

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 15th November 2009

Kingdom, Power and Glory – Power Encounters

2 Cor 10:1-6



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Paul has had enough! He could do nothing right! He hadn't visited enough, his speaking amounted to nothing (10:10), he had misused church funds (8:20, 11:7-9, he was considered unimpressive yet crafty, overly strict yet worldly, he was out of his mind (5:13)! Consequently he had had enough! In this passage from the second letter to the Church in Corinth Paul defends his ministry passionately and in so doing puts his finger on one of the key causes of hostility and antagonism – read 10:3-5. There is a battle raging between two kingdoms – a Kingdom of darkness that brings deception, death and destruction and a Kingdom of light that brings truth, forgiveness and life! Eph 6:12. As Paul says in Ephesians 5:8 'our struggle is against spiritual forces of evil.' The activity of a personal power and presence of evil in the world and in us is a reality that we need to wake up to. There is a battle going on for the hearts and minds of men and women, boys and girls – read Col 2:8. The battle ground for hearts and minds extends across the whole world. The Kingdom of darkness can be seen in the brutalities of this world where values are reversed so that good is seen as evil and evil good. From time to time we may encounter situations or circumstances around us which we can describe in no other terms as evil. But more often than not the battle ground is within us, with the struggle in our daily lives between what we know is of God and what we know is not! Nicky Gumbel speaks of this battle ground and the close connection between God and the Devil as being just one letter away! Behind the power of good lies God, behind the power of evil lies the Devil. Kingdoms then in conflict one with the other. There is in a very real sense a power encounter going on between God – Godness - Light and the Devil – Evil - Darkness. So as Christians how can we fight this battle to win!

- 1 **Firstly know the enemy!** In the two thirds world there is an acceptance of things spiritual and supernatural. Here in the UK there is an unhealthy scepticism about anything spiritual and any associated supernatural phenomena – so much so that many in the church do not even accept that there is a war going on let alone knowing who the enemy is! On the other extreme it is all too easy to see the devil everywhere! CS Lewis helpfully *comments* “*there are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils existence. One is to disbelieve their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.*” Let's get the balance right! We need to be naturally supernatural and supernaturally natural! As Christians we are involved in a daily battle with the powers and presence of evil as we seek to see God's Kingdom grow in us and around us.
- 2 **Secondly Know the right weapons!** Jesus was tempted by the devil for 40 days. Not by a horned red suited figure in front of him so much as devil inspired seeds of doubt sown in his mind “*If you are the Son of God*”, tempted by greed – “*you can have it all, by Idolatry – “just put God second.*” The devil does the same with us: “*you're not really a Christian,*” “*You're not good enough,*” “*If God really cared why did he let that happen to you,*” “*Yes you can have Family , career etc just fit faith in somewhere along the line God Won't mind!*” Jesus faced this battle with what Paul calls “*The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God*” Eph 6:17. Scripture spoken in the power of the Spirit that defends against evil and temptation and helps us move forward in faith and in seeing the Kingdom of God grow. Paul also mentions another weapon in Eph 6:18 – praying in the Spirit on all occasions. Peter and John after preaching to the Sanhedrin received death threats. They called a prayer meeting and prayed that God might anoint them to speak his word with great boldness and that he might stretch out his hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders 4:2 -9. God heard their prayer “*After they prayed the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly*” Acts 3:1. Prayer overcomes evil and yet so often it's the first casualty in the hectic daily, weekly diary. Perhaps this is not so surprising! Paul goes on in Eph 6 to mention other weapons – belt of truth and integrity: keep a focus on Jesus – breastplate of righteousness: keeping our relationships right – gospel of peace: get involved in serving Christ and speaking of him: shield of faith – keep trusting God in difficult times and don't succumb to cynicism and scepticism: helmet of salvation – win the battle of the mind.
- 3 **Thirdly Know that the victory has been won!** Col 2:15 “*Having disarmed the powers and authorities he made a spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross.*” On the cross Jesus won the victory and broke the hold of sin, death and evil and the wonderful news is that Christ not only has the authority over any situation where evil is encountered he also gives that authority to us – his Church, you and me! – Read Luke 10:17-20.



Witness: questions to discuss

Before discussion, read the Bible passage and ask God to help you discern what the Spirit wants to say to your group. Consider one or two questions below – don't feel you have to use them all but do consider the key question! Make sure there's plenty of room for prayer and ministry.

- 1 Do you believe in the devil? Why?
- 2 Have you had any encounters of the supernatural that has caused you to feel uncomfortable?
- 3 Where do you see spiritual forces of evil at work: in the world today? In our daily lives?
- 4 How do you deal with temptation?
- 5 How can we take authority of situations and circumstances that are inherently evil?
- 6 What do you think 'Scripture spoken in the power of the Spirit' means? What do you think 'praying in the Spirit' means? How can we put this into practice?

Key question: *I am struggling with two extremes! Half of me wants to sweep all of this under the carpet because it doesn't really feel real and sensible in our world today. The other half of me sees Satan's work in everything from horoscopes to conspirac theories. How do I have a right understanding of the work of Satan?*

Prayer and Ministry: *Pray for the situations that have shared and use the name of Jesus in your prayer.*