

Spiritual Warfare



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A Free Ebook Published By Biblical Expositor

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Introduction

Christians are those who are translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col.1.13). This was made possible because Jesus Christ by His death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb.2.15). To live this life in the present evil world is a struggle. This life is called a spiritual warfare. But unfortunately a vast majority of Christians are unaware that there is warfare at all. The enemy of all unrighteousness (Acts 13.10) as a vile spider has injected poison and is slowly sucking the life out of them. To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Rom.8.6), i.e. death to our spiritual life?

Daniel reminds us of the gravity of the subject. He prayed to God. The angel came with the answer. The angel told Daniel: "Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou did set thy heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the King of Persia" (Dan.10:12,13). Though the answer for prayer came the first day, it reached Daniel 21 days late, because the demon that controls the Kingdom of Persia (the prince of Persia) fought and prevented the angel reaching Daniel. Apostle Paul explains the nature of this warfare. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph.6.12). It is real and it never ends. It is a fight to the finish. We should realize this truth.

It is a war for the souls of mankind: The god of this world has blinded the minds of those which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them (2 Cor.4.4). Unless the light of the glory of Christ shines in the heart of those souls they are lost. In a larger sense the battle is to win souls of men. Once you control the mind you control the person. We need to ask the question as to who controls our minds. What a battle ground our minds are! Our minds are where our imaginations, reasoning, speculations, arguments, knowledge etc. take place. Everything begins in our minds. It begins with a thought.

"Sow a thought, reap an act;
Sow an act, reap a habit;

Sow a habit, reap a character; and
Sow a character, reap a destiny”

If so, what is the remedy? Our battle is not against flesh and blood and the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having a readiness to revenge all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled”(2 Cor.10.4-6).

The victories of the soldier are primarily mental. The thoughts take place in the realm of the mind. The lion and the bear are in the mind as also the poisonous fumes of vile imaginations. You conquer the man as you conquer the mind. And this victory is corrective. You don't destroy the mind; but as the fragrance of obedience permeates the minds it is cleansed. There are many fortifications or strongholds in the minds. They are the strongholds of prejudices, worldly maxims, associations, passions, habits etc. These strongholds are entrenched in the minds against God. These may seem innocent at first, and you may try to justify them; but anything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God is to be brought to the obedience to Christ. These captives are not brought to Christ by compulsion, but willingly and with a readiness to punish these. If you realize you are a soldier and there is a warfare going on in your mind bring every thought to the obedience of Christ. There is victory for you.

We are fighting against a highly structured evil empire. The whole world lies under the wicked one (1 Jn.5.19). Realize that you are a Christian, and Satan has no legal right over you. Resolve that you want to be successful in this warfare.

How to have victory in the mind: It is easier said than done. How to have this victory of the mind? We cannot escape a thought passing through the mind. As someone said, “You cannot prevent a bird flying over your head, but you can certainly prevent it in building a nest on your head”. Jesus Christ said: “That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt.6.28). Looking at a woman is not sin. But harboring adulterous thoughts in the mind is and can be prevented. When an evil thought passes through the mind, shake your head. You will find that the thoughts have gone. Then confess it to Christ and ask Him to give victory over such thoughts.

Jesus Christ spoke of the worthlessness of self reformation. When an unclean spirit comes out of a man, he wanders around looking for a place to dwell. Without finding any he comes back and “finds the old house swept and cleansed. Then goes he and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first (Lk.11.26). When you remove the wicked thoughts fill your minds with good thoughts (Cf.4.8).

Whom do we fight against: A Christian has three enemies. They are the world, the flesh and the Devil. The world is the enemy that is outside – the external enemy. The flesh is the enemy within him – the internal enemy. The Devil is the one who uses both the flesh and the world to defeat the Christian. He is the infernal enemy. But a Christian need not be defeated. As His Lord is the Victor, he too can be victorious. This study will teach us about these enemies and how to overcome them.

The World, what is it: There is the world of nature. It is God who made the world and all things therein (Acts 17.24). When God created it, it was very good (Gen.1.31). This world of nature is not the enemy. Then, there is the world of humanity. God loved this world and send his Son to save this world (Jn.3.16). Then there is a world system that is opposed to God. This whole world lies in wickedness or under the wicked one (1 Jn.5.19). This world is judged and will be judged (Cf.Jn.12.31). This world has a spirit of its own (1 Cor.2.12). This is the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience (Eph.2.2). This world also has its own wisdom (1 Cor.2.6). It is warped and perverted. By this wisdom the world knew not God (1 Cor.1.21). It is opposed to everything godly.

The Christian is in the world, the world of nature. But he is not of the world but is redeemed from this world system which lies under the wicked one. We are chosen out of the world (Jn.15.19; 17.14, 16) to be His purchased possession (Eph.1.14). We are citizens of heaven (Phil.3.20) and are strangers (away from home) and pilgrims (on our way to our home) here (1 Pet.2.11). We are also ambassadors in this world (2 Cor.5.20).

What does the world do to us: The world has its own power of allurement. Though the children of Israel were redeemed from Egypt (a picture of the world), and were fed with heavenly manna (Ex.16.15) they were dissatisfied with it and craved for the cucumbers, and the melons , and the leeks, and the onions and the garlic (Num.11.5). We are instructed: “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, -because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 Jn.2.15,16), and warned not to be conformed to the world (Rom.12.1-2). The world will try all its allurements to squeeze us into its mould. Our kingdom is not of this world (Jn.18.36). This world is passing away and one day it will be destroyed by fire (2 Pet.3.10).

How to overcome the world: James writes that undefiled religion is to live unspotted from the world (Jas.1.27). The world will try to put its marks on us. We should resist it by having no friendship with the world (Jas.4.4). We don't need any patronizing with the world which has crucified our Lord. We are crucified with Christ (Gal.2.20). By him the world is crucified unto us and we are crucified unto the world (Gal.6.14). We should remember that we are those who bear in our body the brand marks of the Lord Jesus

Christ (Gal.6.17). A soldier of the cross does not entangle himself with the affairs of this world (2 Tim.2.4).

Live soberly (Tit.2.12). Grace teaches us to do so. We should ever be watchful. By faith we are able to overcome the world (1 Jn.5.4,5). My influence in the world depends on my separation. The armor of righteousness is available for the Christian. Put it on (2 Cor.6.7). Doing the will of God conquers the world (1 Jn.2.17). It is the Father who helps us to overcome the world.

The armor of righteousness: To defend, fight against the world and to conquer it, our own natural resources are utterly inadequate. The armor of righteousness here is first of all not physical but moral. The armor is also worn on the right hand and on the left. The one of the right hand is to attack and the other on the left is to defend.

“There is none righteous, no not one” says the Divine Judge. But a Christian has imputed righteousness of Christ (2 Cor.5.21). We are clothed with the righteousness of Christ himself. This is our standing before God. When the world attacks us this is our defensive armor. We should live honest among the gentiles (1 Pet.2.12). This is also our offensive armor. Our righteous life should be an open rebuke to unbelievers among whom we live. This is our moral right to be heard.

Though we live in this world we are not of this world. Therefore our behavior should be according to our belief (Cf.2 Pet.3.11-18). How is a holy life and godly conduct produced? By the knowledge of Christ. Therefore if we know Christ this would be reflected in our life in the world. We need to put off the old man (Eph.4.22). Our life was vain (1 Pet.1.18) and filthy (2 Pet..7). Now it should be holy before God (2 Pet.2.11) chaste in the home (1 Pet.3.2), honest in society (1 Pet.2.12) and good in the world (1 Pet.3.16). We have nothing to hide. We should not be led away by errors and should not fall from our steadfastness.

We are the salt of the earth. Savorless salt is no good (Matt.5.13). Covered candles don't show the light (Lk.8.16). Let us wear the armor of righteousness.

THE FLESH - The Internal Enemy: Our second enemy is the flesh. What does this mean? The original creation of man was very good. Sin corrupted him. In the new creation, man is redeemed from the penalty of sin, but the sin nature is still within man. Flesh is used in different senses in the Bible.

* Man or man kind in general is called flesh (Gen.6.12; Psa.145.21; Isa.40.5; Lk.3.6; Rom.3.20). The “filthiness of flesh” is an integral part of man (2 Cor.7.1; Prov.14.30; Ps.16.9).

- * The whole person is called flesh (Ps.56.4; Isa.40.6; Matt.19.5; 1 Cor.1.26).
- * The humanity of Christ is also called flesh. The word became flesh (Jn.1.14; 1 Tim.3.16; 1 Pet.3.18; Heb.10.20).
- * All living beings are called flesh (Gen.6.13, 17).

Flesh – the Old man: But flesh is also used in a bad sense. Evil desires of the old nature or the old nature itself is called flesh (Rom.8.4,13; Gal.5.6). The seat of sin in man is flesh (2 Pet.2.18; 1 Jn.2.16). Paul said: “But I saw another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members (Rom.7.23). The lower or temporary element in the Christian is flesh (Gal.3.3; 6.8) and the weaker element in the human nature (Matt.26.14; Rom.6.19).

The fight and the victory: Flesh lusts against the Spirit and vice versa. A believer has two natures – the spiritual and natural. These two are engaged in a fight to the finish. Who ever gets victorious dominates man. Flesh can raise the passions and create evil desires (Gal.5.24) and can dominate the mind (Eph.2.3), but it need not. A Christian should make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts thereof (Rom.13.14).

The mind should be controlled. Since all sins begin in thought life a Christian should be able to bring all his thoughts to the obedience of Christ and punish all evil thoughts (2 Cor.10.5). This is the negative side. Positively he should think on pure things and fill his life with pure thoughts. This is fresh oxygen (Phil.4.8). This helps him to walk in the Spirit (Gal.5.25). Walking after the flesh (2 Pet.2.10) pollutes the body of a Christian.

“The works of the flesh are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, etc.” (Gal.5.19-21). These works which affects three areas of human life, viz. sex, religion and human relationships, are characteristic of unbelievers, though they are not all evident in one person or to the same degree. These works are called as “unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph.5.11). These are unfruitful works of darkness in the sense it is done under cover of darkness; it is done in secret (5.12). Light reveals and darkness hides. It is light that manifests everything. Children of light are exhorted not to have any fellowship with these but expose them (v.11). This is done by casting of the work of darkness, and putting on the armor of light (Rom.13.12).

Christian life should bear the severe scrutiny. We have nothing to hide. Our armor against the flesh is the armor of light. Our holy walk is our strength. Though the adversary will accuse we should not provide an opportunity for him to do so.

THE DEVIL - The Christian’s third enemy is the infernal one, the Devil: A Christian is a soldier on active service. Christian life is not simply a battle but a war. There is no discharge and it is a fight to the finish. First we should know the enemy. Sometimes Satan is caricatured as a person with two horns on the head and a tail. At other times he is ignored away as a myth. They say there is no Satan, but he is only a religious

imagination. The opposition we face is satanic and planned and carried out by the Devil. Who is he? He is described as

1. A strong man fully armed (Lk.11.21);
2. The prince of this world (Jn.14.30);
3. The god of this world (2 Cor.4.4);
4. Ruler of the kingdom of the air (Eph.2.2);
5. Roaring lion to persecute (1 Pet.5.8);
6. An angel of light to patronize (2 Cor.11.14);
7. Angel of the bottomless pit (Rev.19.11); and
8. The accuser of the brethren (Rev.12.10; job.1.9-11).

This by no means exhausts his description. He is a living super power, an evil genius, cruel and cunning. Adam and Eve were tempted by him. He entered Judas Iscariot and persuaded him to betray Jesus Christ (Jn.13.27). Apostle Paul was opposed by him (1 Thes.2.18). No area of a Christian's life is safe from him. He attacks our lives and our personalities.

We should not be ignorant of his devices (2 Cor.2.11). He attacks our body (2 Cor.12.7; Lk.13.16). He affects our minds (2 Cor.4.4). As a serpent he beguiles (2 Cor.11.3). He distorts man's mental process (Jn.8.44). He can influence our hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit (Cf. Acts 5.3). He can attack our unity. He introduced jealousy in the minds of the disciples to ask who is the greatest among them (Lk.9.46) and be indifferent to the things of God and to each other.

The Armor of God: The Christian is exhorted to "take unto you the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand" (Eph.6.13). Our armor that we may have is neither complete nor sufficient to withstand the enemy. We should realize that the battle is the Lord. Any victory that we have is only the result of battle fought in heavenly places. By faith we lay hold of what God has done for us. Thank God we are not left to our own devices to fight against the enemy but God has provided the "whole armor of God". The armor is powerful enough to withstand the enemy and let us see what this is.

- "Your loins girt about with truth" Christian's girdle of loins against the enemy is the girdle of truth. This girdle not only gives him freedom but strength. The Roman soldier, it is said, tucks his skirt under his belt and is ready for instant battle. "Truth" here is what is revealed in the Scripture. "Thy word is truth" (Jn.17.17). The word gives us strength to stand. Jesus Christ said: I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn.14.6). He is truth. He is our strength.

Church of Christ is an army. The church itself is the pillar and ground of truth (1 tim.3.15). The Church of Christ is built upon truth, and not on any personalities. Neither is it built by spiritual tramps that are not accountable to anyone. Our life

and service are to be in harmony with the Scriptures. The Tabernacle was to be built according to pattern.

“Do not withhold your mercy from me, O Lord: let thy loving kindness and thy truth continually preserve me, for innumerable evils have compassed me about” (Ps.40.11,12). The truth of God will continually preserve the child of God even when surrounded by innumerable enemies. When you hold to the truth of God, you are holding on to Christ.

- “Breastplate of righteousness” This is the chief piece of defensive armor protecting the heart and vital organs of the body. The Roman soldier’s breastplate is made of steel plates overlapping one another. It gives him the mobility of movement and also the ability to withstand. Christ is righteous and you are righteous in Christ.

“Righteousness keeps him that is upright in the way” (Prov.13.6). Your righteousness is not by the things you do, but by faith in Christ to make you right. Clothed in his righteousness you have no condemnation. The breast plate protects the heart. Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life (Prov.4.23). Your heart should be assured of the righteousness you have in Christ.

If you have any doubt about this and your heart condemns you, you should go to the divine Physician. He can heal you. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? (Jer.8.22). He heals the broken hearted

- “Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace”. Gospel is the gospel of peace. A Christian should be ready to preach the gospel in season and out of season (2 Tim.4.2). Roman soldier’s shoes are said to give him the mobility and ability to go and stand. No matter when and where and how the enemy attacks the believer should be ready to preach the gospel.

In our preparation to preach the gospel, our relationship to the Lord is very important. We should have the assurance that we have peace with God (Rom.5.1). We can trust God and He will keep us in perfect peace if our mind is stayed on him (Isa.26.3). Then we are ready to face the enemy, ready to take the gospel of peace to anyone, ready and willing to be, to go and to say (Cf.1 Pet.3.15).

We are asked to have peace one with other (Mk.9.50). It is only when the churches have rest (peace) that they will be edified and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit will be multiplied (Acts 9.31).

- “Take the shield of faith”. The Roman soldier had two types of shields. One was circular and another rectangular. The last one protects the whole body; the

soldiers standing together with these shields make it almost a wall. Fiery darts of the devil cannot harm us then.

Satan will attack the believer in many ways – through his wife, through the family, through emotional disturbances, through ill health etc. It is only the shield of faith that is able to extinguish the fiery darts.

The Lord himself is our shield (Cf.Gen.15.1). The truth of the Lord shall also be your shield (Ps.91.4). It is faith that makes the unseen real. We should have faith in the faithfulness of God to protect us (Cf.1 Cor.1.9). He is faithful even in small things.

David found the Lord faithful to protect him and the sheep under his care. He saved him from the paw of the lion and the bear. Then he was ready to challenge Goliath and defeat him by faith in the name of the Living God (Cf.1 Sam.17.36,37,47).

- “Take the helmet of salvation”. Helmet protects the head, the seat of the mind. At a crucial time a wound in the head could prove fatal. A believer’s mind will be under constant attack. Doubts may assail him even regarding his own salvation. As a soldier Joshua came back to Gilgal often. This is the place where the reproach was rolled away. A believer can assure himself again and again that he is saved by grace.

Salvation spans the past, present and the future. You are saved from the penalty of sin (This is past). You are being saved from the power of sin (This is the present). You will be saved from the presence of sin (This is future). The believer (who is of the day) is exhorted to be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. He is not hoping to be saved. But he awaits the consummation of salvation, the redemption of the body.

Don’t be wounded in the head. Depression, anger, fear, negative thoughts etc. may enter your head. But be an optimist in your life and ministry. Whether we are alive or we are asleep we shall be saved. Hope makes us not ashamed. Trust in the Lord. Let your head and heart have perfect co-ordination.

- “Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”. Sword is a weapon to attack. Keep it combat ready and clean by constant polish and use. Study the word (1 Tim.2.15) and use the word (Ecc.12.11). It is the sword of the Spirit, .e. the sword that the Spirit uses. He will use it most effectively. Therefore you should be always be in tune with the Spirit of God.
- The sword (which the word) has its inherent power. It has reproductive power. It is living and is sharper than any two edged sword (Heb.4.12). It can convict of sin (Jn.16.7; Acts 2.37). It can regenerate a person (1 Pet.1.23; Jas.1.18). It can give

illumination (Ps.119.130). It can produce faith (Rom.10.17). It can prevent sin (Ps.119.11). It can cleanse us (Ps.119.9; Jn.15.3).

It is the word of truth. You can rely on it. It will always cut. But, be careful, don't use a broken sword. Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly and use it effectively.

- “Praying always, with all prayer and supplication” There is no time when we cannot pray. There is no item for which we cannot pray, unless it is expressly forbidden. A believer should always be in an attitude of prayer. There should be nothing in his life that hinders prayer. All sins should be confessed and forgiven. When you live in the presence of God you can always pray. When we can always come to God, why don't we? Nehemiah sat and prayed. Then he always prayed. Prayer should be persevering. We should not faint in prayer. The throne of grace is always open to us. God speaks through His word. When you fill your heart with the word you can hear the still small voice of God in your heart. We can pray for all saints.

We can praise and pray. Children of Moab and the children of Ammon and the children of Mount Seir came against Jehoshaphat to battle. He cried unto the Lord and confessed his inability to defeat the enemy. He appointed signers unto the Lord and that they should praise the beauty of holiness and to say, Praise the Lord, for his mercy endures for ever (2 Chr.20.21). The Lord fought the battle. The first two enemies joined together and defeated the third - the children of Mt.Seir! And then Moab and Ammon fought one with the other and destroyed each another. The power of praise is tremendous.

Prayer can crush the gates of hell. The enemy trembles when he sees the weakest saint on his knees. Prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian.

Warfare and Victory: A Christian is in a spiritual battle field. He has three enemies – the world, the flesh and the Devil. The Lord has provided the armour. Let us put them on and fight.

George Pattan, the great combat general said: There are three elements to military victory: “attack, attack, attack”. Pull down the strongholds of the enemy (2 Cor.10.,4).Attack the enemy through prayer, fasting. You have a problem? Pray. He will lead us in triumph always (2 Cor.2.14).