

Lesson 10

Your New Struggle: Spiritual Warfare

“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 enemy was first introduced in Genesis 3 as a serpent. John identifies the great dragon as the serpent of Genesis 3, and if there were any doubts, he clearly identifies him as Satan, the devil (Revelation 12:9; 20:2). The devil persuaded Adam and Eve to doubt God, disobey his Word, and sin.

1. According to John, what does the devil do (Revelation 12:9)? _____.

God pronounced enmity between the devil and humankind (Genesis 3:15). In typical fashion, the serpent strikes at the heel of a man, but a man crushes the head of the snake. In the history of spiritual warfare, Satan strikes, wounds, and does injury to humankind. Likewise, he wounded Jesus. However, Jesus struck the fatal blow to Satan. His final victory came by dying on the cross to rescue men and women from the clutches of sin (Colossians 2:14-15). God proclaimed a sentence upon Satan. Jesus won the victory, but it will only take an angel of God to cast him into the “Abyss” for a thousand years (Revelation 20:3). He will be released for a time to deceive the nations and wage war against God’s people. Final judgment is executed as the devil is thrown into lake of burning sulfur to be continually tormented for ever (Revelation 20:1-10).

Christianity is not a system of this world. The world’s religions are hostile toward the gospel of Jesus Christ. Whether they are steeped in law and have their adherents in bondage to a worldly system, or whether they are full of demonic activity and have their followers in bondage to dark powers, these religions are anti-Christ, and often people who follow them do not coexist peacefully with followers of Jesus.

Millions of people live in fear of evil spirits, blaming their circumstances on external forces beyond their control. Some attribute the incidental inconveniences of everyday life to the spirits, while others blame demons for disease, famine, war, and death. They feel helpless and powerless without the help of someone, something, or some place that has perceived power to counteract the effect of evil forces. Multitudes of people turn to magic, witchcraft, and other ways of manipulating the spirit world. These folks are more concerned with the answers to the problems of every day life than with the questions concerning God, eternity, and judgment.

The Holy Scripture assumes the reality of the spirit world and the operation of spirit beings in the earthly realm. The New Testament records that God’s choice servant, Jesus, dealt with evil spirits more than once. On one occasion, he encountered an evil spirit in a house of prayer in Capernaum and ordered the spirit to come out of the man. The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people

were amazed that he taught with such authority and that even the evil spirits obeyed him (Mark 1:23-27).

Although Satan is a powerful being, and though humans are no match for him, Jesus' victory over the devil gives his disciples authority and power over the works of the devil now. Followers of Christ do not have to live under Satan's bondage or live in fear of his power. Disciples do not use superstition, witchcraft, or sorcery to engage the forces of the devil. Jesus said, "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Luke 10:16).

2. What did Jesus say that he gave to his disciples (Luke 10:19)? _____

3. Jesus gave his disciples power, or authority, to (Matthew 10:1) _____
_____, and _____.

4. James said, if we resist the devil he (James 4:7) _____.

Read Ephesians 6:10-18.

Scripture arms disciples with an arsenal of spiritual weapons to help them in their struggle against the enemy. Paul begins by encouraging the Ephesians to be strong in the Lord and his mighty power. By this he reminds disciples that they do not have to rely on their own resources to combat the forces of hell.

5. Whose strength and mighty power do we trust to protect us against evil (6:10)? _____
_____.

Paul reminds his disciples that there is spiritual armor to help them stand against the devil's attacks. And then he informs them that the struggle is not against flesh and blood. Our enemies are not people! God loves all people.

6. Identify the enemy (6:12). _____
_____.

A disciple needs the full armor of God (6:13). List the parts of the disciple's armor.

7. (6:14) _____.

8. (6:14) _____.

9. (6:15) _____.

10. (6:16) _____.

11. (6:17) _____.

12. (6:17) _____.

Some have identified truth as the Word of God (6:14). In the same context Paul uses another metaphor to describe the Word of God in 6:17, and he leaves no room for misunderstanding. He states that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. So it seems unlikely that he would mix metaphors in the context while he is listing parts of the armor. While the Word is the source of truth, this is not the primary implication in 6:14. It may include the idea of the Word, or the Bible, but truth speaks of character and integrity. Disciples need integrity of character in order to stand. All spiritual weapons and gifts hang on one's character as all parts of a warrior's armor are buckled together by this belt. If the belt of truth is not buckled, no part of the armor will be available.

The "breastplate of righteousness" (6:14) primarily speaks of the righteousness of Christ. The devil cannot accuse disciples because Christ is the disciple's righteousness.

13. Who is the "accuser of our brothers" (Revelation 12:10)? _____.

When God looks at the disciple he does not see human weaknesses and sinful nature, he sees the righteousness of Christ. Although self righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), the disciple's heart and conscience should be clear, and his or her life should reflect Christ's holy character. The breastplate of "righteousness" is to be in "place."

Although runners usually ran barefoot, the soldier required combat boots to support and protect his feet. Is it strange that Paul uses the metaphor of soldiers' combat boots to refer to the gospel of peace? No. Disciples struggle with the enemy in bringing the gospel of peace to a troubled world. Actually, these combat boots are referred to as "readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" (6:15).

14. Comment as to what you think "readiness" means in this context. _____

The "shield of faith" will "extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (6:16). The Roman soldier's shield was covered with leather and could be soaked in water, and it was capable of putting out flame tipped arrows. Satan will attempt to make disciples doubt, but these "fiery arrows" are extinguished by nothing else but faith. Against all odds, Abraham believed God. "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:3).

Our faith is not detached from our intellect. Paul tells the Ephesians to take the "helmet of salvation" (6:17). The decision to follow Christ is a conscious decision and an act of volition or will.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2).

Furthermore, disciples need to guard what they allow to enter their minds. They need the helmet of salvation to protect their thought processes from destructive ideas. Disciples of Christ should be discrete as to what they view, read, or listen to. They have been saved and delivered from such deeds.

It has often been stated the “sword of the Spirit” (6:17) is the only offensive weapon in the soldier’s arsenal of armor. Nothing is more effective against the enemy than the Word of God and prayer. Disciples who neglect these disciplines in their lives are not effective in their struggle against evil. God wants Christians to be victorious, not defeated. That is why Paul uses the imperative when mentioning the armor of God.

After listing the spiritual armor, Paul gives some good advice. First he urges the disciples in Ephesus to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (6:18).

15. What does Paul mean when he says “Pray in the Spirit?” _____

Praying in tongues edifies one’s own spirit (1 Corinthians 14:4). While this is not the goal of public worship, edifying ourselves strengthens us in our struggle against the enemy. Perhaps this is why Paul said, “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you” (1 Corinthians 14:18). Disciples should pray every day. They should pray with the understanding, but for spiritual power they should pray in the Spirit. Paul told the Ephesians that when they pray in the Spirit that they should pray all kinds of prayers and make requests. This is one reason why it is important to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. You may not be used by the Spirit in the gift of tongues in the public worship service, but every disciple can become spiritual giants, warriors in the struggle against the forces of evil. Practice praying in the spirit every day. Jude echoes Paul’s advice. “But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 1:20). A better rendering is given by the New American Standard Bible, because the conjunction, “and” is missing in the original Greek language. “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 1:20, NASB). This translation shows that the way to build yourselves up on your most holy faith is by praying in the Spirit. It is important.

When we pray in the Spirit, we pray without the understanding (1 Corinthians 14:14). Paul told the Romans that there are times when we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us (Romans 8:26). This is why disciples need to pray in the Spirit in order to succeed in their struggle against the forces of evil.

16. How frequently should disciples pray (Ephesians 6:18)? _____.

17. Memory Verses:

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 6:15)

But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. (Jude 1:20)

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

18. Action:

Read Ephesians 6:10-18 every day this week. Memorize the parts of the disciple's armor. Think of ways to "put on the full armor of God." Practice it. If you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, pray in the Spirit every day this week. If you have not been filled with the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues, then continue to ask the Lord to baptize you. As a disciple of Jesus you need the infilling of the Holy Spirit in your new struggle.

19. Rethink the Lesson:

- The devil is the disciple's enemy.
- The systems of this world are anti-Christ.
- Jesus has given his disciples authority and power over Satan and the forces of evil.
- Spiritual armor helps us in our struggle against evil.
- Praying in the Spirit is an effective and powerful method of praying.

Answers to Lesson 10:

1. Leads the whole world astray.
2. Authority.
3. Drive out evil spirits and heal every disease and sickness.
4. Will flee from you.
5. The Lord.
6. Rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.
7. Belt of truth.
8. Breastplate of righteousness.
9. Feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

10. The shield of faith.
11. The helmet of salvation.
12. The sword of the Spirit.
13. Satan.
14. Your answer.
15. Praying in tongues. See 1 Corinthians 14:14-15.
16. Always.