

The Fight of Spiritual Warfare

Introduction: We have determined that the Bible **does teach that we are engaged in a war** that in fact includes both what is seen and unseen. This war that we speak of is not the kind of war the world would readily think of when they speak of war.

This warfare that is spoken about in the Bible has to do with what is seen but also that which is not seen.

We must answer the following questions:

- Who am I up against in this war?

- What is **my responsibility** in this warfare?

Read I John 2:12-22

I. Who Am I Up Against In This War?

John the beloved disciple was the last of the apostles. He outlived the rest of those that were eyewitnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ. He penned by inspiration of the Holy Spirit the gospel record of John, three short epistles, and also the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

John is writing to help Christians deal with their manner of life in a fallen world. God desires for you and me who are saved to be strengthened in our faith that we are possessors of eternal life.

I John 5:13 *“13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”*

We also have this book so that we would walk in fellowship with God and one with another.

In **chapter 1 in verses 6 and 7**, we are told *“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”*

John begins this chapter by telling us about our Lord Jesus Christ who is our Advocate. **(v1-2)**

John is speaking to those who are young in the faith and those who are old in the faith. As he speaks to these Christians, John helps them understand who the enemies are.

A. The World

I **John 2:15** states, ***Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.***

The first enemy listed in this passage is the world. By this is meant the common state of the world that is ungodly.

John Phillips - "*the world* - represents human life and society with God left out, human life and society as organized by Satan in whose lap it lies. (5:19)

The Bible teaches us in **II Corinthians 4:4** that the 'god' of this world is the Devil.

In **Ephesians 2:2** we are reminded that the unsaved [and us in times past] walk according to "*[enemy 1] the course of this world, [enemy 2] according to the prince of the power of the air, [enemy 3] the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*"

The world system appeals to us in the manner that is described in **verse 16**. The word 'lust' that is used in this passage means 'desire.' So that the world appeals to your flesh, to your eyes, and your pride. If we yield to these worldly influences the result is worldliness or world-likeness as opposed to godliness.

1. The Lust of the Flesh

Before Christ, we were guided by nothing but our old nature. The Bible tells us in **Romans 8:7** that "*The carnal mind is enmity against God.*" When we trusted in Christ we were born again and received a new nature, regenerated by the operation of the Holy Spirit. This old nature still exists. And this is what the world's system appeals to.

Warren Wiersbe in his commentary on this passage said it this way, "The lust of the flesh includes anything that appeals to man's fallen nature. "The flesh" does not mean "the body." Rather, it refers to the basic nature of unregenerate man that makes him blind to spiritual truth (**1 Cor. 2:14**). Flesh is the nature we receive in our physical birth; spirit is the nature we receive in the second birth (**John 3:5-6**). When we trust Christ, we become "partakers of the divine nature" (**2 Peter 1:4**). A Christian has both the old nature (flesh) and the new nature (Spirit) in his life. And what a battle these two natures can wage! (**Gal. 5:17-23**)
Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 493.

2. The Lust of the Eyes

Secondly, the world's system appeals to the lust of the eyes.

The world system appeals to us and desires to enter in by that which we look upon. This appeal is to have that which does not pertain to us. It is that which excites the mind to turn away from our heart and mind away from the Lord and place our affections unduly on something else.

We may think immediately about David's sin with Bathsheba, how it is that he looked upon her from the rooftop. But the lust of the eyes is more than just dealing with sexual immorality.

In **Psalm 73**, David had another problem. He envied the wicked. He looked upon them and considered all that they had.

He tells us in **verses 1-3** *"Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. **For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**"* The Bible says in verses 16 and 17 of that Psalm, *"When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; **Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.**"*

3. The Pride of Life

The world's system appeals to you to bring glory to yourself. To operate and exercise your life centered around you and not centered around God. This worldly godless philosophy is the counterfeit appeal that God is not enough and that God is withholding what is rightfully yours. These same appeals are seen conquered by the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam (I Corinthians 15:45), in **Matthew chapter 4**.

And why does the world appeal to us in this manner?

That leads us to the second enemy we face in spiritual warfare.

B. The Flesh

This is where our battle ensues.

In the book of Galatians, Paul enlightened those Christians in Galatia to this battle, when he stated in **Galatians 5:16-17**, *“This I say then, **Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.** For the flesh lusteth [wants dominance] against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and **these are contrary the one to the other:** so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”*

In **Romans chapter 13** we find again this battle mentioned *“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But **put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.**”*

C. The Devil

Lastly, we have the third enemy mentioned in this passage, which is the Devil or Satan. In **verse 13** of this chapter in dealing with those Christians to whom John was writing, he states that they have overcome the Wicked One. In this world, the Devil has men that are actively engaging in a direct assault against God and His workers.

Notice with me in **verse 18** how John begins to speak about these that are “antichrists.” These are men that were against Christ. These are men that are liars who deny Christ.

*“**Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.**”*

In **1 John 4:3** John states this *“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and **this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.**”*

When the Lord Jesus Christ was dealing with those that refused to receive Him as Savior He addressed them and spoke to them very strongly as under the influence of the father of lies.

In **John 8:44** the Lord Jesus Christ states, *“Ye are of your father the devil, **and the lusts of your father ye will do.** He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: **for he is a liar, and the father of it.**”*

We see the enemies that we face in this matter of spiritual warfare. They are the world, the flesh, and the Devil and his workers. But secondly, concerning this Fight of Spiritual Warfare, we then need to ask the question, What is **my responsibility** in this warfare?

II. What Is My Responsibility In This Warfare?

When we speak about spiritual warfare, we must distinguish between the battles that we face and the war that is going on. **The battles that we face have to do with us individually.** The instructions that we find in the Bible are given to local assemblies but most are instructions to be appropriated individually.

When I get up tomorrow, should the Lord Jesus Christ tarry, I will face spiritual battles in my life.

The ‘war’ that is taking place has to do with us corporately as the family of God. The Bible, therefore, lays much emphasis on our individual personal lives and the battles that we face. It refers to our often to our ‘walk’ in the Christian life.

A. We Have a Personal Responsibility In This War

Turn with me to **Zechariah chapter 3.**

*“And he shewed me **Joshua the high priest** standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”*

What we see in this text is one by the name of Joshua. He was the High Priest that God had sent along with Zerubbabel to return from captivity to rebuild the Temple there in Jerusalem that was destroyed before the children of Israel went off into captivity.

The Bible tells us in **Ezra 2:1-2** *“Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; Which came with **Zerubbabel: Jeshua, ...**”*

The remnant of God’s people had begun the work of rebuilding, but had stopped when opposition came. The Bible says here in this text that Satan was there to resist Joshua.

Why was Satan there to resist the work of Joshua?

If we were to continue on into the next chapter another figure from the book of Ezra is mentioned which is Zerubbabel. These were two of God's servants. These were two leaders that God had raised up and called to accomplish His work. They returned with the remnant. Their task was to rebuild the Temple of God. What is recorded for us in the book of Ezra is how enemy withstood them. When you read the book of Ezra you will find that men stood up to resist the work. They used various political measures and financial means to cause the work of God to cease.

These were men in the land that withstood the work of God. But here, that which could not be seen, behind all the opposition that was seen by men, was the enemy Himself. We discover the battles that ensue in the midst of the war. We are not told of every battle that was fought, but we do discover that God shed light on these two particular leaders that were there to lead the work.

When you come to the book of Nehemiah, after the Temple was rebuilt, you discover again that the enemies of Christ resisting the work of God. This teaches us something very important. This teaches us that our enemies will fight against every inch the we move forward for the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. In The Midst of the Raging War There Are Individual Battles

This local church will only be successful if individual Christians yield themselves to Jesus Christ. As we finish this lesson on "The Fight of Spiritual Warfare" we must understand who are enemies are. The enemies in this life are the World, the flesh, and the Devil. The appeal from the world to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. We fight battles against our flesh. And we understand that we have an Adversary, the Devil who seeks to devour us.

But lastly, as we think about spiritual warfare, we understand that we have an individual responsibility.

When we come back next week we will look at The Furnishings for Spiritual Warfare. All of this is great to know but how do I fight and win these battles.