

ElderTalk: Spiritual Warfare and the Belt of Truth

MATTHEW GODSIL

What is spiritual warfare? In Ephesians 6:12 Paul writes, "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." That sounds fairly ominous. First, a struggle is identified, and we are in it. This struggle has been going on before we entered the scene. We are told that our struggle is not against what we think it is against. We tend to believe that the struggle is against the biological and physical beings we brush up against throughout the course of our lives.

While, in fact, we do come into conflict with the people we meet in our lives, the origin of these conflicts is not contained in the individuals who oppose us or groups of individuals that we continually spar with. There is something or someone behind the flesh and blood beings we battle. Paul tells us about whom we are up against. It is a group of powerful beings who rule, display power and authority over this physical world. And this world is a dark place because of their rule.

Their power is spiritual, working in ways that are not subject to the laws of the physical world, or are not experienced by our five senses of sight, sound, touch, taste or smell. But we can be aware of them. As human beings we can have the ability to sense that something is wrong or evil. And these characters are. Some of us are able to sense that more than others.



*St. Michael Vanquishing Satan (1518)
by Raffaello Sanzio Urbino*

Jesus entered this world and taught us to pray. "Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Jesus acknowledges His Father and our Father are the same. He is a spiritual creator who inhabits the space (heaven) that surrounds the physical realm (earth). Jesus also tells us that our Father is the ruler and authority of the heavenly realm.

Our Father has a will, a desired plan and an outcome for the heavenly realm AND the earthly realm. His will is being applied to the earthly realm as we speak. So, if we go back to Ephesians 6:12, Paul says that rulers and authorities of this dark world (the earth) are currently God's adversaries. Satan and his demons, are spiritual forces from heaven now battling here on earth—this is the basis for the struggle we call "spiritual warfare."

Here is a brief history of spiritual warfare. The prophet Nehemiah speaks to the Creator and the two realms where he writes in Chapter 9:6. "You 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."

Scripture identifies one God, who made all levels of the spiritual realm, heaven and the earth, and the multitudes of beings that worship that one God in heaven. He also created the earth and filled it with creatures He made and breathed life into.

Early on, the earth was formless, void, dark, and without order. (Gen.1:2) The Spirit of God hovered over it and brought light, order, and life to it. He created men and women and made them rulers, gave them authority and power over the earth that God had established. So why does Paul say that there are others that have authority over the earth?

"Elohim" is a Hebrew word meaning "gods that inhabit the spiritual realm." But it can also mean "The One True God," who has authority over all other 'gods' or inhabitants of the heavenly realm. So who are the others that exist in heaven?

The Elohim is a category title that covers those beings that inhabit the spiritual realm.

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Spiritual Warfare *(Cont. from p. 1)*

1. The triune Godhead: Father, Son, and Spirit.
2. The Divine Council: the host of heaven, God's Team, with whom God wants to share His authority.
3. The Cherubim: Guardians of the entrance to Eden, the base of the throne of God, or His chariot.
4. The Seraphim: continual worshippers of the Lord.
5. The Angels: "angels are created spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence but without physical bodies." (*Systematic Theology, 2nd Edition, Wayne A. Grudem*)
6. Lucifer, the Satan: ruler of this world.
7. Demons: "evil fallen angels who have sinned against God and who now continually work evil in the world." (*Grudem, op. cit.*)

Throughout Scripture we learn that before Satan tempted Eve in the Garden, a third of the angels, under the leadership of Lucifer, sinned and rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven to the earth/hell. (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6) Authority over this world was given to mankind by God, but we surrendered that authority to Satan when we sinned, and rebelled against God, and became captives to sin and death. Now the battle has moved to earth, where our Creator Father God initiated a rescue of mankind and set to establish the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth.

The mission of Jesus was to secure our rescue, by satisfying the absolute justice and righteousness of God, freeing us by paying our ransom by His sacrificial death on the cross. We now can stand justified by the shed innocent blood of Jesus, which covers us by faith in Him. The Spiritual War is won, but the battle continues. The doors of His

(Concluded on page 4)

Bucyrus Piano Teacher Celebrates Five Decades of Teaching Crawford County Now *ERIN SMITH (6-29-22)*

Ed.'s Note:

Thanks to all who commented on this article online and who said; "Put this in TrailNotes!" Erin Smith is a staff writer for CCN and a good friend of one of my student families. The painting behind the piano was done by our elder, Matt Godsil, soon after Amazing Grace House was built. DK



BUCYRUS—Mrs. Donna Kurtz has been teaching piano lessons in Bucyrus since 1969. Recently, the question was posed to her: How many students has she had in 53 years of teaching in Bucyrus? She took a moment to ponder this and, with a light laugh, said, "Oh, I have no idea!" (*I have since checked: it has been 600-650*).

It is not outside the realm of possibility that her former and present piano students number in the hundreds. At one time, she was teaching 31 students, which is the most she had ever had at once. Currently, she has 13 students, and she is now seeing second generation students coming through her studio.

Kurtz is a woman of many talents. Not only is she a wife, mother, grandmother, singer, a trained pianist, and flautist, but she also compiled a hymnal entitled "My Lips Shall Praise Thee" in 1976. During our interview in her cozy library, she rose to her feet to take two copies of the hymnal off of a bookshelf. It is no surprise that a woman who has dedicated her life to music would also have classical music playing softly in the background of her home and meaningful sayings and Bible verses painted ornately on the walls.

As she handed over a special leatherbound version of her hymnal, she explained, "We had a typewriter which we borrowed from someone that actually typed the music." This is quite a feat, given that this hymnal was compiled long before computers and the internet. She paused when asked how she conquered such a project. "At the dining room table!" she said with a laugh.

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Bucyrus Piano Teacher...(continued from page 2.)

Where It All All Began

Her love of music started young. As an only child growing up outside of Chicago, Illinois, she was immersed into music from the very beginning. “My parents were singers on WLS in Chicago for many years. I was in a musical family,” she said. Her parents were dedicated in finding her the very best piano teacher. By the age of 17, she made her debut at Orchestra Hall in Chicago under the direction of conductor, Desiré Defauw. She played Konzertstück in F Minor by Carl Maria von Weber.

Following in the footsteps of her parents, Kurtz also stepped into a staff musician role as a singer for WMBI Chicago in 1954—a position her church organist secured for her. “I said I thought that sounded like fun. You were given the music about 10 minutes before you were on the radio.” Almost no rehearsal...just be able to sight read.

After high school, she pursued her Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin Conservatory. It was there that she met John Kurtz. “He said I smiled at him coming out of the treasurer’s office,” she laughed. Within just a few days, he had tracked her down, and they became inseparable. He was a junior to her sophomore. He then got his medical degree at Johns Hopkins University. During this time, she spent a year in Salzburg, Austria, studying at The Mozarteum. She also performed 300 concerts across Europe with a quartet. She returned to the U.S. and earned her master’s degree at Peabody Conservatory.

Moving to Crawford County

After they were married, they lived in Columbus for a short time as John took his residency and fellowship training at The Ohio State University. His family had roots in Crawford County, so they decided to move to Bucyrus. Along with raising their four children there, he practiced internal medicine, hematology, and oncology, and she built her piano studio. Kurtz is not sure when she decided to pursue music as an occupation. “I don’t think there was ever a conscious decision that I was going to be a piano teacher,” she said. It is just part of who she is.

Kurtz’s Music Studio Success

Over the years, Kurtz’s students have gone on to have many achievements along with over \$1.1 million in college music scholarships. She is involved with the Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto, as a Legacy Examiner, Ohio Music Teachers Association as a Permanently Certified Teacher, Ohio Federation of Music Clubs as an Adjudicator, and judge for the National Guild of Piano Teachers. She is also a trained teacher for the Suzuki Association. During her time teaching, Kurtz continued to play about 350 concerts all over the world.

At the end of our time together, Kurtz showed me where she teaches. Her studio is a large area with an impressive 7-foot Baldwin grand piano anchored in the middle of the room. At times her students give private recitals for their families.

A special treat has been to see students become piano teachers, composers, arrangers, performers, building on what they learned early in life.

Above the piano hangs a Swedish sign that embodies Kurtz and her passion for music, teaching, and life itself. Translated, it says: “Do what you love, and love what you do.”

(used by permission)

A Sneak Peak!

JOHN KURTZ



Are you aware of the significant controversy over one letter in the Hebrew of Psalm 22:16?



Did you know that when the Jews roasted their Passover lambs back in 33 AD they were placed on a cross-like spit? I was previously unaware of both facts and their significance for Christians. Unaware, that is, until I read a recent book covering the events, persons, and details of the week leading up to the crucifixion.

Due to space limitations in this month’s *Trailnotes* issue, I found that all I could squeeze in was this “teaser.” Be sure to get and read your copy of the September issue to learn more about this well-written book, “*The Crucifixion of the King of Glory*.”

Spiritual Warfare *(concluded)*

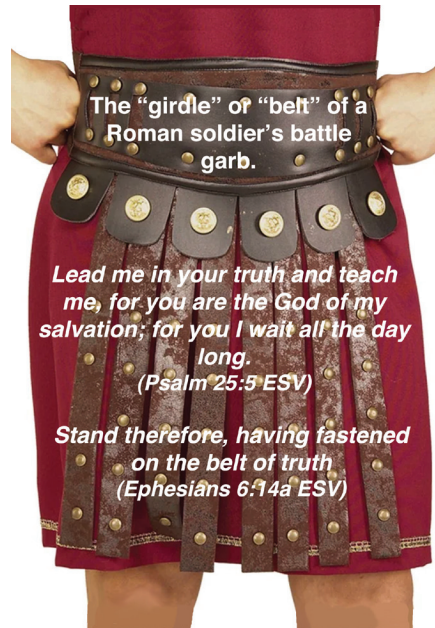
Church are open to this day, so the captives, right now, can be set free.

Yes, the battles still continue. We are justified by the death of Jesus. But now we have a purpose after justification. We are now being sanctified, set apart for the special purpose of proclaiming the truth about our God, while at the same time, conforming to the character of His Son, Jesus. We have work to do, and the adversary knows that. He is doing everything he can to frustrate our participation in God's rescue of those who do not yet know Him. Satan's strategy for this is to deceive believers. Just as the serpent whispered into Eve's ear, "Did God really say...?" Satan wants to erode and twist the truth about who God is. In doing so, we become hesitant, doubting and timid. That is his goal for us, and that is the basis of the spiritual warfare we find ourselves in, whether we believe it or not.

Paul tells us that as believers, we have been provided with a set of armor and weaponry for spiritual battle. But it is not like the weaponry of fleshly battle. The first article of armor we are to pick up is the belt of truth, the Truth of God. Every other article of the armor is secured upon this first one. Where do we find the Truth of God? — in His Word!

We all have thoughts throughout each day, some from our own mind and heart, some from the enemy, or from the world (his domain). We get thoughts from places we thought we could trust. But can we, or should we, trust them? Remember, our struggle is not against flesh and blood. We read in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not

of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."



How can we know where our thoughts come from? Submit your thoughts to the Truth of God. Wearing the belt of Truth involves realizing that truth is fundamentally God-based knowledge—His viewpoint on a matter, containing three principles:

- Truth is comprised of information and facts, but it also includes God's original intent, making it the absolute, objective standard by which reality is measured.
- Truth has already been predetermined by God.
- Truth must resonate internally in order to have any validity externally.

By presenting our thoughts to the Lord, seeking His will, and trusting in His viewpoint on any thought we may have—this is what putting on the belt of Truth is when we find ourselves engaged in the spiritual battles of today.

AUGUST 2022

- 3** Biblical Doctrine Class, Chpts. 27-28, 6:00 to 8:00 pm.
- 4** Women of Grace Bible Study and Prayer. 9:00-10:00 am.
- 5-7** Family Camping Weekend. Begins Fri. 4:00 pm.
- 7** Elder Jerry Mathias preaching, II Corinthians 11:1-15.
- 12-14** "She Loves Me" Fri. and Sat. 7 pm, Sun. 2:30 pm. Grace Youth Production Co.
- 14** Pastor Eric Byrom preaching, II Corinthians 11:16-12:10.
- **17** Biblical Doctrine Class, Chpts. 29-30, 6:00 to 8:00 pm.
- 20** (No Men's Prayer Breakfast until September!)
- 21** Pastor Eric Byrom preaching, II Corinthians 12:11-21.
- 27** Community Celebration, 5:30 to 8:00 pm.
- 28** Pastor Eric Byrom preaching, II Corinthians 13:1-14.
- **31** Biblical Doctrine Class, Chpts. 31-32, 6:00 to 8:00 pm.

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Eric Byrom Presiding Elder / Pastor
Jadae Fox Elder
Matt Godsil Elder
Andy Heining Elder
Jerry Mathias Elder

(A complete list of church functionaries will return next month)