

The Fight We Face: A Strategy for Spiritual Victory

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March 9, 2013

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The Invisible War

What do radio waves, music, thoughts and emotions all have in common? Each one is invisible to the naked eye, but can be detected, heard, processed, felt and experienced by human beings. Invisible realities may be a good way to classify such mysterious elements of our world.

The Bible speaks of many things that are not seen, but all together real. Speaking of creation, the Bible says, “God's *invisible* qualities--his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20) The Word of God teaches that our focus in this life needs to be on what is unseen and eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:18) We are to live with spiritual eyes that are fixed upon Jesus Christ as if he were standing before us. (Hebrews 12:2)

The Scriptures make it clear that an entire reality of spiritual forces exist that cannot be witnessed by the naked eye. “For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities *of the unseen world*, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12, NLT)

We are at war. It is *not* a war fought on a physical battlefield, like the Middle East. It is *not* a war between individuals who cannot get along. It is *not* a war between believers and unbelievers or different religious or political groups. The war the Bible speaks of is *not* a war between human beings, although humans can often find themselves at war as a result of this unseen war. The Invisible War is between God's team and Satan's team.

The first strategy to winning this spiritual battle is to recognize that it exists. Ignoring the battle or being ignorant of it will not help. Wishing it would go away is of no value either. The first step to victory is coming to grips with one reality: you are at war.

The Good Guys and Bad Guys

Let us look at the teams, players and powers involved in this battle so we can better understand who is fighting this Invisible War. Dave Earley succinctly points out that there are good guys and bad guys in this spiritual conflict. The good guys are God, angels and believers in Jesus Christ. The bad guys are the world, the flesh, the devil and his demons.¹

The best news of all is that as a believer in Jesus Christ, God is on your side. (Roman 8:31) God the Father is a king who desires to expand his kingdom throughout the entire earth. (Matthew 6:10) Jesus Christ is the commander in chief and holds all authority.² Those of us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ have become his good soldiers. (2 Timothy 2:3) By God's Spirit within us, we have been sealed or marked as His own precious possession. (2 Corinthians 1:22) God's Spirit is greater than every external force in this world and empowers us to complete our mission. (1 John 4:4, Acts 1:8)

Not only is God on our side, He has also provided angels as heavenly back up. To be clear, angels are not “adorable, chubby babies with wings” or “pale, blue-eyed females with beautiful blond hair.”³ Angels are superhuman, but not divine beings. They are created by God for the purpose of worshipping and serving Him continually.⁴ Angels have been commissioned by God to minister and serve His followers. (Hebrews 1:14) Angels are at times sent by God to reveal and communicate His message to human beings.⁵

¹ Earley, Dave, “The War, The Warriors and The Warfare”, EVAN 670, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Slides 3-4.

² Medical Mission Response Online, <http://www.mmronline.org/Websites/MMR/files/Content/224119/Everydisciple.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2013).

³ Earley, Dave, “Winning the Unseen Battle”, EVAN 670, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Slide 11.

⁴ Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 457, 459.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 468.

Now introducing the bad guys: the world, the flesh, the devil and his demons.

Mark Bubeck gives an outstanding description of the world:

As our enemy, the world is the whole organized system, made up of varying and changing social, economic, materialistic, and religious philosophies which have their expression through the organizations and personalities of human beings. The world system in its function is a composite expression of the depravity of man and the intrigues of Satan's rule, combining in opposition to the sovereign rule of God.⁶

Additionally, the world we live in has been corrupted by sin and therefore exposes humanity to disease, sickness, pain, suffering, natural disasters and other physical depravities which were never part of God's original plan or creation. (Romans 8:22)

Every war story has a traitor, an insider who knows the most information about the good guys and can cause the greatest damage from within. In this spiritual war, the traitor is our flesh, the unredeemed nature and thought life within mankind that "tempts and wars against the spiritual man."⁷ "The flesh is intimately intertwined with our mind, our will, and our emotions, and prior to (one's) conversion, it pretty much controls a man's inner life."⁸ The flesh opposes our spiritual life with its evil lusts and desires. (Ro 8:6, 1 Jn 2:6)

Lastly, the supreme enemy of God and mankind is Satan and his demons. Satan is a "fallen angel" meaning he willfully chose to turn from his allegiance to God. Following his lead were other fallen angels, most commonly referred to as demons. "Demons, then, are angels created by God and thus were originally good; but they sinned and thus became evil."⁹ Satan and his cohorts seek to keep humanity from knowing God and doing His will.

⁶ Bubeck, Mark I. (1975-07-01). *The Adversary: The Christian Versus Demon Activity* (p. 47). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

⁷ Ibid. 28.

⁸ Ibid. 28.

⁹ Erickson, Millard J. (1998-08-01). *Christian Theology* (p. 472). Baker Academic. Kindle Edition.

Satan's Objective and Strategy

“Satan is the father of lies, and he seeks to keep people in bondage through deception.”¹⁰ (John 8:44) Satan uses his lies to tempt us, intimidate us, deceive us, accuse us, to steal the truth of God's Word from our hearts and fill our minds with doubt and fear. Satan's primary tactics are those of any military strategist – divide and conquer. Satan desires to cause division in our relationship with God and with people. Isolation is deadly and the wicked one knows it. Once alienated, we become vulnerable to his wiles and vices.

Satan does not play fair. He waits for when we are vulnerable and weak to pounce on us like a lion would its prey. (1 Peter 5:8) Satan is merciless. He does not cease to tempt us when we feel weak, tired, or lonely. “After fasting forty days and forty nights, (Jesus) was hungry. The tempter came to him.” (Matthew 4:2-3a) “Satan is a trained strategist, and an obstinate fighter. He refuses to acknowledge defeat until he must.”¹¹

Satan hates God and all of His creation, especially humankind. He seeks to keep those who do not know God in darkness and to keep those who know God from walking in victory. Satan hates to have his plans exposed. Pastor Dave Early woke up one morning with pain throughout his body. He went to his doctor and discovered he had twenty-two boils on his body! His (Christian) doctor asked what he was preaching about on Sunday. “Spiritual warfare,” he said. “I'm preaching on the devil and demons.” Realizing it was warfare he called upon intercessors to pray. All twenty-two boils disappeared by Friday!¹²

¹⁰ Anderson, Neil. *The Bondage Breaker: Overcoming Negative Thoughts, Irrational Feelings, Habitual Sins*. Sisters, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2006, 209.

¹¹Gordon, S. D. *Quiet Talks on Prayer*. Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: Destiny Image Publishers, 2003. Kindle Edition Location 285.

¹² Earley, Dave. *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High-Impact Leaders*. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 2008. 53-54.

The Victory has been Won

Many believers can feel intimidated when it comes to spiritual warfare as they consider the power of Satan. Truth be told, Satan is powerful. Underestimating his power or ignoring him completely is not wise. As long as we are in this world, believers will face tribulation and trials. (Jn 16:33) But the good news is that we are guaranteed victory. “But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 15:57)

History has shown that even after a war is won and the enemy is defeated, many battles carry on and lives are still lost despite the peace agreements that are signed. The same is true with the spiritual war between God and Satan. When Jesus Christ came to this earth, He was declaring war against Satan and all of his allies. Satan attempted to defeat Jesus by offering him the world’s riches and tempting him to disobey the Father. Jesus was tempted in every respect, yet was found without sin. (Hebrews 4:15) On the cross before Jesus gave up his spirit, he said, “It is finished.” (John 19:30) The fight had been won and Jesus was victorious. “Because God's children are human beings--made of flesh and blood--the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death.” (Heb 2:14 NLT)

As believers, we can live with confidence knowing that the victory of Jesus’ death on the cross provides us with victory over Satan and his powers. We may still need to fight the battle, but the war has been won! Similarly, imagine recording a football game on TV so that you can attend an important meeting at church. The meeting ends and before you leave the church, someone mistakenly tells you that your team won. You still go home to watch the recorded game. As you watch, no matter how many times your quarterback gets sacked, you maintain your composure because you know, “We already won the game!”

Your Position in Christ

Knowing that Jesus has won the battle against Satan is the fundamental basis for gaining victory over the Devil's wiles and any personal vices you may face. As a child of God, you need to understand that the position you have in this battle is one of a victor, not a victim. In Christ, we have the upper hand on Satan and evil. Anderson points out that a believer's position in Christ guarantees that they are accepted, secure and significant.¹³

The blood of Christ has freed us not only from our guilt and shame, but also from God's wrath and condemnation. "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:17) We have been adopted by God, redeemed and forgiven all of our sins. (Ephesians 1:5, Colossians 1:14) When God looks at us, He is pleased. The aroma of Christ's blood removes the stench of our sinfulness.

Not only are we fully accepted by God through Christ, we are also secure in Him. We do not receive eternal life when we die; we already have eternal life now. Our citizenship is in God's eternal kingdom. (Philippians 3:20) Our spiritual passport is marked, "Kingdom of Heaven". Nothing can separate us from Christ's love. (Ro 8:38)

As children of God, we have a unique purpose and significance. When Christ ascended into heaven, he poured out gifts upon his children so that we can all be used by Him to advance His kingdom. (Ephesians 4:7-11) We are now witnesses to the truth of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelations 1:2) We are God's co-workers, the instruments He uses to redeem the world through Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 5:17-20, 6:1) God has given us power to preach his Word, to see signs and miracles following and to see other captives set free from the grips of Satan's lies and deception. (Acts 1:8, Mk 16:17, Ga 5:1)

¹³ Anderson, Neil. *The Bondage Breaker: Overcoming Negative Thoughts, Irrational Feelings, Habitual Sins*. 43-45.

The Weapons of Our Warfare

Satan has lost his possession of you, but he still seeks to influence you, deceive you, tempt you and if possible control you.¹⁴ The primary means he accomplishes this task is through “strongholds”. The word stronghold comes from a Greek word meaning to fortify or figuratively a castle or fortress. Strongholds are mental blockages based on Satan’s lies.

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We 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. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. (2 Corinthians 10:4-6)

God has equipped every believer with weaponry to fight this spiritual battle. The weapons we fight with are not material or fleshly, but spiritual. The Apostle Paul compares our spiritual garments to those of a Roman soldier. (Ephesians 6:10-18) We have the helmet of salvation to protect our minds. The truth of God’s Word keeps us from deception. We have the shield of faith to protect us from Satan’s lies and accusations. We have the breastplate of righteousness to protect our heart from guilt and condemnation. Our feet are fitted with the Gospel of peace to follow the Commander’s marching orders. We have the Holy Spirit who brings to mind God’s Word in a way that is timely and purposeful which is our sword. And we have the ability to pray at all times to the Father.

Our responsibility as good soldiers of Jesus Christ is to daily put on the full armor of God. An armed, vigilant and sober warrior is mindful of his enemy, but an unarmed one is Satan’s target. (1 Pt 5:8) We must also renew our mind by studying and meditating on God’s Word. (Ro 12:1) As we go about our day, we take captive every thought and precept that enters our mind and seeks to steal our peace. “Jesus, I give you this thought.”

¹⁴ Anderson, Neil. *The Bondage Breaker: Overcoming Negative Thoughts, Irrational Feelings, Habitual Sins*. 113.

Setting Captives Free

The goal of every Christian is not just to be free from Satan's grip, but to see others find freedom in Jesus Christ our Lord. We are on assignment. We are not looking to retreat or back down. Instead, we seek to advance the kingdom of God in the world.

Satan is not going to willingly hand over those who are captive to his lies and deceit. "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Aggressive warfare praying ... represents one of the greatest needs of intercession in this day. There are multitudes about us who, though they may be notorious sinners, are some of the other sheep that our Lord says He must bring (see Jn 10:16). Willingness to pray with aggressive prayer of this type is mighty and powerful in setting them free.¹⁵

Anderson suggests there are four ways we need to pray for the lost. First, we need to pray for more laborers and Christian witnesses to share the Gospel. (Matthew 9:37, 38) Secondly, we need to pray for God to give unbelievers life. (John 10:10). Third, we need to pray against thoughts that rise up against the knowledge of God. Finally, we need to pray that the eyes of the lost be opened to the truth that is able to set them free in Christ.¹⁶

In addition to praying for those who have not yet come into the light, we need to share with them the light of God's word. "The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple." (Psalm 119:130) Not only do we need to share God's Word, we need to live it out by faith, love and good deeds so people may know that our testimony is valid and God's Word is true. "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

¹⁵ Bubeck, Mark I. *The Adversary: The Christian Versus Demon Activity* (p. 107).

¹⁶ Anderson, Neil. *The Bondage Breaker: Overcoming Negative Thoughts, Irrational Feelings, Habitual Sins*. 107.

The Only Way Satan Can Defeat Us

Since we are fully purchased by God and a possession of the Lord's we are in good hands and our future both now and in eternity is secure. The only way Satan can defeat us is if we give up the fight. He cannot defeat us any other way. It is for this reason that one of Satan's primary attacks against believers is to demoralize and discourage us.

Weariness should not be taken lightly. The feelings of weariness can make us sick of living and even desirous of death, just ask Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), Job (Job 3:16-17, 6:8,9, 10:1) or Jonah (Jonah 4:8) Weariness can also make us more vulnerable and susceptible to the enemy's attacks which may come in the form of discouragement in our hearts or in the guise of a "good friend". (1 Peter 5:8, Deuteronomy 25:18, Job 16:7, Job 22:7) We must be cautious of the company we surround ourselves with when we feel weary and find good friends who will lift us up and encourage us.¹⁷

Jesus promises to provide the refreshment we need if we will simply come to him and lay our burdens down at his feet. (Matthew 11:28) "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Gal 6:9)

Summary

In summary, let us remember these simple truths. We are at war. We have the Divine Trinity and good angels on our side. The world, the flesh, the devil and his demons are against us. Satan seeks to divide and conquer us, but through Jesus Christ we already have the victory. In Christ we find true acceptance, security and significance. God has given us spiritual gifts as well as spiritual weapons to fight our daily battle. Our objective is not just to be free, but to see others find freedom as well. Prayer, the Word of God and a good Christian witness will draw others to the Lord. As long as we don't quit, we win!

¹⁷ Christian Growth Network, "Refreshment for the Christian Weary Soul". http://www.christiangrowthnetwork.com/refreshment_for_weary_souls.html, (accessed March 7, 2013).

Spiritual Warfare Prayer

The below biblically based prayer can be prayed at the start of your day, whenever you feel down, defeated or when you are in need of power or refreshment.

Dear Heavenly Father, I come to You boldly in the name of Your Son Jesus seeking your mercy and grace for my life. This day, this hour, this moment is in your hands. As an act of my will, I submit every aspect of my life totally and completely to You. Send angels to minister to me. On the basis of Your Word, I resist the devil and he must flee from me.

I intercede not only on my behalf, but also on behalf of my family members (say their names). I cover them in my prayers and seek Your grace for every need they have. I thank you for the blood of Jesus that washes me pure of all my sins. I repent of any and every sin I have committed in thought, word and deed against You. Send Your Holy Spirit to convict me of any unknown or ignored sin and bring me to a deep and true repentance.

I humble myself before you and put on the full armor of God. I place the helmet of salvation on my head, the belt of truth around my waist, the breastplate of righteousness over my chest and I shod my feet with the Gospel of peace. In my spirit, my soul and my body, I ask for the Sword of the Spirit, Your Word to quicken me. I take up the shield of faith and wield it against every fiery dart that Satan or his demons throw against my mind.

Fill me afresh Lord with Your Holy Spirit. Come upon me with power from on High that I may be Your Witness, Your Warrior and Your Ambassador. Fan into flame every spiritual gift you have given me and move mightily through my life. Fill me with love for everyone I come in contact with and help me to be a shining witness to every person I meet who does not yet know You. I pray for the salvation of (list names) and ask that you work even now to remove the blinders from their eyes that they may see the glory of your salvation. Open their hearts and minds to You. I ask these things in Jesus' name.

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