



Evangelistic Apologetics

The Church Under Attack

Part 4

By

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Chapters

It's War!	5
What's At Stake?	11
Are You Really Involved?	18
The Battleground	25
Strategy of War	37
The Challenge	49
How Is The Battle Going For You?	53
What Part Does Evangelistic Apologetics Play?	64
What Part Are You Playing?	71

It's War!

If teachers are teaching and preachers are preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), no Christian should wonder why the Church is under attack. It's not a secret. God is not trying to hide from us that the Church is under attack. In fact, God has made it abundantly clear in His Word that Satan is His enemy and our enemy and is attacking us continually using a sophisticated system of spiritual forces working at many levels of life on this planet and in this universe.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Ephesians 6:10-13

Ephesians 6:10-18 is often referred to as “spiritual warfare” and that's not a bad name for what is occurring in the spiritual realms. We may think our enemies stand before us in flesh and blood, but the real enemies live in the spirit world. That's why God tells us to use “spiritual” weapons to battle with these spiritual beings. A primary weapon we have available to us as Christian warriors is *Evangelistic Apologetics*.

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” Ephesians 6:14-18

Before you say, ‘I’ve heard this before,’ let me ask you seven questions:

1. Why has God placed ‘you’ in this spiritual battle?
2. What’s at stake in this spiritual battle?
3. Are you really involved in fighting in this spiritual battle?
4. If not, why not?
5. If so, how is the battle going for you?
6. What part does Evangelistic Apologetics play in this spiritual battle?
7. What part are you playing in Evangelistic Apologetics?

In reading Ephesians Chapter 3 we learn that God made known to Paul “the mystery,” which Paul mentioned earlier in his letter (Ephesians 1:8-12). The mystery described there is “the mystery of His will ... that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.” Paul expands on the ‘mystery’ theme in Chapter 3.

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles — if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.” Ephesians 3:1-7

This is not the first time Paul told the Ephesians about the mystery of the Gentiles being fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel.

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might

reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Ephesians 2:11-18

At the beginning of Israel’s journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, God made clear the differences between Israel and all other nations. “And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘This *is* the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it’ (Exodus 12:43). However, God did make a way for gentiles to participate in the Passover and that was through circumcision: “But every man’s servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it” (Exodus 12:44). In fact, God went a step further: “And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you” (Exodus 12:48-49).

That is **not** a mystery. Anyone who read the Torah knew how gentiles could participate in worshiping God. Circumcision was something God instituted with Abraham (Genesis 17:10). What Paul wrote about in Ephesians is something not included in the writings of Moses or the Prophets. It was a true mystery that God revealed in His time. Here’s how Paul explained that timing.

“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.” Ephesians 3:8-13

The preaching among the Gentiles “the unsearchable riches of Christ” was hidden ‘in God’ from the beginning of the ages. Paul’s preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ “to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery” was hidden ‘in God’ from the beginning of the ages. Why? “... to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*.”

What you and I are involved in now is the Church, the Body of Christ – “one new man” that Jesus created from Gentile and Jews (“thus making peace”), reconciling them both to God in His Body through the Cross, putting to death the enmity.” The intent of this ‘mystery’ is “that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.” God wants to make known to His spiritual enemies His manifold wisdom and He does that through His

Church. If you are a member of the Church, the Body of Christ, then God is making known His manifold wisdom through you and other members of His Church.

Every true Christian is involved in spiritual battle with God's enemies. The 'intent' of our involvement in that battle is that "now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places."

What's At Stake?

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!’ And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: ‘Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts.’” Isaiah 6:1-5

In the last chapter we asked seven questions about the spiritual battle Christians find themselves fighting every day -

1. Why has God placed ‘you’ in this spiritual battle?
2. What’s at stake in this spiritual battle?
3. Are you really involved in fighting in this spiritual battle?
4. If not, why not?
5. If so, how is the battle going for you?
6. What part does Evangelistic Apologetics play in this spiritual battle?
7. What part are you playing in Evangelistic Apologetics?

We answered the first question. Now let’s look at the second: *what is at stake in this spiritual battle?*

Christianity is not a game. It's not a social event. It's not even 'up' for discussion. **It's a war.** The sooner every one of us understands that, the sooner being Christian makes sense.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Ephesians 6:10-13

If we're reading our Bibles and attending a Bible-teaching church, we should have heard someone quote from Ephesians 6 about 'spiritual warfare'. However, have you considered *what's at stake* in this battle? If you've looked at the back of the Bible, you know that God wins it all. So, what's at stake is not whether God wins or not. Nothing Christians do or don't do on earth will affect God's victory over Satan, sin and death. So, why is what we do here of any consequence to the end game? What does it matter whether we participate in spiritual warfare or not?

The short answer is that God **commands** it. If you have spent any time serving in the military, you know that people who have a higher rank than you rarely 'ask' you to do something. They 'order' you to do it and if you know what's good for your future, you do it (as long as it's not illegal).

When Isaiah saw God sitting on His throne in Heaven, “high and lifted up,” with the train of His robe filling the Heavenly Temple, saw the angels covering their faces and crying out, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory,” and saw the posts of the Heavenly door shaken and the house filled with smoke, Isaiah said: “Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts.”

When I read stories today about people who claim to have seen Heaven, it's obvious that they did not see the Heaven written about in the Bible. Anyone who sees God's Heaven is going to see the Holy God on His Throne and hundreds of thousands of angels praising His Name and singing about His holiness. They'll also see Heavenly elders casting their crowns toward God and crying out that He is worthy to receive glory and honor and power because He created all things and sustains all things by His will. They would also cry out like Isaiah about being people of ‘unclean lips.’ When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians about seeing Heaven, he said that he heard inexpressible words “which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” (2 Corinthians 12:4)

Let me propose the idea that one important thing at stake in spiritual warfare is **God's reputation on earth**. Notice that I did not say *God's reputation in Heaven*. There is nothing Satan and his ‘principalities and powers’ can do to God's reputation in Heaven. Nothing. However, there is much Satan and his demons can do to the ‘perception’ of God's reputation on earth and that is a big part of what's at stake in our war “against

principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.”

Jesus began His special prayer for disciples with these words – “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10) It is the desire of God the Son that the ‘will’ of God the Father be done on earth in the same way it is done in Heaven. We’ve already seen that the way God’s will is done in Heaven is absolute obedience. Jesus wants His Father’s will to be done here on earth in the same way – absolute obedience. Anything less than that is a challenge to God’s reputation as God.

We don’t have to leave our homes to know that God’s will on earth is not being done in the same way it’s being done in Heaven. In fact, we don’t have to look at anyone except ourselves to see that His will is not being done here in the same way we will one day do His will in Heaven. Think about that for a minute. The day is coming when you and I will stand before God in Heaven and do whatever He asks us to do. No questions. No hesitations. No discussing alternatives. We will obey God willingly, gladly and absolutely. Agree? Okay, then why won’t we do that now? Yes, I know about sin and human nature, but isn’t that just an excuse of convenience? I know it is because I use that excuse for not doing God’s will on earth as I would if I was in Heaven. Sin and human nature is a factor, but what did Paul tell us about the flesh and spiritual warfare?

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 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, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Sounds great! But how do we do that? How do we walk in the flesh but not war according to the flesh? Paul gets specific in Ephesians 6.

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” Ephesians 6:14-18

Why should we fight so hard in this spiritual war? Because of what's at stake. What's at stake? God's reputation on earth. Why? Because God has chosen to use us as His *ambassadors*, “as though God were pleading through us.” (2 Corinthians 5:20) Christians ‘represent’ God on earth. We speak for Him and touch lives for Him. God could have chosen to do things differently, but He chose to use us. The good news is that God chose to use us. The bad news is that God chose to use us.

The office of ambassador is very important because that's how people of another country know about your leader. If you're kind and generous, they think of your leader as kind and generous. If you're mean and stingy, they think of your leader as mean and stingy. The conduct of an ambassador is so important to the reputation of a country's leader that ambassadors are often recalled because of their actions and attitudes.

So, how are we doing? What kind of ambassadors are we? Should God promote us or recall us? If you want to know more about what God thinks of how His 'ambassadors' are doing, check out the letters Jesus dictated to seven churches in the 1st century – Revelation chapters 2 & 3.

Are You Really Involved?

“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Revelation 20:10

It's sometimes helpful to remember why we start things. We get so deep into a project that we can forget why we're doing what we're doing.

As I began to write this post I thought about why I started this series a year ago. Here's how I explained it then:

“Some pastors I've talked with through the years about emphasizing apologetics in their church (especially with children, teens and young adults) either chuckle, roll their eyes or get upset with me at some point in our discussion. They tell me that apologetics should not take the place of evangelism. It's unfortunate they see apologetics that way because biblical apologetics is evangelistic – thus the name of this series of studies.”

After writing this series for a year, let me strengthen that statement a bit by saying that the discipline of apologetics **MUST** have evangelism, the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of eternal souls, at the center of its purpose. Anything less than that misses the primary message of the Bible – *Redemption*.

We are currently answering seven questions about the spiritual battle Christians find themselves fighting every day and have answered questions 1 and 2:

1. Why has God placed 'you' in this spiritual battle?
2. What's at stake in this spiritual battle?

We'll now look at question 3 – *Are you really involved in fighting this spiritual battle?*

The Battles

It might be helpful if we break open this question in multiple parts. Let's begin with the *Battle*.

We've addressed this before. The Battle began in the Garden of Eden. God showed Adam all of the great foods God had created for him in the garden, but said – “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” God then created woman for the man. In the next scene we are introduced to ‘the serpent’ who approached the woman and tempted her to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil knowing what would happen when she did. The woman ate the fruit, gave it to her husband and he ate it as well. Next scene we see God confronting the man, the woman and the serpent. God cursed the serpent and told him that the Battle was on – “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her

Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” (Genesis 3:15)

God said ‘He’ would put a great hostility and hatred (‘enmity’, Hebrew *ebah*) between the serpent and the woman ‘And’ between the serpent’s seed and her Seed. Why would the woman be mentioned but not her husband? The serpent attacked the woman, but there’s more to it than that. The woman would become the ‘mother of all living.’ That’s why Adam named his wife Eve (Genesis 3:20).

Adam was the responsible party in the garden. God commanded Adam to ‘guard’ the garden and keep it safe (Genesis 2:15). He was “with” his wife when the serpent tempted her and did nothing to stop the temptation or the awful outcome (Genesis 3:6) Paul explained in 1 Timothy 3:13-14 that Adam was NOT deceived, but his wife was deceived. The implication here is that Adam, who had the responsibility of guarding his wife from the serpent, disobeyed God’s command and knowingly participated in the transgression. It is because of Adam’s responsibility that he could not be a party to winning the great Battle. As Paul explained in Romans 5, it was through Adam that sin entered the world and death through sin. Death spread to all men because all have sinned.

Here is the logic.

“For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.” Romans 5:17-19

That explains why God said that the hostility, the hatred, would be between the serpent (Satan) and the woman, and between the serpent’s seed and the woman’s Seed. Adam’s seed could not participate because of the reasons Paul explained in his wonderful letter to the Romans.

Another way of saying this is that because of Adam’s offense and the judgment that came to all men and the resulting condemnation from Adam, no human hero to save the world could arise from the first Adam. The Hero would come from the Seed of the woman and become the Second Adam, and His righteous act of grace to all men would result in justification of life.

Notice something important in these words – “He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” God took **ownership** of the Battle! God did not say that the woman or the man would bruise the seed of the serpent or be bruised by the seed of the serpent. God said that the Battle was between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman. As we know from following the **redemptive story** of the Seed through the Bible, Jesus is the Seed of the woman and Satan is the serpent. God said two things would come from this great supernatural battle:

1. Jesus would bruise Satan’s head
2. Satan would bruise Jesus’ heel

The English word ‘bruise’ doesn’t sound much like a Battle. However, when we look at the Hebrew words used in Genesis 3:15, the Battle becomes clear. The Hebrew word for Jesus bruising Satan’s head means ‘to crush, break into small pieces.’ Satan bruising Jesus’ heel means ‘to strike, to cause great injury, to wound seriously.’ Now we have a Battle. Both fighters are going to give and receive great wounds in this Great Battle. However, one will be victorious though seriously wounded, while the other will be crushed into small pieces with no possibility of returning to the Battle. Whereas the Man stomps on the head of the serpent and breaks it into small pieces, the serpent uses its fangs to strike the Man from its slithering position where it could strike only His heel. Both can be fatal, but whereas there is an antidote for the serpent’s venom (resurrection from the dead) there is no hope for the powerful crushing of the Man’s foot breaking the serpent’s head into many small pieces.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome and told them, in the context of avoiding people in their church that caused divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine they had learned, that “the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.” (Romans 16:20) The Greek word is *suntribo* and is similar to the Hebrew word used in Genesis 3:15 about what the Seed of the woman would do to the seed of the serpent. It means ‘to rub together so to shatter and break in pieces.’

The Battleground

“Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.’” John 10:7-10

With all the seemingly complex arguments aimed at Christianity today, the basic argument *for* Christianity is simple – *Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior*.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” John 10:11

Jesus Christ is God’s eternal Son. He came to earth in the form of a man, lived a perfect life, gave His life for His sheep, and rose from the dead so whoever believes in Him “will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

How can such a simple message with the promise of an awesome outcome for believers be so hard to understand by so many? We have an enemy who is also God’s enemy. Satan, ‘the thief,’ is here on planet earth to ‘steal, and to kill, and to destroy.’

What that means for us is Spiritual **WAR!**

We are currently answering seven questions about the spiritual battle Christians find themselves fighting every day and previously answered questions 1 and 2:

1. Why has God placed 'you' in this spiritual battle?
2. What's at stake in this spiritual battle?

We began looking at question 3 in the last chapter – *Are you really involved in fighting this spiritual battle? Where are battles fought? The Battleground*

We see the spiritual 'battleground' clearly in the Parable of the Sower. It's found in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. Because of how foundational this is to our understanding of the war we find ourselves in, let's look how each of the Gospel writers recorded what Jesus said to the crowd followed by what Jesus said to His disciples.

Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13

Jesus speaking to the crowd:

“Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root

they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Jesus speaking to His disciples:

“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

Parable of the Sower in Mark 4

Jesus speaking to the crowd:

“Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.’ And He said to them, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”

Jesus speaking to His disciples:

“And He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown

among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

Parable of the Sower in Luke 8

Jesus speaking to the crowd:

“A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.” When He had said these things He cried, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’”

Jesus speaking to His disciples:

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell

among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.”

The Prophets and War

Jesus told the crowd about the battle and the battleground without explaining it to them. The twelve disciples asked Jesus the meaning of the parable and He said to them:

“To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.’” Mark 4:11-12

It’s important to note here that Jesus quoted from Isaiah 6 where the prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord sitting on His throne in Heaven. Isaiah heard the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Isaiah said, “Here am I! Send me.” He heard the Lord say what Jesus would later tell His disciples:

“Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ ‘Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed.’”

Isaiah asked the Lord, “how long?” and the Lord answered:

“Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate, The Lord has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth will be in it, And will return and be for consuming, As a terebinth tree or as an oak, Whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the holy seed shall be its stump.”

Isaiah prophesied in Judah during the second half of the 8th century and the first part of the 7th century BC. He lived during the time of Assyria defeating the northern kingdom of Israel and warned multiple kings of Judah that a foreign empire would defeat them as well. Israel and Judah had a great physical enemy in both Assyria and Babylon. Though the battleground appeared to be those who would control the land, Isaiah and other prophets made clear that the real battle was a spiritual one.

Jesus prophesied in Israel during the beginning of the 1st century AD and also warned the people and their leaders about impending judgment and destruction. However, the Gospel that Jesus preached about the Kingdom of God was much more than control of a small area of land in the Middle East. After His death and resurrection, Jesus commanded His disciples to take the Gospel “to the end of the earth” and to “make disciples of all the nations.”

Players on the Field of Battle

Jesus introduced His disciples to several key players on the spiritual battleground: The Sower, Seed, Wayside, Birds, Stony Ground, Earth, Sun, Root, Thorns, Crop, Good Ground.

The Sower ... Jesus does not describe the ‘sower’ in this parable, though it is usually believed to be the person who ‘sows’ the seed (e.g. Jesus, apostles, teachers, preachers, evangelists, Christians who tell people about the Gospel of Christ)

The Seed ... Jesus said the seed is the ‘word of God.’ The ‘sower’ would ‘sow’ the Word of God through teaching and preaching the Gospel of Christ.

The Wayside ... the Greek words used in Mark 4 are παρα την οδον, meaning ‘road, path.’ It’s where people walk along their journey, explaining why ‘seed’ that ‘fell by the wayside’ would be trampled down.

The Birds ... Jesus said that the ‘birds of the air’ devoured the seed that fell by the wayside. He explained that the birds of the air represent what Satan (the devil) does when he ‘comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.’ Jesus makes clear that what He’s talking about is the ‘spiritual battleground’ of people’s souls – ‘lest they should believe and be saved.’ Jesus would later say that He had “come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

The Stony Ground, Earth and Sun ... Jesus said that some of the seed (the Word of God) fell on ‘stony ground.’ The Greek word for ‘stony ground’ is πετρωδες, meaning ‘rocky ground, ground full of rocks.’ Jesus also pointed out that the stony ground ‘did not have much earth.’ The Greek word for ‘earth’ is γην, meaning ‘the physical earth, soil, land.’ The seed ‘sprang up’ because it had ‘no depth of earth.’ Jesus said that ‘when the sun was up the seed was scorched.’ Jesus said that this represents people who ‘immediately’ receive the Word of God with gladness, but endure only for a time because they have no root in themselves. “Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.” The combination of no depth (stony ground that did not have much earth) and tribulation or persecution (scorching sun) led to the death of what sprang up from the seed (people did not endure because they have no root in themselves).

The Thorns and The Crop ... Jesus said that some of the seed ‘fell among thorns.’ The Greek word for ‘thorns’ is ακανθαι, meaning ‘a thorn-bush, prickly plant.’ Jesus said the thorns ‘grew up and choked it’ and it ‘yielded no crop.’ He told His disciples those were the people who heard the Word, ‘and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.’

The Good Ground ... Jesus told the crowd that other seed fell on ‘good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.’ He then told the crowd, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’ Jesus explained to His disciples that these are the ‘ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept *it*, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.’

No Neutral Ground

C.S. Lewis said it well – “There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.” (C.S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967, p. 33)

There is no place on earth where the spiritual principles Jesus taught His disciples are not true. In order for Christians to be successful with Evangelistic Apologetics, we must understand the battleground in which we wage spiritual warfare. As we preach the Gospel of Christ (sow the Word), we must know how the enemy will oppose us. Satan knows what we’re doing and why we’re doing it. The devil will direct his forces of evil to do

everything in their power to make sure the Word of God does not land on 'good ground' where people will accept it and bear fruit.

What Jesus has given His Church is the 'strategy of war.' We need to study it until we understand it — then never forget it. In the next chapter we will look at Satan's battle strategy and how we can face him on the battlefield.

Strategy of War

“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck.”

1 Timothy 1:18-19

The Fight

We are currently answering seven questions about the spiritual battle Christians find themselves fighting every day. In our last study we looked at the Battleground and the Players on the Field of Battle. We now move to the Strategy of War.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.’ Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them. Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever

came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. 'Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.'" John 10:1-18

Jesus gave us vital insight into how Satan fights –

- Satan is a thief and robber
- Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy
- Satan approaches sheep deceptively
- Satan catches 'the sheep' and scatters them

Battle Lost

We see Satan's strategy from his first encounter with God's "sheep" –

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” Genesis 3:1-7

Do you see how what Satan did in the Garden with Adam and Eve is identical to the thief and robber Jesus described in John 10?

- Satan came to Adam and Eve for the purpose of stealing, killing and destroying. That is always his purpose.
- Satan entered into the Garden deceptively for the purpose of scattering God's sheep. That's Satan's strategy then and now.

Understanding how Satan works will help us as we fight against him and his evil empire (principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places – Ephesians 6:12). What does Satan ‘steal’ (Greek, *klepto*) and how does he steal it? What did Satan ‘steal’ from Adam and Eve? Several things come to mind, but I think most important was the pure ‘relationship’ they had with God. How did Satan do that? Through *deception*.

“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Revelation 12:9

Satan is currently ‘deceiving’ the ‘whole world.’ That’s everyone, including Christians. How do I know that? Because Jesus warned His disciples about Satan’s deceptions.

“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’ And Jesus answered and said to them: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.” Matthew 24:3-5

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.” Matthew 24:23-25

The Apostle Paul warned believers how they can be deceived. This is not a complete list, but should give us a good idea of the deceptive methods the enemy uses in his attacks on Christians.

“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.” Romans 16:17-18

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!” 2 Corinthians 11:2-4

“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the

sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.”
Ephesians 5:3-7

“For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ... Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.” Colossians 2:1-4, 8-10

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be

revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” 1 Timothy 4:1-3

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And

from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was. But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3

Why did I share these words from the Apostle Paul with you? Because if you are not ‘really involved’ in fighting the spiritual battle, you may have been deceived. I know that’s blunt, but it’s true. If we are not heavily involved in the spiritual battle with Satan and his forces, a battle God tells us we’re in whether we want to be or not, we may have been deceived. We may also have made that choice for reasons we believe are good, but that doesn’t make it right not to obey Christ.

Let me be quick to add that I have also been deceived – we all have.

“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Titus 3:3-7

Paul says he was once foolish, disobedient and deceived, but then he was saved. Salvation brings cleansing and renewing. We can start fresh with minds that are alive with knowledge and understanding. However, as Paul and other apostles make clear, we are in a battle with the great deceiver and liar.

“Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.” John 8:43-45

So, how do we deal with Satan’s deceptions and lies?

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” 1 Peter 5:8-9

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” James 4:7

- Be sober
- Be vigilant
- Satan walks about like a roaring lion, seeking for people to devour
- Resist him, steadfast in the faith
- Submit to God, resist the devil

Battle Won

We have another example of Satan's war strategy when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. First, notice Satan's tactics from Matthew chapter 4 –

- “Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’”
- “Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down.’”
- “Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’”

Satan's strategy is the same as with Adam and Eve –

- Satan came to Jesus for the purpose of stealing, killing and destroying.
- Satan came to Jesus deceptively for the purpose of scattering God's sheep by attacking the Great Shepherd.

What we find different is how Jesus responded to Satan –

- “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”
- “Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’”
- “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”

Jesus demonstrated how to win the battles against Satan’s strategy and the result was that “the devil left Him.”

The Apostle John addressed the Spiritual War Strategy this way –

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” 1 John 2:15-17

The Challenge

We have raised seven questions for Christians to consider –

1. Why has God placed 'you' in this spiritual battle?
2. What's at stake in this spiritual battle?
3. Are you really involved in fighting in this spiritual battle?
4. If not, why not?
5. If so, how is the battle going for you?
6. What part does Evangelistic Apologetics play in this spiritual battle?
7. What part are you playing in Evangelistic Apologetics?

We will now address #4 – *If not, why not?*

Being made in the image and likeness of God includes making decisions. God is free to make decisions and so are we. Being involved in the spiritual battle or sitting on the sidelines is our decision. Remember that Eve was deceived while Adam wasn't. Adam made a decision not to fight, not to do battle with the lies of Satan. We have all of the information we need to make the right decision concerning this spiritual battle.

Adam made the wrong decision. Jesus made the right decision. We have an advantage in knowing the history of these decisions and how everything will benefit us through the gracious gift of eternal life. Why then would we decide not to fight?

“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 5:18-21

Christians will be with Christ forever. What we experience in this life on earth is just the first leg of an eternal journey. Knowing what our future will be, why would we not do what our Lord asks us to do?

“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:17

If you are really involved in the battle, we thank you. If you are not involved in the battle, we need you. This thing is tough and we need every hand on deck, every fighter wearing full armor and wielding shield and sword and –

“... praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for

which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:18-20

How Is The Battle Going For you?

We are asking and answering seven basic questions about our involvement in God's purpose for His Church:

1. Why has God placed 'you' in this spiritual battle?
2. What's at stake in this spiritual battle?
3. Are you really involved in fighting in this spiritual battle?
4. If not, why not?
5. If so, how is the battle going for you?
6. What part does Evangelistic Apologetics play in this spiritual battle?
7. What part are you playing in Evangelistic Apologetics?

We move now to question 5: *If so, how is the battle going for you?*

It is a good thing to pause at various points in our lives to consider how things are going. That pause gives us the opportunity to reflect and make course adjustments as necessary.

In light of the spiritual battle we are involved in with Satan and his forces for evil (Ephesians 6:10-13), pausing from time to time to consider how we are doing in the battle is most helpful.

So, how are you doing? Are you winning battles? Are you overcoming the obstacles? Holding your own or losing ground?

One mistake many of us make each day is to think we are not at war on that day. Things may be going very well in our life and the lives of our family and friends. No one is ill. No one is out of a job. No one is having financial difficulties of any kind. No one is suffering in any way, so the war must have settled down for now. BIG MISTAKE!

Satan and his evil forces are always warring with us. The worst time is often when we think we're not under attack. If we think the war has quieted, we loosen the truth that had been girded around our waist, we lower the breastplate of righteousness, take off the preparation of the Gospel of peace that were on our feet, dropping the shield of faith, taking off the helmet of salvation, re-sheathing the sword of the Spirit, no longer praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and taking our eyes away from watching with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. Guess what? Satan has you just where he wants you.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

Satan takes no holidays, no vacations, no sick days, no time off for good behavior. He's always bad and he's always after you. He wants to devour you.

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.”
John 10:10a

Satan is a thief. He roams the earth with one intent: to steal, kill and destroy. That's what he does and he will do it to you and to me and the people we love if we aren't ready to defend at all times.

So, back to our question: *If you are in the battle, how is the battle going for you?*

We need to take a close look and make sure we are fighting the right battle and fighting it well.

Fighting The Right Battle

In martial arts we teach people how to defend themselves. The first lesson of self defense is to be aware of potential danger. That means knowing what could be dangerous and how to defend against it. That might mean not walking across the street until you look left and right to make sure no cars are coming toward you. It could also mean walking away from someone you think might want to harm you.

The same is true in spiritual warfare. We need to know what dangers we face as Christians and how to defend against those dangers.

We know from what Jesus and His apostles told us that Satan is an enemy and we need to be ready to defend against him and his evil forces. Question – how do we identify what is a real spiritual danger? Answer – read the Bible!

As Jesus told His apostles – “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” Even as Jesus told His disciples that He was going away, He told them He would leave them as orphans and would come to them. How does that work? How can you leave someone and come to them at the same time? The answer to that question is an important key to spiritual warfare.

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you ... These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:15-18, 25-27

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” John 16:13

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be the primary spiritual helper and guide to living the Christian life and fighting spiritual battles with Satan and his evil forces. The Holy Spirit did guide the apostles into all truth and that’s how we know to fight the right battle. How did the Spirit do that?

We know from the New Testament writings that the Holy Spirit gave Christians great power on the Day of Pentecost and often spoke directly to believers –

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

“Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:3-4

“Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot.’” Acts 8:29

“While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are seeking you.” Acts 10:19

“Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house.” Acts 11:12

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” Acts 13:2

The Holy Spirit spoke to Christ's Apostles and also inspired some of them to write what we now know as the New Testament –

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:19-21

There you have it .. “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” and “All Scripture. is given by inspiration of God.” That demonstrates the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy when He told the apostles that the Holy Spirit would “teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” and “when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.”

We learn about which battles are the right battles to fight by reading the truth the Holy Spirit guided the apostles to write.

Fighting the Right Battle Well

Reading the Bible carefully also teaches us how to fight those right battles well.

If someone attacks you physically and you identify the attack as a real and dangerous event but your ability to defend is weak and you lose, what good was it for you to rightly identify the battle? Self-defense training includes knowing what battles to fight and how to fight them well.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. God wants us to win battles and overcome great obstacles in our lives. How do we know how to do that?

Back to the Bible –

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the

Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:10-20

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 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, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

The Holy Spirit told the Apostle Paul how Christians can fight spiritual battles well. So, what’s next? Application.

Knowing how to fight well is not enough. Knowing needs understanding and a willingness to do whatever is necessary to overcome the enemy –

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:21

“I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.” 1 John 2:13

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” 1 John 4:4

“Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” 1 John 5:5

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” Revelation 2:7

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” Revelation 2:11

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name

written which no one knows except him who receives it.” Revelation 2:17

“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.” Revelation 2:26

“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” Revelation 3:5

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.” Revelation 3:12

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Revelation 3:21

We could share many more insights from God’s Word about how to fight the right battles well, but if we will do what we know from the verses above we will be well on our way to victory.

The Church is under attack. We need to prepare now, train well and be ready for the fight of our lives!

What Part Does Evangelistic Apologetics Play?

We are asking and answering seven basic questions about our involvement in God's purpose for His Church:

1. Why has God placed 'you' in this spiritual battle?
2. What's at stake in this spiritual battle?
3. Are you really involved in fighting in this spiritual battle?
4. If not, why not?
5. If so, how is the battle going for you?
6. What part does Evangelistic Apologetics play in this spiritual battle?
7. What part are you playing in Evangelistic Apologetics?

We move now to question 6: *What part does Evangelistic Apologetics play in this spiritual battle?*

The Problem

I am saddened as I begin this part of our series:

- saddened by thousands of young people around the world who walk away from their belief in Jesus Christ every year after spending their childhood and teenage years in Christian churches
- saddened by the continual stream of people walking in and out of churches every Sunday never hearing the overwhelming evidence for the truth of Christianity

- saddened to know that many pastors, elders, deacons, teachers, educators and other Christian leaders oppose the idea of using apologetics (reasons for belief) in their ministry

I was one of those young people who walked away from Christianity after spending my childhood and teen years in church. I later became a strong atheist who mocked Christians for their beliefs. I accused Christians of having no evidence for the existence of God, the truth of the Bible and the reality of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was only because of the amazing grace of God that I am a follower of Jesus Christ today.

I, like so many other young people, never heard about the evidence for Christianity as I grew up. I learned Bible stories, but not the evidence for the historical accuracy in them. I learned doctrinal claims, but not the evidence for their truth.

What would have helped me as a child and teenager is something called *evangelistic apologetics*. It's not a new thing. In fact, evangelistic apologetics is in the Bible and was used powerfully in the early centuries of the Church's history. Evangelistic apologetics is what God brought to me as a young adult to demonstrate the reality and credibility of the truth claims of Christianity.

The problem is not that evidence for Christian truth claims does not exist, but that Christian leaders are withholding the evidence from the people God called them to lead. The Gospel of Christ is evidential in nature, but church leaders rarely present the evidence in a way people can understand and apply to their lives.

I believe strongly that Christian pastors, teachers and leaders are doing a great disservice to the Gospel by not including the evidence for the Gospel. Can you imagine Jesus telling His disciples to “just have faith” instead of demonstrating His power and glory as evidence of His divine claims and answering tough questions thrown at Him by the opposition?

Jesus presented His disciples with evidence. Jesus calmed storms, walked on water, healed people of every disease, raised the dead and showed Himself alive to many witnesses after His own death. The disciples saw the evidence and believed.

“On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, ‘Let us cross over to the other side.’ Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’ Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, ‘Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?’ And they feared exceedingly, and

said to one another, ‘Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!’ Mark 4:35-41

“Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’ Matthew 14:25-27

“Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ The sick man answered Him, ‘Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk.’ And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.” John 5:5-9

“Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon’s house. But Simon’s wife’s mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them.” Luke 4:38-39

“And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed.” Luke 6:17-18

“Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, ‘Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?’ Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.’ Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Loose him, and let him go.’” John 11:38-44

“And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, ‘Peace to you!’ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into

My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’ And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ John 20:26-28

“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Acts 1:1-3

The Bible is filled with evidence for the existence of God, the credibility of its Writings and the reality of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God gave us evidence so we would both believe and teach.

What Part Are You Playing?

We are asking and answering seven basic questions about our involvement in God's purpose for His Church:

1. Why has God placed 'you' in this spiritual battle?
2. What's at stake in this spiritual battle?
3. Are you really involved in fighting in this spiritual battle?
4. If not, why not?
5. If so, how is the battle going for you?
6. What part does Evangelistic Apologetics play in this spiritual battle?
7. What part are you playing in Evangelistic Apologetics?

We move now to question 7: *What part are you playing in Evangelistic Apologetics?*

The Church has been under attack physically and spiritually since Jesus Christ began building it. Estimates of severe physical persecution of Christians today (e.g. loss of possessions and property, imprisonment, torture, bombings, killings) are as high as a quarter-of-a-billion Christians around the world. Christianity is illegal in many countries.

Open Doors USA estimates that every month, on average –

- 345 Christians are killed for faith-related reasons
- 105 Churches and Christian buildings are burned or attacked
- 219 Christians are detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned

Open Doors USA has a World Watch List that looks at persecutions that range from High to Very High to Extreme in the top 50 countries where it is most dangerous to follow Christ.

‘Less’ severe persecution (e.g. social discrimination, loss of positions/jobs, denial of civil rights, loss or degradation of political/citizenship rights, incitement of hate, etc) are also on the rise and impacting hundreds of millions more Christians around the world.

If you’re reading this article from the United States, you probably are not experiencing persecution for being a Christian – but it’s coming. Look at what’s happening around the world in many countries where Christians used to have the freedom to worship and that freedom is slipping away or gone. If you think it can’t happen here, please, think again. It can and it probably will.

Losing Freedom – Gaining Ground

Christ has not called His Church to function only in free societies. In fact, He has called Christians to grow strong during persecution. Why do I say strong? Because when we are weak, when we are challenged by the powers of this world, we become strong in the power of Christ. Here's how the Apostle Paul explained it –

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:10

Our faith in God grows through persecutions and trials. That’s not a popular message, but it is apostolic. Again, the Apostle Paul –

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who

do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 1:3-8

Of the seven churches Jesus dictated letters to the Apostle John in Revelation 2-3, one that received the Lord’s praise faced severe persecution.

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: ‘I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.’” Revelation 2:8-11

The church in Philadelphia also received the Lord’s praise for standing strong in the face of great opposition.

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, ‘He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens’: ‘I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue

of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ Revelation 3:7-13

Where are Christians gaining ground in the world? Is it in countries where Christianity is legal? Where Christians are free to worship as they please without opposition or persecution? Do you think Christianity is growing fastest in countries where it is the majority religion – like the United States? The answer is NO. Christianity is growing fastest in countries where Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists are the majority. Is that because Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists want to help build Christian churches and support Christians in their ministry to preach the Gospel of Christ? Again the answer is NO. Christianity grows fastest when it is persecuted.

Look at some of the countries where Christianity is currently growing rapidly –

- Nepal is a majority Hindu country, but Christianity is growing at an annual rate of almost 11%
- China is a majority non-religious country, but Christianity is growing at an annual rate of almost 11%
- United Arab Emirates is majority Muslim, but Christianity is growing at an annual rate of about 9.3%
- Saudi Arabia is majority Muslim, but Christianity is growing at an annual rate of almost 9.3%
- Qatar is majority Muslim, but Christianity is growing at an annual rate of about 7.8%
- Oman is majority Muslim, but Christianity is growing at an annual rate of about 7.62%
- Yemen is majority Muslim, but Christianity is growing at an annual rate of about 7.1%
- Mongolia is majority Buddhist, but Christianity is growing at an annual rate of about 5.96%
- Cambodia is majority Buddhist, but Christianity is growing at an annual rate of about 5.87%
- Bahrain is majority Muslim, but Christianity is growing at an annual rate of 5.49%

Most of the countries where Christianity is growing fastest are in Asia and Africa. 11 of the countries in the top 20 list are Muslim majority. Others are Buddhist, Hindu and non-religious. Eastern Asia, Western Africa and the Arabian Peninsula are where Christianity is growing fastest in our world today – not in the United States, not in Canada, not in Europe.

The rapid growth of Christianity in these countries is not because of birth rates in Christian families. It's a combination of conversions of people to Christianity and immigration of Christians into those countries.

Jesus Christ offered His disciples a unique way of 'growing' the Church wherever they live, wherever they go –

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” Matthew 28:18-20

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 2:8

The key is discipleship! Making disciples, teaching them, being witnesses to what Jesus Christ has done in our lives.

Change Coming to the USA?

Pew Research shows that Christianity in the United States is declining, while Muslims are growing in number. Pew believes that Christianity will decline from 75% of the population in 2010 to 66% in 2050. Their research shows Muslims will be more numerous in the U.S. than people who identify as Jewish on the basis of religion by or before 2050. (*The Future of World Religions*, Pew Research, 2015)

One of the reasons for this is that Muslims have a higher fertility rate and are projected to increase by 73% worldwide by 2050. Christian growth will be slower – 35%. For the first time in history, the population of Christians and Muslims will be about the same (Christians – 31% .. Muslims – 30%). That's based on current demographic trends continuing for the next 30 years. Pew Research shows that the Muslim population in the US is growing at a rate of about 100,000 per year because of the migration of Muslims along with the higher fertility rate among Muslim Americans.

Another reason is the conversion rates among Muslims and Christians. While a majority of people born into Muslim homes remain Muslims throughout their life, the number of people born into Christian homes who leave Christianity at a young age is very high.

Pew Research estimates that while about 40 million people will convert to Christianity worldwide in the next 30 years, about 106 million people will leave Christianity during that same time period – most of them becoming religiously unaffiliated. That's a **net loss** of 66 million Christians around the

world in the next 30 years from 'deconversion'. Muslims, on the other hand, are expected to have a **net gain** through conversions of more than three million worldwide during the next 30 years. Pew believes the combination of birth rates and conversion rates is a big reason why Muslims will become almost as numerous as Christians worldwide by 2050 and surpass Christians by 2070.

Is Persecution Inevitable?

The question before us is how all of the changes will impact Christianity in the United States. At what point will those changes lead to persecution of Christians? Christians in the U.S. have experienced a majority position for centuries, but how long can that last?

Here is a graphic from Pew Research that shows some of the countries that had a Christian majority in 2010 that will be in the minority by 2050.

Countries That Will No Longer Have a Christian Majority in 2050

Countries That Will No Longer Have a Christian Majority in 2050

	MAJORITY RELIGION 2010	% OF POPULATION 2010	MAJORITY/LARGEST RELIGION 2050	% OF POPULATION 2050
Australia	Christians	67.3%	Christians	47.0%
United Kingdom	Christians	64.3	Christians	45.4
Benin	Christians	53.0	Christians	48.5
France	Christians	63.0	Unaffiliated	44.1
Republic of Macedonia	Christians	59.3	Muslims	56.2
New Zealand	Christians	57.0	Unaffiliated	45.1
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Christians	52.3	Muslims	49.4
Netherlands	Christians	50.6	Unaffiliated	49.1

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Notice that the United States is not on the list. That's because Christianity, which had a religious majority of 75% in 2010, will still have a majority in 2050 – though it will drop to about 66%. If that trend continues, Christians could be a minority religion within a hundred years. Other religions, plus unaffiliated, would push Christianity out of the majority.

Would becoming a minority religion mean immediate persecution in the United States? Persecution is often a process rather than something that happens all at once. Many Christians in the U.S. are currently facing persecution, sometimes because of converting from another religion, sometimes because of their Christian 'values' and 'positions' on a variety of subjects (e.g. abortion, sexual orientation, same-sex marriage, gender issues).

We are already seeing religious persecution on many college campuses in the United States. Christians are often targeted for their beliefs and ridiculed for their values (e.g. called ‘haters,’ ‘bigots’).

Seeing persecution as something that happens to minorities and not majorities is to misunderstand what Jesus told His disciples:

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.” John 15:19-21

Christians will be persecuted, not because of their majority or minority status, but because the world hates Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul shared this with Timothy –

“... all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”
2 Timothy 3:12

Christians in the United States deal with persecution at a variety of levels. Christian teens are targeted as are college students. That’s when so many Christian young people walk away from Christianity. Those who get into their 20’s and 30’s without walking away are in a somewhat better position as far as being targeted, but it will happen as they speak up and stand up

for Christian values and positions within their family, workplace and community.

The fact that Christianity in the U.S. is shrinking and may become a minority group within the next 100 years could lead to an increase in persecutions as other religious and non-religious groups are emboldened.

That leads us to **you**. What part are you playing in Evangelistic Apologetics? What part can you play in helping young Christians understand the powerful ‘reasons’ for being a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. What can you do to reach more non-Christians with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? We’ll dive into that subject when our special series *Evangelistic Apologetics – The Church Under Attack* continues next time.

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