

Spiritual Warfare—Satan’s Tactics

Introduction

A simple listing of times when Paul refers to Satan or the Devil and or demonic work is instructive. Seeing these kind of verses in their weaving context suggests tactics used by Satan in spiritual warfare. And to be aware of such tactics allows a leader to combat them.

Pauline Passages on Satan, the Devil or Demons

Table 1 lists some Pauline passages dealing with spiritual warfare instigated by Satan and lists some suggestions as to tactics involved.

Table 1. Spiritual Warfare—Satanic Tactics

Passage	Satanic Tactic
Ro 16:20	Satan upsets Christians’ inner life attitudes, taking away peace due to divisions in the church. Antidote: Strive for unity and maintain inward peace as God works through the relationships.
1Co 5:5	Satan can destroy a life by controlling a person through immoral sexual addiction. Antidote: Avoid situations that can lead to sexual addiction.
1Co 7:5	Satan can gain inroads into the life of a married person when sexual needs are not being met. Antidote: Keep lines of communication open in a marriage relationship, concerning sexual needs.
2Co 2:11	Satan can use lack of forgiveness and failure to receive one who repents to control a church situation. Antidote: Accept those back who God has forgiven and who have shown genuine repentance.
2Co 11:14	Satan can counterfeit good things that attract believers (e.g. apparent good teaching; false apostles). Satan can appear like a messenger from God to deceive Christians. Antidote: Get discernment on apparent good teaching, apparent dynamic leaders. This may involve having to depend on people with revelatory gifts (discernings of spirits; word of knowledge; word of prophecy; word of wisdom, etc.).
2Co 12:7	Satan can use a physical sickness or disability to prey upon a believer and instill doubts about God and His enabling grace. But God can also use these things to prevent abuse of power and pride in a leader’s life. Antidote: Don’t let sickness rob you of your trust in God. Seek His enabling grace (whether or not He chooses to heal you).
Eph 4:27	Satan can use anger in a life to gain inroads into a life and eventually control that life through the anger. Antidote: Get help if anger controls you. This may require inner healing. Also recognize the benefits of anger.
Eph 6:10-20	Satan uses lies or half-truths to trick believers and give unreliable perspectives on their lives and situations. Satan uses lack of righteousness (on-going unrighteous things in a believer’s life) as an inroad into the life. Satan uses lack of presentation of testimony in a believer’s life to weaken that believer’s stand. Satan causes a believer to doubt God (character, dealings, truth, etc.). Satan robs believers from the impact of salvation in their lives. Satan keeps believers from using the Word of God in their lives and in combating his tactics. Satan keeps believers from praying in the Spirit as they confront him in his tactics. Satan keeps people from being alert to his tactics and from discerning his involvement. Antidotes: See the imperatives in the Eph 6:10-20 spiritual warfare passage.
1Th 2:18	Satan can block a believer’s guidance. So closed doors are not always clear guidance. Antidote: Get certainty guidance. Let all of the major guidance elements give weight to your guidance: God’s Voice in the Word; God’s Voice in the Heart; God’s Voice in Circumstances; God’s Voice in the Church.

2Th 2:9	Satan can do signs and wonders through a leader so that the leader looks as if he/she is empowered of God (apostolic workers also do signs and wonders). Antidote: Get discernment on apparent good teaching, apparent dynamic leaders. This may involve having to depend on people with revelatory gifts (discernings of spirits; word of knowledge; word of prophecy; word of wisdom, etc.).
1Ti 1:20	Satan can use a lack of responsiveness to one's conscience to eventually destroy a leader and take them out of ministry and further cause them to blaspheme what they once believed. The antidote, keeping a clear conscience and holding on to the truths of the Christian faith. Antidote: On the one hand, don't go against your conscience. On the other hand, allow God to impact your inner life and correct wrongly held ideas that affect your conscience.
1Ti 3:6	Satan can take a young leader out of ministry due to pride. Antidote: Potential young leaders should not be placed into leadership responsibility too soon.
1Ti 4:1	Satan uses demons to influence teachers to give false doctrines that appeal to people. They are actually described as seducing spirits, hypocritical liars with no conscience. Antidote: A Bible centered leader like Timothy should teach the truth about these evil doctrines countering these heresies.
2Ti 2:26	Satan blinds people to truth. Antidote: Gently persuade people winning them over by manner as well as truth.

Conclusion

I have only barely touched on Satanic tactics. I have limited myself to Pauline input in this article. Each of the passages above should be studied in a detailed way in their context. And the other passages in the N.T.¹ need to be comparatively studied along with these.

¹ Some 89 passages mention the Devil or Satan. Other passages talk about demonic influence. But at least the above form a core of truth to start with in observing Satanic tactics.

Spiritual Warfare—Two Extremes To Avoid

Introduction

Did Paul ever engage in spiritual warfare? Oh, yes! But when you read his epistles there is very little up front information, i.e. direct teaching, on doing spiritual warfare. There is Eph 6:10-17 and Col 2:13-15. But for the most part, spiritual warfare is incidental and remarks about it are asides simply woven into the fabric of a letter.¹ In my opinion, you can draw implications from them but not solid models that can be passed on authoritatively as to how to do spiritual warfare. And herein lies a model—two basics—that can help us approach spiritual warfare.

Two Extremes To Avoid

From a comparative study of all of Paul's epistles looking for spiritual warfare information I have drawn the following implications for leaders.

1. Spiritual warfare exists.
2. The spirit world is real and impinges on our world.
3. Leaders should be aware of spiritual warfare and their strengths² and limitations about it.
4. Paul is a model for how leaders ought to approach spiritual warfare in their ministries.

Paul deals with many problematic situations and people in ministry. Occasionally he will assert something about spiritual warfare as being involved in a problem or as the source of some person's situation. But for the most part Paul avoids two extremes:

Extreme 1. Overemphasis on Spiritual Warfare

Paul does not assign blame for everything that happens on spirit beings, demons, and spiritual warfare.

He sees the human side of things as being heavily involved in many of the problems.

Extreme 2. Under Emphasis on Spiritual Warfare

Paul does recognize that some problems and issues have at their heart spiritual warfare. Demonic influence must be countered.

Yes, there is spiritual warfare and it must be discerned and dealt with. But, no, not everything is spiritual warfare. Paul has a healthy balance.

Conclusion

In most of the evangelical world I have dealt with (Bible teaching ministries), **Extreme 2** is the norm. And most of those ministries do not discern or deal with spiritual warfare, even when most needed in their people or situations.

In a little, but not as much, the charismatic or pentecostal circles I deal with, **Extreme 1** is the norm.

When **Extreme 2** is the norm—great needs go unmet. When **Extreme 1** is the norm, abuse of power can abound. Frequently such a leader involved will fall by the wayside (many due to overpowering from the demonic world; many due to the power and pride barriers.)

Balance! How much we need it as leaders. Consistency in maintaining a middle ground and heeding both these dynamic extremes at the same time is needed. And Shakespeare said it well, "Consistency, thou art a jewel!"

See **Article**, *Finishing Well—Six Major Barriers*.

¹ For example if you trace spiritual warfare content through 1,2Ti you will see only several asides: 1Ti 1:18-20; 3:6,7; 4:1; 2Ti 1:6. You will see little or none in most of Paul's epistles. The omissions speak loudly.

² See especially the **Article**, *Spiritual Warfare—Two Foundational Axioms*.

Spiritual Warfare—Two Foundational Axioms

Introduction

Spiritual warfare is real. All leaders engage in it, knowingly or not. Spiritual warfare was introduced in the book of Da.¹ There we learned some initial truth about spiritual warfare.

1. The unseen spirit world is real and does affect a leader's world.
2. Leaders seemingly unanswered prayers may be delayed because of spiritual warfare in the unseen spirit world.
3. Leaders can know that God does protect them with supernatural beings.
4. Some renewal experiences can be via supernatural beings who will affirm, encourage, give physical strength and reveal God's working to leaders.
5. Progressive revelation² is needed before spiritual warfare in the heavenlies and our participation in it can be understood. That is, Daniel does not give the full picture or information about human leaders intervening in spiritual warfare.

Definition Spiritual warfare refers to the unseen opposition in the spirit world made up of Satan and his demons and their attempts to defeat God's forces, angelic beings, and God's people, today called believers. It also involves the response by believers to these attempts.

This article identifies two fundamental axioms concerning spiritual warfare which are part of the progressive revelation given in the N.T. An axiom refers to a maxim widely accepted on its intrinsic merit. It is a statement accepted as true as the basis for argument or inference. It is an established rule or principle or a self-evident truth. To engage in spiritual warfare without these fundamental axioms is to invite defeat. To engage in spiritual warfare with these fundamental axioms lays the foundation for victory over those unseen spiritual forces representing Satan.

Axiom 1. Strategic Warfare

Jesus makes an unusual statement in Jn 16:11 as he looks forward to the Cross.

11 Judgment is certain, because the ruler of this world is judged.”³ Jn 16:11

Removing the figurative language and expressing the meaning in a powerful statement we have the foundation for Axiom 1 on Strategic Warfare.

11 At the Cross I will defeat Satan and his forces; this judgment on them is sure. Jn 16:11

¹ I refer to the commentary on Daniel. In the Bible spiritual warfare is introduced in Gen 3 with Satan's influence over Adam and Eve. It is explained further in Job which points out how the unseen spiritual world can influence the seen world. There are occasional allusions to it in other books (see 2 Kings 6:8-23; Note especially vs 16). Spiritual forces on God's side are mentioned throughout the Bible (Angels). And Da gives more information on spiritual warfare.

² Progressive revelation is a concept noted in the O.T. and N.T. that God is a God who continues to communicate and over time clarifies earlier revelation, expanding on it, filling in more details, helping later leaders see the relevance of it, etc. See especially prophetic ministry. Example: Daniel's prophecies in ch 2, 7, 8, 9, 10-12. There is progress in both content and methodology as observed in various genre in Old and New Testaments. See Job for further references to spirit world intervention in human affairs. See also Eph 6:10ff for basic teaching on spiritual warfare, particularly what human leaders can do. See also Jn 16:11 and Col 2:15 for the strategic basis of spiritual warfare.

³ This is a certainty idiom, the *prophetic past*. A future event is spoken of as if it had already happened (the **TEV** and **NLT** translate—*has already been judged*) because it is so certain, in this case the Cross and one result of it. *Captured: At the Cross I will defeat Satan and his forces; this judgment on them is sure.* See *capture, certainty idiom, Glossary*. See **Article, Figures and Idioms in the Bible**.

This aside on spiritual warfare concerns an aspect of the Cross not usually stressed. Besides dealing with sins, sin and righteousness, the Cross also was a strategic victory over Satanic forces. This is the single most important truth for leader's using power ministry in spiritual warfare.

Paul gives the basic teaching on this foundational axiom in Col 2:13-15.

13 And you, Gentiles, were dead in your sins. God gave you life through Jesus' death, having forgiven you all your wrongdoings; 14 All our failures to meet the law's demands were taken care of at the Cross. 15 At the same time He openly triumphed over those spirit beings which powerfully oppose God. They are defeated. Col 2:13-15

Axiom 1. Strategically, Jesus Has Already Defeated All Spiritual Forces Opposed To God. The War Was Won At The Cross. It Only Remains That This Strategic Victory Be Appropriated And Won Tactically.

This is fundamental to any believer's spiritual warfare. It is a truth that must be believed and acted upon.

Axiom 2. Tactical Warfare

Though the Commander-in-Chief has declared the overall war won there are still battles going on all around us. It doesn't always appear won. A defeated army can still inflict many casualties. So it is in spiritual warfare. Satan has not acknowledged defeat and still fights on. A fundamental axiom basic to this continued warfare is introduced by John.

1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God. Because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2 But here is how you can know the source is by the Spirit of God: Every spirit that affirms that Jesus Christ is come in human form is of God: 3 And every spirit that does not affirm that Jesus Christ came in human form is not from God. Such a source is a spirit against Christ and already is in the world. 4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome these spiritual forces, **because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.**

In a context dealing with spiritual warfare (trying the spirits) John gives the encouraging statement which enables tactical victory.

Axiom 2. A believer has within himself/herself, the Spirit of God which is much more powerful than Satanic forces.

Conclusion

Victory is certain, it was potentially won at the Cross. It will be won totally in history. In the meantime, a believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit who will enable victory in everyday skirmishes over spirit forces. Count on these axioms.

See **Articles**, *Spiritual Warfare—Satan's Tactics*; *Spiritual Warfare—Two Extremes to Avoid*; *Daniel—Supernatural Beings and Spiritual Warfare*.