

A black and white photograph of a woman with her hands clasped in prayer, looking down at an open book. The image is soft and slightly out of focus, creating a contemplative atmosphere. The woman's hands are clasped together in front of her face, and she is looking down at an open book resting on a surface in front of her. The background is bright and hazy, suggesting a window or a bright light source.

Prayer and Spiritual Warfare

Experiencing the Presence and Power of God

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PREFACE

We live in a day when few people believe that spiritual warfare is real. We know that there are 'forces' of 'good' and 'bad,' but most people hesitate to believe that Satan is an actual entity. When it comes to 'good' and 'evil' we prefer to embrace the 'Star Wars' mentality of a metaphysical, ubiquitous power in the universe.

Yet, God has told us that the spiritual battle is very real, and that Satan is a viable adversary. We are living in the last days before Jesus' victorious return to Earth. The Lord has told us that our enemy, the devil, is well aware of his impending doom and that as a result he will 'turn up the heat' on God's children (*Revelation 12:12*).

The Lord urges us to 'not be ignorant' of Satan's schemes (*II Corinthians 2:11*), and He exhorts us to 'stand firm' and 'resist in the evil day' (*Ephesians 6:11, 13*). God has already assured our victory and He has given us everything that we need to experience overwhelming triumph in our lives (*II Peter 1:3*).

The problem is that few Christians understand the scope of the battle and how to effectively fight in this conflict. We know that we should pray; but we don't know how to pray with power. We understand that we should 'fight;' but we don't know what that means.

There are many books available on spiritual warfare and prayer, yet there are few Bible studies that take the student directly into the Word of God to discover truth for himself. This 8-week study was written for that purpose. Our goal is to help prepare and equip believers on a very practical level to 'fight the good fight' in their daily lives (*II Timothy 4:7*).

Let's experience what Jesus has already given to us; for we are MORE than conquerors through Christ who loves us (*Romans 8:37*)!

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Chapter I **We're at War!**

*“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.”
(Ephesians 6:12)*

Day One - Kingdoms in Conflict

It all started in eternity past. The war began long before we humans were created. Today, the conflict continues.

Most Christians are oblivious to the threat of mortal combat that is going on around them. The truth is that there is a battle raging around us constantly. Every human being is involved in this warfare whether he is aware of it or not.

There are two opposing powers in this conflict of Good versus evil.

Scripture indicates that God Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, created angels before He made the earth (*Job 38:6, 7*). These angels were spirit beings, not possessing bodies of flesh and bone (*Hebrews 1:13, 14; Matthew 22:30*), but they did possess intellect (*II Samuel 14:20*) and the ability to communicate (*Genesis 19:1, 2*). They were more powerful than the other kinds of created beings (*II Peter 2:11*).

Certain angels were made superior in intelligence, power, and authority over others (*Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16; Daniel 10:13*). The Bible does not reveal exactly how many angels God created, but it does mention one hundred million plus thousands of thousands more (*Daniel 7:10; Revelation 5:11; Hebrews 12:22*).

At some point in eternity past, one of the highest-ranking angels became so proud of his great intelligence and powers that he deceived himself into thinking that he could establish his own kingdom and overthrow the sovereign rule of God (*I Timothy 3:6; perhaps Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:11-17*). This angel hoped to destroy the kingdom of God and thus become the king himself.

When this angel rebelled against God, his name was changed to ‘Satan,’ which means ‘adversary.’

Satan recruited a vast army of angels to join in his rebellion against God (*Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:7*), and he became the prince, or ruler, of these fallen demon-angels (*Matthew 12:24-26*). Those multitude of angels remaining faithful to the kingdom of God are called the 'holy' and 'elect' angels (*Mark 8:38; I Timothy 5:21*) over whom God is Lord of hosts (*Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 31:35*).

While God Almighty is the sovereign 'eternal King' and the 'only God' (*I Timothy 1:17*), He allows Satan to exist and has given him limited and temporary power on Earth (*Job 1:12*). Satan continues to be the enemy of God and of every member of God's kingdom (*Matthew 13:28, 29; Luke 10:18, 19*).

1. John 12:31; 14:30; and 16:11

What did Jesus call Satan?

2. I John 5:19

How much of the world lies in the power of the evil one?

Do you believe that statement?

3. Luke 4:5-8

What did Satan offer to give to Jesus if He would worship him?

Did Jesus refute Satan's authority to legitimately offer such a thing?

What does that tell you?

The conflict of the ages is being waged both in the heavens and on the earth (*Revelation 12:7, 13, 17*). Scripture is God's written revelation to man, and it deals primarily with the earthly phase of this conflict that we are facing today.

4. Ephesians 6:12

According to this passage, what are we NOT struggling against?

What are the four specific things that we ARE struggling against?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

All of the four terms mentioned above refer to the ranks of those 'evil angels' who aligned themselves in Satan's camp.

This battle between Good and evil can be seen throughout the span of world history. The stories and folklore from every culture resonate with the truth of this battle. The triumph of Good over evil is the formula for the tales most loved by all of humanity. If we flip to the last pages of our favorite story books we look forward to reading those words of hope ... 'and they lived happily ever after.' Happy endings are the deep cry of the human heart!

In our lives today we find ourselves immersed in a battle where there are kingdoms in conflict. We sense that there is a battle being waged in our daily lives and we wonder 'what on earth is happening.' Praise God, He has already written the whole story down for us! In the Bible our Creator has even told us how the story ends.

5. John 12:31

What will happen to the 'ruler of this world?'

As a matter of fact, Jesus tells us that the 'ruler of this world' has already been judged (*John 16:11*). If we flip to the last pages of God's Book we indeed read the wonderful words of promise that the Lord Himself will deal with this adversary and he will be 'thrown into the lake of fire' forever (*Revelation 20:10*).

6. Ephesians 1:20, 21

Where is Jesus right now?

Jesus is already 'far above' what specific entities?

7. I Peter 3:22

What entities have already been subjected to Christ?

In this story of the ages the Lord not only promises that Good triumphs in the end; He announces that the victory is already a 'done deal'! We also read in the Bible that He even promises our 'happily ever after' with Him (*Matthew 25:34*).

The question for us is Even though we know the end of the story, how do we live in victory during these days of warfare in which we find ourselves?

CONSIDER:

As you picked up this study book and saw the title, 'Prayer and Spiritual Warfare' what thoughts went through your mind?

In the space below, describe what prompted you to study this material, and what you hope to gain through this Bible study.

In the coming days we will be looking more closely at these issues and growing in our confidence as we learn how to identify the enemy at work and experience the victory that Jesus has promised in our lives!

*"You are from God, little children, and have overcome them;
because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."*

1 John 4:4

Day Two - Choosing Sides

Yesterday we saw that there are two opposing kingdoms in existence on Earth. Satan's kingdom (*Luke 11:18*) constantly fights against the kingdom of God (*Luke 4:43*). Satan is a finite creature. God is the infinite, eternal, sovereign Creator of all.

In the first chapters of the Bible we read that when Adam chose to follow Satan rather than God (*Genesis 3:6*), the entire human race became sinners (*Romans 5:12*). Every single human being is born a sinner (*Romans 3:23*) and is born into Satan's kingdom on Earth (*Ephesians 2:1, 2*). Scripture says that before coming to Christ we were 'enemies' of God (*Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21; James 4:4*).

No sooner had Satan lured man into joining his ranks than God promised to send a Redeemer (*Genesis 3:15*).

1. Romans 6:23

What will people experience as a result of their sin?

What free gift does God offer?

2. Galatians 1:4

What did Jesus do for us?

3. Colossians 2:13-15

How did God legally pay for the debt of sin that we owe? (*verses 13, 14*)

What entities are now disarmed and openly shamed because of the Redeemer? (*verse 15*)

4. Colossians 1:12-14

What is Satan's kingdom called?

What is God's kingdom called?

When Jesus met Paul on that road to Damascus, He gave Paul a specific assignment.

5. Acts 26:18

What is it that Jesus wants people to turn to?

- That they may turn from _____ to _____.
- And from the power of _____ to _____.

What two things do we receive when we change alliances and turn to God?

The greatest question of each man's life is whether or not he will remain in the camp of the enemy, or whether he will join the kingdom of God. We either remain where we are born with the darkness, or we can change our allegiance.

6. John 1:12

What must we do to become children of God?

Believing in Jesus Christ involves more than mental acknowledgement (*James 2:19*); it involves embracing Him in every area of our lives. God has given us the choice of joining the mighty army of light (*Colossians 1:12*). All people must choose sides in this spiritual war. The stakes are high; they have eternal consequences.

CONSIDER:

As we looked at the two kingdoms in conflict today we must ask ourselves, 'which side am I on?' Have you made the decision to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and join the kingdom of God? If so, briefly describe how you came to know Jesus as Lord.

If you have not yet met Jesus personally, you can do it right now. On page 181 in the back of this study book you will find Scripture to lead you in "Becoming a Follower of Christ."

If you do know Jesus as your Savior, when was the last time that you thanked Him for paying the price so that you could become a child of God? Spend some time today in prayer thanking the Lord for all that He has done for you.

Day Three - The Enemy

God tells us that Satan was originally created as a wise and beautiful angel named Lucifer (*Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:12-15*). This angel apparently served in the very court of God until pride rose in his heart (*Ezekiel 28:15-18*).

1. **Isaiah 14:12-15**

What five things did Satan decide in his heart that he wanted to do?

1. I will _____
2. I will _____
3. I will _____
4. I will _____
5. I will _____

After his rebellion against God, the Lord changed 'Lucifer's' name to 'Satan;' which means 'adversary.' Satan was cast out of heaven (*Ezekiel 28:16*) to become 'the god of this world' (*II Corinthians 4:4*). By God's decree he dominates this present era as 'the ruler of this age' (*John 12:31*).

He also has many other titles. Note how these descriptive names reveal something about his character and tactics.

I Peter 5:8 – your adversary

Revelation 12:10 – the accuser of the brethren

Revelation 12:9 – the deceiver

Revelation 9:11 – the destroyer

John 17:15 – the evil one

John 8:44 – the liar– the murderer

Ephesians 2:2 – the prince of the power of the air

Matthew 4:3 – the tempter

Ephesians 6:11 – devil (This term literally means, 'slanderer')

In addition to the above descriptors, this adversary is referred to in Scripture as being a 'serpent' (*Genesis 4:3; Revelation 12:9*) and a 'dragon' (*Revelation 12:3*).

The enemy's original name was 'Lucifer,' which means 'the shining one.' As our enemy, we see that Satan continues to disguise himself as an 'angel of light' in an effort to deceive people (*II Corinthians 11:14*). God has allowed him to have a limited degree of power and the ability to perform 'signs and false wonders' (*II Thessalonians 2:9*).

Even though we know that Satan has power, the Lord heartily assures us that 'greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world' (*I John 4:4*). Satan's doom and judgment was sealed at the cross of Christ (*John 12:31-33*). Yet we see that our adversary continues to be very busy on planet earth today.

2. Job 1:7

What does Satan tell God that he has been doing?

During this first chapter of Job we learn quite a bit about the nature of spiritual warfare. Satan roams the earth but apparently he has access to speak with God when granted permission. In Job 1:6 we read about one specific time when Satan was called to 'present' himself before the Lord.

In verse 7 the Lord initiates a conversation with Satan. In this conversation we see that God points out Job as being a 'blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil' (*1:8*). Apparently, Satan is very aware of the details regarding Job's life. He recognizes Job's righteous heart for the Lord. Yet, Satan accuses Job of only loving God because the Lord protects and blesses him.

Satan maintains that if God were to stop blessing Job with success and riches, that Job would in turn curse God.

3. Job 1:12

From what Source does Satan get permission to intervene in Job's life?

Is the permission granted to Satan limited in any way?

If so, how is Satan's power limited in regards to Job?

Our enemy is a defeated foe who is operating on a short leash. Nothing can touch our lives without first having God's direct permission. We can be confident that God is the sovereign ruler of all.

4. Romans 8:38, 39

What does this passage tell you about spiritual warfare?

How might this encourage you personally?

CONSIDER:

As you looked up the Scriptures in our study today, were there any that stood out as especially surprising or noteworthy to you? If so, note those in the space below.

Personally, I don't like to think about the enemy; I don't want to focus on him. I would rather keep my focus completely on my great Lord and Savior, wouldn't you? Our eternal victory has already been secured! But throughout Scripture we see that God wants us to 'recognize' our enemy so that we can understand how to experience victory in our daily lives.

Let's keep our eyes on Jesus and in the coming weeks we'll see the Lord develop our discernment and wisdom as we look more deeply into the whole of His holy Word.

Day Four – The Invisible War

Yesterday we learned that Satan is a real created entity who has been given temporary and limited power by God. His current domain is the Earth. Though Satan has already been judged and God will totally end his rule and rebellion in the future (*Revelation 20:10*), this present age is one of spiritual warfare.

We know that Satan 'roams the earth' today (*Job 1:7*). Since we live here it behooves us to know what he is up to.

1. I Peter 5:8

Why is our adversary prowling around?

In light of this verse, how should we be living?

Most people today are unaware that there is even a war going on. Oh, we know that life can get 'challenging' at times, and we recognize that there is 'good' and 'bad' around us, but we don't tend to take it very seriously.

We see cartoon depictions of the devil in a little red suit sporting horns and carrying a pitchfork; children dress up like him for costume parties; and television shows and Hollywood movies treat Satan as a tongue-in-cheek 'kill-joy.' We joke about our sin saying that 'the devil made me do it' and laughingly comment that someone 'will have the devil to pay' for their mistakes.

In our contemporary culture we have difficulty believing that Satan is a serious enemy. It is hard to 'be of sober spirit and on the alert' when we fail to recognize the life-and-death threat of the 'prowling lion.'

2. II Corinthians 4:4

What does Satan do to the minds of unbelievers?

Not only does the 'ruler of this age' deceive those who are born into the kingdom of darkness, he also realizes that if he can keep Christians unaware, or in denial, of the battle that rages around us we will also be blinded to our need to walk closely with the Lord.

While most self-described Christians say that they believe that the Bible is the literal and accurate Word of God; only one out of four of Christians today believe that Satan is an actual, created, living being. They view him as being a rather innocuous negative impulse rather than as one who is seeking to 'devour them.'

The majority of Christians in America today find it easier to believe in a 'force' of evil, than to consider the reality of a tangible diabolical enemy. (*George Barna Survey; April 10, 2009*)

But the truth is that once we have been 'rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred' to the kingdom of Christ (*Colossians 1:13*), we are on the 'front lines' of the battle of the ages. Today, though we live in a world where Satan temporarily rules, redeemed humans do not belong to that world (*John 17:14-18; Hebrews 11:13*). If we remain blinded to the reality of the spiritual warfare surrounding us we will be handicapped in the battle.

During the next eight weeks our goal is to become more aware and better equipped to “fight the good fight” (*I Timothy 6:12*).

Paul prays that “the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe” (*Ephesians 1:18, 19*). As believers, we need the eyes of our hearts to be opened. The truth is that we are involved in a supernatural war that we cannot win on our own strength.

The Old Testament prophet Elisha certainly understood the nature of the battle that he was in. At one point he was being chased by a whole enemy army that surrounded the town in which he was staying during the night. Elisha’s assistant woke up in the morning, saw the troops circling the city, and he became paralyzed with fear.

3. **II Kings 6:13-17**

What did the servant say to Elisha?

What did Elisha say to his servant?

What did Elisha ask the Lord to do for his servant?

What do you think that the servant saw in verse 17?

Like Elisha's servant, our vision is limited to seeing only the physical realities around us until God opens our spiritual eyes. When we are only able to look at the visible challenges in our lives we can easily become fearful. Yet, true reality exists in what is unseen (*II Corinthians 4:18*). The warfare around us is very real, but as children of God, “those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” We have been given the great Advantage.

Not only is the enemy’s power temporary and limited,

- we have been issued surpassing weapons of warfare (*II Corinthians 10:4*),
- the enemy’s tactics and strategies have already been divulged to us in the Book (*II Corinthians 2:11*),
- God sends His angels as ‘ministering spirits’ to assist us (*Hebrews 1:14*),
- and we have the mighty power of the holy living God Personally indwelling us (*Ephesians 1:19*)!

Immediately after Peter tells us that we should be sober in spirit because Satan is seeking to devour us, Peter goes on to explain more about what we are to do.

4. I Peter 5:9

Yes, we are the 'resistance.' Our victory is secured. But we must fight!

CONSIDER:

Check the statement(s) below that best describes how you honestly think of 'the devil.'

- I believe that 'the devil' is not a real creature; that term only describes a type of negative force in the universe.
- I really don't believe that there is such a thing as 'the devil.' That term is the invention of uneducated, simple people who live in fear of the unknown.
- I think that 'the devil' is a real, literal being who is the enemy of God and of God's people.
- 'The devil' isn't real; it's a made-up concept so that people can blame someone else when things go wrong in life.

Do you think that it is important for you to have an accurate view of 'the enemy?'
Why, or why not?

Spend some time today asking the Lord to "open the eyes of your heart" so that you can more clearly see the surpassing power of Jesus.

Day Five - Chain of Command

As we begin to talk about created spiritual beings it is crucial that we have a clear view of the 'chain of command' in Creation. The Lord has a perfect and well-ordered plan that is being worked out throughout Earth history that transcends time.

As Christians we are soldiers of Christ with Jesus as the 'Commander of the Lord's army' (*Joshua 5:15*). We confidently follow Him knowing that He is in total control, nothing takes Him by surprise, and no power exists except by His holy decree.

As His children we have nothing to fear because our loving God is using everything to accomplish His purposes.

1. Colossians 1:16

Who created all of the various spiritual entities?

Why did He create them?

2. Colossians 2:10

Who is the ultimate head of all spiritual entities?

3. I Chronicles 29:11

Over what specific things does God have dominion?

God is the "eternal King" and the "only God" (*I Timothy 1:17*). The Lord not only created all spiritual beings, He controls every one of them. Jesus disarmed all of the principalities and powers at the cross (*Colossians 2:15*), but He continues to allow them to exist today

4. I Corinthians 15:24

What happens to the adversary's angelic army at the end of world history?

So the question for us today is why would the Lord, the head of all things, allow evil to continue to exist today? Surely He has a plan, an eternal purpose, to all that He is doing on earth right now. Why would He place us in a situation where there is continual spiritual warfare?

Paul addresses this question in Ephesians 3:9 when he says that his personal message is to "make all men see what is the **plan of the mystery hidden for ages** in God who created all things." Paul states that this message is so important that it is part of "**the eternal purpose** which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord" (3:11).

So what is this 'mystery' that was hidden in past ages?

5. Ephesians 3:10

What 'mystery' does Paul want to make known

What specific group does God work through in order to display this mystery?

Who is the intended 'target audience' of this heretofore 'mystery?'

It is mind-boggling to consider that right now as we are living, all of the spiritual forces in Creation are observing God's wisdom being played out through our lives.

6. I Corinthians 4:9

Paul has concluded that God has put the apostles on display to certain groups. What is the 'target audience' of this display?

We generally understand that other people are watching our lives. But rarely do we consider the fact that the spiritual forces (both good and evil) are observing our lives. In Daniel 4:17 we read that there are 'angelic watchers.' Even though the angels know how the 'story' ends regarding this spiritual battle in which we live today, we're told that they are intrigued by how we Christians display the wisdom of God Himself.

While we know that all angels understand that God is sovereign – it seems to be that the depth of God's grace and love is what amazes them as they watch our planet.

7. I Peter 1:12

What is the specific thing "into which angels long to look?"

Apparently, the vast depth of God's love and grace as evidenced when He gave His own Son, the 'darling of heaven,' is something that continues to mystify the angels. They are amazed at the story of the gospel.

8. Romans 5:8

How did God demonstrate His love for us?

The book of Ephesians is profoundly tantalizing when it comes to considering what is going on in time and eternity - past, present and future - as we read that "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him" (1:4).

God always wanted us to be His holy people – even before the world was created He had you and me in His mind! And what was it that motivated God? In Ephesians God goes out of His way to explain that

- The Lord acts based on "the **kind intention** of His will" (1:5, 9)
- He is "rich in **mercy** because of His **great love** with which He **loved us**" (2:4).

- He has predestined us “**in love**” (1:4, 5).

It was God’s **love** and the **kind motive and intention** of His heart and will that He has done everything. Apparently, it is very important to God that we know that He is kind, merciful and loves us lavishly! And it brings the Lord Jesus Christ great glory in heaven when all creation sees us trusting His goodness and love while we live by faith, fighting the good fight by faith on Earth.

How we live plays a crucial role in the story of the ages.

During our lives here on earth we are being given “knowledge of Him” (*Ephesians 1:17*) as we experience His saving power in our lives (*1:19*). In response to God’s great love, we walk in love (*5:2*) while doing the “good works that He prepared” in eternity past for each one of us to specifically do (*2:10*). Yet, there is a continual tug-of-war in our lives as to whom we will choose to follow in our daily lives.

We children of God demonstrate His love; and verify our love for Him; when we walk by faith.

9. I Timothy 6:12

What kind of a ‘good fight’ are we to be fighting?

10. II Timothy 2:3, 4.

What army had Timothy joined?

Have you joined this army?

What kind of soldier does Paul exhort Timothy to become?

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to deliver us from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Christ (*Galatians 1:4; Colossians 1:13*). When an individual receives Jesus as Savior, that person instantly becomes a permanent member of God’s family (*John 1:12, 13*).

Every individual on Earth is involved in the spiritual warfare of this life, and all have chosen which side they are on in the battle. As Christians we are soldiers of Christ with Jesus as the ‘Commander of the Lord’s army’ (*Joshua 5:15*). We pledge allegiance to the Sovereign God, marching under His flag (*Psalms 60:4; Song of Solomon 2:4*).

The question that we all have to answer as believers is whether or not we will become "good soldiers of Christ Jesus" or poor soldiers (*II Timothy 2:3*). What kind of soldier do you want to be?

CONSIDER:

As every soldier knows, it takes 'training' to become 'fit for battle.' In Second Timothy 3:16 and 17 we read that

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Scripture is what 'trains' us to become 'good soldiers of Christ' who are 'equipped' for what He has for our lives. Being together in this Bible study will help us to become more fit for service and for battle.

In the space below, write out a prayer to the Lord committing yourself to His army as a "good soldier of Christ." Ask Him to train you to be useful in His kingdom and trust Him to use His Word to prepare you to "fight the good fight of faith."

Chapter 2

Be Strong in the Lord

*Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.”
(Ephesians 6:10)*

Day One – Who Do You Trust?

From Genesis through Revelation we read about the spiritual battle that is taking place on planet Earth. Since time began this battle rages between Satan’s ‘kingdom of darkness’ and Almighty God’s ‘kingdom of light.’ At birth, every human being is automatically a member of Satan’s kingdom and is by nature an enemy of God.

The good news is that God loves us so much that He sent a Redeemer to purchase us for Himself. Scripture tells us that the moment that we receive this Redeemer, Jesus Christ, as our personal Savior, we become ‘born again’ as eternal members of God’s family. As a child of God our allegiance has changed and we instantly become an enemy of the ‘adversary.’

Every person is engaged in spiritual warfare; and every Christian is on the front lines of the conflict.

Have you ever been aware of a specific time when you sensed that you were in a spiritual battle? If so, in the space below briefly describe the **most recent time** when you realized that you were fighting a spiritual battle.

Most of us relegate ‘spiritual warfare’ solely to ‘big’ things. We assume that spiritual battles involve grandiose conflict. We think about how the shepherd boy David fought Goliath (*I Samuel 17*) – now THAT was a ‘spiritual battle;’ right? And what about the time that Elijah called fire from heaven to consume God’s enemies – THAT was certainly ‘spiritual warfare’ (*II Kings 1:10*).

We tend to look at the challenges in our lives and rate them on a scale from one to ten much like the scale below.

<i>simple</i>		<i>difficult</i>		<i>hard</i>		<i>improbable</i>		<i>impossible</i>	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

The spiritual battles around us often go unnoticed because we think that the real battles involve God’s intervention in situations that we think qualify as being ‘impossible’. We look for those times when we are ‘facing Goliath,’ when the Red Sea has to part or when we have to walk on water. When we don’t see those dramatic events happening in our daily lives we sense that we can handle things and assume that we are not involved in warfare.

Yet, here in Ephesians, Paul says that the most mundane events of our daily routine lives are supernaturally intertwined with spiritual issues of eternal weight and significance. He speaks about the ‘ages to come’ (2:7) in the same breath as exhorting us to avoid ‘obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking” (5:4). Just prior to speaking of spiritual warfare he discusses our relationships in the home and in the workplace. He points out that the seemingly mundane issues of life are inexorably and mysteriously connected to great spiritual victory.

Spiritual warfare permeates all of our lives; the mundanely ‘simple’ events of our lives as well as the dramatically ‘impossible’ situations that we may face. We need to be aware that we are in a battle.

As he concludes his letter, Paul brings everything together and directly addresses the topic of spiritual warfare. But before he begins to elaborate on the spiritual battles in which we are all embroiled, he begins with a strong exhortation.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.” (6:10)

Paul understands that once he begins to shine a light directly on the spiritual war raging around us we may be naturally tempted to respond in two dangerously destructive ways.

- On one hand we may become fearful and fall into retreat;
- while on the other extreme we may become galvanized to fight the battle using our own natural strength.

When Paul urges us to “be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might,” he is assuring us that we have the strength of God Himself fighting on our behalf. In an effort to dispel any fear that we may have, Paul wants us to grasp the assurance of victory that is ours through the power of the Lord in our lives.

The fact that Paul commands us to “be strong in the Lord” implies that we have a choice to make about HOW we will be strong as we fight our spiritual battles. Will we rely on the Lord’s strength? Or will we instead rely on our own strength?

1. II Chronicles 32:7, 8

What does King Hezekiah exhort his people NOT to do when facing the enemy?

According to **verse 8**, what kind of strength did the enemy have?

Hezekiah encouraged his people to be strong and courageous. Why did he think that they had every reason to be bold as they saw the enemy approaching?

As the people listened to their king they made the choice to take courage because they understood that the Lord was with them and He was going to fight their battles. The same is true for Christians today. Before His birth Jesus was given the name ‘Emmanuel’ which literally means; ‘God with us’ (*Matthew 1:23*), and before ascending to heaven He told us that He would ‘never leave us or forsake us’ (*Hebrews 13:5*).

Like Hezekiah’s army we Christians today know that “with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.” Surely every Christian would choose to be “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” rather than trusting in an “arm of flesh.”

Using the present tense Paul tells us to *continually* be strong by relying on the Lord’s strength. Apparently, the decision to “be strong in the Lord” is one that we need to make every single day.

King Asa was a godly man. We’re told that he “did good and right in the sight of the Lord his God” (*II Chronicles 14:2*).

2. II Chronicles 14:9-11

On whose strength did Asa rely?

What was the outcome of the battle?

Asa certainly understood that the Lord's strength was essential to victory. Yet, years later we read that King Asa was once again faced with another threatening enemy.

3. II Chronicles 16:1-9

On whose strength did Asa rely this time?

What was the outcome of the battle?

According to verse 9, what kind of a person is the Lord searching for?

What does God promise to do for the person who fits this description?

King Asa had obviously changed over the years. What do you imagine might have motivated him to change his battle tactics over time?

What warning might this give to you about your own life?

King Asa used human tactics to win in the conflict with the enemy. While the Lord did indeed allow Asa to win the battle, we see that the victory was not complete. It was a superficial win since the enemy king escaped with his life to fight another day. Also, as a result of Asa's choice to trust in strength other than God's, he was told that there would more wars in the future.

CONSIDER:

In **Ephesians 6:10** we are exhorted to be continually strong in the Lord's power. Do you ever feel like you're trying to fight the battles of life on your own strength?

When King Asa was threatened, he became fearful and tried to manipulate his circumstances by making a treaty with an enemy. Think about how you respond to the challenges in your life.

- Do you ever find yourself trying to control the situation by manipulating the circumstances and people around you?
- Have you ever made a 'treaty' with the 'enemy' by compromising on something that you knew you should not have done....(even 'small' compromises)?