

# Spiritual War in the Angelic Conflict



*World*



*Flesh*



*Devil*

## *Introduction*

We live in a world that is at war – a spiritual war. The battle is fought on three fronts:

- The world (1 John 2:16, Romans 12:1-2)
- The flesh or sinful nature (Galatians 5:13-25; Romans 7:13-25)
- The devil, Satan (1 John 12:31; John 14:30; Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 Peter 5:8).

This spiritual war began with the fall of Satan at an unknown time in the past. The prophets speak of this in Isaiah 14:12-14 where the Lord speaks to the king of Babylon and goes beyond this king to Satan whom the king was imitating and in Ezekiel 28:11-19 where the Lord, as in the Isaiah passage, speaks to an historical king, the king of Tyre, and goes beyond the king of Tyre to Satan whom the king of Tyre was acting like. It entered human history with the fall of Adam and Even (Genesis 3:1-7). It is also discussed in the New Testament in I Timothy 3:6 and 1 John 3:8.

It is the battle of the ages. It is to the death. There will be only one winner. Even though God through Jesus Christ has already won the battle, the enemy continues to do all he can in a vain attempt to regain the ultimate victory. This powerful spiritual enemy is the devil and his name is Satan. Other names and titles include the tempter, the evil one, prince of the power of the air, a roaring lion, an angel of light, the ruler of this world, the god of this world, and the serpent. He is clever, scheming, deceitful, vicious, and evil.

Satan, his demon angels, and people who follow him and his worldview do all that they can to prevent believers from serving God and to hinder believers who are serving God. Satan does not want believers to succeed. He want to prevent them from serving God in the family, on the job, in church, in school, by studying, by writing, by teaching, and in all of life. Our enemy is afraid of obedient believers, but he is also very powerful.

Satan and his demon army attack in many different ways. He throws doubt on what God says. He convinces us to disobey God. He pushes believers to hinder God's plans. He causes suffering so we turn

against God. He has demons working in world capitals to hinder God's plans. He accuses believers of sin to God. He has counterfeit ministers in churches. He can authorize pain and sickness. He has his own demon doctrine.

This war is spiritual and supernatural. People and human resources are involved, but the ability and power is beyond human ability and power. In this spiritual warfare, believers must not depend upon their own intelligence, prominent contacts, money, abilities, or any other human resource. None of them are powerful enough to defeat the schemes of the devil.

Satan has already lost the war. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ sealed his defeat. Even before Jesus' death and resurrection, Satan had already lost, because God is the creator and is greater than the enemy (Job 1-2; Matthew 4:1-11; 16:21-23; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 John 4:4; and many others). God created hell for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41) but He will not carry out the sentence until the time of the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:1-3, 10). Meanwhile, human history continues.

### *Scripture teaches this spiritual war*

1. Genesis 3:1-7, Satan successfully tempted Eve to question God and then to disobey God.
2. 1 Chronicles 21:1-7, Satan persuaded David to take a census of Israel against God's will.
3. Job 1-2 (1:9-12; 2:3-10), Satan attacked Job to make him curse God and prove Satan's claim that Job only served God so God would bless him.
4. Daniel 10:10-13, Bad angels (demons) try to control nations and hinder God's plan for rulers and nations.
5. Zechariah 3:1-2, Satan accuses Joshua, Israel's current high priest, of sin before the Lord.
6. Matthew 4:3-11, Satan attacked Jesus to make Him reject Father's will.
7. Matthew 12:22-32, Pharisees accused Jesus of working by Satan's power.
8. Matthew 16:21-23, Satan prompted Peter to interfere in the Father's plan for Jesus.
9. John 12:31 and 16:11, the devil (Satan) is the god and limited ruler of this world system.
10. 2 Corinthians 2:11, Satan tries to take advantage of believers so we fail spiritual tests and Christian living.
11. 2 Corinthians 4:3, The god of this world, Satan, blinds the unbeliever's mind to the gospel.
12. 2 Corinthians 10:5, Human and demonic speculations and doctrines challenge and seek to conquer God's truth.
13. 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 14, Satan disguises himself as one who represents God and God's truth.
14. 2 Corinthians 12:9, Sometimes God allows Satan or his helpers to injure or make believers sick.
15. Ephesians 6:11-12, The devil (Satan) and his demons scheme to make believers fail in their Christian lives.
16. 1 Timothy 4:1, Satan has his deceitful spirits and demon doctrine.
17. 1 Peter 5:8-9, The devil (Satan) prowls around trying to find believers whom he can spiritually destroy.
18. Jude 9, The devil (Satan) tried to intimidate Michael the archangel in order to claim the body of Moses.
19. Revelation 12:10, Satan accuses believers to God.

*The Bible's three commands for this war*

1. Be strong in the Lord (Ephesians 6:10)
2. Put on God's armor (Ephesians 6:11-20)
3. Stand firm and resist (Ephesians 6:11, 13-14; 1 Peter 5:9; James 4:7).

***Believers need God's power, Ephesians 6:10***

1. We are in a spiritual war with Satan, his evil strategies and schemes, and his demon command staff and soldiers, so we must be strong in the Lord. God's power is for us because we are in Christ, because we have God's word, and because the Holy Spirit lives in each of us. Ephesians 6:10 tell us to be strong in the Lord for the battle. The verb is ἐνδυναμῶ 1743 endunamow present passive imperative. The word means to become strong so one can function.

***Believers need God's spiritual armor so we can stand firm and resist when each attack strikes, Ephesians 6:11-20***

1. Ephesians 6:11 tells us to put on God's armor. The Greek verb is ἐνδύω 746 enduo in the aorist middle imperative. The verb means to put on clothes.
2. Ephesians 6:11, 13, 14 tells us to stand firm. The Greek verb is ἵστημι 2476 histemi. In verses 11 and 13, it is in the aorist active infinitive. In verse 14 it is in the aorist active imperative. The word means to be in position, to stand. This is the same word found in the LXX in Exodus 14:13; Moses said "Stand by and see the deliverance of the Lord."
3. Resist in verse 13 is the Greek verb is ἀνθίστημι 436 anthistemi in the aorist active infinitive. The verb means to oppose, resist, set oneself against. Other helpful passages that use this verb include Galatians 2:11, Luke 21:15, 2 Timothy 4:15, Acts 7:51, and Romans 13:2.
4. The unseen enemy commanders are specified in Ephesians 6:12. They include
  - 4.1. Rulers (the top ranking demons probably operating directly under Satan)
  - 4.2. Authorities (the second rank and they use the power of their positions in whatever duties assigned to them)
  - 4.3. World rulers (demons working in a nation, group of people, or some area of importance)
  - 4.4. Spiritual forces in the heavenly places (those demons not in the above three groups).

***The specific spiritual armor for believers, Ephesians 6:14-20***

Paul was familiar with the Roman soldier and his armor (Acts 28:16).

1. **Belt of truth**, Ephesians 6:14 perizwsamenoi thn osfun umwn en alhqeia. The first and most basic part of the soldier's armor. God has revealed absolute truth—Scripture—to His creation and His truth is the basis for what we think, say, and do in this spiritual war. God's truth is the basis for relationship, fellowship, service, and standing firm. We are full of truth—truthfulness.
2. **Breastplate of righteousness**, Ephesians 6:14 ton qwraka th- dikaiosunh-. Covers the trunk, front and back. Right thinking, acting, and speaking are required. Unrighteousness in a spiritual soldier makes him easy prey for the enemy.
3. **Shoes are the preparation of the gospel of peace**, Ephesians 6:15 tou- poda- en etoimasia tou euaggel iou th- eirhnh-. Prepared by a thorough understanding of the gospel gives us protection, comfort, and mobility and makes us ready for action anywhere.

4. **Shield of faith**, Ephesians 6:16 τὸν θώρακα τοῦ πιστεύειν. The shield is faith (believing what God said, faith rest). The shield was 2 ½ by 4 feet and made of wood, glue, and leather. It would stop the enemy's flaming arrows.
5. **Helmet of salvation**, Ephesians 6:17 τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου. Our personal understanding of and therefore assurance of our own eternal salvation. This gives us confidence in battle since we do not fear what death brings.
6. **Sword of the Spirit**, Ephesians 6:17 τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος ἧς ἡ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ. This sword is small, versatile, and dangerous. It is the Holy Spirit's weapon that we use in the war. The Word of God is the communicated word (rhema rhma).
7. **Praying in the Spirit**, Ephesians 6:18 προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντί καὶ ἐν πνεύματι. Prayer is the spiritual soldier's support for each other in war time. We are to pray in the Holy Spirit (walking by the Holy Spirit as stated in Galatians 5) and on every needed occasion.

### ***Resist the Roaring Lion, 1 Peter 5:5-9***

1. We are to humble ourselves under God. The Greek verb is ταπεινῶ 5013 tapeinoo, in the aorist passive imperative.
2. We are to be sober. The Greek verb is νήφω 3525 nepho in the aorist active imperative. It means to be well balanced and self controlled.
3. We are to be alert. The Greek verb is γρηγορέω 1127 gregoreo in the aorist active imperative. This verb means to be awake, to be alert.
4. We are to resist the roaring lion. The Greek verb is ἀνθίστημι 436 anthistemi in the aorist active imperative. The verb means to oppose, resist, set oneself against. See Ephesians 6:13 above. We resist, being strong in the faith. Strong is στερεός 4731 stereos. The adjective means firm, hard, solid in contrast to soft and viscous, and therefore means to be firm, steadfast, committed in the faith.

### ***James 4:7, Submit to God and Resist the devil***

1. Submit yourselves to God. The verb is ὑποτάσσω 5293 hupotasso in the aorist active imperative. The verb means to be under, to be obedient, to be under the control of, to submit. In James 4:7 we submit to God. In the papyri it was commonly used to append something to a document. This is the same word as in Ephesians 6:13 and 1 Peter 5:9.
2. Resist the devil. Resist is the Greek verb ἀνθίστημι 436 anthistemi in the aorist active imperative. The verb means to oppose, resist, set oneself against. Other helpful passages include Galatians 2:11, Luke 21:15, 2 Timothy 4:15, Acts 7:51, Romans 13:2
3. He shall flee from you is the verb φεύγω 5343 pheugo in the future middle indicative. It means to flee from danger, to take safety by fleeing. Properly resist Satan and he cannot and will not harm you. He will seek safety by running away from you.

### ***What about Demon Possession of Believers?***

1. Satan and demons can influence and oppress believers, but this is from the outside, not from inside the believer. For example, a criminal who has a gun and is inside your house is a different danger than a criminal who has a gun and is outside your house.
2. 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" The trinity lives inside of us. Each believer is a temple of God. When a demon comes knocking, the Holy Spirit answers the door and sends the demon on his way. Some wrongly hold that because sin indwells believers (Romans 7) while the Holy Spirit indwells, that demons also can indwell. But, sin is the human condition and constitution. It is our nature. Demons are separate spirit beings.

3. I John 4:4, "You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world." No demon can overcome the power of God the Holy Spirit who lives inside of every believer.

### *Things not to do to defeat Satan and his forces*

1. Bind Satan.
  - 1.1. This so-called practice is based upon a misinterpretation of Matthew 12:22-29. Jesus is simply refuting the Pharisees charge that he was casting out demons by Satan's authority. Christ was teaching and demonstrating His authority over Satan. He was not setting up a practice for believers to follow.
  - 1.2. Matthew 16:19 and 18:18 have nothing to do with binding Satan. An angel from heaven will bind Satan for 1000 years at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:1-3). There is no Scripture authority telling believers to bind Satan. Satan is not omnipresent and people around the world are attempting to bind him, often at the same time; how is this possible. If someone can bind Satan, who lets him go and why do they let him go? How long does Satan remain bound once he is bound? If binding Satan is possible, then believers should coordinate with each other and keep him continually bound. It should be clear that binding Satan is not biblical.
2. Rebuke Satan.
  - 2.1. Matthew 17:18, Mark 1:25 and 9:25, Luke 4:35, 8:41, and 9:42 are passages that people use to support this activity. In all of these Jesus rebukes the demons, not his disciples.
  - 2.2. When Michael argued with Satan about Moses' body, he did not rebuke Satan. He said (Jude 9), "The Lord rebuke you."
  - 2.3. In 1 Peter 5:8-11 Peter did not rebuke the devil; he gave doctrinal instruction and encouraged them to trust God.
  - 2.4. In Zechariah 3:2 the LORD rebuked Satan, Joshua the high priest did not.
  - 2.5. When Jesus came into the world as a man, He came to offer His kingdom to Israel and to die for the sins of the world. Satan recognized this. Satan increased his activity because he wanted to stop Jesus' ministry, confuse people, and maintain his own empire and authority. More demon activity was the result. Jesus showed His authority as prophet, priest, savior, and king when He rebuked Satan and the demons. We have no biblical authority to rebuke Satan or the demons.
3. Cast out Satan or demons.
  - 3.1. Jesus also showed the power of His kingdom and His authority over Satan by casting out demons. Matthew 8:16 and 28-33, Mark 1:21-27, Luke 11:14-22 and 13:31-32 are Scripture passages that tell of Jesus casting out demons. Note that the demons were witnessing to who Jesus was. Jesus did not want their witness. Furthermore, He did not want crowds to attempt to force Him into any messianic action. He healed people of demon possession and "shut up" the demons.
  - 3.2. Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the kingdom message. While they did this, He gave them authority to cast out demons for the same reasons – to alleviate suffering of some people and to stop demon interference with the purpose of His ministry (Matthew 3:15-16; 10:1; Mark 6:7).
  - 3.3. There is no Scripture authority for the present day casting out demons. The present day evidence is from experiences, not from biblical commands.

### *Some Ever Present Attacks by Satan and Demons*

1. In the past Satan directly questioned, twisted, and contradicted what God had said (Genesis 3:1-5; Matthew 4:1-10; Galatians 2:1-4). Satan apparently still has this ability to influence and control unbelievers who open themselves to him. Test ideas by God's Word.
2. He indirectly influenced believers to disbelieve, change, or to oppose God's plan revealed in Scripture (Matthew 16:21-23; Acts 5:1-10; 1 Corinthians 10:14-21; Galatians 2:11-14.) Today this can occur through

communication from people in the form of books, audio and video media, gullible and false teachers, friends and family, and other sources of information. Believers must test by God's word what comes to them.

- 2.1. Paul wrote that Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light (one pretending to proclaim God's message, but in fact the message was a counterfeit message) and his servants (demons or people) can disguise themselves as servants of righteousness (people who claim to serve righteousness but in fact serve Satan and his purposes (2 Corinthians 12:14-15). They then lead believers away from God's will.
3. Satan and demons may cause illness or other physical irritants to believers (Job 1-2; 2 Corinthians 12:7). This does not mean that when a believer is sick that Satan has caused the sickness. But apparently, God sometimes permits Satan to attack believers through sickness and pain.
4. He can frighten, worry, and discourage believers primarily through suffering, false teaching, bad spiritual leadership, opposition to God's message, and hindering the ministry of God's word (1 Peter 5:1-9; Luke 8:11-12). This can result in believers forsaking fellowship with God and the local church assembly, isolating themselves from the body of Christ, fighting amongst each other, and hindering, preventing, and destroying Christian service.
5. When things go wrong for which there is no reasonable explanation, just possibly it is from the spiritual war going on around us and against us.

### ***So What? Summary and Application***

1. We know we are in a spiritual war with Satan and his forces. Should this control us? Definitely not. We can compare our lives in this spiritual war and its influence on us to flying in an airplane that is completely safe, on course, and will take us safely and on time to our destination. During the flight we encounter bad weather that slaps the plane around a bit, but is unable to harm us or prevent the arrival at our destination. Satan and his forces can slap at us and make life unpleasant at times, but he cannot harm us, change our route, or prevent us from reaching our destination. The pilot and we as passengers do not attack the weather; we are aware of it and adjust to it, and all the time we continue to our destination.
2. Our responsibility in this war is to:
  - 2.1. Be strong in the Lord (Ephesians 6:10)
  - 2.2. Put on God's armor (Ephesians 6:11-20)
  - 2.3. Stand firm and resist (Ephesians 6:11, 13-14; 1 Peter 5:9; James 4:7).
3. We also have other areas of spiritual war: the world system (Romans 12:2) and the flesh or sinful nature (Galatians 5:16-25). God has provided for our stability and victory in each of these areas of the spiritual war. Our support against the world system is God's revelation and our support against the flesh is the indwelling Holy Spirit.
4. This spiritual war is part of every believer's day to day life. Because of that we need to think of the warfare under God's basic purpose, support, and resources for spiritual living and victory.
  - 4.1. God, His Revelation, and His Glory are the three points on our spiritual compass. We live our lives governed by these three. We have studied these in the past. Psalm 117 is one of many Scripture passages that teach this.
  - 4.2. Whatever we do and whenever we do it, we ought to do it in the name of Jesus Christ while doing this we are to be thankful for this privilege and opportunity. This means doing what He wants and honorably representing Him (Colossians 3:17).
  - 4.3. Whatever we do, we are to do it wholeheartedly and just as if the Lord has personally delegated that task to us – we do it for Him (Colossians 3:23). This truth alone should motivate us to joyous service no matter what the task is.

- 4.4. And then, of course, Paul wrote that whatever we do, we are to do it for God's glory. The ultimate purpose for whatever we do is to honor God, show what His is like, and please Him (1 Corinthians 10:31).
- 4.5. The how to or the ways we fulfill these spiritual demands are the basic spiritual resources found in Scripture. These include
  - 4.5.1. Occupation with Christ (Hebrews 12:2 and Galatians 2:20)
  - 4.5.2. Knowledge of the Word of God (2 Peter 3:16),
  - 4.5.3. Faith Rest (1 Peter 5:7),
  - 4.5.4. Confession of sin and fellowship (1 John 1:9)
  - 4.5.5. Living by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16)
  - 4.5.6. Prayer (5:17)
  - 4.5.7. Ministry (1 Peter 4:10-11)

Ephesians 6:10-11

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might, <sup>11</sup> put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.