



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Spiritual Warfare 101

Invisible War: Winning Against Evil | Part 1

Steve Lombardo | June 14, 2015 | 2 Kings 6:8-17



We're talking about spiritual warfare today, which is a serious thing. Our new sermon series is entitled, "Invisible War: Winning Against Evil." This is the first in a number of messages exposing the darkness, talking about winning against the evil one and his workers and his ways in the world. We're in a battle and I'm ready to fight. I'm eager to learn what God's Word instructs us to do in this invisible war.

All the campus pastors, led by Pastor Tim, get together each week and ask this question: "God, what do the people of Village Bible Church need to hear from Your Word? Lord, what book of Your words should we go through verse by verse? Lord, what series should we bring to help people not just with their felt needs, but the real spiritual needs of our body?" And it's been a great thing to see the Lord work to bring His Word to each of our four gathered churches as we seek to grow together in our faith.

This series developed from wrestling with what evil is and what's going on in the invisible world. We read in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that the devil blinds the eyes of unbelievers so that they cannot see the glory of Jesus Christ. So if you're here today and you're not a believer in Jesus Christ, the devil wants you to stay an unbeliever. He wants your eyes to stay blinded. He's working to blind your eyes to the truth that you're a sinner and that Jesus died for your sin. If you would believe in Him and turn to Him by faith, you could have everlasting life. You could have your sins forgiven. You can have peace with God. However, the devil doesn't want you to hear that message or to receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

If you're a believer, the devil seeks to oppress you, disable you, distract you and distort the truth so that you are ineffective for the Kingdom of God. As a leadership team, we felt like we needed to address this issue this summer. We need to talk about the spirit world. The spiritual world isn't going away. There is still evil in the world. There are angels and demons, whose evil activity is increasing. We can't be blind to what's going on in the heavenly realms.

I was looking through one of my old papers from seminary from a Theology of the Spirit World class. The final paper had to address something in culture that had a spiritual significance and then answer a question about that. So my thesis was, "In the one-hundred-and-sixty year history of the Archdiocese of the Catholic Church in Chicago, they didn't appoint their first full-time exorcist until 2002. This was kept quiet. Nobody knew anything about it until a couple of years afterwards." So my question was, "Why did they do that?"

My quest for an answer led me to a little library at the Archdiocese in downtown Chicago. Some little old nuns helped me find information. They knew nothing about this. I went out to a Catholic seminary in the northern suburbs and did some studies there. As I was doing this, I thought, "This is like a movie. I'm investigating this and I'm going to find out who this exorcist is. He's going to grant me an interview and maybe even take me along on an exorcism." [That didn't happen. I did find the office of The Charismatic Renewal of the Catholic Church though.]

Now I'm really getting into this. The whole paper boiled down to this: The reason they appointed this exorcist was that for the ten years leading up to the 2002 appointment, calls for assistance for exorcism, possession and demonic oppression had increased dramatically and they needed to do something to address the problem. So they appointed this priest as a full-time exorcist.

Things are not getting better in society. Evil is active and will grow until one day the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will put an end to it. Until that day, we're involved in this battle. What does the average person think about the spirit world? What do you think about the spirit world? Have you given much thought to it? I took this question about the spirit world and went to Walmart. I recorded my interactions with a few people and we're going to show it today. Let's see what a couple guys have to say:

[Video Plays]

Steve (while walking into Walmart): We'll see if we can't find some folks to answer a couple questions. How are you doing today, sir?

Dave: Good. How are you?

Steve: So, can you say your name and what you consider yourself to be religiously?

Dave: Yeah. My name is Dave and I'm Catholic.

Steve: As a Catholic, do you believe that there's a spirit world? That there's a world that we don't see, but it's real? Or not?

Dave: I believe there's a God, but I believe He has a hands-off attitude.

Steve: Okay, so there is a spiritual God and there are spiritual beings, but maybe they don't have anything to do with our world?

Dave: Well, no. I believe God does not interfere. That's a good thing that He doesn't interfere because people will stop blaming Him if there's something wrong. People get spoiled. People curse God for not giving them a BMW for their birthday, you know. So I believe He has a hands-off attitude about it. If God intervened, you know, man would not learn to not stick his head inside a lion's mouth.

Steve: What about angels and demons and stuff like that? What are your thoughts there?

Dave: I guess there has to be angels and demons.

Steve: But they don't affect...?

Dave: I believe they have a hands-off attitude, just let things go.

Steve: Well thanks, Dave, I appreciate your time. There we go. Go ahead Ralph.

Ralph: My name's Ralph. How are you?

Steve: Good. How are you doing?

Ralph: Good. Good. Good.

Steve: Good. Okay. I'm asking today, first, "Would you consider yourself a Christian or non-Christian?"

Ralph: I'm a Catholic.

Steve: You're a Catholic?

Ralph: Mm-hmm.

Steve: So what do you think about the spirit world? Is there a spiritual realm that we can't see?

Ralph: I'm sure there's... Obviously we can't see it because we're down here. Yeah, but I believe there is.

Steve: Like angels and demons? Do you believe in that?

Ralph: I don't. I don't believe in demons. I don't think there is anything like that. That's just me personally. Everybody says, "Yeah, there is," you know? I say, "No, there's not." Because there's got to be a better place than this. I don't think anything's going to get really worse than where we're at right now.

Steve: What do you think about Jesus?

Ralph: I believe in the Man. I do. With, you know, like you said I have my doubts, but there's always... What can I say? How can I put it? You always wonder in the back of your head, "Is there something really there?" There's gotta be something there. My mom passed away when I was a kid. She went somewhere. I plan on seeing her again.

Steve: There is hope in Jesus. He died for us and rose again so we could have eternal life.

Ralph: This is true.

Steve: Thanks Ralph, I appreciate it.

Ralph: You're welcome sir.

[Video Ends]

So there you see just a couple of answers. There was one more where the audio was so bad that I didn't include it, but he expressed essentially the same thing as the other guys. One believed in the spirit world, but both really didn't think they had anything to do with this world. After I stopped filming this other one, he said, "What do you believe?" As a pastor, I dream of those types of scenarios. That's just a fastball right down the middle. So we talked about Jesus for fifteen minutes at Walmart.

Two Faulty Views of the Spirit World

What is spiritual warfare? Most people believe in one or two extremes:

1. **There are spirits that control all aspects of our world.** This is the world-view that thinks there's a devil behind every bush. Even Christians can think this way. "I was so thankful. I went to Walmart. I was driving around and God sent His angels and they opened up a parking spot for me right up front." It's a belief that these spirits are just controlling everything that we do.
2. **There's no such thing as a spiritual realm, and if there is, it doesn't affect our lives.** It says, "I only believe in what I can see."

Neither of these views are Biblical. I think we at Village Bible Church have a tendency to say that there's a spirit world but it doesn't really affect our daily lives. Would you agree? If we're asked about it we believe in the spirit world, but on a day-to-day, hour-to-hour basis, we're not thinking about the war. We're in spiritual warfare.

Let's define it like this:

Spiritual warfare is a war of rebellion against the rebellion.

God created all that there is and it was good, but we chose to sin. We rebelled against God. The entire world is rebelling against the good and gracious and righteous and holy God. There's evil in this world. There's sickness in this world. It's all because of rebellion against God and Who He is. The devil rebelled against God because he wanted to ascend to His throne. This rebellion is all over the place. As a Christian, you have joined the rebellion against the rebellion.

At the start of the Civil War, Tennessee joined the Confederate States and rebelled against the Union. They seceded from the Union. In response to their secession, East Tennessee seceded from Tennessee. They became the rebellion against the rebellion. That's what it means to be a Christian. That's what spiritual warfare is. It is rebellion against all that is around us. Think about the world in which we live and how God is not honored. We're rebelling against that. We're rebelling against evil.

Please turn to 2 Kings 6:8–17. This is our spiritual food.

Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, he took counsel with his servants, saying, "At such and such a place shall be my camp. But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are going down there. And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God told him. Thus he used to warn him, so that he saved himself there more than once or twice.

And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing, and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel?" And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." And he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and seize him." It was told him, "Behold, he is in Dothan." So he sent there horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city.

When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Three Truths About This War

God is in control | vv. 8-10

The king of Syria sought to fight against Israel. He made plans to send his army to specific places. From his perspective, it seemed as though Israel was always beating him to the punch. He said to his servant, "Who is on Israel's side?" The servant said, "There's nobody here on Israel's side but Elisha. God tells Elisha what's going on before it happens. He knows the words you speak in your bedroom. God knows all that's going on even before you do, Oh king of Syria. God is in control."

As we go through this series, we must never lose sight of the fact that we might have plans—that the evil one might have plans as well—but God is sovereign. God is on the throne. God wins the day.

I played baseball in college and remember one game in particular. They were hitting my pitches more than normal during this game. I later found out that the other coach was stealing the signs from our catcher. He could see the signs from the sideline and was giving a sign to their hitter and so they were just waiting for the fastball and then they would give it a rip.

The same thing is going on in this passage. The Syrian king is trying to surprise Israel, trying to get the upper hand. God's in control and knows what is going to happen before it even happens. He's one step ahead.

God has been in control since the very beginning. Go back to Genesis 1, 2 and 3. We see in creation that God is in control. Everything is good. Then man sins. Man rebels against God and still God is in control. In Genesis 3:14–15, God condemns the serpent and then He says that there will come a day when the offspring of Eve will crush the serpent's head. *"He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* God promises that one day, Jesus will crush the head of the serpent. God is in control. There's the cross. There's Jesus in the very beginning. God is always in control.

As we talk about spiritual warfare, we want to get away from this idea that there's a good force versus an evil force—God against the devil. I think we have a picture of Jesus' fight against the devil as an arm wrestling match. Jesus on one side and the devil on the other side. We imagine that they're equal and they're fighting one another and the question is, "Who's going to win?" That's not the case whatsoever. God is in control. He is the Victor. He is the One Who wins.

In Job 1–2, we see a behind-the-scenes view of the spirit world. The devil comes before God, challenging Him by saying, "Nobody can love You, God, unless You do stuff for them. Nobody can love You for Who You are." But God says, "Have you considered My servant Job? Have you tried Job? Have you seen if he's faithful or not?" Satan says, "God, You've put a hedge around him. You've protected him." You can almost hear God saying, "Oh, that's right, Satan, you can't do anything without My permission."

Martin Luther once said, "The devil is God's devil." The devil is on a leash. God is in control and He never loses control. You'll never come to a place in your life so dark that God's light is not there, a place where you cannot find Him, a place where He is not in control. No matter how dark the day seems to be. Maybe some of you are in a dark day right now from your perspective. You'll never get to a place where God's not in control, even in the hard times. Grief. Pain. Yes. But at the end of the day, no matter what happens, believe that God is in control. He'll see you through. He'll take care of you in the end.

We are surrounded by adversaries | vv. 11-14

The king of Syria said, "Okay, so if Elisha is the problem, we've got to take Elisha out. Let's go get Elisha." So he sent his army to the city of Dothan with the horses and chariots. They came by night and surrounded the city. We are surrounded by adversaries.

A couple of years ago the Chicago Bears lost a playoff game to the Green Bay Packers. We happened to be in the Wisconsin Dells for that game. We were in a restaurant with a bowling alley and the place was full of Packers fans wearing Packers jerseys. My family and I were about the only ones cheering for the Chicago Bears. The Bears lost a pass at the last second. The whole place was cheering and everybody was on fire. One of my sons was crying because he was so sad about the loss. And we're all kind of sad, but we were surrounded by the enemy: the Packers.

We're surrounded by the enemy here, but it's not a sporting event. It's real life. It's eternity. You have an eternal soul. Satan wants your soul to be damaged and hurt forever so that you're ineffective for the Kingdom. If you're not a believer, Satan wants to keep your eyes blinded so that you don't find the truth of forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus Christ and the hope of heaven. This is a real battle. There are enemies all around us. Who are our enemies?

1. The world. The culture that we find ourselves in is our enemy.

2. Our flesh. Even inside ourselves, even as believers, our own flesh is our enemy. We can't even trust ourselves much of the time.
3. Satan, the accuser of the brethren.

Scripture says that these are our enemies and they're surrounding us (1 John 2:15–16; Revelation 12:10).

There are many practical places where we see our enemies today. They don't want to be seen as enemies, but they are there. Stephanie Meyer wrote the *Twilight* series that became the hit movie series. (I'm not a legalist, but I want to point to truth.) She wrote the *Twilight* series because of a recurring dream she had of an ancient vampire who wanted to fall in love. He was in love with a young girl, but couldn't have that relationship because he wanted to drink her blood and kill her. She wrote the *Twilight* series based on that dream.

Stephanie Meyer is a Mormon. Mormonism started when Joseph Smith said that he was visited by an angel named Moroni. At night the angel came and revealed where the ancient plates were that told the story of Jesus Christ coming to the Americas. Coincidence? The spiritual is real. We're surrounded by enemies. The devil masquerades as an angel of light. You might say, "It's just a book. It's just a movie." Oh, that God would give us discernment as we seek to stay clear of our enemy and do battle with him.

The internet is so amazing with all the information we have right at our fingertips. You have your phones and can find things that would have taken months of research years ago. There are so many benefits from it, but I remember being in a public library three years ago and the five-year-old kid next to me was looking at porn. I said, "What are you looking at? Turn that off." He just looked at me and laughed. We are surrounded by enemies. We're in a battle.

So what do our adversaries try to do to us? We know here in the story that they surrounded the city. They were trying to get Elisha. "We've got to get Elisha because he's God's man. He's helping the nation of Israel. We've got to capture him. We've got to take him." What are our adversaries trying to do to us? What are the spiritual forces that are around us? What are the world, our flesh and the devil trying to do? They are trying to distract from and distort the truth.

This goes back to the father of lies, Satan himself. Genesis 3 begins with the serpent coming to Adam and Eve. "Did God really say that you shouldn't eat of any tree?" Eve replies by saying God said that they were not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Satan began by distorting and distracting from the truth. That's the enemy of our souls. He wants to distort and distract you from truth. He wants to oppress you. We're going to be talking about this in the days to come: demonic oppression and demonic possession. They're real things.

There's a story in The New Testament where seven brothers go to cast out a demon (Acts 19:11-20). They're trying to cast out the demon in the name of Paul but they get beat up. The demon says, "I've heard of Paul, but I don't know who you guys are." And the demon-possessed man proceeds to beat the living daylight out of the brothers. It says in the text that the seven of them run out of the house naked. You know you've lost the fight when you run away naked. That's a bad thing.

So what should we do? Elisha and his servant were in this situation. What should they do? Should they flee? Should they run away? Should we flee? Should we run away? Should we start our own community? Should we become Amish? Should we lock our kids away? What are we to do? Turn to James 4:7: "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" Resist the devil. Warfare. Resistance. Rebellion. You're the rebellion against the rebellion that's going on in our world. Resist him. How do we resist the devil?

1. Flee from sin. First Timothy 6:11, "*But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.*" Flee from sin. Don't indulge your sin nature. Run away from them.
2. Deal with the sin that happens. First John 1:9, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" Deal with sin quickly. In Ephesians 4:26–27, Paul says, "*Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.*" That means that when you sin and don't deal with it—or when you let your anger fester—the devil comes in and gets a foothold. He can make something out of it. If there's anger in a marriage and you don't deal with it, the devil gets in there. He has a foothold now and he can use it to drive a wedge between a husband and wife. When we have sin in our lives that's hanging on, the devil can use it against us. He's called "the accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10). The devil comes and says, "You call yourself a Christian? Look at what's in your life. You're a dirty, good-for-nothing person. You're filled with sin. You're hopeless and helpless." That's how he accuses. If you have unconfessed sin in your

life, he's got some power against you. But when you confess your sins, when you walk in the light as He is in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin (1 John 1:7–9). Then when the devil comes to accuse us, we say, "My sin is crucified with Christ. Therefore I no longer live, but Jesus Christ now lives in me (Galatians 2:20). Devil, you have no power over me." We have adversaries all around us, but we're called to fight, and fighting begins with resistance.

Flee from sin. Deal with sin. God's in control. We're surrounded by adversaries.

We are accompanied by allies | vv. 15-17

Look at 2 Kings 6:15–17. So they were surrounded and the young servant said, *"Alas my master what should we do?" [Elisha] said, 'Do not be afraid for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.'* Just imagine that the young servant is looking around thinking, "Elisha, it's just you and me. What do you mean by that? There's an army all around us!" Then Elisha prayed to the Lord, "Please open his eyes that he may see." The Lord opened his eyes and he saw the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

You're not alone. Remember that greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world. There are angelic forces, which God is in control of, that aid His people. Elisha was surrounded and he was with the young man. Their situation was bleak. They were ready to be taken in. But Elisha knew better. Who's on the Lord's side today? If you're on the Lord's side, know that you're never alone.

In the weeks to come we're going to be looking at our three main allies who aid our fight against the adversary:

1. The Holy Spirit. The Lord indwells you. He is the One Who lives in you. He is the One Who provides His power and presence and protection.
2. The church. The church is part of the team.
3. Angels.

That's all coming up. But let me ask this question: how do our allies help us? We talked about how adversaries hurt us. How do allies help us?

1. The Spirit of God is inside of us. He empowers us and strengthens us for the fight to resist the devil. We cannot resist on our own, but through God's strength and might we can resist. We need to put on the whole armor of God that He provides for us (Ephesians 6:10–20).
2. The church. God's people come alongside us during hard times. I once read a story of a Christian woman who got her husband a ticket for a ride in a hot air balloon for his 40th birthday, which was on a Saturday. The dad got in the hot air balloon with the instructor; the mom and two kids were on the ground. They watched the balloon go up, but then it caught fire and came crashing down, killing the instructor and the husband. It was a horrible tragedy. The next day—Sunday—that mom and her kids were in church. Years later at a Bible study, somebody asked her, "You know, I've never asked this question, but how in the world were you able to come to church right after your husband died?" She said, "Because I knew at church there would be people who understood my grief. I also knew that there would be people there who understood my joy." That's the church. People who come alongside in the hard times and people who know that there's salvation and joy in the Lord. There's the hope of heaven. I could tell you numerous stories of people who have lost loved ones. Through the pain and the tears and the hard times, they're able to have joy in the Lord as God's people come alongside them, loving them and helping them. God gives us these people.
3. Angels. Later in our series, we're going to look at what these angels do as God's messengers of hope and protection.

You, my friend, are in a fight. Jesus was tempted by the devil. You will be tempted by the devil. You're part of the rebellion against the rebellion in this world. Don't be blind to it, but engage yourself in it. Resist the devil. As you resist him, he will flee (James 4:7).