

Divine Romance - Spiritual Warfare

Message 2

Week 3 – Monday

Rev. 19:7-8, 14 – Footnote 7²

We began to see in the first message that we are in the midst of a spiritual warfare. Actually, from the moment we get up we find ourselves in the midst of this spiritual warfare. There is a conflict between God and Satan. There is a conflict between two wills. Once upon a time in the universe there was no such conflict; at that time there was one will. Then God created the angels. He created the universe and He chose to give even the angels a free will. This was before the creation of man. One among God's creation chose to exercise his will not in line with God's will, but against God's will. That became the source of all conflict even until today: the conflict between countries, the conflict between peoples, the conflict within families, even the conflict within our very self. Have you not ever had feelings one way and another way at the same time? Maybe even this morning you had a feeling, "There's a meeting. I would like to go to the meeting but I am so tired. It's Saturday and I have so many things to do." You have a feeling: "I need the Lord, I need to pray" but then I don't feel like praying. There is a conflict right within our being.

We also saw the matter of the divine romance. The Bible from start to finish is a presentation of this romance. God desires to marry His people. I still remember the first meeting that I was in as a teenager and the brother had a us turn to Isaiah and Jeremiah, not just one verse but verses here and there. I never heard these verses before and I never read these verses before that say, "For your Maker is your Husband." I said, "There's a verse in my Bible that says this?" I knew God was the Creator but I did not know that the Creator created me to be His wife. From start to finish God wants to romance His people.

These two matters are put together in the Bible quite a number of times, the bride and the warrior. Last night we saw in Revelation 19 that there is a declaration, perhaps the most joyous declaration since the declaration on the cross, "It is finished." That was a marvellous declaration from the Lord Jesus: "It is finished." But in Revelation 19 you have the declaration, "His wife has made herself ready." The Lord is longing for that day come. We are gathered here today in this meeting for that day. We pray that our fellowship today would be bride preparing fellowship; that is our goal. There is such a declaration, His wife has made herself ready and she is clothed with fine linen bright and clean. Then just a few verses later, as we mentioned last night, when the Lord is coming to fight Antichrist, the armies that come with Him are also closed in fine linen white and clean. When you read this chapter have you seen these two cases? Who has the fine linen first? The bride. A few verses later, who has it now? The warrior. You have to realize that these are not two separate groups of people; the bride is the warrior. So we are involved with both the divine romance and spiritual warfare.

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Week 3 – Tuesday

Eph. 6:12-13 – Footnotes 12¹, 12², 12³, 12⁴, 13¹, 13², 13³, 13⁴

Then we came Ephesians which reveals the church in so many aspects. Probably at least 12 aspects of the church are shown in there: the assembly the gathering of the called ones, the body, the new man, the kingdom, the family, the house, the fullness of God—so many aspects. But the final two aspects revealed in the book of Ephesians are the bride and the warrior.

In chapter 5 is the bride: “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” When you got saved, probably you realized that Christ loved you and gave Himself up for you. This is the gospel that I heard when I was that little seven year old boy. That night I felt that even if there was no one else on Earth, Christ would have died for me. I was so filled with the love of God that night. That is John 3:16: “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” Sometimes when we share the gospel we even tell people, put your name there in that verse instead of *the world*. Read it, “God so loved— and then say your name—that He gave His only begotten Son.” So on one side, when the Lord was on the cross, He saw you and He saw me and He was there dying for us. That is one side. But in Ephesians 5 it says, “Christ loved the church gave Himself up for her.” So yes, what He did was very personal to each one of us, but on the other side, He had a goal, He had His desire. He saw you and died for you for the church, to get the bride. That is chapter 5 of Ephesians.

In Chapter 6 we see that our wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness. When it says, “Put on the whole armour of God” that is to be prepared for warfare. The church is revealed in Ephesians as the bride in chapter 5 and the corporate warrior in chapter 6.

Then we also saw 2 Corinthians chapters 10 and 11. What do we see in Chapter 11? We see Eve, the first bride. Paul says, “I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God.” Jealousy sort of brings romance and warfare together. “I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband.” Paul had preached the gospel to the Corinthians so in the first book he said that he had begotten them; he was their spiritual father. But in his view when he preached the gospel to the Corinthian believers, he was betrothing them to Christ. This means that whenever we got saved we got engaged, we entered into this divine romance, into this relationship with our Lord. But then Paul says, “But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted.” The enemy came into Eve’s thoughts in the garden and he tries to fight against us in the same way.

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Week 3 – Wednesday

S.S. 6:4, 10 – Footnotes 4¹ paragraph 1, 4²

Chapter 10 compliments this: “For though we walk in flesh, we do not war according to flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds, As we overthrow reasonings and every high thing rising up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ.” So, in this context we can see that Satan’s weapons are thoughts. He injects his thoughts into our mind. These are the flaming darts that we see in Ephesians chapter 6. Satan fights against us so we need to be equipped with the whole armour of God.

My burden this morning is to have what I hope is practical fellowship on how to put on this armour, how to take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ. Before that though, I would like to read a couple of verses from the Song of Songs. Chapter 6 is another place where the scriptures bring together the two matters of the divine romance and the spiritual warfare. Verses 4 and 10 read, “You are beautiful, my love as Tirzah, As lovely as Jerusalem, As terrible as an army with banners.” “Who is this woman who looks forth as the dawn, As beautiful as the moon, As clear as the sun, As terrible as an army with banners?” These verses have the phrases, “You are beautiful”, “You are terrible.” Imagine if a young man would say to the girl that he is engaged to, “You are so beautiful and terrible.” That might cause some misunderstanding. But here the Lord says, “You are so lovely and terrible.” Actually, she is lovely to the Lord and terrible to the enemy. So right here you can see the divine romance and the spiritual warfare. The beautiful, lovely one is likened to Tirzah and Jerusalem. Tirzah was the palace of the kings in the northern kingdom of Israel, and Jerusalem was where God’s house was, the apple of God’s eye. So the church is God’s house, the church is God’s kingdom. She is beautiful and lovely; she is His bride. That is one side, but this beautiful one is as terrible as an army. It is so consistent throughout the scriptures; the bride is the warrior. But as I mentioned last night, let us not focus too much on the warfare. We are in the warfare but one way to win the war is to develop the romance. When we go deeper with the Lord in our fellowship with Him, this is defeating the enemy.

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Week 3 – Thursday

Psa. 27:4; 42:1-2

Now let us come to the verses that we read in the book of Psalms. I would like to highlight some words to focus our fellowship. We do encourage the saints very much to set aside some minutes, some time, just for the Lord. It is best if it is in the morning. Of course, there are saints who have their situations because of health or because of work. We surely understand. We don't want to make this something legal or put anyone under bondage based on our fellowship. So if your schedule does not permit and you are spending the time with the Lord in the afternoon or the evening, no worries. We are talking about separating time for the Lord. We recommend not only a set time, but even a set place of fellowship. It should be a place that is free from distractions so that you can focus on the Lord. Why? Because the enemy is very subtle; he comes in through our thoughts.

One time we had a kind of informal training for our college students between the semesters in January. We gathered our college students for 3 weeks. On Monday nights we would come together and fellowship with them many of the principles that I will share this morning. Then from Tuesday through Friday we gathered at the church meeting hall with the purpose to give every one of them one hour to practice having personal time with the Lord. During that time we would assign each person a different room. Then after one hour we would come back together, make a circle and then fellowship. It was not to fellowship about what they enjoyed such as a verse. We asked them, "What did you do in your hour with the Lord? When the distractions came, how did you counter the distractions?" It was very interesting. Remember, we were in the meeting hall and that was not anyone's set place. It was a new environment with saints scattered in the different children's meeting rooms. We had testimonies such as, "I started to pray, 'Oh Lord Jesus, Oh Lord—Oh there is a map, the journeys of Israel. I never noticed that before. Oh, Dan is way up here.'" They spent 5 minutes looking at the map. Then they realized, "Oh Lord Jesus." Maybe they heard a sister calling loudly in another room and then remembered, "Oh Lord, I love You." And then a few minutes later, "Oh, there is spider web in the corner. I never noticed that spider web." That could have been the room where this sister teaches the children, but she never noticed the spider web. Now she is trying to pray and she notices the spider web. Do you know what she did? Remember that this was a 3 week training; she was going to pray in this room for the next 3 weeks. She noticed that every corner had spider webs. She went and got a cloth during her prayer time, got a chair, and wiped all the spider webs away. You might say that she got distracted, but I say that she was preparing the room for her prayer for the next 3 weeks. She was removing the distractions.

We need to have a place where we remove all the distractions. Maybe it will take us a few days. One time I was having hospitality in my home during a conference. My regular place to pray was occupied so I went to pray in my kitchen. I was there pacing in my kitchen and then noticed a magnet on my refrigerator; it was upside down. That magnet had been there for years and I never noticed that it was upside down. When did it come to my mind? When I was trying to contact the Lord. The enemy was distracting me with just a magnet, so I turned it right side up so that I could forget about it. So saints, the place you pray is also important. It is good for us to have a place where we go to have fellowship with the Lord. If you have such a place, it won't be too long before you are already in the presence of the Lord when you go there. It makes it easier for your mind to be focussed and your spirit to be exercised. Don't think that the place is insignificant. Have a set time and a set place.

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Week 3 – Friday

Lam. 3:55-56

When we come to the Lord at such a time, there are different categories of prayer. There is the prayer of petition, the prayer for things, the prayer for people, even for people to be saved, or the prayer to know the Lord's will. As we are growing up we need to know the Lord's will about our future, about our education, about the job that we have, about our career, concerning marriage, and concerning migration for the Lord's move. We need to pray for these types of things, but the morning fellowship is not the time for that. Those prayers should be at other times. Petition is important but the prayer of fellowship is more basic where all we are doing is coming to behold the Lord's countenance. That is what we find here. Psalm 27:4 says, "One thing have I asked from Jehovah; That do I seek: To dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, And to inquire in His temple." The house of the Lord has two aspects: one is our spirit and the other is His church. Here we take it and apply it as our spirit: I want to dwell in my spirit, to do what? Just to behold the beauty of Jehovah. After you behold, then to inquire in His temple. Don't reverse the order. Don't come to inquire first; behold first. We contact the Lord; we come to behold Him. I would say that we come to breathe Him; we come to absorb Him. In principle, basically prayer is our spiritual breathing.

Prayer is breathing. In Lamentations 3:55-56, Jeremiah says, "I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, From the lowest pit. You have heard my voice; do not hide Your ear at my breathing, at my cry." Jeremiah tells us that our calling on the Lord is breathing, our crying to the Lord is breathing. Shall we cry to the Lord? "Oh Lord Jesus! Oh Lord Jesus!" That which we just did is a deeper breathing but as you are sitting here and I am standing here, we all should be breathing the Lord, absorbing Him and taking Him in.

I would like to point out that physical breathing has two parts. Of course, we don't think about breathing. If you are thinking about breathing, probably something is wrong with your breathing. You just breathe. Breathing has two aspects, breathing in and breathing out. You all knew that but spiritually, breathing out is first. We need to breathe out in order to breathe in. Even physically it is healthy, not just to take a deep breath in but to more deeply breathe out, to empty the lungs. Without the proper exhaling a certain amount of bad air stays there. What we breathe out is somewhat negative; sometimes it even smells bad. Every living organism, in order to survive, must discharge things. If something is wrong with your digestive system and you cannot discharge what should be discharged, that could kill you. We become toxic, so we need to discharge things. That physical picture exactly matches our spiritual situation. To go on in a healthy way we need to exhale, we need to discharge things. Confession of our sins is probably the first type of discharge. When someone gets saved, when the gospel is preached and they call out to God for forgiveness, that is a discharge letting go of their sins, and then they take in the Saviour.

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Week 3 – Saturday

Let's look at hymn 255; it is a wonderful classic hymn by brother A.B. Simpson. The topic is breathing. Lets just sing verse 1 and the chorus.

O Lord, breathe Thy Spirit on me,
Teach me how to breathe Thee in;
Help me pour into Thy bosom
All my life of self and sin.

I am breathing out my sorrow,
Breathing out my sin;
I am breathing, breathing, breathing,
All Thy fulness in.

Note that in the chorus first I am breathing out my sorrow, breathing out my sin, and then I am breathing in. Nearly every verse follows this principle. Verse 2 says,

I am breathing out my own life,
That I may be filled with Thine;
Letting go my strength and weakness,
Breathing in Thy life divine.

You need to breathe out even your strength. Sometimes our strength prevents the Lord from filling us. We are too strong, too able, so we don't get the Lord's supply. We need to breathe out our strength and our weakness. Sometimes we feel that we are so weak, so terrible, so this, and so that. When we say this we feel like this disqualifies us from taking the Lord in. Actually, we need to breathe out that weakness and breathe Him in as our very strength. What else?

Breathing out my sinful nature,
Thou hast borne it all for me;
Breathing in Thy cleansing fulness,
Finding all my life in Thee.

I am breathing out my sorrow,
On Thy kind and gentle breast;
Breathing in Thy joy and comfort,
Breathing in Thy peace and rest.

Sometimes I found out, both in my own experience and with others, you cannot avoid frustrations, problems and disappointments. From the time of the curse, from the time of the fall, we know that human life would be this way. No one can escape; so we have difficulties and frustrations. We all have our share. At times we give the enemy ground to inject thoughts into our thoughts: "How come that family never suffers? Look at that family; everything is perfect. Why us? Why me?"

We need to breathe such thoughts out. We also need to breathe out our sorrow. Recently my own family was passing through a little something, and too often in the time with the Lord in the morning, I didn't even realize when the thought came. A family member was suffering and there was a feeling of weight, heaviness like a cloud covering. That could take 7 or 8 minutes before you realize, "Oh Lord, oh Lord, amen." By the time you realize where you are you are too deep in a pit that you made for yourself; it is hard to climb out. We need to breathe out our sorrows. We also need to breathe out our disappointments. Have you never been disappointed? Have you never been disappointed with your spouse? Have you never been disappointed with God? "God, I thought that You are faithful. Even I preached to others that You are faithful. Why are You faithful to everybody except me?" It is not that way but didn't you ever feel that way? When you feel that way, you need to breathe that out. Sometimes the darts of the enemy come to us because we gave the enemy ground to visit us because we held on to certain things. We need to learn to breathe out.

Verse 6 begins "I am breathing out my longings". Do you have longings, desires? "In Thy listening, loving ear; I am breathing in Thy answers, Stilling every doubt and fear." Let's sing verse 7 and the chorus:

I am breathing every moment,
Drawing all my life from Thee;
Breath by breath I live upon Thee,
Lord, Thy Spirit breathe in me.

I am breathing out my sorrow,
Breathing out my sin;
I am breathing, breathing, breathing,
All Thy fulness in.