

Know What You Believe

Our Spiritual Warfare

2 Cor 4.7-11

[There is a dark, diabolical, devious battle raging all around us. This is the struggle of the ages. It began in the Garden of Eden shortly after God formed Adam and Eve. It mounted an epic battle on Calvary's hill when the only begotten of the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ redeemed all who would from the dominion of our greatest adversary. It has afflicted Christianity throughout the centuries through false religions and false teachers that sought and still seek to lead people into false hopes apart from the new life in Christ. It rages today with seemingly new spiritual answers.]

[Christians are engaged in this battle of the ages, whether they are aware of the battle or not. You cannot try to be neutral in this battle, you must choose a side and get into the fight. If you try to be neutral then you place yourself in the worst place you could ever be, right between the two fighting forces, and in that place you will find yourself in the crossfire. Christian's must understand that they are in an undeniable spiritual battle, and they must get in the fight.]

Three things to learn about our Spiritual Warfare,

A. **The Presence of our Struggle** [- Our text strongly infers the presence of Allies and Adversaries in our spiritual lives. As Christians we need to understand who our help and hindrances will be.]

1. **Our Spiritual Allies (Eph 4.14-15; John 14.26; Heb 13.2)** [- There are a number of spiritual helps available to God's people.]

a. **[The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a source of stability** – Be careful about what you think about the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. You should not underestimate the incredible strength and stability that is available to you through the Church.]

[Ephesians 4:14-15¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:]

b. **[The Holy Spirit is our teacher, comforter, counselor** – The Holy Spirit is our most intimate and powerful ally. Every Christians receives the Holy Spirit at the moment of their salvation ([Eph 1.13-14](#)), and should seek to be continuously filled (submissive) to His direction and influence in their lives (Eph 5.18).]

[John 14:26²⁶ But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.]

c. **[The Angels are a source of protection and strength.** Angles are real beings that answer only to God. Angels are not the spirits of human beings who have lived and died and now spiritually serve God. **People do not become angels.** Angels are a completely different order of created being. Angels are real spiritual beings that are often seen interacting in the affairs of mankind.]

(1) **[The Angle Gabriel is seen in the Bible interacting with Daniel (Dan 8.16; 9.21) and then again with Mary, the mother of our Lord (Luke 1.26). The Bible contains numerous references to angels and their interactions with people.]**

(2) **[Angels are incredibly powerful beings who serve God directly and exclusively.** Angels are not at the bidding call of people, they are directed by God and God alone.]

(3) **[Angels are some times seen with wings and in forms that are alien to our thinking.** They are also often seen in a form that looks indistinguishable from our physical form. Hence the popular portrayal of angles as beautiful female beings with stork like wings will have the tendency of leading people into deception rather than into the presence of God or godliness. As a matter of the Bible, angels are almost always seen as male figures without wings, rather than female.]

[Hebrews 13:2² Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.]

2. **Our Spiritual Adversaries (1 Pet 5.8-9; Rev 12.3-4; cf. Ezek 28.11-19; Isa 14.12-16; Luke 8.27-34)**

a. **[The Devil (Ezek 28.11-19; Isa 14.12-16) – Lucifer, the covering cherub -** It is important for people to understand that God never created a devil or demon. God created the glorious angel Lucifer and a heavenly host of angels in glory. Lucifer and those that followed him rebelled against God and became the Devil and his demons. The devil is referred to as the Prince of the power of the air (Eph 2.2), The god of this world (2 Cor 4.4) among many other names. Of the devil the Bible warns,]

[1 Peter 5:8-9⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: ⁹ Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.]

[The devil will do everything he can to convince you that he is somehow your friend. But his ultimate desire is revealed to us by God. The devil only desires to destroy you. He is a powerful, wise, and an incredibly deceiving foe. Don't be fooled by the devil, he will destroy you.]

b. **[The Demons (Luke 8.27-34; Rev 12.3-4; Deut 18.10-12; Matt 23.23-24) – Referred to as devils, unclean spirits, and demons -** Demons are not disembodied

human spirits, nor are they the disembodied spirits of some pre-Adamic race (as Larkin taught). Every indication in scripture is that demons are fallen angels. These are angels who joined Lucifer in his rebellion and fell from the presence of God.]

[Revelation 12:3-4 ³ And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. ⁴ And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.]

[Demons are real beings that can possess people. Our Lord Jesus Christ dealt directly with demons and people driven by demons as did some of the apostles. I believe that many addictions and physiological disorders in our day are differing forms of demon possession, but a society that denies the supernatural would rather try and identify some natural chemical or physiological disorder for a condition than identify it as a spiritual influence.]

[Jesus was not crazy when He talk with demons and cast them out of people. The Bible clearly reveals that demons are real spiritual beings. In our day when people deal with the meta physical, transcendental meditation, séances, Wee Gee boards, ghosts, and other forms of spiritual interaction they are in fact dealing with demons. God has warned people since the beginning of time to stay away from false prophets, witches, and spiritual interaction.]

[Deuteronomy 18:10-12 ¹⁰ There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, ¹¹ Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. ¹² For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.]

[Why does God give such a strong warning against these spiritual interactions?]

[Matthew 24:23-24 ²³ Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. ²⁴ For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.]

[God give such strong warnings because you are not smarter than demons and the devil. If you are dabbling in the supernatural, then you reveal just how foolish you are. They will deceive you! Then they will destroy you and your life!]

[Illustration: I once knew a young girl raised in the good church going Bible believing home. Her parents taught her the Bible, even the parts about spiritual warfare. But she thought she was strong enough to deal with these demons (oh what miss given pride) so she began to dabble in Wicca and transcendental meditation. She

found out just how powerful and deceptive these demons really are. Now her life is a mess.]

[**The Demonic** – Christians need to understand that the devil and demons will usually present themselves to you through people who belong to them. Some of these people will know that they belong to the devil or some demon, but most are as unaware of the demonic influence pressed upon their life as they are ignorant of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are blind deceivers. Hence, you need to know of your spiritual adversaries and you need to protect your heart with all diligence (Prov 4.23).]

B. The Picture of our Struggle (vs 8-9) [- The Nature of Spiritual Warfare.]

1. We are in the Crossfire (vs 8; Eph 6.10-12; 2 Kings 6.13-17) [-We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; . . .]

- a. [**Troubled** - *thlibo* {*thlee'-bo*}, 1) to press (as grapes), press hard upon; a compressed way, i.e. narrow straitened, contracted; metaphorically, to trouble, afflict, distress]

(1) [Who is, or what is pressing in upon us (troubling us)?]

[Ephes. 6:10-12 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.]

(2) [**They press from every side – Illustration** – A picture enters my mind here that flows for those old western movies and shows I watched as a child. In these western when the pioneers knew that the regade Indians were coming to attack them they would circle the wagons and the fight was on. The Indians would ride around the wagons and stir up the dust, as the dust provided cover they would move their circle in on the wagons until they were finally able to ride right into the center of the circled wagons.]

[Well, our spiritual adversaries are much like those old western Indians in that the persistently circle us and distract us. The press in closer and closer in their attacks until the are right at the heart of who we are. Hence we are troubled on every side.]

b. [It often seems like there are more of them than there are of us.]

(1) [**Elisha** in Dothan with his servant (2 Kings 6.13-17)]

[2 Kings 6:15-17 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? ¹⁶And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. ¹⁷And

Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.]

c. **[The wounds of friends hurt the most.** It wouldn't be so bad if the attack was coming from out there, but often our adversary finds ways to attack us in personal, and foreboding ways.]

- (1) [Jesus was attacked by Satan through Peter, right after Peter was used by God (Matt 16.23).]
- (2) [Judas Iscariot, who was one of His disciples, betrayed Jesus. Jesus even called him His friend.]

d. **[Yet never Distressed (vs 8b).]**

- (1) [**Not Distressed** - *stenochoreo* {*sten-okh-o-reh'-o*}, 1) to be in a narrow place 2) to straiten, compress, cramp, reduce to straits; to be sorely straitened in spirit]
- (2) [Godly Christians ought never to be claustrophobic.]
- (3) [It may appear like you are in a tight spot, but understand that the hosts of heaven are two-thirds more than our spiritual enemies, and their creator is our heavenly Father.]

2. **We are Covered Over (vs 8c; 1 Cor 10.13; James 1.5)** [- . . . *we are perplexed, but not in despair; . . .*]

[**Illustration:** Picture if you will those Indians and wagons again, only now add to the picture a massive and foreboding cloud covering over the entire battle giving an almost overwhelming sense of despair and defeat.]

[Spiritually speaking this cloud would represent a sense of separation from any form of deliverance or help. Hence, we become perplexed in the midst of our spiritual battle.]

a. [**Perplexed** - *aporeo* {*ap-or-eh'-o*}, 1) to be without resources, to be in straits, to be left wanting, to be embarrassed, to be in doubt, **not to know which way to turn.**]

- (1) [One lexicon records - Bewildered by an almost **overwhelming cloud of darkness**. Confused by a vexing lack of knowledge.]
- (2) [In spiritual warfare our enemy often seems to cover the sky with a formidable cloud of evil darkness.]

(3) [This evil is possibly best expressed by the bewilderment of the battle, whereby we are just not certain what to do next.]

b. [Yet never Despairing (vs 8d).]

(1) [Not Despair - *exaporeomai* {*ex-ap-or-eh'-om-ahee*}, 1) to be utterly at loss, be utterly destitute of measures or resources, to renounce all hope, be in despair.]

[1 Corinthians 10:13 ¹³ *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.]*

(2) [Knowledge dissipates despair]

[James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.]

3. We are Carved up (vs 9a; Heb 13.5) [- The Wounds will appear - Persecuted, but not forsaken; . . .]

a. [Persecuted - *dioko* {*dee-o'-ko*}, 3) in any way whatever to harass, trouble, molest one; to persecute; to be maltreated, suffer persecution on account of something 5) metaphorically, to pursue i.e. to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavor to acquire.]

b. [These are unrelenting attacks. They never give up. They just become meaner.]

(1) [There can be personal losses - Job lost his finances and his family.]

(2) [There can be physical injuries - Jesus was beaten and crucified.]

(3) [There will be emotional scares - Often the hardest wounds to deal with.]

(4) [There will be spiritual struggles - Touching the vary foundation of our faith.]

c. [Yet never Forsaken (vs 9b).]

(1) [Not Forsaken - *egkataleipo* {*eng-kat-al-i'-po*}, 1) abandon, desert, leave in straits, leave helpless, totally abandoned, utterly forsake.]

[Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.]

4. We Are Cast Down (vs 9c; 1 John 4.4) [- The Prisoner of war - . . . cast down, but not destroyed;]

a. [**Cast Down** - *kataballo* {*kat-ab-al'-lo*}, 1) to cast down; to throw to the ground, prostrate]

(1) [Appearing to finally be defeated.]

b. [**Christians can't be prisoners of war? Can they?** If the Old Testament is our example then we must understand:]

(1) [Joseph was a prisoner before he was Prime-Minister.]

(2) [Daniel was a prisoner before he was a Prophet.]

(3) [Paul was a prisoner before he Preached to the king.]

[There are worse things than being a prisoner!]

c. [**Yet never Destroyed (vs 9d).**]

(1) [**Not Destroyed** - *apollumi* {*ap-ol'-loo-mee*}, 1) to destroy, i.e. to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to ruin, render useless, to kill, to declare that one must be put to death, to devote or give over to eternal misery.]

[1 John 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.]

[You may end up as a prisoner but you can never perish!]

C. The Purpose of Our Struggle (vs 10-11) [- Reasons to endure hardness. Many a scoffer has ridiculed faithful suffering Christians for standing for Christ in the face of certain death. They might say, “Why will you give your life for a God who does not even love you enough to rescue you.” Is it the lack of our Heavenly Father’s love that leaves us to suffer spiritually and physically in this life and world. No, it is just the opposite.]

[God did not make this world the way it is today. Our Lord created a perfect world and creation. There was no sin, suffering, death and despair in God’s original creation. The evil and suffering we find in our world are the result of mankind’s rejection of God and its results. God loved mankind enough to give us a choice to either love God or rebel against God. Mankind chose poorly and the spiritual struggle we face is the result of mankind’s evil choices.]

[Christians need to carefully avoid any thought that these spiritual struggles might show a lack of goodness, provision or protection by our Heavenly Father. Our Heavenly Father has promised to give us good things (Matt 7.11), He has promised that even these struggle will work to our good (Rom 8.28), He has promised our ultimate victory no mater what happens (1 John 4.4).]

[So why does God allow this Spiritual Struggle to continue? The Bible reveals three results of the spiritual struggle we face as Christians,]

1. To Please Jesus Christ (2 Tim 3.3-5) [- A crown will be won.]

*[2 Tim. 2:3-5 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; **that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.** ⁵And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.]*

2. To Purify your life (1 Pet 1.6-9; James 1.2-4)

*[1 Peter 1:6-9 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, **if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:** ⁷**That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:** ⁸Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: ⁹Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.]*

[The Bible reveals that our trials and struggles in life will purify us as gold and silver is purified by fire. God, as a master jeweler, is working the impurities out of our lives. How does a master jeweler know when the silver or gold is really pure? When he can see himself in the precious metal. Hence, God will work on us and in us until He can see Jesus in us. Hence James wrote,]

*[James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³Knowing this, **that the trying of your faith worketh patience.** ⁴**But let patience have her perfect work,** that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.]*

[It may not always be God's purpose to just remove you from the trial. Sometimes God may leave you in a trial in order to work a greater revelation and purity into your life.]

3. To Persuade the lost (vs 10-11)

a. [Our Christian endurance, when properly, and spiritually tuned will manifest and glory Jesus Christ.]

(1) [**Illustration:** Foxes Book of Martyrs records that at the height of the vicious Roman persecution the Romans would lead Christians into the coliseum. As the Christians knew what was about to happen they would often pray and begin to sing hymns. As they sang of Jesus and His grace the Romans would release starving and vicious beast upon the Christians. It is said that it was common for men and women to stand up in the coliseum and seek Christ as they witnessed the unspeakable wonder of Jesus Christi through those perishing saints.]

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