and roared with laughter until my sides ached and I finally fell on the floor laughing!

Jackie came running into my office, shocked. She had seen me a depressed man and now I was roaring with laughter. “What happened to you?”, she asked. I found that I couldn’t respond. All I could do was laugh. I roared some more. I tried to get up and found I was unable to stand.

I began to act drunk. I tried to talk and couldn’t. I stumbled around the house roaring in laughter. The cats ran and hid in the closet. The kids, I remember, came in front of my face and just stared at me and giggled. I went to the kitchen and got out pots and pans and big spoons and began beating on them as I continued roaring with laughter.

This went on for more than an hour and a half....

I finally said something, and found it was the only thing I could say. Other than this one statement, all I could do is speak in tongues and laugh and fall on the floor.

I shouted, “The devil’s mad, and I’m glad. He don’t know that he’s been had!”

There should have been a video camera. I’m sure it looked and sounded ridiculous. I suppose I would have looked crazy to some. Not to Jackie, however. She knew I’d had a breakthrough.

In the middle of that noise, while I acted drunk on the outside, I was totally sober on the inside. I was clear headed and I knew exactly what the truth was.

I was seeing more clearly than ever in my life that God is victorious, Satan is defeated, heaven and hell are real and Jesus is Lord! I saw it all so clearly in the power of the joy of the Lord.

Furthermore, I saw the reality of Psalms 2, the great Psalm of intercession and warfare for the nations. I remembered the verse in that Psalm that said, “He who sits in the heavens laughs...” As I was rolling on the floor laughing, I thought, “Lord, do you do this?” It was too much for me to take in. But I knew He was pouring His joy on me!” I saw, as the first verse of that Psalm says, the nations raging against the Lord, and the Father installing Jesus as King. Then the Father told His Son to ask for the nations, and He would give them to Him as an inheritance. That verse

settled in my spirit as God's call to us and the foundation for our ministry. All in the middle of roaring laughter!

I cannot explain to you how rolling on the floor in heavenly laughter has anything to do with money, but the financial flow that we needed to exist and do ministry began to flow. And it still does, as long as I stay in the joy of the Lord and stop trying to figure it out. You see, many of life's struggles are really spiritual battles, and we only win them with spiritual weapons.

Our valley of the shadow of death...

Fifteen years ago Jackie and I walked through "the valley of the shadow of death". She was diagnosed with breast cancer. Actually the symptoms showed up within weeks of us leaving the pas-

torate to enter this “faith ministry” of missions and prayer. We were without health insurance, and without salary. After several months Jackie faced the fact that she was having symptoms which could not be ignored. Tests revealed cancer.

The phone call from the doctor which confirmed the tests came in the middle of a missions prayer meeting in our living room, and several of our pastor friends were in the room. Jackie took the call, and came back into the living room with the report of cancer.

Immediately those pastors began to pray over her. Almost immediately, the fear of cancer and death left her.

I, on the other hand, didn't get prayed for. And a certain dread invaded me.

By the evening I was suffering and couldn't sleep. Finally, at about three a.m. I got out of bed (Jackie was sleeping peacefully) and I went downstairs to my office to pray. Or cry. Or something.

Through the prayer and the tears I found myself looking at Psalms 118, and saw the verse, "You shall not die but live, and give praise to the Lord..." In a moment I knew in my spirit that Jackie would not die, but live to proclaim God's goodness.

During that night the Lord spoke to her as well, and she knew she would not die. She knew she would be delivered from this cancer. And she was! Fifteen years have passed, and she is healthy.

Yet, she also knew she was to submit to

the surgery. Beyond the initial surgery, this took eight other reconstructive surgeries. She spent the next two years of life in and out of surgical procedures.

The night before her cancer surgery, Jackie was in total peace, knowing in her spirit that she was delivered from the cancer, and knowing also that the Lord told her to have the surgery.

However, I was not at peace that night and the internal war felt as intense as what I had gone through in Sri Lanka. I had lost my appetite, and was slipping into depression and grief. That Sunday evening I went to Living Word Christian Center, pastored by Mac and Lynne Hammond.

“John, Run!”

During the praise and worship, I sat in

the middle of the fifteen hundred people attending the meeting. Suddenly pastor Lynne stood up on the platform and shouted, "John! Run! I say, run!" She was pointing right at me, as I sat there startled and dazed. She then ran off the platform and came in my direction, telling me to get out in the aisle. She grabbed my hand and said, "Come on, run! Run around the whole sanctuary! She literally dragged me running around the whole room, then let me go and said, "Keep running! Faster! Faster!"

The crowd was now shouting and clapping, and I was running around them. And running. And running. You see, pastor Lynne saw the passivity and depression trying to get hold of me. And she obeyed the Spirit in getting me to fight against it. As I ran, I broke

free from the darkness, the grief, and the fear. It was like pushing against the darkness until it parted and I was set free. She wouldn't let me stop until she saw that I was smiling and rejoicing and shouting as I ran! The Lord used her to save me from despair and defeat that night.

Do you understand these things? The Bible says "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Sometimes we must fight. Fight the fight of faith. Lay hold on life.

Spiritual passivity is one of the most dangerous schemes of the devil. It can be very religious, deceiving us into thinking we are submitting to some sovereign trouble that God has allowed, not knowing that we are in a war and that

God wants us to stand up in our spiritual armor and shake off the darkness!

There is no depression in God. No self pity. No panic. No gloom. No death.

He is Life, and full of life. He is Peace, and full of peace. He is Joy, and full of joy.

He teaches us to shake off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. "...Who trains my hands to war, and my fingers to battle..." (Psalms 144:1) He gives us a fighting spirit.

Let me be clear. This does not mean you should go around yelling at the devil all the time. On the contrary, you should not give the enemy any more attention than is absolutely needed. Knowing you are in a battle with the devil does not mean you focus on him.

You focus on God, and on the truth. Fighting the fight of faith is believing and meditating on and understanding and declaring and obeying the truth – the Word of God.

In Sri Lanka I proved the power of the truth of Romans 8:31-39. “If God is for us, who is against us?” These ten verses are full of power against Satan himself and the kingdom of darkness. I noticed that the devil is never mentioned in these verses. Only God, and Jesus. Only God’s character and the position, authority, and ministry of Christ. Winning the fight...

Satan’s strategy is to build strongholds in your mind, which are basically lies. Strongholds are the “imagination and speculations and every proud and

lofty thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.” The evidence of such strongholds is that you believe something to be true and unchangeable that is contrary to the Word of God.

It is with the “divine weapons of warfare”, as written in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, that we tear down strongholds. They are weapons of the Word, weapons of the truth. They must be used – aggressively, and consistently.

This is how we fight: with the weapons of the truth about Jesus Christ and the truth about His great redemption. The weapons are His Word, His Blood, and His Name. The power is found in the truth of who God is, and what He has done through Christ, and what He has written about it. Not only what he has written about Himself, but what He has

written about us, His children. We put our faith in this truth, we declare this truth, and we act on this truth.

And we win, for Jesus has already won on our behalf.

“Lord, teach me to fight this fight of faith, to lay hold of the life you have given me through redemption in Christ. Forgive me for at times rolling over and playing dead in the face of the enemy’s oppressions and depressions. Thank you for the grace which is in Christ Jesus and therefore in me, so that I might put on the armor of God and stand firm against the lies and strategies of the darkness. Through faith in Christ, I put on the armor of light. Thank you Lord, for causing me to understand the truth, and for the truth that sets me free!”