

Learning How to Resist our Worst Enemies Using The Five Key Truths of Spiritual Warfare

Isaiah 14:12-15

As we open to Isaiah 14 this morning, we are viewing the spiritual realm beyond our physical world. Above all the vast reaches of the cosmos, above all the swirling galaxies, shining stars and circling planets God made some special creatures, fashioned for His own service—the angels.

And in this angelic host of the Almighty God in heaven, above the super-powerful archangels, above the fiery seraphim, and above the mighty cherubim, there was one angel that God chose to be the crown prince of them all.

His name was Lucifer. He was designed as the star of the morning. He was made the leader of the host of heaven. He was set up as the guardian of the throne of God.

Into Lucifer's hands was committed all that the Lord God had made and all of the angels that He had created. He was beautiful. He was perfect. But in his God-given beauty, his God-given perfection, there arose some self-generated pride as Lucifer first thought, and then said, "I will be like the Most High God!"

The Origin of Satan

The Bible does not explain how Lucifer could fall into sin, as a perfect being in a perfect environment—God's Word just declares that he did.

Ezekiel also gives us the description of what took place in Lucifer's heart (Ezekiel 28:17) when he records "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor." Lucifer became enamored with his beauty instead of God's. Lucifer focused upon his splendor not God's, and that produced in him the sin of pride, which led to his rebellion.

The Old Testament Hebrew prophet Isaiah describes even more clearly how completely pride drove Satan's downfall. Look with me at Isaiah 14:12-15 as we stand for the reading of God's Word:

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart:

‘I will ascend (that is self-assertion) into heaven,
I will exalt my throne (that is promotion) above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount (that is self-centeredness) of the congregation on the farthest
sides of the north;
I will ascend above (that is self-exaltation) the heights of the clouds,
I will be like (that is deception) the Most High.’
Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,
To the lowest depths of the Pit.

Pray

Did you note Lucifer, become Satan’s, destination? It is in our text this morning.

The lesson for us is always to beware of any self-assertion, self-promotion, self-centeredness, self-exaltation, and self-deception—for each of these acts leads to pride, pride makes us act independent of God and that is always sin, and sin always has horrible consequences as Lucifer, now Satan’s life so clearly testifies. Now, back to the Pit.

God Has a Prison for Rebel Angels

Now as we move onward to Rev. 9 we look at those angels that joined in with Satan’s rebellion. There are at least two groups of demons: the ones surrounding us at all times and the ones locked up in God’s prison.

There is a place, and a realm that most of us today have very little understanding or comprehension of, that simmers beneath us each day.

*Revelation 9:1-2 (NKJV) Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to **the bottomless pit**. 2 And he opened **the bottomless pit**, and smoke arose out of **the pit** like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of **the pit**.*

There is a bottomless pit (literally “pit of the abyss”), filled with the worst of the worst. They are horrific creatures so vile that they are imprisoned because they are even more dangerous and destructive than normal evil demons. These demonic beings are horrible even to other demons who beg to be spared from being trapped with them forever.

This prison is mentioned 7 times in Revelation, and it always refers to the prison where some of the demonic hordes are incarcerated, the place of severest torment and isolation (vv. 1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3). Note how even the devil is confined there and unable to escape for 1,000 years.

Rev. 11:7 (NKJV) When they finish their testimony, **the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit** will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

Rev. 17:8 (NKJV) The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will **ascend out of the bottomless pit** and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Rev. 20:1-3 (NKJV) Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, **having the key to the bottomless pit** and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he **cast him into the bottomless pit**, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Jesus Defeated the Power of Demons

Part of the authentication of Christ's ministry was that He had absolute power over the unseen world of powerful and evil spirit beings called demons. These demons feared Christ, often screaming out when they saw Him. Open with me to Luke 4:31, where Luke records that after Christ's birth in chapters 1-2, His baptism in chapter 3, and His temptation in chapter 4: we come to Christ's first miracle recorded in Luke 4:33-34. Watch what happens:

- 4:33-34 an unclean demon cries out;
- 4:41 many demons came out of many and cried out;
- 6:18 people tormented with unclean spirits were healed;
- 7:21 He cured many of evil spirits;
- 8:2 women are healed of evil spirits, and Mary Magdalene had seven demons.

Now move onward to Luke 8:26, here in one of the most dramatic scenes, Jesus confronts a demonized man, and has a legion (or up to 6,000 demons) answer Him. Listen to the connection between demons and the bottomless pit we are looking at in Rev. 9.

Luke 8:26-31 (NKJV) Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27 And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city **who had demons for a long time**. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" 29 For He had commanded **the unclean spirit** to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was

driven by the demon into the wilderness. 30 Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because **many demons** had entered him. 31 And they begged Him that **He would not command them to go out into the abyss.**

Demons Know and Fear the Abyss or Bottomless Pit. So, what can we conclude about demons from God's Word? Other than the wonderful reality that they fear Jesus, and are powerless before Him and those clothed in His power:

What Are Demons Like?

INVISIBLE: They are invisible beings. Being incorporeal, they are neither visible nor tangible. There is no record in Scripture of their taking visible or tangible form.

INDEPENDENT: They are personal beings. Personality and corporeality are not to be confused. God is spirit, but He is not corporeal. The same arguments used to prove the personality of God can also be used to demonstrate the personality of demons. They have the power of thought, speech, and of action (Acts 19:15-16).

BODYLESS: They are incorporeal beings, but seem to have a strange passion to possess living organisms, whether human or animal. "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'" (Luke 11:24).

CONVINCED: They are believing beings. There are no atheists among them. "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder' (James 2:19). They have faith, but not saving faith, for it does not lead them to repentance.

SUPERNATURAL: They are powerful beings, and exercise superhuman strength. And they are also able to impart superhuman strength to their victims. "A certain man ... who was possessed with demons; ... He was bound with chains and shackles ... yet he would burst his fetters" (Luke 8:27,29).

MALIGNANT: They are harmful beings; they have power to inflict physical disabilities. "My son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth" (Mark 9:17-18)¹.

Now, with that evil leader Satan, and all his countless demon hosts surrounding all we do each day, what does God's Word tell us in Christ's church to do?

¹ J. Oswald Sanders, *Satan is no Myth*, p. 64-67.

I invite you to examine one of the most amazing chapters in the Bible, Acts 19. In this chapter we find the key to enduring, powerful churches that God can use, and where Christ's glory is supreme.

God's Methodology for Church Growth

Today many churches all over the world are involved in what is actually often just veiled competition; it becomes a struggle for "our church" getting more people to come than "your church". What methodology did Paul use to grow a church?

In Acts 19:17-20 we find *the two real keys to church growth*.

God's Word explains to us what makes Christ's church grow. It is when *Jesus is magnified* and when *God's Word is unleashed*.

Jesus was magnified and God's Word grew mighty in one group of people in the New Testament ...what a combination to have for the Lord in any generation. That powerful ministry was the result of the purged lives of a local church.

Think of every pressure facing us as believers from: our pleasure seeking culture, our mind-assaulting media, and our materialism-dominated way of life.

God's Word has an answer for how to walk in the Spirit, abide in Christ, and see Christ's church prevail in an ever-darkening world. Resisting the Devil is what we are charged with as an imperative from God's Word.

Spiritual warfare is a theme that we find in the author's of 22 of the 27 books of our New Testaments. We can easily say that the New Testament is filled with pointed warnings to actively resist and defend against the Evil One. If we look at the main passages we can see...

The Five Key Truths of Spiritual Warfare

There are five key passages on spiritual warfare, and each of them has a very specific message for us to apply. As we turn to each one and read the verses, note the lesson and apply it, by the power of God's Spirit, in your life.

PAUL taught that to magnify God we must divest ourselves of anything tied to Satan, demons, occultic activity, and magical black arts—**RENOUNCE THE DARKNESS**. In Acts 19:17-20 we see the turning point. The power of darkness was broken. Satan's house was divided. Christ triumphantly opened the door to great ministry through this church.

*Acts 19:17-18 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and **the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.**18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So **the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.***

The most remarkable facet of Paul's ministry to this church is that when Paul taught the Ephesian believers about the strategies of Satan, they collected and burned all of the objects associated with demonic and satanic contact.

LESSON: The level of their desire to repent and follow the Lord was seen in this costly choice to rid their lives of anything that displeased Him. Their example recorded by God in His Word should stir us to ask, "Have we likewise carefully purged out of our lives anything that displeases the Lord?"

As you look back at v. 19, doesn't that verse amaze you? What did God lead Paul to do to prompt such a huge response in public with such great sacrifice involved?

God's Word records exactly what Paul told them that made them respond so dramatically to the evil around them. What Paul taught made them go home, search out, gather and BURN all of their expensive media.

PAUL said to resist Satan we must—**USE GOD'S WEAPONS.** In Ephesians 6.10-17 we see that our spiritual weapons are not human inventions or works, as Paul wrote:

*2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 **For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God** for pulling down strongholds,5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*

JAMES said that to resist Satan we must—**LIVE SUBMISSIVELY in God's sight.** In James 4:7-10 we see submission to God precedes any resistance of the Devil.

*James 4:7-10 Therefore **submit to God.**[is first and then, and only then can we] Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 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 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*

PETER said to resist Satan we must—**LIVE HUMBLY in God's sight.** In I Peter 5.5-9 we see that God calls us to clothe ourselves with humility before we resist the prowling Devil.

*1 Peter 5:5-9 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 6 **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God**, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 **Resist him, steadfast in the faith**, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*

JOHN said to resist Satan we must—**LIVE HOLY in God's sight**. In I John 3.7-9 we see how powerful a pure life can be, and how disabling impurity can be.

*1 John 3:3, 8 And everyone who has this hope in Him **purifies himself**, just as He is pure. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might **destroy the works of the devil**.*

Monitor Your Spiritual Immune System

Our spiritual immune system is laid out in Scripture as having three factors:

- **spiritual health** (eating and drinking in God's Word, plus exercising each day by walking in the Spirit);
- **spiritual armor** (understanding and uses the armor Paul commands us to use in Ephesians 6:10-18); and
- **spiritual warfare** (resisting the devil and his demons).

If we neglect any part of our spiritual immune system—Satan and his army have a point to step up their campaign.

One final point that is perhaps the most important one of all for each of us: when the church cleans house, when believers renounce hidden sins, when there is a banishment of all hypocrisy and pretense, and genuine holiness begins to permeate Christ's church—*unbelievers become attracted to this new way of life*. Which reminds us of:

Our Call to Consecrated Living

Look again at Acts 19. God's Word explains that the people of Ephesus learned that Christ's church is powerful in any culture when:

- **God's Son is magnified (v. 17);**
- **God's People are consecrated (v. 18-19);**

• ***God's Word is prevailing (v. 20).***

Jesus was magnified and God's Word prevailed in this group of consecrated people in the New Testament church at Ephesus. That powerful ministry was the result of a purged and obedient local church. One dear pastor wrote these words:

“What would be burned today if the Spirit’s conviction swept this church? I think some DVD’s, magazines, and videos would be quietly removed and trashed from out-of-the-way desk drawers or certain novels from the family bookshelves.

Perhaps some television shows, movies, web sites, radio stations, and video games would be boycotted. Some people would ask others to pray that they would be set free from whatever is dragging them down. And many would come to Christ for forgiveness of sin and deliverance from the eternal wrath of God²”.

Is that what Jesus sees here among us today? We each need to seek the:

Power of Consecration

The power of the early church was simply genuine holiness. Energized by grace they magnified Christ, God's Word prevailed in them, and they lived consecrated lives. The Spirit of God moved unhindered, flowed unquenched and God got all the glory. No one competed for the credit, no one sought to be in control. God reigned, the Spirit moved, and Christ was magnified.

The saints at Ephesus had applied the training Paul had given them and wrote back reminding them in Ephesians 4:22-24. They put off, renewed, and put on the new—just as God told them to do. The choice is still ours.

We must daily strip off any return of the rotting garments of the old life.

We must personally reject any hint of sensuality, selfishness, pride, materialism, and bitterness in our lives.

We must eat God’s Word and ask for renewed minds by His Spirit.

We must work out our own salvation by choosing to do the disciplines that will develop a Biblical mind.

We must put on and wear our new, shining garments of light each day, and live the new us we became in Christ. Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me!

² Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Ephesians—The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.