

Spiritual Warfare

1 Peter 5:8-9

Introduction

Two Important Errors to Avoid

- 1) Rationalism/Naturalism
- 2) Spiritism/Mysticism

Aethelred II, known as the '*Unready*'

"so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

First, we must understand that there is a very real battle raging for men's souls on earth. We are at war.

"Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him" (2 Timothy 2:3-5).

- 1) There must be a global battle going on.
- 2) Christians are in it.
- 3) We are called to endure the suffering "as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (v3).
- 4) This is how we please the one who called us to join Him in the battle.

What the Bible does *NOT* teach about spiritual warfare:

- 1) that Christians are to cast out "*demons of sin.*"

Not a single example in the Bible of Jesus or His apostles casting out demons of sin, or *moral* evil. Only to alleviate human misery – i.e., *situational* evil (examples in Powlison, 72).

- 2) that Christians are to engage the Enemy, 'rebuke' him, or 'bind' him.

Instead, Christians are told to "Resist him" (v9).

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

- 3) that Christians are to blame Satan or demons for their sin.

"Be sober-minded" Gk *nepho*

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:15-18).

"be watchful" Gk *gregoreuo*; "a mindfulness of threatening dangers."

Why must we keep our minds sharp and alert? Because the devil's principle place of attack is the *mind*.

“You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with 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).

The evil world system is “that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitute a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at any moment of our lives we inhale, inevitably to exhale” (Trench).

“But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:2-4).

They're meant to confuse and overwhelm us, leading to fears that give rise to fracturing, conflict, division, hatred and contempt for each other.

God has awakened the mind of the believer by bringing their dead hearts to life! Now we can see Jesus!

“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

“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 6:12).

The battle rages in the mind because the mind is the doorway to the *heart*.

Only by *abiding in the Word of God* will we possess *the truth that sets us free* (John 8:31-32).

It is critically important to develop spiritual discernment.

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

“devil” Gk *diabolos*; false accuser, slanderer.

“the accuser of the brethren...who accuses [us] day and night before God” (Revelation 12:10).

There are two ways the Enemy can defeat us by appealing to something that comes natural to us: *Legalism*.

- 1) Either by enticing us to work hard to pursue knowledge and live a moral life as a badge of honor, which is prideful.
- 2) Or, by convincing us through constant accusations and slander to work harder at being better Christians, which is defeatist.

“prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (v8).

How are lions successful in defeating and devouring their prey?

1. Lions are fierce predators that often stalk their prey before attacking.
2. They are most often successful in taking down their prey by ambushing them.
3. Their attacks cause prey to panic and disperse, allowing the lions to isolate and attack a weaker or slower individual.
4. By hunting together, lions are able to exhaust and kill their prey.
5. Night is their busy time. Most successful hunts are on dark nights in dense cover against a single prey animal.

“You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about” (Psalm 104:20).

What is Satan’s agenda? What is he capable of doing to Christians?

1. He will allow your profession of faith while working against its daily practice.
2. He wants to draw you into sin by appealing to your fallen flesh.
3. He wants to sow seeds of division in your relationships: your marriage, friendships, and the church.
4. He wants to damage your witness for Christ by tempting you to sin.
5. He wants to cause you to doubt your faith by creating areas of unbelief.

“Satan strikes either at the root of faith or at the root of diligence” (Livingstone).

“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Romans 13:14).

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

Remember: Satan is a conquered foe. He may growl, but he is toothless.

Remember: *“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).*

“And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death” (Revelation 12:11).