

Theme: Spiritual warfare is Satan's ongoing war against God, His purposes, and His people, and every Christian and church is part of this warfare.

I. Intro - Screwtape Letters

- A. Fictional work by CS Lewis - senior demon giving advice to a junior demon on how to wage war against a human
- B. Many incredible insights into how temptation, spiritual growth, and spiritual warfare work
- C. In preface Lewis observes importance of balance here
There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.
- D. Materialist/naturalist danger is far greater for us today
- E. Much of the work of the demons in the book is behind the scenes - not noticed to be spiritual warfare
- F. What is spiritual warfare? Why is it important?

II. The Reality of Spiritual Warfare

- A. Spiritual warfare is real
¹¹ Put on the full **armor** of God so that you can take your **stand** against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our **struggle** is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ 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**. Ephesians 6:11-13
1. Battle terms - armor, stand your ground, struggle

2. These terms point to spiritual warfare
3. This is not just metaphor - spiritual warfare existed before human, physical warfare!
 - a. Satan had rebelled against God and begun the warfare before humans even existed
 - b. Humans became part of spiritual warfare in the Garden, long before human warfare existed
 - c. Spiritual warfare is Satan's ongoing war against God, His purposes, and His people, and every Christian and church is part of this warfare.
 - d. Spiritual warfare is the prior, deeper reality of which human warfare is only a distorted shadow
- B. Satan and his forces are after every Christian & church
For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12
 1. This is 'our struggle' - not just a select few
 2. Whole passage addressed to entire local church
 3. Our enemy is Satan and his forces - not humans
 4. Put on armor, stand your ground (vv11,13) - Satan is coming after you so you better be ready
 5. This is also seen elsewhere - 1 Peter 5:8-9; James 4:7-10; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5
 6. There is no spiritual Switzerland, a person or church not swept up into the spiritual war that engulfs the whole world.
 7. No one escapes from this warfare - so we better be prepared

III. The Nature of Spiritual Warfare

A. Spiritual warfare is spiritual

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12

1. Our enemy is not people or powers of this world, but Satan and his forces
2. Christians must not be lulled into thinking in materialistic, naturalistic terms
 - a. Marital struggles are often due to the attack of Satan
 - b. Relational conflict is often due to the attack of Satan
 - c. Our struggle with sin is often due to the attack of Satan and his strongholds in our life
 - d. Problems besetting a family or church are often related to spiritual attack, and we ignore this at our peril
 - e. Not always, but sometimes even physical sickness or financial problems are due to spiritual attack
3. Many Christians live as practical atheists, seeing life's events as merely natural, with no spiritual cause or meaning - this is disastrous.
4. Christians who live as practical atheists try to fight spiritual war with worldly wisdom and weapons - and are routed by Satan.
5. Next week we will look at how we engage in spiritual warfare more closely - but first we must realize that we are part of a cosmic spiritual warfare and not live as practical atheists

B. Spiritual warfare includes physical aspects & outcomes

1. We are not Gnostic! Spiritual and physical can be distinguished but never divided!
2. Spiritual warfare here included Paul's bold speech¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. Eph 6:19-20
 - a. This spiritual warfare had a physical goal - bold physical proclamation of the Gospel
 - b. Spiritual warfare engages our entire being - body and soul; mind, will, & emotions, & includes both spiritual practices & physical actions
 - c. Spiritual warfare will alter spiritual realities and will have visible, physical effects
 1. The spiritual power causing relational conflict is broken, and peace returns to the relationship
 2. The power enslaving us is broken, and we are able to take steps to walk in righteousness - we no longer live in that sin

C. Spiritual warfare is individual and corporate

- Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. Ephesians 6:11
1. We are commanded to gear up for warfare
 2. Armor is worn by individuals - not the whole group
 3. But the commands are plural - addressed to group
 4. Roman armor only worked if you fought as a group
 5. *Gladiator* scene - importance of fighting as group

6. Satan attacks individuals, families, & churches - and we must fight as individuals, families & as a church
7. We will be having an evening of worship and prayer for spiritual warfare on Friday, July 21 (and more!)

D. Spiritual warfare is both **defensive** and **offensive**

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.** ¹⁴ **Stand firm then**, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place... Take the helmet of salvation and **the sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God. Eph 6:13–14, 17

1. Stand - picture is unit withstanding attack
2. The armor protects us from enemy assault
3. But after repelling attack, the unit goes on offense
4. The sword is used to attack, not just defend

³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3–5

1. The picture here is us being on offense - destroying Satan's strongholds
2. We are not just defending - we are taking captives
3. Similar to Matthew 16:18 - gates of hell will not stand before the church

4. This means our spiritual warfare, prayers, and service are not just defensive, but rather go on the offensive.
5. We are not just praying to maintain where we are - we want Jesus to increase the kingdom in us, our family, our church, our city, the world.
6. More on this next week

IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do I understand the reality of spiritual warfare?
 1. Scripture is full of spiritual warfare - it is very real
 2. Do I live as a Christian or a practical atheist?
 3. Do I realize Satan is real, and that he wants to steal, kill, and destroy every good thing I have and love?
 4. When problems arise, do I consider spiritual causes - or just natural ones?
 5. Do I turn to God in serious prayer for family, work, relational, financial, or health issues - or just seek a 'natural' solution?
 6. Do I do spiritual warfare prayer for BRCC? The people of BRCC? The church and its mission?
 7. Please plan to be here on Friday July 21
- B. A time of spiritual warfare prayer
 1. BRCC is in a time of increased spiritual attack
 - a. Physical sicknesses and attacks
 - b. Family and relational pressures and strains

- c. Increased temptation and struggles with sin
- 2. Many of us have sensed this and have already been engaging in spiritual warfare
- 3. We need to join in prayer for one another and the church
- 4. Closing prayer for BRCC

Understanding Spiritual Warfare

Ephesians 6:10-20

July 9, 2017

Prayer

Romans 16:20

Teaching keywords: spiritual warfare; prayer; Satan and demons; Christian life

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. Romans 16:20

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, 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 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. Ephesians 6:10–20