

First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

March 10, 2019 - Benevolent Sunday

Scripture: Revelation 12:7-12 New International Version (NIV)

7 Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. 11 They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. 12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”

Congregational Prayer: “Our Father”

Our Father, Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven. Give Us This Day, Our Daily Bread, And Forgive Us Our Trespases, As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us. And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil. For Thine Is The Kingdom, The Power And The Glory. Forever And Ever. Amen

Message: "Prayer 10: Spiritual Warfare:2"

Introduction:

- Let me tell you the story of the prophet Elisha and the Aramean Army.

You can find it in 2 Kings 6:8-30 (p. 264). It is one of my favourite stories, especially when we talk about spiritual warfare. Verse 8 begins with: *“Now the king of Aram (Syria) was at war with Israel.”* Syria, the land to the north and east of Israel was attacking the northern kingdom in war. The rest of verse 8 says that the king of Aram would come up

with a plan to attack Israel, but verse 9 has the “man of God” Elisha, telling the king of Israel that they are about to be attacked. This infuriates the king of Aram, who thinks that a spy from his nation is going to the king of Israel. In truth, this is the first part of spiritual warfare. God is speaking directly to the prophet Elisha, and Elisha is able to warn of attacks. It’s really kind of funny - no matter what the king of Aram plans, Elisha can see into it because God is on his side. God is always more powerful. No army can ever defeat the living God. But the story gets even better. The King of Aram finds out that Elisha is in the city of Dothan, and sends his mighty army of horses and chariots to surround and attack the town. Dothan is only 10 miles (16 kilometres, not even the distance from here to Perth) from the Capital city of Samaria - thereby making Dothan a strategic military point, and its defeat would spell problems for Samaria. Now look at verse 15 - the servant of the Prophet Elisha looks out over the army, the war horses, the chariots, and cries out in despair: *“Oh, my Lord, what shall we do?”* Now, put yourself into the shaking boots of the servant. You are on top of a walled fortress, but you see a vast army ready to attack. You are scared and feel overpowered. How do you feel when the prophet says

verse 16: *“Don’t be afraid.”*? Personally, whenever I hear that I know I should be terrified, and I really get scared when I am told not to be afraid. But Elisha is not done v. 16: *“Those who are with us are more than those with them.”* Now, I’d be looking around and comparing our wee garrison of defence to the mighty army in front of me, and I’d be ducking down, wouldn’t you? But look at Elisha’s prayer from 2 Kings 6:17: *“O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.”* Spiritual warfare was not Elisha praying: “Lord, make us more powerful than them” or “Lord, give us strength and courage.” But instead, spiritual warfare is belief in the living God, and a certainty that God is in control. What did the servant think when Elisha prayed for him to be able to see - “I have eyes, mister, just give me a bazooka!” Now comes one of the greatest verses from the word of God as 2 Kings 6:17 finishes: *“Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”* Elisha could see what the servant was allowed to see, and what we can see if we are allowed by God - we are not alone. We are surrounded by the army of God. We are protected and held by God and his legions of angels and watch out evil. Watch out Satan. You are defeated before you begin any attack, as

Revelation 12 from today’s reading makes clear. Today, we continue our reflections on Spiritual warfare - are you ready for the battle?

Part 1: 2 Questions:

- 1. When does the devil attack us most often: When things are good, and we are doing things without having to call on God’s help, sailing along with little showing up on our problem-scale, or when we are struggling, finding it hard to pray, finding ourselves attacked by people and by problems, and when we are trying to get close to God? We will be attacked the most by Satan and his demons when we get close to God - the closer you are to Jesus, the more you will be under fire from evil.
- 2. What is one of the main ways that the devil works to get us to take our eyes off of Jesus? A: Busyness? Satan deceives by keeping us busy doing spiritual work instead of praying. Satan knows that there is little more powerful than a broken-hearted Christian, a contrite believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who comes before the Living God in prayer, lifting up prayers of praise, intercession, confession and thanksgiving in the presence of the Heavenly Father. He will try to keep you busy doing “God’s work” instead of asking God to *“...give us this day our daily bread.”* or for *“... thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is*

in heaven.” Stop your busyness, and lift your heart in prayer.

Part 2: When the Enemy Attacks...

- When thoughts, temptation, and emotions get you off track, use these 7 plans for combat (RESPOND)
- R - Resist Satan in Jesus' Name: James 4:7 says: *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* Do you want to resist Satan? Do you want the devil to leave you alone? Do you want to leave temptation behind? Submit to God first. Give yourself fully to Him. Hold nothing back. Resign yourself in repentance to The Lord, Jesus Christ. That is the first and most important step. Then resist evil. Walk away from it. Don't give evil the time of day. Turn your back on what is wrong and inappropriate and harmful in your life. The first step of responding to evil is to resist.
- E- Escape with Scripture: Turn to the Word of God - escape problems by having God's Word ready. Remember this from 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV): *“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”* Your time of trial is not unique to

- you. We all have to wrestle with our sinful nature trying to erupt from within. You might feel as if you the only one dealing with pornography, or anger, or greed, or lust, or power, or want, or a wish to lash out at that miserable neighbour, but know this: your walk in, around and through temptation has been done by us all. And God knows that you can bear it. God knows you can put up with it. God knows you can defeat the evil that is tempting you in His Holy Name. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us of the power of the Word of God, of His scriptures (NIV): *“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”* There is little in this world more powerful than the Word of God. When you take it in, when you live and breath God's Word, it will change your life, and it will strengthen you. Respond to evil by Escaping through the Word of God.
- S - Search for unconfessed sin, not giving Satan a foothold. The S of Respond is to Stand up to evil by confession. When King David took another man's wife as his own, his world started to fall apart until he confessed. When Adam and Even confessed their sin, God clothed them in the garden, and cared for them as they set up a new life. When the

Pharisee Saul confessed his sins to the Lord that he used to hate and persecute, the Apostle Paul emerged. What about you? When you have unconfessed sin in your life, when you are trying to hide your trespasses from a God who knows all, sees all, hears all, and is everywhere at all times, knowing your heart and your thoughts, how was your life? Was it rich and full or was it anaemic and full of problems? Unconfessed sin will stop you from many things, but even a wee fib in your life will grow into a huge life of lies, problems, and a bombardment of more and more evil if you do not ask God to remove your sins. Unconfessed sin will make you feel like death. Confession brings life.

- P- The “P” in the word Respond is for Plead. We need to learn to Plead the blood of Jesus. In Port Dover on Lake Erie there is a regular gathering of motorcycle riders every Friday the 13th. Winter, Summer - if the month has a Friday the 13th, bikers from all over North America will gather in the sleepy town of 6,000 as the sound of Harleys and Yamahas roar along the streets. A number of years ago the Henchmen club rode into Port Dover, and dismounted by the pub. Their leather jackets were matched by their leathery skin - they were tough, and they were hard. You did not mess with a member of the Henchmen club.

But as they got off their bikes, two young people came up to them - not much older than early teenagers. With wonderful smiles they stood between the bikers and the pub, and started telling those tough men about Jesus, and His love. The man who told me this story said that his first inclination was to physically hurt those youths. But those tough bikers could not move. All the bikers in the gang were held transfixed on these teens as they finished their story of Jesus, and merrily strolled away. That is living by pleading the blood of Jesus. It's living with the blood-covering of the Saviour, who is our protector, our leader, our ultimate body guard. By the way, the one who told me that story is a Christian now. In fact a Church pastor in downtown Kitchener. 1 John 1:9 (NIV) *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* When evil is close by, plead the blood of Jesus.

- O - Overtake ground given to the enemy. There is a simple principle in life: “Do the next right thing.” When you fail, and we all fail, just fix it by doing the next right thing. When you say something that you cannot believe came out of your mouth, fix it by doing the next right thing. When you do something that you are not proud of, fix it by doing the

next right thing. Don't give satan a chance. The devil loves to pick on people who make a wee error, and try to trap you there forever. When evil tries to hold you back, turn your face to Jesus, and claim Christ as Lord over your life, and fix your error by doing the right thing. King David failed about as enormously as any human has ever, but in Psalm 51:10 he turns back to God in repentance, and says (NIV): "*Create in me a (clean) pure heart, O God, and renew a (right) steadfast spirit within me.*" He did the next right thing. The world does not follow this principle. The world says this: "I have failed, but it's your fault. I have made a mistake, but its not near as bad as yours. I really did not do that. I can cover this up." When the enemy gains any ground in your life, take it back by repenting to God and overtake lost ground.

- N - Name someone who specifically needs prayer: This is a great way to start to wrap up this message: The N is for naming someone who needs prayer. The Andrew Principle comes into play here. The first thing Andrew did when Jesus called him to be a disciple was to find his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus, so says John.1:41-42. Every day we need to pray. Everyday we need to lift up a prayer of intercession for our family, our home, our community, our friends and

our co-works or co-students. The Andrew Principle is simply to pray for the unsaved. Would you take just 5-10 minutes a day to bring people and nations to Jesus in prayer? Ephesians 6:18 says (NIV): "*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*" You should carry a list of 5 people in your life who have not yet said yes to Jesus. And everyday you should simply ask the Lord to guide them to His throne of grace, of love and joy and hope. The N of Respond is for Naming a lost soul.

- D - Delight in the Lord. You will not be in satan's pocket if you are praising God. You will not fall victim to the devil's schemes if you are singing glory to The Lord. You will not have evil biting at your ankles if you are delighting your heart in reading about, studying and giving honour to the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 37:4 says (NIV): "*Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*" Philippians 4:4 says (NIV): "*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*" It is good to give praise onto God. It is wonderful to live your life as a praise song to the Lord. It is glorious to have a heart of praise to the One and only Saviour and Lord. And when you delight yourself in

God, you keep satan over there, holding onto his ears, fleeing the joyful sound of praise. Delight in the Lord.

Conclusion:

- The story from 2 Kings 6 is not over, by the way. After the servant sees the angels of God, Elisha prays for the enemy army to be struck with blindness (v. 18). Then Elisha walks the enemy army down the road 10 miles to Samaria, right to the king of Israel (v. 21), who is no doubt relieved that the city of Dothan is safe, but now has to deal with a large group of formerly blinded prisoners. He asks Elisha about killing them (v. 21), but instead, he feeds them a great feast, and send them home (v. 23), thus ending the war with Aram. I find this story to be so funny, and so mighty, and so awesome! What an incredible God we serve!
- Reread Revelation 21 - ultimately the war is won! The enemy around us and about us is defeated already. We may not be able to see the army of God encamped around us, but our God is more mighty than anything else here on earth, or in the spiritual realm. You and God are a mighty army. Stand firm, and watch God win your battles. For the battle belongs to the Lord.