

The Big Fight

by Jim Cymbala

Every believer is involved in a fight against Satan, known as spiritual warfare, which starts the moment you become a Christian and never ends.

Duration: 29:17

Scripture: Ephesians 6:11

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding a vital truth in order to have a proper understanding of salvation and spiritual life. They highlight the potential consequences of not grasping this truth, such as having wrong attitudes towards others and getting into trouble in relationships. The speaker shares an example of a discouraged minister who faced spiritual opposition and emphasizes the need to put on the full armor of God to stand against the forces of evil. They also emphasize the importance of prayer in spiritual warfare. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to be aware of Satan's tactics and to rely on God's strength and prayer in facing spiritual battles.

Transcript

This is another one in the Vital Truth series. Without understanding this vital truth, you can misunderstand your salvation and have real questions inside of you because you don't understand how spiritual life works. Also, if you don't understand this, you can get in a lot of trouble in wrong relationships with people, having wrong attitudes toward people because you don't understand how it works.

We just forget how it works. To lead up to this, let me give you an example. I could take the rest of the time until the end of the third service today, just giving you examples that I'm aware of, and you'll have yours when you hear this.

So there's a minister at another time and another place, but this happened. He's married, fervent for God, full of the Spirit, full of the Word of God. He got discouraged with the work of the Lord.

You know, not much fruit, not many people, not enough money to pay the bills, and being a leader is not easy. So he must have taken his eyes off the Lord, got discouraged, got distracted, and his heart began to wander, and it wandered away from not just his family, his children, but away from the Lord. He ended up, although still going through the motions, turning his back on his wife and children, and whatever was going on in his heart and life, he comes out as a full-blown homosexual.

And whether it's immorality and fornication, sleeping with someone else, or homosexuality, all of that is grouped under immorality in the Bible, and the Word says anyone who practices these things will not enter the kingdom of heaven. This was not a slip. This was, he ended up not just saying, God, I'm sorry, what was I thinking? He ended up giving himself to it.

His wife prayed for him for months, then years. The kids prayed for a while. Then they said, adios, how could you do this? He made a shame of himself and of his former calling.

So it ended up that he was away from God. The wife got bitter because of what he had done, walking out on her, and she stayed bitter to the end of her life. And the children don't wanna know about God because where was God and what was all that church about if this is the way it all ends? I could give you 100 more if you want of different kinds of stories, or let's take another one.

Just someone in the choir more than 25 years ago just had words with some other choir member, some misunderstanding, and they got bitter. And when we addressed them and said, don't be bitter. Whatever the person did, they made a mistake.

Everybody makes a mistake. I make the most, but we're human. Haven't you ever made a mistake? They didn't wanna hear that.

But they're willing to apologize. I don't wanna hear that. No, you have a clique and all of that.

If I remember correctly, they pulled the race card on me and all of that, and you don't understand because you're the man and all of that. And it ended up the person had a bitter spirit till the day she died, and she died with a bitter spirit, estranged from everyone, and not even going to church anymore because if that's the way they do at church, I don't wanna know about God. That's all an example of this.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood.

People ain't the problem, excuse the grammar, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world. Oh yeah, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything, to stand.

So in a nutshell, the truth of the matter is, is that all of us, if you're a true Christian, if this means nothing to you, you don't get this, you don't feel it, you don't know what I'm talking about, it's most likely you're not a born-again Christian. Or you're in some kind of comatose state. I'm not saying that my opinion, I'm just telling you what the Bible would indicate.

Every believer is involved in a fight. It's called spiritual warfare. It starts the moment you become a Christian in a certain way, and it never ends until you die.

And my mom's 102 and a half plus, and she's still involved in spiritual warfare. Paul says our struggle is not against flesh and blood. He includes himself.

This is universal in application. You're a pastor, you're involved in spiritual warfare. You're a brand new believer, you're involved in spiritual warfare.

You're a new member of the church, and now you wanna really serve them, you'll be involved in even hotter spiritual warfare. No escape, no place to hide. This is the plight of a Christian.

That's why Paul said at the end of his life, the apostle, I have fought a good fight. Not I have danced a good dance. I have fought a good fight.

Christianity's not a dance, it's a fight. And it's odd because juxtaposed with the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not walk, and though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. All of that is true, and as we see, be strong in the Lord and the power of his might.

The truth is, there's no place to hide. And the more spiritual you become, the more sensitive you are to the enemy's attacks. And no one you know or ever read about was exempt from it.

And the best Christian you ever heard of fought battles you could not even imagine, because it's the way it is. And it's universal, and it's close. It's individual contact, it's individual warfare.

Let me bring out both close and individual. It's individual in that you can sing in choir practice together, and you can pray for each other. But when the devil comes to you and you gotta fight him, you'll most likely be alone.

Everyone has to go through that. Temptation, the attacks of the enemy, it's mano y mano, man to man, woman to woman. It's alone, you gotta stand.

Can you get help from brothers and sisters? Yay. Can you pray and get encouragement? But you gotta learn to stand. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Notice also the word used for our warfare is a word used for wrestling. Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood. Notice the misconception, if I could throw this in, that a lot of people have.

Satan can use people to torment you and tempt you and attack you and all that, but they're just pawns. They're not the problem. If you think they're the problem, you're not understanding scripture.

It's Satan behind the person. It wasn't that guy's wife, although he complained about his wife. It wasn't her husband, although he fell into a bad place and that embittered her.

And it's not the parents that got the children. Don't you understand who's pulling all the strings? It wasn't the girl in the alto section that got into it with that other girl. That was an accident, don't you get it? Satan is behind the whole thing.

He's orchestrating, planning, bringing thoughts, self-accusing others to your mind. No one likes you, no one cares for you. You're a victim.

If only people could know what you want to, what do you think? It's about people? It's not about people. It's about the thief who comes to steal and kill and destroy. Jesus said, but I have come that you might have a life and have it more abundantly.

So it takes spiritual maturity just to get past the people thing because most churches, 90% of the believers are held back because they got a thing for somebody, against somebody, an embitterment, a wall, a thing, a grudge, holds them back as if that person is the problem. Satan's just using that situation to hold us all back and to attack. Notice also it's close contact.

This is not warfare with shooting arrows in the air, right? And from this first imagery that he gives us, it is hand to hand, it's wrestling. It's the word used for wrestling. In fact, it's from a Greek word, P-A-L-E, where we get the word of palestra.

Palestra is an athletic stadium. They have one in Philadelphia called the palestra. It's where Temple University plays their basketball games and St. Joseph's in Philly.

And it's called the palestra because that was a place where they did wrestling, boxing, and that kind of combative sport. But the sport that they, when Paul used that word, it didn't mean, you know, boxing and like, come on, what you got and all that. It went way beyond that.

There were no rules. The people who did the palestra, this wrestling, they very rarely retired. They died while they were doing it because you could gouge an eye out, you could kick, you could scratch, you could bite.

In other words, no rules, total mayhem. And that's the word Paul uses. For our individual wrestling is not against flesh and blood.

It's against Satan. And then Paul says, it's these hosts that he has, which are demons. Now, if you're here today and you're very dubious about the existence of Satan, I just leave this with you.

Jesus not only believed in him, Jesus encountered him. There's an invisible entity called Satan, Lucifer, the devil, and under him are hosts of invisible evil spirits. And the Bible says here, principalities and powers, they have gradation of authority.

They have like the general and then colonels and then majors and all the rest, like in the army or in the Navy, admirals and commanders, down to lieutenant commanders, down to ensigns. And then you have the lower, just enlisted men. There's a whole demonic evil structure.

And let me just get to the point here. So what is their goal? We know that we're in a wrestling match. And this is why Christians get befuddled.

And like, I thought I was sold out to God. I just went to that prayer meeting. And then the next thing you know, my mind was assaulted.

I'm like, what would you think? Would you think there's a place in God where Satan won't attack? If he attacked Jesus, who are you? Who am I? And the main place he attacks is the mind. Because if he can get our mind on the junk and the wrong stuff, he's gonna get the will and the emotions and everything else. So the attack is in the mind.

So many people think they're not growing in God because Satan's attacking. And that's the proof they are growing in God. Or he wouldn't be attacking so much.

If we don't understand this, we'll think like, oh well, I thought I met God and I was in the heavenly places and all that stuff. Yeah, that's fine, enjoy that. But then when you come back down to earth, you're gonna have to fight the devil every day.

Come on, let's say amen to that. Every single day, every day, every hour. And notice here, what is his goal? His goal is, first of all, the obvious.

But maybe it's not so obvious. He wants to tempt you and me to sin, S-I-N, sin. He wants us to practice the things that Jesus died for and died to save us from.

He wants us to be immoral. He wants us to lie. He wants us to have prejudice.

He wants us to hate. He wants us to gossip. He wants us to steal.

He tempts us to do things that are contrary to what the Bible says Christ is like. The Holy Spirit's trying to make you and I like Jesus. How many wanna be more like Jesus? Lift up one hand.

Well, what would Satan be doing? The opposite. He wants to tempt us to sin, but then he goes further. He wants us to not only sin, he wants us then to practice those sins.

Then that's not enough. He wants us to practice those sins and defend those sins and rationalize that it's not even sin. So get it.

He wants us to sin. He wants me to sin. He wants me to practice that sin.

And God and the Spirit and the Word are working against that but Satan, he has devices, he has schemes. So we can stand against all the schemes of the devil. He has strategies.

He knows where you're weak. He knows your temperament. He knows your past.

He knows where you're vulnerable. He knows that what is a sweet spot in his life that he can attack, it's different for her, but then she's totally different than her and her. And he knows the time to attack, when to attack, after disappointment, when somebody insults you, temper, then he knows to suggest something and take that drink again.

My dad drank for 22 years, but he was a deacon of a church. What are you talking about? I don't understand a little bit about this. My dad used to drag me to church and then lost his job as a drunkard.

Do you think that was God's plan for his life? No. But just like God has a plan for your life, hello, Satan has a plan for your life. Satan has a plan for every one of our lives.

Boy, if that didn't make you call on God every day. So, these hosts, they're so difficult to fight, you need spiritual discernment because they're invisible. Flesh and blood, you know when the person walked in the room, but not a demon.

They even have doctrines, Paul tells us in another letter. Doctrines of demons. They'll come right in the church and get ministers to preach things that are not from the word of God, but come from demonic forces.

Doctrines of demons, right in the church, right with mentioning God. So, Paul says, in every area of your life, you have to be alert now because Satan's got a plan for your life, he's got all these hosts. The main place that he attacks, as I said, is our mind, usually, and he has an ally, and the inside, he's got an ally on the outside.

The ally that he has on the inside is our flesh, or our fallen nature, which we still have, even though now Christ lives in us, we still have a fallen nature, that self-nature, self-gratifying nature that only wants what it wants when it wants it. So, he appeals to that, otherwise he'd have nothing in there to appeal to. We all

know that.

How many are Christians and born again, but you understand the verse that means, but the flesh fights against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh? How many know what that means? Well, of course. Haven't you ever been in a conversation with people, and they're talking, they're going over a line now, they're talking about bad stuff, about other people who aren't present, and the Holy Spirit even whispers to you, don't say a word, don't you say a word. And then you talk.

What made you talk? Didn't God just warn us? Don't say a word, that's not what Jesus would do. What is that in us? Beside that ally that he tries to appeal to, but we have to mortify that by the spirit every day, he has the world. The world, in all of its glamor and glitz, the world, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the desires, and the pride of life, that's what the world is, and the whole culture we're around, the media, the television, the movies, the clubs, the music, the whole thing, does not appeal to your spiritual nature, it appeals to your flesh nature.

Did you ever notice how the girl was dressed when they're trying to sell the car? I thought it's about the car. Because Satan knows exactly how that works. And that's the battle we're all in.

That's why we have to love each other, encourage each other, because you have no idea what battles anyone's facing here. The goal is also not just to sin, and practice sin, and justify sin, it's to break your faith. Ultimately, he's after your faith.

And by the way, if you're here and you're parents, it's Father's Day, he's not only after you, he wants the children. He wants the children. So if you don't fight, not only are you gonna go down, most likely your kids will go down too.

Pastor Will, I didn't come to church to hear this kind of negative stuff. What do you want me to tell you? I only work here. The Bible says these things are true.

Come on, can we say amen to that? So listen, this is not negative, this is reality. That's like a doctor telling you, you know what? I just spotted, you got a spot on your lung. I don't wanna hear that.

All right, then don't hear about it, but you got a spot on your lung. And you don't deal with it, you're gonna have a problem. Okay? So, he wants to break your faith by distracting you, pointing out faults in others, faults in churches.

Oh, do I know this like the back of my hand and the pastors, Pastor Petri, Pastor Lincoln will tell you we know this. You know the people in your church, they're not real. All those West Indians, they hang together and they won't let me into their posse.

Oh. Why do you have your eyes on the people of this church? You have your eyes on me or anyone else in this universe you're heading toward trouble. Keeping our eyes on Jesus.

Come on, every day, every hour. My mind has been renewed enough that if I learn someone is struggling or has a problem or a new Christian goes back and takes a drink or gets high on something, I don't even react anymore. My heart used to beat and get, you know, like, what am I gonna do? And it's just like, another day, another problem.

We're involved in a war. He that covereth a multitude of mercies that God has for us every day, love covers a multitude of sins. You restore, if anyone's fallen, you that are spiritual, let them restore it and do it carefully because in restoring that fallen person, you might be tempted.

You might even hear their confession and it'll stir up something in you. Is this not true or is it true? So these are the realities of spiritual warfare. Now, it goes on to say that, put on the whole armor of God.

That's not a sermon for me today. I just want to bring this vital truth to you. Be encouraged.

You're in a fight. But greater is he that's in you than the one that's in the world. You think I just made that up? First John four, verse four, look at it.

Let's read it out loud. 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. So right now, living inside of all of us is the Holy Spirit, the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead.

The same power that God has when he spoke the world into existence. The same power that opened the Red Sea so the Israelites would cross. That same power is in all of us.

That's why the Bible says, notice, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. I want to declare this to all of you. You gotta be strong in the Lord and in his power.

You can't go to fight this enemy in your own strength. He's older than you, he's smarter than you, he has much more experience than you. Satan and all the demons of hell, you're gonna overcome them in your own strength because you've gone to church a couple years? No, you need the captain of the Lord's army on your side.

You need Jesus, come on, fighting with you, fighting for you, and he wants to, and he wants to. He has given us sufficient power to overcome the devil. First of all, as I close, you need the word of God every day because if Satan is gonna attack you in your mind, you gotta fill your mind with the word of God so that when Satan attacks, the word that's in your mind will push him back and say, that's a lie.

I know you, you liar, you're a liar. But if you're not in the word, you'll entertain those thoughts. Oh, she doesn't like me, I could tell.

All right, now here we go, now you're a victim. Now you're gonna have a pity party, and while you're having a pity party, he's gonna knock on your door with some other gifts for you. And it won't stop with just pity party.

And it's different strokes for different folks. That's not in the Bible, Muhammad Ali said that, but. And what that means is what one person's sin is not another.

So someone who's full of gossip and poison and acid and destroys churches, they look down on someone else who's strung out on crack and ew, or lives immoral lives, sleeps around, they look down at that. But they're just as much in need of help as that other person. Satan doesn't attack in that way.

So we can't look down on anybody. And here's what the Bible says, keep praying for each other, that God will keep everybody strong. Brothers and sisters, we gotta be strong.

I saw last night, just maybe it was meant to be, I saw something National Geographic, saw this female lion, an impala, a young impala, got separated from the herd. What a good lesson for us. Here's one of the things Satan wants to do.

Let me just make you stand. He doesn't want her praying in the choir. He wants to isolate her.

Because if he attacks and she's praying and singing, she'll be stronger. But if we can get her out here alone and there's nobody to help her, that's what happened to the impala. Poor little thing got separated from the herd.

So whenever you hear people say, I'm not going back to any church and all of that, it's the devil. Has nothing to do with the church, had nothing to do with the people. They might have done wrong, but it's not the people, it's the devil.

We don't wrestle against flesh and blood. People aren't your problems, your mother-in-law's not your problem. Oh, she is? I didn't know that.

That just destroyed my sermon. You know what I'm saying, right? So now she's isolated. And they jumped this impala.

It was hard. I talked to my grandson yesterday. He's going to Kenya, Luke.

And he talked to some people in Bermuda who are gonna go with him on a mission trip with kids. And they said, you don't wanna go out on a safari and you wanna see those animals attack them. People wanna see that, see a kill, a lion kill.

They say when you hear those animals groan, when you see them getting their life choked out of them because they go right for the windpipe, they say it is not pretty, it's not exciting. Even the guides say, we don't wanna go out. We like to see them roaming around, but attacking.

They look for weakness. They look for people that are young. They look for isolated things.

And no holds barred. If you think Satan has any feelings, I wanna declare to you, zero. No compassion, no empathy.

No, but he would never do that to my son. He'll do that and more. It's just the way he is.

But we're not ignorant of his devices. So we're gonna be strong. One last verse, and this is why God's house should be called a house of prayer.

Look at the passage in that same, the ending of this. And pray in the spirit on all occasions. This is in the same chapter, the end of the armor of God.

Pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. And with this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Because they're under attack.

Because they're going through things. Don't judge them, don't look down on them. Do you know what they're going through? Do you know the invisible things coming in their mind? Do you know the discouragement they're trying to fight off? Do you know the scars from abuse or whatever that Satan's trying to use to get and bitter them? Nobody knows what anyone's going through.

That's why the Bible says my house shall be called a house of prayer. Pray in the spirit, let the spirit guide you. Everybody join hands with the person next to you.

Put your Bibles down, join hands. Pray for the person on your right now. Bow your head and pray for the person on your right.

Pray out loud, pray, God, strengthen them, hold them, God. Let them resist the devil, let them be strong in the spirit, in the power of your might. Greater is he that's in us than the one that's in the world.

Pray for that person on your right. Whoever they are, you don't know them, but the Satan knows them, he wants to attack them. Pray for the person on your left now.

Come on, lift your voice and pray. Pray for the person on your left. If you know them, call their name out to God.

God, strengthen her, help her, help him, strengthen him. Don't let Satan pull him back. Don't let Satan pull her back.

Keep her faith strong. Keep her in the light. Keep her walking pure and holy, Lord.

Ajuda nos, Senhor. Ajuda nos, Senhor. Lord, thank you for your word to us.

Some are promises, and then some are warnings with promises. This is educational, it reminds us of the battle we're all in. So we don't need to panic when the enemy tries to come in like a flood.

This is part of being a Christian. But thank you for the promise that greater is he that's in us. That in communion with you, through prayer, we can be strong and have incredible power to resist the devil.

We don't have to be victims. We can be more than conquerors. We are more than conquerors through Christ.

Help us to live that out. And Lord, I pray against one thing today that I think you brought to my heart. Let a spirit of offense be broken in people's lives here today.

Offended, whether rightly or wrongly, whether it was meant or not meant to be. But God, the whole world has a spirit of offense. Everyone's offended, everyone's screaming and yelling, and it's ugly.

Help us to be different, because we're your people. We're your children. Help us to be full of mercy and patience and love and kindness.

Help us to forgive one another even as we have been forgiven by you, Jesus. Keep us together, keep us strong. Help us to keep praying for one another.

Holy Spirit, if any one of our members gets under attack, wake somebody up in the middle of the night if you have to so we can pray, Lord. We can pray for one another, love one another. We ask these blessings in Jesus' name.

And everyone said? Amen. Would you please turn around and hug somebody? Give someone a handshake or a hug. God bless you.

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