

JOYCE MEYER: How Can Peace Win in Spiritual Warfare?

During my first several years as a Christian, I listened to a lot of teaching on spiritual warfare. I tried to learn all I could about defeating the devil because it was obvious he was giving me a lot of trouble. I wanted the upper hand for a change.

Yet it seemed I gained no victory from applying all the methods I had learned—until the Lord graciously shared some truths that have become a blessing in my life.

He showed me that spiritual warfare *methods* are good, but they are only *carriers*, or containers, of His real power. I was busy rebuking, resisting, casting out and off, binding and loosing, fasting and praying, and anything else that anyone told me to do. The results were minimal, and I was worn out.

I was approaching the point of spiritual burnout. This always occurs when a Christian continues to do things that do not produce positive results.

But God opened a whole new way of looking at spiritual warfare after He challenged me to observe how Jesus dealt with the devil. As I did, I saw Christ did not do a lot of the things I had been doing.

The Weapons of Love and Obedience

For example, I learned that *remaining obedient* is spiritual warfare. We often quote only a portion of James 4:7: “Resist the devil, and he will flee.”

I was busy resisting, but he was not fleeing! Then I saw the whole verse: “So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you” (Amplified).

The first part about submitting to God is equally as important as the second part about resisting the devil! I realized I was not as concerned about submitting as I was about resisting. It was a relief to find that my obedience would cause the devil to flee from me.

The Holy Spirit also revealed that *walking in love* is spiritual warfare. The devil cannot handle a lover! He could not control Jesus because He walked in obedience and love. Jesus was always loving people and being good to them.

The Word of God instructs us to keep ourselves “in the love of God” (Jude 1:21). It also tells us that in the last days “the love of the great body of people [the church] will grow cold” (Matt. 24:12).

This latter verse tells us that *cold love* will be one of the signs of the last days. Yet, Peter admonishes us: “Above all things have intense and unfailing love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins [forgives and disregards the offenses of others]” (I Pet. 4:8). The devil brings offense, disharmony and strife between people, but the antidote for the whole poisonous problem is love.

We can rebuke all the devils in the world—literally scream at them until we have no voice left—but they will not flee from the person who isn’t walking in obedience and love.

Satan knows that Christians who “talk the talk” but do not “walk the walk” are powerless against him. His end-time warfare strategy is to build a stronghold of cold love. In this way he can keep the church of Jesus Christ powerless.

But by remaining in obedience, walking in love and living in a third element—peace—we can wage spiritual warfare and defeat the devil’s tactics.

Resting in God’s Ability

Scripture tells us the believer is seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). Seated refers to rest. Rest and peace are equivalent to each other.

The book of Hebrews teaches us to enter the rest of God and cease from the weariness and pain of human labor (see Heb. 4:3, 10-11). This rest is and has been available to us since Jesus came, died for us, was resurrected from the dead and ascended on high.

Rest is available, but we are encouraged to *enter* it. We enter the rest of God by believing His Word and by trusting in Him instead of ourselves or someone else.

We actually do spiritual warfare while we rest: "And do not [for a moment] be frightened or intimidated in anything by your opponents and adversaries, for such [constancy and fearlessness] will be a clear sign (proof and seal) to them of [their impending] destruction, but [a sure token and evidence] of your deliverance and salvation, and that from God" (Phil. 1:28).

Constancy refers to being the same—stable and consistent. It is a sign to the enemy of his impending destruction.

Our rest in peace and joy during the devil's attack literally defeats him. He cannot handle a believer who knows how to *hold his peace*.

Consistency is also an outward sign that we are trusting God. It is trust that moves Him to deliver us. We benefit when we defeat the devil, but Jesus also benefits. It gives Him glory when we operate according to His Word. He is able to bless us with our inheritance in Him.

Talking about the promises of God is encouraging, but possessing them is much better.

The Scripture says: "Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied)

is the man whom You discipline and instruct, O Lord, and teach out of Your law, that You may give him power to keep himself calm in the days of adversity, until the [inevitable] pit of corruption is dug for the wicked” (Ps. 94:12-13).

God’s plan is to work in our lives to bring us to the place when, during times of trouble, we can keep ourselves calm and at peace.

Jesus’ followers wanted Him to set up an earthly kingdom and behave as an earthly king. They wanted Him to move against the enemy in the same way that they made war. But He taught them a different way to fight their battles.

He said, “But I say to you who are listening now to Me: [in order to heed, make it a practice to] love your enemies, treat well (do good to, act nobly toward) those who detest you and pursue you with hatred, invoke blessings upon and pray for the happiness of those who curse you, implore God’s blessing (favor) upon those who abuse you [who revile, reproach, disparage, and high-handedly misuse you]” (Luke 6:27-28).

This was a brand new way of thinking! Jesus had come to reveal a new and “living” way (Heb. 10:20)—one that would minister life instead of death.

Peace Will End the War

Seeing peace as spiritual warfare may be a new way of thinking. It certainly was for me.

I had spent all of my life trying to fight my own battles. I thought when I learned about spiritual warfare that my struggles would be over. After all, I had located the culprit behind my problems; taking authority over him would put an end to the misery.

Instead, I ended up in a struggle with the devil that was not producing positive results, simply because I had the methods

but not the power flowing through them. Peace, love and obedience are power!

My mind says fight the devil with fury—not peace. How can *peace* win a war?

But think about a natural war for a minute. What finally puts an end to it? One or both parties decide not to fight anymore. Even if only one party decides not to fight, the other one will eventually have to quit because there is no one to fight with.

My husband used to make me mad because he would not fight with me. I was upset and angry, and I wanted him to say just one thing so I could rail on and on. But when he saw that I was only looking for an argument, he would be quiet and tell me, “I am not going to fight with you.”

Sometimes he would even get in the car and leave for a while, infuriating me even more. But how could I fight with someone who would not fight back?

If we meet our battles with peace and respond to the upsets in life with peace, then we will experience victory!

The methods that Jesus teaches us to use to be victorious are usually the opposite of what makes sense in our heads. He tells us to sell what we have and give to the poor, and we will end up with more than what we started with (see Matt. 19:21); the first will be last, and the last will be first (see Matt. 19:30); to humble ourselves, and He will lift us up (see Matt. 18:4, 23:12; James 4:6).

Jesus conquered with meekness. He ruled with kindness. He humbled Himself and was placed far above all other authority. If we can accept these principles even though our minds cannot comprehend them, then surely we also can accept that peace is a form of spiritual warfare.

When the Israelites found the Red Sea facing them and the Egyptian army chasing them, they became frightened and cried to Moses. He told the people, "Fear not; stand still (firm, confident, undismayed) and see the salvation of the Lord which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians you have seen today you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace and remain at rest" (Ex. 14:13-14).

Notice that Moses told them to hold their peace and remain at rest. Why? They were in warfare, and it was necessary for them to respond in peace in order to win the battle! God would fight for them if they would show their confidence in Him by being peaceful.

When trouble comes, our first temptation is to get upset, speak from our emotions, start trying first one thing and then another, and hope to find something that will work to turn the situation around. All of these are unacceptable behavior for the believer who is walking in faith. None of them will bring victory!

We are instructed to hold our peace. Jesus gave us peace. It is our inheritance. The devil regularly attempts to steal it, but it is ours, and we must hold on to it.

What God gives us is ours. But we can keep it, use it, lose it or give it away. Adam was given dominion over the earth, and he gave it to Satan, who is referred to as "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4).

The Lord God did not create Satan to be the god of this world, so how did he obtain that title? Adam gave up what God had given him.

Let's not make the same mistake with those things that have been given back to us through Jesus Christ. Our inheritance is truly awesome.

Peace is a portion of it—a very important portion. Let a holy determination rise up within you to keep your peace and enjoy it.

And when you go into battle, remember to wear your “shoes of peace.” God supplies us with the armor of a heavily armed soldier. He equips us for battle with righteousness, truth, peace, salvation, the Word, faith and prayer (see Eph. 6:13-18).

But many of God’s children carry their armor instead of wearing it. Don’t carry your shoes of peace with you like a possession; wear them!

Remember, peace is spiritual warfare. Hold your peace live in obedience, walk in love, and you’ll win the battle.