

GOSPEL FROM THE WAR FRONT

SERMON SERIES



SHINGIRAYI GWETE

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BIBLE TEXTS

All scriptures quotations, unless otherwise stated, are from the New King James Version, (NKJV).

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Preface

Some things are best explained through the use of illustrations. Jesus, the greatest Teacher of all time, made use of earthly illustrations to explain heavenly things. He used physical examples to drive home spiritual lessons. In one of His parables, He used an illustration of a King who makes preparations and consultations before going to war (Luke 14:31-32). The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:4, that those who are engaged in warfare do not involve themselves in civilian affairs. The Apostle used a war principle to explain a spiritual principle; that those who are serving God should not engage themselves in worldly matters.

The Apostle John also writes in the book of Revelation about a war which happened in heaven. He writes about a dragon which made war with the remnant of the seed of a woman, and also of a beast which made war with the saints (Revelation 12:7, 17; 13:7). In the Bible, since the creation of the first humans (Adam and Eve) in Genesis, through to the end of the Holy book in Revelation, various battles are raging on which can simply be summarised in five words: **WAR BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.**

This book is made up of a series of sermons and lessons which make use of real war stories and probable war scenarios as examples to explain a spiritual war which has been going on since the history of mankind. Make no mistake, this is not fiction, the examples of war used are very real and recorded in history. The spiritual warfare is also real and everyone is very much involved in it.

It is the desire and prayer of the author of this book, that it will help you the dear reader on how to come out a victor in this spiritual war which we are nearing its end.

Be blessed.

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Chapter 1 - It's not over until it's over

Hiroo Onoda was a Japanese soldier who fought in World War II which ended in August 1945. He did not surrender until 29 years later as he thought that the war was still going on. It had to take his former commander to travel from Japan to Lubang Island in the Philippines were Onoda was to convince him that the war had indeed ended. In the early years of his 29-year holdout, he stayed in the mountains with three other soldiers who also thought that the war had not ended and even exchanged gunfire with local cops.

Attempts were made to inform these soldiers that the war had ended but they did not believe it, they thought these messages were coming from the enemy who wanted to deceive them. Four years after the war had ended one of the soldiers: Yuichi Akatsu surrendered. In 1954 one of the 3 who was left by the name of Shoichi Shimada was shot by a search party looking for them and he died leaving 2 soldiers behind. Then in 1972 another soldier Kinshichi Kozuka was shot and killed by local police leaving Hiro Onoda alone. Major Taniguchi had to fly from Japan and meet with Onoda on 9 March 1974 and convinced him that the war was over.

Hiroo and his mates assumed that the war was going on when it was not. This story is the analogy of my sermon which I shall use not as a comparison but as a contrast to what is happening in some people's lives. Some assume that the war is over yet it is still going on. This assumption will lead them to drop their guard because they feel they are in a safe zone when they are not. If you make this mistake and peradventure the enemy confronts you, you will become easy prey because you are defenceless and unprepared.

It's not over until it's over.

Spiritual warfare

I write not about a war of guns and bullets but a spiritual war whose size and effects are greater than all the wars combined that have been fought since the history of mankind. Many wars have come and gone but there is a spiritual war which is not over yet.

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” Revelation 12:7-9

A war broke out in one of the most unlikely places, heaven that is. One of the warring parties was Michael the Archangel of God backed by his angels and the other party was the dragon. The same passage of the Bible which I quoted above goes on to clarify the identity of the dragon to be a serpent called the Devil and Satan. The dragon (Satan) did not fight this war alone but he had the support of his angels. We are not told about the kind of weapons which were used in this warfare, however, we are told of the results and the consequences. The devil and his angels were defeated and kicked out of heaven.

God the Creator made everything perfect without any fault or weakness. In His creation works, He also made angels and being a

God of love, He gave them free-will, the power to choose. He could have created robots which can follow instructions without making their own conscious decisions whether to follow or not to, but that would not be love. So love being the character of God, He gave angels the power to make choices. Of the Angels that were made, there was one angel called Lucifer who occupied a high position above other angels. Lucifer was created perfect (read Ezekiel 28:15) but since he had the power of choice, he started to entertain thoughts of rebellion against God.

He developed pride and wanted to exalt his position so that he could be worshipped by other angels instead of worshipping God (read Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:14-19). In his rebellion, he managed to convince one-third of God's angels to join him. Revelation 12:4 tells us that the dragon (Satan) by his tail drew one-third of the stars of heaven, this is not a literal tail but its symbolic language which means lies. Isaiah 9:15 says the prophet that teaches lies is the tail. Revelation 1:20 tells us that stars are angels, so in simple language, Satan used his lies to gather the support of one-third of angels.

War transferred to this earth

This rebellion is what led to a war being fought in heaven and the subsequent relegation of Satan and his angels to earth which is now the new battlefield. Though the devil no longer occupies his former position, he still has his angelic powers. He is like a soldier who was fired from his job but he still has his fighting skills.

“Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! for the devil has

come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." Revelation 12:12

Those in heaven should rejoice because the devil was kicked out from there and can no longer fight against them. But as he was kicked out from heaven he was thrown onto this planet (earth). Being a defeated foe, he is very angry, not only because of his defeat but also because he has a short time before he will be destroyed completely. A warning is given to us the residents of the earth because the devil has launched his war against us that we may we lose eternal life which God offers to us through Jesus Christ.

The war might have ended in heaven but it's still going on here on earth whether on land or water (even in mid-air). The devil fell together with a third of angels and these fallen angels are also known as demons or evil spirits.

As Satan was cast to this earth, he had a mission which is comprised of three things according to John 10:10, He came to steal, kill and to destroy. The devil is here on earth not in hell as some might think. At one point He was asked by God about where he was coming from and he answered, *"From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it"* (Job 1:7). Satan is here on earth, and 1 Peter 5:8 tells us that he walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

Everyone is involved in this war whether they know it or not, whether they like it or not, everyone is very much involved. Even if some claim that they are just civilians who have no active part to play in this war, they must know that even in physical wars, civilians are

displaced, maimed or even killed. As long as you are a civilian you are at a higher risk of being killed more than the soldiers because you don't have weapons to defend yourself, you don't have the training on how to survive, you cannot seek refuge anywhere because the whole earth is the battlefield. So it's best you take up arms (I talk of spiritual matters) and fight the war.

This war is a war between good and evil. It is a war of allegiance as the devil tries to draw away people from worshipping the true God so that they can serve him instead. Satan wanted to be worshipped in heaven but his mission failed, he still wants to be worshipped by people on earth. Worship is not merely the act of praying but it involves also the issue of obedience, if you follow what God says you are worshipping Him, by the same token if you follow what the devil suggests to you, you are also worshipping him.

1 John 3:8 says *"He who sins is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning"*. Without even uttering a prayer to Satan, you can be aligned to him by sinning (sin is defined by 1 John 3:4 as committing lawlessness).

In our everyday lives, there is a battle going on between good and evil, even in your own thoughts sometimes there seem to be two opposing voices as you are about to commit a sin. One voice which says 'please don't do that' as you are about to break God's law and another voice saying 'go ahead it doesn't matter'. There is a clash of thoughts and sometimes you find yourself doing bad things which you didn't want to do because there is an outside force which leads you to do it and deep inside you know you didn't want to do it.

Satan used to reside in heaven, he knows the good life which exists there & it pains him to know that God has plans to take people there. This jealousy causes him to fight against you so that you don't make it to heaven but rather you join him to the lake of fire which was designed for him and his angels (Matthew 25:41). The devil was kicked out of heaven and goes around preaching bad things about God, things which are not even true at all. He blames God for every disaster and bad things so that those who are ignorant will end up thinking that God is a tyrant who rules by force, yet the Bible tells us God is love.

Why couldn't God just destroy Satan and his angels the moment they rebelled? One can ask that question. Take note, if God had done so, it would have sent a wrong message to other angels who had not rebelled. It would have appeared as if God is cruel and unjust and forces His creation to obey Him without them exercising their free will. The remaining angels could have served God out of fear of being destroyed rather than out of love. Therefore God permitted Satan to continue in existence so that his character may be exposed and God Himself be vindicated.

"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 heavenly places." Ephesians 6:12

Though we exist in flesh and blood, the war that we are in is not physical but spiritual. Our weapons are not physical but are spiritual also. Our enemy is the devil and his angels. This war started in

heaven but it is now here on earth. Will it end? You may wonder, let us consider how it will end in the next chapter.

Chapter 2 - The Lost Battle

In the first chapter of this book, we learnt about a war which started in heaven and was fought by celestial beings. In this chapter, we shall consider another war which happened on planet earth involving humans and is recorded in 1st Kings Chapter 22.

Jehoshaphat the king of Judah visited his counterpart Ahab the king of Israel. While on that trip Ahab asked Jehoshaphat if he could join him in a war he wanted to make against the Syrians to take the land of Ramoth-Gilead from them. Ahab didn't want to fight his battle alone, he wanted to invite Jehoshaphat to join him. Jehoshaphat responded to this invitation with the words: *"I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses. Please inquire for the word of the LORD today."* (1 Kings 22:4).

Hear what God has to say

Though the king of Judah had soldiers under his command, though he had horses to use during the war, he was not content with just going to this fight without first hearing what the word of the Lord had to say about this.

"The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But deliverance is of the LORD". Proverbs 21:31

He knew that though you might have horses prepared and ready for war, though you might have the good soldiers on your side, deliverance (victory) comes from the Lord. So he dared not to venture into the war without first hearing what the word of the Lord

had to say. He wanted to know whether it's going to be an AYE or NAY from The Lord. In all that we do, let us seek to know what the word of God says first before embarking on that thing, lest we do something which is not sanctioned by God or we fail to do what God requires us to do and we end up in sin. Don't just get into things because someone has invited you into it and you have the resources to do so but consult God first, pray to Him, read His word, seek counsel from those who fear God.

Beware of Counterfeits

When Ahab learnt that Jehoshaphat wanted to hear the word of the Lord first before embarking on this battle, he gathered about four hundred prophets. These were not servants of the true Lord who Jehoshaphat had desired to know His word but these were all false prophets. Let us be watchful of the likes of Ahab whom when we desire to hear the word of God they bring to us counterfeits in their numbers to mislead us. To these four hundred false prophets, Ahab asked: *"Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?"* And they are replied from the same page, *"Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king."* (1 Kings 22:6). Imagine four hundred prophets all saying the same thing, you would be tempted to think that they are speaking the truth. It would have been normal to see Jehoshaphat appreciating this good message coming from these prophets, but instead, he says *"Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?"* (1 Kings 22:7).

Wait a minute, what is Jehoshaphat suggesting here? He still wants to hear from the prophet of the Lord yet he has just heard four hundred prophets speak? It's clear, Jehoshaphat is not deceived, he knows very well that these prophets who just spoke are not prophets of the true God hence he wants to hear from a prophet of the true Lord. The numbers did not convince him. No matter how many people might preach lies, no matter how popular they might be, lies remain lies. A lie will not change into truth because it has been preached by many people. Don't follow a lie simply because it is being preached or practised by many people, but follow after the truth no matter how unpopular it might be.

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Matthew 7:13-14

Notice something in the King of Judah's request, *"Is there not still a PROPHET of the LORD here..."*, he uses the word Prophet (singular) and not prophets (plural) meaning that he was going to be satisfied if he was to hear just one true prophet of the Lord than the four hundred fake prophets. Truth is truth though presented by a few and lies are lies even if presented by hundreds. So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, *"There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."* (1 Kings 22:8)

It gets more interesting when other prophets were called in by Ahab. He did not invite one prophet by the name of Micaiah because he

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