

## Fighting With The Devil

There are many times, friend, when you feel like you are fighting with the devil. Well surprise, surprise guess what? You are. It says in 1st Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:” But in order to break free from this lion’s jaws, yes friend, that’s right, you have to fight. A lion will never let go of its prey without a fight for life and it’s the same with the devil. Satan will never let go unless we declare a personal state of war.

So how do we get out of the lion’s grasp? Let’s first look into a few Bible verses about the devil and his tactics.

Revelation 12:9 “...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world...”

John 8:44 “Ye are of your father the devil, .... He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”.

So as we can see from these Bible verses Satan is a ‘dirty’ player. He uses deceit, dishonesty, oppression and a myriad of other undesirable ways to ‘catch’ his prey and then if the ‘prey’ hasn’t managed to escape, Satan delights in devouring it. We are the prey, Satan always has his predatory eyes on us. The more we run, the faster he chases. Satan will never fall out of the race, trust me friend, he can run faster than any of us. So what do we do? There can only be one answer, friend, stop running, turn and fight. Then and only then can we end this battle with the devil. Don’t think it’s over friend, Satan will return again and again till finally when he comes and finds ‘nothing in you’ then he will leave because he can no longer tempt you.

So we need to define two things, firstly what is ‘nothing in you’ and secondly what is involved in ‘stop’, ‘turn’ and ‘fight’.

1st:- ‘nothing in you’

Jesus is talking to His disciples in the upper room just after He had washed their feet and He mentions the prince (devil) coming and finding ‘nothing’ in Him.

John 14:30 “...for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me”.

Let’s enlarge on this with a excerpt from Ellen White.

“Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father’s commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage...” Great Controversy 623.1

When the devil comes to tempt he normally gains a foothold by something treasured inside ourselves. Often it can be something we deem trivial and not worthy of our attention, but we misread the subtlety of the devil. He only needs a minuscule footing and with that he can gain full control.

We must close the door on the devil, we need to search our hearts, minds and souls carefully. There can be nothing in us when the devil comes to tempt. No cherished sin, no discontent with heaven, the devil can and does use any discontent or doubt over any topic to gain a foothold and once in he enlarges on these insecurities he finds in you. Often he will have gained control before we know he is here, and our insecurities are blown way out of proportion and our treasured ‘sins’ have become uncontrollable.

Friends, when I say ‘nothing in you’ I mean nothing in you that the devil can use to ‘turn’ against you. Once he has you in his snare he then turns about and uses it against you. He tells you “it is too late, you have gone too far, Jesus will never have you back” and under these lies you fall. It is vitally important to remember God’s promises in the struggle for control, our only hope is to hold onto Jesus’ promises. Faith in these promises will vanquish the devil.

Here are a few of my favourites:-

Hebrews 13:5 “...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Deuteronomy 31:6 “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he *it is* that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”

Isaiah 41:10 “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

2nd:- ‘stop’, ‘turn’ and ‘fight’

‘Stop’ :- definition according to the dictionary, “Cease to perform a specified action or have a specified experience.”

“Cause (an action, process, or event) to come to an end.”

I think this is fairly self explanatory, we all know what stop is and how to do it.

‘Turn’ :- definition according to the dictionary, "Change the position of one's body so that one is facing in a different direction.”

“A change of direction when moving.”

The ‘turn’ we are referring to is a 180 degree turn. In other words we turn and face the direction we just came from, we turn and face the devil.

‘Fight’ :- definition according to the dictionary, “Take part in a violent struggle involving the exchange of physical blows or the use of weapons.”

“Struggle to overcome, eliminate, or prevent.” “A violent confrontation or struggle.”

So let’s put these three words together, we can stop, turn (180 degrees) and fight. This means we are face to face with the devil and we are fighting him. Let’s take a look at a few Bible examples and verses relating to ‘fighting with the devil’.

I think one of the perfect examples is how the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Here we can see the devil’s deceiving ways. He didn’t go to Jesus in his true form but took on a form of an angel of light pretending to come from heaven. He pretended to be concerned for Jesus’ ‘wellbeing’ and tried to tempt Jesus to perform a miracle to ‘help Himself’. Jesus walked on earth using human capabilities, He never performed a miracle to help Himself. As humans we can’t perform a miracle for ourselves so Jesus living and dying on earth to save us from sin also never used any divine power to ‘help Himself’. Satan knew if he could tempt our Saviour to ‘help Himself’ the plan of salvation would be over. Lost forever. I believe the temptation in the wilderness to be one of the most devious schemes recorded, it highlights the devil’s malicious character and the lengths he will go to to destroy anyone and anything. I think the disciple Peter sums it all up in:-

1 Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:...”

Once again we see Satan for what he really is, a dirty player. There is nothing we can do about the devil and his ‘dirty’ tactics, we will never be able to change that, but what we can do is learn how to return fire, without using ‘dirty’ tactics.

The first thing we must take note of is who we are fighting. This is no normal person and this fact makes it no normal battle, we’re going to need help. And where does this help come from, yes, that’s right, Jesus. Only Jesus is going to be able to guide us through this battle. Jesus has fought this fight before us. In His life on earth Jesus not only fought for the victory for the world but also for you and me. Through His victory over the devil, we also can claim the victory. In our fight with the devil we can know for a certainty our victory is assured because of Jesus’ victory. Friends, never forget that through Jesus’ life on earth we have power over the devil.

First and foremost I would like to point out the very first thing any christian should do and it is listed in Ephesians. This is one of my favourite Bible verses and I believe one of the most important in fighting with the devil.

Ephesians 6:11-13 “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Without the armour of God we stand defenceless, and a sure prey to the devil. As with any animal of prey, the devil included, they are opportunists, and they will take advantage of any vulnerability of their victim. As we traverse through dangerous forests or seas in our travels on earth we always carry a weapon of defence, but do we ever think of protecting ourselves from the unseen, the wiles of the devil. Friend, if for a moment we stand unguarded we will fall, a casualty of Satan. Stand friend, forever on guard and don't let the devil catch you napping, if he manages to catch you by surprise he has the advantage to throw you off balance.

I think we can clearly see the 'dirty' tactics of the devil friend, but what of them? How do we discern them, how do we see clearly when the path is so overshadowed by the devil and his agents? How do we fight the devil? If we could see clearly the fight would be a whole sight easier, but as the devil clouds our sight our only hope is to walk by faith. This is where we put our hand in Jesus' hand and let Him lead. Jesus will lead us through. The Bible has some precious verses, promises of Jesus' assurance of walking hand in hand and of His promise to lead.

Psalm 73:23,24 "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

Isaiah 41:13 "For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."

Psalm 139:10 "Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

Isaiah 30:21 "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

Psalm 32:8 "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

If we put our trust in Jesus, He will lead us through and when times get tough Jesus carries us.

Isaiah 40:11 "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

Jesus has promised to carry us and He will never let us fall but if we are going to vanquish the devil it means we must put on the whole armour of God and fight.

So where do we start? How do we do it? What do we do? Well first and foremost we must realise that Jesus is our Captain. He is the Lord of Hosts and He is and always at the front of the battle. Jesus will lead the fight and His angels stand ever ready to guard and protect, so with these mighty warriors by our side we have the fortitude to proceed.

Our first obligation is to recognise when it is time to fight and with whom we are fighting. As we mentioned before Satan is the master of disguise, so it is imperative we quickly discern that it is the devil and when he is around. Friends, this may seem to be a clear cut case, but believe me often the devil can be in and out before we even know he has been about. So let's go about this in fact form:-

1) Stay always on guard.

1 Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”

Mark 13:33 “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.”

Matthew 26:41 “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation...”

Ephesians 6:11 “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

2) Recognise when the devil is in the room.

2 Timothy 1:7 “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

If you are feeling afraid, unloved or your mind is in chaos, rest assured the devil is about.

John 14:27 “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

If you are troubled or afraid Satan is at the door if not in the room.

Colossians 3:15 “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts...”

No peace, wild thumping hearts, afraid and tormented, Satan is about.

Galatians 5:22,23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance...”

Any ‘fruits’ contrary to the ones listed above are also sure indicators of the devil’s presence.

Satan the adversary always works opposite to God. Jesus is a God of love, Satan of hate. Anything, any feeling contrary to our God of love is a sure indication Satan is prowling about.

3) Pray to Jesus for strength and wisdom.

Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Psalms 46:1 “...God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

James 1:5 “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

Isaiah 41:10 “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

Psalms 29:11 “The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.”

#### 4) Fight.

James 4:7 “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

Ephesians 4:27 “Neither give place to the devil.”

Let's start at fact 1) On Guard.

No soldier goes into battle without first completing their training. The further into battle they go or the harder their mission the more intense is the training. Every possible scenario, every danger, every ploy or tactic from the enemy is carefully evaluated. The soldier is then briefed and trained to combat and destroy the enemies plans. The stronger army, the cleverer the army, the army with the most faith and trust in its captain always come out winners.

So in fighting with the devil first and foremost, as we mentioned earlier in Ephesians 6, we stand ever ready, guarded with the whole (not just part, but the whole) armour of God. Stand on guard, stand prepared.

We have Jesus on our side so it's a simple fact our team is and always will be stronger and cleverer. But it is up to us to put our faith and trust, our lives into the hands of our Captain. Jesus will always lead, He will always be at the head of our fights. The 23rd Psalm highlights this beautifully, “...Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me...”

Fact number one:- stay on guard, be ever vigilant, stand ready to go into battle at a moments notice.

Let's move on to fact 2) Recognise when the devil is in the room.

How do we know when the devil has come to visit? how do we recognise we are ‘under attack’? Satan is very crafty, he won't knock at your door and politely request admission. No that's not his style, Satan will climb the wall, crawl under the fence, or just barge in. Normally a feeling of ill will attends Satan, you suddenly feel like a cloud has descended and enveloped you in fog. Depression and despair soon follow, gloom and despondency set in and you are my friend, under attack from Satan. Remember Satan often uses truth in his attempt to sink you, but remember friend, Satan never tells all of the truth. Anything in the truth that might encourage you Satan omits and the truth he does use he twists to suit his evil schemes. Satan also comes in with insinuations of doubt, especially doubt against God and God's ability to save. We've heard them all, “Jesus has left you, you've gone too far, it's too late to turn back now, Jesus won't forgive you” etc. Don't listen my friend, they are all lies. It's by these lies and methods we can recognise that the devil has entered the room.

Fact 3) Pray to Jesus for strength and wisdom.

In our fight with the devil our only hope is Jesus. The devil's wisdom and strength far exceeds ours so if we try to fight him directly we will hopelessly lose. Jesus died on the

cross to succour us from the devil and it is by Jesus' victory that we can obtain the strength and wisdom we need to defeat the devil. Listen closely friend and Jesus will whisper in your ear what to do and when to do it, war tactics will be divulged and strength will come from on high. The battle victory will be ours with Jesus by our side. Jesus will impart His wisdom and strength and in His name we go.

Lastly, Fact 4) Fight.

This is one of the hardest of the four facts. Let's have a quick look at a Bible verse in Ephesians, yes we have used it earlier but I think it best describes what we are up against in our fight with the devil. Ephesians 6:12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

The battle we fight is not physical but spiritual, nobody around you can visually see the battle raging, no-one knows what you are going through, but Jesus does, and Jesus can save. Jesus can also impress others to come to your rescue, pastors, church members deeply ingrained in the love of God, will come offering help, prayer and support. Friend, never for a moment think you are on your own, there is always support right at your fingertips. Jesus is always and ever by your side and He will never leave. Angels that excel in strength are commissioned from heaven to stand by your side and fight with you. You can never be defeated with Jesus and His angels beside you. This doesn't mean you can sit back on your laurels and let everyone around you do all the work, no friend, you have to fight too. So pick up your sword and shield and join in the fight.

Let's sum it all up. Yes we are fighting with the devil, yes Satan wants us and we are his prey, but friend, with Jesus by our side, with our sword and shield in hand we can defeat the devil.

Amen

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