



Proclamation

Praise as a Spiritual Weapon

At Christ's Table ~ ACTpublications

"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

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W. D. Furioso ~ At Christ's Table ~ ACTpublications (2011)

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Spiritual Warfare

“¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against **the schemes of the devil**. ¹²For **our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

¹³Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,** ¹⁵and having shod **YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE;** ¹⁶in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷And take **THE HELMET OF SALVATION,** and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Ephesians 6:10-17

Verses 11 and 12 tell us that the warfare is not against human beings, but against spiritual forces – The Powers of Darkness: **“the schemes of the devil.** For

our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

I have researched many theological works which attempt to identify exactly what the apostle Paul was referring to in this passage. Because I don't want to get too “academic”, I am going to run the risk of oversimplifying. But the various views run the gamut of interpreting these “powers” to be solely spiritual, to “demythologizing” them to be solely human. Desiring to limit myself to only that which is clearly revealed in the Scriptures, my personal perspective is a median view: **That is, I understand these “powers” to be spiritual entities which influence and work through human entities – specifically the ideologies of cultures of the world, including the politics and governments of the nations of the world.**

Our Struggle

Next, I'd like to concisely identify the nature of the warfare. Paul spoke about **"our struggle"**. There are a couple contexts in which one could place that phrase. As some have pointed out,¹ Paul is referring to the warfare which he and his apostolic co-workers encountered.² I believe that the whole of the apostolic church was keenly aware of the realities of the Powers of Darkness. **If the Church is to regain its apostolicity, it will need to recover this awareness in her mission and ministries.** Suffice to say that those who desire to be involved in the Lord's eternal purpose of **"the manifold wisdom of God now be(ing) made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places",³** will certainly need to be aware of these realities. Therefore, the apostolic struggle becomes truly **"our struggle"**.

¹ e.g., John Gill, Exposition of the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 10

² Revelation 18:19-21 indicates that the apostolic ministers in particular encountered spiritual warfare with the Powers of Darkness.

³ Ephesians 3:10-11

Paul explains that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood”. It is a **spiritual warfare** “against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Bearing in mind that these powers influence and work through human agencies, ultimately, or at the source, “our struggle” is of a spiritual nature.

Paul gets more specific in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5:

“⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses (or strongholds). ⁵We are destroying **speculations** and **every pretention**⁴ raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every **thought** captive to the obedience of Christ.”

“Thoughts”, “speculations” and “pretentions”. In other epistles Paul referred to them as “the elementary principles of the world”⁵, by which he meant human philosophic and religious systems influenced by

⁴ NIV, “every lofty opinion” (ESV)

⁵ Galatians 4:3, 8-9; Colossians 2:8, 14-15, 20

“deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons”⁶ which serve to bring people under bondage.⁷

⁶ 1 Timothy 4:1-3

⁷ For further definition, see [*Defining the Elementary Principles of the World*](#).

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Praise as a Spiritual Weapon

⁶Let the high **praises** of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
⁷To execute vengeance on the nations
And punishment on the peoples,
⁸To bind their kings with chains
And their nobles with fetters of iron,
⁹To execute on them the judgment written,
This is an honor for all His godly ones.
Praise the LORD!" Psalm 149:6-9

Verse 6 reads: "Let the high **praises** of God be in their mouth..." "to execute vengeance ... to bind ... to execute judgment...." How does "praising" do all that? Actually, the word "praises" is not in the Hebrew text. But the idea of "praise" is there, and the absence of the word "praise", as we will see, actually serves to focus our attention on what "praise" truly is. The text literally says: "Let the high things of God" or "Let the heights of God". Commentators say this is in reference to God's many attributes. In other words, "Let God's many and various attributes – His omnipotence, His

omniscience, His holiness, His righteousness, et. al. be in their mouth....”

We have the same thought in the New Testament in 1 Peter 2:9, where in one verse we also find an excellent definition of the Church: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may **proclaim the excellencies** of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” The NKJV reads, “**show forth the praises of Him**”. The RSV says, “**declare the wonderful deeds**”. The Greek word, *exaggello*, means “*to make known a message or announcement*”. Specifically, this refers to a **proclamation** of the praises, a **proclamation** of the excellencies, a **proclamation** of the attributes and deeds. You see, the “high praises” that “execute vengeance, bind and execute judgment” are **proclamations** of the truth of God. We are not to sing nice little praise songs to the Powers of Darkness; **we are to make bold proclamations to the Powers of Darkness regarding the truth of God**. It is *that* which will “execute vengeance, bind and execute judgment”.

It was the musicians who led Israel into battle. We can do it with music; but *praise in no way necessitates music*. It is proclamation which is the key to power in spiritual warfare.

A little more about the nature of this **proclamation**: Psalm 149:6 says: “Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, **and a two-edged sword in their hand.**” Commentators say that in the parallelism of Hebrew poetry, the second phrase repeats the idea of the first phrase. In other words, **the “two-edged sword” is the “high praises of God” – the “two-edged sword” is the proclamation of the truth of God.**

When Paul speaks of conducting spiritual warfare against the Powers of Darkness, he explains that “the sword of the Spirit is the word of God.”⁸ **It is the word of God which we are to proclaim to the Powers of Darkness.**

⁸ Ephesians 6:17

Defense & Offense

If we look carefully at Ephesians 6:13-17, we will see that the list consists of five pieces of defensive armor and one offensive weapon:

¹³Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH**, and **HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**, ¹⁵and having shod **YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE**; ¹⁶in addition to all, taking up **the shield of faith** with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷And take **THE HELMET OF SALVATION**”

Five pieces of defensive armor – plus **one offensive weapon** – namely, **“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”** – that is, **proclamation of the word of God** – **“to execute vengeance, to bind, to execute the judgment written”**.

The Captain of the Army

This is the way the Captain of the Army of the Lord conducted spiritual warfare with Satan. Let's read about it in Luke 4:

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. ³**And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."** ⁴**And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.'"** ⁵And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶**And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish."** ⁷**"Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."** ⁸**Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"** ⁹And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, **and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; ¹⁰for it is written, 'HE WILL**

COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU,' ¹¹and, 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" ¹²**And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"** ¹³When the devil had finished every temptation; he left Him until an opportune time."⁹

This is what we need to see: *Firstly*, the nature of the spiritual warfare is that it is a battle of words. "Satan said" and "the Lord said". The truth of God's word versus the lies of Satan. *Secondly*, the weapon which Jesus used was the "two-edged sword" – "the sword of the Spirit" – the proclamation of the truth of God's written words. And *thirdly* we see that this weapon worked – it rendered Satan silent and inactive.

We need to understand that this battle between God and Satan is a spiritual battle – it is a legal battle – it is a moral battle. The nature of the warfare and the power of the weapons are moral. Good overcomes

⁹ Cf. Matthew 4:1-11

Evil,¹⁰ Light overcomes Darkness,¹¹ Truth wins out over Lies, Righteousness over Unrighteousness, Faith over Fear, self-denial over self-aggrandizement. Moral virtues have spiritual power. We human beings tend to think of power in terms of physical might, violence, and destruction. The spiritual realm is a dimension which human beings cannot fully grasp, but God and His angels and Satan and his angles battle in the spiritual dimension of morality. The part that we play are the “high praises of God in our mouths and a two-edged sword in our hands” – “proclaiming the excellencies of Him” – **proclamation** of the truth of God’s written words. In this legal, moral, spiritual battle, *that* is what “executes vengeance, binds, and executes the judgment written” against the powers of darkness. *That* is **true praise**.

¹⁰ Romans 12:21

¹¹ John 1:5

True Power & True Praise

There is power in true praise; and I believe the Scriptures give us an admonition about the necessity of our praise being **true** when in this spiritual warfare. Let's read about something which took place in the apostolic Church – I believe “these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”¹²

“¹³But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, “I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.” ¹⁴Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵And the evil spirit answered and said to them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?”¹³ ¹⁶And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”

Acts 19:13-16

¹² 1 Corinthians 10:11

¹³ KJV, NKJV

So, what's the difference between Jesus and Paul and the seven sons of Sceva? The evil spirit said: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know...." Actually, two different Greek words are used: "Jesus I *ginosko*, and Paul I *epistamai*..." *Ginosko* is stronger than *epistamai*; but they both mean *to have an experiential knowledge of* something. This evil spirit had run into Jesus and Paul in the spiritual realm – he had a "run in" - an experience with both of them. But he had never run into the sons of Sceva – they were unknown in the spiritual realm. No one had ever heard of them – no one had run into them.

So, what's the difference? What was missing in the sons of Sceva which the evil spirit had experienced in Jesus and Paul? Why did the "high praises" and proclamations of Jesus and Paul exercise power in the spiritual realm? In one word, the difference is this: **"faith"**. In two words **"true faith"**. In another two words:

“true praise”. In three words: **“sacrifice of praise”**. I’ll explain:

When Jesus and Paul proclaimed the high praises of God into the spiritual realm, **they really believed what they were proclaiming, and the powers of darkness knew it.**

You see, spiritual warfare is not a “magic trick” – a glib use of the name of Jesus – a singing of praise songs with clapping, shouting and electronic amplification - going through the motions of “binding and loosing”,¹⁴ ignorantly “reviling angelic beings”.¹⁵ These things don’t touch the powers of darkness – they don’t even enter into the spiritual realm.

We must remember that the warfare is spiritual – it is legal – it is moral. There must be spiritual reality behind what we are saying and doing. Mere formulas

¹⁴ Matthew 16:19, 18:18

¹⁵ Jude 1:8

and recitations can be empty forms without spiritual content, and therefore have no spiritual power. There is no power in reciting Scripture, mouthing prayers, singing happy-clappy songs, if we really don't believe what we are saying. How do the powers of darkness know who really believes what they are proclaiming? **True praise is accompanied by true faith.**

What does **true faith** look like? Let's go to a chapter in the book of Hebrews, which in the *NASB* is entitled "*The Triumphs of Faith*" – it gives a record of those known as the "*Heroes of Faith*" – and we will look specifically at Abraham, the "*Father of Faith*":

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, **when he was tested, offered up Isaac**, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; ¹⁸ *it was he* to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." Hebrews 11:17-18

In other words, Abraham was willing to offer up his son, Isaac, upon whom the promises of God rested. If there

was Isaac, there was fulfillment of the promises. If there was no Isaac, there was no fulfillment of the promises. This was an expression of **true faith** on Abraham's part.

A Sacrifice of Praise

¹⁹He considered (that is, he believed) that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him (that is, Isaac) back as a type.” (Hebrews 11:19) Specifically, Isaac was a type of Jesus. Do you see the aspect of **sacrifice**? Do you see the **cross of Christ**? **The cross is the key to power in spiritual warfare.** The apostle Paul said that **through the cross Jesus disarmed, made a public display of, and triumphed over the Powers of Darkness.** (Colossians 2:14-15)

The faith that Jesus and Paul were able to exercise against the Powers of Darkness was a faith that believed that God was faithful even if they were to die. **They would still proclaim the high praises of God even if they had to deny self and die to self - deny and die to their own wills – deny and die to their own desires – deny and die to their own comforts, and if necessary, sacrifice their very lives.**

Listen to what the book of Hebrews says about these
“Heroes of Faith”.

“³³ who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; ³⁶ and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated ³⁸ (men of whom the world was not worthy).”

Hebrews 11:33-38

**This is a faith that overcomes the “fear of death”,
which subjects people to bondage the whole of their
lives.¹⁶ This is the “faith that overcomes the world”¹⁷**

¹⁶ Hebrews 2:15

¹⁷ 1 John 5:4

and “the god of this world”¹⁸, and “the world forces of this darkness”.¹⁹

The “high praises of God” extend to a “**sacrifice of praise**”. Hebrews 13:15 says, “... let us **continually** offer up a **sacrifice of praise** to God, that is, **the fruit of lips** that give thanks to His name.” A “sacrifice of praise” is “the fruit of our lips”. The “fruit of our lips” is not mere lip service. The Scripture refers to “people (who) draw near with their words and honor (the Lord) with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from (the Lord).”²⁰ These are a people who are “fair-weather friends” of the Lord. Their hearts are not steadfast on the Lord. In their lip service, they are only willing to praise the Lord when everything is going nicely; but in adversity they are unable to offer “a **sacrifice of praise**”. With a people whose hearts are steadfast on the Lord, “a **sacrifice of praise**” is offered “**continually**” - even in adversity, because “the fruit

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 4:4

¹⁹ Ephesians 6:12

²⁰ Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8

of the lips” is the natural out-growth of steadfast hearts.

We see a very clear example of “a sacrifice of praise” in the midst of spiritual warfare in the Book of Job. Satan accuses Job. The Lord allows Satan to attack Job that his faith could be proven. Job ultimately passes the test and praises God:

“⁹Then Satan answered the LORD, “Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.” Job 1:9-11

And again:

“⁴Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.”

Job 2:4-5

But this is Job's response: "Though he slay me, yet I will trust Him." Job 13:15

David said something similar in one of his psalms: "I believed, even when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.'"
Psalm 116:10

The "substance"²¹ undergirding this "sacrifice of praise" is the "**faith** that overcomes the world"²² and "the god of this world"²³, and "the world forces of this darkness".²⁴

A story from the Acts of the Apostles clearly demonstrates the power of "a sacrifice of praise" – the power of *true* praise - and its effectiveness in the kingdom of God against the Powers of Darkness. Before we read this story, it would be good to remember that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood" but against *the powers* which influence and

²¹ Hebrews 11:1

²² 1 John 5:4

²³ 2 Corinthians 4:4

²⁴ Ephesians 6:12

work through human entities – specifically the ideologies of cultures of the world, including the politics and governments of the nations of the world.

“²²The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. ²³After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns to God**, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was such a **violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken**. At once all the **prison doors flew open**, and everybody’s **chains came loose**. ²⁷The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” ²⁹The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, **what must I do to be saved?**” ³¹They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” ³²Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³At that hour of

the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately **he and all his family were baptized.**

³⁴The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.”

Acts 16:22-34



Prayer

Lord, may we be a people of **true praise** – able to offer up “a **sacrifice of praise**” – the fruit of our lips grown from the soil of steadfast hearts; that as with Jesus and His apostles, we would have spiritual power even in the adversity of warfare, because Your Spirit will be upon us to “proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to prisoners, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God”.²⁵

²⁵ Isaiah 61:1

Bill & Frances Furioso
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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, disciplined many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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