

ChallengeNet.net

The Spiritual Battle

Written by: James Travis

Written on: March 27 2005

Last Updated: March 1, 2006

All of us are in a battle. That may come as a shock to some of you. I am not speaking about a physical battle (although that may also be true for some of you), but I am speaking of a battle whose consequences are eternal; a spiritual battle.

There is no-one neutral in this battle, no-one can remain out of the fighting, for it is for our souls that the battle rages. Jesus understood this battle well, and tried to convey it to the people in several instances.

The first was when He was accused of casting out demons in the name of Satan; a thought that is ridiculous when reflected upon. His reply to that laughable accusation was this:

"Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, ' Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.'" (Matthew 12:25-30)

I will take Jesus' response point-by-point because there is simply so much good material there that we cannot afford to miss.

Firstly, Jesus makes a very reasonable point about leadership and rule. Any kingdom divided cannot stand. Any military leader can confirm that fact. If Satan casts out his own legions he would be undermining himself.

The next sentence can be somewhat confusing, but with some research I have discovered that *Flavius Josephus* (a Jewish, non-Christian Priest and Historian) wrote of Jewish Exorcists who in Christ's name cast out devils, though they did not follow Him, or were not faithful to Him.

Now I don't want to dwell on this point too long, and I don't want you to dwell on it either, but it does prove something interesting...

Demons are afraid of Jesus, even if the person invoking His name is not faithful to Him. Now immediately I want to point out that you can fall into a very evil trap here if you don't pay attention. I don't want people going around thinking they can live a sinful life and everything will be fine because they still can use the powerful name of Jesus. For if you are not living your life for Christ and you have never confessed your sins to Him and accepted Him and allowed Him to change you, then you have nothing but a one-way ticket to the fires of Hell in your future. I just wanted to explain that one sentence, and clear up any confusion about it that your minds may have dwelt on. It's a great testament to the power of Jesus' name.

The next few sentences show the masterful way Jesus can take a point and simplify it so that everyone listening can understand it; making it known of His power over Satan with easy-to-understand imagery.

The final sentence is the part we will deal most with. Here Jesus indicates that there is nothing that is neutral in this spiritual war, nor can anyone be neutral in it.

We as Christians have been misled to believe that certain things that we may partake in are neutral. One of the most common reasons for this is our own ego. We sometimes feel that because we are such strong Christians we can partake or participate in less-than-wholesome activities, and think that they will not affect us because of our great Christian strength. Let me tell you friends, that is deception, pure and simple.

“Oh, I know that Television program isn't good for me to watch, but I am a strong Christian, it won't affect me. I simply enjoy watching it.”

“This music may have a less than Christian message in its lyrics, but I'll still maintain my Christian lifestyle, I just want to listen to it.”

We all need to get over ourselves! Our lives should be dying to our old sinful nature everyday, not satisfying the cravings of our sinful nature.

Every action we take will either:

- a. Glorify God and His kingdom, or
- b. Glorify Satan and his kingdom

When we feed our sinful nature by giving it what it wants, we are building up our sinful nature, exercising it so it becomes stronger. The stronger it becomes, the harder it is to resist next time. Then before you know it, we are stuck in a circle where it is so strong you can't resist it at all and you continually feed it. Ungodly habits are formed and they give way to the more serious outcomes. The Bible says that those who continually ignore their conscience can “sear it” (1st Timothy 4:1-2) to the point where it will die and you will no longer have its guidance. We see that affect today with criminals who have no remorse from their crimes.

However, when we feed our spiritual nature by rejecting the temptation and desires of sin and follow the commandments of the Lord, we are building up our spiritual nature, and exercising it so that it grows stronger. The stronger it becomes, the easier it will be next time to resist temptation and do the right things. We however must make the first move; we must take the first step.

Changing our nature

So how do we take the first step? How do we change from our sinful nature to Godly Christ-like behavior? The first step is to accept Jesus Christ. Accept His sacrifice on the cross for your sins. He will accept you just as you are, and when He does accept you and you give yourself wholeheartedly to Him that's when He will begin to change you and mold you into His perfect image.

You can pray this simple prayer wherever you are; there is no magical rule that states the Lord will only hear you from inside a church. The only requirement is that when you do pray this prayer you mean it, God knows if you are just reciting the words with no real meaning or intention to follow through.

“Lord Jesus, I recognize that I am a sinner, and that I deserve Hell and not Heaven because of my sin. I also know that You sacrificed Yourself on the cross to pay the penalty for my sin. I thank you Lord Jesus and I ask You to forgive me of all of my sins. I make You the Lord and Savior of my life, and I promise to read and obey Your Word. In Jesus' name I pray and ask it. Amen.”

If you prayed that simple prayer and meant it, congratulations! You have taken the first step. The next step is to arm yourself. If you do not have a reliable copy/translation of the Holy Bible, I would suggest getting a copy as soon as possible. I would recommend either the NIV (New International Version) or the ESV (English Standard Version) as those two versions are in my opinion the easiest translations to read while still remaining accurate and faithful to the original text.

The next step (and one we must practice continually) is to guard our minds. The battle begins and ends in our minds. Before any sinful action can happen, it must pass judgment and be accepted in our minds. For example: When we eat food, we must first make a conscious decision that we are hungry then we make another conscious decision to go and get some food and then to eat it.

Now eating food is necessary to maintain our body, but if we do not guard our minds we can become gluttonous and lascivious; eating and drinking not because our body is lacking fuel but because we simply lust after the taste or experience of eating or drinking. And that is a sin.

A previous spiritual health article entitled [How To Defeat Sin](#) covers more strategies and techniques for defeating temptation and I recommend that everyone get to know it well for the sake of being prepared in this spiritual war.

