

The Faith Script

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“As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord’s way is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.” Psalm 18:30 (NIV)

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Pharmakeia: Christian Pharmacists on the Front Lines of Spiritual Warfare

As Christian pharmacists, how can we better prepare for the challenges that constantly confront us every day? Of the wide variety of challenges we face, I wonder how often we consider them to be a part of a larger spiritual battle. If we are in a battle, are we prepared? I began thinking of this while studying the Book of Revelation and the Greek word ‘pharmakeia’ in Revelation 9:21, 18:23, 21:8, and 22:15. What does this word mean and how does it apply to Christian pharmacists practicing today?

The definition of ‘pharmakeia’ according to New English Translation Bible notes is: “On the term φαρμακεία (farmakeia, “magic spells”) “the use of magic, often involving drugs and the casting of spells upon people – ‘to practice magic, to cast spells upon, to engage in sorcery, magic, sorcery.’”¹ There are several interpretations of this word and much has been written. It is beyond the scope of this article to go into detail for all of the definitions, but one interpretation is of particular interest. It involves the use of drugs to open pathways to demonic spirits. In other words, this definition is speaking of the use of mind-altering drugs such as the psychedelics. As I thought about this definition, I wondered how many of our daily challenges are the result of having to communicate with people using this type of illicit drugs. I am not saying that because our English words “*pharmacy*” and “*pharmacist*” have their origins from this Greek word that pharmacists are sorcerers or that the medicines we dispense should be avoided. Most patients that frequent pharmacies are in legitimate need of care (e.g. diabetic or hypertensive patients and children needing antibiotics). However, in the midst of taking care of our routine patients, we may be faced with communicating with individuals who use this type of illicit drugs. Their needs can range from a genuine need of a prescription or nonprescription drug, to less honorable reasons such as requesting a box of pseudoephedrine, passing a forged prescription, or attempting robbery. If these illicit drugs are connected with sorcery, as the definition suggests, there may be instances when we as pharmacists may be communicating with an individual influenced by demonic spirits. Herein lies the spiritual battle. We are on the front lines of the battle as we are face-to-face with this person. We have the power to succeed in this battle, but we have to choose to employ it.

Colossians 2:13-15 states: “*And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*” (NKJV) From these verses we see that Jesus’ death on the cross “disarmed” the demonic powers. The only power they have over us is what we allow them to have. The key for us as we enter into the battle is to be prepared. If we fail to prepare, we are entering the battle like unbelievers, exposed and vulnerable to the deception that awaits us.

How do we prepare? We prepare for pharmakeia like we should prepare for any other form of spiritual warfare. Individually, we need to put on the armor of God daily as described in Ephesians 6:10-18. Praying intercessory prayers for each other for protection from demonic attacks sent our way is vital. We can also pray scriptural prayers, lifting up God’s own words to Him. A wonderful

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resource for this is the book “The Sword of the Spirit, The Word of God: A Handbook for Praying God’s Word” by Joy Lamb. Ms. Lamb, in her book, suggests fasting once a week for breakfast and lunch only while praying for whatever specific issues you have listed.²

What would be the impact on our individual daily lives, the daily practice of our profession, and the lives of our patients if each of us as CPFI members prayed intercessory prayers daily and fasted weekly for each other? We need to realize that life is a spiritual battle and evil comes our way daily in all sorts of shapes and forms. As pharmacists we may come face-to-face with one specific form of evil, pharmakeia. As Christian pharmacists, we are indwelled with the Holy Spirit, who possesses the power to overcome spiritual forces. It is not a battle we can win alone. Will you choose to release the power of the Holy Spirit through daily prayer and weekly fasting? It is the only way to win the battle.

Daniel Spadaro, Pharm.D.
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