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CHURCH

Your Journey With Christ · Discipleship · Lesson 23 of 27

Spiritual Warfare

Relate Church • Foundations for a Growing Faith

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

ROMANS 8:37

Introduction

In our spiritual lives, we have no choice but to engage unseen forces. Why? Because Satan and his demons are in a struggle to the death. They fiercely oppose God and the love of God's heart: people. This battle of two kingdoms rages over the hearts and minds of people. The Devil is fierce, ruthless, and loves to destroy (John 10:10). He wants to rob your heart and smash your soul! He attacks your love story with God and the love stories of others. As if our struggle against sin were not enough, this enemy uses our own sin against us. Our confidence is that Jesus fights victoriously for all those who love Him. We must join this battle with this assurance:

> [37] *But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.*
>
> **Romans 8:37 NASB95**

Two Kingdoms

> [1] *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins* [2] *in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient.* [3] *We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also.*
>
> **Ephesians 2:1-3 CSB**

> [3] *But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.* [4] *In their case, the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 4:3-4 CSB**

The ultimate fate of Satan and his kingdom is revealed in Revelation 16:10-11; 20:7-10.

> [10] *Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain,* [11] *and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds.*
>
> **Revelation 16:10-11 LSB**

> [7] *And when the thousand years are finished, Satan will be released from his prison,* [8] *and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together*

for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. [9] *And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.* [10] *And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

Revelation 20:7-10 LSB

The ultimate destiny of Christ and His kingdom is revealed in 1 Corinthians 15.

[22] *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.* [23] *But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming.* [24] *Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.*

1 Corinthians 15:22-24 LSB

Which kingdom has more power and authority? The kingdom of God.

[18] *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

Matthew 28:18 NIV

[4] *You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*

1 John 4:4 NIV

Our Battle

Remember the account of the Lord's confrontation with Satan in Luke 4:1-13?

[1] *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness* [2] *for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.* [3] *And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."* [4] *And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.'"*
[5] *And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.* [6] *And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.* [7] *Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."* [8] *Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"*

> [9] *And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here;* [10] *for it is written,*
> *'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU,'*
> [11] *and,*
> *'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP,*
> *SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"*
> [12] *And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"*
> [13] *When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.*
>
> **Luke 4:1-13 NASB95**

What was Jesus' physical condition when the Devil appeared?
What desires did Satan appeal to in the three temptations?
Do you have any of these desires? How have you faced these temptations?

The apostle Paul described the spiritual battle life of a follower of Jesus in Ephesians 6.

> [10] *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.* [11] *Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.* [12] *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.* [13] *Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.*
>
> **Ephesians 6:10-13 NASB95**

From these verses, list several truths about your spiritual battle.

> *"[As a follower of Jesus] you don't fight for victory; you fight from a position of victory. You don't say, "I am going to try to be victorious over Satan today." Instead, you say, "Jesus Christ has already been victorious over Satan. So today, by faith, I am going to live in Christ's authority, trusting His blood to give me the power over any attacks of the evil one." That's authority." —Tony Evans, The Battle Is the Lord's*

Know Your Enemy

Knowing the enemy is as important for a believer as for a military commander—both are engaged in battle.

Look at how Satan is pictured in 1 Peter 5.

> [8] *Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.*
>
> **1 Peter 5:8 CSB**

And now look at the immensely powerful and practical response we are given in verse 9.

> [9] *Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.*
>
> **1 Peter 5:9 CSB**

Look at the names given to the enemy in Revelation 12.

> [9] *So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.* [10] *Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.*
>
> **Revelation 12:9-10 NKJV**

What does he do? He is the accuser of the brethren.

Satan makes it his continual business to cast doubt on God's Word, to discredit God's Son, and to destroy followers of Jesus. Look at how Satan discredited God's Word when he deceived Eve.

> [1] *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"* [2] *And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;* [3] *but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"* [4] *Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.* [5] *For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*
>
> **Genesis 3:1-5 NKJV**

The verses below teach us some things about Satan and his schemes.

> [12] *Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*

Luke 8:12 NKJV

44 *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."*

John 8:44 NKJV

What kind of father does the Devil make to those who accept his lies? In John 8:33-45, Jesus confronted unbelieving Jews who claimed God as their Father. These Jews had come under Satan's deceptive influence and were trying to kill Jesus.

33 *"We are descendants of Abraham," they answered him, "and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, 'You will become free'? "* 34 *Jesus responded, "Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.* 35 *A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does remain forever.* 36 *So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.* 37 *I know you are descendants of Abraham, but you are trying to kill me because my word has no place among you.* 38 *I speak what I have seen in the presence of the Father; so then, you do what you have heard from your father."* 39 *"Our father is Abraham," they replied. "If you were Abraham's children," Jesus told them, "you would do what Abraham did.* 40 *But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.* 41 *You're doing what your father does." "We weren't born of sexual immorality," they said. "We have one Father — God."* 42 *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, because I came from God and I am here. For I didn't come on my own, but he sent me.* 43 *Why don't you understand what I say? Because you cannot listen to my word.* 44 *You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me."*

John 8:33-45 CSB

3 *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,* 4 *in whose case the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 LSB

3 *But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be corrupted from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*

2 Corinthians 11:3 LSB

[14] *And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

2 Corinthians 11:14 LSB

Read Ephesians 4:26-27 below.

[26] *When angry, do not sin; do not ever let your wrath (your exasperation, your fury or indignation) last until the sun goes down.* [27] *Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil [give no opportunity to him].*

Ephesians 4:26-27 AMP

Considering Satan's nature and his various schemes, how do you think he has influenced your life in the past, perhaps by accusing you, deceiving you, or taking advantage of your sin?

Satan came at Eve with a subtle attack that cast doubt on the authority of God's Word. He was so successful with this in the Garden of Eden that he has been using the same strategy ever since…. Questioning God's Word is a trick of the Devil to cause you to overlook and under appreciate God's goodness…. God wants us to come to Him with praise and thanksgiving because He has put a lot of trees out there for us to enjoy. But Satan will always try to get us hung up on the one tree we can't have. —Tony Evans, The Battle Is the Lord's

The Conflict With Sin

The verses below describe sin.

[2] *Listen, heavens, and pay attention, earth,*
for the LORD has spoken:
"I have raised children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.

Isaiah 1:2 CSB

[4] *Everyone who commits sin practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.*

1 John 3:4 CSB

Sin is breaking God's law and thus breaking trust with Him. Expand on this definition of breaking trust with God after looking at Jesus' summary of the law in Matthew 22:37-40.

> [37] *He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.* [38] *This is the greatest and most important command.* [39] *The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.* [40] *All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."*
>
> **Matthew 22:37-40 CSB**

> [1] *WHAT LEADS to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fightings) originate among you? Do they not arise from your sensual desires that are ever warring in your bodily members?* [2] *You are jealous and covet [what others have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murderers. [To hate is to murder as far as your hearts are concerned.] You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment, and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war. You do not have, because you do not ask.* [3] *[Or] you do ask [God for them] and yet fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives. Your intention is [when you get what you desire] to spend it in sensual pleasures.* [4] *You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God.*
>
> **James 4:1-4 AMP**

> [7] *So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you.*
>
> **James 4:7 AMP**

The origin of hostility is revealed in verses 1-3.
What competes with your devotion to God is in verse 4.
Does this passage help explain any conflicts you have? If so, explain.
Verse 7 tells us how to practically resist Satan as he tries to capitalize on your sin.

Romans 12:2 teaches us that to avoid being squeezed into the world's mold, we must be renewed in mind.

> [2] *Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].*
>
> **Romans 12:2 AMP**

Philippians teaches us to not think like the world thinks, but to think about the whatever things.

> [6]*Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God.* [7]*And God's peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.* [8]*For the rest, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them].*
>
> **Philippians 4:6-8 AMP**

What the Lord has promised to the person who successfully endures temptation is found in James 1.

> [12]*Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.*
>
> **James 1:12 NIV**

Victory is Assured

What Christ's death on the cross mean for Satan.

> [14]*Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death — that is, the devil —* [15]*and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.*
>
> **Hebrews 2:14-15 CSB**

What does this mean for people?

> *"The witness of the New Testament then is clear. Satan is a malignant reality, always hostile to God and to God's people. But he has already been defeated in Christ's life and death and resurrection, and this defeat will become obvious and complete in the end of the age." L. L. Morris, New Bible Dictionary*

The basis for your victory is found in the verses below.

[14] *I have written to you, fathers,*
Because you have known Him who is from the beginning.
I have written to you, young men,
Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you,
And you have overcome the wicked one.

1 John 2:14 NKJV

[4] *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

1 John 4:4 NKJV

[4] *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.* [5] *Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

1 John 5:4-5 NKJV

Meditate on 1 Corinthians 15:57 as a personal prayer. Take some time now to thank God for your assurance of daily victory in Jesus Christ.

[57] *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

1 Corinthians 15:57 CSB

Are there areas of your life that you seem to constantly struggle with, such as addictions, pornography, anger, lying, or defrauding? Resist any and every influence of Satan in your life through obedience to God's Word. Consider asking several other believers to pray for you and to stand with you in this struggle.

Walking in Victory Every Day

Revelation 12:11 provides three factors that give you victory over Satan.

[11] *They conquered him*
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
for they did not love their lives
to the point of death.

Revelation 12:11 CSB

The spiritual battle equipment God has given us to wear and use is given in Ephesians 6.

> [14] *Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest,* [15] *and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace.* [16] *In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.* [17] *Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit — which is the word of God.* [18] *Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.*
>
> **Ephesians 6:14-18 CSB**

Which of these items do you believe is most prominent in your life?
Which of these items do you believe is most lacking in your life?
What do you think you should do about it?

What can you do each day to experience victory over sin?

> [3] *Be merciful to me, O Lord,*
> *For I cry to You all day long.*
>
> **Psalm 86:3 NKJV**

> [9] *How can a young man cleanse his way?*
> *By taking heed according to Your word.*
> *10 With my whole heart I have sought You;*
> *Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!*
> *11 Your word I have hidden in my heart,*
> *That I might not sin against You.*
>
> **Psalm 119:9-11 NKJV**

> [23] *And He said to all, If any person wills to come after Me, let him deny himself [disown himself, forget, lose sight of himself and his own interests, refuse and give up himself] and take up his cross daily and follow Me [cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying also].*
>
> **Luke 9:23 AMP**

> [13] *But instead warn (admonish, urge, and encourage) one another every day, as long as it is called Today, that none of you may be hardened [into settled rebellion] by the deceitfulness of sin [by the fraudulence, the stratagem, the trickery which the delusive glamor of his sin may play on him].*

Hebrews 3:13 AMP

What do you do when you have sinned?

> [5] *I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord [continually unfolding the past till all is told]—then You [instantly] forgave me the guilt and iniquity of my sin. Selah [pause, and calmly think of that]!*
>
> **Psalm 32:5 AMP**

> [9] *If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just (true to His own nature and promises) and will forgive our sins [dismiss our lawlessness] and [continuously] cleanse us from all unrighteousness [everything not in conformity to His will in purpose, thought, and action].*
>
> **1 John 1:9 AMP**

Psalm 103:9-14 reveals God's attitude toward all the sins you have committed.

> [9] *He will not always chide or be contending, neither will He keep His anger forever or hold a grudge.*
> [10] *He has not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*
> [11] *For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great are His mercy and loving-kindness toward those who reverently and worshipfully fear Him.*
> [12] *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*
> [13] *As a father loves and pities his children, so the Lord loves and pities those who fear Him [with reverence, worship, and awe].*
> [14] *For He knows our frame, He [earnestly] remembers and imprints [on His heart] that we are dust.*
>
> **Psalm 103:9-14 AMP**

How do you respond to God's attitude toward your sin?

Memory Verse

> [8] *Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.* [9] *Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.*
>
> **1 Peter 5:8-9 CSB**

Things to Ponder

In today's world, the demonic world is often trivialized, even though God's Word explains this reality. Research God's Word for the various names given to Satan. As you find them, consider how the names of the enemy reveal something about his character and about how he works against God and against people.

How can playing down the demonic world be dangerous to a follower of Jesus?
What satanic effects have you observed or experienced?
What do you think are some of the most effective ways we can be protected against this evil one?
Recall a time when you resisted Satan and he fled from you (James 4:7). Or recall a time when you experienced some aspect of spiritual warfare or intense temptation. What did you learn from it?