

This Is War, Part 4: Sermon Study Guide

The Story Houston - March 31, 2019

Eric Huffman - Lead Pastor

fb/ig: @pastorerichuffman tw: @ericthestory

thestoryhouston@gmail.com



Intro to 'This Is War'

This is it: the final week in our series on demons, the Devil, angels, and the spiritual war being waged all around us. All month long, we've been learning what the Bible says about the spiritual realm while paying especially close attention to what Jesus believed about Satan, angels, demons, and the epic struggle of light against the darkness. This subject might be uncomfortable for some; you might not believe in creatures like demons at all. If that's the case, all I ask is that you approach these teachings with an open mind.

Reflection Question: Have you ever experienced seasons of life in which you felt besieged or "under attack"? What happened, and how do you tend to interpret those seasons? (ie: "just bad luck," "karma," or as a "spiritual test")

War is a team sport, so today we're going to focus on the vital role of Christian community when facing the Enemy. Toward the end of last week's message, we looked briefly at Hebrews 12, and that's where we'll begin today.

Hebrews 12:1-4 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

What is another word for "entangles" in verse 1? How does sin so easily hinder, entangle, and distract people?

Who are the people in our "great cloud of witnesses"? What difference does having a cloud of witnesses make in the life of a believer?

Jesus "endured the cross, scorning its shame..." What role does shame play in the spiritual battles we fight?

Should We Be Ashamed?

We often conflate "shame" with "guilt", but they are not the same. Whereas guilt involves feelings of indebtedness based on what you know you've done, shame is the feeling of indebtedness based on *who you think you are*. Why does this distinction matter?

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How does the Enemy use shame in this spiritual war? What is the relationship between shame and isolation?

What is the gospel's answer to shame?

Luke 22:24-38 A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.” Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.” Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?” “Nothing,” they answered.

He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.” The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.” “That's enough!” he replied.

What were the disciples arguing about, and what does that have to do with shame?

What did Jesus mean when he told Simon Peter, “Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat”?

How was Jesus preparing his disciples for the spiritual war that awaited them?

Your notes here: