

“Spiritual Warfare #2”

Introduction

- Spiritual warfare is a battle of cosmic proportions.
- It affects everybody everywhere. No one is exempt.
- Before the creation of the world, Satan rebelled against the Almighty and was cast out of the His presence.

⁹ The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

¹³ When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.

¹⁷ Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (Rev. 12:9, 17)

- See, the devil was defeated when Jesus’ rose from the dead.

- So now he is trying to take as many people as possible with him to eternal condemnation.
- That’s why war imagery pervades both the Old and New Testaments.
- It is a battle of epic proportions that goes on the supernatural realm.

¹² 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. (Eph. 6:12)

- Are Satan and the fallen angels our only enemies?
- What else do we have to be concerned about?
- James 1:14-15 teach us that although Satan is indeed our adversary, another problem lives even closer to home.

¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

¹⁵ *Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*
(James 1:14-15)

- Evidently,
we not only
have to be concerned about Satan
but also our **own internal desires**.
- The Apostle Paul
goes to great lengths
to identify the inner struggle we experience.

¹⁵ *I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.*

¹⁶ *And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.*

¹⁷ *As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.*

¹⁸ *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*

¹⁹ *For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.*

²⁰ *Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.*

- One of the consequences of the fall is that our innocent nature has been corrupted.
- So now we sin.
- We want to do right all the time but we can't.
- *Thanks be to God,* as Paul writes in v. 25, that Christ has saved us— has given us a his nature and freed us from slavery to sin.
- But our **old human nature** remains a constant presence for the rest of our lives.
- I want you to see that the greatest threat to our walk with God is to underestimate its ability to defeat us.
- Just think of some of the most outstanding people in the Bible:

- David, the man after God’s own heart
- Moses, the most humble man
- Samson, the strongest man
- Solomon, the wisest man
- Do you see how powerful sin is?
- It defeated all of these men with all of these outstanding qualities.
 - Samson’s great strength was no match for his lust.
 - Moses’ humility eventually failed.
 - David abandoned his desire for God in a moment of passion.
 - Solomon’s great wisdom didn’t stop him from having 700 wives and 300 concubines.
- In each person resides this powerful enemy.

- James says it’s our evil desire!
- That’s why Paul wrote about his **own** struggle,

²¹ *So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.*

²² *For in my inner being I delight in God’s law;*

²³ *but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.*

²⁴ *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*

I. The Flesh Seeks Self.

A. All sin, all of it,
springs from a desire
to seek self’s interests first,
regardless of God’s will.

1. The flesh focuses on
gratifying self,
exalting self,
serving self,
pleasing self,
and meeting the self’s needs.

2. It relegates God
and everybody else
to a secondary position.
3. Do you know
what self will compromise
if it believes
something else is in it's best interest?
4. Let's think of some things:

- a. Integrity
- b. Faith
- c. Truth
- d. Honor
- e. Justice
- f. Faithfulness to God

B. Here's where we see
the relationship
between Satan and our flesh.

II. Satan Manipulates the Enemy within Us.

A. Remember Satan
cannot make us do anything
against our will.

1. So he does what he can.

2. He uses our sinful tendencies against us.

B. How does he do that?

1. He uses circumstances
to awaken
the evil desires within us

2. All kinds of circumstances,
good or bad,
pleasant or unpleasant.

C. Speaking of circumstances,
what is it that led Peter to deny Christ?

1. How could he have
walked with Jesus three years
only to have left him
on the night of his greatest trial?

2. The answer may surprise you.

3. We often think
Peter’s failure
was all about fear.

4. But I suspect it went deeper than that.

D. Do you remember
Jesus had to teach his disciples
that greatness in the kingdom of God
comes through humility and service
(Matt. 20:26-28)?

1. See, the disciples never argued
over who was going to be greatest
until they believed Jesus was the Christ.

2. Why?

3. Because it dawned on them that
if Christ were indeed the Messiah,
then the King
had to have a cabinet
with different
ranks of importance.

4. And from that moment on,
they **constantly** jockeyed for position.

E. Even on the night
of Jesus’ arrest
they argued over
who was the greatest (Luke 22:24).

1. So Jesus corrected them again (22:25-34)
but this time
he talked about
their positions in the kingdom.

a. They would sit with Him
on thrones judging Israel.

b. But the next thing Jesus
said horrified Peter.

³¹ *“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat.*

³² *But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”* (Luke 22:31-32)

2. I didn’t see this at first
but Jesus announced this
in front of everybody!

3. He emphatically said that
every disciple would be sifted,
but only Peter would fail **the test**.

4. What would
that kind of statement
from your boss
in front of your co-workers
mean to you?
 - a. “Now I’ll never get promoted.”
 - b. “I better start looking for a **new** job.”
5. Peter’s reaction is astonishing.

³³ ... *“Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”* (Luke 22:33)

- a. Do you see the condition of Peter’s heart?
- b. He’d already lost the war
before he ever entered it.
- c. Even though
Jesus took the time to tell them
about the kingdom,
a kingdom of humility and servanthood,
their desire for status
blinded and deafened them
to the truth.

- d. No wonder
Peter began swinging a sword
when Judas showed up at the garden
with soldiers (John 18:10).
- e. Peter had already forgotten
everything
Jesus had predicted
just a few hours earlier.
- f. Isn't that something!
- g. Because he's confused
he's defenseless
- h. No way
could he withstand
the sifting
that was coming upon him.
- i. So ultimately Satan won the victory
because Peter wanted to exalt himself!
- j. Peter's self-focus led to his downfall.
- k. It'll do it every time.

F. Satan knows
the areas in our lives
over which
we have not gained mastery.

1. If it is materialism,
we'll have plenty of opportunities
to spend, spend, spend.
2. If it is sex, temptation will be everywhere.
3. If it is gossip, you'll find the latest tidbits.

G. So what are your inherent areas of weakness?

1. Pride
2. Gossip
3. An unforgiving spirit
4. Unbelief
5. Alcohol/drugs
6. Discouragement
7. A critical spirit
8. Gluttony
9. Lust
10. Anger
11. Creating division
12. Procrastination
13. Laziness

14. Envy

15. Feelings of worthlessness?

- We need to identify our weaknesses so that Satan can't turn our circumstances against us so easily.
- We have to be deliberate and proactive if we're going to grow spiritually.

III. **Why Would God Allow Satan to Test Us at the Very Points We Are Most Likely to Fail?**

A. God allows it for four reasons:

1. God wants to free us from the dominion of sin.

With freedom comes responsibility!

2. God wants to develop character in the area of temptation.

That requires self-examination & self-control.

3. God wants to prepare us
for greater kingdom service.

We have to be reminded that
the kingdom of God
is about humility and servanthood.

4. We need to be reminded
that we must depend on God.

To be successful
we have to cooperate
with the Almighty!

We don't have the power
to do this on our own!

IV. We Must Know Satan's Primary Scheme to Tempt Us to Sin.

- A. **Step #1:** The enemy engages us in conversation.

In Genesis 3:1-7, Satan engages Eve in conversation.

1. It doesn't take him very long
to get her to doubt God and his Word.

2. I know we don't
verbally speak
with the devil
as Eve did,
but we carry on
the same kind of conversation
when temptation comes.

3. See if this sounds familiar.

It's a conversation
between Satan and a Christian.

It goes back and forth beginning with Satan.

- Satan: “Go ahead,
this sin won't hurt you
just this once.”
- Believer: “But I shouldn't do it...
although it probably
won't hurt me...
If it does, it will only hurt me.”
- Satan: “That's right.
And besides, no one will know.”

- Believer: “Yeah, I can probably hide it.”
- Satan: “And think about the pleasure it will bring you.”
- Believer: “Yeah, it would be fun!”
- Satan: “Just think what you’ll be missing. if you don’t.”

B. On and on the conversation goes until we decide to give in to the temptation.

1. That’s why the Bible says,

¹⁸ *Flee from sexual immorality. (1 Cor. 6:18)*

⁷ *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)*

⁴¹ *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” (Matt. 26:41)*

2. Remember,
any lingering
will probably **bring trouble**.

C. **Step #2:** The enemy focuses on
what **we are missing**.

1. Even though God said that
they could eat from every other tree in the garden,
Satan had Eve focus on
what she couldn't have.
2. So she thought
she was missing out
on something.
 - a. He had her right where he wanted her.
 - b. He told her
she was missing out
on being like God.
3. You know we do the same thing.
 - a. How often do we sit around
pointing out
all the blessing we have?

b. Instead we focus on **what we don't have**.

4. We don't have
what others have,
so we greedily covet (Exod. 20:17).

5. Worry is a similar sin.

a. We get so caught up
in **what we can't control**
that we lose our focus
on God's provision (Matt. 5:25-34).

D. **Step #3**: The enemy makes sin look good.

1. Let's be honest:
most of the time we sin
because sin looks good to us.
2. Satan makes sin look pleasurable.
3. The prodigal son certainly thought so.
4. After he squandered his wealth
living in sin,
he worked in a pigpen (Luke 13:13-15).

Conclusion

Satan offers the world,
but he wants us to **ignore** the cost
of worshiping him (Matt. 4:8-9).

Do this and you’ll win more than you’ll lose:

1. Run to God. Run and don’t look back!
2. Focus on God’s goodness and blessings.
3. Remember the consequences of sin.
4. Be sure to thank God for protecting you
when He has given you the strength
to defeat the enemy.

Gospel Invitation:

- Do you remember what Paul wrote
after he came to grips
with his own weaknesses
in Romans 7?

²⁴ *What a wretched man I am!*

Who will rescue me from this body of death? (Romans 7:24)

- The only person that can rescue us is Jesus!
- That’s why He came.
- His death, burial, and resurrection save us from eternal death.
- Paul wrote in Romans 1:17,

¹⁶ I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (Romans 1:16)

- Peter wrote,

²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:21)

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◆ **The Flesh Seeks S_____.**

◆ **Satan Manipulates the E_____ within Us (Luke 22:31-33).**

- In a state of confusion Peter had no d_____ for the sifting that was coming upon him.
- So ultimately Satan won the victory because Peter wanted to e_____ himself?
- Satan knows the areas in our lives over which we have not gained m_____.

◆ **Why Would God Allow Satan to Test Us at the Very Points We Are Most Likely to F_____?**

- God allows it for four reasons:
 4. God wants to f_____ us from the dominion of sin.
 5. God want to d_____ character in the area of temptation.
 6. God wants to p_____ us for greater kingdom service.
 7. We need to be reminded that we must d_____ on God.

◆ **We Must Know Satan’s Primary S_____ to Tempt Us to Sin.**

- Step #1: The enemy engages us in c_____ (1 Cor. 6:18; Ja. 4:7; Matt. 26:41).
- Step #2: The enemy focuses on what we are m_____.
- Step #3: The enemy makes sin look g_____.

Conclusion

- Satan offers the world, but he wants us to i_____ the cost of worshipping him (Matt. 4:8-9).
- Do the following and you’ll win more than you’ll lose:
 5. R_____ to God.
 6. Focus on God’s g_____ and blessings.
 7. Remember the c_____ of sin.
 8. Be sure to thank God for p_____ you.