

Luke 18: Bible Study Is War

(this transcript has been lightly edited for readability)

There is a great spiritual war fought on the turf of your heart, fought for control of your soul in every situation, every location, every circumstance of your life. I sort of hate the way spiritual warfare is often talked about; it's this weird world of demons and deliverance (*ooOoo!*). Really, spiritual warfare is a very normal thing. We live in a dramatically broken world that doesn't operate the way God intended. We live with sin still inside of us. We live with seductive voices of temptation.

And so, marriage is spiritual war, parenting a spiritual war, and surely the study of the Word of God is spiritual warfare. As I said earlier, you have to know that you bring some kind of position, some kind of condition of your heart to your study of the Bible. And so that is war for your heart, that your heart would be open and ready and expectant. I love this parable that Jesus told in Luke 18 of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Let me read for you:

Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

You come to the Word of God full of your own righteousness, proud of what you've become, trying to build a little bit of your knowledge base, or you come to the Word of God devastated by the continuing evidence of your own iniquity. You come dependent, crying out that this portion of the Word of God would be a tool of grace in your life, that you would meet your Savior there

and that He would take you one more step toward what His grace gives you the potential to be, that through this study, sin would be defeated in your heart.

Or, you come like that Pharisee, reminding yourself of how righteous you've become. The thing that's shocking about the prayer of the Pharisee is that he is basically saying to God, "Here I am, I'm in your temple, but I don't need you; I'm doing quite well on my own."

I want to encourage you to pray that God would give you the grace to bring these three things to your study of the Word of God. First, an expectant heart; that you really believe God reveals Himself in His Word. You expect that Word to be a tool of transformation. Bring a humble heart. Admit how desperately you need what the Word of God is able to give you. And, bring an obedient heart ready to live in light of what the Word will teach you that day.

I'm afraid, if I'm honest with myself, that there's much of my study of Scripture that's just a massive waste of time because I came with a proud heart, I came with a closed heart, I came studying for other people while forgetting that I desperately need the Word of God myself.

It's shocking for me to say this, but I will, "There are many times rather than standing underneath the Word of God, I stood above it." And it was just an abstract information exercise done by a proud man.

Listen, it takes grace to know how much you need grace! Pray for that grace as you approach God's Word every time. Pray for expectancy and humility and obedience and you watch what God will do through His Word.

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