

Spiritual Warfare --The Invisible World

We live in a world where some things are unseen and yet we are absolutely aware that they exist. Jesus used the example of the wind to help us understand the fact that there is a spiritual world behind all that we see in the visible world and we have to deal with that world if we are to see changes in our hearts,, minds, and circumstances.

"Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit." (John 3:8 NLT)

We are all aware that not only do we have a body that we can see and feel and touch but we also have a soul where we think and feel and choose. We can't see that soul but we experience its effects every day of our lives. We also have a spirit that keeps us alive every day we live and breathe on this earth and that leaves our body when we die. At our death our body remains but something clearly has changed. The spirit is gone. We don't see the spirit leave but the heart stops beating, the lungs stop breathing, the brain stops sending signals. With current medical technology doctors can describe all these effects of the spirit being gone and we can see the signals on monitors that beep and make lines and pictures, but no doctor and no machine has seen the spirit. It's like the wind. We hear it and see the effects but the spirit itself is not seen. However, the spirit is still very real because when the spirit is present, there is life. When the spirit is gone, there is death.

In the same way we cannot see God but we can see all that God has done in creation, how He's changed lives around us - even our own. ***For the truth about God is known to them instinctively. God has put this knowledge in their hearts. From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.*** (Romans 1:19-20 NLT)

When we invite God to come into our lives, take away our sin and give us a nourishing and uplifting relationship with Him, he does it by filling our lives with the His presence, with His Holy Spirit. We do not see the Holy Spirit enter our life but He definitely comes and we know inside ourselves that something has changed. We ask Jesus to forgive us for our sins because He died on the cross to take our punishment. We give Jesus permission to take control of our lives and make us new people. Jesus does this by filling our spirit with His Spirit. We don't see bad things being washed away. We don't see a new heart being created inside us. We don't see life filling our previously dead spirits but it surely is happening. It's happening in the spiritual world and we are spiritual people. What we "see" is new hope and new joy and a new ability to love and be loved. What we experience is a new ability to say "no" when

we need to avoid harmful addiction and relationships and an ability to say "yes" to forgiving others and taking responsibility for ourselves and our actions. Those are all the signs of the new life of God that has changed us in the core of our being.

Those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. (Romans 8:5-8 NLT)

We know all this and yet how often in recovery do we feel as though we are in a battle with our thoughts, our emotions, people around us, and even God? The reality is we are engaged in a spiritual battle as long as we live. God is for us. The devil is against us. Jesus summarized this using the picture of a thief, ***The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.*** (John 10:10 NLT) When we invite God the Holy Spirit to come and live in us, we choose who will be in control. As we surrender ourselves moment my moment to God, we will find ourselves on the winning side of the battle because, ***"The Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world"*** (1 John 4:4 NLT)

God offers us life. The devil offers us activities that will steal, kill and destroy us. Our addictions are ample proof of the empty promises from the devil - temporary pleasure that ends in a fruitless search to simply cover a grinding need and all the way along we lose relationships, hope, and even ourselves. God's offer to us today is life in all its fullness - life controlled by God's Spirit.

Am I alive spiritually? How will I know? Have I invited God to come into my life? Do I have life and peace? Would God be pleased with what I am thinking about myself, others around me, my plans, my dreams? If that's the case, then God's spirit is controlling my mind. Do I have hostility and disobedience, anger and resentment, shame and guilt? Then I have given control of my will to Satan.

God, I invite you to come into my life and make me alive by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Cleanse me from my sin through Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. Fill me with power so I can live as a new person.

Questions For Discussion and Reflection

1. How do I decide if I am alive or dead spiritually?
2. What evidence do I see from my daily life to support my claim?