*Introduction*

Last Sunday, we started to look at the subject of Spiritual Darkness and strongholds that we can allow to develop in our lives that need to be broken down.

Many of us hold on to things which start off quite innocent, but grow into an inner fortress that cannot be broken, except by the power of God, and they prevent us from fulfilling Gods will for our lives.

Often we put up these barriers out of fear, pride, hurt or through teaching at Church.

Yes, even wrong teaching at Church can cause a wrong thinking, that wrong thinking then develops into your own belief and becomes something that you cling onto, even though it may be wrong.

I asked you to seek God to show you if you have any strongholds in your life, and if so, ask God to help you knock them down, for as Paul said:

***Gal 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.***

As God, through His Holy Spirit guides us I stated last week that we would look at a number of different areas connected with this subject.

Before we get started proper on this short journey, I think a good starting point is that of knowing your enemy, and that is where I believe God has led me this morning.

One of the problems the world faces today is terrorism. The reason terrorism is such a threat to us is that we do not know its form.

It comes at us in many different ways. It comes through direct warfare as we see in Syria, weapon v weapon, man v man, it's an enemy that you can see.

But it also comes in other forms, one being what the news outlets describe as a 'lone wolf'. A person who through the media is radicalised and becomes a means of terrorism. He or she may sit on a bus, unknowingly to those around, and then detonate a bomb. The unseen threat.

Satan and his forces are in open warfare and they are highly organised.

So we as Christians NEED to KNOW our enemy, because he has many disguises.

We live in very dark days, and if we stand for Jesus, we will come under attack, and be placed in positions of Spiritual authority where our job is to push back the enemy, by the power of God.

*1. Do you believe in the reality of evil spirits?*

I ask this question as a starting point, because if you do not believe, or if when you read the Bible and particularly the accounts of spirits being cast out, you are sceptical, or say, well that was in bible days, they were primitive in their thinking, you are already a defeated Christian.

If you do think that way, let me remind you that Jesus, the Son of God, came face to face with evil spirits, demons, and they took him seriously and He took them seriously.

Praise God there is POWER in the NAME of JESUS.. Amen!

We are, DV, going to look at 3 subjects this morning, very briefly.

1. We are in a war

2. Satan and his forces are highly organised

3. We need to understand the 'Heavenlies'

**READ: Matthew 12: 22-37**

***1. We are in a war***

Do not be under any illusion, satan and his workers are at work today, just as they were in Jesus' day.

In Matthew 12 Jesus delivered a man who was deaf and mute from an evil spirit. He didn't examine the man like a doctor and prescribe pills. He spoke directly to the demonic spirit and told it to come out. The man was released and he was able to hear and speak.

When the Pharisees heard this, they made a terrible accusation against Jesus, saying that he had done it by Beelzebub

***“It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.”***

What a thing to say!

But look at Jesus' answer

***“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?***

Jesus is saying a number of things in this passage, and we need to hear this.

a. Satan will not drive his own demons out - he wants them to occupy.

b. If he did, his kingdom would fail

c. If the Spirit of God drives them out - then watch out, the Kingdom of God has come.

Jesus is saying quite clearly to the Pharisees who He is.

There is also a warning that we did not read, which comes in v32

***32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.***

There is a warning here.

Jesus acknowledges that Satan has a kingdom and that he has an army.

But He also goes on to speak about the Kingdom of God

***27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.***

Through the ministry of deliverance the two kingdoms are brought right out into the open.

The invisible kingdom of Satan is shown by the presence of demons, and the Kingdom of God represented by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Of course, Satan would rather we took no notice and keep his kingdom secret, because when it is confronted by Gods Kingdom - he loses every time.

We are in a war, and as a Christian, you are part of Jesus' Kingdom, you are His soldier.

***2. Satan and his forces are highly organised***

When we think about terrorism, we could often believe that it was disorganised, that their forces are not professionals, that is not the case, and it is certainly not the case when it comes to the forces of darkness.

Paul makes this absolutely clear in Ephesians 6

***12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

Paul goes on to speak about the armour of God that we need to put on in order to just stand against these forces, but we will DV come back to that another day.

What is Paul saying in this verse that will help us to understand these forces of darkness.

Firstly, Paul tells us that we are not fighting human beings, theses are not persons with bodies, you cannot see them - normally.

Secondly, they are organised, Satan is the head of the Dark kingdom, but he has rulers, rulers rule an area, there are authorities and forces.

Let me give you an example of this set up:

The United Kingdom has a head - the Queen, she is in overall command, under her she has a Government, the Government has authority to rule the land. The land is divided into Counties, each with its own Councils and authorities.

Within the land there are army bases, with forces of various strengths, the police force etc.

In the same way, Satan's kingdom is set up.

***3. We need to understand the 'Heavenlies'***

Alot of people, and many Christians believe that Satan is in Hell, after all, the cartoonists always portray the devil as a red, horned figure with a trident surrounded by the flames of hell. Hell is a place of confinement beneath the earth for wicked persons.

But Satan and his armies are active - extremely active, not only that, the Bible describes Satan

***1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.***

***2 Cor 11:13-15 For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.***

Now Paul states back in Ephesians 6 that these ***spiritual forces of evil*** are ***in the heavenly realms***

Now is Paul making a mistake in his speaking or does he really mean plural - realms?

Well, we see in Genesis 1, that in the beginning God ....made the heavens and the earth

heavens - plural, earth - single,

We could argue this point all day, except that Paul, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a pupil of Gamaliel etc etc. states on at least two occasions the same thing.

***2 Cor 12:2-4 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. 3 And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— 4 was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.***

He states the THIRD HEAVEN and states it is Paradise - The place where God is.

Now logic alone would tell you that if there was a third heaven, there must also be a first and second heaven!

***EPH 4:10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)***

***DEUT 10:14To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.***

***Nehemiah 9:6You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.***

We know that Satan was thrown out of Heaven with a third of the angels, so the heavenlies that Paul speaks of in Ephesians must be the 1st and 2nd heavens, which I interpret as being the air around us and the next one up.

***Eph 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+2:1-3&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29233a)***] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.***

Therefore it stands to reason that between us and God's throne - paradise, lays the realm of the enemy, an enemy that seeks to harm us, frustrate us and defeat us.

Daniel came across this after he had prayed

***Dan 10:12 Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. 13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.***

*Conclusion*

It is important to know your enemy and how he operates. He is a dangerous foe, he uses many disguises, he is a roaring lion, an angel of light, he inhabits people and binds them, he gets in through opened doorways, such as witchcraft and curses, and his sole aim is to destroy and keep in darkness those who are his slaves.

He uses Christians to lead astray other Christians.

If a preacher tells you to do things that are of the darkness - do not go near them.

Lastly, Why are we Christians so important in the spiritual war?

Because God has given to us alone, the true Church, the weaponry that can fight and destroy the works of the evil one. We alone are able to intercede for others who are being attacked.

Some countries have vast armies to defend themselves with military hardware that can destroy vast areas and you can see them on the TV parading their wares as a show of strength.

As believer's we have the most sophisticated, powerful, all consuming, weapon at our disposal, it is the name of Jesus.

When a demon came into contact with Jesus - it could do nothing but flee.

***James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.***

Each of us need to recognise the reality of the demonic realm and become spiritually equipped, learning how to fight against, Satan and his schemes. Because if we do not, we will end up a casualty of the spiritual war.

There is POWER in the NAME OF JESUS

WE have the VICTORY

Amen