

Not by Might – Part 1

Today we are kicking off a series on spiritual warfare, a series that we are calling ***Not by Might***.

There will be times in your life in which you encounter situations that you cannot overcome using human strength and human intellect. And the reason those situations cannot be overcome with human strength and human intellect is because the forces behind those situations are not human; they are spiritual. Therefore, it's important that you and I learn how to engage in spiritual warfare.

For several years I've been a part of a small group that meets every Thursday Morning, here at the church, for prayer. We pray for any requests that have come in and then we walk through the sanctuary praying over the church body. After prayer we go eat breakfast together. The group meets every Thursday at 7:30.

A few years back, I skipped out on breakfast. I had a busy day planned so I stayed back. When I got to my office and sat down, I heard what sounded like a wild animal coming from somewhere in the building. I couldn't tell what it was, but I could tell it was big, it was loud, and it had a deep deep growl.

Then this growl turned into a voice and this voice began cursing God and saying terrible things about Jesus. I knew that somehow, someone was in the building with me. I got up from my desk and started looking for the person behind this voice.

At the end of our office hallway there's a door that exits the building onto a metal staircase. Curled up in a ball was a little frail lady. She probably weighed 90 pounds. She was naked and rolled up in one of our rubber door mats. She looked like Smigel from Lord of the Rings. She was sound asleep.

While she laid there asleep, these voices were coming out of her. I watched her for about a minute. I tried to wake her up, but she was out, possibly drug induced. But when I began to take authority over those demons, she came awake, and she ran. I haven't seen her since.

1 John 3:8

For this purpose the Son of God appeared, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

I don't share that story with you to freak you out.

I share that story with you because it was a reminder to me, that we are at war. There is a devil who wants to steal, kill and destroy your life!

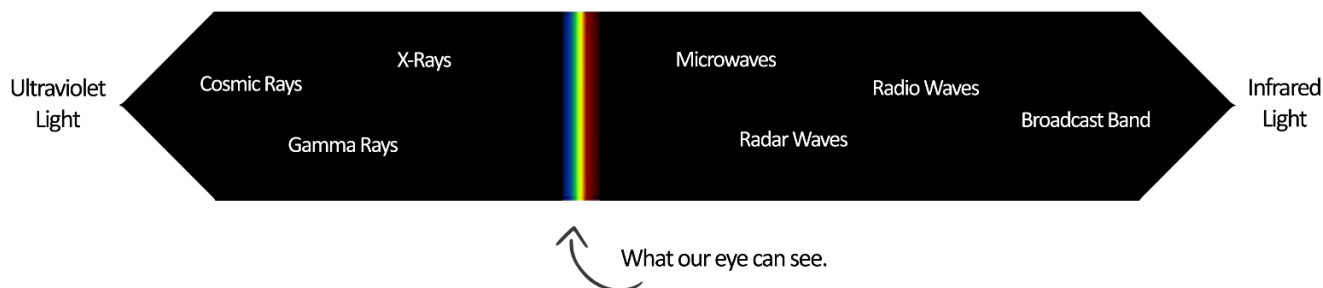
I want you to write this statement down.

We only see very little of what's going on around us.

That's not just a faith statement; that's a scientific fact, and I will show you that in just a second.

200 years ago, all we knew was what we could see with our natural eyes. Then ultraviolet light and infrared light were discovered. Since then, we have come to realize that we only see a very small portion of what's going on around us. I want to show you an illustration then I'll unpack the illustration.

Show pic.



This is an illustration of what we currently understand about the light spectrum, or what we understand about what's going on around us. On one side of the spectrum, you have cosmic rays, gamma rays and x-rays. On the other side of the spectrum, you have microwaves, radar waves, radio waves and broadcasting waves.

According to NASA research, the human eye can only see 35 thousandths of 1% (.0035%) of what's going on around us.

My Dad and the TV antenna.

2 Kings 6:8-17 NLT

When the king of Aram was at war with Israel, he would confer with his officers and say, “We will mobilize our forces at such and such a place.” ⁹ But immediately Elisha, the man of God, would warn the king of Israel, “Do not go near that place, for the Arameans are planning to mobilize their troops there.” ¹⁰ So the king of Israel would send word to the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he would be on the alert there.

¹¹ The king of Aram became very upset over this. He called his officers together and demanded, “Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?”

¹² “It’s not us, my lord the king,” one of the officers replied. “Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!” ¹³ The king commanded, “Go and find out where he is so I can send troops to seize him.”

And the report came back: “Elisha is at Dothan.” ¹⁴ So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city. ¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. “Oh, sir, what will we do now?” the young man cried to Elisha.

¹⁶ “Don’t be afraid!” Elisha told him. “For there are more on our side than on theirs!” ¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes and let him see!” The Lord opened the young man’s eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.

The lesson we learn from this story is that there is more going on around you than what you can see with your natural eye.

The reason we’re doing this series is because I know that we are at war.

I have seen where ACCH is going over the next 2 years.

I’ve seen the growth that’s coming.

Don't think for a second that the devil will sit back and let us take ground without a fight.

We are at war.

So I'm going to close with four simple instructions:

1. Guard your mind.

Some of you have been battling a war in your head.

You've battled fear.

Condemnation.

Shame.

Self-doubt.

Don't internalize the enemy's lies.

What's the solution?

Get in God's word. Speak it. Say it. Declare it until you believe it!

2. Guard your heart.

In this season, the enemy will look for ways to get between you and your family.

Between you and your spouse.

He will look for ways to get between you and your church family.

Between you and your coworker.

Between you and your employer.

Guard your heart.

What's the solution?

Pray.

Let not a root of bitterness spring up and defile your heart and the heart of others.

Keep communication open.

Strive to live at peace with all people and run from those who stir up trouble.

Not by Might – Part 2

Last week, we kicked off a new series on spiritual warfare, a series that we are calling ***Not by Might***.

Why are we doing a series on declaring war?

The answer is simple; you are in one whether you realize it or not.

I'm sure all of us have known someone who was battling an illness long before they were.

They were in a battle long before the diagnosis.

Some were in a battle for months or even years, and they didn't know it.

Today I want to talk to you about the battle of compromise.

I heard a story about a man who wanted to lose weight, so he started a strict diet. On the third morning of his diet, he passed by a donut shop on his way to a meeting. He thought about how nice it would be to start his day eating a doughnut and drinking a cup of coffee.

On a normal day he wouldn't think twice about it, but since he was on a diet he decided to pray. He said, "Lord, if it's your will for me to have a donut, just this one time, let there be an open parking spot directly in front of the building. If there is one, that will be my sign that it's your will." He said, "Wouldn't you know it, after circling the building 15 times sure enough there was an open parking space."

The moral of the story is that we're good at justifying the things we struggle with.

I want to look at a story from Joshua 7. The story revolves around a man by the name of Achan. His name is easy to remember because when his sin caught up with him, his behind was “achin.” See what I did there?

The story covers three chapters of the book of Joshua: chapters 6, 7 and 8. Let me paint the picture for you.

The Hebrew people had lived in Egyptian bondage for over 400 years.

They came out under the leadership of Moses.

They wandered through the wilderness for 40 years.

Moses passed away and God raised up a young leader by the name of Joshua to lead in Moses’ place.

Joshua led God’s people through the Jordan and into the promised land.

In order to possess that land, they had to overcome 31 nations.

The first city they had to conquer was the city of Jericho.

God told the people that everything of value within the walls of Jericho belonged to Him.

It was a type of the tithe.

They were to give to God the spoil of the first city.

They could take anything they wanted from the remaining 30 cities, but the first belonged to God.

In Joshua 7, a man by the name of Achan, took a few costly items from the spoil of Jericho.

He dug a hole in the ground beneath his tent, and he buried the items where no one could see them.

Israel won the battle of Jericho but because of Achan’s sin, they lost the next battle.

Joshua knew something was wrong and Achan’s sin was exposed.

Joshua 7:20-21

Achan replied, “It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: 21 When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

Lesson #1: Never trade the immediate for the important.

Let me say it this way: Never compromise what you need most for what you want now.

- What you and I need most is peace with God.
- What you and I need most is a clean heart before God and one another.
- What you and I need most is a good reputation and godly character.

Let me ask you a question.

- What good is a new robe if you can't wear it?
- He buried it in the ground!
- He took a beautiful thing and made it dirty.
- That's what the world does.
- Achan couldn't wear it.
- He couldn't enjoy it.
- If he did wear it everyone would know where it came from.
- His wife would be like, "When and where did you get that?"
- What good is a new robe if you can't wear it?

As foolish as Achan's decision was, we've all been there. At some point in our lives, we've compromised.

As long as you compromise with the things you battle with, you will stay bound.

Lesson #2: You cannot change until you confront what's holding you back. Transformation begins with confrontation.

Achan's decision cost not only him, but everyone around him. Because of Achan's sin, two terrible things happened:

1. They lost the next battle, and 36 men died.

Joshua 7:12, Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies... It's hard to stand against the enemy when you don't know how you stand with God.

2. Achan's entire family also died because of his sin

Lesson #3: **Our choices impact others.**

Our decisions are never only about us. What you go through is never just about you. God told Adam, "The day you eat of that tree, you will die." Adam probably thought, "OK, I'm going to eat. I'm not hurting anyone but myself. This can't possibly affect anyone else." Little did Adam know, the day he ate, everything began to die. There are stars dying in the universe because of Adam's choice.

In 2009, **Tiger Woods** was caught in a major sex scandal.

Women he had slept with were coming out of the woodworks.

Every news station and tabloid was covering the story.

His decisions immediately cost him **\$22 million in lost endorsements.**

But it cost the stockholders of those companies even more.

Collectively, **it cost those stockholders \$12 billion.**

That means **those people lost 500 times more what he lost.**

Our choices impact everyone around us.

The Boat Plug: Little things make a big difference.

James 1:12

Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Lesson #4: You always trade something of greater value when you compromise.

Achin had not taken what he took, he could have had his portion of the spoils of 30 nations.

God has your best in mind.

Is there an area where you've comprised?

Sexually?

Financially?

On the job?

At home?

Not by Might – Part 3

Last week, we kicked off a new series on spiritual warfare, a series that we are calling ***Not by Might***. In preaching on spiritual warfare, I could easily start off with one of the many stories in which Jesus cast a demon out of someone.

Did you know that 2/3 of Jesus ministry consisted of setting people free from demonic strongholds?

Some suggest there are over fifty stories in the Gospels where Jesus cast a demon out of someone.

I don't know how accurate that is, I've never counted them.

I could tell my own stories of confronting demonic activity in someone's life.

But it's been my experience that the enemy usually works in a more subtle way.

So today, I want to talk about winning the battle of unrealistic expectations.

Now I'm a person who lives with great expectation.

I have seen God do great things in my life, and I continue to believe He will do great things in my life.

However, I also realize that nothing comes easy.

Everything worth anything in life is uphill all the way.

Do you know why most marriages end in divorce? Two words: unrealistic expectations.

Every young man thinks when he gets married his wife is going to throw herself at him every night.

That aint going to happen.

Every young lady thinks she's going to wake up every morning to roses and love notes.

That aint going to happen either.

The biggest challenge every small business owner has during their first year of business is unrealistic expectations. Often the greater the dream, the more unrealistic the expectations are.

One of the biggest struggles people have when they're new to the faith is unrealistic expectations. Life isn't always a playground, sometimes it's a battleground.

So let's talk today about winning the battle of unrealistic expectations.

Judges 7:7-15

The Lord told Gideon, "With these 300 men I will rescue you and give you victory over the Midianites. Send all the others home." ⁸ So Gideon collected the provisions and rams' horns of the other warriors and sent them home. But he kept the 300 men with him.

The Midianite camp was in the valley just below Gideon. ⁹ That night the Lord said, "Get up! Go down into the Midianite camp, for I have given you victory over them!" ¹⁰ But if you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant. ¹¹ Listen to what the Midianites are saying, and you will be greatly encouraged. Then you will be eager to attack."

So Gideon took his servant and went down to the edge of the enemy's camp. ¹² The armies of Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east had settled in the valley like a swarm of locusts. Their camels were like grains of sand on the seashore—too many to count! ¹³ Gideon crept up just as a man was telling his companion about a dream.

The man said, "I had this dream, and in my dream a loaf of barley bread came tumbling down into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent, turned it over, and knocked it flat!" ¹⁴ His companion answered, "Your dream can mean only one thing—God has given Gideon, the Israelite, victory over Midian and all its allies!"

¹⁵ When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship before the Lord.

Did you know that God is always talking about you behind your back?

I want that to sink in for a moment.

I said, “God is always talking about you behind your back.”

Gideon was thinking, “How can I win this battle when there’s only 300 of us and there’s a million of them?” But he didn’t realize that behind his back God was talking to his enemies in dreams and visions and over campfire conversations.

You see, the Bible says that we see through a glass dimly.

In other words, you don’t see the big picture.

You only see what’s right in front of you.

You don’t know what God is up to in your life right now.

Look at your neighbor and tell them, “God has been talking about you behind your back.”

I don’t know how many theater people we have in the crowd but in theater there’s moments of intermission, they’re called “curtain call” moments.

During a curtain call, those big red curtains come together and the lights come up.

It might seem like the production is over the story has come to an end.

But something is happening behind the curtain.

People usually give up right before their breakthrough.

I want you to do something right now.

Right now, go ahead and give yourself permission to quit.

But don’t quit during a curtain call.

Never quit when you’re in a storm.

Don’t quit when it’s hard.

Wait until the storm passes.

Never quit when you're in a valley, wait until you're back on the mountain top.

Weeping may endure for the night but joy comes in the morning!

I have a word for someone this morning. You're discouraged. It's been harder than you expected. You're thinking about quitting. But God is having conversations about you that you don't hear or see. Be not weary in well doing, you will reap a harvest if you don't give up!

Robert's Story

Not by Might – Part 4

We are in a series on spiritual warfare, a series that we are calling ***Not by Might***.

In **Ephesians 6**, we are reminded that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces. That's why we're told to put on the full armor of God.

In **1 Timothy 1:18** Paul instructs Timothy to "wage a good warfare."

In **1 Timothy 6:12** he says, "Fight the good fight of faith lay hold on eternal life."

In **2 Timothy 2:3** we are told to, "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

You and I are in a battle whether we realize it or not.

And many people today don't even believe there's an actual devil.

A new nationwide survey of adults, conducted by The Barna Research Group, suggests that Americans who consider themselves to be Christian have a diverse set of beliefs, many of those beliefs contradict Scripture. Four out of ten Christians (40%) say they do not believe in the devil.

2 Corinthians 4:4

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Today I want to talk about one of the greatest battles of our time. It's a battle against what the Bible calls **"The Spirit of Antichrist."**

Now when we hear antichrist, we tend to think... end times, mark of the Beast, Armageddon.

But we are told in **1 John 4:3** that the spirit of antichrist is already at work in the world.

- The spirit of antichrist is just what it sounds like.
- It's the demoralization of society.
- You know the spirit of antichrist is at work when there's a cultural attack on biblical principles.
- One famous Hollywood director was asked, "What does it take to make a movie successful?"
- He said, "It has to break at least three of the ten commandments."

In 1960 a new television show rocked the nation. It was controversial because the main character was often shown drinking alcohol and he and his wife slept in the same bed. That show was the Flintstones. And in 1960 that cartoon was controversial.

In January of 1957, Elvis Presley appeared on The Ed Sullivan Show. During his performance viewers only saw him from the waist up. Producers at CBS said his dance moves were not family friendly.

In the US today, by the time a child reaches the age of 18, they will have watched on Television over 40,000 murders, 200,000 beatings, and countless sexual encounters.

Ephesians 6:10-15

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **stand** against the wiles of the devil.

¹² 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*.

¹³ 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...

As followers of Jesus Christ, you and I are instructed to stand. When the whole world is flooded with ungodliness, you and I are instructed to take a stand.

Growing up, I used to watch a show on TV called Candid Camera. The show debuted on August 10, 1948. Now I'm not that old, the show had 38 seasons. Here's how the show worked: producers would place hidden cameras in common everyday places, then they created a strange scenario and the world got to watch how they responded.

In 1962, an episode aired that shocked the world. An unexpected person would enter an elevator, and that person would do what every person does, the person walked in, they turned around, and they faced the front of the elevator. But then another person (a cast member) would step on the elevator and not turn around. Instead of turning to the front, they faced the back. Then a second and third person would board the elevator and they too would face the back. Cameras would catch the victim looking around in confusion wondering what was going on. When a fourth person got on the elevator facing the wrong way, the victim would always, without fail turn and face the wrong way. The peer-pressure was too much.

It wasn't just one person who did this. This happened over and over with multiple unexpected people.

Listen to me guys, if everyone in your life is facing the wrong direction, you don't have to turn. You stay faithful!

If everyone is facing the wrong way, you put your shoulders back and say, "God is doing something special in my life. My life's going to please the Lord. There's a God-given purpose on my life. He's going to use me in a great way. There's a calling on my life."

You don't have to be like everybody else.

As a matter of fact, you're here today, it's because your different.

Now let me make sure we're all on the same page about a few things.

We love people right where they are.

And we do so because Jesus loves people right where they are.

Jesus loves you where you are and as you are.

And if you give your life to Him, He will receive you right where you are.

But He loves you too much to leave you where you are.

