

Spiritual Warfare – Thriving in a Dying World

Many ministers and ministries suffer tremendous setbacks because they underestimate the power and activity of the enemy. This section addresses that critically important topic.

Spiritual warfare involves all manner of spiritual beings. The battle wages primarily unseen, on the spiritual plane. Sometimes it flows over into the physical realm – our world as in Daniel 10:1-4. Satan desperately wants to control and destroy this world. In Scripture, he is called, “the destroyer.” He wants to destroy all that is beautiful, and all whom God loves.

Unfortunately, I must tell you that the Bible notes that what is currently keeping Satan and demonic activity in check – and will continue to do so until the Rapture, is the “Restrainer” (2 Thess. 2:5-12). We believe that restrainer is the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit largely resides in the hearts of believers, when believers are taken away in the Rapture, we expect that demonic activity will increase greatly, particularly during the last part of the Tribulation period. The book of Revelation speaks of this.

During the Tribulation, the Antichrist will cause much pain and suffering. The entire demonic world will share in this evil, but Satan’s rule will not last. Jesus will return at the end of the Tribulation, defeat the armies of the Antichrist, and cast Satan and his demons into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:1-3). This will take place before the Millennial Reign of Christ begins. Christ is the ultimate Victor! Victory is coming (1 Cor.15:57).

The study of spiritual warfare encompasses both angels and demons and their activity in the spiritual and physical world. It is a vast and complex study which, I believe, even the best minds only partially understand. Still, the Word, prayer, and solid trust in the Lord provides all a believer needs to overcome in this difficult time. Every believer needs to know several fundamental truths about spiritual warfare.

1) Spiritual Warfare and the Devil are Real

Many suggest that Satan and demons are symbolic representations of evil, not literal beings with a will, personality, and power. Others believe angels are departed ancestors, or that miniature angelic figurines hung around the house provide protection. Neither is true.

Spiritual warfare is real. Angels were never human – they are a different, special order of divinely created beings.

Scripture explains that Satan has a plan or objective (Luke 4:1-13), desires to destroy (Luke 22:31), attacks (2 Cor 12:7), lies (John 8:44), accuses (Rev. 12:10), deceives and ensnares (2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Tim.3:6-7). Those are all characteristics of a being, not an idea.

Satan is wise and powerful. Do not underestimate him. Still, he and his demons can be overcome (Luke 10:17-21), and his reign will come to an end (Rev. 19-20).

2) Spiritual Warfare Impacts our Realm

The story of Job, and many other stories in Scripture, illustrate how demonic activity can have a devastating impact on our world. Demons can attack, oppress, tempt, and even possess. They can cause calamities and illnesses. Please carefully study the closing information explaining how to prepare for and guard against spiritual attacks.

3) Satan is Not Easily Deterred

Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:12-17, and Revelation 12:3-4 reference Satan's rebellion and the war in heaven. Satan lost, but that will not stop him from challenging God's plans in the future (see Rev. 19-20). Satan is aware of God's power and his prophetic certain future, yet he is not deterred. He presses on with his plan – blinded by rage.

In Luke 4 Satan tempts Jesus three times. Each time his efforts fail. That story ends with Satan leaving Jesus *but waiting for an opportune time to attack again*. Satan is persistent and tenacious. Do not make the mistake of believing that because you had a victory over temptation yesterday, Satan will not try again tomorrow. 1 Peter 5:8 cautions believers to "stay alert." 1 Cor. 10:12 notes, *"Therefore, let him who thinks he stands firm beware lest he fall."*

4) Demonic Activity Imitates Truth

Paul writes that *"Satan masquerades as an angel of light"* (2 Cor. 11:14). He lures with false promises and persuades with half-truths (Gen. 3:4). Remember, he is an expert at what he does. The many false religions and philosophies of today testify to this. But take heart. You can resist him (James 4:7) and you can overcome temptation (1 Cor. 10:13). Keep these four important things in mind:

- **Know that victory is not by your wisdom or strength** Victory comes from the Father (James 4:7a), the Son (1 Cor. 15:57), and the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Even the powerful archangel Michael, when contending with Satan, did not rely on his own strength but said, *"the Lord rebuke you"* (Jude 9).
- **Commit every matter to prayer** Ask God to lead and guide you. Ask Him to confirm His leading. Remain in constant prayer. Call out to Him with questions, and in times of need. Invoke the power and covering that comes with Jesus' name.

- **Memorize and quote Scripture** The Psalms, particularly Psalm 119:11 and 105, note the importance of memorizing Scripture. Hide it in your heart, and draw on it for counsel, strength, and guidance. Even Jesus used Scripture as an effective defense against Satan. I find that interesting because we view everything Jesus said to be “Red-letter Scripture.” However, when Jesus is tempted (Matt. 4), He does not speak His own word, He quotes Scripture, what we now call the Old Testament. He quotes from the writings of Moses, which were about 1,450 years old at the time. He did not need to do this. I believe He did it for us – to show us that He had confidence in the integrity of the sacred writings. They were already ancient in His day and these ancient words still hold incredible power.
- **Put on the full armor of God** Ephesians 6:10-18 presents a picture of the well prepared believer. The Helmet of Salvation provides a holy covering guarding the mind (see 2 Cor. 10:3-5).
- The Breastplate of Righteousness is the radiance of our witness and guards our heart.
- The Belt of Truth represents the Word of God. Note that in Roman days, the breastplate was fitted into the belt – without the proper belt the breastplate would be compromised.
- The Sword of the Spirit is the penetrating, powerful Word of God. It is the only offensive piece of armor mentioned.
- The Shoes “shod with the preparation of peace” represent the sure foundation of the Gospel message on which we stand.
- The Shield of Faith is the wondrous protection believers enjoy when faith is strong, and we are in right relationship with Christ.

This does not mean that believers will not endure trials and suffer, but it does mean that believers are never alone. God provides help, salvation is sure, and eternal reward is promised.