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OUR SPIRITUAL BATTLE

1 Peter 5:8-9 *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith,...*

Many pastors and teachers downplay spiritual warfare, leaving God's people unaware they're even in a battle. This ignorance puts believers at risk. Hosea 4:6 *...my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge...*

The church *must* recognize the reality of the enemy's schemes, and believers *must* learn to walk in victory over these unseen spiritual forces through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 6:10).

Paul writes about this warfare and compares us to soldiers of Jesus Christ in 2 Timothy 2:3-4: *You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*

Today, spiritual warfare is intensifying as satan's attacks grow bolder and more deceptive. When danger increases and awareness decreases, God's shepherds *must* sound the alarm to prevent disaster! Ezekiel 33:1-10 *...(God's leaders), I have made you (watchmen for the people of God); so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me...*

THE BATTLE FOR LOYALTY

The heart of spiritual warfare is not merely a battle against demons; it is a battle over allegiance, dependence, and ultimately worship. Satan's primary objective has never changed... to persuade people to exchange wholehearted devotion to God for independence, self-rule, and love of the world.

1. The origin and focus of all spiritual conflict...

- Before sin entered humanity, it entered the heart of Lucifer in Heaven. Isaiah 14:12-15 records Lucifer's five "I will" statements, including, *"I will be like the Most High."*

- Pride, the root of all sin, seeks to replace God's throne with our own. Lucifer's rebellion became humanity's temptation when the serpent told Eve, *"You will be like God..."* (Genesis 3:5).

2. Satan's warfare is subtle. Many picture spiritual warfare as dramatic encounters with evil, yet Scripture describes something far more deceptive. 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:13-15 *We are not ignorant of his schemes... for even satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

- Satan's attacks often begin with small compromises... replacing prayer with self-confidence, Scripture with opinion, worship with entertainment, holiness with cultural values, God's approval with man's approval, and obedience with rationalization.

Our spiritual battle is fought in three main areas: the mind (thoughts, truth, etc.), the church (relationships, unity, trust, etc.), and the world (temptation, compromise, and worldly influence). Every temptation is a choice... will we trust God or trust ourselves?

3. How the world competes for our affections and loyalties.

- John summarizes satan's strategy in 1 John 2:15-17, *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*
- **The lust of the flesh** refers to powerful human desires. In this passage, it describes appetites that seek fulfillment apart from God. Context determines whether desire is holy or sinful. Jesus Himself earnestly desired to eat the Passover with His disciples (Luke 22:15). **God-given desires such as hunger, thirst, rest, sexual intimacy within marriage, and the desire for companionship become sinful when they are pursued outside of God's will, or God's boundaries.**
- **The lust of the eyes.** Biblically, the eye is often the gateway to desire. The eyes see, then the heart longs. In Genesis 3, Eve saw the tree. In Joshua 7, Achan saw the Babylonian treasure. David's descent into sin began when he saw Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11–12). John is describing a heart driven by coveting, greed, envy, materialism, pornography, and the relentless pursuit of possessions. Ecclesiastes 1:8 says, ***"The eye is not satisfied with seeing." It continually longs for more, declaring, "I want and deserve that."***
- **The pride of life.** This expression appears only twice in the New Testament. It describes someone who boasts in what he possesses or claims to possess, **an arrogant, pretentious show-off.** It is not merely pride, but confidence rooted in status, achievements, possessions, or worldly success.

VICTORY COMES FROM WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

4. The armor of God is about standing firm in the battle (Ephesians 6:10-20)

- We **DO NOT** wrestle against flesh and blood (people). Our struggle is against spiritual rulers and authorities far stronger than we are.
- Our strength does not come from ourselves. God supplies every piece of armor, while the only offensive weapon is the Word of God, applied by the Holy Spirit. Paul's repeated command is simply, "**Stand.**" We do not fight **for** victory; we stand **in** the victory the LORD has already won!

5. We are called to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ! (2 Timothy 2:1-4)

- In 2 Timothy 2:1-4, Paul insists that Timothy share in suffering as a faithful soldier of Christ. *You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus... You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*

6. The key to victory is clearly seen in Galatians 5:16-26... *So I say, walk by (in step with) the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit...*

- Spiritual victory is not necessarily experienced in aggressively confronting the devil (Zechariah 4:6 "*Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,*" says the LORD of hosts), but through continual dependence on and submission to the Holy Spirit. Victory comes by understanding the enemy's **schemes** (2 Corinthians 2:11) while walking daily in the Spirit's power. Like the men of Issachar, we must discern the times and know how to respond (1 Chronicles 12:32).

DISCUSSION

1. How can a believer distinguish between a spiritual attack (1 Peter 5:8–9), personal temptation (James 1:13-15), and the consequences of poor choices (Proverbs 22:8; Job 4:8)?
2. How have technology, social media, and constant connectivity affected our ability to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit?
3. In what ways do you think AI (Artificial Intelligence) is intensifying spiritual warfare?
4. In what area are you most vulnerable to the enemy's attacks, and how are you using God's Word to resist him?



PRAYER...

LORD, we understand that we are in a cosmic battle. Open our eyes and increase our discernment so that, like the men of Issachar, we may understand the times and know what to do.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from every hidden sin, from every entanglement, every deception, and every trace of half-hearted devotion. Transform us from the inside out and let our enemy have NO hold in us!

JEHOVAH Sabaoth, let that victory begin in our own lives and overflow to others. Empower us by your Spirit to rescue others from the bondage of sin, the lies of the enemy, and the power of darkness. Make us faithful, spirit led soldiers who stand firm and advance Your Kingdom and your will in our society. Amen