

How You Can Be Ready When the Enemy Fights Dirty

You have to run over the devil before he runs over you. You are standing on a battlefield (perhaps a different one than you were last year at this time).

You may be standing in the middle of an army or you may be standing all alone. Are you just going to stand there, waiting to see what will happen? Or are you going to do something that will allow you to get and keep the upper hand?

King David gave us a psalm that we should graft onto ourselves so that we can be true overcomers: "I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not return until they were destroyed" (Ps. 18:37).

Earlier in the same psalm, he expressed his utter dependency on God when his enemies proved to be too strong for him: "He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support" (Ps. 18:17-18).

He was a true overcomer—determined to make an end of his enemies, but always aware that he needed help doing it.

Why Is Satan Picking on You?

Do you sometimes feel as if the enemy has painted a bull's-eye on you? What did you do to attract his unwelcome attention?

Well, for one thing, you are God's friend. God created you for His pleasure and He takes pleasure in you (see Rev. 4:11). He takes so much pleasure in you that He sent His Son to redeem you from the hand of His enemy so that He could adopt you as His child. He takes so much pleasure in you that He is

beautifying you and making you able to reflect His image the way you were created to.

Since Satan cannot assault God directly, he attacks God's friends. He tries to undermine the ground beneath your feet. He tries to make you deny your Lord. The devil tries to paralyze your planning, abort your dreams and dilute your hope. He opposes everything that could help you stay close to God's heart.

The truth of the situation is that the devil is mighty jealous of you. Who do you think you are, giving glory to God, surrendering yourself to Him as your Father and Lord—and resisting evil at every turn?

What Are Satan's Favorite Tactics?

Satan is not particularly creative. He exercises his malice in certain predictable (and, therefore, resistible) ways. With his limited repertoire, all he can do is mix standard ingredients into variations on the same recipe. Here is a quick list of his favorite tactics against human beings:

Delay. To weaken you and wear you out. To make you lose your way (see Dan. 10:2-14).

Deceit. To derail God's purposes by making spiritual principles into legalism. To move you from the stability of truth to the instability of error (see Rev. 12:9).

Distraction. To break your focus. To make you concentrate on a side issue. A time of great intimacy with God can turn into a time of great battle (see Prov. 4:27.)

Disappointment. To magnify the weaknesses of others; to offend you and to embitter you (see Ps. 55:2).

Delay, deceit, distraction and disappointment—each one of these tactics is slow-acting. You may not recognize them at first. Sometimes it seems that Satan is more patient than you

are as he encroaches on your peace, inch by inch. He cannot derail you instantly, though it may seem abrupt when it happens.

To detect evil encroachment more quickly, assess your life experiences to become aware of your personal Achilles' heel, your point of greatest vulnerability. Some people's greatest weakness is unbelief. For others it is bitterness or revenge. For others it is checking out, backing off and quitting. Everyone is different. One person may be vulnerable because of a time of grief or fatigue. Others may be prone to volcanic anger. Ask the Lord to show you your greatest weakness, because that is where your enemy will concentrate his efforts.

Realize, however, that once you shore up your defenses in your area of greatest weakness, some other area could become vulnerable, and the enemy will circle around again. He's stalking you, just waiting for you to stumble.

When Does Satan Hit the Hardest?

The devil works in cycles. He attacks and pulls back. He hits you and then he shifts around to the other side. This could be disorienting (and he wants it to be), but you can anticipate his moves. You can predict the seasons of your attack.

You will remember what happened to Jesus at the end of His time of temptation in the wilderness. After He had overcome every temptation, "Then the devil left Him, and immediately angels came and ministered to Him" (Matt. 4:11). In other words, the 40-day attack was over. There would be more battles later, in another season. The enemy would regroup. Taking advantage of the breather, angels helped Jesus to regroup as well.

We can observe this same pattern of attacking and regrouping in our own lives. The two reasons why Satan pulls back are: (1) because you won, and he has to go off to lick his wounds; or (2) he wants to trick you and put you off your balance so

you will let your guard down. Either way, you need to be ready for the next round.

One of the best ways to prepare in anticipation is to assess your own seasonal cycle of weakness. This is reminiscent of geographical spiritual mapping, but it is personal spiritual mapping. Look over the literal seasons of your life. When do you tend to struggle with depression? In the winter? When have you been hit with lust? Gear up for that season beforehand. Keep the sword of the Spirit at your side, keep prayer-watching and steer clear of sin. Do not think for a minute that just because you are not under attack right now, you are free and clear. Keep an eye on yourself and keep an eye out for the enemy. Make your next battle a decisive victory.

Some of Satan's greatest attacks will probably happen when you get too little sleep. We are all more vulnerable when we are tired. When you have worked yourself to the bone, you are weak: not only because of physical fatigue, but also because of emotional and mental fatigue. The Lord has told me that one of my most effective tactics in spiritual warfare right now is simply rest. As I make time for physical rest, I make it a point to rest my spirit—in faith. I firmly believe that resting is not only serving to restore my strength, but also to fend off the enemy's further assaults.

Watch out also when you have major changes in your life, especially geographical relocations. Crisis occurs on the eve of change.

The enemy always tries to thwart the plans of God. Even with his partial knowledge, he knows when someone is destined for greatness (he can hear the prophecies, too). You may not be a Moses or a Jesus with Pharaoh or Herod tracking you with murder in his eyes, but look at what has happened to an entire generation as a result of the legalization of abortion in 1973. God destined this generation for greatness, and the enemy has already mowed down millions of innocent babies

before they could emerge into the light of day.

In a similar way, the enemy hits desperately hard when a specific miracle is leaving the hand of God. Daniel is the clearest example of this. For 21 days, Daniel fasted and prayed, sweating, trembling and troubled almost beyond endurance (see Dan. 10) before a breakthrough occurred. When you make an effort to take a stand, the degree and intensity of spiritual warfare will be proportional to the territory that you are about to possess. Look at it through a positive lens; all the hell that you have been going through could be a prophetic indication of the great things that are about to happen in your life.

Have you noticed that when you are next in line for a promotion, the enemy tries to stop you? Job is the perfect example. The enemy threw his whole arsenal at Job and he nearly knocked him out of the running, but Job remained true to God through it all. As far as we know, he never had to go through something like that again.

The Book of Wars

In the book of Numbers, I found this interesting phrase: "Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord ..." (Num. 21:14). What is this book? The Book of the Wars of the Lord is not part of the canon of Scripture, nor are several other books that are mentioned in the Bible, such as the Book of Remembrance (see Mal. 3:16) or the Book of Tears (see Ps. 56:8). Perhaps we can construe the Book of the Wars of the Lord to be a book that has not yet been finished—and that we ourselves can help to complete as we engage the enemy, one skirmish at a time.

For each of us, the combat will not be over until the day we die. Born in the midst of battle and born for battle, we are following our Commander-in-Chief, whose mission was to destroy the works of the devil. We are not warring against our

spouses, our children, our bosses or our pastors (even if some of the time it seems like it). We are battling against besetting spiritual forces of wickedness (see Eph. 6:12).

As we engage in struggle after struggle, not only are we subjugating Satan, but we are also being transformed, individually and as a body. The whole church is in metamorphosis, becoming a new creation in Christ, growing, maturing and overcoming the darkness of the old regime.

Our ongoing struggle is a sign of life, and proof that we have not been conquered by our desperate enemy. The Lord of life is waging warfare through us. Yes, He is transforming the redeemed ones as He leads them forward on every battlefield. He is making sure that the entire church, His bride, will be beautiful for Him.

As one who has persevered through many battles, I have a word from the Lord for you: "Never, never, never give up! Quitters never win and winners never quit. Pursue your enemy until..."
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