

Lesson 5

Teacher's Manual

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

subject matter:
dealing with
temptation and
the enemies of
our soul.

READ & MEDITATE ON: Ephesians 6:10-18 MEMORIZE: II Corinthians 10:3-5

INTRODUCTION

When you gave your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, you enlisted in His army and entered into spiritual conflict with the enemies of God. It is a fight to the finish! In the Bible we are told to, "Fight the good fight of faith..." (I Timothy 6:12).

Whether you realize it or not, you have already been engaged in some of the battles. It is not a physical warfare you are fighting. The battlefield is in the mind. Here is where defeats are suffered or victories won. God's promise is that He will "...keep (that is, put a garrison or military stronghold about) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). How wonderful! However, in order to be victorious, we must know our enemies and what Satan's weapons are. We must take advantage of the armor Christ provides us, and we must know how to use it.

If you will take God's way in this great warfare, you can shout with the Apostle Paul, "...Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57)!

I. OUR ENEMIES

The Christian has three enemies which oppose him: two of them are outward, and one is inward:

A. The Devil

The first enemy is, of course, the devil. He is the arch-enemy of your soul. Since you have become a child of God, he is

II. SATAN'S WEAPON

All men are honest, until they are faced with a situation tempting enough to make them dishonest.

One of Satan's major weapons is TEMPTATION. He, himself, is called the Tempter (Matthew 4:3; I Thessalonians 3:5). He often uses worldly attractions with which to tempt us. This is what he did with Jesus when Satan took Him up into a high mountain and showed Him all that the world had to offer, and then said, "...All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9). Jesus resisted Satan and his temptations, answering him with the Word of God, and the devil had to leave Him.

Why was it Jesus resisted the temptation of the devil and the world, but so often Christians do not? Is it because Christians do not have the power to resist? No! Jesus has given us (in the Holy Ghost) all the power we need and all the spiritual resources necessary to resist temptation and be victorious. But many times we simply do not avail ourselves of this power. We can be victorious every time. But first we must understand that the reason many Christians fail when Satan comes to them with worldly temptations is because the carnal nature which is in them responds to the temptation and wants to sin.

*utilize
our
power
(Holy
Christ)*

James 1:14 tells us, "...every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Really, we would not be tempted if we did not have a fallen nature which wanted to sin. Satan could come at us all day with his worldly enticements but if there was no lustful flesh nature within us to respond, there really would be no temptation.

The response of the flesh to temptation is called "lust." The next verse (James 1:15) says, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Here we have the devil's deadly progression: from lust to sin, and from sin to death. Temptation, itself, is not sin. Jesus, himself, "...was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). However, entertaining the temptation and yielding to it is sin. God allows the devil to tempt us so that we will learn to stop trusting in the flesh (which will fail every time) and start trusting Him and seeking His face so that we will become strong and victorious and be able to help others who are tempted.

Temptation may take various forms. It may come as a desire to do something obviously sinful or worldly. Sometimes Satan tries to put doubt into our minds. When the temptation to doubt God and His Word comes, you will know it comes from Satan. Or, temptation may come as an urge to be a show-off, or to be proud, or rebellious against your pastor and others over you, or to be covetous or selfish. In fact, temptation may come in a thousand disguises. But it is always from the devil. Temptation is Satan's big weapon in spiritual warfare.

Alexander was trying to save all the pennies he could in order to buy a baseball bat. But he had a hard struggle.

One night when he was saying his prayers, his mother heard him say fervently: "O Lord, please help me save my money for a baseball bat. And, God, don't let the ice cream man come down this street!"

B. Breastplate

The breastplate of righteousness covers the heart. This protection of right living protects the soldier's most vital organs. Also, righteousness must be in his heart for the soldier to defeat the devil.

C. Shoes

The Christian soldier's feet must have on them the shoes of readiness to share the "good news." That is, you should be prepared and "...ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you..." (I Peter 3:15).

D. Shield

Then comes, "...the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (one)" (verse 16). A shield, strapped to the soldier's arm or held in his left hand, can be quickly moved to protect any part of the body under attack. Satan may hurl his fiery darts, but the shield of faith will quench them. "...This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

→ faith blocks doubts & fears

E. Helmet

The last of the defensive pieces of the armor of God is the helmet of salvation. The helmet provides protection for the head. If the salvation of God does not cover your mind and your thoughts, you have not yet put on this vital piece of the soldier's armor. After speaking of the weapons of our warfare being mighty through God to the pulling down of (Satan's) strongholds in II Corinthians 10:4, Paul indicates that the evil thoughts of our human minds is one of the strongholds God will enable us to cast down by using the weapons and armor God provides. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5). This is done by putting on the helmet of salvation.

F. Sword

As wonderful as the above pieces of armor are, they are for protection only, and we cannot attack Satan with them. Therefore, a mighty offensive weapon is given us. With it we can reach into the devil's own territory and decisively defeat him. It is

to happen (Acts 5:12), many souls to be saved (verse 14), sick to be healed (verse 15), devils to be cast out (verse 16), prison doors to miraculously open (verses 17-23), supernatural boldness to witness (verses 26-32), power to endure persecution (verses 40, 41), and increased zeal to spread the gospel (verse 42). What a tremendous power prayer has in spiritual warfare!

•The popularity of a CHURCH is measured by its Sunday morning attendance and the popularity of the PREACHER by its Sunday evening attendance. However, the popularity of the LORD is measured at the prayer meeting.

— The Bible Friend

IV. THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIUMPH

The armor God gives us, if we will but put it on and use it, enables us to be "...more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). Truth, righteousness, preparation of the gospel, faith and salvation protect us even as pieces of armor did the Roman soldier. The devil simply cannot penetrate that armor with his wiles or his fiery darts. You need never be defeated, or yield to temptation, no matter how strong or enticing it may be when you have put on God's armor. Whether at school, at work, in an ungodly home environment, or among friends, always keep the armor on. Never compromise. When you take the effective offensive weapon you are provided with in God's armor (the sword of the Word of God)--and unite it with prayer--you are prepared to face the devil. Armed as such, a Holy Ghost filled child of God can "...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10). Notice how the warfare is to be conducted: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). It is only by His Spirit that we can conquer Satan. We are told in James 4:7 that when you go out to do battle against satanic forces, you must first submit yourself to God. Then you can "...resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Resist him in the power of the Holy Ghost by using the weapon of the Word of God and prayer. Face him with this mighty weapon in faith, and he will flee. Give yourself to the acquirement of every piece of the armor of God. Fill your soul with the Word of God, and pray yourself full of the Holy Ghost. Then go forth in Jesus Name. Be sure you give all the glory to God, because it will be His empowerment that enables you to conquer--not yours. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ..." (II Corinthians 2:14).

No armor is provided for your back, for God never intended for you to turn and run. His will is for you to be covered by the whole armor of God and armed with the spiritual weapons that will empower you to face satanic forces and win victories for the kingdom of God. We are soldiers in the army of the Lord, and Jesus gives us authority "...over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). Avail yourself of this power, and like the disciples you will return rejoicing that, "...even the devils are subject unto us through thy name" (Luke 10:17).

Before the victory can truly be won over the devil, there must be a victory over self. Learn how to say "No" to fleshly desires. This is one of the requirements of being a follower of Jesus (Matthew 16:24). Self-denial is not easy, but the armor of God does not fit a bloated,

fleshly, self-centered person. When you have learned how to say "No" to yourself, you can say "No" to the devil. We cannot allow the devil even a small place and conquer him at the same time. Ephesians 4:27 says, "Neither give place to the devil." He cannot ever be accommodated in any way. He must be resisted. And he can only be resisted when we have on the whole armor of God. It may seem sometimes that our enemy comes on strong, but, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4). It may also appear that a temptation is overwhelming, but we have a promise to be able to overcome:

"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 of escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

I Corinthians 10:13

However, if the devil does knock you down with a blow of temptation, always remember that, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). Quickly acknowledge your sin to God, ask Him for forgiveness, recommit your life to Christ, and be assured of His forgiveness. There will be times when you fail God, but you never have to be a failure. Satan may win an occasional battle, but by truly confessing and forsaking your sin, you can win the war. Through the blood of Jesus Christ we can be cleansed from all sin (I John 1:7) and walk in victory.

the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Thus we see the Word is for protection (the girdle of truth) and also for aggressive battle. As the skilled soldier can use his sword to destroy his adversary, so the child of God can use the Word of God to utterly defeat the devil. Jesus' glorious victory over all three of the temptations of Satan was achieved, not by commanding the devil to stop tempting Him, but by using the sword of the Word of God against the devil. It was the Word, against which the devil had no defense, that defeated Satan. (See verses 4, 7 and 10 of Matthew 4.) "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword..." (Hebrews 4:12). Study it, hide it away in your heart, and then use it whenever the devil comes at you with his temptations.

Notice that immediately after listing the Christian's armour, Paul exhorts them to go into "battle action"---and the command is to pray:

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication...."

Ephesians 6:18

A praying Christian is a powerful Christian. As a strong man builds his strength by exerting his muscles and exercising, so prayer is the spiritual exercise which makes a strong Christian stronger. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost..." (Jude 20). It is truly said that, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees."

The early Church provides us with an outstanding example of the power which prayer gave to them. We read in Acts 4 how the apostles were persecuted and threatened, and commanded not to testify, or to speak or teach any more in Jesus Name (verses 17-18). Satan certainly thought he had them on the run! But watch what they did. They gathered together and reported to the saints and other apostles what had happened. Verse 24 says, "...When they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord." In other words, they all prayed out loud, and their remarkable prayer is recorded in verses 24-30. What was the result? Verse 31 records the glorious victory: "...And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness." Courage, boldness, and faith replaced fear. They received a mighty endowment of fresh power and they burst forth into the city. "... And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (verse 33). The power they received through prayer caused miracles

III. THE ARMOR OF GOD

We are not left to fight the devil and his temptations alone. God has given us everything we need to defeat the devil. These wonderful resources are given to everyone who is truly born again of water and Spirit. However, we must take them and use them to be successful in defeating our enemies. The scriptures liken us to soldiers (II Timothy 2:4). Paul therefore uses the military armor worn by the Roman soldiers to picture the spiritual armor of the Christian. Far from being defenseless and helpless against the devil, God has given us both defensive and offensive weapons with which to defeat him. Paul lists the weapons of our warfare which, he tells us in II Corinthians 10:4, are "...mighty through God to the pulling down of (Satan's) strongholds..." In Ephesians 6, he says that if we will, "...put on the whole armor of God...", we will "be able to stand against the wiles (methods, cunning tricks) of the devil" (verse 11). This armor was given to us when we received the Holy Ghost, but we must put it on to win the battle against the devil. The Christian is never supposed to run from the battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, but to stand and fight and, "...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (verse 10). If we will put on the whole armor of God we will "be able to withstand (the devil) in the evil day..." (verse 13).

There are seven pieces of armor which are given to us: six are for our protection against everything the devil can hurl at us, and one is a weapon which enables us to attack and defeat the devil...

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

Ephesians 6:13-17

A. Girdle

The girdle of truth about the loins is the first piece. The Christian soldier must love the truth, the pure doctrine of God. This protects his strength, symbolized by the loins.

*hold
truth
tight*

exceedingly angry at you and will use all of his wiles to lure you back to himself. If you are foolish enough to listen to him he will destroy you.

watchful ←

There is the story of a lady who never spoke ill of anybody. "I believe you would say something good even about the devil," a friend told her.

"Well," she said, "you certainly do have to admire his persistence."

"Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

I Peter 5:8

B. The World

Your second enemy, likewise on the outside of you, is the world. Although you are still living in the world, you are saved from it, and you are no longer of the world. I John 5:19 tells us that, "...the whole world lieth in wickedness." James 4:4 gives us a clear warning:

opposition
or enemy ←

"...Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

C. The Flesh

The only one of our three enemies that is within us is what the Bible calls the "flesh." This is the nature we received within us when we were born into this world. We obtained this carnal, fleshly, sinful nature from our parents, who got it from their parents, and so on...back to our first parents, Adam and Eve, who received this evil nature from the devil when they sinned in the Garden of Eden. This nature they passed on to their children until we have it today. This is the "flesh"---our inward enemy. Peter tells us in his first epistle to, "...abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (I Peter 2:11). Paul tells us in Romans 8:8 that, "...they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Galatians 5:17

Now that we have identified our enemies: the devil, the world, and the flesh, let us look at the way these enemies conspire against us. Then we will see how we may overcome them.