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## Spiritual Warfare Part VIII

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### More Good News on Spiritual Warfare

#### James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:5-9

Peter is calling the church (and us) to be mature and faithful which requires us to submit and to be humble. The result is respect, cooperation, unity, community, and the power of His Fruit at work. But, if we do not submit, have disregard for unity, or have no respect for authority, our sinful nature will win out; the result will be quarrels (because of pride), discord, and shame. We have to see that God wants us to submit; this is best for us both individually and collectively as a church. Being a Christian and a church is about relying on Him, not ourselves; it is about His mighty power at work in us--not our feeble ways! His favor and power will be poured out on us when we are faithful, obedient, and meek (strength under control). Nevertheless, be warned that pride is the opposite of these, and that it will destroy relationships and churches fast and furiously; that is why God hates it so much! Thus, to be confident in Jesus and be used by Him, we need Him to empower us. With this mindset and empowering, we do not need to worry or fret because our mind is not on our status, situations, possessions, or experiences, but on Christ! This comes about when we realize that Jesus does indeed care, and loves us ever so deeply!

Thus, the devil will get a hold on us when we are not complying with these precepts! He will attack to discourage and sway us away from God and His ways. Our defense is simple; we are to stand firm in Christ, pray, and allow His work in us and not ours; what we would bring to the table is just fuel for the devil and his ways!

The passage in James asks us the crucial question: *are we resisting God or resisting the devil?* How we respond to life and other people will be rooted in how we respond to God. Do we fight Him or do we glorify Him? How do we know? The answer is in how we are with our attitudes and mindsets; are we humble or proud? If we are proud, we are serving the devil, even though we may think we are serving ourselves. If we are humble, then we are serving our Lord. This strikes at the root of our mindset and motivation in life.

- The knowledge of who we are in Christ will be the driving force of how we are with others (Galatians 2:20-21; 6: 3-5; Philippians 3:10)!
- We are best able to function in ministry by concentrating our efforts of growing in our relationship with Christ into a daily love endeavor (Hebrews 10:19-25; 11:1-3).

The victory of Christ is also given to us! This can be applied to sin, disease, pride, spiritualism, or as it evidently means, spiritual warfare—a template on how Satan and evil seek to operate, a plan of the enemy. But, the bottom line is this: Christ is the

Victor! His win has continual outcomes of triumph for the Christian, and judgment and consequences for Satan and those who follow him. This passage may be a depiction of the fall of Satan, the application of how he works, the battle of the Cross, or how he sought to steal the show and defeat Christ to prevent the salvation of the elect. Perhaps, it is all of the above; but, the context clearly shows the prime meaning to be the battle of the Cross. Satan was just using the same old “game plan” as he had before, and Christ again proved victorious by His redemptive blood and resurrection. The point God has for us is this: the devil has his ways and plan and God has His; the devil has his facts and God has His Truth, The question is *what will reign in you* (Isaiah 14:12-14; John 12:31-33; Col. 2:15)?

- **Submit** means to obey! It is our surrender to God in His will. We are urgently called to accept the absolute authority of God. We are under His authority whether or not we acknowledge Him, so we might as well acquiesce. It does no good to fight God, as Jacob discovered (Gen. 32:22-32). In this context, it also refers to fights and quarrels so they do not build and take us over (James 4:1-6). Jacob’s dispute with his brother had to be resolved (Gen 33).
- **Be self-controlled** means to allow God to be in control of our will and heart and seek the Spirit to enable us. Then, we will know what not to do and be able to guard the areas in which we are weak. This will allow us to have discipline and restraint as we are obedient to God and others. It also means not allowing distractions to derail or remove us from His will and plan; that way, we will not be held back from what Christ has called us to do (Prov. 16:32; 25:28; Rom 13:12-14; 1 Cor. 6:12; 9:25-27; 1Thess. 5: 22; Titus 2:12; Heb. 12:2).
- **Resist him/ the devil** means to beware of the Devil and resist him, to be sober and vigilant (as in *alert*) of Satan’s tactics and influences, to flee the Devil’s kingdom, his values, and his wisdom, and then embrace God’s kingdom, values, and wisdom. This has more to do with moral values than spiritual warfare. The devil does not have equal authority or power as the popular “Ying/Yang” philosophy states; rather, he only has the power we give to Him. God has *absolute power*. The devil is not invincible; he is easily thwarted. We put on God’s armor so we can fight his temptations and flee from him; we evade the lusts of our hearts and the world by running from them, not toward them (Eph. 6:11-18; James. 3:15, 17; 4:4, 7-10; 1 Pet. 5:8-9)!

As this verse continues to say, *your brothers*, it means we are all the body of Christ, in community with one another, and in unity by Christ and His work. Therefore, we are never alone, away from God, or away from one another (unless you isolate yourself). Yes you can win this war, because He who is on your side is far greater than whatever the enemy can throw at us!

When Satan comes against us, God leads His people out of persecution on His wings, and then, continues to show images that deal with authentic spiritual warfare just as He did with the Exodus. Spiritual warfare is the ultimate conflict of good versus evil, of light versus dark, rooted in history, and with future ramifications. As Satan failed to

stop the work of Christ and then was punished and thrown from Heaven, so he changed his “game plan” from hunting Christ to hunting His people. Now, Satan hunts for people of faith or those with the potential to be of faith. He not only wants us wounded so we are ineffective, he wants us annihilated! We have a great enemy capable of unspeakable harm, but we also have a Great Savior who leads and protects us, and who is much greater and more powerful, beyond our imagination, over us and our enemy! Keep in mind that God gives us far more than what Satan seeks to steal! Keep in mind that God is totally sovereign and Satan can do nothing to us other than what God allows. However, he still has power and has not been tamed yet. Consider that your will is the door through which he comes prowling and attacking; why give him an open door! Satan is still our adversary; he wants to not only take you away from God’s love and precepts, he wants to utterly destroy you! Peter’s point? Be on your guard and resist him; do not let Satan have that open door--as Peter has personally experienced (Luke 22:31-34; Eph. 6:10-20)!

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What do you do when you are anxious, worried or stressed? What should you do? What does this have to do with Spiritual Warfare?
2. What does it mean to you to be mature and faithful? What do you think is required to submit and to be humble?
3. How does humbleness promote respect, cooperation, unity, and community? Consider your work, school, family, and church! Why does God honor these?
4. What blocks humility from working and being exhibited in you? How does humility give God the “power line” to empower you with His Fruit? What would your life and church look like with these precepts at work?
5. What happens when we do not submit, we have disregard for unity, or no respect for authority? How does this collectively affect a church?
6. Why do you suppose that His favor and power will be poured out on us when we are faithful, obedient, and meek? How does being confident in Jesus help you in this?
7. Do you worry? Why? Why do you not need to worry or fret? What happens when your mind is on your status, situation, possessions, or experiences and not on Christ?
8. What will happen to your spiritual life and relationships when you realize that Jesus does indeed care and love you ever so deeply?
9. How does the devil get a hold on you? How does he discourage or sway you away from God and His ways? How does he twist your mindset? How can you form a defense to him?

10. How do the foundational blocks of attitude, of submission, and of humility help prepare you for life and leadership? How do they influence who you are and what you do?
11. What do you need to do to more fully take hold of your dependence on God, seeking His will, and being in prayer? What does it mean to you to fully trust in our Lord? How will confessing your sins and seeking forgiveness from God and others whom you have offended help you? Now, what are you going to do about it?
12. How will you be always in prayer for yourself and your fellow Christians so they do not fall for the deceit either?