

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE, WHEN DOES IT OCCUR, AND HOW DO WE FIGHT IT?

To Answer This Question...

I. WE NEED TO IDENTIFY WHO OUR ENEMIES ARE AND UNDERSTAND HOW WE WERE THRUST INTO A SPIRITUAL BATTLE.

A. Notice first of all the Bible states very clearly who our enemies are (I Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:12). They are not human beings but spirit beings. From these Scriptures and others we know the devil has an invisible army of well-organized, intelligent, spirit creatures who are involved in a battle against God and His people.

1. In Satan's military-like structure these evil spirits have different ranks and authority and are at his disposal and command to carry out his orders.
2. The "principalities" means "leading ones" and may refer to the highest ranking officers in Satan's army.
3. The "powers" may refer to those under Satan's officers who have certain powers by which they can carry out remarkable things for him.
4. The "rulers of darkness of this world" are those evil spirits operating behind and within certain rulers in this world who continually cause conflict and turmoil. Note Rev. 16:13,14.
5. The "spiritual wickedness in high places" refers to the hordes of wicked spirit beings who operate in the heavenlies or surrounding this world. Note the incident in Dan. 10.

B. It is important to understand that our warfare involves the spiritual and invisible realm and it is against Satan and the evil angelic forces and not against men.

1. Notice while unsaved men are used in many despicable ways they are victims of wicked demonic control from which they need deliverance.
2. It may oftentimes be trying and difficult to separate and identify the enemy but men are mere instruments and not the agents in opposition to God and His people. Men who are unsaved and used of the devil could and would be altogether different if they were saved. Consider Paul's actions before and after he was saved (Acts 8:1; 9:1,2; I Tim. 1:12-16). Consider our own!

C. How man became involved in spiritual warfare is directly associated with Satan's rebellion against God and his judgment.

1. When Satan rebelled against God he lost his high position in heaven and was cast down to the earth (Isa. 14:12-14).
2. In his rebellion against God Satan led a third of the angelic host with him and these were also cast out of heaven and became a host of fallen angels who hate God and serve the devil (Rev. 12:4; II Pet. 2:4).
3. As a result of Satan's sin he became the prince or ruler of this world (Jn. 16:11) and he then set his sights upon destroying man whom God had set as the crowning glory of His creation to have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26). To get back at God, Satan then tempted Eve and introduced sin into this world which brought about the fall of man and the subsequent curse (Gen. 3; II Cor. 11:3; Rom. 5:12).
4. Satan became the arch-enemy of God, His people and His program for the ages. It must be seen that Satan's work to destroy the souls of men is his way of striking back at God and it is how man became involved in spiritual warfare. Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels not for men, but multitudes of men will be led there by the devil (Matt. 25:41; 7:13).

II. WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE BATTLE IS ALL ABOUT AND WHY WE HAVE TO FIGHT IT.

A. The battle is for the souls of men and where they will spend eternity.

1. Notice because of the curse men are spiritually dead or separated from God and stand in need of the new birth (Eph. 2:1; Jn. 3:3; Rom. 6:23).
2. Because of the curse if a person dies without Christ he will suffer eternal destruction (Jn. 8:24; Jn. 14:6; Rev. 21:8).

B. We as believers have to be involved in this spiritual warfare for a number of valid reasons.

1. First of all, it is why Jesus came and died for our sins (Jn. 3:16; Lk. 10:10; I Jn. 3:8).
2. It is the work He has called believers to do (Jn. 20:21; Matt. 28:19,20; II Cor. 5:18,19).
3. It is required for us to live a victorious life and not be defeated by the devil (I Tim. 6:12; I Pet. 5:8,9; Jas. 4:7; I Tim. 1:18-20).

III. WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT THE DEVIL'S PURPOSE IS FOR THE UNSAVED AND THE TACTICS HE USES TO ACCOMPLISH HIS GOAL.

A. The purpose of Satan regarding unsaved people is to keep them lost so they will die and go to hell and for everyone who does it is his way of getting back at God (Matt. 25:41).

B. To accomplish this purpose Satan uses a number of things to "blind" unbelievers so they won't see the need of being saved (II Cor. 4:3,4).

1. First he is the master-mind and builder behind a well-organized system which eliminates God and attracts men to focus their minds upon "self" rather than God. This system appeals to men to concentrate on the "here and now" and give no thoughts to eternity (I Jn. 2:15-17; II Cor. 4:18). Satan will use everything imaginable in his world system to keep a man's mind off God so he won't be saved. It can involve various pleasures, practices, philosophies or people through whom he may work (Heb. 11:25; Col. 2:8; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:18,19; Jn. 8:44; III Jn. 9,10).

2. Secondly Satan has contrived and is behind a counterfeit system of religion by which he is able to deceive the minds of men in the matter of salvation and the things of God (Matt. 13:24-30 13:24-30; 38-43).

a. Notice within this system of religion the devil has his ministers who appear to be preaching and teaching the truth (II Cor. 11:3,4, 13:15).

b. Notice the means by which Satan damns the souls of those unsaved is through a counterfeit message of the gospel which deceives the minds of men to think that they have the truth and are saved. Note some examples of this (Gal. 1:6-9; I Tim. 1:3-7 Titus 1:10,11).

3. Thirdly Satan goes about to prevent those who hear the truth from believing it and being saved.

a. This may involve taking the Word of God out of a persons heart by getting him to doubt it or to procrastinate about it (Luke 8:12). Someone has said, "one of the devil's most successful wiles it wait awhile". It is no doubt true the devil is content to keep a man lost one day at a time.

b. This may involve bringing different arguments and excuses to a person's mind why he shouldn't believe. Many should but don't know that you cant believe what he says (Jn. 8:44).

c. Satan often brings up the sinful testimonies of unfaithful believers or statements which are contrary to the Word of God which they may have heard before. He is not above using Scripture but he will turn it around to mean something it doesn't mean in order to keep a person blinded to the truth (Acts 16:16-18).

IV. WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT THE DEVIL'S PURPOSE IS FOR BELIEVERS AND THE TACTICS HE USES TO ACCOMPLISH HIS GOAL.

A. The purpose of Satan regarding those who are saved is to get them to commit sin and thereby to defeat them by destroying their testimony. It is also his purpose to use them in any way he can to disrupt, divide, destroy and prevent other people and/or a church from doing the work of God.

B. In order to accomplish these purposes Satan uses an assortment of wiles and devices to bring it about (Eph. 6:11; II Cor. 2:1).

1. To defeat a believer and destroy him or prevent him from serving the Lord Satan goes about it in a two-fold way.

a. First Satan appeals to a person with various temptations. In these he speaks to us in three distinct areas or avenues to be drawn away by our own lusts to do contrary to God's will for us (I Thess. 3:5; I Jn. 2:15-17; James 1:13-15).

b. Secondly Satan has a way of assaulting us in order to prevent us from doing God's will and work. This may involve physical illness (Luke 13:11,16; II Cor. 12:7). We should note that this is only by divine permission. Satan's assault may involve certain hindrances in trying to do God's work (I Thess. 2:17,18). It can come in the form of personal attacks from unbelievers (Acts 7:54-58). It may involve mental torments such as profane words or thoughts (I Sam. 16:14).

2. To defeat a church and prevent it from carrying on God's work or to destroy a church altogether Satan has several devices of which we should be aware.

a. Satan will tempt believers to commit immorality which will destroy the testimony of a church (I Cor. 5:1-8; 7:5).

b. Satan will lead people to harbor grudges and have an unforgiving spirit (II Cor. 2:10, 11).

c. Satan will cause a person to act out of selfishness and vain glory and not out of love and concern for others (Acts 5:3).

d. Satan will use spiritual pride among believers in a church to cause dissension and divide it so that it cannot carry on the Lord's work effectively (I Cor. 1:10-17; Phil. 2:14-16; 4:2).

e. Satan will use immaturity among believers to keep them from dealing with individuals which must be disciplined because of a bad testimony (I Cor. 5:6-8, 12,13).

f. Satan will use pride in certain individuals to take positions of oversight which God has not given them and in an attempt to run things they can become offensive, hurt others, and destroy the ministry of a church (III Jn. 9,10; Heb. 5:4; Acts 20:28; I Thess. 5:12,13; Heb. 13:7,17; I Pet. 5:1-3).

V. WE NEED TO KNOW THE WEAPONS WE HAVE FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND HOW TO USE THEM.

A. The weapons for the kind of conflict we're in are not carnal (II Cor. 10:3,4).

1. This means first of all we can't fight a spiritual warfare like a conventional kind of war is fought. We can't use our fists, we can't use guns, we can't use tanks or planes with bombs. These will not suffice because they are totally ineffective.

2. Note a second thing this involves. Men do not possess the power to be successful in this kind of warfare. No mortal man is strong enough or smart enough to engage this kind of enemy and be victorious. For this reason spiritual warfare demands spiritual weapons and without them defeat is certain.

B. The weapons of our warfare are spiritual (I Tim. 6:11,12; II Tim. 4:7; II Cor. 10:3,4).

1. This means the battle must be fought in the strength and power of the Lord and not on our own (Eph. 6:10).

2. It also means appropriating and using the things which God has prescribed for protection as well as for power and victory (Eph. 6:11,13).

C. The way to protect ourselves and have power to defeat the devil.

1. To protect ourselves we must keep alert against our adversary (I Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:18).

2. To protect ourselves and have power against the devil we must have some spiritual strength (Eph. 6:10) to have this involves daily feeding upon the Word of God and staying in fellowship with God.

3. To protect ourselves and have power against the devil we must put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:11-18). Notice if any single piece of this armor is missing the Christian soldier will be vulnerable and can be fatally wounded which will take him out of the battle for the Lord.

a. Notice to put on these particular things to defend ourselves it involves a day by day matter of prayer, self-surrender and the exercise of faith on our part. And as we do these things which are opposite and contrary to what Satan would have us to do, we are yielding to the Holy Spirit in our lives and putting on Christ or reproducing

qualities characteristic of Him (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 2:20).

b. This armor here is compared to that of a Roman soldier of Paul's day but it illustrates exactly what is essential for every day of our lives against the devil.

(1) We must have on first the belt of truth (Eph. 6:14). Truth is what holds everything else together. The devil would have us to be dishonest and deceitful but when we are truthful and honest in our daily lives we have some protection against the devil. compare Phil. 1:11.

(2) Secondly we must put on the breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14). This simply means doing what is right in God's sight and obeying His Word (I Tim. 6:11; II Tim. 2:15; I Jn. 3:7). Satan wants us to disobey God.

(3) Thirdly we are to have on sandals and be prepared to go with a particular purpose in mind (Eph. 6:15). This means we are to be prepared to witness to others and share the gospel with them. Compare Matt. 28:19,20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8. The devil doesn't want us to go to others and to witness to them. Having on these sandals means having everything else in order also. Those who are lacking the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, or the helmet of salvation will be ineffective.

(4) Fourthly we must have the shield of faith (Eph. 6:16). This means to trust God's promises and go about doing His work with a reliance upon Him. Satan wants us to rely upon our own strength.

(5) Fifthly we are to have on the helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:17). This speaks of having a personal and experiential knowledge of being saved but it may also refer to the assurance we have knowing that we are saved (I Jn. 5:13). The devil would like to keep us in doubt, ignorance, and cause us to be discouraged.

4. It may be seen that the last two of our weapons of warfare are offensive weapons instead of defensive ones (Eph. 6:17,18).

a. This includes the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17). What this refers to is obeying and using the Word of God. It involves giving out God's Word to others rather than hiding it away. The devil wants us to be quiet about the things of Christ.

b. Lastly prayer is an offensive weapon which will protect us and empower us to be victorious against the devil (Eph. 6:18). This involves a regular prayer life. Satan wants us to "go it on our own" and he will do anything to disrupt or cause us to neglect prayer in our lives.

