

Principle #15

Spiritual Warfare

the invisible battle



Principles of Discipleship

There is one final aspect of our life in Christ that most Christians tend to forget, and it is one of the most crucial. We think of dealing with God, with ourselves and other people, and with the world - yet we often fail to recognize that there is dark side to spiritual reality. This “dark side” is alive, intelligent, and actively working against all that is good and life-producing. It seeks to hinder our personal progress even as it tries to stop the overall progress of the kingdom of God. All of the apostles were well acquainted with the reality of spiritual warfare, just as Jesus was constantly confronted with it. So how should we think about it, and what can we do to emerge victorious?

Ephesians 6—The Armor of God

^{6:10} Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor 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 armor 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 saints.

Main Passage: *Ephesians 6:10-20*

What do you learn about spiritual warfare just from verses 10-13?

What are the “principalities and powers”? (Use a Bible dictionary.)

What is the *armor of God* (vs 14-17), and how does it work?

What aspect of warfare does he describe in verses 18-20?

Other Key Passages:

What does each of these references contribute to the overall Biblical picture of spiritual warfare?

- *Ezekiel 2:11-19*
- *Job 1:1-12*
- *Colossians 1:13*
- *James 4:7*
- *1 Peter 5:8*
- *2 Corinthians 10:3,4*
- *John 8:44*
- *Revelation 12:10*

Discuss the following quote by C.S. Lewis:*

"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. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."

* One of the best books about spiritual warfare is C.S. Lewis' book, [The Screwtape Letters](#), a very creative fictional account of two devils trying to destroy one man's spiritual life.



What would you answer if you were asked, “What is the thing that gives you the most difficulty in life; of what does the struggle of life consist?” Many would say that it is other human beings. There are the Communists, for instance, who are always causing difficulty. They can never let anything rest in the world but are forever stirring up some kind of trouble somewhere. And then there are the Republicans, or, if you are on the other side, the Democrats. They never let anything rest either but are always making difficulties. In their bullheaded obstinacy they are continually refusing to “see the light”.

And let us not forget the Internal Revenue Service. Certainly they are devils, if there ever were any. And the county tax department! And don’t leave out your wife and her family! Or your husband and his family. Then, what about our ancestors?

Our heredity is at fault. It is because we are Scotch or Irish or Italian – our family has always been this way; we have always had a hot temper. And so it goes.

But the Apostle says that you cannot explain life adequately on that level. The battle is not against flesh and blood. Rather, it is against the whole human race that certain principalities and powers, world rulers of darkness, wicked spirits in high places are set. There is your problem, Paul says. Those are the enemies we are up against. And it is not just Christians who are opposed by these, but every man, everywhere. The whole race is opposed by the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness. There is Paul’s positive explanation of the struggle of life.

I hasten to say that this declaration will only be fully believed and understood by Christians. The world either distorts it to the point of ridiculousness or it rejects it as unacceptable to the intelligent mind. Superstition has taken this great revelation and distorted it, twisted it, reduced it to a ridiculous pantheon of goblins, witches, spooks, and ghouls.

I am very well aware of the disdain, even contempt, with which the biblical concept of the devil and his cohorts, this kingdom of darkness, these principalities and powers and wicked spirits

in high places, is received in many circles. There are those who say, “Are you going to insult our intelligence by talking about a personal Devil? Surely you are not going back to those medieval concepts and tell us that the Devil is the root of all our problems?”

I once spent an evening in Berlin discussing the whole problem with four or five intelligent churchmen – men who knew the Bible intimately. Though we never once opened a Bible, we spent the whole evening together discussing various passages, and I never referred to a single passage that they were not aware of and could not quote almost verbatim. Yet all of them rejected the idea of a Devil. They could not believe in a personal Devil. At the end of the evening they admitted that, in their rejection of the Devil, they also had no answers to the conundrums which life was continually presenting. We had to leave it there.

I am reminded of the story Billy Graham tells in response to this idea that there is no Devil. A certain boxer was being badly beaten in a match. Battered and bruised, he leaned over the ropes and said to his trainer, “Please throw in the towel! This guy is killing me!” The trainer responded, “Oh no, he’s not. He’s not even hitting you. He hasn’t laid a glove on you!” And the boxer replied, “Well, then, I wish you’d watch that referee – somebody is sure hitting me!” In similar fashion, the questions we must ask when challenged with this idea that there is no Devil are, “How do you explain what is going on in the world? How do you explain the entrenched evil in human affairs?”



Satan's power is in the lie. Jesus said: "The devil...does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Satan has no power over you except what you give him by failing to take every thought captive and thus being deceived into believing his lies.

Since Satan's primary weapon is the lie, your defense against him is the truth. Dealing with Satan is not a power encounter; it's a truth encounter. When you expose Satan's lie with God's truth, his power is broken. That's why Jesus said: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). That's why He prayed: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one... Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:15,17, NIV). That's why the first piece of armor Paul mentions for standing against the schemes of the devil is the belt of truth (Eph. 6:14). Satan's lie cannot withstand the truth any more than the darkness of night can withstand the light of the rising sun.

What is your part in the battle? First, you must be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:2). How do you renew your mind? By filling it with God's Word. In order to win the battle for your mind you must "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col. 3:15) and let "the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (Col. 3:16). As you continue to stockpile your mind with God's truth, you will equip yourself to recognize the lie and take it captive.

Second, Peter directs us to prepare our minds for action (1 Peter 1:13). Do away with fruitless fantasy. To imagine yourself doing things without ever doing anything is dangerous. You will lose touch with reality. But if you imagine yourself obeying the truth, you can motivate yourself toward productive living- as long as you follow through by doing what you imagine.

Third, take every thought captive in obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Practice threshold, first-frame thinking. Evaluate every thought by the

truth and don't give place to the lie.

Fourth, turn to God. When your commitment to Plan A is being challenged by Plan B thoughts from the world, the flesh or the devil, bring it to God in prayer (Phil. 4:6). By doing so you are acknowledging God and exposing your thoughts to His truth. Your double-mindedness will dissolve "*and the peace of God...shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*" (v.7).

SCRIPTURE

Which verses significantly impacted you and why?



ARTICLE

What did you personally glean from this article?



PRINCIPLE

Summarize the truth you've learned in a concise statement:



LIFE APPLICATION

1. In Revelation 12:10 we read that Satan is the “accuser of the brethren”. What is the practical application of this when it comes to gossip, and how should we respond when we see ourselves getting involved in it?

2. In John 8:44 we see Christ refer to Satan as the “father of lies”. What are some of the lies you've believed about God, yourself, and others? What specific truths do you need to believe to fight against those lies?

