

SHALOM AND SPIRITUAL CONFLICT

Katie Rawson

Our conflict is against

- the **sinful nature** (flesh),
- **world** (the world alienated from and hostile to God) and
- the **devil** (Eph. 2:1-3).

***Victory against the sinful nature and the world is necessary for victory against the devil**

- We battle against the sinful nature by putting off the old nature and putting on the new (Ephesians 4: 20-5:2)
- We battle against the world by renewing our minds (Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

The Devil:

- Is a created being who is much less powerful than God, a fallen angel (Rev. 12: 1-17)
- Is also known as Satan, the adversary or accuser
- Is called the ruler of this world (John 12:30) and prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2, see also 6:12)
- Is a murderer, destroyer, thief, liar and father of lies (John 8:44, 10:10)
- Blinds the minds of unbelievers about the identity of Jesus (2 Cor. 4:4)
- Holds people in bondage through their fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15)
- Accuses God's people (Zechariah 3:1, Rev. 12:10-11)

The Enemy Hinders and Attacks Shalom (God's peace and wholeness which includes justice):

- He Seeks to Take Glory from God
- Attacks One's Relationship with God
- Attacks One's Relationship with Self
- Attacks One's Relationships with Others
- Attacks Relationships within Christ's Body
- Uses sin, including control, shame and fear, to perpetuate systems of evil and injustice
- Attacks Relationships with Creation

The Enemy:

- Distracts
- Disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14)

- Deceives (2 Cor. 4:4, 11: 3-4)
- Devours (1 Peter 5:5-8)
- Discourages (Isa 61:3)
- Destroys (John 10:10)
- Divides (John 17:23, Eph 4:25-27)

Christ Defeated the Enemy at the Cross and in the Resurrection

- Jesus appeared to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8)
- God disarmed the powers and authorities and made us alive with Christ (Col. 2:13-15)
- God rescued us from the dominion of darkness (Col. 1:13, Acts 26:17-18)
- Jesus came to give us abundant life (John 10:10)

Some Weapons in the Continuing Battle

- Worship and praise (2 Chronicles 20:20-22, Acts 16:22-26)
- Confession, (Daniel 9:1-19), apology, lament
- Repentance (Joel 2:12-17)
- Prayer (Eph. 6:18, Mark 9:29 ["This kind can come out only by prayer"])
- Fasting (Daniel 9:1-3, Nehemiah 1:4-10)
- Obedience to Christ and putting on the mind of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5)
- The Word of God (Ephesians 6:17- the Spirit's sword)
- Speaking the truth, especially speaking Scripture
- Works of service and sacrifice (Isa. 58: 3-12)

Spiritual Conflict: Potential Holes in the Armor of Individuals and Groups

1. Relational woundedness or other kinds of pain
2. Family (generational) sin
3. Unrecognized strongholds in the thought life (false worldview assumptions from cultural and family backgrounds and past experiences)
4. Shame, fear, control
5. Pride (see James 4:7, 1 Pet. 5:5-7)
6. Deliberately continuing in sin of any kind
7. Continuing in anger or unforgiveness-Ephesians 4:26-27
8. Groups: unresolved conflict, gossip, criticism, blaming, judging, cross-cultural misunderstandings
9. Communication breakdowns

How to Stand in the Battle

1. Close up holes in your armor: Ephesians 4: 26-27.
2. Deal with temptations from your sin nature (flesh) and the world.
3. Watch your tongue; James warns that it can be set on fire by hell (3:6). Especially avoid grumbling (1 Cor. 10:10) and cursing (James 2:10).
4. Confess sin as soon as you become aware of it, and remind yourself (and the enemy) that the blood of Jesus has cleansed you: 1 John 1:6-9.
5. Remember and stand in your identity as a well-loved child of the Father (1 John 3:1-3).
6. Be filled with the Spirit by continually humbling yourself, repenting: 1 Pet. 5:5-8.
7. Be committed to both love and truth.
8. Get extra prayer support before, during and after intense ministry times.
9. Learn to listen to God for direction, and practice his presence so it is easier to receive nudges from him.
10. Ask God to teach you about prayer and make you/ your group intercessors- learn to use Scripture as you pray.
11. Pray protecting prayers for those you have a sense of responsibility for.
12. Memorize the Word so the Spirit can recall it to you easily (Jesus in Matthew 4).
13. Become a worshipper; David is our example of a worshipping warrior- Ps. 18. See also 2 Chronicles 20:5-23 and Acts 16:25-31.
14. Use the Name and blood of Jesus and your testimony of God's deeds in your life (Rev. 12:9-11) if your mind is attacked by thoughts from the enemy.
15. Group members can fight disunity by working through conflict and miscommunication, refraining from complaining and gossip and praying for fellow members, especially leaders. (Psalm 134).

What Does Victory Look Like?

- It may include evangelistic fruit but will always include the fruit of the Spirit.
- Disciples will become more like Jesus and be enabled to finish well.
- Believers will persevere and even experience joy in suffering (1 Peter 5:5-10; 1:6).
- There will be a sense of hope in the midst of grieving the deaths of believers.
- People will be set free from bondages.
- People groups and places will experience more shalom.
- There may be reconciliation and peace-making.
- God will receive glory.

Suggested Reading (All are IVP except Murphy)

- *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* by Clinton E. Arnold: Excellent material on the cultural background, the demonic in the teachings and ministry of Jesus and in-depth material on the powers in Paul. Practical discussion of the armor of Ephesians 6.
- *The Message of Spiritual Warfare* by Keith Ferdinando: examines key texts, good discussion of the armor. Takes a very conservative position.
- *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* by Ed Murphy (Thomas Nelson). Extensive survey of the biblical material and practical treatment of warfare against the flesh and the world as well as the devil.
- *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves* by Curt Thompson: Christian psychiatrist uses insights from interpersonal neurobiology to show how shame impacts both individuals and groups, how it can be used by the enemy and how it can be healed. Although shame is healthy in certain cultural contexts, Thompson focuses on the unhealthy kind.
- *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* by Dallas Willard: wise and practical counsel on listening to God.