

An Ephesians 6 Strategy for Conquering Your Unrelenting Foe

Every biblical Christian understands that our battle is not against “flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). We are commanded and empowered to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might” and to “put on the whole armor of God” that we may be “able to stand against the schemes of the devil” (Eph. 6:10-11). We also know that we are under constant attack from the “fiery arrows of the evil one” (Eph. 6:16). Using very illustrative language, borrowed from the wartime armor of the Roman soldiers of his day, Paul reminds us that Christ is able to provide strong protection and to “deliver us from evil.”

Responding to Spiritual Attack

During some recent days in which I sensed some very clear and relentless spiritual attack, I was reminded of a very important aspect of our warfare. This approach delivered a new sense of personal victory. Although easily classified as Christianity 101, I had to relearn this lesson. I hope it will be helpful to you as I share.

P.T. O'Brien said in his commentary on Ephesians that the schemes of the devil against us “are constantly repeated and of incalculable variety.” They are described as “evil tricks” or “strategies” and are usually lies that come against our mind to lead us away from godliness, the life of the Spirit and a firm faith. That is why Paul also affirmed that we should cast “down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought

into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

Loaded for Battle

How do we do this? Our offensive weapons in this spiritual contest are described in this way: "Take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit always with all kinds of prayer and supplication" (Eph. 6:17-18a). The Greek word here is *rhema* (a spoken word), not the more common *logos*. Essentially, this is a command to speak the word of God in times of spiritual attack. (Certainly, in a broad sense, it is a command to preach the gospel to those in spiritual darkness.) We could even say that it follows that we should speak our prayers aloud. This is not implicit but surely could be helpful.

When Jesus was assaulted by the twisted and deceitful words of Satan in the wilderness, He countered these lies three times with, "It is written ..." (Matthew 4:1-11). His wisdom and immediacy in being able to speak the appropriate word of truth in direct response to the enemy serves as an example of Paul's teaching about the sword of the Spirit, which is the spoken word of God.

Embracing these truths, I have found myself often quoting the Bible aloud, praying aloud and even singing songs about Christ when I have sensed spiritual attack. A profound sense of peace, strength and victory have followed. No surprise. The Word of God is powerful, "sharper than a two-edged sword" and able to trump the deceptions the enemy assaults us with.

In a parallel sense, God commanded Joshua, "This Book of the Law must not depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night so that you may act carefully according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way successful, and you will be wise" (Josh. 1:8). Notice that Joshua's ability to keep the truth in his "mouth" was rooted in his meditation (and presumed memorization) of that truth "day and night." The

result was obedience and spiritual success. As New Testament believers, the approach and results can be the same.

Serving Notice

Another positive fruit of speaking God's truth is that it serves notice to the enemy that our mind is mastered, not by his lies, but by God's truth. The Lord is omniscient and knows our thoughts (Ps. 139:4, Jer. 20:12, Luke 6:8, Heb. 4:13). Although the devil is supernatural and powerful, he is not omniscient and cannot read our thoughts. He and his demons can certainly watch our behavior and hear our words. This is why our words matter. They demonstrate the victory of the mind, spoken by the lips, declaring that truths, not lies, are controlling our thoughts.

Recently, as I listened to a message from my friend, Pastor Vance Pittman, he said, "The key to victory is to expose the lies of the enemy to the truth of God and by faith walk in the truth." He went on to quote author Clyde Cranford, who wrote, "Growth in the Christian life is a process whereby we learn to recognize the lies of Satan, then expose them to the truth of God, and decide who[m] we will believe: Satan or God ... only as lies are exposed to the truth of God can we begin to walk in the truth and really grow as Christians."

Speak the Word—Win the Battle

Many of us live in spiritual defeat unnecessarily. We become stunted in our growth. Christ has provided powerful armor to help us stand. But it seems too often, we fail to use our powerful offensive weapon of the spoken word of God in moments of attack. This is a powerful strategy I wish I had used more often in my Christian journey, and one I should have taught more frequently and clearly to those I pastored. But today is a new day and a new opportunity to embrace this lesson with fresh diligence.

Speak the word. Win the daily battles. Continue to grow in the

grace and truth of Jesus Christ. {eoa}

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[1] O'Brien, P. T. (1999). *The Letter to the Ephesians* (p. 463). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.