

Spiritual Warfare: Our Friends and Enemies

Purpose: To be informed of the invisible spiritual forces and the weapons of our warfare.

Objectives:

1. To know what the Bible says about angels, demons, and Satan.
2. To know specific weapons for specific spiritual enemies.
3. To have an individual plan of action for your own life, your disciples lives, and your Target Area.

I. Introduction: The story of the greatest battle of them all

"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. Satan is equally pleased by the Materialist and the Magician."

C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Preface.

II. We must be briefed before we fight!

A. We have powerful hidden allies: angels

1. Their existence: Most people don't believe in them simply because there is no empirical evidence. However the Bible clearly teaches their reality (2 Kings 6:15-17).
2. Their nature:
 - a. They are personal (I Peter 1:12; Luke 2:13; Jude 6)
 - b. They are spirit-beings (Hebrews 1:14)
 - c. They are referred to in the masculine gender (Genesis 18:1-2)
 - d. They are organized – having rank (Jude 9, Daniel 10:13).
3. Their ministry:
 - a. To Christ, primarily surrounding His birth and death (Matthew 1:20; 28:2).
 - b. To believers to help us and protect us (Psalms 91:11; Hebrews 1:14).
 - c. To the nations of the world, both to care for them and to execute judgement (Daniel 10:21, 12:1, Revelation 8-10)
 - d. To unbelievers, agents in God's plan and executors of death (II Samuel 24:15-16; Acts 12:23; 2 Kings 19:35)

B. We have an awesome but beatable enemy: Lucifer, Satan. Every New Testament writer refers him to.

1. His existence: He is depicted as very real and personal (II Corinthians 11:3, Revelation 12:17, II Timothy 2:26). Jesus had a personal encounter with him (Matthew 4:1-11)

2. His nature:
 - a. He has the limitations that go with being a finite, created being but he is of a higher order than humans are (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-15).
 - b. He is the "god of this age" (II Corinthians 4:4).
 - c. His nature is reflected in his names: Satan – the adversary (Job 1:6); the devil – chief opponent of God (John 8:44; Revelation 12:10).
 3. His downfall: Ezekiel 28:3-10.
 4. His activity:
 - a. He comes to "steal, kill and destroy." (John 10:10)
 - b. He wants to usurp, counterfeit or eliminate the works of God (2 Corinthians 11:3, 13-15).
 - c. He offers "short cuts" to God's will. (Genesis 3:1-5).
 - d. He utilizes various subtle schemes (Ephesians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 2:10,11)
- C. We have a horrible hoard arrayed against us: demons (Ephesians 6:12)
1. Their existence:
 - a. They are real and active today.
 - b. They are angels who fell with Satan (Revelation 12:4).
 - c. There are two kinds: Some are in bonds in pits of darkness (II Peter 2:4, Jude 6), and some are roaming the earth and able to enter people or animals (Luke 8:26-40).
 - d. Eventually all demons will end up in the Lake of Fire (Matthew 25:41).
 2. Their nature:
 - a. They are spirit beings who share the same characteristics of personality with other angels.
 - b. They have a system of information to promote: false doctrine (I Timothy 4:1-3).
 3. Their activity:
 - a. Their goal is to extend the domain of Satan (Matthew 12:24-30).
 - b. Satan is not actually omnipresent (Job 1:7; 1 Peter 5:8).

III. We must be trained to use our weapons!

A. Is there an enemy in our camp?

Question: Can a Christian be demon possessed? Given that we are created new by the Holy Spirit at conversion/regeneration, and that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the answer is no. But if a Christian turns his or her faith away from Christ, either by conscious choice to seek another spirit, or by disobedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit, that person will lose power, confidence, fruitfulness, fellowship and peace. The person is still a child of God and is kept by the Holy Spirit, but they are not living in and blessed by the walk with Christ they could have.

- B. What is clear is that Satan and demons can influence believers and this influence is not permanent.

"Whatever Satan or demons can do to a believer, and whether from without or within as their base of operation, their control cannot be permanent and eternal. John clearly declares that the evil one cannot "touch" the one who is born of God (I John 5:18). The word "touch" here involves the purpose of harming--Satan cannot harm the believer . . . Satan can never hang on to the believer with the purpose of harming him, for that believer belongs eternally and irrevocably to God."
Charles Ryrie, Basic Theology, p. 168.

- C. A balanced perspective

We need to be aware of Satan, demons, the evil forces of the world and the possibilities of our own sin; but we also need to know that greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world. (I John 4:4)

- D. We must fight on more than one front!

1. The fight against Satan: know your weapons!
 - a. Our Lord's prayers for us (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34; John 17:15)
 - b. Respect him (Jude 8-10)
 - c. Be watchful and alert (I Peter 5:8)
 - d. Resist him (James 4:7)
 - e. Walk consistently in the Spirit (Colossians 2:6,3:1-2)
 - f. Memorize Scriptures that will be your protection in temptation (I Corinthians 10:13; Matthew 4:1-11; Ephesians 6:17)

2. Put on your armor (Ephesians 6:10-18):
 - a. Having put on truth
 - b. Having put on righteousness
 - c. Having put on peace
 - d. Take faith
 - e. Take future salvation
 - f. Take the word of God

Protect your flank: we have three enemies. Although our foes are interrelated (I John 2:16; II Corinthians 4:4; II Peter 1:4) and often join forces against us (I John 5:19; Matthew 4:3-9), there are distinct biblical strategies for combating each antagonist.

3. Know your battle!
 - a. The World: We are not to love it (1 John 2:15) or be conformed to it but be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2), have a solid faith (1 John 5:4), and abide in Christ (John 16:33).
 - b. The Flesh: Make no provision for it -- (Romans 13:14); run from lust and chase righteousness (1 Timothy 6:10,11; 2 Timothy 2:22; Genesis 39:12); walk in the Spirit (Romans 8:2-8; Galatians 5:16) and be alert in prayer (Matthew 26:41).
 - c. The Devil: Resist him firm in your faith and he will run from you! (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9). Resist him through proper use of Scripture (Matthew 4:1-11; Ephesians 6:17), abiding in Christ (1 John 4:4), and being alert in prayer (1 Peter 5:8; 4:7).
 - d. Don't get your enemies confused and use the wrong weapon:
 - 1) Renewing your mind is not much use against the Devil; he's smarter than you are. He would love you to become overly fascinated with him! (1 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 2:24)
 - 2) Running from the Devil is risky
 - 3) Trying to stand up to temptation and resist it is a sucker's play
 - 4) Fleeing the world doesn't work (John 17:18-19).
 - 5) Casting out demons is not the answer to every spiritual problem.
 - 6) Prayer, confrontation, counseling

IV. Strongholds

- A. Spiritual warfare is real. In some parts of the world it is much more evident than in other parts. As more and more people get involved in spiritism, the occult, or cults, there will be more and more manifestations of spiritual warfare. But we are talking about spiritual warfare and how it effects all of us in our evangelism and personal discipleship that we do in the community through our churches.

In Second Corinthians 10:3-5 we read: "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not 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." Paul saw the battle as being real but also knew how to fight the battle. In order to understand this passage better we need to define one of the words - strongholds.

Stronghold: a fortress, a well defended area, often set on the top of a hill so as to make it difficult to attack. Spiritually, these are the areas of our lives that habitually keep us from the knowledge of God. They go along with the "arguments and every pretension" that are mentioned. Hebrews 12:1 calls these "the sins which so easily entrap us." These can be found in both Christians and non-Christians. Sometimes, a stronghold is combined with demonic activity that may be geographically based.

A number of years ago a pastor said that a member of the church brought him a tract

based upon this passage. The tract challenged people to take seriously this passage. The pastor and some men in the church decided to put the Scripture to a test. They decided to pray specifically for seven people that had never responded to the Gospel. One of those that had never responded had the problem of pride. He always felt the he was better than the church people. Another had the problem of procrastination. He always said that someday he would respond. The prayer group began praying to God to specifically destroy those strongholds in the lives. Within in a short time one of the men had responded to the Gospel. Then another one responded. They all responded to the Gospel within a short period of time. Revival swept through the church.

How can we learn from this situation? Can God work in and through us like this? Yes! There is no doubt that God still works strongly today. God may not respond to your prayers exactly as He did in the previous story. He may not respond to your specific requests as you would like Him to. He will respond to the prayers of His children who are walking with Him, and He will respond in such a way that HE gets the glory. Let's take him at his word and believe Him to work specifically in the lives of those who do not believe.

How can we combat against spiritual strongholds?

B. Strongholds Exist in the Hearts of People.

1. In non-Christians these are the areas of their lives that keep them from coming to Christ. Many times we need to study the culture to understand what influences the culture has had upon individuals. Also, some families have problems within them that hold people back from a knowledge of God.
2. After getting to know the person well enough to understand what the strongholds are in his life, begin to pray specifically to God asking Him to destroy that stronghold. Only God can uproot a deeply seated stronghold.
3. Pray with others for the individuals.
4. Expect God to answer your prayers. Sometimes the most difficult person is the one who God has chosen to be a mighty warrior for Him. Think of the Apostle Paul. God does change people.

C. Application

Begin to think through the possible strongholds in some of the people with whom you have been sharing Christ. Remember to then pray specifically for those people. Find other people who will pray with you and continue to pray together as a group. Each week get an update and add requests to the list as you see fit. God will do miracles in the lives of people. He is waiting for us to ask.

V. Conclusion:

- A. Avoid overemphasis on demons or possession. Ministry is not primarily a series of 'power encounters' and Christian growth involves far more than simply casting out one demon after another.

"Remember, first, that the Bible distinguished between the demonic and disease. Second, Satan would have us overestimate his power and activity and become occupied with his power and influence, thus causing fear and imbalance in our thinking. Third, sensitive souls cannot handle the uncertainty and fear created by such overemphasis. Fourth, Satan would love to divide churches over this issue. Fifth, Satan would encourage pride in those who cast out demons. Jesus said not to rejoice in our power over demons, but in our relationship to Him (Luke 10:20). This relationship should be our joy and the main emphasis of our preaching."
Fred Dickason, *Angels Elect and Evil*, pp. 191-192.

- B. There is one strategy that is always appropriate: use God's Word! In his 40 days of temptation (Matthew 4:1-11) Jesus faced all three enemies together. For each, his answer was the same, "It is written . . .!"

C. The Success of the Spirit over habitual sin

1. Identify the situation in which a bad habit exists.
2. Determine what your response has been.
3. Determine what your biblical response should be.
4. Develop a mindset of proper response.
5. Watch for an opportunity to practice your new lifestyle.
6. Perhaps ask a trusted friend to pray for you and help hold you accountable (James 5:16).

Discussion Questions

*****Some answers to these questions may be deeply personal and may not be appropriate to share in a group. Use discretion, and don't feel pressured to "share all." In question #2, be careful not to mention others by name, nor to turn this into a "gossip session."***

1. In what ways have you seen the world, the flesh, the devil, and strongholds in your life? From what you have read in the Scriptures and in this lesson, what "plan of action" or steps do you need to trust God with?

