

(Scripture Study 32 from the Revised Stewardship)

Spiritual Warfare against our Enemy

Now that you are more rooted and grounded in the truth of who God is and how much He cares for you, let's consider our enemy, the devil. Shortly after Jesus was baptized and heard those powerful and wonderful words of affirmation from His Dad, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased," He was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He knew He was God's Son but the devil still tried to get Him to doubt what God had told Him plainly. Jesus successfully withstood His attacks by quoting Scripture. In the same way, our best weapon to combat the evil foe in our day, is the truth, or the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17)

The Spirit says through Paul, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in 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 the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:10-12)

I frequently need to remind myself that my enemies are not terrorists, or medical doctors performing abortions, or political leaders. Our enemies are not flesh and blood but spiritual forces of evil. One of the ways to discern our enemies is by understanding the nature of evil. Jesus describes the devil as a thief who "comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10) This is the opposite of Jesus who came to give life.

I believe the devil is behind the abortion industry for he steals, kills, and destroys. He also has a hand in wars, conflicts, bombings, murder, for this who he is, a murderer. I had the solemn opportunity to tour Yad Vashem (www.yadvashem.org/), which is the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem. The atrocities which were committed against the Jewish people are appalling to see. I left the museum with a fresh understanding of how evil the devil really is.

He not only is a murderer, he is also a liar. Jesus said "the devil, ... He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44). While the devil lies, Jesus always utters truth, for He is the truth. "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.'" (John 14:6)

He makes us know the truth to set us free from lies and deception. "So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" (John 8:31-32)

Condemnation

We have studied the difference between conviction which comes from the Holy Spirit and condemnation, which usually comes from the devil. Condemnation is void of hope and leads to despair. We have all felt useless and hopeless but these feelings originate with the liar himself. He not only lies, he also accuses us. He is referred to in this passage as the "accuser of the brethren." "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." (Revelation 12:10-11)

When I am feeling down, depressed, and hopeless, I take time to pray and resist the devil. For this is his kind of work, discouraging the saints. I simply say “I resist the devil in the name of Jesus!!” If I am alone, I may pray out loud and with some force and vigor. The language “resist the devil” is found in James 4:6-7. ““God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:6-7) I fully expect that the devil will flee when I resist him, because God’s Word declares this to be true.

This verse in James 4 is enlightening on another front. We are to humble ourselves first. Humility is a characteristic of Jesus. God gives grace to the humble. Pride, the opposite of humility, is the hallmark of evil. When I resist the devil, I am not haughty, but humble. And I am in earnest. Jesus and Paul cast out demons and withstood evil in their day, with the help of the Spirit of God. They did it powerfully and yet humbly. I like to imagine I am standing behind my big brother Jesus when I pray. For the devil is stronger than me, but he is not a match for the Son of God!!

By the Spirit

(Jesus said) “If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.” (Matthew 12:28-29)

Notice that Jesus cast out demons by the Spirit. Notice also that He said we are to bind the strong man first. Sometimes in prayer I resist the devil, other times I ask God to bind the strong man. Both are scriptural and effectual methods of fighting the good fight.

The Name of Jesus

I always pray in the name of Jesus. For this name is above every name. Jesus Himself taught us to pray in His name. “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” (John 14:13-14)

Notice how the apostles performed acts of healing and deliverance in this wonderful powerful name. “Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!’” (Acts 3:6) “Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And it came out that very hour.” (Acts 16:18)

King Jesus

Following Jesus is serious business. We have enemies but we also have a great Savior. “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4) “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)

Prayer

Father teach us to fight the good fight of the faith. Remind us that our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. Enable us to discern our foe, and in the Spirit, successfully resist and bind him. “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1Corinthians 15:57)