

THE SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE

Fifty years ago this coming September 1st [*the date of this sermon was 1989*], World War II broke out when Hitler's armies invaded Poland. Here in New Zealand, we live in a time of relative peace and stability as far as threats from other countries are concerned. The last big war that in any way threatened the survival of N.Z. was World War II. Since then we have been relatively free of fear of invasion by another country.

But in World War II, the Germans, Italians and Japanese were on the rampage. German forces in short order entered and took over Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and France. In a few months, many of the countries of Europe were occupied by the Nazi invaders.

Wouldn't it be terrible to have your country occupied by a foreign power—especially a ruthless one like the Nazis? You'd have foreign troops maintaining order—soldiers outside everywhere—restricting many freedoms, maybe not even allowing us to meet as we are today. Isn't it great that we aren't under the sway of an occupying army at this time?

Well, I'm sorry to tell you, we are!! The fact is that we are at this time under military occupation! The world is now under the sway of the fuehrer Satan and his demons, just as the larger part of continental Europe was under Hitler's sway by June of 1940.

1 John 5:19 "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one*."

Satan and his henchmen have taken away and replaced the Government of God over the earth, their troops maintain their type of order in the world, and have taken away the true freedom of the world's inhabitants—the true freedom that only comes from obeying God's law.

We know well the scriptures which show that Satan is the god of this world and has blinded the minds of those who believe not (2 Corinthians 4:4)—in fact Satan has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). He is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2) and the ruler of the darkness of this world (Ephesians 6:12).

So it is abundantly clear that, spiritually speaking, Satan has taken the whole world captive—he has invaded the entire world and his troops are in occupation of it. 2 Timothy 2:26 (NIV) is a good illustration, "and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."

When Hitler's armies invaded the various nations of Europe, sometimes the people crumbled and collapsed before them; sometimes they collaborated with them and invited them in without resisting, so that their lives would be spared; and sometimes they stood fast and resisted, and kept on resisting even while Hitler occupied the country. The historical record shows that in most countries, after Hitler had taken control, the vast majority of the defeated population collaborated with the Nazis, but a small, dedicated and courageous group chose to resist even against such greatly superior strength, and although they were the underdogs, they fought a long, heroic battle to defeat the occupation—these people were called the **Resistance Movement**.

We have a lot to learn from the things the resistance fighters in World War II Europe went through. I'd like to talk about that in the sermon today, because we are told to resist Satan: James 4:7 "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

1 Peter 5:8-9 ⁸“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

(Verse 8: The Gestapo walked about getting the location of the resistance, so the Nazi S.S. could seize and destroy them.)

Here’s a quote from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article “World War II” to show the techniques the Germans used when they invaded a country. It’s interesting to compare the techniques used by Hitler to the ones Satan uses on mankind.

“The other conquered countries of Western Europe (apart from France) were completely occupied, but the Germans sought, for their own convenience, to get the administration carried on by officials of these countries, subject to German control. A policy of conciliation was at first pursued. It corresponded to the ideas of the German military chiefs, who had learned the drawbacks of repression from the experience of World War I, while it also represented Hitler’s desire to get these countries to accept their intended place in his “new European order.” At first, that policy made considerable progress—largely because of the way the German troops fulfilled the high command’s instructions to behave with restraint and courtesy in the conquered countries. This polite behaviour, combined with the German efforts to restore normal conditions, began to win over a much larger proportion of the peoples than merely the instinctive collaborators.”

They were careful not to be harsh and repressive, but to be friendly to the people, and to work through the established system as much as possible, so as not to cause disruption. But they were in charge.

This is the way Satan works too, with subtlety, seeking to appeal to his captives, so they hardly know he is in control.

2 Corinthians 11:14-15 ¹⁴And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”

Satan approaches as a friend, making it seem like his way is just, fair, reasonable and right. That’s exactly the way he worked on Eve, in his first attempt to invade humanity and occupy their minds.

Genesis 3:4-5 ⁴“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

This was the beginning of Satan’s World War, his attempt to take control of man. Notice the approach, to come as a friend and helper, and offer a promise.

Hitler’s troops used subtlety by the technique of saying to the people they confronted “Collaborate with us and we will give you food, supplies, whatever you need.” Satan certainly rewards his collaborators—many of those people in this life are well off materially. They have quietly accepted his rule without complaint, and he leaves them in peace—they’re not involved in a hard-fought battle against him—it’s just the handful of resistance fighters who have to do that.

Hitler beguiled the imagination of his people by offering them 1,000 years of peace and prosperity—and so Satan works on people’s imagination and offers them the “delights” that come from a way of sin. Another interesting comparison is that Hitler really worked on the Youth of Germany. He knew they were vulnerable to his approaches, and he built them into a force that followed him religiously—the “Hitler Youth.” Satan works with the youth for the same reasons, and they follow him in droves.

The European nations were unprepared for the war. They let Hitler march all over them because they didn't want to believe war was possible. In September 1938, Neville Chamberlain of Great Britain, plus the leaders of France and Italy, got together to sign the "Munich Agreement" by which Czechoslovakia gave up the Sudetenland to Germany, in return for a promise Hitler wouldn't invade any other country. Britain and France thought this agreement would keep Europe at peace, and Chamberlain came back to Britain saying the Munich Agreement had brought "Peace for Our Time." Less than one year later, Hitler marched into Poland, starting World War II.

It's possible spiritually for us too to say "Peace, peace" when there is no peace. We can kid ourselves that all is well with us and we don't really have any big spiritual problems, we're not really letting Satan have his way with us at all.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 ³"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

The battle is in the mind, it's largely unseen, going on inside us, so that makes it easy to be deceived into thinking there's no great war going on.

It's easy to give way to anger, greed, jealousy, or criticism, without really fighting against it. Fighting these sins in our minds is not easy. Resisting the temptation to turn on the TV is not easy—or to keep it on when there are more important things we should be doing. When you get up and turn off the switch and walk out of the room, you feel like you have been in a big battle sometimes! That is war! The war is in the mind! But when you do the right thing, you can taste the sweet feeling of victory.

A vitally important principle to realise in this regard is that our human nature, (led by Satan of course) has a very great desire to have peace, peace at any price. The natural thing to do is to seek peace and allow yourself to sin. It takes discipline and strength to resist sin. To collaborate with the enemy is the easy way, to resist takes grit, courage and determination.

Imagine if the Japanese or some other nation invaded New Zealand. Imagine they knocked out our defence forces and army (such as it is) and took over the Government, and had policemen and soldiers everywhere. What would you do? It would be easy to go about life as normally as possible, being sure not to get on the bad side of the occupying force, but just to make the most of the situation. What would be the point of fighting against such massive odds? Trying to resist the strength of such a vast and populous occupying nation would seem to be totally vain and useless.

That's the way the vast majority of the people, in the countries Hitler invaded, looked on things. The tendency of human nature is for peace at any price—i.e. we are dominated by the desire to save our skins, to look after No.1. We need to ask the question—Am I like that when it comes to sin? Do I give in to wrong thoughts and do things I shouldn't do because that's the easy way, it's just too hard to resist?

Sure, we don't agree with Satan and his ways—but similarly the collaborators in Europe didn't agree with Hitler. However, Hitler didn't mind that, as long as they didn't actively resist him. If they didn't resist, he could basically do what he liked—he was the one in control.

We may not be actively for Satan, but if we aren't actively against him, he has us where he wants us. If you don't resist, you become a collaborator. That's the way it was in Europe, and that's the way it is spiritually.

If we are not actively resisting Satan, we are collaborating with him. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with Me is against Me." And in Revelation 3:15-16 He said to the Church at Laodicea, if you are not hot or cold I'll spew you out. If we are actively for Satan, at least

God knows where we stand. If we are actively resisting Satan, God knows where we stand. If we are lukewarm, and are just breezing along, not really fighting any battle—saying we don't like sin but not actively doing anything about it, then we are collaborators!

God gives us some instruction on how we should look at sin in Deuteronomy 7. Again it is a military theme that shows us some spiritual lessons about the spiritual war we are fighting for control of our mind.

Human nature totally occupied our mind before we were converted. When we were converted and baptised, we received God's Holy Spirit and began to slowly repel and beat back Satan's influence in our minds, to gradually take control of our human nature, to resist against the forces of Satan.

In Deuteronomy we see God's instructions to the Israelites when they were fighting for occupation of the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 7:1-2 "When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—² and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy."

We should utterly plunder, defeat and destroy our sins. And make no covenant or agreement with them! Like "I'll just watch this one X-rated movie," or "I'll just take this person's property for a few days and then I'll tell him about it" etc. Don't play around with sin.

Verse 3 "Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons." We can't allow ourselves to live with the enemy, or it will eventually destroy us.

Verse 4 "for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you." Letting down in one area tends to get worse and worse. That's the principle of how leaven works—"A little leaven leavens the lump." Sins grow and develop and puff up bigger and bigger.

Verse 5 "This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire." That's how to deal with our sins!

Verse 6 "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be His people, His treasured possession." That's talking about us!

Verses 7-11 ⁷"The LORD did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath He swore to your ancestors that He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments. ¹⁰But those who hate Him he will repay to their face by destruction; He will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate Him. ¹¹Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today."

This applies to us too in a spiritual sense; and—

Verses 12-15 ¹²"If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep His covenant of love with you, as He swore to your ancestors. ¹³He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of

your land—your grain, new wine and olive oil—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land He swore to your ancestors to give you. ¹⁴ You will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless, nor will any of your livestock be without young. ¹⁵ The LORD will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but He will inflict them on all who hate you.”

Verse 16 continues the instruction about what to do about sin.

¹⁶ “You must destroy all the peoples the LORD your God gives over to you. Do not look on them with pity and do not serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you.”

Verse 17 “You may say to yourselves, “These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?” Some sins seem this way. We keep fighting them, but can’t seem to make headway and beat them down.

That’s what some of the resistance fighters in Europe thought about Hitler. Some opted for collaboration because of the strength of Hitler’s seeming irresistible, irrepressible advance. It’s possible to give in, to grow weary in well doing. But God says “Don’t give up! Don’t quit!” Remember we have His power to help us win.

Verse 18-19,21 ¹⁸ “But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. ¹⁹ You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, with which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear. ²¹ Do not be terrified by them, for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God.”

Call upon the help of God’s Holy Spirit in overcoming our sins. The Spirit is the key weapon we have in our arsenal, and He will make Satan’s forces fall back defeated.

Verse 22 “The LORD your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you.”

This is what should be happening with our sins too. We don’t become perfect all of a sudden, but should be gradually working towards it, winning victories against sin.

Verse 23 “But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, throwing them into great confusion until they are destroyed.” We can win. And when we’re resurrected we will be perfect.

Verse 24 “He will give their kings into your hand, and you will wipe out their names from under heaven. No one will be able to stand up against you; you will destroy them.”

With God’s Holy Spirit this will happen. But it takes 2 things:

1. God gives us His Holy Spirit;
2. We fight.

We actively go into war and resist Satan.

Verse 25 “The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the LORD your God.” There is action to be undertaken by us. We are to fight actively.

Verse 26 “Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Regard it as vile and utterly detest it, for it is set apart for destruction.” Utterly detest and abhor sin. Resist It!

Joshua 23:11-13 ¹¹ “So be very careful to love the LORD your God. ¹² “But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with

them and associate with them, ¹³ then you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you.”

Again, Israel, a type of the converted Christian—still an enemy within its borders that had to be overcome. This is what happens if we co-exist, or collaborate with our sins. They will spread like leaven and gradually take over us!

Judges 2:1-3 “ The angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, “I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land I swore to give to your ancestors. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, ² and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.’ Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this? ³ And I have also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; they will become traps for you, and their gods will become snares to you.’”

Israel failed to do what God commanded. Their big mistake was to allow themselves to co-exist with the enemy. Soon they began to think they weren’t so bad. They made peace treaties with them, married them and lived with them. And so they dragged Israel down, constantly sapping their spiritual energy and ability to serve God.

Do we have any alliances and agreements with Satan in our lives? Do we harbour certain sins or wrong attitudes, certain bitterness or judgments of others, resentment of authority, certain desires for things that are wrong? Things like this can cripple our spiritual growth. Don’t collaborate with Satan!

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 ³“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” Rather than letting Satan keep in control of our minds, we must make ground on the offensive and bring our whole mind into captivity, not to Satan, but to Christ!

The resistance fighters in Europe were working with another Government, from outside, rather than the government that was currently in control of their country, the government of Hitler. By the fact that they were resisting Hitler, they were showing that they didn’t believe his government was right, and they were working for the return of the legitimate government of the country.

We also, as well as resisting the current god of this world by fighting against our sins, we also are preaching the return of the legitimate government of this world. In France, for example, when it fell to Hitler’s advance, General Charles de Gaulle fled to London. There, he directed and controlled a movement called “Free France” and invited all French patriots to join it and fight the Germans. This resistance movement spread through France. Some groups of Frenchmen called Maquis hid in hilly areas and fought the Germans.

Christ left the world as a nobleman going to receive His Kingdom and to return. He guides and leads His resistance fighters from heaven.

The resistance fighters in Europe had to keep in close contact with their provisional governments in exile, mostly Headquartered in London. Similarly we must keep in daily communication with God, the leader of the Government we are fighting for. And we share a code with Him for our messages—the Bible is a coded book that we can understand, but the rest of the world can’t.

The resistance fighters depended on arms and equipment to be supplied by their exiled governments and their liberators. They couldn’t provide much in the way of arms for themselves,

they depended mostly on parachute drops of ammunition and supplies to their secret hideouts. And so God provides us with armour to combat the wiles of Satan.

The armour of a spiritual resistance fighter is described in Ephesians 6:10-18—these are the things that will enable us to win our fight against sin!

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.

¹¹ Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

¹³ Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

When World War II ended, Hitler was defeated and the occupied countries were liberated, Charles de Gaulle returned to France triumphantly, and became the head of the new government there. Many other resistance fighters received high positions of authority after the war was over.

I think we can easily see the analogy that after our liberators come, and Christ returns with His armies to take over the world, His government will replace that of Satan, and His faithful resistance fighters will all be there to receive wonderful positions of authority as Kings and Priests ruling with Him.

So don't let your human nature deceive you into thinking you are at peace and everything is fine and dandy! This world is under occupation by Satan and his demonic forces. And they even have control of part of our minds! They have the world around us in total captivity, and they are like plundering soldiers trying to get our thoughts and minds in captivity to sin.

We are in a war every day of our lives, in the resistance army of Jesus Christ! Don't collaborate one tiny bit with the enemy. Let's go to battle every day and resist Satan with all of our might.