

Waging Spiritual Warfare on Carnal Lusts

You know all too well that you are in a spiritual war against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places. But have you ever considered that you are also in a spiritual war against your own carnal lusts?

When Paul said we don't wrestle against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12), he did not mean that we don't wrestle against fleshly temptations. Indeed, we know that carnal lusts war against our soul (1 Peter 2:11). We have to engage in this battle in order to walk out the victory we already have in Christ. We have to declare war on carnal lusts or we may wind up buffeting the air in the name of Jesus while the enemy has his wicked way in our lives.

Before you dismiss this article because you aren't living in immorality, consider that carnal lusts include more than sexual sin. Vine's Dictionary defines lust as a "strong desire" of any kind. Although the Bible uses *lust* in a positive context three times, the Word of God most often describes it as a root of sin. Lust is associated with pride, greed and other strong desires that lead us out of God's will.

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" (James 1:13-15, NASB).

We must wage war on carnal lusts because these strong desires ultimately bring forth death in our lives. Paul understood this all too well. Paul not only wrestled the beast at Ephesus

(1 Cor. 15:32), he also wrestled his own carnal desires. He shared his heart in the book of Romans. He knew the right thing to do, but the power of sin kept sabotaging his best intentions. He had a will to do what is right, but an inability to follow through. He would decide not to do bad, then do bad anyway. Sound familiar? Listen in to Paul's confession:

"Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?" (Romans 7:20-24, MSG).

That is the real question. But thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14). Jesus Christ acted to set things right in a life of contradictions where Paul wanted to serve God with all his heart and mind, but was pulled by his carnal nature to do something totally different. Christ is our secret weapon in the war against carnal lusts, too. Paul won the war against his soul—and he showed us how to win, too. Consider his advice:

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:12-14, NKJV).

Listen to the words of Paul. He tells us to do several things in rapid-fire succession, one building upon another. We first must cast off the works of darkness before we can put on the armor of light. Only then can we walk properly. Apart from

Christ, we can do nothing. That's why Paul exhorts us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

But practically speaking, how do we walk this out? By having a righteous consciousness rather than a sin consciousness. By walking in the principles of the Spirit. By renewing our mind with the Word of God. By fleeing the scene of sinful temptations. And by surrendering to God.

We need a righteousness consciousness. Here's our Sword: "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (Romans 6:11-13). You are dead to sin. Keep reminding yourself of that. You are alive to God in Christ. Christ lives in you. Meditate on that. The Holy Spirit dwells in you. You are endued with power to overcome all the power of the enemy. Act as if you believe it.

We need to walk by the principles of the Spirit. Here's our Sword: "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). How do you know when you are walking by the principles of the Spirit? Examine the fruit. The works of the flesh are: adultery; fornication; uncleanness; lewdness; idolatry; sorcery; hatred; contentions; jealousy; outbursts of wrath; selfish ambitions; dissensions; heresies; envy; murder; drunkenness; revelries and the like (Gal. 5:19-21). By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

We need to continually renew our mind. Here's our Sword: "But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which

grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:20-24). Confess that you are renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man every day, just like you put on your whole armor of God. Put another way, meditate on who you are in Christ.

We need to flee the scene of sinful temptations. Here's our Sword: "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). It's not enough to flee the scene of the lust. We must also pursue something else, namely righteousness, faith, love and peace. Get your mind off the temptation and onto your Father's business.

Ultimately, we need to surrender to God. Here's our Sword: "Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). When you submit to God—when you submit to the principles of the Word and the Spirit—you are resisting the devil. Lust is not irresistible. When lust comes knocking on the door of your mind, don't ignore it. Confront it with the weapons of your warfare, which are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds—including lust.

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