

War Zone

Part 8 – Offensive Weapons

ILLUS – One of the strategies used in the Gulf War was to send in the B-52s. They delivered huge bombing payloads, demoralising the enemy. Once the B-52s have done their job, then they send in the ground troops. This is similar to the strategy used in ancient times, where before they could take a city, they'd use their war engines, including these huge catapults. Once they'd broken through the walls, they'd send in the soldiers.

We're continuing in our series "War Zone", and in this message we're looking at Offensive Weapons.

2 Cor 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.

According to this Scripture, we're equipped to pull down strongholds.

We've seen previously that enemy strongholds operate in the human mind.

But the weapons of our warfare are not powerless against strongholds; they are very powerful.

First, against the strongholds in our own minds; point to your forehead and say, "Who me?!?"

Second, against the strongholds in the minds of others; now look at the person next to you, nod your head knowingly, and say, "Hmm. I suspected as much."

But you've got to be willing to deal with strongholds of enemy thinking in your own life if you're going to deal with strongholds in the lives of others.

Mat 7:3-5 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? (4) Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck from your eye"; and look, a plank is in your own eye? (5) Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

This principle is just as true in spiritual warfare.

You'll also notice that in 2 Cor 10:4 it says "the weapons [plural] of our warfare".

But in our last study on the armour of God it mentioned only one weapon; the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

Today we're going to look at two more offensive weapons, and both are very effective and powerful.

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

There are three things mentioned in this verse, but we're only looking at one of them today, for reasons that hopefully will become clear later.

Offensive Weapons

1. The word of your testimony

Your testimony is a weapon; so what does it mean by the word of their testimony?

Anyone who's ever watched TV shows like *Perry Mason* or *Law And Order* will have an idea of what it means to give testimony.

If you were giving testimony, you would be asked questions like: "What did you see? What did you hear? What did you smell?"

It's your personal evidence based on your experience.

A person who gives testimony is an eye-witness to something.

The reason they can give testimony is that they have personally experienced something.

You'll also know that as soon as someone says something like, "And George told me..." the lawyer for the opposing side is on their feet: "Objection, Your Honour. That's hearsay."

Hearsay evidence is not allowed in a court of law.

It doesn't matter what someone else says, your testimony is what *you* say about what you've personally seen or experienced.

Definition of testimony: "the establishment of events or actual relations or facts of experience on the basis of direct personal knowledge."¹

It's your direct personal knowledge that counts, based on your experience.

Now for the Christian, your testimony is more than just evidence, it's a weapon.

And you can use it as a weapon to break down strongholds.

I've used this example before, but I want to reinforce the idea that your testimony has power.

ILLUS – For instance, the JW's or Mormons come to your door. The JW's aren't selling anything, but they'll give you a copy of their magazine if you give them some money. Here's what you need to know. Anyone who's in a cult has major strongholds in their minds. Don't let that put you off because you have divine weapons for just such an occasion. While they show you pictures of happy people with lions and lambs, they ask you, "Don't you think the world is in a mess? Wouldn't you like to see a world of peace?" Just say, "Yeah, let me tell you what Jesus has done for me." In other words, give them your testimony.

By now, they've picked up on the fact that you're some kind of church person.

They ask, "So you go to church? Do you think it's right for a Christian to go to war?"

Note something here; your testimony is already doing its job and rattling their cage, so they retreat into a stronghold.

How do I know? (2 Cor 10:4-5) For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, (5) **casting down arguments** and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

If there's one thing that people in cults can do supremely well, it's argue.

You'll know when you're stirring up a stronghold because they start trotting out arguments.

Don't get sucked into it; that's what that stronghold is designed to do. Just ignore the argument and tell them more of your testimony.

Just say something like, "I haven't given a lot of thought to that, but when I got married our house was a war zone. Let me tell you what Jesus did for us."

You're using your testimony again; it's a powerful weapon.

Next they say, "It says in Revelation there'll only be 144,000 who go to heaven."

Remember this: They're looking for an argument.

Don't get caught up in the argument, but just say something like, "I haven't studied that, but when I made Jesus my Lord, He gave me such a sense of peace with God, and an inner knowledge that He's accepted me and that I'll be in heaven with Him when I die."

Understand what we're doing here?

You're making a direct assault on the strongholds the enemy has built up in their minds.

You're not fighting the person; you're fighting the stronghold.

How? Through the word of your testimony.

¹ Brown, Colin [ed] *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Vol 3 p1039

If you get sucked into their arguments, it's like attacking this huge tower with your bare fists; it won't do anything.

In fact, they'll probably strengthen the tower.

ILLUS – But your testimony is like one of those huge catapults. It could throw a stone (around 25 kilos) about 400 metres or more². And those stones are pounding into the stronghold with tremendous force.

Imagine their strongholds taking a pounding every time they knock on the door of a Christian household.

Your testimony can do that.

It can be a testimony of healing, or personal transformation, or deliverance from bondage, or God's intervention, or anything that God has done in your life or through you and is part of your personal experience.

Does it matter that the person I'm telling doesn't believe in healing, or even in God?

Of course not; as they say, the man with an experience is never at the mercy of the man with an argument.

And besides, the Holy Spirit takes my testimony and gives it power.

I don't have to argue; that's the last thing you should do.

Here's a couple of things the Bible has to say about our testimony.

2 Tim 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God.

First, don't ever be ashamed of it.

Reminds me of Rom 1:16 – God knows that we can often have a tendency to be timid, so He reminds us not to give in to fear.

Luke 21:12-13 But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. (13) But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony.

Second, tough times give you more testimony opportunities.

In this case it's talking about persecution, but the same is true of all adverse circumstances.

If I hadn't come close to death, I wouldn't have that testimony about God's healing power.

2. Praise

Matt 12:25-29 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. (26) If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? (27) And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. (28) But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. (29) Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."

When Jesus talks about plundering the house of the enemy, I only have one question: "What could there possibly be in the enemy's house that we would want?"

I'll tell you what the enemy's got that we want – souls. We want souls.

Jesus tells us here that if we want to plunder the enemy, we must first bind him.

ILLUS – For instance, let's say that you decide that you're going to rob the local supermarket. So you find out that the money's being counted 8:30 tonight. You manage to get inside. But there's a problem – the guy counting the money is huge. But not to worry, you've brought your cosh. So you sneak up behind him, and whack him on the back of the head with your cosh. Next, you've got to search the place. Don't you just hate movies where the good guys knock someone out, and leave them lying there while they start searching?

² Encyclopaedia Britannica CD 2001

Almost every time, the bad guy wakes up, and then there's trouble. So simple to avoid. You don't just leave him lying there, because soon he's going to wake up. And when he does, he's not going to be happy. So if you're smart, what you'll do is tie him up.

That's what Jesus is saying.

To plunder the enemy, we first need to bind the enemy.

So how do we do that?

Now for a lot of us Pentecostals, that means that you wave your hands in the air shouting, "I bind you in the name of Jesus. I break your power."

So I looked up everywhere in the Bible where it used the words bind (37 times), binds (12 times), binding (10 times), bound (91 times).

Add that up and you'll see that those words occur 150 times altogether.

Did you know that nowhere in the Bible does anyone ever talk like that?

Nobody ever says something like, "I bind you in the name of Jesus. I break your power."

I'm not saying that you're not allowed to, but it kind of gets you thinking, are we on the right track?

Is the way we do it, the way we're supposed to be doing it?

Or is there a Bible way of binding the enemy?

How do we really bind the strongman?

The Bible is often its own interpreter. For instance:

ILLUS – Luke 11:20 "But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you." What's the finger of God? I could come up with lots of theories. But in Mat 12:28, Jesus says, "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you." This tells us that the finger of God is the Holy Spirit. Jesus is confronted by a demonised person and the Holy Spirit is poised. He says, "Come out of him." And flick – the finger of God. No wonder those demons so often came out screaming.

Not only does the Bible often interpret itself, I've discovered that when the Bible tells us what to do, it often tells us how to do it.

Who'd like to know what the Bible says about how to bind the enemy?

Eph 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

In this passage it's talking about wrestling against the rulers of darkness; these are the guys we want to bind.

Now let's turn to the passage where it tells us how to bind them.

Ps 149:6-9

So now we find our second offensive weapon – praise.

Notice some things in this passage.

This is a spiritual activity; it's not talking about binding people.

It's talking about demonic entities – how do I know that?

Eph 6:12 For we do not wrestle **against flesh and blood**, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

This verse specifically says that people aren't our enemy; the devil is our enemy.

Psalm 149 also tells us, "This honour have **all** His saints."

Fighting against kings is something all of God's people should be engaged in, so it's clearly not talking about human kings.

Ps 149:8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

In this psalm, kings and nobles are the Old Testament equivalent of the principalities, powers, and rulers in Eph 6:12.

Dan 10:12-13 Then he [the angel] said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. (13) But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.”

When Daniel prayed, the answer to his prayer was delayed three weeks because a demonic angel referred to here as “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” hindered the angel from bringing the answer.

Want to know what’s happening up there sometimes when answers to your prayers are delayed?

There’s a battle in heavenly places.

So the Old Testament refers to enemy angels as “kings, princes and nobles” and the New Testament calls them “principalities, powers, and rulers”.

How do we deal with them? How do we bind them?

There’s a two-fold strategy: Praise, coupled with the two-edged sword.

What’s the two-edged sword? Again, the Word of God interprets itself.

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

So when wielded by people of the Word, praise is a powerful weapon.

Have you noticed how the Word of God just keeps popping up in this series?

I hope that you’ll be inspired to read it more consistently, if you’re not already.

But also that we should become a praising people.

Praise is very powerful.

When we praise God, something happens in the spiritual realm.

ILLUS – For most of the last 35 years, I’ve been involved in Worship Teams. Mostly, my eyes are closed if I can, and I’m trying to focus on the Lord, but I also get to see a lot of what goes on. I often see people worshiping God with all their hearts, hands raised, eyes closed, smiling faces, tears running down their face. Then I see another group of people – standing like a post, some chewing gum, hands in pockets, checking out their finger nails, playing with their mobile phones. One guy, I thought he’d died standing up.

If you’re part of the first group, I want to commend you.

You will personally reap the benefits because, whether you are aware of it or not, you are engaging the enemy in battle.

When you praise, you are doing battle with the demonic forces.

Buy if you recognise yourself a little in my description of the second group, why aren’t you using this powerful weapon God gave you?

Maybe you’re saying, “I just don’t feel like praising God.”

But I don’t praise God because I feel like it, I praise Him because He said to, because it’s good for me, and because when I do He does great things.

ILLUS – Can you imagine being in a war, you see the enemy pouring over the ridges. Your first response is: “Aaugh!” Your sergeant comes to you and says, “Don’t worry son. Put your rifle down and use this rocket launcher.” “But sergeant, I don’t feel like it.” “Use it son, it works.” “But sergeant, you don’t understand.

I'm afraid. I'm hurting. I'm unhappy. I'm depressed. My wife yelled at me, and I miss my mummy."
"Don't give me excuses, private. Use the rocket launcher."

That's a bit like what happens in church.

Some people, you'd swear by watching them that life is always good to them, because they make a decision not to let their circumstances or their feelings determine their behaviour.

Others, if they've had a bad week, they stop using their rocket launcher.

"I don't feel like praising God today."

This is where you need faith.

Heb 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Because often, you're just not going to feel like praising God.

But this isn't about how you feel; it's about what's happening in the spiritual realm.

Now I've used church as an example, but praise and worship aren't activities that are limited to the Sunday service.

They should be lifestyle activities.

Old Testament example – 2 Chronicles 20 – through praise, they bound the strongman and plundered his goods.

New Testament example – Acts 16:22-33 – The main point here is that through praise, they bound the strongman and plundered his goods, and the Philippian jailer and all of his family came to Christ.