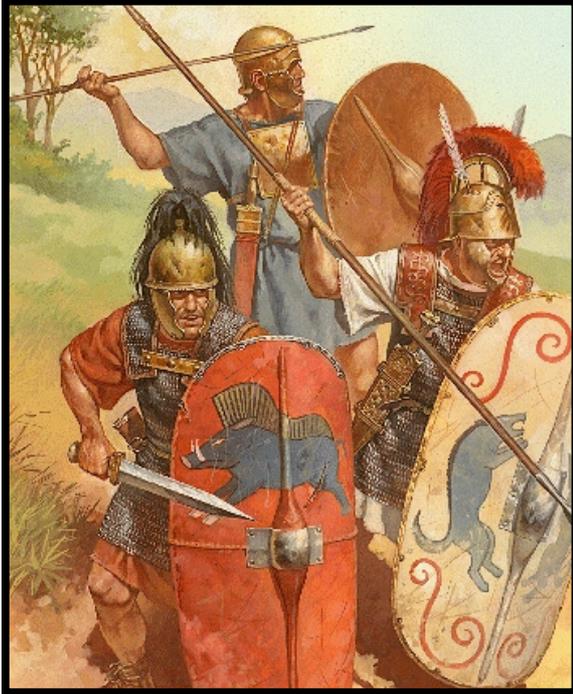


The Spiritual War

5. OUR PLACE IN CHRIST



Here we stand in the midst of a fallen world, while the spiritual battle rages all around. Satan and his fallen angels work night and day to preserve their kingdom, from the advancing Kingdom of God (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). The battle is over the souls of humanity, as Satan works to keep lost humanity from finding salvation, blinding those who are perishing. He also works to prevent the saints (the saved) from advancing the Kingdom of God, through a catalog of weapons and tactics. For those new to the faith, the reality of spiritual warfare can be a shock. However, the Lord through scripture has prepared us to expect the war and the attacks.

If God is so powerful, why doesn't God just eliminate Satan and his of fallen angels? Many of us ask this question ourselves in the midst of the struggle. Why do we have to struggle with Satan, and go through his attacks? Have you ever found yourself asking this question? If you have, you are not alone, when we struggle and feel helpless; sometimes it is hard for us to see any good in the struggle.

One thing we need to remember is God does not need angels or humans, to do His work or us. He is completely able to accomplish His will. If he made the universe, including the spiritual realms, at the command of His word, He could finish it at the command of His word. However, God chooses to use

us, and allow us to participate in His work. In the process, we the saints (believers in Christ) transform into the image of Christ. Satan serves the purpose of the Lord, because his attacks cause us to grow, being more like Christ (2 Cor 3:18).

Imagine if you as child growing, never experienced pain, or failure, then as an adult you were expected to cope with pain or failure. How do you think you would handle the trials of adulthood, without having the trials of childhood? When we fall off the bike, or struggle to learn to walk, falling and crying we are being *transformed* into adults, through trials. In the same way, when we struggle spiritually we are being *transformed*, the Holy Spirit is conforming us to the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us, urging us to pray.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Romans 8;26

Through the process of spiritual warfare, the redeemed are tested and tried, learning to trust and depend on the Lord. In the spiritual war Satan's hands are tied, he is limited in what he can do; God knows our limitations too, not allowing more then we can handle.

The spiritual war

As we see from scripture spiritual warfare is very real, and involving both the physical and spiritual worlds. In our physical world, we see the effects of this spiritual conflict, between angelic and demonic realms. Through scripture, God has revealed to us the supernatural world, vying for the souls of humanity. This struggle involves us, whether we want it or not, once someone comes to Christ they become Satan's mortal enemy, rather than his mortal victim. Satan understands the stakes of a saved soul used by the Lord.

Before the person is saved Satan's goal was to keep the person in darkness, by blinding the lost from seeing the gospel. All this changes when someone comes to the light, Satan's goal shifts from keeping a person lost, to defeating the "new" believer, to keep them from living a victorious life. He wants them to be defeated, in bondage, wallowing in the struggles of their life. He (Satan) wants to keep them becoming effective warriors for the Kingdom of God, he does this through his attacks. God uses these same attacks to advance His kingdom, through them the saved, learn to the way of the spiritual warrior.

This war however is not primarily played out in the *physical* world, but the *spiritual* as Paul states in Ephesians chapter 6. It is imperative for everyone who serves in the army of the Lord to understand just how and why the enemy battles. For this reason, Paul makes a the distinction between the two realms, the physical and the spiritual. Our battle takes in spiritual places, even though it may seem to be physical, the source is spiritual, in heavenly realms.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
Ephesians 6:12

Before we continue to understand the spiritual war and the role we play, we should have a clear understanding of the nature of spiritual warfare. Let's make sure we have a clear understanding of the background of spiritual war, in relation to the Christian.

1. Who is our enemy?

First our enemy is Satan, a fallen angel of the cherub order (Ezk 28:14), who deceived 1/3 of the angels who followed him in rejected their Creator (Rev. 12:4), the Lord God of the Bible. He along with his horde of fallen angels (demons) unite in their assault against humanity (Eph. 6:12). They work through fallen humanity, who is deceived by Satan (John 8:44).

2. What is the spiritual war?

The Spiritual war is a war between the forces of God, including angels and saved humanity versus Satan and his fallen angels (Luke 4:8-9). The battle is for the souls of souls of lost (I Cor. 4:3-4), to bring them to salvation. Satan has blinded the eyes of those who are perishing, so they stay in their lost condition. Our goal is to advance the kingdom of God on Satan's territory, through the power of the Gospel, which transforms lives, bringing the lost to salvation (Matthew 28:18-20)

3. Where is the spiritual war fought?

The Spiritual war is being fought in heavenly realms (Eph. 6:12), on the battlefield of the minds of humanity (I Cor. 4:14). The physical world is merely a byproduct of the events taking place spiritually. When souls come to salvation, territory is taken away from Satan. He and his fallen angels control geographic areas, keeping souls under in a lost condition. When the Gospel is advanced on enemy territory, Satan loses control.

He loses territory, when minds turn from his control, to Christ.

4. When does the spiritual war take place?

The war started at the fall of the angels, and the battle was transferred to earth when Adam and Eve fell. Satan became the god of the age, he exercises their (Adam and Eve) dominion over the earth. Satan works to prevent the lost from being saved, by keeping them in blindness to the gospel.

When a person is "saved" by being "Born again", they are removed from Satan's power, they now have Holy Spirit power. At this point, Satan begins his battle to destroy the testimony and walk of the newly saved believer.

5. How is the spiritual war fought?

Satan wages war on two fronts, *the spiritual* and *the physical* front. In the spiritual front, Satan controls areas of the physical earth, through the fallen angels who rule over spiritual principalities (Ephesians 6:12, Daniel 10). Satan is behind deceptive teachings to keep regions under darkness.

This battle is also fought in the minds and hearts of humanity. Satan opposes the advancing Gospel, because it frees minds from satanic deception.

To summarize these five points:

- Satan is our enemy
- Spiritual warfare is the battle for souls
- Spiritual warfare takes place in the mind
- Spiritual warfare begins the day we are born
- Satan uses deception to blind the mind

What is our position?

Having reviewed the state of the spiritual warfare, next we need to understand where we stand in relation to this conflict. When someone comes to Christ, he/she becomes Satan's mortal enemy. Satan is fearful and powerful, but he is chained and limited in how he can wage war.

Deception is Satan's weapon of choice; even though he is limited, his goal for us (the redeemed) is to give him control, even though we have victory. The Christian is not fighting for victory; he/she is fighting from victory. Satan is a defeated enemy.

We fight from victory

Our battle against Satan is not for victory; Jesus has already won the victory. Christians are already the victors when they come to Christ. We are fighting from the position of victors in Christ conquering enemy territory. Satan knows our position, his goal is to deceive us, trying to convince us we must still attain victory, rather than advance forward in our victory through Christ.

Jesus Christ has guaranteed our redemption, He will complete our salvation, and the Holy Spirit is the down payment. Paul writes about this in Ephesians, the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance.

13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,
14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. **Ephesians 1:13-14**

Therefore, we are conquerors taking territory, not warriors fighting for victory. The war is already over, the enemy is defeated Satan has lost. His goal is to take away our victory, through deception. We need to remind Satan he is defeated, and his only power over our lives is the power we give him.

We have authority

Jesus sent out the seventy disciples, who later returned with joy. Rejoicing they have authority over the demonic realm, in the name of Jesus. Jesus replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven". What did Jesus mean by this statement? As the seventy went from village to village, Jesus was watching another spectacle he saw Satan's defeat. Jesus saw territory taken away from him. At the loss of territory, and the subjection of his "demonic realms" Christ saw Satan fall, like a bolt of lightning from Heaven.

17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."
18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.
19 "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. **Luke 10:17-19**

Not only do we fight from the position of victory, we have the authority, which comes with the victory. Satan's agenda is to take away the strategic advantage of the believer. For this reason, Paul admonishes us to put on the whole armour of God. We can be prepared against the *wiles or scheme* of Satan. Satan is not going to go down in defeat without a fight.

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
Ephesians 6:10-11

Satan wants to take away our power in Christ, he wants to stop the authority we have, Satan's kingdom is at stake. Therefore, he uses methods or schemes to assault the believer, causing them to not use the power, we have in Christ. He wants us to live a defeated existence. The Greek word of *wiles* is μεθοδεία *Methodeia*, meaning follow up or investigate by method. This is where the English word, *method* is derived. Satan has a method to his work, he knows what he is doing, he is not haphazard, but methodical in his pursuit.

Again, Satan goal is to remove our authority, take victory from our mind, and make us useless to the kingdom of God. He can remove our authority, by causing us to fall. We have authority to reprove the world of sins, in the power of Christ. How much authority does a believer have, when he is engaged in the same activity? Not much, at least in the eyes of those reprovved. That is why Christian leaders, who fall, become mocked. Their fall not only takes their authority away, but the whole kingdom of God suffers. Satan hunts Christian leaders and Christians his goal is to remove authority, hurting the kingdom of God in the process.

We advance the kingdom

Satan rejoices in the destruction of humanity. Souls who come to Christ remind him of his loss and eventual judgment. Therefore, Satan's goal is taking away our victory and authority, to stop the advance of God's kingdom. We are the advance team; through us, God advances His kingdom in enemy territory. Think about it! God could by very word advance His kingdom, but he chooses to allow us to participate in the war. We are warriors in the Lord's army, taking dominion from Satan.

Whatever our profession whatever the world thinks of us, does not matter, as children of God, we are soldiers of God. If we are CEO of a major fortune 500 company, or the clerk in a Wal-Mart, both stand on equal footing in the kingdom of God. The CEO, who fears what his colleagues think of Christ and fails to advance the kingdom of God, has fallen to Satan schemes. He has allowed the deception of pride and honor in this world, keep him/her back from what God offers.

God will take us where we stand, and use us if we are willing to be used, He does not need the prestige offered by the world. He (God) rejoices in uses the things despised of by the world. If we are willing to commit to Him, He will take us beyond anything we could imagine of ourselves.

Remember, when Jesus chose the disciples, they were not world's all-stars. They were fishermen, tax-collectors, prostitutes and plain ordinary folk. What you and I see is the power of the Spirit in their lives. This same power of God's Spirit dwells in us if we are saved. God reminded Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah not to rely on human power or effort but on the Spirit of God.

6 So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the Lord of hosts. **Zechariah 4:6**

Therefore, wherever we stand in this world, does not matter, it is who we are in Christ, that's all that matters. Our goal is to be faithful with the work we have at hand, God will take care of the rest. We can take comfort, in that the Lord rejoices in confounding the ways of the world. He rejoices in taking the simple and despised in this world, and using them to show His greatness.

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." 20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. **I Corinthians 1:18-21**

So let's rejoice in our simplicity! We are warriors of the Lord operating in enemy territory, taking dominion away from Satan. If we are a clerk at Wal-Mart, or the CEO of a multi-billion dollar company we have the same calling. God rewards the faithful, and despises the ways of the world. Put on our armor and go to war!

What can Satan do to us?

Since we have victory, authority and we are to advance the kingdom of God on Satan's territory what can Satan do? Paul reminds us to put on the armor of God to be able to resist the schemes of Satan. Satan is not without resources, he has a whole catalog of methods to take down believers. Remember, by taking down a believer he removes their authority, securing his kingdom.

Before we examine Satan's tactics, let us review Satan's position in relation to the believer.

1. He is limited

Satan requires permission before he can "sift" us. We see this in Job where he complains Job has a hedge around him (Job 1:10). Jesus also tells Peter, Satan has requested the permission to "Sift" him as wheat (Luke 22:31). Satan is the accuser, who stands before the throne of God accusing, the redeemed (Revelation 12:10).

2. He is defeated

Jesus beheld Satan falling like lightning (Luke 10:18). Our job is to take his territory from him, advancing the Kingdom of God. Satan's end is already declared in and seen in scripture. John taken into the future, saw the day when Satan was cast into the Lake of Fire, for the rest of eternity.

10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Revelation 20:10

Satan operates from the position of defeat, he wants us to think otherwise. He knows his time is limited, he knows were his eternity is.

3. He attacks causes us to grow

Satan's existence must be a frustrating one, because God uses his attacks to transform His church into the image of Christ. Satan is limited, and when he is allowed to attack its for our growth. We need to keep this in mind when we suffer; God takes our sufferings and causes us to grow.

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.

10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. **1 Peter 5:8-10**

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, **1 Peter 1:6-7**

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, **2 Corinthians 4:14**

Satan's Tactics

Satan's tactics for the lost are different than the saved, for the lost the goal is keep them in blindness. For the saved person, Satan has a multi pronged approach,

- Remove victory from their mind
- Distract us from the Lord's work
- Take away our authority
- Stop the advance of the Kingdom of God

We will examine this issue with more detail in later studies.

1. Remove victory from their mind

- A. Self-righteousness, rather than the Lord's righteousness
- B. Not trust in the promises of the word
- C. Causes us to wallow in our sin, rather than overcome it
- D. Establishes stronghold in our life

2. Distract us from the Lord's work

- A. He uses our pride
- B. He uses the things of this world to engage us
- C. He uses relationships
- D. He causes us to envy others

3. Take away our authority

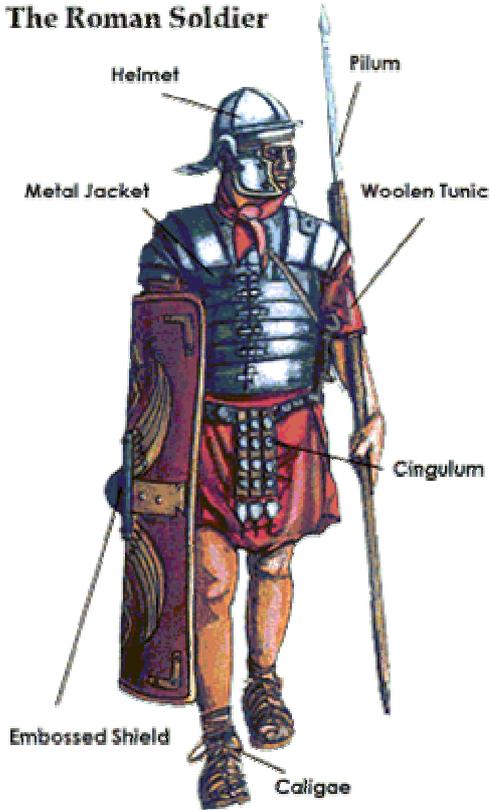
- A. He tempts us
- B. He demonstrates our hypocrisy
- C. He makes us fall in the midst of the people we need to

4. Stop the advance of the Kingdom of God

- A. He attacks the Word of God (The Bible)
- B. He attacks the person of Christ
- C. He spreads heretical doctrines
- D. He creates false religions
- E. He spreads lies in education
- F. He controls access to scripture through government
- G. He destroys families

The Armor of God: Our Weapons

The Roman Soldier



11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

Ephesians 6:11-17