

PRISONER OF WAR (P.O.W)

Text:- Roman 7:23

But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

The child of God need to come up to knowledge he should have had over the years. This knowledge is both shocking and helpful. The child of God needs to know that he is in a battle front. In fact, the bible did not keep this information secret. It states,

“The weapon of our warfare is not canal”,

“our struggle is not against flesh and blood”.....therefore put on the full armor of God”,

“They are in conflict with one another,”

“Fight the good fight of the faith”.

”No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affair”,

“the sin that war against your souls”.

These are only few among the many cries of the Holy Spirit as He warns the child of God of the great battle going on. This battle is not between Angels and the devil. There is an account of such a battle actually-.

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.

Rev12:7

But this is not the one I am talking about here. I am talking about the battle between the believer and the devil and his demons. The forces of darkness arrayed against the child of God, using every weapon at their disposal to try to undo the child of God.

Before one gets born-again there is a battle to keep one in the dark over the need for salvation. The scripture puts it this way,

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they can not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2Cor. 4:4

There is actually a covering over the eye of the unbeliever. That is the only reason somebody who earn a little over ten thousand naira a month, would burn five thousand on cigarettes. Even though he reads an advert that says that cigarette smoking is dangerous to his health. As one makes an effort to preach to him, he reacts by asking you which church you belong to. At many instances he says, "Listen here, I am a catholic. I attend church. Why do you Pentecostals ever think you alone know God?" That is a blind-folded fellow, he can not see that you are not talking about church but his soul. Bear with him, he is blind. There was a man I used to know. At many occasions I saw him fighting with his wife on the street. The wife would bite him and he would tear her clothes on the street. They were notorious. He worked on Sundays. The wife only attended church on special Sundays like mothering Sunday. I took time to pray on their account, asking God for grace to minister to

them. One day I went and after speaking with them, the man confessed his family had problem and promised to worship with us on Sunday, I did not see him. After waiting for sometime, I went to find out what happened. Then, he said to me, "Look pastor, the Rev. Father said I am due for wedding. And if I must wed; I must stop attending fellowship and church anywhere else. In fact the Bishop has warned me sternly about this. He said we should ask you to come to our church".

The church he was not attending, he was still a member. They were waiting for the day he will die and they will bury him. He is a poor blind fellow. The devil has a veil over his eyes. He is blind. The duty a child of God owes this kind of person is fervent intercession and visitation and God who makes his light shine into darkness will break the yoke and they will see the danger of their souls and be saved.

Immediately this happens a battle starts,

for what I do is not good I want to do, no, the evil I do not want to do- this I keep on going (Rom 7:19)

As one embraces Christ and becomes born again, there is a hunger to improve in well doing. There is a hunger to serve God more. There is a hunger to pray more. There is a hunger to attend fellowship and Sunday service. In my own case, I became a bookworm for Christian literature. I read anything I lay my hands on.

There is a hunger to obey everything you read. If you made a mistake somewhere you repented immediately. Quite often, young

converts take to the streets in an effort to convert others. “Morning cry” is a delight. One goes for evangelism alone or in a group. It could be said of him, “For zeal for your house consumes me...”

(Psalm 69:9)

The Holy Spirit will enter your life and stir up your zeal but the day he departs, He departs a gentle spirit. Like a rejected play mate would walk out of his friend’s house.

In the days of your zeal, it does not mean there was no battle, for the scripture says,

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the spirit and the spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so, that you do not do what you want. (Gal. 5:17)

In this battle what is needed is your will. What would you submit to? Many of us who are still Christians submitted to the Holy Spirit.

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Rom 6:16-17 NIV

So, that is how you became a believer. You submitted to Christ and became His slave. You found joy in service for God. Anything that clashed with your God, you rejected. You were active in church, prayerful, contributed your quota to support God’s work financially. As long as you had strength, it was for the brethren.

And you grew in grace and won many over to Christ. Praise the Lord!

That was how you started and everybody knew you are a believer a light in darkness; **Satan had lost the first battle!**

He sees your joy and comfort as you bear the light yoke of Christ. He tries to use force to pull you down. Your parents attack you, but you are for Christ. Your denomination threatens, but you have decided. Financial hardship everywhere but the Holy Spirit gives you grace to overcome. Even if He does not, you were willing to die for Christ.

Devil has lost the second battle.

I wish to point out here that many who did not backslide when they faced hardship, became cold when God blessed them. They ate and drank and said, "Who is God?"

There is a shout of victory in God's camp and the devil is angry. He summons his demons and express dissatisfaction with your new position. Helplessly they watched you grow. They watched as you wrecked havoc on their strongholds. They watched as you liberated other souls. To worsen the situation, you attacked Satan himself and exposed his evil works. Devil tries again to intimidate you with bad dreams and sickness, but you were too hot for him. In the name of your Lord and master JESUS CHRIST you tore his bars away and launched a violent attack on his domain, wrecked an unequaled havoc on his territory.

Devil has lost the third battle.

You continued to grow strong in the Lord.

So, devil concludes he can not stop you by using force. He is an ancient warrior. The problem with him is that he is an untiring loser. He now goes to his store house of experience and pulled out the weapon that have killed so many great men of God, and that is, cunning.

With cunning they conspire against your people, they plot against those you cherish. (Psalm 83:3).

Note the linking of cunning and plot.

The child of God who did not fall into sexual seduction, intimidation of peers, sickness and other ugly things that Satan throws at his enemies is faced with a subtle weapon. Will he survive it? He offers the strong Christian pride.

1. Prisoner to pride:- The scripture did not say without reason that, “pride goes before a fall.” (). I pray that the Holy Spirit will search the heart of the reader. Immediately, the devil tells the believer how much he has achieved for the Lord already. He tells him that he is twenty five years in the Lord now. He points out to him how many he has converted and how many churches he had lifted from foundation. He tells him how successful he had been in fasting and that even his local church pastor has not achieved half of what he had.

Finally, he tells him that it is time to sit down and watch others do theirs. After all, he has children and a wife to take care of. He tells him he needed to work to take care of them. He could not continue to attend prayer night, as that is for bachelors and spinsters. He should not bother to remain in the prayer cell, he knew how to pray. Even if he sinned he knew his way back to God. He tells him there is nothing wrong with working or even living with unbelievers as they are all children of God who should be converted. Because of the nature of his work, there is nothing wrong skipping weekly activities.

All these look attractive to the child of God. Like the prodigal son, he sees himself as one in bondage in the house of God. If the pastor calls him to correct him, he knows enough scripture to answer back.

Devil wins his first battle.

CHAPTER

Let the child of God look into his life now and see if the things stated above are not true about him. How could you have kept away from the men's meeting, if not pride? How could you have neglected the pastor's instruction, if not pride?

If I am caught in fornication or adultery, I know I will be back benched and my license as a preacher withdrawn until further notice. If I steal and I am caught, I will be dismembered from fellowship. If I fight and my senior pastor hears of it, I will be

disfellowshipped until further notice. But look at this mortal sin that has dealt the deadliest blow on the church of Christ. That has left many a mighty instruments of God sprawling at the feet of Satan. Look at this saints-killer, that has pushed our beloved ones into the bosom of Satan's hell; none of us know what to do about it. Could it be because we all are guilty of it that we treat it as a light matter?

It was pride that led a sister to marry a criminal in the name of liberty in Christ. It is pride that led the senior pastor to refuse to allow the young minister mount the pulpit, even though he had no message from God.

It is pride that will not allow a brother apologize to the body of Christ, instead he went to another church that will condone his sin and there he is ordained a deacon. Though, the Holy Spirit pricked him, pride will not allow him bow, he is on his way to hell. Although, he had read that God honours the just mandate of the church, pride will not allow our brother go and make restitution.

Oh, pride, the murderer of our brothers who dwelt with us on mount Zion and carry them to the valley of backsliding. If this is your case you are a prisoner to pride. The righteousness you profess today is what the scriptures call self righteousness. You have not submitted to God's righteousness.

2. Prisoner to prayerlessness:-

19 your glory, Oh Israel, lies slain on your heights.

How the mighty have fallen

27 How the mighty have fallen

The weapons of war have perished! **11 Sam 1:**

Beloved is your spiritual life what you would wish it were? Pride is the culprit again. Once a prisoner to pride, the arch enemy of your soul leads you one more step into his hideous prison cells. Because you have broken a spiritual law that says, Iron sharpens iron? You thought to keep your self warm alone (Eccl. 4:9). No more time to meet with your prayer partner. You could give money to keep the prayer team in a camp, but you are too busy to attend. Even when your wife invites you to the family altar, you will tell them to carry on, tell them you will pray later. If you dare to attend at all, you will rebuke your daughter for making long prayers.

You used to make a lot of noise when you prayed, that was when you were a “Babe” in the Lord. Now you will be in the “spirit” and dose off.

In your diary you have it recorded when you were baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues. If anybody showed doubt as to if you have it, you know how to wag your tongue and produce the old sound. This is where many brethren miss it. That you had a baptism ten years ago- even six months ago- does not mean you are still filled. Study your bible and you will agree with me. In John 20:22, Jesus said to the disciples, “Receive the Holy Spirit”, in Acts 2:4, they were filled in the Holy Spirit and again in Acts 4:31, they were filled with the Holy Spirit again. I believe that subsequently they were filled at different

occasions. What does the scripture tend to let us know? Beloved, that your diary record is insignificant if you have not been receiving in-fillings after that one. You are empty.

That is why your prayer life is zero. When you are in the congregation you shout as if you are still alive but at home you can not pray. Poor Rehoboam, when his enemies took away his golden shield, he improvised inferior ones that looked like the original but only he and his bearers knew what he had was not the real thing (1 Kings 14:25-28)

Beloved you can fake the signs but you cannot fake the power. Those days you were bold to lay hands on the sick and if they did not get healed, you were surprised. But today you will be the first to recommend the nearest hospital. You begin to excuse your flaw, "God still uses the doctors to heal the sick". A strange doctrine from a man like you.

In those days your neighbours call you "Pastor" because if a child screamed from his dream because of demonic attack, when you pray, that will be the end. Today, it is not the case. In fact, under your pillow is a bottle of "Holy oil" you got from one of the "Popular Pastors" in town.

Fasting? No longer for today. In fact, your doctrine says, "God answers prayers, whether fasting or not. Fasting is like coming before God with ones work". A strange doctrine from a man like you that used to keep twenty-one days fasting. Is the difference not clear?

The enemy of your soul has you captive. You are a prisoner to the spirit of prayerlessness. It has you shut up, it is the result of your pride. It started when you started to excuse yourself for group prayer. Little by little you begin to find yourself in some sins you would not have thought of attempting before. All kinds of ugly things are now happening to you. **Oh, prisoner, Is there any hope?**

3. Prisoner to procrastination:- At this point you begin to wonder what is really happening. Like the prodigal son you say, “I will arise and go to my father”. But no way. Even the Lord Jesus calls Satan who is holding you captive a strong man (*Luke 11:21). Devil says you are his belonging, his possession, in fact, his house. Therefore, he is fully armed as he guards you.

The day you manage to think of returning to your first love, he tells you why you are too busy to think about that now.

“Wait”, he says, “you can do it at a more convenient time. Wait till your last child graduates. Why not wait till your church sends you an assistant”. “It is not your fault. The youths are not performing. Just wait till next year, then you will have the time to really talk to them. The nature of your work is really too tedious for you to fast now. Wait till you are promoted”.

Then you begin to defer the day of recovery. To be sincere, you would want to get this over, but you are a prisoner.

A man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

(2Pet. 2:19).

For by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage (KJV).

You have been mastered by your present condition; you are prisoner to it. So, the spirit of procrastination is holding you captive.

4. Prisoner to the fire extinguisher:-

Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. (Hosea 5:4).

Somebody after reading this is provoked in the Spirit. He wants to rise but it is not possible. He has gone too low. The church was against your wedding. They said nothing clean can come out of the unclean (). But you said you must go ahead. Now your marriage partner is a great hindrance to your fellowship with God. The spirit of God warned you that that job cannot allow you chance to live like a good Christian but you resisted him, look at the mess you are into.

The fire extinguisher could be a human being. Like my pastor friend whose wife would cross him with her legs on the bed when it is time for morning cry. When he wants to fast she would place a heavy demand for sex and romance. If he turns her down she would tell him that his prayers will not reach God because she did not agree with him.

It could be completely spiritual. All kinds of distracting thoughts come to your mind. You look into the bible; your mind goes so far that the book drops. Your environment is unclean so your thoughts

represent your environment. When you think of this, tears dribble down your cheeks, but sorry, you are a prisoner.

5. Prisoner to bad habits:-

(a) Comfort eating- Again I will state here that very few fell in the time of hardship as compared to the time of abundance. Even God warned the Israelites about this-

12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down,

13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied,

14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

A preacher, who went to somewhere I have preached before, made a pressing demand on his hosts to provide him with an air conditioned room. He did not know-or rather care- how he had wounded those he went to bless but they told me.

When you did not have much wealth, you did not care where you slept. You did not care the kind of plate with which you got your food. You did not care the clothes you wore to church. You were humble, so God exalted you. How about now? Some Sundays you do not go to church because your dry cleaner did not finish the suit you would want to wear. You have too many wonderful things to eat, how can you fast? Your mechanic did not finish your car that is

why you could not attend the workers meeting. The seats in your pastors' parlor would tear your lace, so if he cared he should visit you instead.

Night vigil? "Oh no! Pastor, you know I am a very busy person. I need a good sleep, to work well tomorrow". Sunday evening fellowship? "No beloved, there is time for everything. After Sunday morning, I come home and have a good time with my children watching video movies".

And if there are not many car owners in the church in which God lifted you, instead of contributing immensely to help the church grow, you move over to the other church with many car owners like yourself and that runs TV ministry.

But, at the bottom of your heart, you do not like all this. You wish you can become humble again. You know the richer you become, the more comfort you desire and lesser Christian you are. You are a prisoner.

6. Prisoner to discouragement Association:-

I know that by now you are fed up with yourself. Having read so far, you can not continue to gamble with this miserable condition of your life. No by the special grace of God you hope to rise but suddenly you remember that this was not the first message that had moved you. You have heard many of such messages and the enemy of your soul says. "And so what could you do with them? Give it up; it is too late."

Then you slump back into your pit waiting for your eventual destruction. Many young people after hearing me present the message, "The Expected Birth Of The Militant Church" were so provoked that they cried, promising God that they would be the ones to change the world in this generation. But after a few days the enemy of the church will discourage them, he will remind them they do not have gospel equipment, he will even tell them these are not the days of great revival. He will tell them they did not have as much money as the men I mentioned. Some resolved to fast more than ever and the accuser warns them of the adverse effects of fasting. Some of my readers today have been inactive in church for years, now the Spirit of God is telling them to start house fellowship in their houses so that they can plant a new outreach for their church, but they will rather listen to the enemy of their soul than listen to their Lord and Master, who gave even his throne to die for them, and promised most assuredly to be with them if only they will obey his voice today.

Now hear the verdict-

After a doctor carries out medical test he must show the patient a copy of the result. All I have been doing is a diagnosis on the state of your spiritual life. It is true the report may be very bad but I just must let you know what the position of your spiritual health is. First, I must tell you I acknowledge that you are in trouble and would not mind to have help but I also should let you know the true picture, and perhaps render help if I have any.

Picture a man who sees a bunch of colourful flowers not very far away. He begins to walk toward it, not knowing he was walking into a solid glass box-transparent yet too hard for anybody to break it. When he was completely inside the box, the hard glass gate shuts. Alas, the man who was free a few minutes ago is now inside a glass box. He deceives himself he would get the flower and then break the glass and get away but he was dead wrong.

The flowers are not even in the glass box. They are outside, and then it is time to go home. He strikes with his bare fist at the box but the pains he felt made him change pattern. He tries his shoulder and then his legs but no way, he puts in more efforts but no result. He decides to rest, perhaps somebody will pass by and help. Suddenly he looks up and sees the man who holds the glass in his hand. He is his enemy- the devil himself. He jeers at him and jingles the keys and began to carry the box away. The helpless man looks at the direction he is carrying the box. It is a big lake of fire. He sees other souls gnashing their teeth there crying, weeping. Wishing he were dreaming and that he would wake-up. The man in the box wakes up, puts up a last fight but no way. He is a prisoner of war.

It is a pity that this is your position if what I discussed earlier represent your spiritual state. I want to present my diagnosis in a simple sentence now.

The fact is this- you are **BACK SLIDDEN**, you have fallen out of the way. The fact is that if you died in your present state you may wake up in Hell Fire. And I know you would be wondering why the

whole thing appears so real to you now. The evidence that a man is drawing closer to Christ is when he begins to see his true spiritual state. When a man begins to see the effect of sin on his life and how unworthy he really is, then God is at ear shot. Then God is around to see whether the man will ask for help that he the Lord of his soul would save him.

CHAPTER

Let's look at our text once more.

But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a PRISONER of the law of sin at work within my members. (Rom 7:23)

The way I understand this place is like a man who was a sinner, shut away from the light of Christ. By the special grace of God he sees the danger of his soul through the divine quickening of his conscience. He stretched out his hand to embrace Christ. He felt a great joy and promises himself and his God to continue to work in the parts of righteousness. Only to discover-

15- I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

19- For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing.

Beloved, this is very different from willful sin but the person in question is not totally innocent.

Let the child of God wake up and know that there is an on-going war between light and darkness, good and evil, righteousness and wickedness. Any careless move would land him at the mercy of our enemy. As we desire deliverance, God expects three things from us -

1. **Acknowledgement of sin:-** Let the child of God now acknowledgment his sins. If you will but accept that whatever is happening in your life did not start happening but that through pride and carelessness you opened the door to the enemy to take you captive.

2. **Acknowledgment of your helplessness:-** When a man is a prisoner of war in military terms, efforts to get away is dangerous. So, it is in the spiritual. Devil would rather kill you than see you return to Jesus. That is why each time you want to rise, one problem or the other draws you back. Could be sickness, loss of job or many such things, just to draw you back. You can not help yourself. The help can not come from within you.

What a wretched man. I am! Who will deliver (rescue) me from this body of death? (Rom. 7:24)

You must look outside for help. In military terms, only a commando operation- a situation where the comrade of the prisoner attacks unsuspecting and rescues him- or exchange of prisoners- like Iraq and Iran had- prisoners of war are exchanged at battle lines.

This means that you can only have help from outside. In the spiritual level, our rescue force is the body of Christ. Move forward

and tell the brethren you know you are backslidden and ask them to do whatever is within their reach to help you.

My address is at the back of this book if you feel this way, write for directions.

3. Only Jesus can save you-

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord- verse 25

14- Since the children have flesh and blood, he (Jesus Christ) too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-that is the devil

15- and free those who all their lives were HELD IN SLAVERY (BONDAGE- KJV) by their fear of death.

(Heb 2:14-15)

So if the son (of God) sets you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:36)

Jesus Christ is the bondage breaker.

And the scriptures says-

For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"

You know what you should do next. Your heart is made ready. You are going to pray now like never before.

PRAYERS-

(a) Confess the sin of pride and rebellion which opened the door for you fall.

(b) Confess the power of Christ to deliver you and restore you.

(c) By the authority in the name of Jesus Christ begin to deal with each of the prison houses stated above as spirits. Bind them and by the power of the Holy Spirit break their bars away.

(i) Spirit of Pride

(ii) Spirit of prayerlessness

(iii) Spirit of procrastination:

(iv) Spirit of selfishness called comfort

(v) Spirit of discouragement

Beloved pray violently

(d) Return to the things you know you stopped doing.

Remember the height from which you have fallen? Repent and do the things you did at first (Rev. 2:5)

PRAY- ON