**A Biblical Understanding of Spiritual Warfare**

# INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

* The goal of this five-week class is to develop a Biblical framework and understanding of spiritual warfare in the life of a believer.
* The concept of spiritual warfare is often misunderstood in the church today.
* Some will over-emphasize it, believing that every issue in the life of a believer is caused by demons that must be cast out, while others will ignore it completely, disregarding any notion of a spiritual realm or a spiritual battle in the life of a believer.
* How, then, are we to approach passages that deal with this? How do we engage in true spiritual warfare?
* For the next five weeks, we will unpack what the Bible says about spiritual warfare, and for the majority of this class, we will be walking through Ephesians 6:10-20, looking at the context of a believer’s spiritual battle.
* Our schedule will look like this:
  + Week 1: Introduction, Survey of Spiritual Warfare Throughout Scripture
  + Week 2: Putting on the Full Armor of God (Eph 6:10-12)

### Week 3: The Purpose of the Armor of God (Eph 6:13)

* + Week 4: The Believer’s Armor – Part I (Eph 6:14-16)
  + Week 5: The Believer’s Armor – Part II (Eph 6:17-20)

# INTRODUCTION

* As we approach the topic of spiritual warfare, many believers can be tempted to fall to one of two extremes.
* First is an over-emphasizing of spiritual warfare, particularly as it pertains to a believers interaction with the demonic forces.
  + In the church today, specifically within Pentecostal and Charismatic teachings, there is a growing emphasis on spiritual warfare consisting of the binding and removal of demons, even Satan himself.
    - This is tied to the concept derived from the “prosperity gospel”, which is based on the presupposition that those who have been redeemed by the curse through the gospel have also been redeemed from poverty and disease.
    - Those holding to this would contend that it is always God’s will to heal and for His people to prosper.
  + Because of this, within this false doctrine is an understanding that any hardship, affliction, illness, disability, or infirmity is the work of a demon that must be cast out.
  + This, then, becomes the front on which we conduct spiritual warfare.
    - Through healings, casting out demons, and other miraculous works, those with enough faith have authority in Jesus’ name to tear down these “demonic strongholds”.
    - This is a distortion of the gospel and spiritual gifts, and it is a false view of spiritual warfare!
* Second is a complete disregard for spiritual warfare, the existence of a spiritual realm, or those passages that discuss spiritual warfare for believers.
  + While this is perhaps a response to the false doctrines of the charismatic church, it has become an overcorrection to the point that any concept of spiritual warfare is ignored completely.
* So, how do we find the right balance?
  + Also, we need to ask, “Why does all of this matter?”. Why should believers care at all about the spiritual realm or spiritual warfare?
    - First, it is because the idea of spiritual warfare is consistent throughout Scripture.
      * God’s word warns us of our great enemy, Satan, who is described as a prowling lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8).
      * Christ prays to the Father that though His followers are left in the world, that they would be kept from the evil one (John 17:15)
      * We cannot ignore this! Spiritual opposition is part of a biblical worldview.
    - Second, we are called by God to participate in spiritual warfare!
      * As we will go through in greater detail over the following weeks, Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 to be gearing up for war.
      * We cannot ignore these passages, but rather we must approach them with a proper hermeneutic, asking, “What does this passage mean?” and “How am I to respond?”.
* With that, we are going to do a brief survey of spiritual warfare throughout Scripture, and from that ascertain what spiritual warfare is like for believers today.

# SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

As we look to examples of spiritual warfare and demonic activity, we must remind ourselves of a couple of things:

* First, much of the Old Testament is an account of God’s work through His people, Israel. With this, we must understand that the church **is not** Israel.
  + Therefore, many of the passages we will address are simply historical narratives, detailing what happened in a particular time.
  + Just because we see things happen in a particular way in Scripture does not mean that we should always expect the same thing in our own lives.
* However, it is from these texts that we can draw principles of spiritual warfare, and we can begin to build a framework that we can apply today.

**Satan’s Strategy From the Beginning (Gen 3:1-6)**

* As we approach spiritual warfare in the Old Testament, we don’t have to look far.
  + In Genesis 3, we read of the temptation of Eve by the serpent, and it is from the very beginning that we see Satan’s strategy against those who would seek to follow the Lord.
* Eve was approached by the serpent and, through this exchange, is tempted to partake of the fruit which God had forbidden her to eat.
* How was it that the serpent tempted her?
  + First, it started as a doubting of God’s word: *Indeed,* ***has God said****, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?* (Gen 3:1)
  + Second, it progressed to a denial of God’s word: *You surely will not die!* (Gen 3:4)
  + Finally, it progressed to a doubting of God’s character: *For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.* (Gen 3:5)
* It is from this encounter that we can begin to see Satan’s strategy against believers.
  + Satan is consistently looking to attack God’s word and God’s character.
    - Why? Because as we begin to doubt in God’s character and authority, we replace it with our own, and we begin to do what is right in our own eyes (Prov 3:5-8).
  + Along with this, Satan appeals to the desirable nature of sin (Gen 3:6)
    - Thomas Brooks, in his book *Precious Remedies for Satan’s Devices*, talks of Satan’s attempt to present the bait, but hide the hook:
      * “Here is the bait, the sweet, the pleasure, the profit. Oh, but he hides the hook, – the shame, the wrath, and the loss that would certainly follow!”[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Demons in Connection With False Religions**

* **Deuteronomy 32:17** - *They sacrificed to demons who were not God, To gods whom they have not known, New gods who came lately, Whom your fathers did not dread.*
* Moses, in Deut 32:15-18, is talking of a time to come when Israel would rebel against God.
  + In v. 17, he is making a clear connection from the so-called “gods” and idols that men worshipped, and that were not God, to demonic forces who are simply masquerading as deities, propagating false worship and idolatry away from the one true God.
* Again, in this we see Satan’s tactics, using pagan gods and false religion to act as a snare to deceive many.
  + **Psalm 106:36-37** - *And served their idols, Which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons.*
* Satan, the tempter and the father of lies (John 8:44), is actively working through false religions to deceive and to draw as many as he can away from following the Lord.

**Prayer and Spiritual Warfare in the OT**

* In Daniel 10, we see the relationship of the prayers of God’s people and the effects of those prayers in the unseen world of spiritual reality.
  + In vv. 2-3, Daniel is praying and fasting for three weeks for insight on what was to come (v. 14).
  + In response to this, a “man” came to him, one who had the appearance of lightning, eyes like flaming torches, and whose words were like the sound of a tumult (vv. 4-6).
  + This was an angelic being that came to Daniel in response to his prayer.
* What is interesting about this encounter is this heavenly messenger’s response to Daniel:
  + **Daniel 10:12-14** - *Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. “****But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days****; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.*
* What is it that this messenger is detailing?
  + As Daniel prayed, there was an immediate response, but what came with it was demonic resistance which lasted twenty-one days.
* So, this account not only affirms that Satan is working through worldly systems (i.e., “the prince of the kingdom of Persia”), but also that when believers pray, there are spiritual forces and warfare at work in ways that we cannot see.

**The LORD’S Sovereignty and Spiritual Warfare**

* As we look at a few other examples of demonic activity throughout Scripture, it will be helpful to point out the place of God’s sovereignty in the realm of spiritual warfare.
  + This is detailed well in the Old Testament and displays God’s use of evil to fulfill His purposes.

**Judges 9:22-24** - *Now Abimelech ruled over Israel three years.* ***Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem****; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, so that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood might be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers.*

* Earlier in Judges 9, Abimelech conspired to become king, and he and other men that he hired had killed his seventy brothers, with only Jotham surviving.
* Because of this, the Lord sent an evil spirit to create discord between Abimelech and the men of Shechem.
* This was done as an act of judgment, which ultimately led to Abimelech’s death (Judg 9:54-57).
* There are similar accounts of God sovereignly using Satan and evil spirits to accomplish His will:
  + **1 Samuel 16:14-16** - *Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him. Saul’s servants then said to him, “Behold now, an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you.*
  + **2 Samuel 24:1** - *Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah.”* (cf. 1 Chr 21:1)
* Likely one of the most well-known passages detailing Satan’s attacks on God’s people in the Old Testament is the account of Job.
  + It is in Job 1:6-12, 2:1-6 that we are given an account of exchanges between God and Satan, and how these things came upon Job.
  + We are given a view into the spiritual realm and aspects of spiritual warfare that we normally do not witness.
  + While Satan brought great evil and affliction upon Job, Satan could not act beyond what was permitted by God (1:12, 2:6)
* But what does this have to do with spiritual warfare?
  + First, it shows that the Lord is sovereign over events and uses them for His purposes, whether to bring judgment, discipline, or sanctification.
  + Second, it shows that though the Lord is sovereign over these events, He is not culpable.
    - It is Satan and his demonic forces that work within the worldly system, false religions, or through lies and deceit to bring about temptation and doubt.
    - It is those that give in to that temptation that sin and are guilty before God (James 1:13-15).
* The Old Testament, then, begins to help us better understand our enemy and how he works, as well as how the Lord is sovereignly working all things for our good and His glory!

# SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

* While spiritual warfare has existed since the garden, it greatly increases and is discussed in significantly more detail in the New Testament.
  + This is likely because Jesus had come, and the fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan through Him was unfolding on earth.
* It is also from the New Testament that we receive the majority of the commands regarding spiritual warfare, and where many false doctrines that over-emphasize spiritual warfare are derived.
  + Because of that, it is crucial that we have a proper interpretation of these texts to understand spiritual warfare in the time of the New Testament, as well as today.

**Satan’s Tactics Continued**

* Throughout the Gospels and Acts, we are given many accounts of demonic activity and spiritual warfare against Jesus and His disciples.
* One of the primary examples is the account of Jesus being tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13)
  + Much can be drawn from this account as it pertains to spiritual warfare:
    - First, we see that Satan’s tactics to tempt Jesus are the same tactics used in the garden of Eden against Adam and Eve.
    - Satan sought to tempt Jesus with the allure of sin, playing on His hunger after fasting for forty days, as well as attempting to entice Him with the giving of power and dominion if Jesus would only worship him. (Matt 4:3, 8-9; cf. Luke 4:3, 6-7)
    - Satan also distorted God’s word in an attempt to deceive Jesus. (Matt 4:6; cf. Luke 4:10-11)
    - However, Christ, replying each time with the word of God, succeeded where the first Adam failed.
  + This is a tremendous passage as it pertains to victory in spiritual warfare.
    - Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, did not use supernatural powers to defeat the devil in the wilderness but God’s holy Word understood, believed, and obeyed.
    - While this account does not provide a direct command regarding this, it is a clear principle that effective reliance on the Holy Spirit and use of God’s word, described as the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17), is critical for victory against temptation and spiritual warfare.

**Demon Possession and the Exorcising and Binding of Demons**

* As we come to the time of Jesus and His disciples, we must address the concept of casting out demons and binding evil spirits.
  + As with speaking in tongues, healings, and other miraculous sign gifts, casting out demons is seen in the New Testament as a unique role granted by Christ to the Apostles, to the early church leaders, as well as the seventy (Matt 10:1; Mark 3:15; Luke 9:1; Heb 2:3–4).
    - As Christ had ultimate authority over demons, He delegated this authority to others that He sent out.
* A key passage used to defend the binding of demons today is Matt 18:18, where Jesus tells His disciples, “*whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*”
  + Is this passage teaching that believers are able to bind demons?
  + To answer this, we must examine the context in which this passage was written.
  + Directly before this, in Matthew 18:15–17, Jesus is giving instruction regarding church discipline.
    - This passage, then, is not directed towards authority to bind or loose demons, but rather that Jesus’ disciples were given authority to discipline those who were displaying unrepentant sin.
    - We must remain faithful to the **intended meaning of any passage by the original author**.
* Also, it is also important to note that the apostolic era was an era of revelation.
  + The act of casting out demons and the other sign gifts were primarily used to authenticate the message of the gospel that was going forth at that time.
* Also, those who were given authority to cast out demons were addressed specifically by Christ.
  + In charismatic circles today, leaders would claim to hold the office of apostle, though they do not meet the qualifications of the office, namely, being an eyewitness to Christ’s resurrection and being appointed by Christ Himself.
* Therefore, as we look to these passages, we cannot use these to build a framework for spiritual warfare today.

**Prayer and Spiritual Warfare in the NT**

* Again, helpful to point out, as we look at Jesus’ example and teachings, is the continued emphasis on prayer as a means of spiritual warfare.
  + Jesus’ example of faithful prayer in Matt 6:9-13:
    - **Matt 6:13** - *And do not lead us into temptation,* ***but deliver us from evil****. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*
    - Jesus’s petition in the Lord’s Prayer instructs his disciples to pray for deliverance from the evil one, who brings about temptation to sin.
  + We see this emphasized again in the High Priestly Prayer in John 17
    - **John 17:15** - *I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.*
    - Again, Jesus comes to the Father through prayer, seeking protection for His disciples as they remain on in the world.

**Satanic Influence Over Jesus’ Disciples**

* It is also worth discussing Peter and Judas, who both were disciples of Christ, and who both have interaction with or influence from Satan in the gospel accounts.
  + Peter, in Matt 16:21-23, rebukes Christ after hearing that He must suffer and be killed.
    - Christ’s response alludes to satanic influence coming upon Peter, “*Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.*”
    - Again, we see Satan’s tactics of tempting someone to sin through a doubt and denial of God’s word, and instead leaning on their own understanding and interests.
  + Judas Iscariot, however, experienced a different form of satanic influence.
    - In John 13, during the last supper before Christ’s betrayal and arrest, Judas is not only influenced by Satan, but is also possessed by him.
      * **John 13:27** - *After the morsel,* ***Satan then entered into him****. Therefore Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.”*
  + What is the difference here between Peter and Judas?
    - Peter was a believer who was simply tempted by Satan and fell into sin.
    - Judas was an unbeliever and had given Satan a foothold through his habitual greed (John 12:6) and his unrepentant sin and was, therefore, possessed by Satan.
* While the disciples at this point were not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it is important to note that as believers living post-Pentecost, we are now temples of the Holy Spirit.
  + **2 Corinthian 1:21-22** - *Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also* ***sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge****.*
  + Therefore, as we think through spiritual warfare for a believer, it consists of resisting temptation brought on by Satan, not fearing that he or a demon may possess us, as the Holy Spirit would not share residence with a demon.

# SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE EPISTLES

* As we come to the epistles to early New Testament believers, we must recognize that every epistle recognizes or addresses spiritual warfare in some way.
* Rather than looking to every example of spiritual warfare in these writings, we will summarize what the NT writers focused on regarding the existence of spiritual warfare.

**Spiritual Warfare and the Believer**

* Throughout the epistles, there is a consistent call for believers to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.
  + As those who are redeemed through the blood of Christ, we are called to conform to His likeness (Rom 8:29) and to be holy as He is holy (1 Pet 1:15-16).
  + With this call is an understanding that there will be great opposition in this pursuit of holiness, which will come from three distinct sources: the world, the flesh, and the devil.
* We have already said much regarding Satan’s tactics to cause believers to sin.
  + He is the deceiver, the father of lies, the lion prowling around looking for someone to devour.
  + Believers are not called to face him, but to submit to God and resist him (James 4:7)
    - With this, our spiritual warfare against Satan is primarily defensive, not offensive.
    - We must not be tempted to believe that we have power to confront or bind him.
      * Not even the great archangel, Michael, when he was disputing with Satan, dared to condemn him (Jude 9).
      * In fact, confronting demons is shown to be a mark of false teachers (2 Pet 2:10–11).
    - We must be sober-minded and submit to the Lord.
      * **1 Pet 5:8-9** - *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.*
* We must also recognize the battle that we must wage against the world, Satan’s present domain, it’s false ideologies, and it’s celebration and acceptance of sin.
  + Along with the temptation to live like the world, persecution has come heavily from the world.
  + This is really a means by which Satan seeks to destroy the church.
    - “Persecution is the roar by which he tries to intimidate believers in the hope that they will capitulate at the prospect of suffering. If believers deny their faith, then the devil has devoured them, bringing them back into his fold.”[[2]](#footnote-2)
  + The world is consistently seen at odds with God and His people.
    - They hate Christ and those who follow Him (John 15)
    - They mock and ridicule those who hold to God’s word (1 Peter 2:12, 3:16, 4:4)
    - They will seek to draw you away from the faith to live worldly lives (2 Tim 3:1-5)
  + We, however, must not live in a way that characterized our old life, but we must identify with Christ, bring firmly rooted and built up in Him (Col 2:6-8).
  + We must recognize the inevitability of trials and persecution (1 Per 4:12) and hold fast to Christ.
* Finally, we must recognize the war that we wage against our own flesh.
  + If you are in Christ, you are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), you have a new heart, you have been brought back to life spiritually (Eph 2:4-9)
  + HOWEVER, we are still in our unredeemed bodies; we are still susceptible to temptation and continually sin against God.
    - Sin no longer controls us, but it has not been eradicated from us completely (Rom 7:14-25)
    - We are, therefore, called to be mortifying sin in our own lives.
  + This is an area of spiritual warfare in which we must be continually watchful.
    - We will be tempted to push blame off of ourselves and onto external factors as the source of our issues. (Gen 3:12-13)
    - With that there is a complete lack of owning up to our own heart issues and sin
  + Please understand, there are forces at work against believers (i.e., the world and Satan), however, we have to differentiate between temptation and sin.
    - The world and Satan provide temptation (external forces that try to draw us away from pursuing godliness)
    - Our own flesh, when giving into that temptation, produces sin (James 1:13-15)
  + While the temptations certainly come upon us relentlessly, we can’t pass the blame to those sources of temptation (“the devil made me do it”).
    - We need to understand that our sin is our own willing disobedience against the Lord.
    - We need to understand the wicked nature of our flesh and the ease at which we can begin to justify our sin when not confronting it with the truth of God’s word.
  + This is also why we can’t strive to please God using only our own efforts (John 14)
    - Christ is the vine, and we are the branches. Outside of Him, we can do nothing.

**Spiritual Warfare and the Church**

* We see spiritual warfare addressed not only on the individual level, but also in regard to the church.
  + While Christ declared that He would build His church, and that the gates of Hades would not be able to overpower it (Matt 16:18), there are constant attacks that come upon the church.
* These attacks on the church come through two primary fronts: False Teaching and Division
  + False teaching was a constant battle throughout the Old and New Testaments, and continues today.
    - You’ll remember that demonic activity was seen in conjunction with pagan worship (Deut 32:17)
    - Peter warned of false teachers who would “*bring in destructive heresies*” (2 Pet 2:1).
    - Paul also warned the Ephesian elders, calling them to be on guard and be watchful of false teachers that would come in.
      * **Acts 20:28-30** - *Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.*
    - Paul dealt with satanic false teachers that began to infiltrate the church in Corinth.
      * These teachers, Paul said, were “*false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ*” (2 Cor 11:13–15).
    - This is a reminder to us of how subtle and cunning our enemy is.
      * Satan is not going present himself as a danger and a threat to believers and the church.
      * He is going to come disguised as an angel of light, presenting just enough truth for you to let your guard down, so that those things which he distorts or corrupts will go unnoticed.
        + **2 Cor 11:13-14** - *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even* ***Satan disguises himself as an angel of light****.*
      * This is why there is a consistent call to be on guard!
        + This again draws us back to God’s word as a means of spiritual warfare.
        + We must know the truth to combat false teaching.

**1 Thess 5:21-22** - *But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.*

* + While false teaching is generally regarded as the church’s greatest threat from outside the church, division and disunity is the greatest threat that comes from within the church.
    - Unity is addressed numerous times throughout the New Testament
      * Believers are brought together as the body of Christ (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 4:16) and are being fitted together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Eph 2:22).
      * In the majority of Paul’s letters, as he expounds on the practical implications of life in Christ, starts with striving for unity with one another (Rom 15:5-6; 1 Cor 1:10; Gal 3:27-29; Eph 4:1-3; Phil 1:27)
      * Jesus prays for believers to be one (John 17:11, 21-23)
    - Personally, I believe this is one of the greatest threats to the church.
      * Division and quarrels amongst believers can be catastrophic to the church.
        + **1 Cor 1:10** – *Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.*
      * This is why Paul deals with it so decisively.
        + **Titus 3:9-11** – *Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.*
    - How does this happen? How does division begin to take hold in a church?
    - In their book, *Spiritual Warfare in the Storyline of Scripture*, William F. Cook III and Chuck Lawless describe a few ways this can begin to manifest.
      * First, division manifests when believers sin against each other and allow their anger to fester. In their continued anger, they give the devil “something to work with.”
        + **Eph 4:26-27** - *BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.*
      * Second, division takes place when believers lose their love for each other. Rather than put on love, “which is the perfect bond of unity” (Col 3:14), they allow their love to wane—which then opens the door to tolerating disunity.
        + **1 Pet 1:22-23** - *Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.*
      * Third, division happens when believers put their own interests ahead of the interests of others. Selfishness and pride separate believers; James, in fact, concluded that envy and selfish ambition are of the devil (Jas 3:15–16).
        + **James 4:1-3** - *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*
      * Fourth, division occurs because of spiritual immaturity, as evidenced among the Corinthian believers. Though they were believers, they were acting like the world and allowing envy and strife to divide them (1 Cor 3:1–3).[[3]](#footnote-3)
        + **1 Cor 3:1-3** - *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?*
    - For this, we must be on guard for our own hearts, in humility seeking to preserve unity with the body of Christ.
    - In short, as Satan is waging war against Christ and His church, we must stand firm “*in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*”
    - **Eph 4:14-16** - *As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

# WHAT DOES SPIRITUAL WARFARE LOOK LIKE TODAY?

* As we look to what is displayed and prescribed in Scripture regarding a believer’s spiritual warfare, what should this look like for believers today?
* We must first recognize the call to spiritual warfare!
  + Our enemy is relentless, and we are called to stand firm and take up arms against him.
  + We live in a world that celebrates sin and hates Christ and His word, and therefore, must seek to not be conformed to the world (Rom 12:1-2).
  + We must be killing sin in our own flesh, seeking to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of our calling (Phil 1:27)
* Next, we must understand our enemy.
  + Remember Satan’s tactics: He wants to tempt mankind to doubt and deny God’s word and God’s character, as well as entice mankind through the perceived pleasure of sin.
  + His greatest desire is to disrupt God’s plans and to bring desctruction upon God’s people.
* Finally, we must understand how we are to be conducting spiritual warfare.
  + First, true victory requires saving faith, through God’s grace, in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
    - It is through this that we are given new life and now have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.
  + Second, it is understanding the necessity of renewing our minds in God’s word, as it is the believer’s sufficient, inerrant, inspired authority (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:3).
    - If we are to understand our enemy and his strategies, as well as the weapons and armor of our warfare, we must rely on God’s word.
  + Third, it is a humble reliance on prayer as a means of seeking grace in times of need (Heb 4:16), praying that the Lord would guard us against the evil one (Matt 6:13).
* Regarding the practical outworking of this warfare in our daily lives, you will need to come back as we begin to walk through Ephesians 6:10-20.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REGARDING SPIRITUAL WARFARE

* *Precious Remedies for Satan’s Devices* by Thomas Brooks
* *Spiritual Warfare in the Storyline of Scripture* by William F. Cook III and Chuck Lawless
* *Demons: A Biblically Based Perspective* by Alex Konya
* *Standing Strong: How to Resist the Enemy of Your Soul* by John MacArthur

1. Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies for Satan’s Devices* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth, 1968), 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude, New American Commentary, vol. 37* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. William F. Cook III and Chuck Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in the Storyline of Scripture* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2019), 211–212. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)