

WARFARE WITH THE WORLD

The Bible likens people to sheep. We so easily go astray. We often seem oblivious to dangers around us. It seems an unlikely metaphor, but we sheep are players in a dramatic spiritual warfare. As theologian RC Sproul says, "the great triad of enemies for Christian growth contains the world, the flesh, and the devil."

1- Know your ENEMY. We saw last time how the "world" means anti-God transient earthly ideas that are counterfeit, compared to what God says is true and eternal. Lusts, pride, power and possessions take great pleasure in the measure of their treasure. Your eyes covet what you desire. Your heart craves things of the flesh. Your pride collects possessions. But God provides more than principles of warfare.

2- Know your RESOURCES. Colossians 2:8 warns believers, "*see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*" Sheep in the pasture think the world is their playground. But for believers it's really an arena of warfare, where spiritual battles rage in your mind. 2 Corinthians 10:3 explains, "*though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.*"

Your resources are truth and power. The world raises up lies against the knowledge of God. You counter with the truth of God's written Word. When the world comes at you with false values of pleasure, power and possessions, you are ready with spiritual weapons to destroy mere worldly arguments and lofty opinions. How? Put God's truth in your mind and heart, and live it out by the Holy Spirit's power.

Some are disappointed that our weapons aren't physical tools to take on the zombies of darkness. But we need God's weapons with divine power, shining His light to dispel the darkness and destroy demonic strongholds of deceit. When we sheep follow the Good Shepherd, instead of being taken captive by the way the world thinks, we turn it around. We take what the world says and make it captive to Christ.

You do this with the spiritual power of the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer. He regenerates you to faith in Christ, enables you to understand God's Word, and empowers you to live it out. And weapons of truth and power can be with you all the time. You don't need a concealed carry permit. Just read God's Word every day. Get it in your mind. Meditate on it. Memorize it. Carry it with you always. Live it.

3- Know your STRATEGIES. Use your resources against the enemy, by trusting and obeying. You won't win wars by simply knowing - you must be doing. Believe what God says is true, then obey Him and put it into action. The world says "get riches" but in Matthew 6:19 Jesus says "*do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal, but lay up treasures in heaven... for where your treasure is there your heart will be also.*" Your heart follows your treasures.

Don't be deceived by earthly values. In Matthew 13:22 Jesus says, don't let the world choke out the gospel. Don't let the cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches overcome God's Word. Root out the rocks and weeds and thorns and pests, by His power within you. You have spiritual truth and power. Use them! Believe what God says and act on it, living it out in your life. Trust and obey!

Know your Shepherd. Your Savior has won the war against sin. He gives you the victory as you trust Him and obey Him. Whatever you're battling in your life just now - sin, self, sorrow, selfishness - Jesus has already conquered. You can wage the warfare in your heart and mind and will as you trust and obey.

The great Puritan preacher Thomas Brooks said, "there are only war veterans in heaven, who have fought the good fight for the kingdom of God." The world crucified Jesus. But He gave His life and rose again. Trust in Him and as Galatians 2:20 says, you are "*crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*" The Lord reigns! In Him you're no longer a victim - but a victor.