

Kingdom Conflict

Series: The Kingdom Project

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We are continuing in our series, *The Kingdom Project*. And so far in this series, we have talked about:

- What the Kingdom is...
- Why seeking the Kingdom of God is important and should be the ultimate priority of our life...
- Having a Kingdom heart based off the Beatitudes that Jesus mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount...
- And last week, we talked about what it looks like to bring people into the Kingdom...

The direction we're headed this week and the title of the message today is: **Kingdom Conflict**

Let me just say this, and I say it as a warning to everyone that is listening to this message and following us in this series.

Illus. Warning: Have you ever seen those commercials on TV that encourage you to ask your doctor for a certain kind of medicine that's hitting the market, and at the end of the message, there is a vocal warning and maybe even some fine print at the bottom of the screen that says something to the effect of: "Don't take if you have this or that...or this may cause...and it goes on to give a long list of side effects – I always think after those commercials, I think, "Rather than chance it, I think I'll just live with what I got!"

Well, here is a warning, I want everyone to hear regarding living the Kingdom life. It's the fine print if you will for signing on and making the decision to be a kingdom citizen. The warning is this:

- If you live with the Kingdom at the center of your priorities...
- If you foster a kingdom heart that we talked about a few weeks ago...
- If you are committed to bring people into the kingdom...
- And as we will talk about the next two weeks if you discover your kingdom purpose that God has designed specifically for you...

The warning is there is a kingdom of darkness that is going to work overtime to distract you...to discredit you...to discourage you...and to disqualify you!

If you get serious about advancing the Kingdom of God, you better get serious about engaging in some spiritual warfare because there are two rival kingdoms at play - a kingdom of light and a kingdom of darkness.

Now, just a couple of points up front about this Kingdom Conflict.

1. We are in a real battle.

I use the word, “battle” intentionally and strategically here. See, the war has been won. The war for our soul and the future kingdom to come was taken care of and solidified at Calvary and in the Garden Tomb.

At the moment of calling on the name of the Lord, the Bible teaches:

Col. 1:13-14– “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

At that moment, while the ultimate war was won, spiritual battles began. And our Enemy (who we will talk about in just a moment) is working to frustrate God’s people, thwart God’s purposes and prevent God’s Kingdom from advancing.

We are in a VERY real battle!

E.M. Bounds (attorney and author mid to late 1800’s) - **“It cannot be said too often that the life of a Christian is warfare, an intense conflict, a lifelong contest. It is a battle fought against invisible foes who are ever alert and seeking to entrap, deceive, and ruin the souls of men. The Bible calls men to life, not a picnic or holiday. It is no pastime or pleasure excursion. It entails effort, wrestling, and struggling. It demands putting out the full energy of the spirit in order to frustrate the foe and come out, at last more than a conqueror. It is no primrose path, no rose-scented flirting. From start to finish, it is war.”**

And listen: Just because we can’t see this war being waged around us, does not mean it doesn’t exist.

Illus. Gravity, Electricity, Gas – you can’t see these things, but they are there! (Virginia home). We are in a real battle.

2. We have a real enemy.

Eph. 6:12 – “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

These rulers and authorities report to the fallen angel, Satan. He is known in the scripture as the “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). He is “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). He is the “prince of darkness”, and is over the forces that rule and reign this kingdom of darkness.

Satan is NOT a figment of our imagination. He is not just some invisible spirit like some ghost or goblin. He is NOT a force, but instead is a real being out, according to John 10:10 to “steal, kill and destroy.”

We are in a real battle...we have a real enemy...

3. We are a real target

If you are not saved...if you don't know Jesus in a personal way, his goal is to keep it that way! And so, he will throw up every barrier he can to keep you from the knowledge of truth. He'll do whatever he can to keep you spiritually blind. You are not a problem to him – you a part (regardless if you're actively a part of it or not) of the kingdom of darkness and he wants to keep it that way.

If you ARE saved...if you are a citizen of the Kingdom, well this is when the spiritual battles really begin. As a child of God, Satan puts a target on your chest!

He can't get to God, so, what's the next best thing? His children...those who “represent him”...those who are a mixture of heaven on earth – they have God in them...those who are bent on advancing his will...his work...his kingdom on earth.

And so, for ALL of our life, we are in a spiritual battle and Satan and his demonic army is going to work like crazy to confuse God's purposes and plans and mess with God's people.

It's Kingdom Conflict. And so, what are we to do? What is our response?

I want to give it to you in one word: **PRAYER**

In Ephesians chapter six, we are given a picture of a soldier wearing what we refer to as the armor of God. And what I want you to notice is at the very end of Paul's description, he mentions our offensive weaponry – most all the other gear is defensive weaponry.

The only offensive weapon we have is (Eph. 6:17) the word of God, which is the sword of the Lord and look at how Paul continues his train of thought in (v. 18) – Prayer is both an offensive and defensive weapon, the Lord has placed at our disposal.

Eph. 6:18 - “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.”

The beauty of this weapon called prayer, is that we never run out of ammo. As long as we are breathing, we can be praying. And with every prayer we lift up...it's just like throwing a grenade against the Enemy.

You want to get rid of Satan...you want to fight and win...you want to say ‘no’ to temptation and ‘yes’ to God...you want to advance the kingdom? PRAY.

Pray Consistently...Pray continually...Pray. Pray. Pray. At all times! There is NEVER a bad time to pray! I told you a few weeks ago that prayer is like water from above, and just as water softens the ground, it's water that softens our heart to God's voice.

- We are to pray "at all times" – this is a "praying without ceasing" that Paul writes about in (1 Thess 5:17)...
- We are to pray in the Spirit – which alludes to the fact we are walking in step with the Spirit and sensitive to his leading and his voice in our lives...
- We are to pray "with all prayer"...

Commentator, **David Guzik**: "**The idea is *all kinds of prayer or prayer upon prayer*. We should use every kind of prayer we can think of. Group prayer, individual prayer, silent prayer, shouting prayer, walking prayer, kneeling prayer, eloquent prayer, groaning prayer, constant prayer, fervent prayer — *just pray*."**

When it comes to Kingdom Conflict, there is ONE "MUST" if we desire to live victoriously and advance the Kingdom of God, and that is prayer!

And don't think for a second that the Devil doesn't know how powerful prayer is...how important prayer is. It's why he will do anything and everything he can to stop us from praying!

Samuel Chadwick (Methodist pastor early 1900's) - "**The one concern of the Devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.**"

Illus. LSB – laziness, selfishness, busyness

Prayer does a number of things for us as it relates to the Kingdom Conflict.

1. Praying helps us stay focused

Now, let me begin by defining prayer for those that want a definition. I define it as relationship. It's more than a conversation...I've heard it defined as communion with God.

It's you speaking to God, and allowing God to speak to you by his word and through his Spirit.

Prayer was a HUGE part of Jesus's life. Before any MAJOR moment in the life of Jesus, he would break away to pray:

- Before he called the disciples, he stayed all night in prayer.
- Before he began his earthly ministry he spent 40 days in fasting and prayer.
- Before his betrayal and arrest, he was in the garden praying.

Illus. Mount Desolate – It wasn't just the BIG moments though! In my book, *The Mountains Are Calling...*

The prayer life of Jesus was so intriguing to the disciples that they came to him one day...listen to this:

Luke 11:1-2 – “Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” (They had witnessed his prayer life in an up close and personal way and wanted to know the secret. They had grown up praying, but evidently the way Jesus prayed was quite different than the way they were taught...what they had experienced growing up) ² **And he said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.”**

This is what we know as the Lord's Prayer. The Sermon on the Mount...which is ALL about the Kingdom Life (I think January of next year, we may do an entire series on the Sermon on the Mount – don't hold me to it! But we may!) Listen to Jesus's teaching on prayer.

Matt. 6:5-10 – “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Notice how the Lord's Prayer begins...it's all about FOCUS. It's all about PERSPECTIVE.

- “Our Father in heaven...” - there is separation! He is a caring Father, but distinct.
- “Hallowed be your name” – this is honor and worship. He is worthy.
- “Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” – there it is! This is what I call Kingdom praying!

? - How is God's will done in heaven right now?

A: Perfectly. Completely. Immediately.

And what Jesus is teaching his disciples here is that Kingdom praying focuses the mind and heart on what is MOST important. It's about God...and his will being done...it's about bringing his Kingdom to earth – this us of FIRST importance and should be the FOREMOST concern we have.

And praying this way ensures that we have the right focus. Think about it! The essence of sin is removing God from the center. This kind of praying is putting God back into his proper place! It's reminding ourselves and making ourselves aware that our lives should be revolving around him AND we should be living this Kingdom life that gives people a foretaste of the future kingdom to come – that's "your kingdom come praying!"

? – Could it be you are not as focused on the kingdom as you should be because you are not praying the way Jesus taught?

Are all your prayers mostly self-directed prayers? Which listen, aren't bad! The Lord's prayer mentions praying for your daily bread...asking the Lord for provision. Praying for protection over temptation.

Jesus teaches us to pray for our needs, BUT the driving force behind prayer should not be self-focused – that's "my kingdom come" praying. Kingdom praying is a focus asking God to get us on his agenda, NOT asking God to get on our agenda.

Prayer helps us stay focused and centered on what God wants MOST and what's MOST important in life...and there is NOTHING more important than the advance of God's kingdom on earth – praying...proper kingdom praying reinforces this.

His kingdom will NEVER be a priority to us apart from kingdom-focused prayer. There are too many other things that will vie for our attention and allegiance. Prayer helps us stay focused – it's about him! "You're Kingdom come..."

2. Prayer helps us stay fighting

If the beginning of the Lord's prayer has to do with focus or perspective, the end of it has to do with protection.

Matt. 6:13 – “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Prayer is what helps us stay fighting. It's what causes us not to let our guard down. Again, we are in a real battle, with a real enemy and we are a real target.

Do you remember the scene in the Garden when Jesus took Peter and James and John with him to pray? Do you remember what happened?

Jesus needed his disciples...those closest to him...his inner circle to pray. And he asks these men to "watch with him". In other words, he asked them to stay on guard and pray – that's what "watching" is...it's waiting and praying!

But three times, Jesus came to them and he found them sleeping. He even tells them in:

Matt. 26:41 – “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

The disciples were tired...and the answer (according to Jesus) to fighting the Enemy and temptation was to pray. Prayer helps us stay engaged and in the fight.

I have a statement that I make about prayer. It's in an old message I preached that I entitled "Warfare Prayer". The statement is simply this:

The quality of our prayer life will be determined by our awareness of the war.

If we were to pull back the curtain and see the invisible battles that were taking place...the battle for our fidelity...the battle for our families...the battle for our faith...

If we could SEE the spiritual warfare taking place RIGHT NOW, I'm telling you the quality of our prayer life would pick up really, really fast!

- Prayer is what gives us spiritual eyes to see these things...
- Prayer is what gives us wisdom and discernment to KNOW when we are being tempted or led down a path that could lead to destruction...
- Prayer is what helps us put on the armor of God so we can fight against the Enemy (explain)...
- Prayer is what allows us to foster that Kingdom heart we talked about a few weeks ago and enables us to live under the rule and reign of Christ each day...
- Prayer is what helps more than anything bring people into the Kingdom of light...
- Prayer as we just mentioned focuses us on the Kingdom and centers us on what is most important...
- Prayer is what gets us the resources of God to help us as we fight to advance the Kingdom...

John Piper – "Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den. God has given us prayer as a wartime walkie-talkie so we can call headquarters for everything we need as the kingdom of God advances in this world."

God has given us prayer so that we could not just fight, but fight well. And listen, as citizens of the Kingdom, we are not fighting FOR victory, but FROM a place of victory. We have the Holy Spirit living in us!

1 John 4:4 – "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in

you is greater than he who is in the world.”

Praying helps us advance against the Enemy! Again, prayer is like a grenade that does incredible damage to the kingdom of darkness and let me just add this. When we fast and pray – that’s going nuclear! That’s spiritual Hiroshima stuff right there!

John Wesley – “Prayer is where the action is.”

O. Hallesby was a Norwegian priest and theologian during World War 2. He was arrested and spent two years in a concentration camp because of his resistance to and his speaking against the Nazi regime. He wrote a book on prayer that was required reading for all mission classes at SWBTS.

“The secret prayer chamber is a bloody battleground. Here violent and decisive battles are fought out. Here the fate for souls for time and eternity is determined, in quietude and solitude.”

It’s true...some battles we face will only be fought and won on the bloody battleground called, prayer.

- Salvation – that’s a battle fought and won in prayer (Eric).
- Spiritual growth – that’s a battle fought and won in prayer.
- Godly marriage – fought and won in prayer.
- Loosening of addictions – fought and won in prayer.
- The direction of our country – will be fought and won in prayer.

Illus. First Sat. prayer – 8:00-9:00 in our chapel

The quality of your prayer life will be determined by the awareness of the war going on around us. And it’s prayer that is our divine protection that allows us to stay fighting.

Illus. First West men’s conference - And BTW – don’t ever out your guard down! (David). And this leads to the final point I want to make about prayer.

1. Prayer helps us stay focused
2. Prayer helps us stay fighting
3. **Prayer helps us stay faithful**

One of my favorite chapters in all of the Bible is John 15. I love the chapter because when Jesus wanted to make a point, he’d repeat himself. If you are ever reading your Bible and you see a word repeated more than once, that’s a “red alert” to pay attention – there is a point being made...that repetition is about emphasis!

Well, in John 15 in the first 11 verses, Jesus uses the word (depending upon the translation you have!) “abide” or “remain” 9x. It’s an important word.

And what he teaches in that chapter is that if we will remain or abide “in Christ” and we do this through prayer.

Illus. Phone cord - It’s like your phone cord. If your phone doesn’t stay connected, it will run out of battery and it won’t work!

The same as true as it relates to prayer. Prayer is what abiding in Christ is. It keeps us connected to him. And what Jesus teaches if we abide in him, we will (v. 5) “bear much fruit” and thus (v. 8) “prove to be his disciples”.

Proof is seen in our perseverance...in us continuing to be “in Christ”. You ask me, “How do I know that you are a believer?” It’s that you persevere to the end. This is a doctrine called the perseverance of the saints. Those who persevere, are those who pray.

If you want to stay faithful to the end...advancing the Kingdom of God to your last breath EVEN in the midst suffering, it will only happen if you pray.

I want to close with one of the same quotes I opened this message with. I began with a warning. If you are a citizen of the Kingdom, then get ready for an onslaught of spiritual battles.

E.M. Bounds: “It cannot be said too often that the life of a Christian is warfare, an intense conflict, a lifelong contest. It is a battle fought against invisible foes who are ever alert and seeking to entrap, deceive, and ruin the souls of men. The Bible calls men to life, not a picnic or holiday. It is no pastime or pleasure excursion. It entails effort, wrestling, and struggling. It demands putting out the full energy of the spirit in order to frustrate the foe and come out, at last more than a conqueror. It is no primrose path, no rose-scented flirting. From start to finish, it is war.”

Kingdom Conflict is a given! And the way we move forward amid the battles we face is to show up every single day, report to our commanding officer (King Jesus), receive his instruction via his word, the Bible and through prayer, we will get God’s help to:

- stay focused (perspective)...
- stay fighting (protection)...
- and stay faithful (persevere)...

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.