

War Zone

Part 2 – The Devil’s Tactics

ILLUS – Imagine this great battle in heaven. Michael and his archangels on the one side, and Satan and his angels on the other. And the good guys prevail. And there’s no room any more for Satan and his team. So they’re cast down to the earth. And Satan is very angry. Some thousands of years later, enter the Son of God who brought with Him the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand.” (Mk 1:15)

Demons screamed with fear and anguish as the Kingdom of God clashed with the kingdom of darkness and they were forced by the power of God to leave their human hosts.

I want to impress upon you today that we are in a spiritual war.

We talk about “entering into spiritual warfare” or having “a time of spiritual warfare”.

But you cannot enter into spiritual warfare, because you are already in it.

The “time of spiritual warfare” began when you were born, and will finish when you die.

You don’t have a choice – you’re in a war.

We’re in enemy territory – and if we don’t understand that we will be largely ineffective as soldiers.

ILLUS – It’s like during WW2 they sometimes had to take a group of men into a plane and fly them behind enemy lines, and parachute them into enemy territory.

When we were born, we were parachuted into enemy territory.

That’s why: 1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

The whole world system is under Satan’s influence.

And when we were born again we were commissioned into God’s army and stationed behind enemy lines.

That’s why 1 Peter 2:11 calls us “sojourners and pilgrims”.

Heb 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

We’re visitors on this planet – and this planet is a war zone.

Spiritual warfare is not something you do on special occasions or when a special need arises.

Unfortunately, the church has often been lulled into a sense of peace and safety.

1 Thess 5:3 For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

So let’s use our understanding as we look into spiritual warfare.

The first thing we need to understand is that the main arena for the spiritual war is in our minds.

Our minds are the battleground.

2 Cor 4:3-4 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, (4) whose **minds** the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Listen to how much of these next verses are related to the mind.

2 Cor 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. (4) For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, (5) casting down **arguments** [the way people think ... mental structures¹] and every high thing that exalts itself against the **knowledge** of God, bringing every **thought** into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

What the enemy does is establish strongholds in people's minds.

Watchman Nee says, "The mind suffers the onslaughts of the powers of darkness more than any other organ of the whole man²."

This is where the battle takes place – so what's a stronghold?

ILLUS – In the ancient world, a prosperous city would not only build a wall around itself, but also a stronghold. The stronghold was an immensely fortified tower built into the wall, which was so strong that even if the enemy breached the wall of the city, the stronghold could be defended with relatively few soldiers. If the stronghold was taken that was the end of the battle³.

From the moment a person is born, the enemy seeks to build strongholds.

It doesn't mean you are demon-possessed, but it means the enemy has been successful in latching onto a particular area of your mind.

But the stronghold is there to entangle the person in the enemy's ways, and to help resist the Gospel (as if).

Unless they're dealt with at conversion, when a person comes to Christ, they can bring some of those enemy strongholds with them – because they're built in the mind.

ILLUS – Ever had one of those conversations with someone where you tried to explain to them why something was wrong, but they just didn't get it? Chances are you were speaking to an enemy stronghold.

Tragic isn't it? But you've got them too.

How Do Strongholds Get There?

What is Satan's primary weapon of attack? How does he infiltrate our minds?

Attack comes in the form of temptation – I am tempted on a daily basis.

Temptation is a reality in this war – even Jesus – the ultimate man – was tempted regularly.

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was **in all points** tempted as we are, yet without sin.

He was tempted in the wilderness, but He was also tempted in every other area of His life.

Jesus was regularly tempted – it's not wrong to be tempted.

Watchman Nee points out that although "Eve's heart was sinless ... yet she received Satan's suggested thoughts⁴."

All of us are tempted.

That makes the war real for everyone, doesn't it?

I want to talk about **How To Overcome Temptation**.

Definition – Concise Oxford Dictionary – Temptation: incitement to sin, thing that attracts, attractive course of action.

Definition – Very Concise Llewellyn Dictionary – Temptation: An attempted incursion by enemy troops into God's territory with a view to gaining control and establishing a stronghold.

It's a raid – and if you let the enemy get a foothold, he'll turn it into a stronghold.

¹ Carson, D.A. *From Triumphalism To Maturity* Paternoster Press 1984 p47

² Nee, Watchman *The Spiritual Man* Volume 3 p 10

³ Carson, D.A. *From Triumphalism To Maturity* Paternoster Press 1984 p47

⁴ Nee, Watchman *The Spiritual Man* Volume 3 p 10

What's the purpose of this raid?

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.

That's the purpose of the enemy.

Whenever you yield to temptation – no matter how small or insignificant – you will lose something.

Something will be stolen or killed or destroyed – because that's the only reason the enemy comes.

Satan can be a formidable foe – but really, he's only got one weapon at his disposal – temptation.

He may have many strategies, but they all come via temptation – but it's a powerful weapon.

Gen 3:1-6

This is a very important passage in the Bible, because it gives us some very clear insights into the whole process of temptation.

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

Important Truths

1. Take note of the word "cunning"

It means crafty, subtle, sneaky.

Sin is subtle, temptation is subtle.

Have you ever been tempted to climb to the top of the Eiffel Tower and jump off, or to have a sex change operation, or would you go up to a cop and smack him in the nose?

There are lots of things that you wouldn't be tempted to do – homosexuality or drug taking may not be a temptation for you.

You might even find those things repulsive.

You're far too sensible for that.

So Satan doesn't attack in our area of strength – but he waits and watches and studies our weaknesses.

Then he comes in subtly, craftily, and little by little, he takes ground.

So – 1 Pet 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

We need to be on the alert at all times.

ILLUS – I used to keep my deodorant on the dressing table. One morning I grabbed the can, sprayed, and thought, "Yuk! What is that?" I had left the fly spray there the night before – I hadn't looked. Next morning, same thing. Alli put it there deliberately. But I never did it again – these days I look, and I read the can.

At least I don't have fleas in my armpits.

We must stay on the alert.

2. Notice Satan spoke to the woman

It says, "And he said to the woman ..."

Now why did he go to her?

Was it because women are dumber than men? I don't think so.

Was it because she was the last in a chain of command? There may be some truth in that.

But I think it was more than that.

Gen 2:15-19 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. (16) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; (17) but of

the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (18) And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” (19) Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.

Notice something here?

Adam received the original instruction from God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – then after that Eve was created.

So Adam would have passed the information on to Eve.

What she had was second-hand information – second-hand knowledge of the Word of God.

Second hand servings of God’s Word need to be checked out.

This is a principle that still holds true in the New Testament.

Every week for years I’ve taken my Bible to church – for a good reason.

It’s not so I can look spiritual – “Look, there’s Tony Llewellyn. He looks so spiritual.”

It’s so I can check out what’s being preached.

I check as many references as I can – even if I think I know them.

If someone else is preaching, I check their Scripture quotes, the exact wording.

Should I do that? Shouldn’t I just trust them?

Acts 17:11 These were more fair-minded [“nobility of character⁵”] than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched [“thorough examination⁶”] the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

The apostle Paul preached and they checked up on him – does it say they suffered from unbelief?

No – it commends them.

I try to make sure that I’m preaching God’s Word every week.

But I’m not insulted if you bring your Bible and check what I say in God’s Word – you have a responsibility to do that.

And it doesn’t matter how good the preaching is you’ll never get by on a second-hand knowledge of God’s Word.

You don’t just accept things thoughtlessly.

You’ve got to search the Scriptures for yourself.

Jesus knew the Scriptures very well.

And so does Satan – and he knows that the weak ones [the vulnerable ones] are those for whom the Word of God is a sometimes book.

So the serpent went to the woman to find out what she knew – and guess what? He was pleasantly surprised.

3. Notice the enemy’s tactic

“He said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden”?’”

This is the great tactic of the enemy – to undermine the authority of the God’s Word – by continually questioning it and sowing seeds of doubt.

Remember Satan comes to steal?

⁵ Expositor’s Greek Testament Vol 2 p 362

⁶ Vincent’s Word Studies In The New Testament Vol 1 p 428

If he sows enough doubt, it's easy to steal the truth out of your heart.

ILLUS – I saw an experiment on TV many years ago. Six people were asked a simple question, such as which line was the longest. Five were told to give the wrong answer so they could observe how the other guy handled it. He went first and gave the correct answer. Then one by one, the other five gave their answers – the wrong one. And you could see the look on the other guy's face. He was re-evaluating his answer. And eventually, he changed his mind.

Sow enough doubt, and you undermine a person's confidence in the truth.

That's how Satan works.

And the most vulnerable are those who don't know the Word.

“Has God indeed said that Christ is the only means of salvation?”

“Has God indeed said that you should love the Lord your God with all your heart ...? Does it really mean that?”

“Does the Bible really say that sex outside of marriage is wrong?”

We need an absolute confidence in God's Word.

If we have unshakeable faith in God's Word we will never be at the mercy of the enemy.