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Grace Bible Church, NY
July 26, 2020

Spiritual Warfare Boot-camp Selected Scriptures

Introduction

We are nearing the end of topical sermons I have been asked to preach. I am looking forward to getting into an exposition of 1 & 2 Thessalonians in September, but until then these remaining topics are important ones to address. I was going to preach on a different subject this morning until I remembered that we do not have a children's church operating at the present time. I do not have a date yet for when we will start that up again since it presents a logistical challenge for us, but if day camps and day care centers can operate, then we should be able to figure out something so that we can restart our various children's ministries. We have already set aside Saturday, August 29 as a children's activity day. We do not yet have it all planned out, but we believe it is important for us to resume our ministry to children. It will be a day in which our children will be able to have a lot of fun together, but it will be a day for us to be able to teach them about our Lord at a level they can understand. (By the way, just to set your mind a little at ease, studies out of Europe where schools resumed in May & June are showing that children are at extremely low risk for either COVID-19 or transmission of it).

This morning I want to address the topic of Spiritual Warfare. I have addressed this many times in the past which includes some extensive series on it. Diane will be teaching on this topic in depth again fairly soon when she reaches Ephesians 6:10 in her ladies Bible study on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. Today will be more a boot-camp sermon on the topic designed to accomplish three main objectives. First, I want you to be aware of the reality of the spiritual battle that rages all around us. Second, I want to briefly go over the armor God has already provided for fighting in this war. Third, I want to encourage you that victory is assured if you will follow God's simple commands concerning it. Those who are true Christians have no need to be afraid of the devil or his demons. However, those who are not followers of the Lord Jesus have every reason to be terrified.

The Origin of Spiritual Warfare - Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, Genesis 3

Spiritual warfare began sometime fairly soon after God completed the work of Creation and rested on the seventh day. Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:11-15 both give some insight into the beginning of this spiritual war. Both passages speak against a particular person (the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14 and the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28), but both passages also jump to speak against a being that is beyond human. In Isaiah 14 it is the "*star of the morning*," translated as Lucifer in the KJV, that has fallen from heaven but is proud and arrogant and is determined to ascend back to heaven to make himself like the Most High (God) and have a throne that is above the stars of God. In Ezekiel 28 is the "*anointed cherub who covers*" that was created in perfection and beauty and was in Eden, the garden of God, until unrighteousness was found in him.

We understand from these passages and others that Satan, also known by several other names and titles such as the devil, the accuser of the brethren, the adversary, prince of the power of the air, the serpent, the great dragon, the evil one, the father of lies, and the god of this age, has set himself against the Lord God and seeks to usurp Him. That usurpation includes both trying to gain for himself what only belongs to God and trying to turn other beings, angels and humans, away from God to something else.

While we do not know when the war in heaven occurred, the logical conclusion is that probably occurred early on since demon worship (idolatry) occurs early in human history. Revelation 12:4 indicates that a third of the angelic host joined in Satan's rebellion and fell with him. Those fallen angels are now known as demons.

We do know the relative time of when the devil's attack on humanity began since it is recorded in Genesis 3. It could have been very soon after Creation or it could have been a few years, but before Adam and Eve had their first child, a son they named Cain, the devil made his move to bring them into his sphere of influence and make them sinful creatures as himself. As I read through this passage, notice the devil's method of attack. He is rightly called a slanderer and the father of lies as he deceives Eve through perverting what are normal human desires. While we would be shocked at a talking animal, Eve did not consider it unusual at that time, and the devil spoke through a serpent to hide his true identity. He is still a deceiver disguising himself even as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:4).

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" ² The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.' " ⁴ The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! ⁵ "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. Genesis 3:1-7

Satan slanders God and disparages His character and then uses normal human desires for food, beauty and wisdom to entice Eve to disobey God under a false belief that God was holding something good back from her. She broke God's commandment and then gave it to Adam who also then broke God's command through there is no question that he did know better. Spiritual warfare began that day and Satan won the first round as mankind fell into sin and became cursed along with Creation. However, on that same day, the plan of redemption was also proclaimed with God's declaration that the seed of the woman would one day bruise or crush the serpent's head.

Satan's basic strategy has never changed. He slanders and lies to get people to believe things that are not true about God or reality, then uses man's own desires for his flesh, his eyes and his pride to entice him into sinful ways of fulfilling those desires. Satan tried this same strategy on Jesus (Matthew 4), but was unsuccessful because Jesus knew the truth and was committed to following and fulfilling His Father's will no matter what. That is same strategy we must use if we are to resist Satan's efforts to tempt us. We must know God and His word and be committed to living for Him according to His commands.

The Reality of Spiritual Warfare - Daniel 10, Ephesians 6:10-12

Most people tend to think of spiritual warfare in terms of its overt manifestations leading to either great fear or throwing it all into the category of myth and ignoring it. Both of those are wrong responses and both are very dangerous. Spiritual warfare is very real, but we do not need to fear it, and whether you are aware of it or not, you are constantly in a battle against it.

We are going to examine Ephesians 6:10-19 a little more closely later, but I want you to carefully note the beginning of this passage and what it reveals about the nature of spiritual warfare. ¹⁰ "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

First, note that the battle is both a tangible part of daily life here on this earth and it is something that is also happening in spiritual realms which we cannot perceive. It is both our own personal struggle against these forces of evil in daily life that manifest themselves in using people of regular flesh and blood, and it is something that is also occurring in heavenly places. Second, note that it exists on many

levels since there is a hierarchy of forces - rulers, powers, world forces and spiritual forces in heavenly places. Third, note that these evil entities will use people to carry out their wicked schemes, our battle is actually against them and not the people of flesh and blood that are being used as their pawns.

Turn over to Daniel 10 because it gives us some insight into the unseen battle that rages around us on a spiritual plane that ranges from personal to national levels. The chapter begins by recording that Daniel received a message and a vision that caused him to mourn for three weeks. At the end of that time while he was by the Tigris river, he saw a man whose appearance was like lightning, whose eyes were like flaming torches and had arms and feet that looked like polished bronze and who spoke with a voice that sounded like a tumult - a roaring. It caused Daniel to faint. This angelic being then touches Daniel who is then able to rise to his hands and knees though still trembling. The angel then reveals that he had been sent on the first day Daniel had started to mourn and pray over the vision he had seen. However, he explains, starting in verse 13, *"But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia."*¹⁴ *"Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future."* After explaining his purpose, the angel adds in verse 20-21, *"... I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come."*²¹ *"However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince."*

This passage reveals to us that there is a real battle that is going on between angels that are sent to do God's will and fallen angels, demons, that seek to stop them. In this particular case, it was an angel sent to explain to Daniel the vision he had received, but that angel was opposed by a demon identified as the *"prince of Persia,"* and a demon of similar rank, the *"prince of Greece"* is also mentioned. The angel cannot overcome the demon by himself, so Michael, who is an angel of higher rank and is the prince of Daniel's people, the Israelites, comes and helps him.

We do not see the spiritual warfare that is going on between angels and demons of various ranks, but it is real nonetheless and it has direct effects upon people and nations. Those who are spiritually discerning will recognize it more than others, but at times it can be so blatant that even those without discernment can recognize that the irrational evil that is occurring is something beyond just mere human wickedness. An example would be psychopathic criminals, and especially when there is obvious evidence of their involvement in the occult. The same would be true for nations, such as Nazi Germany, in which many of the top leaders were involved in the occult and there was a concerted effort to establish Nazi beliefs and practices as a religious element in their society.

However, whether recognized or not, demonic influence is strong over individuals and nations because false religions and philosophies are the major tools of demons and not blatant manifestations such as Satan worship and the occult. Most people today would not consider idolatry as anything more than a religion of superstitions. Paul says something quite the opposite in 1 Corinthians 10:19-20 pointing out that those who made sacrifices to idols were actually sacrificing to demons. The material idol itself was nothing, but the power behind it was demonic and a system of false worship to false gods.

It is not hard to recognize demonic influence when you start considering the beliefs of people and the actual source of those beliefs. For example, Paul warns in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 that in the last days people would fall away from the faith and pay attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons ending up with seared consciences. Among those doctrines of demons are forbidding marriage and religious abstaining of foods. He speaks against the same kind of thing in Colossians 3 warning about those who become religious aesthetes, those who worship angels, and those who become proud based on claimed visions. That describes the foundation of most false religions and cults which claim special revelation whether through angels or visions. Islam and Mormonism are two prominent examples of that. They are demonic in nature.

Then there are the philosophies that are supposedly secular, but they have a firm foundation in what is actually demonic. Consider atheism in its various forms and manifestations. Some are filled with hatred for a being they adamantly deny exists. That is irrational. Others say they are against the idea of God and want to free people to pursue the things God prohibits such as immorality and sexual perversion, but they fail to recognize the very real physical and psychological danger of those things. That is harmful. Others are pleasant enough people who live quite lives or may even be quite active in things that would be considered to be good humanitarian endeavors. That is nice, but quite the opposite of their claimed belief. They live based on the morality and rationalism of a God created universe and world and not the cosmic accident of chance random interactions of atoms to form what now exists, but which removes any actual meaning to existence. What purpose in life is there for the evolutionist except to survive and pass on their genetic information to the next generation in vain hope of the improvement of the species. But that is both futile since that individual will cease to exist and never know if his species improved or not. It is also contrary to the overwhelming evidence that all species are in genetic decline, not improvement, since the genetic load of mutations makes each generation less fit than the previous.

I will add this before moving on to my next point. The current over-reaction to the threat of SARS-CoV-2 as well the current turmoil of protests and riots over claimed systemic injustice show all the hallmarks of demonic influence. Government claims are contrary to the actual science both in the actual threat of the pandemic and the ability to treat it with medicines already available. There is a great evil in requiring healthy people to quarantine, do things that are contrary to their own health, and repressing medications that have already been shown to help, and creating fraudulent studies in an effort to justify their actions. There is a great evil in deliberately destroying our economy and saddling our children and grandchildren with an additional debt load they will never be able to repay and that will take away their inheritance if their parents had been savers. There is a great evil in making blatantly false claims about supposed systemic racism and injustice and using that to justify riots, looting, destruction of other people's property, looting, and murder. There is a great evil in purposely striving to distort history by lies, slander and destruction of any reminders of it. The purpose is to make the next generation easy to manipulate by removing all ties to its heritage and truth. History is His Story - it is the record of God's gracious working in and through imperfect people. It is tales of warning about the consequences of evil and encouragement to pursue righteousness - so says Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:11 of why the history of Israel was recorded.

The Danger of Spiritual Warfare

Perhaps you may think what I have just said is stretching it or that I am in danger of falling into the trap of seeing a demon behind every tree. Not so. People are quite capable of evil even without demonic influence, but the reality is that the devil and his demons are real and they pose a real danger whether you recognize it or not.

1 Peter 5:8 admonishes us, *“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”* Jesus warned in Matthew 13:39 that the enemy that sowed the tares among the wheat - the false converts among the true brethren - was the devil. He warned the scribes and Pharisees in John 8:44 that they were of their father, the devil who was a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies, and they had the same desires. In Ephesians 4:26-27 Paul warns *“BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger,²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity.”* Not dealing with your anger properly and quickly gives the devil an opportunity to lead you into sin. The apostle John makes a direct correlation between practicing sin and being of the devil and your actions demonstrating whether you were a child of God or the devil. The final danger in failing in the spiritual battle is to find out when you stand before Him in judgment that though He offered you redemption, forgiveness and adoption into His family, because you rejected Him

to pursue your own desires instead of His will, He will reject you for not obeying the gospel of the Lord Jesus and cast you into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels (1 Thessalonians 1:8; Matthew 25:41).

One other danger in spiritual warfare is making sure you fight in God's way. You cannot succeed by following your own methods or those of religion. Many religions have all sorts of rituals to try and drive out demons or keep them away, but none of them can work for very long if at all.

In Acts 19:11-16 we are told about the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, that got involved in the practice of exorcism. Apparently they must have had some success because they were called to get rid of an evil spirit. Because they saw that the apostles were successful at casting out demons in the name of the Lord Jesus, they tried to do the same thing. Acts 19:15-16 recounts the result of such an attempt, *"And the evil spirit answered and said to them, 'I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?'"*¹⁶ *And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."*

Jesus' warns in Luke 11:17-26 about the futility of exorcism unless it is done by God. He tells about a man that had an unclean spirit cast out, but not finding a new home, it went back to that man and brought seven more spirits more evil than itself so that the man's last state was worse than his first. So again, spiritual warfare must be fought according to God's methods and instructions and not those developed by man.

Armor for Spiritual Warfare - Ephesians 6:10-19

Engagement in spiritual warfare begins by proper preparation, and that begins by getting saved. You must repent of your sins and turn in faith and belief in the person and work of the Lord Jesus to redeem you from your sins, forgive you, and bring you into His family in which you will be filled and sealed by the Holy Spirit which will give you the means and ability to resist the devil. Until then, Ephesians 2:1-3 explains that you are dead in your sins and walking according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, living in the lusts of your flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and mind, and are by nature a child of wrath even as all the rest. Salvation by God's grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone makes you alive in Christ so that you become a product of His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared before hand so that you should walk in them.

Ephesians 6:10-19 explains the spiritual war we are in and uses the common equipment of a Roman soldier to illustrate how to be prepared to fight spiritual battles.

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, ¹⁵ and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹ and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel."

I have already talked about verses 10-12 and the reality of the spiritual war that each of us in. Please note that in this passage we are commanded three times to "stand firm," and what we are to stand firm against are the schemes of the devil. Again, he is a liar and deceiver who seeks to get you to believe him

instead of God, and to follow lies instead of the truth. See my full series on this passage for detailed explanations, but let's look at each piece of armor God wants you to put on.

The belt of truth is first because it provides a place upon which to attach other pieces of armor or to hold it in place. Truth, actual reality, is key to both knowing God and His will. God is the God of truth (Psalm 31:5), His word is truth (John 17:17) as is Jesus Himself (John 14:6). Man's descent into greater sin begins with exchanging the truth of God for a lie (Romans 1:25). Those who take truth lightly or think lying is no big deal are not of God, for God is the source of truth and the devil is the father of lies. Truth is also essential for a successful life, for even if a person achieves success by whatever standard of the world interests him - fame, fortune, pleasure or power - of what good is any of that when he reaches the end of his life. As Jesus succinctly put it in Matthew 16:26, *"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

The next piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness. This hung from the shoulders to protect your vital organs from arrows, sword and spears when you face the enemy. It is designed to help you in the quest to stand firm. There are two aspects to the breastplate of righteousness. The first is the positional righteousness that belongs to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not and cannot come before God in our own righteousness because even our best efforts at righteousness are as a filthy rag before our holy God (Isaiah 64:6). 2 Corinthians 5:21 explains that God made Christ who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. The righteousness of Jesus is imputed to the one who has faith in Him (Philippians 3:9). That righteousness that came through the sacrifice of Christ enables us come with confidence before our God to be in His presence and present our petitions (Hebrews 4:13-16). Whatever accusations the devil makes against us, we know we are forgiven and stand righteous before our God because of Jesus.

The second aspect of this righteousness is the practical righteousness of living a holy life. The closer you walk with Christ so that your life is lived in a holy manner according to God's will and commands, the less able the accusations of our adversary can affect you.

The next piece of battle equipment is having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Foot wear of the soldier was important piece of armor because it both protected the feet from the rough ground and it gave more traction and thus agility to the soldier. It is reported that the sandals of the Roman Soldiers would have hob-nails protruding from the bottom - much like cleats of sports shoes to give more traction.

The sandals here are those of the "preparation of the gospel of peace." The gospel is a message of peace for having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus (Romans 5:1). Jesus also said that He gives us His peace (John 14:27). We need to be at peace with God in order to stand at ready and prepared for battle with the enemy. Satan will certainly try to attack you in this area. He wants you to be full of anxiety and fret and worry which will keep you busy wasting your time. Worry ultimately stems from a fear of not being in control of the future and fretting about how to try and gain some kind of control of it. Let me be candid. You never have been and never will be in control of the future, so why bother to worry? The future is held in the hand of God, and to fear the future simply means that you do not trust God. Satan does not want you to trust God. He wants you to be anxious, to worry, to be fearful, for if you are like that you cannot be effective in battle. Fear will cause you to turn and run.

The fourth piece of armor is the shield of faith, and Paul makes special note of this piece, introducing it saying, *"in addition to all."* It is an emphasis for you not to forget your shield. This is not the little round shield the calvary men carried and that the gladiators used in the arenas. This is the big combat shield used by the Roman Legions. They were typically 4 feet long by 2 1/2 feet wide, and they would extend from knees to eye level on the typical soldier. They would be covered with tough leather or even metal which would easily defend against the arrows shot against them. Even the arrows that would be wrapped with cloth, dipped in pitch, set on fire and then shot would have no effect on these big shields.

Faith is critical to the Christian life for it begins by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ which is then applied to my sins and I am wonderfully saved. Faith is also what enables me to walk daily with Christ to follow and trust Him. This shield of faith extinguishes the fiery arrows of our enemy's slander against God designed to cause you to doubt Him. Satan will lie and slander God and His promises. He wants you to doubt and try to earn your salvation instead of trusting the Lord. He does not want you to trust God to provide for your needs by seeking first His kingdom and righteousness so that you will neglect God and try to do it yourself in your own way. He will claim that God is not good, or does not really love or care about you because you go through trials in life instead of having an easy time. Asaph considered that in Psalm 73 but was reminded of truth which restored his faith. The devil will suggest that God does not understand you or listen your prayers, so you might as well give up and do things your way instead of His way. Do what makes you happy. Protect yourself. Seek your own revenge. The devil will shoot those and so many other flaming arrows at you, yet each and every one is easily extinguished with true faith. God is good, merciful, wise, gracious, loving, caring, gentle, sovereign, holy, just, righteous, omnipotent, omniscient, kind, wise, etc. etc. As you put your faith in Him and trust your future to the Lord, then the devil can shoot whatever he wants, but nothing can get through. It will be blocked each time by faith in the Lord God.

The shield of faith was heavy and not easy to lift, so you had to exercise with it to use it easily. Faith cannot be passive as evidenced by the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11.

The next item in our panoply is the helmet of salvation. The purpose of the helmet was to protect the head from injury. The head houses the brain which controls the rest of the body, and contains the eyes, the ears, the nose and the mouth. Four out of five senses are all contained in the head - sight, smell, hearing & taste. Yet all of these are in turn controlled by the brain, so it is the mind which is the most important item. As the Helmet protects the head, so it is that salvation protects the mind from the blows of the enemy. Salvation brings me back to the purpose of my life in glorifying God and securing my hope for the present and future in Him.

Our hope is a confident assurance because our salvation in Christ is secure. Jesus does not lose any given to Him by the Father (John 6:39), so He will not drop you and you can't jump out, and no one can snatch you from His hand (John 10:27-29). It was Job's confidence in God that sustained him in the midst of overwhelming economic, emotional and physical trials. He said in Job 13:15, "*Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.*" In Job 19 he expressed his confidence in a future resurrection. How much greater our confidence when we have the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The devil will lie and slander to try to break your trust in God when trouble arises, but as Paul describes in Romans 5:3-10, we should exult in our tribulations. Why? Because such trials bring about perseverance, proven character and an unshakable hope because it is grounded in God's love demonstrated in Christ dying for us while we were yet sinners. The helmet of salvation also brings me back to the fundamental truth that I am not here for my needs and my glory.

The last piece of armor is "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*" This is the short sword carried by a Roman foot soldier used in hand to hand combat. The sword was both an offensive and defensive weapon, and so is the word of God.

It is defensive in that it parries the strikes of the enemies lies and deceptions with truth. Matthew 4 records Jesus' defeat of Satan's temptations through use of the Scriptures and following them. Jesus knew God's word well enough quote it and apply its truth to His situation. The greater your knowledge of the Bible and commitment to following it, the better able you will be at resisting the devil's temptations and deceptions.

It is offensive in that its truths defeat the lies of the enemy. 2 Corinthians 10:5 puts it this way, "*We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*" I do not need to be afraid of those that

contradict God, and I don't even have to "win" the arguments with them. I only have to faithfully declare the truth of God's word and let the sword of the Spirit do its work.

I always add in Ephesians 6:18-19 when discussing this passage and spiritual warfare because though it starts another paragraph, it is also the culmination of the armor of God. ¹⁸ *"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹ and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel."* It is a spiritual battle, therefore the weapons and armor used must be applied spiritually. You do not fight this in your own wisdom and strength. It is fought in humble submission to the Spirit of God to be used by Him to fight it His way. And if Paul needed others to pray for him, then certainly each of us needs each other to pray for us.

Victory in Spiritual Warfare - James 4:7

Spiritual warfare is reality and every individual needs to be prepared for it. Though there is real danger involved, it is not something that we need to fear. James 4:7 is the most succinct verse in the Scriptures on how to win the battles with our adversary. The verses before and after give us further guidance in coming to God and living holy lives. James 4:7 states, *"Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* It really is that simple, but that will require humility, but that is also where hope lies. *"But He gives a great grace. Therefore it says, GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."* The person who is humble will receive God's grace, and that same humility will enable them to submit to God.

Submission to God is the key to victory. Submission to God by its very nature is resisting the devil because his quest is to get you to resist and defy God. God and Satan are opposed to each other just as the Spirit and flesh are as explained in Galatians 5:16-17, *"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please."* The devil cannot even use your lusts - strong desires - against you if you are in walking in the Spirit for that is an aspect of submission to God.

The Christian does not need to fear spiritual warfare because God is already victorious and all we need to do is submit to him. Satan may be a roaring lion, but God shuts His mouth just as He did with the lions when Daniel was thrown into their den.

The non-Christian is vulnerable in spiritual warfare because he is already in Satan's realm. However, the very battle for his soul means there is hope for a change of kingdoms and masters. James 4:8-10 explains how to pursue that hope. ⁸ *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."* If you are not yet a believer and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, then humble yourself before him. Ask him to reveal your sin to you so that you may repent of it. Ask Him to help you understand the identity, character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ that you might believe in Him. Ask Him to have the Holy Spirit quicken - make alive - your soul that you may receive the gift of salvation from Him by placing your faith in Jesus. That is the start of a new life in which victory over sin, self and Satan is possible.

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Prayer

Victory in Spiritual Warfare - James 4:7

KIDS KORNER – Parents, you are responsible to apply God’s Word to your children’s lives. Here is some help. Young Children – draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. Older Children – Do one or more of the following: 1) Count how many times warfare is mentioned. 2) Talk with your parents about how to submit to God and resist the devil.

THINK ABOUT IT – Questions to consider in understanding the sermon and its application. Are you afraid of spiritual warfare? Explain. What is the origin of spiritual warfare? Who are the participants in its battles? How did the devil deceive Eve? How does the devil use the same strategy today? What do we learn about the personal nature of spiritual warfare from Ephesians 6:10-12? What do we learn about its national nature from Daniel 10? What are some of the ways personal spiritual warfare manifests itself? How have you seen this in your own life? What are some of the ways national spiritual warfare manifests itself? How have you seen this during your life? What are the dangers of spiritual warfare according to 1 Peter 5:8, Matthew 13:39, John 8:44 and Ephesians 4:26-27? What happened to the seven sons of Sceva in Acts 19 and why? Read Luke 11:17-26. Why is exorcism without salvation very dangerous? What is the context of Ephesians 6:10-19? What action is emphasized in the passage? Explain each piece of the armor and how it can help you to stand firm against the schemes of the devil: Belt of Truth; Breastplate of righteousness; feet shod with the gospel of peace; the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit - the word of God. What is the relationship of prayer to the armor of God and spiritual warfare? Read James 4:6-10. What does it mean to submit to God? What is character trait is necessary to be able to submit to God? How does submission to God result in resistance to the devil? How does a non-Christian become humble? What will God give to the humble? How did this sermon affect your view and response to spiritual warfare?