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Presentation Transcript
Waging Spiritual War – Part 6 – Broken Arrow
December 18, 2020

Today we finish our sixth part series on *Waging Spiritual War*. So far we've talked about five aspects of the topic. The first one was *Enlisting in God's Army*. Before you go to war, you sign up. Right? That is about baptism. And we talked about the contract that we have with God to serve Him, to have faith in Him – in other words, to *believe* what He tells us, instead of what the devil tells us. He's the deceiver, so he lies to us. Then, in the second part, we went to boot camp and learned about *Enemy Tactics*. We saw more about the fact that he uses lies and deception and deceit to keep us enslaved to sin. That's how he does it. He lies to us and tells us that sin is good, or it feels good, or it's better for us, or it's a smart thing to do, or whatever. Then we had a presentation on *Spiritual Weapons Training*. That was our third part. We saw that the *truth* is our weapon. We combat his lies with the truth that we find in the Bible – not that we hear from other people, but that we find in the Bible. We learned the *Rules of Engagement* next. We're either serving God by following Him and believing His truth, or we are contracting with the devil by believing his lies. And we learned that, if we choose to go with the devil at any given moment, God is going to back off, because we're *not* keeping our contract with Him when we do that. In the most recent presentation – the fifth – we saw that, as we steadfastly believe God in faith, that is how we wage war against the spiritual wickedness in high places and in our lives as well.

Now today, we're going to see what God says *He* will do when we do what we have promised – when we follow our contract. I've called this one *Broken Arrow*. *Broken arrow*, during the Vietnam War, was a military term. It meant troops in the field were in immediate danger of being wiped out – completely overcome by the enemy. And when base commanders heard this from the field, they would send all available aircraft to provide extremely close-in bombing support – so close that their own troops might often be in danger, because usually the enemy was so close to them, that's the only way it could be effective. This is what God says He will do if we believe God's truth and resist Satan's lies. He's going to take swift, powerful, close-in, effective action to save us – to protect us. It's absolutely amazing what he will do. Let's look at it.

As we started this series, we mentioned a frank statement by Jesus. Let's look at it again, one last time, in John 8, beginning in verse 31.

John 8:31-32 – *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, “If you abide in My word” – abide – you know, live in it – if it’s yours and you belong to it, and you believe it and follow it – “you are truly My disciples.” And what happens if we’re truly God’s disciples? “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” You’ll become impervious to the lies of the devil – in each area where you believe truth, the truth will set you free.*

Now in verse 34:

V-34 – *Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.”*

In the context of personal sin, if we believe the truth, we will be set free of that sin. That’s what Jesus was talking about. And this is a promise made to all Jesus’ disciples of every age – a promise to set them free from the practice of sin. He wasn’t talking about being forgiven for our sins, but being free from the *practice* of them.

Now think about this: Who’s making this promise? Well, Jesus Christ. And who is He? He’s done two things for us. First of all, His death on the cross allows God to forgive us of all of our sins, because He paid the price for them. He already paid the penalty of them. *But* He’s also the only human who has ever lived completely sin free. That’s why he *could* pay the price for us. The fact that He lived the life completely sin free – where He did not practice sin – makes Him an expert – a grand master – at how to do what we’re talking about here, which is to live sin free. So we ought to pay serious attention when He talks about this area of expertise. Our repeated failures at overcoming our sins tell us, “It can’t be done.” But He did it and He tells us that we can do it, too, if we just do it His way. There’s no addiction, no habit, no attitude that can stand in the face of the way Jesus lived a sin-free life. If we live life that way, then we can be free of sin too. Why is that? Well, because He aligned Himself with God’s truth and the truth made Him free of sin. If we do that – if we align ourselves with the truth – in whatever area of life we do that, sin will depart. Temptation subsides because the tempter can no longer tempt us. He has been expelled from our lives by God. He has no more power. He has to go. We’ve broken our contract with him in that area. And when we do that, then God picks up and does what He’s going to do in response to keeping our contract with Him.

So we examined the account where God led Jesus into the mountains for the specific purpose of being tempted, or tested, by the devil. So this example in Matthew 4 – this story about what happened – is instruction for us about how to do it. In Matthew 4:1, it says:

Matthew 4:1-2 – *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.*

Well, you would think, wouldn’t you, when getting ready to fight a battle, one would want to

chow down and have lots of energy and be strong. But that's not how spiritual battles are fought or won. With God, it's always just the opposite to the way we think about things. It's one of those great spiritual paradoxes. To be strong spiritually, you have to be weak psychologically or physically. We have to rely on God, because we're weak, instead of on ourselves. This was true even of Jesus Christ when He was a human being. Verse 3 says:

V- 3-4 – *And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”* So Jesus was really hungry, so the devil is heading Him where he thinks He's weakest. So he tempted Him to obey him, rather than to obey God, and turn those stones into bread. But Jesus answered: *“It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* So He refused the suggestion that He wouldn't be the Son of God if He didn't do it and refuted it with truth out of the Bible.

Now this sequence – and you can read it in Matthew 4 – happened twice more. And after that, the devil left Him. Was it because he wanted to? No, he always wants to torment us. But he *had* to, because Jesus was following His contract with God. So after He resisted by believing God instead of the devil, the devil *had* to leave. It also tells us that angels came and tended to Jesus, who, most likely, was nearly dead. Forty days – *forty* days. That's pretty amazing that we can expect God to send help. This is an example of what happens when we believe God's truth instead of the devil's lies. The devil *has* to leave. He can't tempt us any longer, and so it becomes easier to follow God, and God begins to reestablish a connection with us in that area of life, and to bolster us and make us strong.

Let's look at some situations that are common to us. Doctrine is what I first thought about when I read about what Jesus said about the truth setting us free, because I was in the process of just learning the true doctrines out of the Bible when I first read that passage. And I thought He was talking about the truth about Christ's forgiveness, and salvation, and the Sabbath, and the holy days and all of that – that that was setting me free from doctrinal error. Which it was! But that was just the tip of the iceberg.

So I was listening to a sermon given by Jim O'Brien in Cincinnati earlier today. He mentioned that a large, well-established Christian church has decided that Jesus really didn't die for our sins. So this church is pressuring itself, with all the political correctness that is extant in the world right now. That church would rather fit in with the latest modern thought, and be politically correct than fit in with what the Bible says. So where do you think that lie came from? Yeah, yeah. How do we know? Well, how do we protect ourselves from the present pressure, in other words? Well, it's simple and yet it's complicated.

God's truth is in the Bible. Does it say in the Bible that Jesus died for our sins? Yes, it does – clearly and often. So we have a choice. Are we going to believe what God has said in the Bible? Or are we going to believe what the devil is saying through society? Well, if you believe what it

says in the Bible, despite what everybody else thinks, He will free you from doctrinal deception and from the sin that comes with it.

Now, this is so easy for a Bible reader to see, but among our Church of God group, it can be more complicated. When the sacred calendar needs to be tweaked.... Did you know that it needs to be? It does. Every so often – and we’re talking like hundreds of years – it gets a little bit off, and so it needs to be set back in order. So who does the *Bible* say should do it? I mean, there’s all kinds of groups within us that have taken on themselves the authority to do that, but that is *not* what the *Bible* says. God has given the responsibility for the oracles of God – the revelations of God – to be maintained by the Jews. It says that in Romans 5.

Now we know who the Jews are today. So that’s their job. And they’ve been doing that for thousands of years. They’ve maintained the Old Testament. They’ve maintained the Sabbath. There are many other things that they’ve done. But they’ve also maintained faithfully the knowledge and the correct timing of the true calendar, because God has assigned them to do that.

Notice, by the way, that my statement about the Jews didn’t come from my personal bias about the Jews. It came from a *scripture*. That’s simple. But other things can get trickier yet. The Bible is an old book, written in various languages, most of which are no longer spoken. We have different customs and languages now in the various cultures around the world. And these differences make it difficult sometimes to understand what the Bible means. So it’s good to confer with others – not just anybody, but people who have studied and are familiar with the cultures of ancient times – either by reading or in person. We should do that before “pouring concrete” around some of our ideas about biblical meaning. But, if we’re careful, and if we pray for understanding, and if we really *want* to follow and believe God – that’s the important part there – if we take what the Bible says first, instead of fitting in, or being superior to other people, or knowing more than other people about the Bible, or being more powerful than other people in our congregation, God is going to lead us into all truth. But all that personal agenda stuff has to go away. We have to just believe what it says and we have to be very careful to understand correctly what it says. If we’re not able to study the Bible without reading into it our own beliefs, all bets are off. Because of lust of power, and superiority, and human bias, we’re going to be owned by our adversary when we study the Bible even.

Just think about how much variation Christians have derived from the Bible. So we should understand that commitment to truth is a rare and difficult thing. One of the simplest doctrines to demonstrate in the Bible is the Sabbath. And yet only a tiny minority of Christians observe it. The rest are content to follow along with the majority into doctrinal deception. Now that doesn’t make them terrible people, it just means they’re missing out on one of the greatest gifts God has ever offered humankind. Jesus said in the Bible, “The Sabbath was made for man.” So if you don’t believe that, and you don’t follow it – you don’t observe it – then you’re missing out.

When I was seventeen, I asked God to show me how to worship Him in spirit and in truth. And I don't mean that that made me great. I'm not alone in that. I know many, many people who prayed prayers similar to that and have that same desire. But I had no idea what kind of change that would require and how far off I had been all my life up until that point about how to worship God. But God led me to simply believe what it says in the Bible, because in it, God said He was the One who wrote it. That made a big impression on me. I'm not boasting. I was in great confusion at the time – great weakness, chaos even – and I desperately needed help. And God, when I prayed that prayer and committed myself to just believe the Bible – the truth of it – instead of what I'd been taught, which were lies that came from the devil, God came to my rescue. Now I'm still trying to learn more doctrinal truth out of the Bible, and I suppose that, when I die, I still won't have it all down. But that *is* my experience. When I committed to following the truth, chaos gradually dissolved and doors of truth opened. And I was then free – free from worshipping God in a way that is not pleasing to Him.

So let's move on to another area – a big one – probably the most important one of all. And that is relationship issues. Have you ever been completely stymied or stuck in a relationship – very unhappy, doors shut, doesn't seem like there's anyway to fix it, at odds. Well, earlier in this series, we offered the understanding that the devil is attacking everybody in the world, primarily in our relationships. And his goal there is to divide us – to separate us from each other at every level – nationally, religiously, culturally, to stir up rivalry and opposition and variance and competition – and to make it hard for us to reason with each other and to work together. Even differences in doctrine are one of the tools that he uses to keep us apart.

But it's more subtle than that. If you're having difficulties in any of your relationships, start looking for the lies you believe about that other person, or that other group of people, or the situation that you're in. And, if you find the words *always* or *never* as a part of your thinking attached to the other person, or the other group, start looking there. Does this person *always* ignore you? Do they *never* pay attention to you? Well, these are usually exaggerations. They're *not* true! So that would be lies – right? – that we tell ourselves. If we will put aside exaggerations, and start looking realistically at the situation – that is, keeping our contract with God – that's what we'd be doing – to believe the *truth* – which in these cases, is to believe the truth about the relationship – God will keep His end of the agreement and deliver us from anger and hatred and jealousy and competition and division. And the way for relational healing will start to open. That's a promise that Jesus makes to us. Something we cannot do on our own will start to happen.

God does not want us to be at odds with each other. So He's going to call in a *broken arrow* for us. He wants love, respect and tolerance. When we start believing His truth about the other person and the situation we're in with them, God will start to change things. The truth will set us free, even in our relationships. Many people believe the lie that, once a relationship is damaged, there's no hope of recovery. So they pull back and stop trying. But, if we're willing to look for the lies and replace them with truth, God can call in that broken arrow – a spiritual airstrike

against the deceiver. And he has to leave us and the people God's with alone and let us work things out. He *has* to leave – just as when he had to leave Jesus when he was tempting Him. So at that point, communication is going to become a lot easier – when there's not a third party in there. You know, it's kind of funny in a way, in psychology, in working with people, we all have noticed that there's a thing called a triangle, where there are two people in their relationship, but there's a third one that they both know. And so one of the people that has the problem with the other will go to the third person and talk to them, and then that person goes and talks to the other person. But they never talk to each other. The devil kind of inserts himself into our relationships by lying to us about the other.

There are a lot more lies to find than simply exaggerations. Sometimes, in relationships, it helps to have someone else sort through it – to help us sort out where we're not seeing it right. It's not uncommon to find dozens of lies about any one broken relationship. It's hard work. But if we want to get things right, we have to be willing to find the truth.

So let's move on to spotlight another area of difficulty. I've just called it honesty issues. I have met people who have told so many lies they can no longer tell when they're telling the truth or whether they're lying. It's all the same. Whatever they want to believe is what's true to them. They have completely desensitized themselves toward the truth. And they have become like the devil, their father. They lie. Now, I say, "They." Lying is common to human beings – so much so that Paul said, "Let God be true, though every man a liar." So right there, we're all slaves to sin, because of that habit that we have. Often, we are lying about other sins, such as stealing, for example. When we determine to believe God's truth and speak it though, the devil has to flee. God makes him go away. And it suddenly becomes much easier to be honest, like our Father God is. So we can be free of dishonesty by believing truth.

Scripture tells us that the human heart is incredibly deceitful. So don't expect this area to be simple or quickly resolved. It's probably going to be a lifelong battle. But, if we make a concerted effort to put away lying, God will make a concerted effort to keep the liar away from us.

Let's look at one more area of difficulty for many people. And that would be addictions. There are so many of them and so many kinds. There are people that gamble. There are people that lie. There are people that look at pornography. There are people who are addicted to sex. There are people who are addicted to all kinds of drugs – alcohol, smoking, hard drugs – heroin, cocaine, meth. And people tend to think addictions are the hardest of all sins to overcome. It *is* that way for some people. But I've met people addicted to many different things, such as heroin, meth, gambling, etc., who have quit. So it's not impossible. It's not impossible, for some people, even without God's help. But for some, it seems that way. And to some degree, with this kind of a problem, there is a physical element involved with drug addiction. That's one of the penalties that lingers after we've made the commitment to stop. We've damaged ourselves psychologically by building a habit of trying to reduce our anxiety by taking psycho-active drugs, the physical

habit that comes along with it. So it often takes time for this physical aspect to diminish. But science has taught us that the greatest part of addiction is the habit of reducing anxiety with medications – drugs. So, if we find the lies about our anxiety, and what’s causing it, and replace them with truth, then God will send the devil packing, causing temptation to diminish, and eventually, go away, as with any physical withdrawal.

Let’s look at something the apostle Peter wrote. It’s in 1 Peter 5:8. I mean, this is a bread and butter scripture for people that are trying to change their addictions. Verse 8:

1 Peter 5:8-11 – *“Be sober minded,”* he said. Now, to be sober minded doesn’t mean that you can’t have any fun, that you never smile or laugh. It means to be watchful, to be careful, to be aware of the consequences and the stakes. *“Be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith”* – it’s interesting that he links those two things together. And what that means is that we resist by believing God instead of the devil. “Firm in your faith...” – faith is believing in God and what God says. So that’s *how* we resist him – by firm in faith. *“...knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”* So it’s not like this is happening to only us. This is common to humanity. And he says, *“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”* Broken arrow – there it comes. If you are willing to suffer some, and you resist the devil, firm in your faith, God *Himself* is going to step in, get close, and get powerful and restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you. That’s a promise! He’s not making any bones about it. There’s no equivocation. He says, “That’s what’s going to happen!” *To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Peter’s words imply that sometimes issues linger a little while before we’re free of them. And that’s one of the things I’ve noticed about a lot of addiction. But we notice that Peter makes a clear point – that God will *Himself* take action on our behalf. Himself! What do we call it when we’re in desperate straits – helpless, in extreme danger – and someone comes in and defeats the enemy? Well, that’s a rescue, isn’t it? We’re saved from our sins, just as Jesus promised – the reason He came and died for us. He doesn’t just give us a book to read or a strategy to employ. But God *personally* becomes involved – *personally!* – when we renew our contract with Him and make a break from the devil’s lies. In these cases, we have to be patient while we suffer a little while, remembering God’s promise and how successful Jesus was using this approach, and keep on with it until we are free of the “sin that so easily besets us,” as Paul said.

So there are many, many scriptures in the Bible about God rescuing His people. And I’ve always thought about those scriptures as God rescuing His people from other people – enemies, armies, human governments, resistance. And it is true that there are many examples of this kind in the Bible. But there are also many promises to save us from our sins. We just read one. And you can find many, many others. In fact, I challenge you to do that. Start making a list of when God promises to save you from your sins.

Okay. So let's sum this up. As we are in the flesh weak compared to God, the onslaught of sin can seem overwhelming. It feels like we have struggled so much and failed so much that we begin to believe that there is no hope of being free of sin. That is a lie! That's one of the first lies we need to get rid of and start believing God. But it's easy to become discouraged and give up and give in. That state of overwhelm and no hope is an illusion. It's not true! If we resist the devil, and persist in it for a little while, as Peter says, "God *Himself* will come to our rescue with great power and timeliness."

So, when we look with human eyes at insurmountable sin – at least they seem that way to us – we need to remember that we are not alone! God is with us. If God is for us, who can be against us? While we might feel like we are hopeless, that's a lie. The real truth is, the forces on our side are *greater* than the forces against us.

Don't forget to check out our Website, liferesource.org. Lots of encouraging presentations there.

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.