

SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE¹

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“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” (Ephesians 6:12).

INTRODUCTION

I bring you greetings from my wife and family, the President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana, the trustees, the Principal of the seminary, pastors and members. It is a great honor done me to be given the opportunity to speak to seminary professors, district presidents, Presidents of Synods, and all the special people present.

I am Nicholas Salifu. I come from Ziako, a village near Bawku in the north-eastern part of Ghana, West Africa. I am married to Cynthia and we are blessed with five children, all living in Ghana, except the youngest, Dorcas who is studying in the USA.

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I was not born a Christian, for my parents were animists or nature worshipers, and later converted to Islam. Life was full of challenges and there was no hope for me anywhere. Praise the Lord, when I was working in southern Ghana, through an LCMS pastor, Rev. Wally Schmidt, Christ found me and saved me.

After working for some years in Tema, the port-city of Ghana, I returned to my home town, but there was no Lutheran Church in any part of the area where I could go to church. By the grace of God, I started a small Lutheran Church in my village, Ziako in 1983.

By the grace of God, as the church grew we looked for land to build a chapel. When I contacted the chief he told me, “You can have all the land near the *Gann* tree, because nobody wants that land”. That *Gann* tree is the abode of all the evil spirits: dwarfs, ghosts, witches, etc. I thanked the chief for the land, but most of the church members were not happy the chief gave us that “bad” land. It was fearful and dangerous to pass by this tree after 8:00 PM because these evil spirits would either chase you or throw stones at you. The fear of evil spirits is unquestionable.

All the new members were animists or idol worshipers (the common name). The challenges they faced which we prayed for during our Bible studies, Prayer Meetings and Worship services include: bareness, traders suffering from losses, loss of jobs, unemployment, interviews without success, office worker who fails to get promotion, poor academic performance of students, poor crop harvest, marital problems, spousal abuse, divorce, teenage pregnancy, abortion, syncretism, witchcraft accusation, isolated people at Gambaga Witch Camp, accident victims, various misfortunes in life, dreams and their interpretations, sickness (more than half of the congregation suffered from different ailments). Since the Fall, life on earth has not been the way God made it to be. Life is hard!

As the Speaker of the Lutheran Hour once said:

There are things too big for our best ingenuity. When you feel like you're unraveling because every day is filled with too much stress, you know how hard life is then. When your relationships are on rocky ground and you feel that they're at risk, you realize how hard life is. When you face financial need and you don't know where the money will come from to pay the bills, you understand how hard life is. When you wrestle with health issues and you see how challenging it is to grow older, you know how hard life is. When a loved one dies and your heart is weighed down with grief and sadness, you understand

how hard life is. When you feel like you're being pulled away from the strength God gives you and you're beaten down by your own failure and sin, you know how hard life is.

BIBLICAL VIEWS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

After God had created a very good world including angels, some of them rebelled against God, under the leadership of Lucifer, as the prince of the angels, who wanted to make himself equal to God: Isaiah 14:12-15 and Luke 10:18 (GREBE and FON, 2006, p.30).

The Old Testament does not explicitly address the origin of Satan or how or when he turned against God. Satan who is mentioned in Job 1-2; Zech 3:1-2 and 1 Chron 21:1) and his allies appear as a fallen angels. These fallen angels are semi-divine beings with powers of various sorts that are aimed at moving people from God" (HAWTHORNE *et al.*, 1993, p.210). They can cause physical harm of all sorts or tempt people to idolatry. For example, in Acts 16:16-18, a slave girl possessed by evil spirit enabled her to prophesy. In fact, Paul recognized the source of her "power" as demonic and expelled the spirit "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 16:19). Others are the Witch of Endor who Saul consulted (1 Samuel 28); Christians and non-believers trusting various idols and "nature intermediaries" to provide their needs; some Christians in Ghana are among those who consult a fetish priestess called Nana Agrada for protection and material wealth, including money.

The term "spiritual warfare" was originally used by Alan Tippert (Australian Methodist Missionary to Fiji) to refer to the battle that goes on in the lives of Christians when they think of following Christ instead of following their old gods. And spiritual warfare, according to Klaus Schultz, is "a technical term that describes the battle between God and Satan for the souls of people" (BENNETT, 2013, p.13). Satan and his allies are identified by several names and descriptions: principalities, powers, rulers of darkness. He is called the Destroyer (Revelation 9:11), the Accuser or the Adversary (1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 1:6-12), the Deceiver, the Enemy, the Evil One, and the god of this world, the Great Dragon, the Lawless One, a Liar, and a Murderer. He is also the Ruler of this world (Ephesians 2:2), and the Prince of demons (Matthew 12:24), Belial, meaning worthless (2 Cor. 6:15), Prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30), the Tempter (1 Thess. 3:5; 1 Cor. 7:5), a serpent (Genesis 3:1), a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8), A liar and father of lies (John 8:44).

“A biblical view of spiritual warfare must begin with God who is eternal, righteous, loving, and good. God created the devil (Col. 1:16-17), not as he is now but as he was good before he became evil (HIEBERT, SHAW & TIENOU, 2003, p.92). “Paul can legitimately extol Christ’s sovereignty over the powers because Christ created them all” (ARNOLD, 1992, p.100). Spiritual warfare takes place when Satan and his allies who include evil spirits, the cosmic powers, principalities of darkness do all they can to disrupt our experiences of the love of God, and also disrupt the oneness and the holiness that we are supposed to live out in our daily lives and in our community. “Spiritual warfare is a metaphor for our lifelong struggle with Satan which causes fear and despair” (BEILBY & EDDY, 2012, p.92). David A. Powlison, in his book *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare*, says that right from Genesis to Revelation all people are involved in a form of spiritual warfare and it is only Jesus Christ who brings the rescue (BENNETT, 2013, p.13).

THE REALITY OF SATAN

From the Scriptures, and the Early Church, people believed in the existence and power of Satan and his allies. Paul refers to Satan as a personal, evil, spiritual being whose purposes are opposed to God, his people and his cosmos (HAWTHORNE *et al*, 1993, p.210). The early church accepted the influence of the demonic realm with great seriousness. They agreed that the devil works through his hordes of demons, although in certain instances the devil personally may assault Christians, as he did to Jesus Christ. “Christians attributed every fact and phenomenon that in any way hindered the person’s union with God and the submission of the world to Christ to demonic influence” (STUDER, 2014, p.692).

In the 17th and 18th centuries, that is the period of Enlightenment, the advances made in the sciences (development of a scientific method based on reason, observation and experiment) brought about a deep-seated and lasting change in the way people in the West especially, perceived reality. For example, Professor Walter Wink of Auburn Seminary in Alabama, USA in his book *Naming the Powers*, said that it was impossible for people to believe the real existence of demonic powers (WINK, 1984, p.4). Another Western theologian, Rudolf Bultmann, agreeing with Wink, asserted that “belief in the spirits is outdated” (STEYNE, 1990, p.60). Rudolf Bultmann, concluded that now that the forces and the laws of nature have been discovered, we can no longer believe in

spirits, whether good or evil. Hence the reality of the supernatural and miracles, and even that which was recorded in Scripture were called into question. But for all those who doubt the existence and power of Satan and the demons, Jones James cautions, “The devil’s greatest trick was to persuade us that he does not exist” (JONES, 1994, p.65).

IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE SOMETHING NEW TO THE CHURCH?

Ancient Christian teachings on the devil and demons sprang from the Old Testament (Septuagint), Job and Zechariah in particular, and the New Testament, especially Acts and Ephesians. Early Christian references to the demonic can be found in the writings of Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Athanasius and many other early church fathers.

Cyprian – (AD 200-258) the bishop of Carthage wrote of the power of the devil and his demons frequently. He talked about the devil’s “onslaught” and his “repeated attacks” on humanity. Cyprian’s awareness of the reality of spiritual warfare continues to reveal itself throughout his work in reference to the enemy and his on-going, strategic attacks. He taught that temptations and evil thoughts are the “devil’s weapons,” that he uses to hinder Christians from obeying God’s will (Cyprian, 188,191,199). Cyprian further argued that as Satan’s schemes are thwarted, such as when Christians leave false religions, he attacks in new ways through infiltration and division.

Origen – (AD 185-254) was an early leader of the church at Alexandria in Egypt, North Africa. He taught of different demons specializing in different kinds of assaults or temptations. In addition to personal attacks, demons effected illness, natural disasters, magic, heresies, corruption of Orthodox doctrines, and even worldly fashions (Brakke, 13, 39). Origen emphasizes the power of prayer in exorcism.

Tertullian – (AD 145-220) Tertullian affirms the existence of demons, saying that they are well known by both believers and philosophers. Tertullian often boasted, “All the authority and power we have over the demons is from our naming of the name of Christ” (Jenkins, 103). Historian Henry Kelly explains that “No one was more aware than Tertullian of the demonic influences that surrounded the people of his day.

Justin Martyr – (AD 100-165) He exposes a comprehensive and thoroughly biblical understanding of spiritual warfare, demonic oppression and exorcism which did not cease with the apostolic age but continued into the early church. For Justin Martyr or Origen, *the truth of Christianity was proved every time an ordinary Christian cast out demons, not through great occult learning, but through prayer and simply invoking the name of Jesus* (Emphasis mine).

C.S. Lewis – (AD 1898-1963) C.S. Lewis tells us elsewhere that we should not minimize the existence of spiritual warfare or the dangers involved. He continues, that Spiritual warfare is real, and demons truly exist. Satan and his demons use our own weaknesses and temptations against us, drawing us away from God. Pornography, gossip, slander, greed, pride, jealousy, rage, adultery, and a whole array of other sins leave us vulnerable for evil forces to manipulate us. But thankfully, God does not leave us to our own devices. Rather, he fights the battle on our behalf. As the Almighty God, no forces of evil, no matter how crafty, subtle, or powerful it is, can ever overcome God. Scriptures show how a Christian combats Satan and engages in successful spiritual warfare by the grace of God, on account of Jesus, through faith, via the Word of God. Leviticus 19:31; Luke 10:18-19; John 8:32; Romans 12:2; Hebrews 4:2; James 4:6-8; James 5: 16; 1 John 4:1-4. Etc.

John Warwick Montgomery – (AD 1931-) Montgomery an apologist for biblical Christianity in his book titled *Principalities and Powers* and a second book titled *Demon Possession* reminded his readers that “The reality of the demonic is a universal experience known to humanity and found in all cultures and parts of the world” (BENNETT, 2013, p.161). He continues that through the power of Jesus received in the Holy Word and the Holy Sacraments, “Evil and the author of evil who are real, are defeated foes” (BENNETT, 2013, p.162).

C.F.W. Walther – (AD 1811-1887) C.F.W. Walther was the first president of The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. Walther cautions pastors that people who are in danger of falling away from the truth to a false religion are in a serious spiritual warfare and therefore need help. He assures us that Satan does not have any power except that which God has granted him. God does not cause evil to occur, but he does bring good through it (Romans 8:28). Walther proposes the frequent reception of the Lord’s Supper and the Holy Absolution as weapons used in our spiritual warfare.

Francis Pieper — (AD 1852-1931) Pieper was a Lutheran theologian who accepted the possibility of demonic possession. He however accepts that such possession can only take place when God allows Satan to do so. “The thorn in Paul’s flesh” is an example of God allowing a Christian to suffer.

Helmut Thielicke – (AD 1908-1996) Thielicke was a Lutheran theologian. He knew that “evil and the devil were inseparable” (Bennett, 157). He believes when people are filled with the Holy Spirit, the devil is driven away. Thielicke says that when a person is baptized and has received the Holy Spirit, the devil fears such a person because, “he who lives in us is greater than the devil” (1 John 4:4).

Jones, James – (AD 1948-) “The devil’s greatest trick was to persuade us that he does not exist” (65). “I hear some people say that belief in demons and evil spirits belongs to the mind-set of Middle-Ages rather than to the enlightened understanding of our time.” The Christian must recognize the extent of the power of the evil one but should know that the sovereign power of God is greater; he should know that when darkness meets light darkness is always defeated; he should know that the authority of Jesus is greater than the authority of the evil one.

Jones tells us that the gospel episodes of Jesus encountering the forces of darkness speak to us more of the devil and Satan: “they reveal a hidden world of evil that is real and external and which manifests itself both in social structures and even in individual personalities who deliberately open themselves to the evil one and his angels” (JONES, 1994, p.63).

OTHER SCHOLARS

Clinton Arnold, a New Testament scholar says, “The West needs to realize that it is the only contemporary society that denies the reality of evil spirits”. Anthropologist Paul Hiebert, a missionary to India, came to the conclusion on the issue of the belief and power of evil spirit that Western culture has a significant “blind spot” when it comes to the question of spirits and evil spirits (ARNOLD, 1992, p.180). The “blind spot” or middle zone of spirit forces that are believed by non-Western cultures to influence life.

Philip Jenkins says “Overwhelmingly, global South churches teach a firm belief in the existence of evil and in the reality of the devil, and that is

especially true of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. To quote Olusegun Obasanjo, a former President of Nigeria, “Doubting the existence of the devil or Satan is like doubting the existence of sin” (JENKINS, 2006, p.100). If we believe there is sin, then we must believe there is spiritual warfare because Satan is the cause of sin.

Although Satan is neither omnipotent, omnipresent nor omniscient, he has received some minimal power from God. The ultimate goal of Satan is to lead Christians astray by keeping them from accepting Christ as Lord and Savior (2 Cor. 4:3-4; 1 Peter 5:8). Christians should always recognize Satan and the demons and all evil forces that they are always God’s enemies and theirs. Satan is real:

The Scriptures do not deny the existence of demons, evil spirits and witchcraft. But Scriptures insist that the presence of God and his angels provide security against demons and any other cause for human fear. The Christian can rest confidently on Christ’s promise that he will be with us to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). The point is not to deny the existence and power of Satan and his agents like demons and witches, but to affirm the power of God over those who oppose us (Kunhiyop, 241).

Robert H. Bennett – Dr. Bennet is a faithful Lutheran pastor and a professor at Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne. His book *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare* provides a first-hand account of the spiritual warfare found within the Lutheran Church of Madagascar. His book is described by Bishop Dr. Wilhelm Weber, Lutheran Church in Southern Africa that it is “a gift to the Church, for in it is presented a view of spiritual warfare and exorcism that is grounded in the Scriptures and connected to the life and work of the Church – a much needed perspective for the modern Christian”.

Jeffrey A. Gibbs - Dr. Jeff Gibbs, a professor in Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, says, “I do (obviously) believe that evil spirits/demons/Satan are very real, and that they seek to harm God’s people in a number of ways, one of which is the distinct (and terrible) phenomenon of possession. The Bible teaches this. I think that it is unlikely that a baptized, truly believing Christian can be possessed by an evil spirit, since such a person would be inhabited by the Holy Spirit” (*Email received from Dr. Jeff Gibbs of Concordia Seminary,*

St. Louis). Dr. Gibbs echoes what Helmut Thielicke said. Surely, there are people who appear to be Christians in their life manners, but internally remain amongst the unbelievers. Gibbs says, “We cannot reject the possibility that some today may be possessed by evil spirits (Matthew 8:28-29) as Scripture does not promise that Satan and his demons are incapable of possessing people now”.

Rev. Dr. Ronald Rall – Pastor Ron Rall had been the Senior Pastor of Timothy Lutheran Church in St. Louis, Missouri, USA for many years. He has also served as Missionary to Papua New Guinea. He shared with me the information below when I asked for his input on spiritual warfare.

My own experiences with spiritual warfare in Papua New Guinea (PNG) have centered primarily around the challenge of false prophets and false teachers. These people are clearly inspired by Satanic forces who want to undermine the Gospel, destroy the faith of God’s people, lead Christians away from the truth, and ultimately destroy the Church. I have had numerous conflicts with these false prophets/teachers and it is clear that they are under the influence of the demonic.

The type of conflicts that Pastor Rall went through were similar to the controversies that took place in the Reformation Church: Among the controversies were The Majoristic Controversy whose proposition was “good works are necessary for salvation”; The Synergistic Controversies, where a student of Melancthon called Pfeffinger taught that “the human will, along with the Word and the Holy Spirit, is the third factor in conversion”. The other controversies include: Adiaphoristic, Osiendrian, Crypto-Calvinistic and more. We thank the Lord for allowing these controversies to be settled in the Formula of Concord. And you know what? When the Church was facing persecution, the Devil stood and watched. But when there was peace, the devil used the Church members to create confusion. Arius was one of such people the devil used just as the proponents of the various controversies.

In our day, false prophets and teachers are all over the place: the prevalent false teaching in Ghana is “If you are a Christian, you must be rich. If you are not rich, come to a “spiritual pastor” and he will make you rich by multiplying money for you”.

SATAN EXISTS TO FIGHT GOD AND US

1. He brought about the Fall of man (Genesis 3:1ff).
2. He tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11).
3. He perverts the Scriptures (Matthew 4:6).
4. He opposes God's work (1 Thess. 2:18).
5. He hinders the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4).
6. He works lying wonders and miracles (2 Thess. 2:9).

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY AND POWER OVER SATAN AND THE DEVIL

Two tribal clans had a dispute over a piece of land. Each of them claimed ownership. When the matter finally reached the paramount chief of the area he told the two clans, "I am the final authority and I have power over you and the land. From today onward, I have put my hand on the land". Nobody could say anything and they all went home, leaving the land for the chief.

But Jesus has "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). With God's authority comes divine power. Paul Avis (an Anglican priest and theologian) draws a distinction between the NT words 'power' (dunamis) and 'authority' (exousia). Both power and authority are used by Jesus. Dunamis/power is the strength, the might and the ability that belongs to the character of someone or something. It is used of Jesus when, for example, the woman touches him in the crowd and senses that dunamis/power has gone out of him. Exousia/authority is not just the ability to perform an action but the right and the freedom to do so which has been conferred by a higher authority. Exousia is the right that lies behind the exercise of power (dunamis), though the two terms are sometimes used almost synonymously. The authority that Jesus possessed is that which comes from the Father. It is with this divine authority that he exercises power to liberate the oppressed. Not only does he possess the authority to judge he also possesses the authority to forgive; not only does he possess the authority to drive out evil spirits he also possesses the authority to heal; not only does he possess the authority to lay down his life he also possesses the authority to take it up. With this authority he exercises power to set free those whose lives are dogged by evil, failure, disease and death (JONES, 1994, p.50-51). Christ's power and authority is exceedingly superior to all categories of "powers," and every name that is named" (ARNOLD, 1989, p.56).

Apostle Paul clearly attested to the protection and security of Christians (2 Thess 3:3). He however warns Christians: Becoming a Christian does not mean that one gains automatic immunity to the demonic realm. Believers need to learn about their position in Christ. This is precisely why the study of Scripture and theology is so important for Christian living. Since Satan is a deceiver and an accuser, we need to know the truth about who we are in Christ. The actuality about our new identity needs to be grasped and appreciated in the depths of our consciousness so that we can live like free people, rescued from servitude to the powers of darkness (ARNOLD, 1989, p.121)

CHRIST'S VICTORY AND SUPREMACY OVER THE POWERS

Christ's victory over the powers of darkness is given fuller expression in Col 2:15 than any part of the NT. The death and resurrection of Christ marks the beginning of the demise of the powers because Christ won a once-and-for-all victory over the powers.

“Satan is a defeated but is an active enemy” (ARNOLD, 1989, p.122). Apostle Paul was convinced that by Christ's death and resurrection he had defeated and disarmed the power of Satan and all powers of darkness. God disarmed the powers: Christ's death and resurrection deprived the evil forces of any effective power against himself or the Church.

God publicly exposed the powers. The cross “exposed” the relative weakness of the powers. God “disgraced or mocked” the powers. God paraded the powers in a triumphal procession. When a general defeated the opposing forces and won the battle, a “triumphal procession” would occur to celebrate the victory. Christ's death and resurrection represent his decisive victory over the powers of darkness. “The reason why the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work” (1 John 3:8), not the devil itself. The work of the devil is to create chaos in our lives as well as to destroy our faith in God.

EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE BIBLE

Job's case is a perfect example of a spiritual conflict that was manifested in the physical form. Job was a real human being living here on earth, but the Bible gives us a clear look at what was happening concerning Job's life in the spiritual

realm. God looked upon Job as a righteous man but, because Satan wanted to prove God wrong, Job became the victim of Satan's attacks. Job's family, finances and home were destroyed and his health and friends turned against him. Job experienced very real physical and circumstantial conflicts in his life.

Arnold Clinton elaborates on situations involving evil spirits in his book *Powers of Darkness: Principalities & Powers in Paul's Letters*. In Judges 9, "Because of the treacherous bloodshed of Abimelech, God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem. The conflict resulted in a time of great civil strife, war and death. An evil spirit inspired 400 prophets to give false advice to King Ahab of Israel when he inquired whether he should go to war to reclaim a foreign-occupied city (1 Kings 22:21-22) (ARNOLD, 1992, p.60). Whenever God permits Satan to act, "God always has ultimate control and that he permits these forces of evil to carry out their evil deeds as a means of accomplishing his own divine purposes" (ARNOLD, 1992, p.61).

AN EXAMPLE OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Polycarp was a bishop of the early church in Smyrna, one of the seven churches in Asia Minor. He was a disciple of Apostle John. It's agreed that he was arrested as an old man and sentenced to be burned at the stake for his devotion to Christ. Polycarp refused to sacrifice to Caesar or renounce his allegiance to Christ. The Roman proconsul took pity on Polycarp and urged him to recant. All what Polycarp had to say was, "Caesar is Lord," and then offer a little bit of incense to Caesar's statue, and he would live. Polycarp's stalwart response: "Eighty-six years I have served Christ, and He never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" Polycarp was burnt alive by the Romans, and his death was influential, even among the pagans. Polycarp's steadfastness in the face of death inspires us to remain faithful to Christ. (GOTQUESTIONS, 2019).

EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE EXPERIENCED IN GHANA

My personal spiritual warfare

Most members of our Churches, I mean the Lutheran Church, want to make fasting compulsory, and praying like the Pentecostals. Another major challenge I face is Muslims always asking me during our radio broadcast pro-

gram: Is Jesus God; Is he the Son of God. The “most powerful” demon in Ghana is witchcraft. There have been times in my life that I decided not to talk about the above in my sermons, Bible studies and on the radio program. But thanks to God for destroying the schemes of the devil in my life and ministry.

A pastor

A pastor who is greatly loved and highly supported both in cash and in kind by his congregation has become an enemy of other pastors. The other pastors who do not receive such support from their congregations are jealous of him. They gossip, speak evil and are envious of this pastor. He is given names such as, “The know all pastor,” “The inquisitive pastor,” etc. He is even accused of being a witch.

A pastor's daughter

A pastor was told by her daughter that her husband's sickness was due to someone in the family who “caught” him. The pastor was asked to confront the witch but he refused, saying, “In any trouble that a Christian goes through, the Scripture tells us to pray – James 5:13-15. Much as the pastor tried to explain to his daughter that a baptized and faithful Christian should not fear witchcraft because Christ who lives in us is greater than the devil whose accomplish is witchcraft. The long and short of the matter is that the lady announced that, “if my father refuses to confront the witch and my husband dies, I will no more call him my father”. The pastor stood his grounds. The sick man died.

A Pastor's son

When the pastor's son was doing very well academically in a village school, the pastor realizing how potential his son was decided to transfer him to a city school. Before long, this boy was no more like a pastor's son. He took to drinking, chasing ladies, truancy and a host of evil deeds. He did not study and when it was time for exams, he never showed up. He was dismissed.

A Widow

Madam Apumorsum is a widow who has been looking for a job to take care of her kids and self. Fortunately she was employed by a Muslim to work in

his restaurant. She was paid a good salary. After working for two months, she was asked to work on Sundays. Try as she did to explain and even gave options, the man refused. Madam Apumorsum said to herself, “I should obey God more than man”. She left the job. She is still without a job but she trusts the Lord who has never abandoned her.

Accident

Riding her bicycle to work one day Atiewin fell down and broke her leg. She has gone to several hospitals and also applied local treatment but she is still not healed. She has also lost her job. I thank God for the faith created in this woman. She rejoices in the Lord for what the Lord is doing for her. Her children are being supported by the Church.

Sickness

Joseph is my biological brother. We were all Muslims but the Lord saved our lives and he is now a Christian. His wife also became a Christian from Islam. For several years now the woman has been sick. Her family members who are mostly Muslims have asked her to revert to Islam where they promise she would be healed. What would happen if this lady becomes a Muslim? Can they live together? This is his challenge.

Spiritual attack

Akisbo gained admission to Senior High School last year. All her life she had not suffered any demonic attack. But in the school, she has experienced the attack. Three times she was brought home. But whenever she is at home, she is normal but as soon as she returns to school, the attack takes place. Her father has refused to send her to “prayer House” or consult a soothsayer.

Marriage

Asuguru married Mpoaka and their marriage was blessed in the church. Not long after the marriage, in fact less than a month later, Mpoaka says she does not love Asuguru anymore and that she would prefer death to marrying Asuguru.

Employment

Mr. Akologo completed Senior High School and proceeded to the University and graduated. For more than five years Akologo has been looking for a job. He has written countless applications for a job and attended several interviews and in none has he succeeded. He has refused to consult a diviner or go to “prayer houses” where the pastor will ask for payment so that special prayers are said for one to get a job.

In all these circumstances, the affected people have refused to consult a soothsayer or diviner or ancestor for help. They trust Jesus who has promised to be with them always. They believe and trust “Jesus Never Fails”. I have shared copies of Rev. Dr. Robert Rahn, the Founder of Lutheran Heritage Foundation’s gospel tract titled JESUS NEVER FAILS with many people.

Jesus performed many exorcisms which clearly demonstrate his power over the evil one.³ The reality of the demonic is unquestionable, but we need to be careful in attributing whatever happens in our lives to demonic forces. “We should seek a balanced approach to life and ministry. For instance, not every sickness can be attributed to direct demonic attack; it may represent merely the natural constraint of possessing a decaying body that is heading for eventual physical death” (ARNOLD, 1992, p.211).

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT GUNS, SWORDS, TANKS ETC

When Jesus was arrested for trial, one of his companions cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. Jesus did not approve of fighting with a sword on his behalf. A tragic example of trying to fight a spiritual war with physical weapons, was the Crusades. The Crusades were wars fought between European Christian knights (soldiers) and Muslim forces in the Holy Land (Palestine) from 1095 AD to 1272 AD. The Christians thought they should use military force to drive the Muslims out of Jerusalem because it was the Holy Land of Christ. These wars lasted 177 years with many deaths on both sides. In the end, there were no Muslim converts to Christianity and Jerusalem was again in the hands of the Muslims. The fact is, “the knights made a mistake in trying to fight a spiritual war with physical weapons” (O’DONOVAN, 2000, p.211-12). The weapons of our warfare are not guns, swords, tanks etc. It is not the will of

³ Matthew 12:28; Mark 1:25-26; Luke 11:20-21

God for Christians to use physical weapons to fight the enemies of God.⁴ The reason why physical weapons are useless in a spiritual war is because the real enemies are not people of flesh and blood, but spiritual powers of wickedness (Ephesians 6:12). Our enemies are not those who support the idea of women ordination, not the homosexuals, not the political party one doesn't support, not Church that preaches "prosperity" alone, and in fact not any human being. "Remember, our only enemy is Satan and the devil, not those people who attack us" (KENDALL, 1998, p.266 – emphasis mine). "Satan and his powers are still alive and use many of the same methods to deceive, oppress, destroy and, ultimately, blind people to the redemptive message of the gospel" (ARNOLD, 1992, p.209).

THE CHRISTIAN'S WEAPONS FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE: WORD AND SACRAMENT

Baptism

The purpose of Baptism is that it works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal life to all who believe this. In baptism we receive deliverance from the power of Satan. In our baptism we are connected to the cross and the resurrection and victory of Jesus Christ. In our baptism we share Christ's authority over the evil forces and spiritual attacks. The vows during Baptism remind us of Jesus' gifts for us: "Do you believe Jesus who died on Calvary has redeemed you from every evil spirit who include: dwarfs, ghosts, witches, rain-gods, mountains, etc.". "Will you not consult soothsayers or diviners when you are sick or when you are faced with any problems?" "Will you not wear talisman or ring or any amulet for protection?" "Do you believe you are always protected by the blood of Jesus?" "Do you believe "Notood" or "Yamzang" or "Gbiano" or "tudug" has no power over you because you are baptized? Christ's victory over the powers of darkness is given fuller expression in Col 2:15 than any part of the New Testament (*Having disarmed principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*)

The Ghanaian worldview believes strongly in satanic and demonic powers such as witchcraft, evil eyes, sorcery, and magic or "juju". It has

⁴ 2 Cor. 10:3-4 – 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.

been because of fear of witchcraft and other spiritual powers that Pentecostal churches have organized special “deliverance services” to protect members from spiritual attacks. But a baptized believer in Jesus does not need any further “deliverance” because he is already delivered when he was baptized. In our baptism Christ has conquered Satan and destroyed all its powers. In Baptism, the baptized is “exorcized” from witchcraft attack. In Baptism, the believer is removed from the sphere of satanic demonic powers, and made a child of God (Schlink, 25). Christians can rightly say, “I know that Christ lives inside me because I am baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit”.

The Lord's Supper

When Jesus gave his disciples the Lord's Supper, he gave them his true body and blood. That means in the Lord's Supper the Whole Christ enters into our bodies. When Christ is in us, who can be against us, not even Satan or the devil.

When we come to the Lord's Supper, the Lord fights the devil, overthrowing his kingdom of darkness, because at the Lord's altar we are being given the most precious treasure in all of the universe, the very blood that won our salvation. Satan is emptied of his power and loses all hope of victory. A report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the LCMS on the Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper has stated several benefits of the Lord's Supper. The first benefit of The Lord's Supper is that it provides forgiveness of sins. The second benefit of the Lord's Supper is that it offers the truly present body and blood of Christ (AC X) and that through Christ there is divine power with them that will fight against any evil forces or witchcraft or the like that will come their way. The Lord's Supper is a blessing freely given by God. Luther says, “If you could see how many daggers, spears, and arrows are aimed at you every moment, you would be glad to come to the sacrament as often as you can” (Kolb and Wengert. *Book of Concord*, Large Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar, 475).

The Word and the Cross

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Upon the cross Christ died as a curse in order to remove humanity's curse. Arnold observes:

Many Christians have a difficult time internalizing their forgiveness, and their new freedom and liberty in Christ. At my church I have found this difficulty to be true in my ministry to new Christians. Nevertheless, the simple meaning of Christ's work on the cross and the nature of new life in Christ bring refreshing experiences of freedom and release. Satan surely wants to deceive Christians into believing lies about themselves – "God cannot really forgive you for that," "you will never be able to overcome that habit," you couldn't possibly ever love that person,' and on and on. Christ has broken the power of Satan and evil over his people (ARNOLD, 1992, p.212).

Since the cross is of such power and significance, it follows that signing it to the demons and to Satan will remind them of their utter defeat. "Signing the cross or invoking the name of Christ was a way of battling demons" (STUDER, 2014, p.688-692). Hence, "Instructing Christians to make the sign of the cross was Luther's way of reminding them that they were redeemed children of God as a result of Christ's suffering and death on the cross" (SCHMIDT, 2017, p.134).

Like the cross, the word of God is also an effective weapon against the demons when read, spoken aloud, or sung. The simplest way this looks is by merely confessing the Name of the Word (Logos), as Athanasius writes, "For where the Savior is named, there every demon is driven out" (ATHANASIUS, 1989, p.50). The Word of God, whether it is in the form of Christ's Name or extended biblical passages/imagery, is abhorrent to the devil and his demons. The Word thus has immense power against all the schemes of devil and demon. Where the word is proclaimed, there the Christ is. "The sign of the cross and the Scriptures are effective against demons because the Logos enfleshed-Christ Himself-is present in the sign of the Cross and the Scriptures" (Edward Carnehl's PhD Dissertation).

Prayer

Most Lutheran theologians clearly point out the reality of spiritual warfare where Satan is active, and diabolical possession remains a pastoral problem that the Church must answer in the life of its people (BENNETT, 2013, p.167). Prayer also is a weapon used in Spiritual warfare because in prayer, the Chris-

tian is always in constant communication with God. “Prayer became for Paul the practical manifestation of faith. By these means, Satan is effectively resisted” (ARNOLD, 1992, p.158).

Throughout Ephesians, Paul stressed the role of faith in appropriating the power of God. The faith he called for is based on the objective fact of Christ’s resurrection and exaltation over the supernatural powers. God’s power is not imparted to Christians by wearing a magical amulet or even a crucifix. Neither does one gain access to it by performing a rite or by chanting certain words. God’s power is given through simple trust in him (ARNOLD, 1992, p.158.).

In our prayers God hears, he understands and is ready to help us overcome any spiritual hostility that may come our way. In the Lord’s Prayer, we pray “But deliver us from the evil One”. Luther explains this in the Large Catechism as God should protect us from all that the evil One or Satan or the devil may do against us such as: poverty, disgrace, death, and, in short, all the tragic misery and heartache” (KOLB and WENGERT, *Book of Concord on Large Catechism*, the Last Petition, 455). And in Luther’s morning and evening prayers, petition to God to protect us against the evil one is made. “Let your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.” And if our prayer is offered up in faith, we are assured by Christ himself (James 5:15) that it will be efficacious and overcome all the devil’s resistance. He stresses that we cannot of ourselves expel the evil spirits, nor must we even attempt it, hence our prayers should be made in “Jesus Name”. Repeatedly in Scripture we read, “In my name,” “In Jesus’ name,” or “In his name”. The devils were powerless because of his name (Luke 10:17). The demons were cast out in his name (Mark 16:17-18). Healing occurred in his name (Acts 3:6, 3:16, 4:10). Salvation comes in his name (Acts 4:12, Rom. 10:13). We are baptized in his name (Matt. 28:19). We are justified in his name (1 Cor. 6:11). Everything we do and say is done in his name (Col. 3:17).

COMFORT FOR CHRISTIANS IN TIMES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

In times of spiritual warfare where the situation doesn’t seem to get better, it appears that God has been absent in our lives. The background for understanding this situation comes from Luther’s distinction of God Hidden (*Deus Absconditus*) and God Revealed (*Deus Revelatus*).

Job in the Old Testament lost his ten children one day and all his material possessions. In response, he said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21).

In Luther’s lectures on Genesis he retold the account of Joseph’s wrathful treatment of his brothers in order to test their character, before making himself known to them as their brother. Luther views this story as analogous to God’s dealing with faithful Christians. God afflicts the Godly assuring them that “God works all things together in the end for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28). Peter assured the Christians of his day not to be surprised at the fiery trials they were going through (1 Peter 4:12-13). “When afflictions and sufferings in life are difficult to understand, God wants his stricken children to remember the words of Isaiah: For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” Isaiah 55:8-9 (SCHMIDT, 2017, p.212).

All suffering though alien to God’s character can be used by God to transform the believer. Christians should not be surprised when they experience spiritual warfare or suffering in any kind but should consider it all joy. As a matter of fact, “Christians are daily involved in spiritual battles, and God fights for us, not we fight on our own” (WRIGHT, 2006, p.178), and we can live in victory because of Jesus (SCHMIDT, 2017, p.212) who lives within us, and his authority is incomparably greater than any demonic force (1 John 4:4).

When Luther lost two of his children, and when his beloved student Johann Agricola betrayed him, by the grace of God, he coped with the pains he encountered. Luther made a point that not all suffering, trials and temptations are a result of sin. For example, in an address to women who have had miscarriage, he explains that the grieving woman should not think that God is angry with her or someone else was involved in the situation. Rather, she should see this trial and temptation as a test to develop her patience and trust in God (LUTHER, 1968, p.247-50). Gerhard Forde, an eminent Lutheran theologian advises that, faithful Christians can claim that their spiritual warfare is good and that this suffering is the only way to know and trust God (FORDE, 1997, p.84).

Another important means of bringing comfort to those experiencing spiritual warfare is for pastor to bring Holy Communion or the Lord’s Supper to those who are suffering, especially the sick, and remind them of their baptism and its promises of forgiveness of sin and salvation. It is while Christians are suffering that they need to be surrounded by fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, praying and reading the Scriptures.

In my life experiences, I have had a share of spiritual warfare. Two years after I had completed high school, I got a job in the city 600 miles from my

home. Not long after I got the job, my father died and I had to take care of my mother and five younger siblings. Few years later, one of my brothers died through prolonged sickness. And another brother who had married with children suddenly drowned. The announcement of his drowning came when I was going to write examination in the university. Today, I rejoice that I am a pastor, teaching, nurturing, and helping to bring the Word of peace, hope and comfort to those facing spiritual warfare.

Apostle Paul declares that we rejoice in our spiritual warfare, knowing that suffering produces patient endurance, and patient endurance character, and character hope that doesn't disappoint (Romans 5:3-5). Our present spiritual warfare do not compare with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18-25).

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