

THIS IS WAR_ The Reality of Spiritual Warfare
(FIGHTING FOR OUR RIGHT TO FREEDOM)

Our nation was founded on a very basic principle: every person has “*a God given right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*” Yet, it was exactly that belief in such a right that motivated our founding fathers to fight for it. There have always been powers that have sought to rob others of individual freedom, enslaving and controlling them for their own selfish purposes. Like it or not, fighting against oppression and tyranny to gain and to retain freedom is inevitable.

I'd be surprised if anyone here does not know about **the war on terror**. Isis has been made known to us through radio, TV, newsprint, and the internet. Persecution of those professing Judeo/ Christian beliefs has ranged from imprisonment, to torture, to bombings and beheadings. We know they are a real and present evil force, yet most of us live our lives from day to day as if they don't exist. Why? Perhaps because we don't feel personally threatened by their evil influences. As long as they wage their Jihadist war across the sea, we aren't directly affected.

The attack on the twin towers on **9/11** awakened us to danger of Islamic extremists. **2,507** civilians, **72** law enforcement officers, **343** firefighters, and **55** military personnel were killed. Yet, the horrific nature of that attack faded from our collective memory too soon. Then there was the **2009** Fort Hood shooting, the Boston Marathon bombing in **2013**, and the **2014** attack at an Oklahoma factory that left one woman decapitated and another scarred for life. More recently the racially motivated murder of a Charleston Church group and the Naval Yard scare just last Thursday. We may see these as isolated cases of radical individuals_ and though appalling and gruesome, they still seem far removed from us. So we talk about how horrible it all is and send a few more troops to send a signal that they better leave us alone_ and trust the rest to Homeland Security. Meanwhile we personally do little to nothing to prepare ourselves for the real possibility of an eventual assault on our own friends and families. There is a similar problem when it comes to spiritual warfare.

We cannot ignore that it is a reality. **2nd Corinthians 10:3-4** says “**For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world.**” Christians waging war? With who? Paul explains in **Ephesians 6:12**: “**Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**” So, our real enemy isn't **Isis** or **Al-Qa'ida** or **Hamas** or **Hezbollah** or the **KKK** or any other terrorist or militant group_ no matter what mask they hide behind. Neither is it any one in our own government or a particular political party. Despite our tendency to fixate on identifying a single “**Anti-Christ**” or “**Beast**,” our enemy isn't any one person or people group or man-made organization. Our adversary is the devil and his angels.

1st Peter 5:8 warns us “**Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.**” And **Revelation 12:7-9** tells us he is not alone. “**There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.**”

Still, many Christians respond with comments like_ “*Yea, but that was long time ago. And Jesus defeated him at the cross, so I needn't be concerned.*” Or “*Well, I hear he's still harassing some people in 3rd world countries, but like a lion, he's either roaming around somewhere else far away or he's caged up.*”

And that's one of the greatest tools Satan uses. The one the Bible calls "**the deceiver**" - for he has been lying since the beginning - lulls us into a sense of complacency. So what could we_ should we do?

BE SELF CONTROLLED. Don't panic. Don't lose your head. **Ephesians 5:15-16** says: "**Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.**" We've probably seen movies where someone is freaking out so badly that someone had to slap them in order to snap them out of it. In the previous verse Paul says "**Wake up!**" In one sense that is what I think the Spirit is prompting us to do today_ wake up to the reality of Satan and his schemes. The specific warning later in this text is "*to not get intoxicated with wine_ but rather be filled with Spirit.*" It may not be alcohol that we struggle with. It may be drugs or lust or greed or just the tendency to focus on everything else but God and His kingdom. No matter, the end result is the same. We are so preoccupied with fulfilling our own wants and desires that we become comfortable in sin_ and oblivious to our lack of readiness for battle.

Next, **BE ALERT.** Be prepared. Jesus told His disciples in **Mark 13:33**: "**Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.**" He was referring to His eventual return, which is much more imminent now than it was then. If you're concerned about home invasions or burglaries, what do you do? I hear adequate lighting is the #1 deterrent against thieves and intruders. Securing doors and windows makes good sense. How about putting in a home security system? Some suggest having a guard dog is the way to go, but others insist that there's no better option than "*Smith & Wesson.*"

Spiritually speaking, keep the light on. **James 1:17** tells us that "**God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.**" And Paul assures us in **Romans 8:31** that "**if God is on our side, no one can stand against us.**" Guard your heart and mind with prayer. Make sure the Holy Spirit is present night and day. **1st John 4:4** says that "**He who is within us is greater than he who is in the world.**" And forget about a guard dog. If Michael the archangel whipped Satan once, he can do it again. And finally take heed to Paul's urging in **Ephesians 6:17** to "**take up the sword of the Spirit**"_ the word of God. It is still the best option for keeping the devil and his minions at bay.

In **Galatians 5:1** we're reminded of this: "**It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**" That sounds to me like our freedom must be defended. And if it must be defended, it stands to reason that someone is trying to take it from us. Who might that be?

Make no mistake about it...**this is war.**