

2. THE CHRISTIAN'S WEAPON (ARMOR)

Ephesians 6:12, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

This Scripture is one of the key defenses for territorial spirits (popular in missions circle, in many Pentecostal and charismatic movements):

- Fallen angels have been given some type of control/authority over a certain area
- **Spiritual mapping:** research an area, identify the spirit controlling the area, then pray (prayer walk), rebuke, bind so that hindrances can be removed for people to hear and believe in the gospel.

Peter Wagner interprets: “The ‘house’ is the territory controlled by Satan, or his delegated spirits, and that territory cannot be taken unless he is bound. But once the territorial spirits are bound, the kingdom of God can flow into the territory and ‘plunder the strong man’s goods,’ as it were.”

Matthew 12:29, “Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless **he first binds the strong man?** Then indeed he may plunder his house.”

Context:

- Jesus healed a demon-oppressed man who blind and mute (12:22)
- Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by Satan (12:24)
- In this illustration (binding the strong man) Jesus simply makes the point that He is casting out demons by the power of God and that He is not in league with Satan. Jesus is not teaching about binding the territorial spirits over geographical regions. Such notion is going beyond what the text says.

After Peter gave his great confession of Christ, Jesus said,

- ❖ “I will give you [plural – the apostles] the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and **whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven,**

and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

Jesus repeated the same thought in Matthew 18:18 in the context of church discipline:

❖ **“Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”**

GotQuestions: When the apostles “bound” something, or forbade it on earth, they were carrying out the will of God in the matter. When they “loosed” something, or allowed it on earth, they were likewise fulfilling God’s eternal plan.

Caution: In the context of Matthew 16 and 18, binding and loosing have nothing to do with Satan or demons.

Two problems here (which is the great predicament in the churches today):

- Either distort (misinterpret) the Scripture to prove their own practice (assault on the integrity of the Holy Scripture)
- Go beyond the Scripture and invent a strategy because some experience has proven to be true (assault on the sufficiency of the Holy Scripture)

1 Corinthians 4:6, “...that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written...”

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, **for reproof, for correction,** and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

❖ **Acts 16:16-18,** As we were going to the place of prayer **[at Philippi]**, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” **And this she kept doing for many days.** Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour.

Did Paul go around rebuking and binding the demonic spirits in the city?

No. **What was Paul's focus?** Preach Christ and Him crucified.

Clinton Arnold (New Testament scholar): Although God has given us the responsibility of exercising our authority in Christ over unclean spirits that afflict individuals, there is no biblical evidence that God has given us responsibility to bind, expel, or thwart the territorial rulers...Christians do not need to feel a responsibility or a call to engage in a direct confrontation with the principalities and powers over a city, region, or a country. We appeal directly to God, who will direct his angels to fight the battles against the high-ranking powers.

Point: The only time the disciples spoke directly to the evil spirits is when they casted out demons. **Acts 16:18**, “And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, **“I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.”** And it came out that very hour.”

❖ **2 Corinthians 12:7-8**, “So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. **Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this**, that it should leave me.” Remember the Lord's prayer, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [or the evil one]” (Matt. 6:13)

❖ **Jude 9**, “But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”

John MacArthur: Rather than personally cursing such a powerful angel as Satan, Michael deferred to the ultimate, sovereign power of God, following the example of the Angel of the LORD in Zech 3:2. This is the supreme illustration of how Christians are to deal with Satan and demons. Believers are not to address them, but rather seek the Lord's intervening power against them. (Ed: Indeed, if an archangel is cautious about how he deals with Satan, how much more cautious ought believers to be!)

The Holy Bible does not authorize believers to rebuke the devil or to bind him, but to resist him:

Mark Hitchcock, Associate Professor of Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary, author of “101 Answers to Questions About Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare”:

“When it comes to dealing with the devil and his demons, believers are never commanded to bind, rebuke, curse, or deride them. But we are told three times in the New Testament to resist the devil (Ephesians 6:13; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9).”

Resist: To stand against or to oppose

- ❖ **1 Peter 5:8-9**, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **Resist him**, firm in your faith...”

Mark Hitchcock: We resist the enemy by standing firm in our faith, which parallels the shield of faith in Ephesians 6.

- ❖ **James 4:6-7**, “Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Submit yourselves therefore to God. **Resist the devil**, and he will flee from you.”

Mark Hitchcock: This signals to us that humility is essential to resisting the devil. The more humble we are, the less impact the forces of evil can have upon us. We give them less to work with. As Jonathan Edwards said, “Nothing sets a man so much out of the devil’s reach as humility.” Resisting the devil does not mean rebuking him by shouting at him. It refers to a lifestyle of submission and humility.

❖ **Acts 19:11-20 (Location: Paul’s Ministry in Ephesus),**

⁸ And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. ¹¹ And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. ¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.” ¹⁴ Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵ But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” ¹⁶ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all^[a] of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷ And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and

Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. ¹⁸ Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹ And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰ So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

Observation: Ephesus was a city filled with demonic activities. What did Paul counsel the believers in Ephesus about how to stand against the schemes of the devil? To bind? To rebuke?

Scripture: Ephesians 6:11, 13-17, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **stand against** [RESIST] the schemes of the devil... Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **withstand** [RESIST] in the evil day, and having done all, **to stand firm** [RESIST]. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Third part of the Sermon continued next week... (pray, prepare, prevail)