

3. Know Your Enemy

The War Against Satan and his Angels

When World War One broke out, the War Ministry in London, England, sent a coded message to one of the British outposts in the inaccessible areas of British controlled Africa, saying, "War declared, arrest all enemy aliens in your district." The prompt reply came back, "Have arrested ten Germans, six Belgians, four Frenchmen, two Italians, three Austrians, and an American. Please advise immediately who we are at war with." □

In this study, we will take a closer look at Satan and the demonic forces against which the Church is waging war. We need to know who the enemy is and his schemes if we are to be successful in the fight against him. In the book, *The Art of War*, written by Sun Tzu, he said, "If you know your enemy and you know yourself, you need not to fear the results of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."¹ If that is true of earthly wars, even more so is it true of the spiritual fight that every Christian is involved. □

Spiritual Warfare

In the last two studies, we saw that there are very real unseen enemies and a battle in which we are engaged, whether we realize it or not. We also began to see who we are and the authority and power that God has given us through the cross of Christ. The Lord has not left us unequipped for this battle. He has given us all that we need to take our place in the fight and be victorious against our foe. As Christians, we are called to wage war against the enemy whether we see ourselves as spiritual warriors or not. If we are to fulfill the Great Commission to preach the gospel to the world and to make disciples of all nations, we will have opposition. Although there are different gifts and callings in the Body of Christ, we are all drawn into this cosmic conflict and called to be overcomers, victorious with Christ. No one is left out of the battle. □

Question 1. How do we practically align ourselves with Christ in the battle? Can you think of ways that you are doing battle day by day?

³For though we live in the world, **we do not wage war as the world does.** ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they **have divine power to demolish strongholds.** ⁵We 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 10:3-5).

We, the church, have been given spiritual weapons. These weapons are not guns and bombs, swords and pistols; they are not weapons of the world. We cannot fight a spiritual war against unseen spiritual beings with weapons of the world. Our weapons have divine power to demolish strongholds or fortifications of the enemy. Paul, the apostle, sees the Christian as advancing on enemy fortifications where he is firmly entrenched. The church of God is on the attack!

¹ <http://www.artofwarquotes.com>

Empowered by our God, the Church is not deterred at the seemingly impregnable walls and the size and power of the enemy. The bastions of sin and error are battered down. Every knee shall bow to our God! We should not think that these strongholds of the mind, different philosophies of thought set up by our enemy in distant lands, are our only opposition. We don't have to look far to see that in our own country, in our own family, and our minds, there have been fortifications set up by teachings that we have received and, at the time we received them, we were oblivious to the destructive capability against our soul. □ □

Where are these strongholds? In 1970, cartoonist Walt Kelly famously made a poster with the slogan, "We have met the enemy, and he is us." If we are unaware of the battle in the area of our mind, we will find it difficult to stand against our enemy. Be careful of your thought life. **"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it" (Proverbs 4:23).** Your heart, a picture of the central core of your inner life, your spirit, is guarded by your mind. Be careful of the images that Satan would like to sow into the good soil of your heart. Take captive every thought that arises in opposition to the truth of God's Word.

Does that mean we should never fight with guns and bullets against evil men that rise to destroy us? Should we only pray? No, if we had never resisted Adolf Hitler of Nazi Germany, demonic evil forces would have gained control over nations, taken away our religious freedoms, and sought to end the worship of God in every place where that evil regime took hold in this world. The church is called to intercessory prayer to overcome the spiritual forces that oppose the forward movement of the church to preach the Gospel to every creature. In any battle with an enemy, one should always seek to know his enemy. Knowing the enemy's plans and schemes will help us to overcome him.

Satan's Hierarchy of Evil

Inhabiting this unseen spiritual realm that intersects with Earth are at least four different categories of spiritual beings that are at war against God's creation and kingdom:

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.¹²For 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 6:10-12).

Paul the Apostle was careful that the Church is aware against whom we are fighting. He tells us of four categories of evil beings. First of all, though, he says that we are to stand against the devil's schemes or methods (v.11). As in American Football, the coach is standing beside the field with his playbook. Through his hierarchy of evil, Satan is continually trying different plays against you, although we should not call them "plays." There is nothing playful about his strategies and schemes. He observes your weaknesses and attacks you in such areas.

There is a fable that Satan's agents were failing in their various attempts to draw into sin a holy man who lived as a hermit in the desert of northern Africa. Every effort had met with failure; so Satan, angered with the incompetence of his subordinates, became

personally involved in the case. He said, "the reason you have failed in that your methods are too crude for one such as this. Watch this." He then approached the holy man with great care and whispered in his ear, "your brother has just been made Bishop of Alexandria." Instantly the holy man's face showed that Satan had been successful: a great scowl formed over his mouth and his eyes tightened up. "Envy," said Satan, "is often our best weapon against those who seek holiness."²

Do not underestimate the knowledge that he and his evil angels and demons have gained over thousands of years as they have watched people go about their daily lives. He knows how the human mind thinks. Remember, Satan is not limited to an earthly life of seventy or so years; he has been at this from the very beginning.

The word translated into English as *struggle* (v.12) is the Greek word *palē*, which means to wrestle swaying back and forth. It carries the thought of two individuals in hand-to-hand combat, each trying different maneuvers to pin the other into submission. Paul says that our struggle or wrestling is not against flesh and blood. People are never our enemy. The enemy will use people against us when given an opportunity, but the Christian is not to retaliate against that person. It is not flesh and blood that we fight against; the fight is against unseen spiritual forces in the heavenly realms. Being aware of these things is essential for us to understand. In the church, your brother (or sister) is never your enemy. See opposition for what it is. The REAL battle is with the enemy of our souls. The Lord will give you the strategy to overcome evil with good. Ask God for His plan.

John the Apostle wrote:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

I take it to mean that Satan has so structured his evil forces that countries, regions, towns, villages and yes, even people, have some level of enemy personality at work to control what goes on under each enemy sphere of influence. In referencing the whole world under the control of Satan, John the Apostle is talking about the world system that is set up by Satan against God. Those of us who are walking with Christ is out from his authority and control (Colossians 1:13). The only way he can influence us is in the area of our minds if we will allow him. Let's now take a closer look at the Greek words used by Paul to describe the four categories of evil spoken of in Ephesians 6:12:

1) **The Rulers.** The Greek word used by Paul is *Archē*. This word means principalities or chief rulers. It speaks of beings of the highest ranking in Satan's kingdom. The word also implies beginning—perhaps those angels that were colluding with Satan in his rebellion against God. This word speaks of dark angels of a position so high that these spiritual rulers confer with Satan himself and rule over nations and geographical territories to bring about the goals of these enemies of God. We can compare them to Hitler's top men that formed the Nazi Party before the Second World War, men that sat down with Hitler and took action to dominate most of Europe.

² Edited by Michael Green, *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, Published in 1982 by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Page 121.

In the book of Daniel, there is an example of an evil spiritual prince that ruled over the whole territory of Persia. I believe that every nation has an evil prince such as the one mentioned. □ The context of the passage is that of an angel of God sent to the prophet Daniel to help him understand a revelation given to the nation of Israel (Daniel 10:1). He spent time in partial fasting and prayer for twenty-one days while he sought the Lord for the understanding of the vision, referenced in chapter eleven. An evil spiritual ruler called the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted and delayed the angel in getting the answer to Daniels prayer through the unseen realm to Daniel. Finally, the good angel gets through to Daniel and speaks to him:

¹²Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. **Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding** and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and **I have come in response to them.** ¹³But **the prince of the Persian kingdom** resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia" (Daniel 10:12-13).

Question 2. This passage of Scripture says that, in this case, an answer to prayer was delayed by an evil spiritual being with the rank of a prince. Do you think that a delay in response to prayer has happened to you? Share your thoughts and examples. □

The Scripture says that the evil prince's dominion was over the geographical area of Persia, now present-day Iran. It was only after the archangel Michael intervened that the angel got through to Daniel with the message for which he was waiting. Since the cross and the giving of the Spirit to the church, the Church is given authority to resist and oppose evil spiritual forces through cooperating with God in prayer. That spirit is still there in Iran, whispering into the ears of those in power to do what it can to destroy American and Jewish people and those that serve the God of Israel. The leaders of Iran were held under the domination of an evil angel, the Persian prince who exerts control in that part of the world through thoughts, philosophies, and religion.

2) **The Authorities.** The Greek word is *Exousia*. This word means authority. It is delegated authority from higher up the chain of command (Matthew 8:9). It speaks of a spirit that is given permission, capability, right, and authority to act. Using the analogy of Hitler's men, this would be like his generals directing the field of battle, men who were given commands from above and exercised that authority on the battlefield. These evil spirits take their orders from those that are high in Satan's chain of command. They apply their power by fear of death and domination through sin and ignorance of Satan's ways. Perhaps, an "authority" would be a spirit that holds sway over a city in which collectively a body of people have given themselves to a particular deception or sin by an evil spirit "authority" that exerts its hold, an evil spirit such as Moroni, the spirit that spoke to Joseph Smith and started Mormonism. A spirit such as this uses religious deception and holds sway over the city of Salt Lake City in Utah. Such a strong spirit could also be a "principality." It is difficult to know. It is wise for the church in a city or town to research for what the city is known to understand how to engage the spirit over an area. One should then seek God's wisdom and guidance in pulling down the stronghold or spiritual fortification for which the city is known. It is not enough to pray against a spirit, but effective spiritual warfare is waged by **doing acts that are the opposite** of how the evil spirit's control is manifested in the city. Our actions themselves are useful in combat. In simple obedience, we are fighting the good fight when we live our lives going against the flow of the evil one.

3) **The Powers of this Dark World.** There are three principal Greek words here that describe these spirit beings. The first word is composed of two Greek words put together. The word is *Kosmokratōr*. The first word is *kosmos*, translated with the English word “world.” The second half of the word is *krateō*. It is translated into our English word “to hold.” So, it reads, “world holders of this dark world.” The picture is of evil spirits that hold the physical world under the grip of darkness by an assault on the mind. My personal belief is that these spirits hold sway over belief systems that tie men’s minds to religious works, false gods, and systems of thought that are opposed to the worship of the One True God, the creator of all things. These spirits don’t so much hold sway over territory; their influence is mostly through systems of thought that bind people’s minds from finding freedom from demonic influence through knowing the truth of God. Jesus said, **“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).**

Question 3. How do you think these spirits manifest themselves on planet Earth? Of what examples can you imagine?□

These spirits foster belief systems such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Communism, Secular Humanism, to name just a few. The evil spiritual powers also use men and women that are in educational fields, men such as Charles Darwin with the Theory of Evolution. These spirits also work in the cultures of nations, such as the game industry that are driving young people ever deeper into darkness. Then, there is the movie industry in Hollywood promoting ever-increasing incremental stages of fear and sex. There is also the music industry. You don't have to search extensively on Google or YouTube to find examples of musicians who have sold their souls to the devil for success and notoriety. For instance, have you ever seen the interview with Bob Dylan on the American news program, Sixty Minutes, as to why after all these years he is still recording music? Maybe, you would like to click on this link and watch how the interview went:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqvvOD4bdRs>

Some would say he is talking about making a deal with God, the Lord being the Commander-in-Chief. He talks about making a deal early on in his career. Later in life, he is said to have a conversion to Christianity. Others would say he is talking about the devil as commander-in-chief. I don’t know; make up your own mind about it. Then, there are religious spirits that bind people to try to earn salvation in the Christian religion or Islam, or Buddhism, instead of receiving the gift of life from Christ. Religious spirits are very powerful and deceptive. These spirits hold a lot of people all over the world in bondage, trying to please God by religious works. Paul writes about the influence of these particular spirits, the dark world powers when he wrote his second letter to the church at Corinth: □

The god of this age has **blinded** the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Satan himself (the god of this age) is the one accused of blinding people’s minds, but I tend to believe that he is the one directing the powers of this dark world that influence people’s minds.

4) The Spiritual Forces of Evil in the Heavenly Realms. These can be compared to your basic foot soldiers. These spiritual forces are demons of varying lower ranks that oppose and obstruct men and women from searching and finding the truth in this world. These demons target not only non-Christians but also hinder the spiritual growth of God's people after they commit their lives to Christ. Every man or woman of God, I believe, is plagued by a demonic spirit continually looking for ways to weaken and destroy the testimony of the believer. The principal weapon of these forces of evil is to sow destructive thoughts in the seedbed of people's minds. Negative evil thoughts, if we allow them to, can germinate and grow and become attitudes and habits designed to enslave people and bring them into bondage to Satan. The higher the level of influence you have in the Kingdom of God, the higher the rank and cleverness of the evil spirit assigned to you. The enemy also assesses your potential to damage his kingdom. If he thinks that you are a threat to the realm of darkness, he will oppose you to stop you from ever becoming a challenge. If you have ever had it in your heart to be a warrior for God, don't be surprised if Satan comes at you with strategies to try to weaken your potential and hamstringing your walk before you get to run for God. Be strong in the power of God's might, not your own—pray through every opposition to your growth in Christ. Be diligent in the things of God.

Some attacks may be more than thoughts, and they can go deeper into oppression. You cannot stop the birds of the air flying about your head, but you can prevent them from making a nest in your hair. If we buy into the thoughts and mull over them, they can become feelings, such as depression, discouragement, frustration, bitterness, and resentment among many other things. You may find that the enemy's strategies of attack against you may change, as you grow older and more mature in Christ. I saw that in my early days as a Christian, the enemy would plant a thought, such as "You don't really believe in God, do you?" As I got older, that thought would no longer come to me, for the enemy knew he was wasting his time sowing that seed thought. I had come to a stable, logical, Bible-centered belief that there must be a God ruling and reigning over the Earth. I had thoroughly searched and weighed the evidence and come to reliable conclusions on which to base my faith.

Question 4. Have you ever been aware of spiritual warfare in your Christian life? How have you been effective in overcoming negative thoughts?

A Disarmed Enemy

You may not be aware of being in a battle, but let me assure you, if you are a disciple of Christ endeavoring to do God's will on planet Earth, you are in a fight whether you like it or not (2 Timothy 3:12). Some expositors believe that Revelation 12:4 indicates that Satan has won over to his side a third of the stars of heaven. The belief is that the stars are angelic beings that are now called demons. I don't know if that is the proper interpretation of that passage, but I do believe that there are a multitude of demons that inhabit the unseen realm. They are structured in such a way to do the maximum damage that they can to the Kingdom of God. We need not fear these demons and evil spirits sent against us because Christ has triumphed over them by the cross.

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Colossians 2:15).

The Word of God is very plain about the power that lies within those who are born-again of the Spirit. The Scripture says, “**The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world**” (1 John 4:4). Who is in us? Christ Jesus has taken up residence in our hearts when we receive the gift of eternal life. In a later session, we will look at the authority and power Christ has given us to frustrate the plans of the evil one. “**I have given you the authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you**” (Luke 10:19). Peter assures us in his first letter that Christ has conquered all the power of the enemy and sat down alongside the Father in the throne room, and enemy powers are under His feet. □

Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, **angels and authorities and powers** having been made subject to Him (1 Peter 3:22 emphasis mine).

Good angels were already subject to Him before His victory at Calvary’s tree. The angels that mentioned in the above passage are evil angels. We have learned that this world is under the sway of demonic forces under the control of Satan and that they influence what happens in the world by controlling flesh and blood individuals. What is the church to do against such forces? In some way that I cannot fully explain, you and I who are Christians are seated in the heavenly realms with Christ, even though at the same time we are walking on this Earth. Christ is sitting on the throne far above every authority, power, and dominion, and because of our relationship to Christ, we also are seated with Him, exercising His authority in the world through prayer. Paul explains this place of authority in these words:

¹⁸I pray also that the **eyes of your heart may be enlightened** in order that you may **know the hope** to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and **seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,** ²¹far above all rule and **authority, power and dominion,** and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And **God placed all things under his feet** and appointed him to be head over everything for **the church,** ²³**which is his body,** the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Ephesians 1:18-23).

⁶And **God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,** ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6-7).

How do we become useful in our fight against the evil one? How do we become a formidable force in the kingdom of God? We have established that every one of us is amid a spiritual battle whether we are aware of this or not. Also, we know that we have been given the authority in Christ and the powerful weapon of prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. There are some basic 101 principles we need to be aware of to be effective.

- 1) **Know who you are in Christ.** Are you convinced of the authority of Christ? Don't try and wage warfare in your strength. Rely on His power and take direction from the Holy Spirit. □ □

- 2) **Agree with the Word of God.** In this world, you will find that it is becoming more and more unpopular to agree with the Word of God. The Word of God is consistent, and it does not change. The truth in God's Word should shape our thinking and our decisions. Learn the truth in God's Word, and in applying that truth, you will find yourself on the right side of the spiritual conflict, regardless of what others think of you. God's Word, Scripture tells us, is powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). We will talk more about this later. □
- 3) **Agree with the Holy Spirit quickly.** Every time you exercise self-control instead of losing your temper, every time you choose to forgive instead of harboring bitterness, and every time you decide to consider other's needs before your own and make unselfish decisions, you are training yourself for battle and becoming a formidable warrior. You cannot fight the enemy while at the same time giving him ground in your own life. If, however, you are aware of the battle in your mind and your own life and are submitting to the Lordship of Christ, you will grow in your ability to exercise Christ's authority and be effective in seeing the Kingdom of God made manifest in our world and overcoming the enemy.
- 4) **See the possibilities.** What areas of your life do you see the enemy infiltrating? Do you need to be more active in this spiritual battle for members of your family or friends? The enemy would seek to blind us to possibilities or make us think that we have to accept the way things are, but if we look at things from God's perspective and in agreement with His Word, we can start to do battle in these situations! Do not accept defeat, but allow God to enlarge your vision of what He wants to do in your life! Ask God to help you see the possibilities and exercise your faith in Him and His Word to see a change in your own life, your family, and beyond. The forward advance of God's will and purpose is warfare, and God is for you! Every time you draw close to the battle lines in prayer, you are waging war. The beautiful thing is that we can proclaim the victory Christ has already won on our behalf. If God is for us, who can be against us?

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for the work of Christ on the cross in delivering me from Satan's dominion. Grant me a growing sense of the power and authority that I have been given to overcome and resist the enemy's attacks on the lives of my family, my friends, and myself. Amen.

Keith Thomas

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com