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The Three Battlegrounds

In the book, *The Three Battlegrounds*, author Francis Frangipane discusses spiritual warfare and indicates three main areas the enemy uses to attack believers: “the battleground of the mind, the battleground of the church, and the battleground of the heavenly places.” He writes about the Armor of Satan and identifies three sources of demonic strongholds: the world, our experiences, and the wrong doctrines. He explains ways to resist demonic attacks and pull-down strongholds Satan exerts over our lives. The evil one is darkness, and (spiritual) darkness is the “absence of God.” Christ is the Light who came to destroy the works of the devil—darkness. God has given Satan legal access to dwell in the domain of darkness. If we live in the dark – absence of God—then Satan will have legal rights. Therefore, we must be light in dark places. If we fail to shine, then Satan prevails.

Frangipane argues that Peter possessed a fearless character and that his denial of Christ Jesus “was satanically induced.” In Luke 22:24, he explains, when Jesus' disciples disputed among themselves as to which one of them was the greatest, “Peter, the “water-walker,” who was also the boldest and most outspoken of the apostles, prevailed,” and “Peter, being lifted up by pride, was being set up for a fall.” Frangipane suggests that Peter's pride gave Satan access to his life, which consequently led to his denying Jesus three times at His arrest. However, I find no real ground in the bible that substantiates this claim. I believe fear overcame Peter in his human

frailty. He was afraid of the fate of his teacher, Jesus, and he feared for his own life. Fear gives the enemy access to our lives. It can paralyze us. In Psalm 143:4 (NLT), David pleads with the Lord, "I am losing all hope; I am paralyzed with fear." After the last supper, in the Garden Gethsemane, Jesus told Peter and His disciples, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" Matthew 26:41(NKJV). Perhaps the disciples, filled from the Passover meal, physically and emotionally tired, could not stay awake to watch and pray, so they fell asleep. Peter's fleshly nature made him weak; he was afraid and could not stand up to the interrogation during Christ's arrest, so he denied Him.

Many problems, even oppression, originate from our carnal nature. The enemy sets up strongholds in our minds that keep us from freely worshipping God. We must seek deliverance from these strongholds. Frangipane states, "repentance precedes deliverance, and deliverance often leads to healing in other areas." If the constitution of one's thoughts has not changed, and one continues in sinful behavior, then deliverance will be temporary, and one's current spiritual condition can be worse than the former. John 5:14 (NKJV) tells us that Jesus, after healing a crippled man at the pool called Bethesda, later finds him at the temple and warns him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." Sin gives Satan legal rights over our lives. There are cases, however, when affliction comes not from our sins nor our parents', "but that the works of God should be revealed" John 9:3 (NKJV). Therefore, God's holy presence must fill our lives so we can be empowered to withstand the deceptive schemes of the enemy.

In my ministry, I have counseled individuals who have not received complete deliverance even after months of prayer and counseling. I discovered there were secret sins in their lives from which they did not truly repent. I believe people with wrong mindsets who continue in

erroneous thinking, often find themselves in the same sinful activities that got them oppressed in the first place. Moreover, the accuser's voice makes them feel guilty and worthless, and they believe they can never overcome their problems. As Frangipane states, "The energies we expend in keeping our sins secret are the actual "materials" of which a stronghold is made." Where there are secret sins, we find demonic strongholds.

For many years I struggled to be freed from the strongholds of cold love, unforgiveness, perfectionism, fear, and pride. I often sought people's approval and acceptance, an evil fortress created from my childhood rejection and abuse. I was burden with guilt and shame, which made me easily offended by others. Pride defends our position, even if we are wrong. Francis Frangipane states, "The strength of humility is that it builds a spiritual defense around your soul, prohibiting strife, competition, and many of life's irritations from stealing your peace." I am learning to surrender my life to Christ in a spirit of humility, leaving no grounds for the devil's accusations.

When we walk in the Spirit, building up the stronghold of Christlikeness, we triumph over the devil. As we conform to the image and very nature of Jesus, we will have total victory in spiritual warfare in every area of our lives. Failing to change our sinful nature will leave an open door to evil oppression. The Father's goal is more than seeing us delivered from the clutches of the enemy. He wants us conformed to the image of His Beloved Son, who is, in fact, the Father's image. He wants us saturated with the Spirit of Jesus till there is no darkness-evil left in us. If the Lord's presence is in us, then there is no room for evil. Light casts out the darkness.

Jesus performed spiritual warfare not by confronting Satan, but by fulfilling His destiny and purpose at the Garden Gethsemane, laying His life down on the Cross on Calvary. Colossians 2:15 (AMPC) declares, "[God] disarmed the principalities and powers that were

ranged against us and made a bold display and public example of them, in triumphing over them in Him and in it [the cross].” Only when we surrender to God and let His life flow through us, can we defeat the enemy in what Frangipane terms, “the battleground of the mind, the battleground of the church, and the battleground of the heavenly places.”