

## *The Cross as Spiritual Warfare*

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Jesus' death defeated Satan. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, [he] took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians 2:14–15).

We need to take another look at our spiritual warfare tactics and avail ourselves of our top weapon: the Cross. It was the Cross on which Christ destroyed the devil and set mankind free. It was the Cross upon which the Lord became our Healer. As He Himself was wounded, so could He now heal us of all the wounds caused by dreadful sin—physical wounds and emotional wounds. It is at the Cross that death becomes life and decay becomes immortality. It is at the Cross that shame becomes glory! Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world! James 4:7 instructs us to "resist" the devil, but it also gives us other vital information: he tells us to first submit ourselves unto God. Godly submission is always an act of worship. We resist the devil in godly submission. I Peter 5:9 also says to resist him steadfast in the faith. The Bible does not teach us to go around rebuking and talking to the devil all the time. I like to speak my faith out loud, though, so he will know what I'm thinking, because he cannot read our minds. I resist the devil by speaking out faith and truth. I resist him by obedience to the Word of God. I resist him by submitting myself to God. I resist him by loving and worshipping at the foot of the Cross. The devil cannot remain in the presence of the Lord.

At the foot of the Cross our focus is on Him. I can't imagine that any of the women with Him that day were concerned with grocery lists or personal pain. We can get so caught up in our problems—be it health, money, or relationships—that our focus is on ourselves and those problems, instead of on God. If we focus on self long enough, our hearts will become darkened and carnal—the perfect breeding ground for the enemy to construct a stronghold. During worship, when our attention and focus are on Him and off the self, God can come right on in with the balm of healing!

It is at the Cross that we put on Christ and cast aside our former self. It can be a painful thing, this dying to self, because it is rooting out deeply ingrained patterns that we have held dear for a very long time. This is not something that is done once and for all time. It is something that we must do daily. Paul said, "I die daily" (I Corinthians 15:31). It means repenting every day and keeping alert to what is going on in our thoughts. It means that as soon as we discern something going amiss, we are to repent and go the opposite direction. Often the deep attitudes of our heart hide out for years before manifesting themselves. For example, in Hebrews 12:15, Paul talked about the "root of bitterness" springing up and defiling many. When we entertain dark thoughts about others, when we refuse to forgive those who have hurt us, then bitterness can hibernate in our souls. One day it will spring forth full grown and reap devastation in our lives and the lives of others. Oh, dear one, watch your thoughts carefully! If you find yourself criticizing a person, immediately cut it off and bless that person instead. Turn the ugliness into beauty! Defeat the enemy at his own game!