

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Being a Christian is not for sissies. It's a life of spiritual warfare, battling against your adversaries: the world, the flesh, the devil Satan, and his legion of demons. They twist God's truth, as you are tempted by the lusts of your flesh, the desires of your eyes, and your pride in possessions. But God provides you spiritual weapons - truth (the Holy Bible) and power (the Holy Spirit). Here's how to deploy them.

1) Trust and obey. If you are a believer, you are in "*union with Christ.*" The evil one, Satan, is your enemy because he is Christ's enemy. But Christ provides you with all His resources of truth and power. To use them, you must trust God's truth, believing what He says. Then you must obey Him, acting in faith.

2) Believing in God's truth. Jesus uses this strategy in Matthew 4. Led by the Holy Spirit, He countered each of the devil's temptations with God's truth. Satan twisted God's Word. Jesus answered, "*It is written*" as He quoted Scripture in truth. Likewise, we trust and obey His Word by His power. In John 14:26, Jesus promised the ministry of the Holy Spirit to enable His disciples to recall God's Word. The apostle Paul underscores the role of truth in 2 Timothy 2:24 as he writes, "*repentance leading to knowledge of the truth, that they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.*" Unrepentant sin is a snare in your life - a result of unbelief. Don't yield that foothold to the devil.

3) Relying on the armor of Christ. The apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 6:10, "*Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of evil.*" He goes on to describe each component of armor, as a metaphor for being in union with Christ. It's an expansion of Romans 13:12 where he says "*put on the armor of light, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, making no provision for the flesh and its desires.*" Christ Himself is your armor. You are safe in Him because you are in union with Him, with everything you need. Armor was a powerful object lesson for a first-century reader. The belt of truth secures your armor with the eternally unchanging life-changing truth of God's words. The breastplate of righteousness protects your heart from pursuing ungodly passions. The shoes of peace are your readiness to share the gospel, as you go and make disciples. The shield of faith extinguishes the fiery darts of temptation, doubt and demonic attacks. The helmet of salvation protects your mind from the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The sword of the Spirit is your offensive weapon, the word of God, "*which is living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*" Your secret weapon is prayer, "*praying at all times in the Spirit*" as you submit to the Lord's truth, depending on Him with your whole being, heart, mind, will. You are safe in Christ, your armor.

4) Resisting the evil one. Fighting in the flesh does not work against spiritual foes. Paul told Timothy to "*flee temptations and passions*" and "*stand firm*" against the devil. Only Jesus ordered, "*begone Satan.*" In Jude 1:9 even the archangel Michael said to the devil, "*the Lord rebuke you.*" James 4 says, "*friendship with the world is enmity with God. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*" 1 Peter 5 echoes, "*humble yourselves, be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith.*"

5) Living by God's power. The indwelling Holy Spirit provides believers with unlimited spiritual power. Galatians 5:16 says, "*walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*" Jude describes false teachers as "*devoid of the Holy Spirit*" and advises "*praying in the Spirit*" and keeping in the love of God. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Christ has overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. 1 John 4:4 reminds even "*little children*" in Christ, "*you are from God and overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*" In spiritual union with Christ, you have all of His unlimited spiritual resources to live out your faith. Intentionally begin each day by putting on the armor of Christ. Put God's word in your mind. Believe it. Live it. Consciously depend on the Spirit's power. That's how you "*withstand in the evil day, and having done all, stand firm.*" Truth. Power. Trust. Obey. Be transformed! *In Christ!*