

Weekly Devotional - The Struggle Is Real - Living A Christian Life in a Fallen World 6/22/21

Scripture: 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. [Ephesians 6:12 NIV]

If we do not fight against flesh and blood, whom are we wrestling with, and who are our spiritual enemies? The apostle Paul's description seems to indicate a pecking order of evil beings who do Satan's bidding to oppose GOD'S will on earth. [also read 1 Peter 5:8-9]. The Bible calls the devil, or Satan, "the prince of this world" [John 12:31], "the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" [Eph. 2:2], "the god of this age" [2 Cor. 4:4], and "the accuser" of believers [Rev. 12:10]. This is our true enemy.

Paul says, in our fight with this enemy, we must be aware of his tactics [2 Cor. 2:11]. And in Eph. 6:11-12, Paul mentions three main traits of Satan's spiritual forces. First, they are powerful. They have authority to rule in the world. Second, they are evil. These wicked spiritual enemies use their power to wreak destruction. They are associated with darkness and not light, wickedness and not good. And, third, they are shrewd. They know how to scheme and strategize. They are so skilled at deception that sometimes they come disguised as angels of light [2 Cor. 11:14] or wolves in sheep's clothing [Matt. 7:15].

So how can we, in our human weakness, expect to stand against such strong and cunning enemies? Brute strength won't win the battle. Humanly speaking, victory is impossible. In our struggle against the devil and his scheming forces, Paul says we must "be strong in the LORD and in HIS mighty power" [Eph. 6:10]. It is our job to stand aside and let GOD fight the battle for us, and only then are we sure to win.

Christian warfare consists of a spiritual strategy fought with supernatural weapons against an unseen enemy. The opposition is real but not visible to the naked eye. Beneath the surface, an invisible spiritual battle is raging. We fight this war not with tangible weapons like guns and ammunition, nor with bodily defenses such as kicks and punches, but by daily putting on the whole armor of GOD, always praying, standing firm in the WORD of GOD, and staying alert [Ephesians 6:13-18]. Only GOD can strengthen, defend, and deliver us from the power, wickedness, and craft of the devil [2 Tim. 4:17-18]. Our enemy may be strong, but GOD is stronger [1 John 4:4]. GOD makes available to us the same mighty power that raised JESUS CHRIST from the dead and seated HIM at GOD'S Right Hand in heaven [Eph. 1:19-20]. Our enemies are defeated through CHRIST'S victory over them on the cross [Col. 2:15].

When David came up against the Philistine giant, he recognized that his fight was not ultimately against flesh and blood. Goliath taunted David and cursed his GOD, saying, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks? . . . Come here . . . and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!" [1 Sam. 17:43-44]. But David, trusting in the strength of the LORD and HIS mighty power, answered, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the Name of the LORD Almighty, the GOD of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" [1 Sam. 17:45]. "For the battle is the LORD'S!" declared David [1 Sam. 17:47], and so ought we as we engage in spiritual warfare. Our fight is not against flesh and blood. The victory depends on the LORD, not us.

[Read 1 John 4:1-4 NIV and 2 Kings 6:15-17 NKJV]

How To Fight Spiritual Attack? Although it can be discouraging to experience spiritual attack, it's also a good opportunity to grow. If we want to grow, though, we need to fight. Here are some ways to resist spiritual attack.

1) Use Scripture. 2) Try not to feel sorry for yourself. 3) Do not leave the church. We need each other. 4) Don't hide from GOD. [read Hebrews 4:15-16] 5) Fellowship with other believers. Close relationships with people you can share everything with is important. 6) Don't beat yourself up and say what a terrible Christian you are. [read Revelations 12:10; Romans 8:1 and 1 John 1:9]. 7) Do not believe everything your friends tell you. 8) Spend more time with GOD than usual when you're in a season where you need it. 9) Resist. [read James 4:7] And 10) Follow the tips in Ephesians 6:10-20. (Barb Raveling; Spiritual Attack: 10 Tips for Spiritual Warfare; July 30, 2020)

May we always have a mind through which CHRIST thinks; a heart through which CHRIST loves; a voice through which CHRIST speaks; a hand through which CHRIST helps; and be a vessel through which CHRIST lives!

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