



Are Christians in Warfare?

“Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour. Take a firm stand against him, and be strong in your faith.” (I Peter 5:8, 9a, NLT)

Did you know that when you became part of God’s family you entered a war zone? If you don’t understand that, you’ll be defeated in the first encounter! Remember, before God saved you, you were in Satan’s kingdom. Imagine his fury when Jesus rescued you! Although he cannot get you back into his Kingdom, he will tempt you with every device to make you sin and forget that you are a new person in a new family. He uses the things of the world and your fleshly desires to tempt you. You are in warfare!

Attack on Jesus

Look at his attack on Jesus. Just before Jesus began his public ministry, the Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness for a showdown with his enemy the devil. Tired and hungry after a forty day fast, Satan tempted him three times. Jesus never once gave in and sinned. He used God’s Word as a weapon which stopped Satan cold. The first spiritual combat was over. (Matthew 4:1-11)

However, Satan continued to pursue Jesus. If he could only get Jesus to sin one time – ONE time, he could forever be “prince of this world.” However, with a word, Jesus cast out demonic spirits and rebuked Satan. For three years, Jesus obeyed his Father. He said, “I came to do the will of my Father.” At the end of his ministry, he said, “Satan has nothing on me.” Not one sin! As perfect Savior, he carried out his earthly mission.

Satan’s temporary victory

Only when it fit into God’s plan for Jesus to die, a decision made before the creation of the world, was Satan allowed temporary victories against Jesus. He entered the heart of Judas and caused him to betray Jesus. He stirred up hatred in the heart of the religious leaders and the people until they shouted, “Crucify him!” Although Pilate knew in his heart that Jesus was innocent and his wife had warned him not to have anything to do with Jesus, he so feared losing his kingdom that he allowed an innocent man to die. Can you relate to fears or peer pressure that have caused you to make wrong choices?

Can you imagine the joy of Satan and his demons when they thought they had killed the Son of God? Imagine their shock when Jesus resurrected from the dead – defeating death! Satan may have had a victory in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, but

when Jesus resurrected, he defeated Satan, proving he was Almighty God. Satan is a defeated foe! He has been judged and sentenced, but for a short time, you might say he's out on bail. God is using him for his own purposes – to teach believers to be conquerors and to prepare them to reign with him! After all, how can you learn to be a conqueror if you never have anything to conquer? “Through Jesus,” Paul said, “we are more than conquerors.” (Romans 8:37, NIV) What sin do you need to conquer?

An invisible enemy

Imagine fighting an enemy you can't see! Paul warned, “*For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.*” (Ephesians 6:12, NLT) If Peter could have physically seen Satan, do you think he would have denied Jesus three times? What about you? Do you think it would make a difference if you could see your enemy? Well, in one sense, you can – not with physical eyes, but spiritual eyes! Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to recognize the lies and deceits of the enemy.

How can you recognize Satan? It helps to know what he is like. The Bible says he is cunning, crafty and disguises himself as an “angel of light.” He attempts to make “wrong” look “OK.” His names reveal his nature and character – evil one, adversary, ruler of this world, serpent, accuser, tempter, deceiver, murderer, liar, Beelzebub, ruler of demons, roaring lion, devil, god of this age, and prince of the power of the air. Do you really want to obey a character like that? He is a deceiver. Like a lion ready to pounce on you, he wants you to think he is still your master. Don't be fooled because he's invisible!

Satan's methods

So how does he attack? He primarily messes with your mind. Have you ever been tempted to question God's Word and his goodness? Have you been enticed to do wrong things because they looked like so much fun? Have you let problems get you down instead of trusting God? Do you feel hopeless about some addiction? Do you sometimes feel you are alone and no one cares for you? Someone has described his methods as the five D's: doubt, discouragement, diversion, defeat and delay. Paul calls these thoughts “fiery darts from the enemy!” What is his goal? He wants you to forget who you are, doubt God, disobey him and sin.

Should you fear Satan? Recognize his schemes but do not be afraid. Only fear God. God says, “*I will never fail you. I will never forsake you. The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid...*” (Hebrews 13:5b, 6, NLT) John wrote in 1 John 4:4 (NLT), “*The Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.*” Awesome! Satan may be stronger than you, but he is not stronger than Jesus Christ who is in you. Remember, he is not God, but only a fallen angel, a created being. He's a spirit with a personality who has a host of evil spirits and demons with varying ranks and responsibilities working

for him. Satan can only be in one place at a time (his demons are everywhere) and only do what God gives him permission to do. Don't you find that comforting?

Jesus your Deliverer

Here is the exciting good news! God has already provided everything you need to win every round Satan and his demons devise. How? When you became a Christian, God positioned you spiritually in the heavenlies in a place of authority, power and victory. He provided armor to protect you. (See "What Is the Armor of God?") He gave you the Holy Spirit to direct and instruct you. Before you were born and on the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus prayed to the Father for you. *"I'm not asking you to take them [your name] out of the world, but to keep them [your name] safe from the evil one."* (John 17:15, 20, NLT) Guess what Jesus is still doing today? Praying for you! *"He lives forever to plead with God on their [your] behalf."* (Hebrews 7:25b, NLT) Jesus is your Rock, your Fortress and your Deliverer. In him, you can trust! When tempted, remember who you are and run to Jesus. You can't, but he can! Paul said, *"For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need."* (Philippians 4:13) Like Jesus, withstand his attacks by learning Scripture and using it against the powerful evil forces. With Jesus, you can win!

Attitude Check:

- What should your attitude be toward Satan and his demons?

Explore:

- Read "Realize Who Is Tempting You," (Ephesians 6:10-12) Memorize Ephesians 6:10-11. Do a check-up. How is Satan deceiving you? Using your Topical Index, find a Scripture verse to defeat the sin. Write in your journal.

Talking with God:

- Father, thank you for your protection. Keep me alert to Satan's schemes and intentions and remind me that through Jesus, I can resist and stand against him.