

FIGHT LIKE A LOVER

WHY DO WE NEED TO FIGHT?

Becoming a Christian does not mean that everything will be rosy. This world has fallen from its original perfect state, sin is entrenched in the world and its systems, and it affects us, even if we don't participate in that sin. The kingdom of darkness is real, and we have a real enemy – Satan. God's will in sending His Son bring eternal life to us through our participation.

God so LOVED the world that He GAVE His only begotten son; that whosoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16 (emphasis mine).

The Lord Jesus fought a victorious spiritual battle for us as our substitute in receiving our punishment on Himself - He defeated Satan totally. GOD IS LOVE, and we are to be lovers of God as His agents (ambassadors) and love others the way God loves us, with that perfect love. It is not sweet, syrupy love, but tough, corrective, and persistent, as well as compassionate and tender. Lovers of God do not give up on themselves or other people. Lovers of God rescue victims from the kingdom of darkness.

When we give our lives to the Lord Jesus, we are completely forgiven of all sin up to that point. But the consequences of our past sin may not have been erased. For example, if a person commits murder, he can be forgiven when he confesses and truly repents, not just being so. Just being sorry is not enough. Jesus wipes it away just as if there was no sin. But the forgiven person still owes an obligation to society to pay for that crime. The same thing applies to so-called "smaller" sins. Actually, there is no difference in the size of sin in God's eyes. Sin is sin. But in the eyes of society, murder is considered greater than theft, because the damage is greater. The Law of God is a unit, made up of ten principles. Therefore, if one principle is violated, the entire law is broken. It is not called the LawS of God, but the Law of God. To illustrate the consequences of sin, imagine our lives are like beautiful gardens. We know we are to prepare our soil for the good seed of God's Word to be planted.

Break up the fallow ground and sow not among thorns. Jeremiah 4:3.

We break up the fallow ground by repentance and "soul-searching." We are also to guard against weeds (the enemy's words). If we allow weeds or poison ivy to flourish in our gardens, by accident, ignorance, or negligence, we will experience the Word of God being choked and contaminated in our gardens (hearts) by idle or destructive words, which produce unrighteous responses and unrighteous judgments. We can ask for forgiveness and will be forgiven for not taking care of the gardens. But we will be responsible for digging up and destroying everything that is contrary to the seed of God's Word. It takes work to correct things in our lives that have become imbedded in our personalities (mental patterns). Some things are taken care of by God's infinite grace, but most destructive behavior patterns are only corrected by cooperation with the cleansing

power of the Holy Spirit.

WHO DOES THE FIGHTING?

All of us! We all have to fight to stay out of sin even after our sins have been crucified with Christ. Correction in our lives is necessary, because we all have unrighteous life patterns that can only be changed permanently through the Word of God.

For the Word of God is quick [alive] and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

We must be on guard against old habits of behavior and thinking which try to rise up bringing sin. The real battleground is the mind.

(3) For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

(4) For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

(5) Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10: 3-5).

In order to recognize the wiles of the devil, we must know God's Word and His character to have a comparison, or we won't know what to fight against. Having our sins forgiven when we come to the Cross brings responsibility to stay clean. How do we do that? By fighting the good fight of faith with God's Word, repentance, and obeying the leading of the Holy Spirit with His help! The good news is that we can be victorious no matter what we are facing.

None of us are exempt from the fight. We are all part of the Army of the Lord with our General, the Lord of Hosts, leading us. We either follow orders, or we go AWOL. Even taking a "weekend pass" or a "vacation" from the fight without the direction of the Holy Spirit is dangerous. The devil doesn't play fair and will attack at any advantage point.

(8b)... and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

(9) For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

(10) According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

(11) For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

(12) Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble:

(13) Everyman's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire: and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

(14) If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

(15) If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

(16) Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 1 Corinthians 3:8-16

God does not force us to follow His plans for our lives. He has given us free will and the GRACE we need to walk in the good works He has prepared for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:8-10). Those good works are not just our jobs or our accomplishments, but they are also the destruction of the devil's works in us and in others. (1 John 3:8). We must receive that grace by faith - it is not automatic, but God is ever present to help.

WHAT (NOT WHO) DO WE FIGHT AGAINST?

We fight evil with all its principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness in this world. We are not supposed to fight against other people (flesh and blood – Ephesians 6:12). Our fight is with the devil and his kingdom. The devil uses flesh and blood, doesn't he? Even a believer in the Lord who is ignorant of the devil's schemes can be deceived into cooperating with the devil. The Lord went to the Cross so that we could have authority in His Name, not against people, but against all evil. Let's not be deceived. Let's ask the Lord for discernment so that we can use that authority properly.

HOW DO WE FIGHT?

There are several spiritual weapons and defenses for Christians:

REPENTANCE AND SUBMISSION

Did you realize that these are spiritual weapons? Repentance and submission take us off the "dirty path" of Satan's plans for us and puts us on the "path of righteousness" that David spoke of (Psalm 23:3). This is a good place to dwell, since none of us are perfect. We are all guilty of "hidden sins", which I believe include unrighteous motivations that we don't recognize are in us until the Holy Spirit reveals them.

THANKSGIVING FOR WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE AND IS DOING IN US.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. Psalm 100:1.

In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

We are to be thankful IN every circumstance, not necessarily FOR every circumstance. Many circumstances are not from God, but are the creation of evil, some of our own doing, or simply the result of living in this world of tribulation. Remember, this is a fallen world. But being thankful IN everything, and believing the Lord to turn everything around for our good (Romans 8:28) puts us on a path of righteousness through every trial (Psalm 23:3). After we have come through it with Him, we can praise Him FOR it,

because through the experience we are strengthened and matured.

PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS GOODNESS, MERCY, AND LOVINGKINDNESS.

The Lord inhabits our praises (Psalm 22:3). Praise invites His presence as our Warrior, giving us HIS strength. Rejoicing in Him, telling Him why you love Him and appreciating Him are all part of praise and thankfulness.

WORSHIP THE LORD FOR WHO HE IS.

Worship brings us into the presence of the Lord, where we fellowship and commune with Him, and we begin to learn Who He really is. Spiritual maturity in our lives depends on this relationship with the Lord. It is a heart condition. Do we have a distant relationship, or do we take time to come into His Presence daily? The Lord desires fellowship with us! He wants us to bring everything to Him. He will be our Best Friend if we will let Him. Communion is more than just talking to Him; communion is also His speaking to us.

THE BLOOD OF JESUS

The Blood covers our sin, and it is not a good luck charm. It is to be revered as a reminder of the price He paid for us. We must repent often in general because we continually fall short of His glory, and of any thing specific that is not pleasing to the Lord.

(1) I beseech you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

(2) And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

Again, here's a reminder that our minds are the principle players in our maturity in the Lord. How do we transform our minds? By studying the Word, by asking the Holy Spirit to reveal truth and to give us understanding. God has the very best blueprint for our lives.

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

The Lord Himself is our armor of light and righteousness. There are specific pieces of armor that we must consciously be aware of daily (Eph. 6:10-18).

- The belt of truth - Commit to truth. Ask for a love for truth so you will not believe lies. Thank him for discernment and discerning of spirits.
- The breastplate of righteousness - Ask for a love of righteousness so you will hate iniquity and a hunger and thirst for His righteousness.
- The gospel of peace on your feet – Acknowledge the Lord as the Prince of Peace and that He has given us peace that passes all understanding. Ask the Good Shepherd to guide your steps in paths of righteousness and peace, and prepare you to share the gospel and to fulfill the plans He has for you to walk in.
- The shield of faith – Acknowledge that He is author and finisher of our faith. Ask for

- faith to please Him.
- The helmet of salvation (full coverage helmet) - Thank Him for the mind of Christ that will school you into thinking and acting like Him and being more like Him daily. Ask for wisdom that the eyes of your understanding will be enlightened. Ask that your ears be opened to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Lord to put His word in your mouth and a guard on your mouth.
- The sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) - Ask for understanding and revelation. Confess specific Scriptures over yourself, specific situations, and specific people.

THE WORD OF GOD

The sixth piece of armor, the sword of the Spirit, is our first offensive weapon mentioned. The Word of God is the most powerful force in the universe. After all, God spoke the universe into existence (Genesis 1:2), and is being upheld by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). Since we are created in God's image, we must also speak to exercise authority granted to us by God. We are to speak the Word to situations and command the kingdom of darkness to flee. God's angels listen for the Word of God to be spoken from our mouths (Psalm 103:20), and speaking the Word of God sends the angels on assignment to act on our behalf. We do not boss angels around. They respond only to the Word of God being spoken in faith. The Word brings instruction about God's expectations for us - both correction and blessing. Learning God's Word protects us from deception. For example, if I am ignorant of (or don't believe) the FACT that with the stripes of Jesus I am and was healed (Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24), then I won't know or believe that I should resist sickness and fight against it using our weapons and defense systems in the Word.

Satan's only weapon against us is deception, and he has convinced many that he doesn't even exist. He doesn't have any authority over a believer in Christ unless that believer gives it to him. Satan is a real enemy, however. He hates God and God's people. He will try to convince us to do and say things that are not in agreement with God's Word. If we yield to deception, we sin and open the door for Satan to do his dirty work in us. We will gain in discernment when we learn more of God's Word and will be able to resist anything that is not of God (James. 4:7).

PRAYER

Prayer is the all-encompassing activity and is mentioned last in the armor of God, but is also a powerful offensive weapon. I've heard teachings about our six pieces of spiritual armor, but have never heard a teaching that mentions prayer as the seventh piece. I believe it is the main reason for putting on the other six. Prayer is more than simply communing with God. We use all the weapons in prayer: thanksgiving, praise, worship, pleading the Blood of Jesus, speaking the Word over people and situations and fasting. We lift up our needs, our desires, and ask for direction and pray for others. We conduct warfare! Consider tithing your time in prayer – 144 minutes or two hours and forty minutes daily. It doesn't have to be in all one lump, but spend big chunks of time with the Lord. And don't allow it to become a formula, which leads to drudgery. Not all prayer is hearing our own words. Spend time listening, singing, and dancing in the Spirit. Praying

the Word, especially the Psalms, is such a great blessing; I've found myself praying things I never before thought of to pray about. And making it a habit leads to greater faith.

FASTING

Fasting is not mentioned with the armor, and is not popular, but is extremely important. Fasting could be considered the eighth piece in our spiritual armor. It is a powerful weapon against the kingdom of darkness when coupled with prayer. We do not twist God's arm into action with our fasting. Fasting tunes our ears and our hearts to the Holy Spirit, so that we will cooperate perfectly with His plans. Many people believe that fasting is simply denying yourself of anything you like, such as TV, video games, sports, desserts, etc. If any of those things take up too much time or are an obsession, then they should be fasted. Scriptural fasting is actually going without food, or limiting food to "no pleasant bread" as in Daniel's case (Daniel 10:3). I do believe that God is pleased when we give up temporarily things that use time that could be spent communing with Him. We should from time-to-time choose to fast just to cleanse the soul and come closer to God. The best fasts are the ones chosen by God – when the Holy Spirit directs you specifically (Isaiah 58:6-12). The correct order is prayer and fasting, not fasting and prayer, so the emphasis is on prayer. It is easy to get busy with "stuff" or duties while fasting and not giving enough attention to the Lord. Fasting alone has some physical benefits, but when prayer prompts fasting to hear from God, it benefits the entire being.

WHERE AND WHEN DO WE FIGHT?

We need to be ready anywhere and anytime to be led by the Holy Spirit! We are to be lights in this world of darkness. If we have not spent time with the Lord to get His battle plan, His daily instructions, reading His Word, putting on the full armor, we will not be ready if the Lord needs to call on us, or if we have an emergency. But our fight is not just for ourselves. We are responsible to pray and do warfare for our families, our friends, our church, our neighborhoods, our nation, and..... We fight like lovers - lovers of God and people, doing battle, following orders from the Lord of Hosts - tearing down strongholds of darkness and becoming partners with God in the establishment of the Kingdom of God in hearts. So, preparing ourselves daily for battle by renewing the armor of God and praying fervently is the most loving action we can do.

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