

FIGHT!

Refuse to Surrender Your Faith!

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outskirts
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press

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy”

1 Peter 4:12-13.

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Introduction

WE KNOW THERE is something deeper behind many of the evils in the world. It's beyond what we are able to perceive through our senses. There is a real war going on in the spiritual realm, but most people are unable to discern the works of darkness in our world. They attribute much of the degradation we see in the earth to the depravity of the human mind. If only it were that simple. Those of us who follow Jesus Christ know there is much more at work here than mere human wickedness. Our Savior informed us that "...the thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10). This statement points to the reality of evil beyond our physical world. The "thief" that Jesus spoke about in the passage is not human or of any material substance. But, an evil, fallen spirit who seeks to "steal, kill, and to destroy"! And who better to speak about it than Jesus? He would know, considering He is aware of everything that happens in the spiritual realm. It began when a fallen angel (Lucifer), whose name is now Satan, openly rebelled against God. The Holy Bible records him saying, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High" (Is. 14:12-15). These statements brought on his spiritual demise and eternal banishment from the presence of God.

Not only is he locked outside of heaven forever, his nature has also fallen. It fell from a state of goodness to evil. Everything about him is wicked to the core. There are several names given to this fallen angel: Satan, the devil, the serpent, etc. Other angels who followed him into mutiny against God were also driven out of heaven. Revelation 12:3-9 refers to them as stars who fell from heaven. That passage also gives an account of a brutal war that was fought in the heavens in which the dragon (Satan) and his angels (those fallen forces) fought against the archangel Michael and his angelic host. But the dragon did not prevail, because power was given to Michael to win! This power came from Almighty God! This all sounds pretty surreal, doesn't it? But you better believe it is not fantasy or fiction. It is just as real as your physical, earthly existence.

We are in a spiritual fight! The three major enemies we're contending with are evil forces (headed by Satan), the flesh nature (with its vanities and ungodly appetites), and negative life circumstances (due to sin in the world). These combatants challenge every human being, but mainly the followers of Jesus Christ because the nature of the fight is spiritual. Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). This fall would lead to war against Christ and His followers, which started with a spiritual and moral attack on mankind (Gen. 3:1-6). And this kind of attack has perpetuated through time. Just as you can interact with your environment through your senses (taste, touch, hearing, sight, and smell), there is also interaction and life in the spiritual realm. It is nothing to fret or be afraid of. But God wants us to be aware of the reality of this realm. We've all heard about heaven and probably think of it as some place beyond the sky. But heaven is, in fact, very real and it is in the spiritual realm. Do you know that God is a Spirit (John 4:24) and that mankind is created in His image (Gen. 1:26-28)? The Bible says that there are three who bear record in heaven, and they are all ONE (1 John 5:7). Do you know that the serpent (Satan) utterly detests mankind, especially the followers of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 5:8-9)? In Genesis 3:1-6, it reveals how mankind inherited a sinful nature due to disobeying the command of

God. The good news is that God chose to redeem us, while leaving the fallen angels in a permanent state of evil, which will ultimately lead to their eternal torment.

The redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God made it possible for every human being to have everlasting life (John 3:16). The moment you became born of God's Spirit through regeneration, you received a new nature! You are now in a covenanted relationship with God (Rom. 8:14-17) that will last forever! How awesome is that? It was made possible when you decided to follow Jesus Christ according to your faith. You repented of your sins, believed in your heart that Jesus resurrected from the grave, and asked Him to save you. Because you are a follower of Christ, you have turned your back on a life filled with sin and wickedness. You left that way of life and are now on a path that leads to heaven. In addition, you received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. He (the Spirit) will lead and guide you concerning the ways of Christ (John 16:13-15). You have everything you need to live out your faith successfully. You see, your faith was what brought you into the new life. And your faith is what you use to live out your spiritual journey with Christ. As His followers we accept His way of life and devote ourselves to Him by faith. We believe that when our physical lives are over we will live on forever without any pain, suffering, or limitation (Rev. 21:1-5). As God promised, we will have everlasting life because we believed in and lived for Christ. The Bible says, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). It also states, "...The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). Faith is a very important part of spiritual living.

But while we have this wonderful new life in Christ, we also have enemies who want to make our lives miserable. As stated, these are evil forces (headed by Satan), your flesh nature, and adverse life circumstances due to sin in the world. They are all opposite of your faith in Christ and will present challenges throughout your spiritual walk. Especially evil forces, who know we are no longer under their direct influence. They realize that we are on the side of Christ forever! Therefore, they fight against us to try to weaken our faith and pull us

away from a life of spiritual meaning and purpose. They throw all sorts of things in our path in an attempt to detour us from a faith-filled life in Christ. This fight is real! The Bible speaks at length about this spiritual fight we are in as the followers of Christ. When you see evil things occurring in the earth, just know that they originated in the spiritual realm. Evil doings and spiritual warfare come from the spiritual realm right into the earth. This means that wickedness can happen through human beings due to demonic oppression and in some cases, possession. These evil forces oppress and take control of the minds of people who are not regenerated or born of God's Spirit (John 3:3). They are still under the sin nature and from that nature, all sorts of ungodly words, expressions, and actions proceed. This translates into many of the evils and immoralities throughout the world.

The church of today must not underestimated the degree of evil produced by these forces. We are to be fully aware and have keen discernment with respect to challenges coming from the realm of the spirit. Like it or not, we are in a fight. Although it began in heaven long before we existed, we cannot ignore it. The spiritual fight is much like boxing, where two combatants are throwing punches at one another. Your adversary is throwing punches at you in the form of temptation, various challenges, and even attacks upon some of the intimate areas of your life. This all takes place in the battlefield that is your mind. But, you must fight back spiritually. Remember, this is not a physical fight, so your human knowledge, wits, skill, and strength are of no use. You will need to fight using spiritual resources or weapons. Everything you need is in Christ! You fight back in the spiritual realm through Him! In the name of Jesus Christ evil forces tremble and are afraid. He is the Champion of heaven and earth. All power is given to Him! And we must believe and take Him at His word to access what He has to offer us. Furthermore, if we don't exercise faith, then we'll just sit and take unanswered punches from the enemy. We cannot keep getting hit with spiritual attacks to the point that we run in the opposite direction. We must take a stand and fight back through Christ.

In the forthcoming chapters we will discuss all of this! Where the war or fight is fought, life's uncertainties, addressing emotional pain, getting into spiritual shape, using spiritual weapons, fighting back, and more. Get ready for words of encouragement, exhortation, and even some admonishment. You are an overcomer! You know this is true based on how many things you have fought through already. Look at how far you've come in your spiritual journey. The Bible lets us know that we already have the victory through Jesus Christ; and, in the end, we win! But while we are upon earth, we must fight the good fight of faith and lay hold to eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12). We must refuse to surrender our faith!