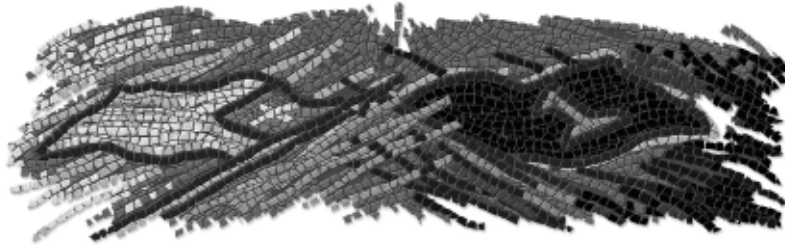


The Christian Warfare (War)



SABBATH—DECEMBER 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isaiah 35:4; Daniel 10:19; Luke 22:31; Romans 7:15-20; Ephesians 6:10-12; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8; Revelation 12:9.

MEMORY VERSE: “Our fight is not against human beings. It is against the rulers, the authorities,¹ and the powers of this dark world. It is against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly world” (Ephesians 6:12, NIV).

THE BIBLE BEGINS WITH TWO GREAT STORIES. First, God created a perfect world and placed Adam and Eve in this perfect world as managers (Genesis 1:27, 28). Second, Satan led Adam and Eve into rebellion against God. So that world and all of its people came under the curse of sin (Genesis 3). The Bible also preaches two great stories of good news. First, God sent His Son to this earth to die for the sins of the world and to bring sinners back to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:14-18). The Cross and Christ's resurrection² guarantee the complete destruction of sin and Satan at the end of the world. The second great story of good news is that God will create a new heaven and earth to be the home of the saints (John 14:1-3).

Between the first two stories and the second two stories, the Bible follows the dangers and the progress of the great war between Christ and Satan. We all are involved in this war. This week, we will study Paul's words on how we can win this war.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: How real is Christian warfare? What kind of battle are we in? What are some of Satan's tricks? Where and how do we fight Satan? What promises do we have of victory?

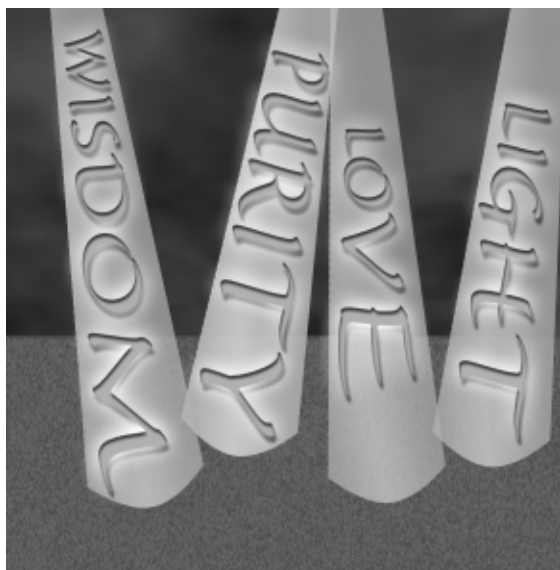
*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 17.

¹authorities—people who are in charge; people who are in power.

²resurrection—coming back to life after dying.

SUNDAY—DECEMBER 11**FINALLY . . . THE WAR
(Ephesians 6:10).**

So far, Paul has outlined (1) how God has saved us from sin through Christ, (2) sealed us by His Holy Spirit, (3) brought us into a fellowship of unity, and (4) made us God's family. As members of this new family, God expects us to "walk worthy of [His] calling" (Ephesians 4:1, NKJV). We "walk worthy" by putting away our old sinful life. We put on the new Christian life. We walk in purity, love, light, and wisdom. We also have a godly relationship³ with other people. The Christian life and walk should be in "the fullness of the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).



**We walk according to the light.
The light is Jesus.**

But there is a demonic, evil spirit working against Christians. Satan wants to have us, as he did Peter (Luke 22:31). So Paul says, "Finally, my brothers, get ready for the daily battle against Satan."

The word "finally" often means a closing or an ending. So the Greek word for "finally" can be translated by the words, "from now on."

What do you think Jesus meant when He said that Satan wanted to make Peter fall? (Luke 22:31). What does it mean when Satan makes a person fall?

What is Paul's point in Ephesians 6:10? How are we to fight? What hope does the Bible give us that we can have victory over Satan?

Paul has spoken of God at work in Christ for us. Christ's coming in history has added a new and powerful weapon to the war between God and Satan. Christ's victory over Satan on the cross has made it possible for God to accept believers. But believers should know that their journey to the kingdom has just begun. *From now on*, they will have many battles to fight. *From now on*, they have a clever enemy to deal with. They also have a war to win "against the wiles [tricks] of the devil" (Ephesians

³relationship—the connection we have with another person.

6:11). “With full faith we may expect that God will combine (join) His power with the efforts of humans, for the glory of His name. Wearing the armor of God’s righteousness (holiness), we may gain the victory over every enemy.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 111.

Think about a time you had a victory in a spiritual battle and a time when you failed. What made the difference?



Satan is good at deceiving people.

MONDAY—DECEMBER 12

“THE WILES [TRICKS] OF THE DEVIL” (Ephesians 6:11).

Paul’s description of spiritual war begins with a general warning. He warns us to stand firm against “the devil’s evil plans” (Ephesians 6:11, NIrV).

What are the wiles of the devil? The devil does not always attack believers in open, evil ways. Often his ways are hidden. He deceives believers into thinking they are working for noble reasons. Here are two examples: First, Satan tempts Eve to eat the fruit because she will know the difference between good and evil and be like God (Genesis 3:1-5). Second, he made Judas think he was helping to establish Christ’s kingdom on earth.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis, a Christian writer, offers a series of imaginary letters written by Screwtape. Screwtape, an older demon, writes to a younger demon not experienced in deceiving the saints. For example, John is praying for his mother who is suffering from rheumatism. Screwtape advises the younger demon not to cause John to lose faith in prayer. Instead, John should be encouraged to pray for his mother at all times. Meanwhile, the younger demon should try to make John forget the need to massage his mother’s aching joints.

In another letter, Screwtape suggests that Christians must be encouraged to worry about great problems they cannot solve so they would not pay attention to problems they could solve. Screwtape says, “The trick is to

have believers running about with fire extinguishers when there is a flood.”—(London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1956), pp. 128, 129; adapted.

What do the following verses teach us about how Satan works? Do any of his methods seem familiar to you?

Job 2:9 _____

Zechariah 3:1 _____

Luke 22:3 _____

Revelation 12:12 _____

Mark 4:15 _____

2 Peter 3:4 _____

1 Thessalonians 2:18 _____

2 Corinthians 2:10, 11 _____

⁴attitudes—how you think and feel about something.

TUESDAY—DECEMBER 13

THE ENEMY WE FACE (Ephesians 6:12).

How does Paul describe the enemy we face? What is he really saying to us about the kind of battle we are involved in? Ephesians 6:12.

Our main enemy is not “flesh and blood” (Ephesians 6:12). This means our enemy is not human. Selfishness, pride, and attitudes⁴ that are against Christianity are all forces Christians must deal with. But there are heavenly powers greater than all the demons working to separate us from God.

Paul describes our enemy as “the rulers . . . and the powers of this dark world” (Ephesians 6:12, NIV). These are “spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil” (Ephesians 6:12, Philips). This description is frightening but real. It shows superhuman, demonic forces that fight against our loyalty to God. Whose side shall we be on? Satan’s or God’s? That is the central question of Christian warfare (war). Warfare is the great controversy (war) between Christ and Satan.

Satan is our enemy. He is a stubborn, terrible fighter. He walks around “like a roaring lion. He prowls around looking for someone to chew up and swallow” (1 Peter 5:8, NIV). He is our accuser (criticizer) (Revelation 12:10), a liar, and a murderer (John 8:44). He has sinned from the beginning (1 John

3:8). He misrepresents (twists) Christ's way (Acts 13:10). He "deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9, NKJV). He fights against God's remnant church (Revelation 12:17, NKJV). He attacks the saints (Revelation 2:10). He can even appear as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). At the close of earth's history, he will lead all people who have not repented in a final battle to overthrow God's rule (2 Thessalonians 2:4-10). It is against this super-human being and his army of fallen angels that Christians are involved in a continuous war. "In every soul, two powers are struggling hard for the victory. Unbelief gathers its forces, led by Satan, to cut us from God, who is our strength. Faith gathers its forces, led by Christ, who is the Creator and Finisher of our faith. Hour by hour, in the sight of the heavenly universe, the war goes forward. This is a hand-to-hand fight. The great question is, who shall have the victory?" —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 328.



Satan is like a roaring lion looking for someone to eat.

How have you experienced the struggle between Christ and Satan? In what ways is the battle seen? How well does Satan hide? How well do you know what is really going on?

WEDNESDAY—DECEMBER 14

“BE STRONG . . . IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT” (Ephesians 6:12).

The word “wrestle” (Ephesians 6:12, KJV) shows two things. First, the Christian war is like a hand-to-hand battle, as in wrestling. Second, the enemy is as close as the opponent in wrestling. The enemy is clever and tricky in trying to deceive those who are faithful to Christ. Victory in this war depends on three principles⁵ of Christian life and faith: (1) “Be strong” (Ephesians 6:10); (2) “Put on the whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11, NKJV); and (3) “Stand” (Ephesians 6:11, 13, 14). Today's lesson will focus on the first principle. We will study the other two principles later.

The words “be strong” appear in the New King James Version more than thirty times. Three of these times are in the New Testament. In most cases, “be strong” means that God is asking us to face Satan fearlessly in physical or spiritual war. “Be strong” suggests that God is saying: “Your strength comes from Me. Be strong, do not be afraid.”

⁵principles—general laws or truths.

How do the following verses help us to be strong? Joshua 10:25; Isaiah 35:4; Daniel 10:19; 1 Corinthians 16:13.

Paul encourages us to “be strong in the Lord” (Ephesians 6:10). We can fight God’s enemy (Satan) only by being on God’s side. “Your power will not do it either. Only the power of my [Holy] Spirit will do it,” says the Lord who rules over all” (Zechariah 4:6, NIV). We cannot fight evil spirits with human strength alone, no matter how righteous (holy) we may be. Only the power that flows from God through His Holy Spirit will be strong enough in fighting Satan. “Without Me,” Christ said, “you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NKJV). Paul adds: “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57, NKJV). God’s grace is powerful enough for us (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Paul adds one more reason to be strong in the Lord. The Lord’s power is mighty (Ephesians 6:10, NIV). Already in Ephesians 1:17-21, Paul prays that we would experience God’s power as He showed it in resurrecting⁶ Christ. In Ephesians 2:1-7, Paul explains how he hopes we will experience this power. God was able to raise Christ from the dead. In the same way, God is able to raise us from death in sin to newness of life in Christ. It is in this resurrection power that we fight “the spiritual forces of

evil in the heavenly realms [places]” (Ephesians 6:12, NIV).

THURSDAY—DECEMBER 15

**“PUT ON . . . STAND”
(Ephesians 6:11).**

Paul gave the call to “be strong . . . in the power of His [God’s] might” (Ephesians 6:10, NKJV). What does Paul say to do next, and why? Ephesians 6:11.

In ourselves, we do not have the willpower to face Satan. By nature, we are sinners (Romans 3:23). Sin has separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2). Sin has made us slaves (John 8:34; Romans 6:16). It has polluted our minds and consciences⁷ (2 Corinthians 3:14; 2 Timothy 3:13).

What do the following verses tell us to do? What do these verses suggest? What part do we have in the war against Satan and sin? Are we to do nothing, or is there a battle we must fight? Matthew 16:24; Luke 13:24; Acts 14:22; Philippians 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:3; James 5:10, 11; 1 Peter 4:1.

Christ has defeated Satan on the cross and gives that victory to us when we accept Him in faith as our Savior. But our new life is not without its dangers. Satan’s powers “have been already greatly weakened by

⁶resurrecting—bringing back to life.

⁷conscience—a knowledge of right and wrong with an urge to do right; moral judgment.

Christ. But his powers have not yet become harmless. For the church to be able to fight against Satan, it has received armor from God. The church is so well armed that it is able to continue to stand.”—Adapted from Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*⁸ (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), p. 392.

With this armor, God sends us into battle against “spiritual forces of evil” (Ephesians 6:12, NIV). This armor is more than enough to deal with Satan’s clever tricks. Satan is a clever enemy and will not fight fair. He will use every trick he can—from turning into a talking serpent (Genesis 3) to acting as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). That is why Paul gives us his reason for his two-part warning: (1) Put on. (2) Stand.

“Put on” is a command to take something that does not begin with us. Anything that springs from within us is not powerful enough to meet Satan. “Put on” also shows the idea of permanent strength. The Christian cannot live for a moment without the “armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11, NKJV). The armor must cover the entire person, from head to toe, from thought (head) to action (toe). We must wear this armor all the time. Four times in Ephesians 6:11-14, Paul urges believers to stand (hold the ground), resist⁹ the enemy, be awake and alert, and never surrender. Victory is ours.

Do you know someone who is going through hand-to-hand battle with Satan? Why not spend time with that person? Besides praying for and with that person, what other things can you do to help?

FRIDAY—DECEMBER 16

ADDITIONAL STUDY: *The spiritual war:* “The Bible shows two warring groups of angels that influence and control people. . . . There are those people who are under God’s control and who are influenced by the heavenly angels. These people will be able to see the tricky workings of the unseen powers of darkness. People who desire to work with the heavenly angels should be very serious about doing God’s will. They must not have anything to do with Satan and his angels.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1119.

Warfare as a lifelong struggle: “Satan will use every argument, every trick, to trap the soul. In order to win the crown of life, we must work very seriously and hard. We must not put off the armor or leave the battlefield until we have gained the victory. We can have victory in our Savior.

“As long as we continue to keep our eyes on Christ, we shall be safe. Be we must show interest in heaven-

⁸theology—the study of God and His truths.

⁹resist—to fight back.

ly things not in earthly things. By faith, we must rise higher and still higher in receiving the graces of Christ. By thinking daily about His matchless love, we must grow more and more into His glorious image.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 105.



Keep your eyes on Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. As a class, read aloud 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Then discuss what new things these verses teach us about spiritual war.
2. Satan's tricks often involve a clever mixture of truth and error. For example, people like to think that having many possessions is a sign of God's approval and blessing. What are other examples of this mixture of truth and error that Satan uses to fool people?
3. Is there a person or a group of people your class knows who is in the middle of a deep spiritual struggle? What useful things can you, as a class, do to show these people your care and support?