

## The Christian's Spiritual Warfare By Mark I. Bubeck

### Classic Christian Writings:

As believers consider their warfare against Satan, two extremes must be carefully avoided. The first extreme is the tendency to ignore this enemy and to treat the whole subject of demonology lightly. One of Satan's clever strategies against us is to keep us in ignorance of his power and working. A pastor friend once stated to me his conviction that if he would just occupy himself with the gospel, the winning of souls, and the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, he would not have to be too concerned about Satan.

Such a view sounds very pious and spiritual, but it is very unbiblical and dangerous. Any believer who determines to occupy himself with the gospel, the winning of the lost, and knowing the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be a special target of Satan. To ignore the weapons of our warfare provided by the Lord against Satan and his kingdom is spiritual suicide. We will soon meet spiritual disaster if we ignore this enemy.

The other extreme to be avoided is a fearful preoccupation with Satan and his kingdom. It is a strategy of Satan to make us more conscious and aware of Satan and his kingdom than we are of the heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the blessed Holy Spirit. The great emphasis of the Word of God is upon the accomplished victory which is ours to appropriate and claim through our Lord Jesus Christ. Though recognizing the awesome power and cunning of Satan, the entire tenor of Scripture affirms that Satan is a defeated foe.

It is a common problem of those under the attack of Satan to become preoccupied with thoughts about how Satan is tempting, afflicting, or oppressing them rather than meditating on the victory Christ has won. To be aware of this danger is a helpful step toward the avoidance of too much occupation with thought about Satan. Dr. A. W. Tozer has brought this danger of too much occupation with Satan into perspective with his inimitable style and depth:

"The scriptural way to see things is to set the Lord always before us, put Christ in the center of our vision, and if Satan is lurking around he will appear on the margin only and be seen as but a shadow on the edge of the brightness. It is always wrong to reverse this – to set Satan in the focus of our vision and push God out to the margin. Nothing but tragedy can come of such inversion.

"The best way to keep the enemy out is to keep Christ in. The sheep need not be terrified by the wolf; they have but to stay close to the shepherd. It is not the praying sheep Satan fears, but the presence of the shepherd.

"The instructed Christian whose faculties have been developed by the Word and the Spirit will not fear the devil. When necessary he will stand against the powers of darkness and overcome them by the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony. He will recognize the peril in which he lives and will know what to do about it, but he will practice the presence of God and never allow himself to become devil-conscious."

Satan is a personal spirit being who is just as real and living as you or I. He controls a vast and highly structured kingdom of personal spirit beings who have the same wicked intent and purpose as Satan in opposing God's will and plans.

This vast kingdom of darkness is centering its strategy against mankind. There are some deep and obvious theological reasons why this is so. It is not our purpose to go into these reasons here, but rather to proceed to understand our resources against this attack. Beginning with Satan's subtle attack against Adam and Eve, and on throughout the Bible, those who are in vital communion and fellowship with God are the very ones who must face this enemy in his most devious strategy.

The apostle Paul seems to have experienced in his lifetime a growing and enlarging understanding of his own spiritual battles with the devil. His epistles contain numerous references to this great battle, but the epistle to the Ephesians is the Christian's handbook on spiritual warfare against the devil and his kingdom. The awesomeness of the battle and the surety of our victory both are spelled out for us in Ephesians 6:10-18. Consider with me some important principles for effective warfare against Satan to be gleaned from this classic text.

### Strong for the Battle

First, it is the will of God for all believers that we be "strong in the Lord and the power of his might"

(Ephesians 6:10). There is no reason for the believer to be defeated and destroyed by Satan's power. We are to remain strong and powerful foes of all that Satan purposes to do. His most sophisticated strategy and concentrated power need not be a threat to any believer. Strength in the Lord, all the mighty power we need, is available. What an important fact that is. Warfare against Satan must be approached from this perspective. As we avail ourselves of our resources, we'll still be standing when the smoke clears away from the battlefield and the enemy will be in retreat and ultimately trampled under our feet (Ro. 16:20).

Another important principle of warfare against Satan is to have a biblical understanding of what we are up against. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:10 that we must put on the whole armor of God that we might stand against the wiles of the devil. That word wiles conveys the picture of a cunning, crafty, sneaky enemy. He is extremely subtle and clever about the way he works against us. How very true this is. With Christians he delights to play both ends against the middle. As the tempter, he delights to inject into our minds wicked thoughts and desires. Then as the accuser, he loves to taunt us about what a terrible person we are to ever have such wicked and sinful thoughts as those. We must expect that Satan will use the most devious, sneaky, and subtle strategy against us which can only be seen and determined as the Lord illumines His Word and bestows His wisdom upon us.

This understanding of our foe also entails an awareness of the powers of darkness that work with him in his kingdom of darkness. Ephesians 6:12 provides us with one of the clearest pictures of this kingdom you will find anywhere in the Word. Our warfare is not a battle with flesh and blood enemies. How much easier it would be if that were so. If you could only see these foes and know when they are near like you can see another human being! But Satan's kingdom is one of spirit beings you cannot see or handle.

Mystery writers have often developed the theme of the advantage the invisible man would have over common mortals. These beings are spirit beings, non-material and invisible, but no less real. We will wrestle with them. This means hand-to-hand combat. When I was in high school, I was on the wrestling team for a time. Wrestling is one of the most fatiguing of all competitive sports. The pitting of skill and muscle against one's opponent in such sport is extremely demanding.

This is the kind of battle we face with these invisible spirit beings. The picture is one of close, demanding, fatiguing encounter.

These spirit beings are also very structured, organized and disciplined. We gain insight into this fact by the mention of these foes who serve under Satan's control in Ephesians 6:12. The picture is one much like that which prevails in a military organization. At the top of America's military structure is our President, the commander-in-chief of all military forces. Under him are the commanding generals, the admirals, and all of the other officers on down to the lowly private.

This is the same kind of structure which is suggested here in Ephesians 6. Satan is the commander-in-chief of the forces of darkness. He is the supreme strategist, and under him is a highly organized system which is as disciplined to carry out Satan's wishes as he can make it.

The first level under Satan is a group of commanders called principalities or princes. These powerful beings carry vast responsibility and power to guide the affairs of Satan. I believe there are different levels of authority among these princes. We gain insight into their working and power in the Old Testament incident recorded in Daniel 10 between the angelic messenger from God sent to speak to Daniel and the prince of Persia (Dan. 10:13). When the angelic messenger finally arrived after a three-week delay, he explained that his delay was because of the prince of Persia's resistance. Only after Michael the archangel came to do battle against this prince was the special angelic messenger able to complete his journey to Daniel.

Does this not suggest that Satan has a prince over every nation whose responsibility it is to carry out Satan's diabolical plans against that nation? Under him are other princes who guide the plans of Satan against the political structure, or the educational structure, or the entertainment structure of that nation.

The next level down in this organized structure are the powers. These are probably more numerous and somewhat less independent and powerful than the princes. Yet their name suggests very powerful activity which they are capable of addressing against believers.

The next level down in the organization of evil are the rulers of darkness. These beings are more numerous; yet they are the real workhorses on the command level. Their counterpart in the army might be the lieutenants and sergeants of our military forces. These rulers of darkness have directly under them a very vast final level of

spirit beings called spiritual wickedness or wicked spirits in high places. I understand these to be the demons so often mentioned during the earthly life of our Lord. These beings are multitudinous, so much so that a whole legion dwelt in one lone man, according to Mark 5:9.

These are the personal wicked spirit forces which we must battle. Formidable indeed is the picture the Word presents to us of this crafty, invisible, highly organized wicked system of evil with which by the very nature of the case we must battle. We have no choice; the enemy presses the battle to us, and it is God's sovereign will and purpose in this day that we fight a good fight.

#### The Provided Armor of God

The third general principle of our warfare against Satan seen in Ephesians 6:10-18 is the importance of the provided armor of God. As believers we are to aggressively act in taking the armor and putting it on. Some have questioned what this armor is and when or how often should we put it on.

The answer to how often seems fairly obvious. Every time we face the enemy and battle him we should be sure our armor is in place. Daily we need to appropriate our provided armor and put on our spiritual dress for battle. To me, this text indicates the battle will be there on a daily basis. A very close, hard-fought battle is always before us. Facing that battle without armor is unthinkable.

Putting on the armor has a further purpose and benefit which must not be missed. I came upon this as a result of personal experience. As a result of my own desire to put on the armor for battle on a daily basis, I began to seek to understand each part of the armor and to discover what the Bible has to say about these various parts of our spiritual dress. Putting on the armor is something done by prayer and the daily practice of faith. As you equip yourself with the whole armor of God, you will find yourself meditating on the armor and using it many times throughout the day.

It is a very worshipful and praising experience to meditate upon each piece of the armor provided for us by God. This is the whole armor of God. It is a complete, total provision of God, sufficient to equip us to stand against the very worst Satan can dish out. Following is a typical prayer one might use in putting on his armor, seeking to show how it can enlarge into a worship and praise experience of adoration of our Lord.

Heavenly Father, I desire to be obedient by being strong in the Lord and the Power of Your might. I see that this is Your will and purpose for me. I recognize that it is essential to put on the armor that You have provided, and I do so now with gratitude and praise that You have provided all I need to stand in victory against Satan and his kingdom. Grant me wisdom to discern the tactics and sneakiness of Satan's strategy against me. Enable me to wrestle in victory against the princes, powers, rulers, and wicked spirits who carry the battle of darkness against me.

I delight to take the armor You have provided and by faith to put it on as effective spiritual protection against the spiritual forces of darkness.

I confidently take the loin girdle of truth that You offer me. I take Him who is the truth as my strength and protection. I reject Satan's lies and deceiving ways to gain advantage against me. Grant me discernment and wisdom to recognize the subtle deceiving ways in which Satan seeks to cause me to accept his lies as truth. I desire to believe only the truth, to live the truth, to speak the truth, and to know the truth. I worship and praise You that You lead me only in the ways of truth. Thank You that Satan cannot stand against the bold use of truth.

Thank You for the breastplate of righteousness which you offer me. I eagerly accept it and put it on as my protection.

Thank You for reminding me again that all of my righteousness comes from You. I embrace that righteousness which is mine by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His righteousness that is mine through justification. I reject and repudiate all trust in my own righteousness which is as filthy rags. I ask You to cleanse me of all the times I have counted my own goodness as being acceptable before You. I bring the righteousness of my Lord directly against all of Satan's workings against me. I express my desire to walk in righteousness before God today. By faith I appropriate the righteousness of Christ and invite Him to walk in His holiness in my life today that I might experience His righteousness in total context of ordinary living. I count upon the righteousness of my Lord to be my protection. I know that Satan must retreat from before the righteousness of God.

Thank you, Lord, for the sandals of peace You have provided. I desire that my feet should stand on the solid rock of peace that You have provided. I claim the peace with God which is mine through justification. I desire the peace of God which touches my emotions and feelings through prayer and sanctification (Phil. 4:6). Thank You that as I walk in obedience to You that the God of peace promises to walk with me (Phil. 4:9), that as the God of peace You are putting Satan under my feet (Ro. 16:20). I will share this good news of peace with all others today that Your Spirit will bring into my life and witness. Thank You that You have not given me the spirit of fear but of love and power and a sound mind (2 Ti. 1:7). Thank You that Satan cannot stand against Your peace.

Eagerly, Lord, I lift up the shield of faith against all the blazing missiles that Satan and his hosts fire at me. I recognize that You are my shield and that in Your incarnation and crucifixion You took the arrows of Satan which I deserved. By faith I count upon You to shield me from above and beneath; on my right and my left; in front of me and behind me, that I might be protected, walled in, encapsulated by You that Satan may gain no way to hurt or destroy me from fulfilling Your will today. I am willing that any fiery darts of Satan You wish to touch me should do so, but I shall look upon them as refining fires permitted in Your providence for my refining and glory (1 Pe.1). Thank You, Lord, that You are a complete and perfect shield and that Satan cannot touch me apart from Your sovereign purpose.

I recognize that my mind is a particular target of Satan's deceiving ways. I take from You the helmet of salvation. I cover my mind, my thoughts, with Your salvation. I recognize that the Lord Jesus Christ is my salvation. I helmet my head with Him. I invite His mind to be in me. Let me think His thoughts, feel His love and compassion, and discern His will and leading in all things. Let my mind be occupied with the continuing, daily, saving work of my Lord in and through my life. May the salvation of my Lord meet and defeat all Satanic thoughts that come to my mind.

With joy I take hold upon the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. I affirm that Your Word is the trustworthy, infallible Word of God. I choose to believe it and to live in its truth and power. Grant me the love for Your Word which comes from the Holy Spirit. Forgive and cleanse me from the sin of neglecting Your Word. Enable me to memorize it and to meditate upon its truth. Grant me proficient recall and skill in using Your Word against all of Satan's subtle attacks against me, even as my Lord Jesus Christ used the Word against Satan. Enable me to use Your Word not only to defend me from Satan, but also to claim its promises and to wield the sword strong against Satan to defeat him, to push him back, to take away from him ground he claims, and to win great victories for my God through Your Word. Thank You that Satan must retreat from Your Word applied against him.

Thank You, dear Lord, for prayer. Help me to keep this armor well oiled with prayer. I desire to pray at all times with depth and intensity as the Holy Spirit leads me. I reject all fleshly praying as sin. I trust the Holy Spirit to enable me, to intercede for me and through me. Grant me great supplication and burden for others in God's family of blood-washed saints. Enable me to see their needs and to assist them through prayer as the enemy attacks them. All of these petitions, intercessions, and words of praise I offer up before the true and living God in the name and worthy merit of my Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Putting on one's armor in prayer may be shortened or greatly extended even beyond the prayer suggested. The important thing is to put on your armor. See its vital importance and appropriate what our Lord offers to you for your victory and protection. How tragic and heartbreaking it is to see believers reeling and staggering under Satan's assault with little hope of victory. The victory is already provided. It remains for us only to aggressively use it and not passively assume it.