

• HARVEST POCKET BOOKS •



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WINNING  
YOUR SPIRITUAL  
BATTLES

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## THE STRATEGY FOR THE BATTLE

A father and his son were traveling across the Wild West in a wagon one day when a prairie fire broke out. The father and son tried to outrun the wildfire in their wagon, but they quickly realized that it wasn't going to work. The fire was coming too fast, and unless they tried something else, it would catch up to them and consume them.

Much to the confusion of the son, the father turned the horse and wagon around and rushed directly back toward the fire. He took them to a spot that had already been burned and yelled to his son, "Jump out and stand here. Don't move!"

They both jumped out, but the boy became afraid as he saw the fire raging and moving toward them. He wanted to run, but his father grabbed his hand and said, "Don't move, son. Stand firm!"

"But the fire is almost here," the son cried, his voice shaking with fear, "I don't understand!"

“This spot has already been burned,” his dad replied. “There is nothing left for the fire to grab. The fire will come near, but it cannot burn again what has already been burned once before.” The boy was safe because he stayed with his father in a place that the fire could not reach.

As Satan battles you in spiritual warfare, he wants you to step away from the ground that has already been burned in the spiritual realm, which is Jesus Christ. Jesus has already been crucified, and His resurrection has already secured the victory. Satan can't touch you when you stay close to Christ. If you stand firm in the center of the safest location – the cross, where the victory has been accomplished – you will stand victoriously because Satan can't reach you there.

But that raises a question. How do you stand firm? As Paul said in Ephesians 6:10, we are to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” You stand firm by appropriating God's strength, not your own determination, positive thinking, or even self-discipline. While those things are good, they are not good enough to overcome an enemy battling you from another realm. Instead, you are to be *strong in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His might*.

In order to know how to be strong in Jesus Christ, we need to understand a few things about His power and His authority to exercise that power. For us to fully experience the power of Christ, we need to look at how things began.

When God created man, He made a very significant decision. He created Adam out of the dust of the ground, and then He said, “Let them rule” (Genesis 1:26). By letting mankind rule on earth, God willingly imposed a limitation on His own involvement in human affairs. He erected precise boundaries where He would respond, either for good or for bad, based on the decisions of men.

It was up to Adam, therefore, to use his God-given capacity to cultivate and rule his world. But in order to do that, Adam had to withstand the attacks of a sly serpent in the garden.

The problem was that Adam *did not* withstand the deceptive attack of the serpent. In fact, he allowed that serpent a strong presence in the garden, forcing Adam out. As a result, Adam allowed the serpent to rule in his place. In football language, we would say Adam fumbled the ball in the devil’s red zone, and the serpent recovered it.

What caused the fumble? Eve had gotten out of alignment under Adam, and Adam had gotten out of alignment under God. This stripped the ball called “rule” from Adam’s hands and gave it to Satan. He took possession of the garden from that point on.

So cataclysmic was Adam’s fumble that Satan and his team sprinted down the field all of the way to mankind’s red zone. Now they have the ball, they call the plays, and they are running out the clock. Because of the fumble,

the Adamites – the human race – have been scrambling ever since.

And that's what we're doing, even to this day. I hear it all of the time. Maybe you hear it too. People talk about trying to stop the devil. If you are trying to stop the devil, he's obviously coming after you. He has the ball. He's calling the shots. He's running the show. He's setting the agenda. And the reason you're trying to stop him is that you are now in a defensive mode.

Jesus recognized this change in position by referring to Satan three times as the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Because of Adam's fumble, Satan is the one who now calls the plays in this world. Of course Satan can only govern the world within the sovereign boundaries set up by God, the ultimate Governor, but he still rules through deception, intimidation, and a myriad of other means.

Not only that, but when Satan took over the rule of this world, a curse came with it. This curse affected Adam's career, family, finances, children, security, and even his life. And unless you and I understand the theology of authority, we will never overcome the curse handed off to us by Adam, and we will never be completely victorious in spiritual warfare.

The bad news is that Satan recovered Adam's fumble. The good news is that you can get the ball back. You can live in both hope and victory when you stand firm in the

strength of Christ. You can force another fumble – this time, by Satan – and in so doing recover the authority that has already been secured for you.

If you have come to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and for the gift of eternal life that He freely offers, you have already forced that fumble. Now all you need to do is pick up the ball and run with it. Through Christ's sacrificial atonement, you have already been repositioned for victory in your life. Remember, you are not fighting *for* victory – you are fighting *from* victory. Let's find out how.

### ***Hardship and Authority***

When God pronounced the curse to the serpent for luring Adam out from underneath his designated alignment, He coupled it with a prophecy: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Genesis 3:15).

In these words, God said, "Adam, you have fumbled the ball. You have turned over the rule of your life, and others' lives, to the evil one by moving out from underneath My alignment. Adam, you blew it – big time. But I've got some good news for you because a woman is going to have a child. And that child will have His heel hurt by the serpent, but that same child – the seed of the woman – will crush the serpent's head."

He will crush the serpent's head. Don't read that too quickly. God said that the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head. Let me help you grasp the significance of that statement by adding something onto the end of a word. Look at it this way:

The seed of the woman will crush the serpent's *headship*.

"Headship" means rule and authority. With the coming of the seed of the woman – Jesus Christ – the headship (the rule and authority of Satan) has been crushed. Eliminated. *Gone!* The heel of the seed was wounded in the process along with His humanity, on the cross, but when all was said and done, Satan's headship was crushed, and Jesus Christ negated the devil's authoritative rule.

The truth alone is enough for you to know that you can get back on the offense in this life. On the cross and through the resurrection, Jesus Christ has already crushed Satan's authority. It's a done deal. The whistle has blown. The play is dead. The ball is now yours once again. In fact, when Jesus spoke about His future death on the cross, He declared Satan's ultimate removal of authority: "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:31-32).

This is so vitally important that I want to put it another way just to make sure we're on the same page. *When you come to Jesus Christ and accept His sacrifice for*

*your life, you are putting yourself under the new Head of State.* The head of state is the one who has final authority for the matters in that land. In America, the head of state is our president. Our president, by virtue of his office, holds the final and ultimate say on what goes on in our nation. It is what we call “veto power.”

When the opposition to the president passes a law that he does not approve of, he doesn't have to accept it. He can disarm it with his veto power. With one stroke of his pen, he can literally undo what took hours, days, and even months for Congress to enact.

Jesus Christ, through the power of the cross and resurrection, has the ultimate veto power in our world. Satan no longer holds final authority over your life. Sure, he may spend hours, days, months, years, and even decades persuading you to believe his lies and pressuring you into feeling that he has the final authority over you, but once you realize that Jesus Christ has already defeated him, you will be set free to live your life in victory. Satan got pummeled at Calvary. He dropped the ball. He knows that. God knows that too.

The problems come, though, when *we* don't know that truth and stand firm in it. Knowledge – what you know and what you believe about a matter – is vital. It's one thing for someone to point a gun at you that has bullets in it. But it's entirely something else for someone to point a gun at you that is empty. Both people do not have



the same power over you. One of them has been disarmed. His firepower has been removed.

It's just that we don't always know that. We don't always have adequate knowledge for a situation like that. If a gun were pointed at us, we wouldn't have any way of knowing whether it was loaded. To be safe, most likely we would walk, talk, and act as if the gun is loaded.

But let me ask you something: What would you do if somebody let you know that the gun was empty? Or what if you saw the gun fired six times, and all dix times, nothing came out? What then? Would you still be making your decisions based on that gun? Probably not. And neither would I because that empty gun no longer holds any authority. We have no need to fear an empty gun.

Of course, the devil doesn't want us to know that his gun has been emptied at the cross of Jesus Christ. So he keeps pointing it at us and putting it in our face as if it were loaded. And we don't realize it's empty, so we keep bowing under its presence. We don't realize that at the cross, Jesus Christ took the bullets out of Satan's gun. We don't realize that the most the devil can do is pretend that his gun is still loaded.

If you don't know that Satan's guns are not loaded, you're going to act as if you're defeated because you will erroneously believe he as power over you.

And that's how many of us live our lives. We forget

that at the cross, Jesus Christ deactivated, dismantled, and disarmed Satan's headship.

*Satan has lost his authority.* Or, to make it more personal: Satan no longer has any authority over *you*.

### ***Authority Verses Power***

"Hey that's nice, Tony," you say. "It sounds very heavenly minded and ethereal, and it even looks good on paper. But what about me living down here in the real world with real battles – financial wars, career wars, family wars, and emotional wars? What about those? I don't seem to be living in victory in my wars. Rather, my enemies are being victorious over me. Yet you're telling me that Jesus Christ is the head. You're telling me the Jesus Christ is calling the plays now and that I'm underneath His authority. So what gives? That's not what's going on in my life."

Those are good questions that we all face. To answer them, we need to keep in mind this essential truth: *Satan lost his authority, but he didn't lose his power.* Satan still dominates our world in many ways because he has retained his power. Satan is as powerful now as he has ever been. The things he does are real, damaging, and destructive. He is and will always be a liar, thief, and murderer with intentions to kill, steal, and destroy. It only takes a glance around our globe, around our communities and

homes, or even in our own souls to see that Satan still operates with power.

The truth we need to realize, and the truth that will set us free, is that Satan no longer has authority. This is the key.

*Authority is the right to use the power that you possess.*

In order for Satan to use his power in your life, he now has to keep you from functioning underneath your authority because his power is only effective when he had the right to use it. Satan does not have the authority to use his power when you are living underneath your legitimate authority as a Christian. Therefore, he seeks to lure you out from underneath God's authority and rule in your life because he knows that you are secure underneath Him. Colossians 1:13 tells us that God has "rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." God rescued us out of the wrong kingdom and brought us into the right one. By rescuing us, He brought us under the rule of a new King. You used to be under Satan's rule before you met Christ, but now you are part of a new kingdom of which Jesus Christ is the King. Satan, in order to rule your world, must entice you to leave your kingdom and come back over to his.

The reason we don't experience more victory in spiritual warfare is that we've been duped into believing that attending church on Sunday and simply getting more information about the real kingdom is enough. Or maybe we think that adding a Wednesday night Bible Study will be

sufficient to affirm our allegiance to our King. Or maybe we'll toss in some serving and praise songs and think we've got it covered.

But then we go back to work on Monday, or back to our routine at home with our mate or with our children, and we flip back over into our old way of thinking. We slide back into the other kingdom and operate under its authority. We align our thoughts with the wisdom Satan has set up in this world. We base our decisions on how we feel or what our friends are telling us or even what our fears are telling us. We transfer our allegiance from the conclusive and authoritative Word of God through Jesus Christ back to Satan's worldly schemes.

We wind up not being victorious in spiritual warfare because we keep flipping sides. We come to church under one kingdom, but we operate on the job in another kingdom. We have our devotions in one kingdom, but we operate among our friends in another kingdom. We keep flip-flopping kingdoms and wonder why the victory is not there. We wonder why we can't get over the hump. We wonder why the enemy keeps calling the plays. We wonder why our prayers go unanswered, our battles end in defeat, and our power over our own lives runs out. The opposition keeps intercepting the ball and returning it for a touchdown.

But the answer is simple: The enemy is victorious in our lives because we are yielding the power to him by not

standing firm in our identity in Jesus Christ. We are failing to firmly remain in the union we were designed to have with Christ, under His headship.

### **Our Union with Christ**

Our union with Christ is essential to our victory over Satan's rule in our lives. The book of Colossians goes into great detail about this.

See to it that no one take you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and *you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority*. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead (Colossians 2:8-12 NIV).

Everything that makes up God – His essence and totality – is in Christ, fully. The only difference is that

it's in a human body. "For in Christ *all* the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."

All of the fullness of God is in Jesus Christ. Not some, not a bit, but *all*.

That's why Jesus is the Son of Man *and* the Son of God. That's why He can get thirsty one minute, and the next minute He can go out and walk on water. That's why He can get hungry one day, and the next day He turns sardines and crackers into a Moby Dick sandwich to feed more than 5000 people. That's why Jesus can die – and then *get up!* He can do all of these things because He is the God-man; fully God and fully man in one person. "For *in* Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."

In fact, if we were to backtrack a few paragraphs, we discover even more.

He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities: all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:15-17 NIV).

Jesus Christ holds all things together. Therefore, if you find yourself falling apart, it is a result of you not

having not stood firm with Jesus in union with Him. We are told that *in* Him, all things hold together and maintain their equilibrium. Take a look at these very important phrases in Colossians 2:

- “in Him” (verse 9)
- “in Him” (verse 10)
- “In Him” (verse 11)
- “with Him...with Him” (verse 12)
- “with Him” (verse 13)

Do you see the pattern? Our victory in spiritual warfare is intimately connected to Jesus Christ. *In* Him. *With* Him. If we miss this truth, we miss the key to our victory: our union with Jesus Christ. Let me illustrate a little bit about that union.

Our church in Oak Cliff becomes a vibrant place of worship, fellowship, outreach, and teaching each and every Sunday morning for thousands of people. If you ever find yourself in the Dallas area on a Sunday, I invite you to come. I would love to meet you personally and let you experience the unique atmosphere in the sanctuary we call Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship. Sundays are a highlight of my week. I enjoy gathering with the saints.

But by Sunday afternoon, I admit, after having sung, sat, and preached through two two-hour-long services, I’m tired.

Knowing this is going to happen, I usually start my Sunday morning off with a cup of coffee. Now some people like their coffee black, and that's fine it that's how you like your coffee. But I always like to have some cream in my coffee.

So every Sunday, before I drink my coffee, I get the white cream and pour it into my black coffee. Then I take a stick and stir it so that a union occurs between my black coffee and my white cream. When that happens, there is no longer any black coffee or white cream. Instead, I now have brown coffee. It is brown because a union has occurred.

If I want to take my formerly black coffee with me into my office before the service, the cream must come along as well. If I want to take my cream into the prayer room, my once-black coffee will be coming with it as well. Once they are mixed, wherever one goes, the other must go as well simply by virtue of the union that has occurred.

This is how our relationship with Christ has been designed, as we saw earlier in Ephesians: “Even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive *together* with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up *with* Him, and seated us *with* Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:5-6).

When Christ died, we died with Him. When Christ arose, we arose with Him. When Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father, we were seated with Him. In



other words, we were made to function in union with Christ.

Jesus Christ *is* over all things; He is sovereign over everything. He has recovered the fumbled ball and has legal authority and victory in the spiritual realm. For us to access that victory, we must stand firm under His headship in our thoughts, in our actions, in our hearts, in our decisions, on our job, in our homes, and throughout our lives.

Only when we stand firm under His Word and authority will we be able to live victoriously in spiritual warfare. Friend, you can go to all of the meetings you want. You can read all of the self-help books and magazines you want. You can name and claim whatever you want. But until you stand firm under the comprehensive rule of God in your life and in union with your identity in Jesus Christ, you will only find a temporary reprieve. Only in Christ will you find the authority to live in victory.

I often hear people quoting the Scripture, “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” But when I look around me, I see very few people who are free *indeed*. And the reason is that we have settled for the temporary rather than aligning ourselves with eternity. Satan has already been beaten. He has already been disarmed. The bullets have been removed. The fumble has already been recovered. Jesus has already defeated Satan. He is already victorious. And you are in union with Him.