

Toward a Biblical Account of Spiritual Warfare

- **The Biblical Context: The Christian View of Reality**

There is an “Unseen World,” behind and largely controlling our “Seen World.”

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
(2 Corinthians 4:17,18)

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12)

The Unseen World consists, at least, in the fullness of God Himself, His Kingdom composed of all good angels, and believers, whether in Heaven or on earth. There is also the Kingdom of Darkness, composed of Satan, all evil angels and unbelievers.

The well-known story of Job was given, in part, to indicate the Biblical view of reality. As one reflects on the story one becomes aware of (1) God and His plan, (2) Satan and his plan, and (3) Job and his trial – which indicates the conflict between God and Satan. These three spheres of reality are still operative today. The conflict continues now, to some degree, in the life of every Christian.

The Bible indicates that God created the angels, the universe, and mankind, and pronounced it was good. The angels and mankind were created with freewill in that God wanted them, and us, to receive His love and love Him in return. Without a free choice that would not happen: love is a choice.

Freewill meant that angels and mankind were given the ability – a potential – to choose to love and obey God, or choose not to do so. The one who is now Satan actualized that potential in choices of selfishness and pride and evil came into existence. When mankind was created Satan knew how to trick Eve into making the choice he had made. The effects of those choices are well known: some angels followed Satan and some did not, entire mankind is now in a fallen state of death, and the universe is under judgment. (See Genesis 1-3). *The whole world is under of the control of the evil one* (I John 5:19).

The Bible makes the reality of Satan and his kingdom very clear.

I [the Lord Jesus] will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me ... (John 14:30)

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4).

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (Ephesians 2:1,2).

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12).

The Kingdom of God is an invasion into this fallen world. It is an expression of God's love and designed to rescue mankind through redemptive grace, defeat Satan and eventually separate him, his kingdom, his followers and all evil into a sphere of reality called Hell. At that time God's Kingdom and righteousness will prevail. *They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9)*

- **The goal of Satan and his Kingdom of Darkness.**

The original goal: Satan sought the take the place of the Lord Jesus or equality with Him in the worship of the angels (Isaiah 14:12-15).

The goal of Satan today is to hinder Christians and counterfeit Biblical Christianity (John 8:44; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 3:4,5; Revelation 12:10).

Explanations of that goal and the subtle manner of demonic attack.

He seeks to hinder, deceive and enslave believers in order to produce weakness in the Church and the Kingdom of God. The appeal is to our self centeredness, pride, fear, elitism, lust, jealousy, covetousness, self-protection, passivity, lack of love, faith, and hope, the desire for control as well as all forms personal error, and neglect of the top priorities of the Bible. In particular all believers are hindered in their prayer life, Bible understanding, and the plan of God for their life.

He also seeks to further enslave, develop allegiance, and gain active participants in strengthening and furthering the kingdom of darkness by the following means:

- a. The developing of demonic power sources: legalized abortion, homosexuality, liberalism, drugs, alcohol, promiscuity, pornography, humanism, relativity of truth, and one of the most important -- passivity among evangelical Christian leaders and Christians -- so they will downplay the importance of the demonic, and not teach spiritual warfare.

- b. The promise/offer of self-centered power, pleasure and control through: hard rock music, violence, drugs, immorality, sexuality, alcohol, materialism, humanism, pantheism, false religions, the New Age movement, occult literature, and the type of false teaching found in television programs with its fantasy and passivity.
- **The vulnerability of the human race to Satanic attack.**

The way Satan controls the human race and particularly believers is to teach us error, which becomes sin when we practice it, and by temptation. His work is in harmony with our fallen nature. Notice how clear that is in the following passages.

The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven--if there was anything to forgive--I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:9-11).

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. (Ephesians 4:26-28).

To summarize one important truth in these verses would be: "When we live in harmony with the characteristics of the Kingdom of Darkness it opens the door to Satanic oppression and bondage."

It appears to be clear in the Bible that God has given the Devil permission to work in our lives to the degree of the sins we are committing. It is also evident that sinning ignorantly is not the same as sinning deliberately. It is a most serious matter to know the truth and to deliberately not practice it.

Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you." (Matthew 11:20-24)

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7,8)

Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. (James 4:17)

The evidence of Satan's work is clearly seen among us as believers. We are kept from growing, becoming mature in Christ, and from developing the Fruit of the Spirit. All Christians are under the attack of Satan and wicked spirits in some manner. This evidence is not only the verses of the Bible—but even more so, our lethargy and weakness in spiritual matters. Satan has worked slowly, subtly, on each of us through his demons, to weaken us in the areas of our strength so that joyful and powerful participation in prayer, worship, obedience, and witnessing is very difficult. He has dried up our desire for our power sources: God Himself, the Bible, worship, prayer, fellowshiping with Spirit filled Christians, and Christian service.

- **The Description of Satanic Control among Believers (never possession, because of salvation).**

The titles given to Satan indicate his activity. He is called Tempter (Matthew 4:3), Deceiver (Revelation 12:9), Accuser (Revelation 12:10), Adversary (I Peter 5:8), Murderer (John 8:44), the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4), and the Prince of the Power of the Air (atmosphere) (Ephesians 2:2).

In summary the Bible indicates that the Christian can give a 'place' (foothold) to the Devil (Ephesians 4:27). Satan can fill the heart of the believer (!) (Acts 5:3), he can be physically, spiritually, and materially attacked by Satan (Job 1,2; II Corinthians 12:7), he can be hindered (I Thessalonians 2:18), deceived (Revelation 12:9, 10; II Corinthians 11:3), tempted (I Corinthians 7:5; I Thessalonians 3:5), ensnared (I Timothy 2:25,26), devoured (I Peter 5:8,9), "sifted as wheat" (Luke 22:31), made proud (I Timothy 3:6), brought into condemnation (I Timothy 3:6) and under reproach (I Timothy 3:7), corrupted in mind (II Corinthians 11:3), accused (Revelation 12:10), made hypocritical (Acts 5:1-11), led into religious fanaticism (II Corinthians 2:1-11), and made the object of fiery darts (Ephesians 6:16).

Note that in all of these Scriptures the problem is clearly attributed to the enemy and his work. Failure to understand and practice the instructions we are given concerning him and his Kingdom – will open our life to his subtle and powerful control.

- **The Victory of the Lord Jesus over Satan and his Kingdom of Darkness.**

In both His deity and humanity the Lord Jesus was free from any demonic hold.

I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, (John 14:30).

The Lord Jesus had no area in His life where the enemy could gain some control over Him. In His temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11) he attempted to do that. In each aspect of the temptation our Savior successfully resisted him and triumphed over him. How the Lord Jesus did this is clearly explain in His reply to Satan in the first temptation. Notice how He spoke directly to the Devil, resisted him, and used the Scripture against him.

After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:2-4)

In His Crucifixion the Lord Jesus defeated Satan and his Kingdom. It was a powerful spiritual confrontation of great proportions.

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Colossians 2:15)

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. (1 John 3:8)

In His Resurrection the Lord Jesus demonstrated His victory over Satan.

I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! and I hold the keys of death and Hades. (Revelation 1:18)

In His Ascension the Lord Jesus celebrated His victory over Satan.

This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." Ephesians 4:8

Who (the Lord Jesus) has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. (1 John 3:22)

- **The Triumph of the Lord Jesus over Satan has been given to all Believers**

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (Ephesians 1:18-21)

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, (Ephesians 2:6)

It is important that we understand that because we are “*in Christ,*” and that His position over the enemy is ours. It is a part of the grace that we were given when we believed upon Him. Satan and his kingdom are under our feet and we have been given authority over him.

As a preview of what the Disciples and the entire Church was to be given following Pentecost, and so the Lord Jesus could be with the Disciples to instruct them, He gave them a special for-taste of what they would receive later.

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:1,2)

Later He gave the same authority and power to the Seventy Two.

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others ... The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. (Luke 10:1,17,19)

Has this commission, authority and power been given to the Church today? Yes it has. Notice how clear this is in the Great Commission.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

It is important that the believer today, as well as the entire Church accept this commission, authority, and power. We cannot hide behind some theological reductionism, false teaching of the Church, nor our fear.

- **Suggestion as to How to Obey God regarding the Enemy and Practice our Authority.**

One important facet of what it means to be a Christian is to realize what God has done for us in giving us the gift of salvation. At that time we were, by the grace and power of God, involved in a tremendous transition. Our guilt was forgiven, we were given imputed righteousness, we received eternal life, and in particular we were removed from the Kingdom of Darkness and placed in the Kingdom of God.

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:12-14)

In looking over the above section (**The Description of Satanic Control over Believers**), we notice that almost every attack is related first, and perhaps primarily, to the mind. Such an observation appears to be underlined by Scripture.

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. (1 John 3:8)

If the enemy is in the business of talking to us (mostly subliminally) then we have the responsibility of taking charge of our thinking and rejecting his – and all wrong thoughts. Our thought life has a direct bearing on all our other functions. What we think on causes a reaction of our will (choices), our body (desires), and our emotions (feelings). Our thinking will also begin a process that will lead to other thoughts.

To live successfully we must learn how our mind is related to our other functions, and how to "take charge" of our thinking. I'm speaking of the "self-control" of the Holy Spirit, the ninth aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:23)

A. Your Thoughts are Not Who You are —They Are Simply a Manifestation of One of Your Functions

(Who you are)	(How you manifest your person)	
PERSON	W	Mind (Thoughts)
	I	Emotions (Feelings)
	L	Body (Desires)

Because of the Fall of man and our sin we have lost control of our functions. Now our functions often have us in bondage — as in the alcoholic – (who has given control of his mind to a function, his body) or any other form of bondage.

Most if not all of us have two levels of thinking. The second level is almost always negative and condemning. It is extremely important to recognize this and take charge of it. See the work of David Burns in *Feeling Good*, and Aaron Beck in *Cognitive Therapy*.

None of us originate all our thinking, they may be caused by the Old Nature.

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries ... and these defile the man. (Mark 7:21,22)

Our thoughts may be caused by our culture (the world), advertising for example.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (1 John 2:16)

Our thoughts may be caused by Wicked Spirits. For example, Satan could talk to Eve even before she became a sinner.

Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree...? (Genesis 3:1-5)

Satan could even talk to the Lord Jesus do you think he cannot talk to you?

And when the tempter came to him, he said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." (Matthew 4:3)

Your thoughts are not authoritative. Simply having a thought does not mean it indicates who or what you are. To accept your thoughts as your authority opens one up to profound error.

The presence of thought in our mind does not mean we must obey it, nor that it has come to pass or will come to pass. We do not create reality by our thought life.

The presence of a wrong thought, as in temptation, does not make us sinful or guilty. The Lord Jesus did not become guilty in His temptation.

B. We Must Learn to Reject Wrong Thoughts.

When a thought is not in harmony with the Bible, and is not what you desire or believe then you have not originated that thought— usually it has come from some other source.

If we blame ourselves for such a wrong thought, then we give that thought some control over us. When we do that it produces guilt or fear or some desire. If Satan put that thought in our mind in some way, and we accept it and give way to it, then he has some control over us. He is the Deceiver, Accuser, and Father of Lies.

It is important to reject wrong thoughts. Make use of the following suggestion:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I take charge of my thinking and reject that thought of _____. I bring all my thinking into subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ and choose to believe the truth as revealed in the Scriptures.

Learn to monitor your thought life. If you have any question as to the origin of a thought, ask yourself what effect the thought has on you. Does it edify you or upset you? Does it make it easier to pray or harder? Does it make you fearful or bring peace? if the effect is disturbing, then it is not from God or from yourself (unless you are living out of the will of God). If it were from God, then you would know that.

C. We Must Learn to Think on Correct Thoughts

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

We must use the Bible as a sword. When we do, then the Holy Spirit can get involved in our thinking and daily life.

Take ...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)

Notice the promise in this verse: when we choose to address a wrong thought and refuse to accept it, (it's good to say it out loud), then the Holy Spirit of Truth can take our decision with His Word and use it against the enemy.

Make a list of your negative thinking, and dare to correct it from the Bible. Learn to reject and correct your thinking moment by moment.

Stop being afraid of your thought life. The whole process is simply one of your functions, and you can take charge of it, like you take charge of your body. Make some choices as to what you are going to think on. Memorize scripture, and meditate on the verses. Sing worship hymns, and think about the words. Listen to good tapes, and concentrate on the teaching. And in doing all this, reject the wrong thoughts that come to you, correct them with truth and then believe and live that truth. If you don't take charge of your thinking, guess who will – yes, the Devil will. And you will suffer for your passivity.

D. How do we know we're under the attack of the enemy?

Ask God for help, particularly to recognize the presence of the enemy in your life. Consider the following questions and suggestions.

Are you honest with God? If not you'll never be free.

Have you cleaned up your past and forgiven those who hurt you? It's essential.

Do you have any non-Biblical relationships now? If so – get out of them.

Do you have a sinful habit (gossip, criticism, manipulation, pornography, greed, laziness, self-centeredness, racism, must be in control, elitism)?
Who do you think is behind these sins?

Have you fully surrendered to God – or only partially? If not do so now.

One more important question: do you have an area in your Christian walk where you continually fail, miserably? It may be in heart-felt worship, Church attendance, holy living, reading/study of the Scripture, prayer, giving, forgiving, witnessing. If that is true, and you continually pray and work at it, and it doesn't change to some measurable degree, then rebuke it sharply a number of times. Declare you are not subject to such control. Then persevere in the will of God.

In some difficult cases you may need to rebuke the enemy *behind* the problem. If need be have a Spirit-filled friend or pastor help you.

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