

## **DRESSED FOR BATTLE?** **Spiritual Warfare**

**2016**

Having been raised by catholic parents, I grew up in the liturgy and decorum of the Catholic Church with its rules and rituals, the fundamentals of which were being mostly taught at church and at school. I obeyed them, no questions asked. The Sunday mass, sacraments, confession of sins to a priest were all part of my life growing up. The doctrines I learned and memorized from the Catechism in elementary school were the foundation of my beliefs. All Catholics were forbidden to read the Bible back then for fear of misinterpretation and the priests were the only ones having the authority to teach it. I never argued or confronted anyone on the matter. I honestly considered myself in good standing with God since I always tried my best to observe his Ten Commandments, follow the Golden Rule and practice a religion.

As I reached my teenage years, I had choices to make. Mass attendance was not an option back then and a sin for anyone who missed a Sunday mass - except for serious reasons - and fear alone kept me in church. I was well aware of God's existence but I realize today that my knowledge of Him was quite limited. He was the Mastermind and Creator of the universe with unlimited powers who oversaw and ruled the earth from his throne in heaven. I found him rather unapproachable but I still ventured to ask for his intervention whenever I found myself in the middle of a crisis. I always hoped that somehow he would listen from up there and help me solve my problems. But as years went by, I realized that following a religion or any other spiritual mumbo jumbo for that matter was not the answer to the peace and happiness I was so desperately yearning for.

My search finally brought me at the foot of the cross. Almost forty years ago, I finally understood and accepted God's message in that no one comes to Him but through his Son, Jesus. God loved us so much that he sent Him so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life<sup>1</sup>. In accepting his sacrificial gift as he was nailed on the cross for me, and having done absolutely nothing to deserve it, my sins were wiped out, my fate was sealed, and I knew without a shadow of a doubt that I was going to spend eternity with Him. God's amazing grace turned my life upside down, and I knew it would only be the beginning of a never-ending love story between us. He would always love me no matter what. And no one or nothing would be able to separate me from his love.

Having this blessed assurance, was my life from thereon a continual bliss? Well, it has been for the most part, but I must admit I had and still have my moments when I hang on to dear faith with all my might. As the lyrics of a popular gospel song goes, '*God never promised us a rose garden along with the sunshine. There's got to be a little rain sometime ...*' So, during these challenging times, I hang on to God's promise to be by my side every step of the way. I pray for his intervention and help which, in itself, is the right thing to do, but is there more to consider when all hell breaks loose?

Over the years I have read the Bible many times and oftentimes a verse will jump right up from its page and prompt me to meditate on it. That's what happened to me recently, and as I was again pondering over this verse this morning, I felt the urge to share it with the preacher and pick his brain on it. So, I headed out the door to find him.

I set foot on the grounds of the assisted living facility, my eyes scanning the area for the red scarf and its owner. I finally saw him sitting in the gazebo of a courtyard nestled between the wings of a building. Absorbed in a book, he didn't see me approaching but as I made my way into the

gazebo he looked up and smiled.

“Well, hi there! It’s been a while since I’ve seen you, dear lady! Take a seat!” he said, showing me an empty spot beside him.

“I’m sorry...I didn’t forget about you...it’s that....” I said, lowering my eyes shamefully.

“That’s okay..” he interjected. “I didn’t want to make you feel guilty by saying this. I just missed you, that’s all... So, what’s new in your little world?”

“Well, I don’t remember if I told you that my husband and I have been blessed with four grandchildren already... And the latest news is that we’re expecting a fifth one...a little girl... beginning of April!” I exclaimed.

“Really?... That’s fantastic news!... Children are certainly a great blessing from God. But I’m sure you were not looking for me this morning *only* to share this good news. What’s on your mind, dear lady?”

“Am I *that* predictable?” I said smiling. “Well, you’re right... I had something else in mind and I would like to pick your brain on it if you have a minute.”

“I’m all ears,” he said as he put his book aside and got himself comfortable.

I can tell he *loves* these moments when we get together and share on different topics. So, I asked him point blank: “Do you believe in the existence of Satan and demons?”

I think I took him by surprise with my question but as he straightened himself up on his seat, he looked at me and replied emphatically: “Of course I do believe they exist, dear lady! And I can tell you that much... that he’s a *cheater*, a *liar* and a *deceiver*... He’s the commander in chief of a hierarchy of demons who now rules the masses *outside* God’s protection. As a matter of fact, Jesus called him the Prince of this world, the evil one... He defies God and despises truth... He masquerades as an angel of light and keeps seeking an opportune time to tempt God’s people... He tries to hide the actual truth about God and offers counterfeit promises he can’t fulfill... He twists scriptures to fit his purposes, and his plan is to steal, kill and destroy... These are his attributes and he’s our worst enemy... But on a positive note, he’ll eventually suffer the fate he deserves... He’ll be thrown into the lake of fire and he’ll be tormented day and night for ever and ever...” he ended quite enthusiastically, I must say.

“Wow! You certainly know a thing or two about him!.. So, I’m sure then that you would agree with this verse that really caught my attention recently: *‘For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.’*<sup>1 2</sup>

“Definitely. If you look at all the evil that takes place in this world, we have to ask ourselves, where is it coming from?.. And it’s certainly not from God!.. Satan is the real culprit behind it all... He commands his army of demons to infiltrate anyone and anywhere they can in the world and spread their deadly poison... I’m telling you, it’s a spiritual warfare out there!”

“This reminds me of a movie I watched recently titled ‘War Room’.” I said. “It depicts exactly what this verse is all about... It’s the story of a husband and wife having marital problems... They’re both Christians but they argue and fight all the time, and no doubt they’re heading for divorce...”

The wife is a real estate agent and one day she meets this elderly lady who wants to put her house up for sale... And as she tours her home, she sees an empty closet with a bunch of little notes hanging on a wall... Curious, she asks about them... The elderly lady says it's what she calls, her 'war room'... *'This is where all my battles are done and won! These over here are my requests to God and these over there are the answers to my prayers'*, she says. Surprised, the agent then comments that she'd wish her prayers would be answered that well... The old lady then tells her she could also have her prayers answered, and offers to teach her how.

"To make a long story short, they start meeting on a regular basis, and the first thing the old lady teaches her is that she shouldn't be fighting against her husband whom she blames, but against the devil that is behind all her troubles... *'He's the one that wants to steal, kill and destroy, and he's the one you should be fighting against to save your marriage... You're in a spiritual warfare here and if you want to win, you've got to show God's love toward this husband of yours!'* she explained. So, she tells her to find a place in her home where she could be alone, with no distractions whatsoever, and start fighting for her marriage by praying God's Word on her husband and her family, and claiming God's promises... Finally convinced, the real estate agent decides to follow the old lady's instructions to the letter... She believed, she stood firm and at the end, her marriage was restored."

"That's it!" he said. "For any evil in this world, we should not look at the ones doing it as being the culprits but we should look at Satan, the instigator behind it, who is trying to destroy everyone in the process... So, if we're at war, we have to dress the part. Have you ever seen a soldier going to war without wearing his uniform and without his weapons? I don't think so. Spiritually speaking, it's the same thing but our arsenal is very different... Having accepted Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord of our life, it is with faith in Him, in his Word, and through our fervent prayers that each battle is won... Jesus paid a high price for us and did not leave us without the power to live victoriously. He gave his life for us but his resurrection was the culmination of his mission on earth... The war against our enemy has already been won, dear lady!.. And knowing this makes all the difference in our spiritual warfare."

"I know that when Jesus left this earth, he didn't leave us powerless..." I said. "He gave us the means to be able to withstand the attacks of the enemy through the power of his Holy Spirit in us."

"Yes, he did... But, sad to say, some of us don't even realize that the power is even there. We try to fight our battles on our own and at some point we end up wounded... defeated... Fortunately, God in his mercy comes to our rescue, and as a loving Father does, he encourages us, picks us up and reminds us to put his armor back on. But this time, you know what? We're victorious!.." he exclaimed, lifting his arms up in the air.

I admit that his excitement was contagious and I spontaneously did the same! "Oh, I can't tell you how much I enjoy sharing with you!" I said. "You're always such a great help in my quest for answers and every time I come out of our visits, I leave with the courage to keep fighting the good fight of the faith knowing that I'm never alone in the middle of a battle!"

"I'm glad to hear that, dear lady."

"Oh, I would love to keep chatting with you but I have to head back home... Perhaps we can do this again some other time?.."

"You're very welcome, dear lady. I'm always available and you know where to find me!...."

I gave him a warm smile and headed back home.

“By the way, congratulate the parents-to-be for me! And may God bless this little family of yours!” I heard him shout before I got too far.

“I will.” I shouted back. And I thought: *‘Oh, he remembered...’*

I walked back home with a song in my heart. Oh, Satan may well be at the head of his army desperately trying to defeat me, but God is the Six-Star General of his own army in which, I’m grateful to say, I have been enlisted. I can, therefore, say with assurance that with God being by my side, the war has already been won!

<sup>1</sup> John 3:16

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 6:12

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