

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Part 3: Spiritual Weapons

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Right, brethren, this message is the third in our series that we have entitled Spiritual Warfare. And today's message is on "Spiritual Weapons".

What we have been saying the last couple of weeks is that obviously you and I are physical flesh and blood beings. We are used to dealing with a world that we can see, reach out and touch and taste, at times. It is easy for us to let this occupy our thinking, as that is what we relate to. And yet it would be easy, and it is very easy, to forget that there is an *invisible world*, and it is real today. So, whilst you are sitting where you are today, there is an invisible realm with principalities, powers, rulers, and wicked spirits. There are righteous angels, there are cherubim, seraphim, and who knows what else, out there in the spirit realm. You and I do not see them, and therefore it is easy to forget. But, as we have said before, we do not want to become unbalanced, like some people who become so tied up in pursuing, studying, and thinking all the time about the spirit realm, about demons. It is one-sided, and becomes a bit of an obsession to us. But, equally, we do not want to go to the opposite extreme of *forgetting entirely* about the spirit realm; we need a bit of balance there.

The first week, we looked at a few scriptures trying to emphasize that actually you and I do have a spiritual enemy.

I Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

This is good advice, we must be aware and we must be watchful. What verse 8 tells us is that you and I have an adversary — or other translations say an enemy — who is the devil. He walks about, or other translations have it as "he prowls about," just like a lion would do, seeking whom he may devour. This is implying that there are some that he *may* devour, and some that *he may not* devour. That depends on whether the person is sober and vigilant, and resists. Because if the person is not vigilant, not watchful, is a bit dozy, is otherwise occupied, does not resist, then it implies that the roaring lion may have found someone that he can devour. I guess lions are a bit choosy when they go out on the hunt. They look for ones that they can bring down. I am not sure if

lions are particularly lazy, or it's just a question of convenience, but the lion probably looks at a herd of antelope, as Satan may look at a herd of brethren, and discover that some actually are going to be easier to devour, because they are not alert, they are not wearing their armor, they are out of condition, and that they are going to be easy prey. Now you would not want that to be you, nor me myself, so therefore let us do what Peter says, let us be aware and vigilant, as we do have an adversary. An adversary is an enemy, and this is a *dangerous enemy*. We should not be worried because we have everything we need to run Satan off, but equally we have to be alert, not sleepy. You would not walk into the jungle where there are lions and tigers and have your eyes half closed, and your eyes staring at your feet as you amble along. You would be alert, you would be looking at the bushes, and your ears would be opened up listening for sounds of padding feet and snuffling in the bushes. You would not want to be caught out, you and I likewise.

II Timothy 2:24-26 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

So according to Paul, there are some who have been snared or trapped by the devil, and have been taken captive by him. Could that be you? It certainly applies to somebody! Paul was not thinking, 'This letter is a bit short so what can I stick in to this chapter to make it look a bit more significant?' Paul meant what he said, when he told Timothy that there are some things that you need to know, and one of them is how to deal with people, and some of these people (men, women, young ones) will have been trapped, ensnared by Satan, and taken captive by him. They will be his captives, under his control, and this is how you deal with them. Satan is a real adversary, a real enemy, and he does take real captives, and he does seek to devour, which means obviously to destroy, to do away with, and to bring someone's life to an end. So we are talking about a real enemy, and one that you and I are advised not to ignore and not to forget.

I think that we have asked before — can Satan just walk right into our lives, and destroy us? The answer would be no — otherwise he already would have done. Satan, in fact, requires *our cooperation*, we have to yield to Satan. You would have to "open the door" in your life to Satan. If we do, if we open the door, and we say come on in, if we make it easy, then Satan will take advantage of that. But, on the other hand, if we are alert, we can keep him at arms' length, indeed we can actually run him off as we will see later.

But you and I have to be aware, alert and vigilant to do that.

Last week, we spent some time looking at the fact that Satan's battle *is for our minds*. That is where the battleground is, between our ears. It is not that Satan comes and attacks us directly, physically, but Satan goes for our minds, and that is where he plays his game, that is where he seduces, that is where he tempts, that is where he deceives, and that is where he tricks us.

Ephesians 4:26-27 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither *give place* to the devil.

Your margin probably says "opportunity;" do not *give opportunity* to the devil. Who is not to give the devil opportunity? *You* are not. *I am* not to. But clearly *we could* if we are not vigilant, if we are not focused, paying attention, aware, if we are sleep-walking through life, then we will give the devil opportunity. He is looking for such a one and that is why he goes about like a roaring lion *seeking* whom he may devour. The point is that some people will have a big sign up saying, 'I am available, come and get me'. Then the door, when Satan arrives, will be open, because they will have given the devil place, they will have given the devil a foothold, they will give the devil an opportunity, and he will take it. I think that we saw elsewhere that Paul said that we are not to be *ignorant* of Satan's devices, of his schemes. But maybe we are, but we ought not to be, as the scriptures are plain. There are stories that we have read about people who have succumbed to Satan and his deceptions. If you left the door open to a thief, he would take advantage of that. They were walking past and saw your front door open, and saw perhaps a cabinet in your room with jewelry in it. They would think, 'I can pop in there and get that jewelry in no time'. You left the door open, you gave opportunity to a thief and Satan is a thief who comes to kill and destroy. If we leave the door open to Satan, he will take advantage of that. We know that there is nothing new under the sun, and Satan has been looking at many men and women, and deceiving them, for six thousand long years. He knows how to deceive, devour and destroy. I do not believe that Satan can actually *read our minds*, but he can read our *body language* very well and he can, of course, hear our words, and our conversations. Satan and his demons can know a fair amount about you and me, and after six thousand years he has polished the art of deceiving mankind.

When we go back to Genesis 3, we see where he deceived Eve for sure, and then Adam tagged along. Genesis 3 tells us a lot, because here we have the earliest days of Adam and Eve, and Satan, back in the Garden of Eden way back in time. What was he doing there? He was seeking whom he may devour, and with mother Eve he found someone.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

Serpent can mean serpent, but equally it can mean “shining one,” a “glorious one.” It is quite likely that Satan would have appeared in his guise as a shining, glorious spirit being. He probably looked marvelous to the eyes of Eve. Notice that he does not physically attack Eve. He doesn’t go and get a big log of wood and beat her over the head, and say, ‘Well that has taken care of that. I win, God loses’. Because, that is not how Satan works. He has to work *in the mind*. So here he is with Eve, and she does not know yet, but he is attacking her mind. He is seeking to influence the way that she thinks, because the way that she thinks will lead her to take certain actions. Just like you and me. He starts by virtually sowing doubt on the word of God. Well, did God really say this? Or, did God really mean that? And I think that you and I can see the parallel today. We have the word of God in writing. Eve probably did not hear these words, but God spoke to Adam and he passed on this information to Eve. So for Eve it was like second-hand. You and I have the thoughts of God kind of second-hand, written down by Moses, Peter, Paul and so on. Does Satan ever come to you and me and say, “Does God really mean that?” “Has God really said that?” “Is that really the word for today?” "When you think about it, it does seem a bit odd, why would God want us to do that?" Satan has not in that sense changed, because he has not needed to change. People still fall for the same story.

Genesis 3:2-4 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die...

That was a lie.

Satan is working *on the mind*. He is saying to her that God has a reason for this, God is keeping something back from you. This God-being is not after your good as you thought He was. Actually, this God-being that you are referring to, He is trying to prevent something good in your life. He is trying to keep you away from that for a reason. So he plays on Eve’s mind. He puts these thoughts, these seeds into her thinking.

Genesis 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

So what happened? He enticed her, and he played on her vanity. Eve thought, 'To be as wise as God, that sounds attractive, and after all why would He not want us to take of the fruit of the tree? Why did He make it after all if we are not to take from it?' You can imagine the reasoning.

Genesis 3:6a And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat...

She has strong desire, which is called lust. She didn't die immediately, of course. Perhaps she thought God was lying. He said, "In the day that you eat of it you will die". Maybe Adam saw that and maybe he thought something similar.

Genesis 3:6b-7 ...and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

What happened? God said that in the day that you eat thereof you will die. Took nearly a thousand years, for Adam at least, but they did die. You could say in one sense, that they were killed by the serpent, they were killed by Satan. This is true. But not directly, they cooperated with the devil. He sowed some seeds, he gave them something to think over, and he influenced their thoughts, but they had to listen, they had to heed, they had to respond, they had to yield, they had to cooperate. If they had not done any of that, then Satan could not have got to them. So Satan cannot just walk into your life and destroy you, but he can seek to get your involvement, he can get you to heed *and respond* to him. He can endeavor to get your cooperation, and if he does then he has got you.

Paul is writing some 4,000 years later than the incident in the Garden of Eden. But as far as Paul is concerned it is still relevant, it is still good teaching and 2,000 years after Paul, it is still relevant and still good teaching, because there is nothing new under the sun.

II Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

So Paul says that he is concerned about the people in Corinth. We could say the same today. You and I could be concerned that *our minds* could be corrupted by the serpent and by his craftiness. It says that Eve was deceived, *or beguiled* some translations say. Satan obtained her cooperation. I mean really Adam and Eve signed their own death warrants by acting upon what Satan had said. He convinced Eve that this was the right way to go. It was contrary to the ways of God, and she didn't say, 'Well hold on there Mr. Serpent, I think what

you say is of interest but I would rather check it out one more time with this God-being and get more information and then I will decide'. She yielded, she cooperated — and they were destroyed. Paul says that he is concerned we will go down the same route.

Am I beguiled and deceived by the serpent? *Our mind* is what Satan is after. Satan will often use human beings.

II Corinthians 11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

They turn up like, look like and purport to be the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II Corinthians 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

This is probably what Eve saw in the Garden of Eden, a brilliant shining angel.

II Corinthians 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Does Satan have any ministers? Well of course — the cardinals in the Roman Catholic Church, the bishops in the Church of England, that nasty lot in the Mormons. Well, maybe. But this is *God's people* who are at danger of being deceived, and there not many of God's people deceived by the Catholic cardinals, or the Mormon bishops. Therefore, this is a lot nearer to home. *We* must be alert. They will deceive. They won't say "today's false teaching is as follows, please turn to scripture XYZ." They will come as ministers of righteousness. They might look smooth, polished and say nice things, but by their fruits you will know them. We saw last week how Satan managed to influence even the likes of Judas Iscariot. He was one of Jesus' immediate friends, His disciple over several years, and yet clearly, little by little, over the course of time, Satan played on Judas' mind, corrupted it, changed it and eventually Satan entered into Judas, and he went out and brought about the arrest and finally the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. How long did that take for Satan to get to Judas, and to bring him to that point? But it would be obvious to me that Judas must have yielded, and he was tempted. He was a thief amongst other things, and he was following a root that leads to destruction. Another example of how Satan and his demons battle for our minds. It does not matter who you are, if you let down, if you yield and if you do not remain vigilant and alert, then Satan will look for that *opportunity*.

Matthew 16:13-20 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some,

Elias; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

At this point, Peter is being *commended*. Christ says "Well done, that is tremendous insight. I tell you what Peter, you did not learn this by yourself." All he says there is under the inspiration of God the Father. "God has given you revelation that other people do not really have. Well done!" So at that point you can imagine that Peter was floating a few inches above the ground, because he has been highly commended by the Lord Jesus for his insight, his spiritual revelation, and perhaps Peter was feeling quite good.

But notice a few verses later:

Matthew 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

This was not in the disciples' thinking at all. So Jesus began to explain about the coming crucifixion, telling them of His arrest, His beating and being scourged. He said that they would desert him. He told them that He was going to be nailed to the stake, bleed to death and be speared and all of the rest of it. They were thinking of Jesus as their hero come to restore the kingdom to Israel. He is going to kick out the Romans, what is this all about?

Matthew 16:22-23 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, *Get thee behind me, Satan*: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

You can imagine Peter's face at this point. A few verses earlier, 'God's inspiring you Peter, you have inside understanding that comes from heaven'. And here He says, 'Get back of me Satan', and He is looking at Peter when He says that. Peter was acting as a voice-piece here for Satan. Satan did not want Jesus to go to Jerusalem and to fulfill His destiny. So here is Peter, in essence innocent himself, but being *used by* Satan saying, 'Lord Jesus do not fulfill Your destiny, let us not see that happen, let us avoid that Lord Jesus'. You can imagine that Jesus did not want to go to Jerusalem and be crucified. That was not something that He was enthusiastic over. He would go, and He had the strength of character to go when His flesh was crying out otherwise. Later on, at

one point, He was sweating blood, because He was in such a huge amount of emotional trauma over it. It was not something that He wanted to do, that He delighted to do. Here is Peter saying, 'No that will not happen, we will find a different way'. So here we see Satan influencing Peter's thoughts, and even Peter's words. So Jesus said, "Get behind me Satan." I guess the other apostles nearby were thinking, 'Oops that is a bit rough'.

Satan would even be after somebody like Peter, and of course why not? He did get to Judas. With Peter, thankfully, he did not get too far.

As we said last week, you and I and others, need to be alert.

I imagine with Judas it started off very simple, just a little bit of perhaps reaction to some of Jesus' acting and teachings. But then, like a seed it would have grown and developed and matured over the course of many months. Judas became no doubt bitter, perhaps jealous, and all of the characteristics that you associate with Satan and with evil. Little by little over the time period they grew and developed. And of course that is not a place that you and I want to be.

Proverbs 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

One paraphrase reads – "Guard your heart above anything else that you have, because it determines the kind of life that you will have".

You and I can stumble through life, and perhaps some of us do at times, but we do have a mind, with a heart, and we are supposed to guard our hearts, guard our thinking with all diligence. As it says, *guard your heart* above anything else that you have. We should guard our hearts because there is an enemy, an adversary that is looking to get to our minds. With Eve he got there, Adam responded, Judas responded, Peter on one instance, at least, yielded to that influence of Satan, and tried very hard to trip up Jesus on His destiny. We saw last week, that Ananias and Sapphira sold their possessions. It was *their money*, there was no problem, but they took that money, which *was theirs* to keep, but they wanted to exalt themselves in the eyes of the church, they desired status, and they engaged in a pretence. They lied to Peter and the church, and said, 'We sold our possessions for this money and here is all of the money from our possessions. We are so good. Are you impressed? Don't you think we are something special?'

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

Then Peter explains, ‘It was your money, you did not have to bring it, there was no compulsion on you, but what you have done is you have set out to deliberately deceive the Holy Spirit, which you cannot do’. God knows all of our secrets, and so he says here, ‘Why have you allowed Satan to fill your heart, to corrupt your mind?’ And, of course, Sapphira dies shortly after Ananias, because the two of them had agreed, as husband and wife. They had discussed it. We do not know whose idea it was, but they were clearly happy to go along together. Peter says that was *satanic*, you have yielded to the voice of Satan, and he has got to your minds. You and I have to be alert. He does not have to get to our minds, it is not compulsory for it to happen, IF we guard our minds with all diligence. He will prowl and prowl, but he will have to leave you after a while and go and look for somebody else who is easier game. Satan is always after our minds, even after the things that we learn. Satan will try to take away the truth that you and I receive before it gets bedded down and starts to produce.

Mark 4:13-14 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? The sower soweth the word.

So, in fact, it is not an explanation of sowing *wheat* and *corn*, but it actually is teaching about *the truth*.

Mark 4:15 And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

When people hear the truth (and in many cases the Word comes, and faith comes by hearing of course), but also *Satan comes*. Satan does not want the Word of truth to settle down, and to produce. So Satan comes immediately. How does he take away the Word? Does he get a vacuum cleaner and stick it in someone’s brain and suck it out? No, but Satan works on the mind, and of course *casts doubt* on the Word. Before it has time to develop and settle down and help you, some well-meaning person just turns up to say, ‘No that is not right, this is what the story actually is’. Satan uses people. In fact occasionally they look like ministers of righteousness, to tell you, ‘That is not the case, oh no you do not want to believe that’. And so the Word is taken away.

Mark 4:16-17 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended.

Three guesses as to who would be behind persecution. Yep, you got it.

Mark 4:18-19 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Well who might be behind that? Who would seek to distract someone from the truth? Get them chasing their tails, worried over what they will eat, what they will drink, what they will wear, where they would live? Who is behind that? Well, Satan again.

Mark 4:20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.

You always find Satan there distracting people, it is his game.

We could say, 'I tell you what, today, I am going to put aside a good couple of hours, I am going to relax and have my bible and notebook out, and I am going to slowly read and I am going to chew over it. I am going to think about it, and I am going to take some time to pray over it, I am going to really get to grips with some of these bits of God's word today'. And you settle down, and the phone goes. Now I wonder could that happen, could Satan have put it into someone's mind to call you that very moment? Well possibly. I have had a few instances where I have thought, 'Well that is uncanny when I have settled down to finish something that I have tried to do for some time, and the proverbial "all hell breaks loose." Now, how come?'

Satan does not want you looking into God's word directly. He may send someone along to tell you that is not the story at all.

II Corinthians 2:3-4 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Paul never writes short sentences, they tend to be multi-clauses and hundreds of words at times! He is telling us that the god of this world (and we know who that is) *blinds the minds* of those who do not believe. That is what Satan does, he blinds people's minds, he distracts them, he gets them focusing on the wrong thing. He is clever that way. You can bring the truth to people, but in many cases they cannot see it because they are spiritually blinded. You can say, "Well how can Satan keep people in the dark, how can he blind them?" I think that is fairly evident. *False teaching* and *false education* will blind people, and they cannot believe the truth because they already believe a lie. If you have been taught wrongly since school days, then the truth will make no sense.

Of course, that happens across society as a whole. *Evolution* is one foundational teaching that probably 99.9% of people in the western world come through in their schooling. Evolution essentially requires no God. In fact, it says that there is no God, man is an animal, and he is the end product of millions or billions of years of accidents. There are no absolute rights or wrongs, because actually there is no God, man is just an animal. There is no life to come, this is it. People will either believe that wholly, or accept parts of it. The consequences of that, you could argue (and I would), are things like abortion. An evil teaching — in Britain we actually pronounce it ‘EVIL-ution’. That to me sounds far more accurate! And, of course, apart from false teaching in society that blinds the minds of millions and hundreds of millions at that, we have individual teaching from friends, family and acquaintances, from ministers, from those that we listen to and heed, and they can often give us misleading information. You listen to the voice of your dear friend who tells you, ‘I would not do that’. We have to watch out, deception comes from all directions, and we know that the whole world is deceived.

Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

This, of course, is talking about the end of the age. Some folk may think that man has progressed, and here in the twenty-first century our knowledge is great, our wisdom is fantastic, we have left behind us all of the primitive beliefs.

Satan the devil *deceives the whole world*. The Amplified says that he is the seducer of all humanity, of the world over. Wherever you go in this world, North Korea, China, Russia, Germany, Tennessee, Oregon, Birmingham, England, or wherever you go in this world, Satan is the deceiver.

Now, what does a deceiver do? A deceiver deceives. Where does the deceiver deceive? They deceive *us in our minds*, and in our thinking. The whole world *thinks wrong*. Does the world know that it is deceived? No! As Mr. Armstrong used to say, a deceived person does not know that they are deceived, otherwise they would not be deceived. So a deceived person thinks that they are seeing things correctly, but obviously they are not. And so the whole system around us is corrupt: education, culture, entertainment, you name it. And it is easy to be influenced by the world, you just have to do nothing at all, just relax and coast, and you will be deceived. Because the whole world is, and if you are in the stream, going downstream with everybody else, you can bet your boots you are deceived. It is quite likely that we are all still deceived in part, and we would not know it, would we, until it is revealed to us? But deception is easy, just switch off the guard from your mind, relax, and you will be deceived, you can guarantee it! Satan blinds the eyes of those who do not believe, and Revelation 12

tell us that he deceives the world over, all humanity, and that is why you and I are told to take great care of our minds.

As we were told earlier, "guard your mind with all diligence."

Paul warns us about just yielding to the world and its thinking, and that is the worst possible thing that you and I could do.

Romans 12:2a And be not conformed to this world:

Do not be conformed, what does that mean? It means do not share the world's views, do not just relax. Do not absorb the ways of the world around you. It takes no effort, you just coast.

Romans 12:2b ...but be ye transformed by the *renewing of your mind*, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

It is *our minds* that need to be renewed, and part of that is obviously our defense against Satan. Satan can easily get to the natural mind because it thinks naturally, it is greedy, and competitive, and tends to get angry, and tends to lust, and has vanity. The natural mind is one that Satan can easily deal with, and he has had 6,000 years of practice.

But you and I are not supposed to have that mind, are we? "*Let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus,*" it says elsewhere. You and I are to be transformed by the *renewing of our minds*, which means our thoughts, our thinking patterns, the way that we look at the world, the way that we think, what is valuable, what is important. Our priorities and our thinking are supposed to *be different* from that of the people around us. Really, a large portion of it means that you and I are supposed to be watchful, on guard at the thoughts that come our way. Take yourself: would you say that most of the time, most of the day, that your thoughts are noble, and positive? Does your mind basically hold good thoughts, good thoughts about yourself, good thoughts about people you know, good thoughts about situations and circumstances? Is it a mind that dwells on healthy, good, positive thoughts? Or, is your mind jangling, is it negative, is it filled with anger, hostility, selfish? Which way does your mind work? Now you can answer that question, and you probably will get a good idea what is behind that.

If we do not guard our minds, then we just take on the coloring of the world around us, and we know that the world around us is deceived, the way that they think is wrong, and that you and I think naturally is wrong. Just before Jesus was arrested He said:

Matthew 26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Jesus is giving us some good advice here. He says, 'Watch', meaning be vigilant, stay alert and pray, stay awake. Praying does not just mean the disciples here on this night, as we will see in a couple of other scriptures.

Jesus is saying, 'Watch and stay vigilant, so you don't enter into temptation'. If you do not watch, and you are not praying, then you stand a risk of entering into temptation. Temptation can be there, but if you do not yield to it, then it stays there. What you do not want to do is to enter into it, walk towards it, knock on its door, and enter in. And then, of course, the devil will jump all over you. Watch and pray. The Amplified says, "All of you must keep awake, give strict attention, be cautious and active, and watch and pray that you may not come into temptation."

So keep awake, stay alert, and be cautious. Now that requires us to be alert. It means that you do not just get up in the morning and stumble through the day, and then think last thing at night, I wonder if Satan was on the earth today? I wonder where he was? Or you could say, 'Okay my mind is important, and I need to guard it. Satan is prowling and I need to be very careful what is going on in my mind, and what voices that I am listening to'. We know that Satan is the tempter, is he not? It says in a couple of places that he is the "tempter". So he will come to, strangely enough, "tempt!" And what you get when you are tempted is *a temptation*. Jesus says to be vigilant, be alert and do not enter into temptation. When the tempter comes you should have gone deaf; you do not hear the tempter, because your mind is closed to him. There are lots of verses that admonish us to be watchful and alert.

I Corinthians 16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Paul wants us to watch, and one commentary says that the Greek word for watch, meaning be vigilant, may be a military metaphor for *sentinels* who would guard a camp, or observe the movements of an enemy. So I guess that is fair enough for *watch*; it means just that. If you were a military man, and you were instructed to watch through the night, and to guard the camp where your buddies were, well you would not just go out and sit under a tree and go to sleep. That would be a fat lot of use as a watchman, when the enemy comes in and kills everybody. No, you are out there *on guard*. You would be watchful, you would stay awake, you would stay alert, and you would be looking and listening so that if there is any sign of trouble you can raise the alarm.

Well, it is the same here: watch, be vigilant, stand fast in the faith, be brave, and be strong. You and I have to be, we cannot afford to just amble carelessly through life, stumbling into situations and circumstances, and then reacting after the event. ‘Oh my word I am in trouble, what do I do now?’ Any time God will step in to help us, but ideally if He is telling us to watch, be vigilant, guard our minds with all diligence, then we ought to do that. We are supposed to be vigilant people.

You and I are making decisions all day long. But what direction are the decisions taking us? Where are the thoughts coming from, and where are they taking us? Are your thoughts and your decisions day by day taking you closer to God’s kingdom? Are your thoughts positive, up-building, fruitful, and clearly thoughts that come from God? You can tell, because they would be *good thoughts*. Or, are they thoughts of a different nature entirely? Paul has instructed us to be fully armed. Paul wants us to be armed and safe from the spirit realm, so he told us about being fully armed. Right now there is a principle that Paul brings out.

II Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war *after the flesh*...

The way that you and I engage in spiritual warfare is not using *physical weapons*. You do not use a shot gun, you do not use a hammer, and you do not use a rotten tomato. You and I are in warfare, but it says here:

II Corinthians 10:4a For the weapons of our warfare [so, hint — *weapons, warfare*] are not carnal, but mighty through God...

That would be thoughts of others who want to argue against us, and obviously would apply, I think to our own thoughts. Do not let your thoughts run wild in your mind so that Satan can play games of anger, hostility, lust, greed, temptation to steal, adultery, whatever it might be. Our thoughts have to be brought into control to the obedience of Christ. Paul is saying here that our weapons are *spiritual weapons*, they are not natural fleshly weapons.

II Corinthians 10:4b to the pulling down of strong holds...

You can imagine what a *stronghold* is. Stronghold in the Greek is like a *fortress*, or a castle. We said earlier let us not give Satan *an opportunity* to set down a beach head in our lives. A beach head or stronghold would be a place where Satan, if you like, could gain access to us and then he could launch advanced attacks. The beach heads are what they used in the war. They would land on the beach and try and get down in a position to hold it temporarily, and then that is the area where they would launch their more advanced attacks. The impression here is that Paul is saying *let us not give Satan a beach head*, or a stronghold in our life. Do not give him a

place in your life, where he can actually set up camp, and he can then launch numerous advanced attacks against you. *Pull the strongholds down*, do not give him a place. We have the weapons to do that, and our weapons are not fleshly, carnal weapons, they are mighty weapons in God, and we can use them as Paul says:

II Corinthians 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

We know that there is one passage that deals with the spiritual armory, which is Ephesians 6.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

That is why our weapons are not carnal because you and I do not have any carnal, fleshly strength against spirit beings, but we can be *strong in the Lord*.

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

We have been through these verses before, and ‘wiles’ means: scheming, trickery, deception. It is not as if Satan can just come and beat you up physically and destroy you, otherwise he would have done so already. But Paul says that you need the armour of God on so that you can stand against the scheming, the plotting of the devil. He would be working through *people* most of the time to get to you. Sometimes putting thoughts into your mind directly, but quite often it is through people, because Paul says:

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not *against flesh and blood*, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

So we can see plainly that there is a war, there is warfare, against various types of *spirit beings*. And so Paul says, “Get your armor on.” Are you going to guard your mind, because that is where the battle is? Then get your armor on to protect your mind, and most of the armor, probably all of it in a sense, is all to do with the battle in the mind, the battle for the mind.

Ephesians 6:13-14 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

Well I think that we will see that all of these are to do *with the mind*. But notice first of all, ‘*gird your waist with truth*,’ other translations say, ‘*with the belt of truth around your loins*.’ Well what is truth? We know that

God's word is truth. The antidote to deception is always going to be truth. Satan is a deceiver, and he is trying to trick us in our minds. What will always work against deception *is truth.* That is the antidote. Where does truth reside? Truth resides in our minds. So here Paul says, '*Get on the belt of truth.*' What he means is to have your mind based in God's truth. It will always work. Truth is always going to see off Satan. If you hold on to the truth then Satan cannot deceive us. Any story that comes to us we say, just a moment, let me check that out in the scriptures. Once you do that, you can see through Satan every day.

I think that the first year or so that I was in church, we had a Bible study and the minister went to this next scripture, and it impressed me then, and it has not left me since.

Isaiah 8:20 *To the law and to the testimony:* if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

That is always, always, always going to be the solution. You see off deception by the truth. If it is not according to the law and to the testimony, then there is no light and no truth.

Isaiah 8:19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? For the living to the dead?

People then were looking for knowledge and understanding, for wisdom, from the spiritists of the day. They were looking for spiritual knowledge elsewhere than God. No! Not the way, either then or today. *To the law and to the testimony!* — that is where you and I look. The word of God is the antidote to deception, and therefore to the deceiver.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

What does a breastplate do? Well it protects your main organs, among them being your heart. It protects your heart, which is, of course, your mind. The scripture says "all your commandments are righteousness" and right living. Avoiding Satan's territory protects us. If we are not in Satan's territory, in his backyard, then we will not be bitten by Satan's dog. Right living is an essential thing to do. If you are not in casinos till the wee hours of the morning, you are not taking drugs, if you are not chasing loose women; if you are not unequally yoked to unbelievers, if you are not, in other words, living wrongly — you will be safe guarded. So, living right will protect us, because we are not in harm's way, we are not in Satan's backyard. His big nasty mongrel will not come and get you, because you are *living right!*

Ephesians 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace...

Well again, the gospel is the good news, it is what we believe in, and we believe *in the truth*. Feet being shod means being *prepared for battle*. You cannot run into battle effectively if you have bare feet and the ground is all covered with thorns and thistles, and so on. So here he is talking about you being ready for battle, because of the gospel, because of the good news, that we believe in our minds.

Ephesians 6:16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Of course, Satan is involved, he has fiery darts, and where are they aimed? They are aimed at your mind, at your thoughts, getting you deceived, getting you thinking wrong. If you think wrong, you will believe wrong. Once you have believed wrong, you will go the wrong way, once you go the wrong way, you will not be in the Kingdom. It is easy enough from Satan's perspective. Get these fiery darts and send it towards you — but thankfully the shield of faith can quench all of them. And what is faith all about? Well faith is all about *believing the word of God*. We must not rely on what we see with our eyes. So rather than relying on what we see with our eyes, hear with our ears and so on, we do not walk by sight, but we walk by faith. We believe and trust in the Word of the living God.

So again, it has to do with *what is in our minds*.

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...

Well that is fairly plain: the sword of the Spirit is God's word, which is truth. The helmet of salvation – a helmet guards your head which contains your mind. So like I say, it has all to do with the mind and truth. In another place it says the helmet of the hope of salvation. Hope is what we believe; it is our confident expectation of salvation, what we believe, what we are positive about, what we are assured of. So, one after one, these things are all about the truth, *the Word of God* and believing right, and that is exactly how we defeat Satan.

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Everything in that passage is all about right thinking, right believing about the truth, and about being guided by the Word of God. That is not rocket science, truth is the complete antidote to deception. Satan might bring his

schemes to us, his cunning craftiness directly, or by friends, society, or ministers, but every time — *to the law and to the testimony* — that is how we defeat Satan.

Remember when Satan came to tempt Jesus, Jesus repeatedly said, ‘No, no Satan *it is written*’, and Jesus used a scripture. Jesus said, ‘No, no *it is written*’, and Jesus said, ‘No, no Satan *it is written*’. And eventually Satan left, and so that is how you and I do it, we look *to the law and to the testimony*, and we hold fast to what is true. In all things, hold fast to that which is good, then Satan cannot deceive.

Watch your mind in the next day, or week or so, and you will find all manner of things crawling around in there, and it is not that hard to figure out where the thoughts are coming from, and whether they are worth enjoying, and watering and keeping. Or whether they are thoughts best rejected.

James 4:6-7 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. ...*Resist the devil*, and he will flee from you.

So you and I are told to humble ourselves before God, to be teachable and not arrogant, not to think that we know it all, but to submit to God. There will be times when the tempter comes to tempt, and what you and I are supposed to do is not yield and submit to Satan and be tempted (maybe it is to be angry, maybe it is to gossip, maybe it is to give in to a lust). But no, we do not submit to Satan, we do not yield and we do not cooperate with Satan and his thoughts, his schemes and his wiles. We do not give him opportunity, we do not give him advantage, we do not give him a stronghold, a foothold and a beach head in our lives, but we submit to God. Now God said this:

James 6:17 *Resist the devil*, and he will flee from you.

One translation says, "flee as in fear." Satan has not got it "over" you and me, we *are conquerors* in Jesus Christ, but Satan is the deceiver, he is the tempter and he is looking for an opportunity in life to try and get to you, to try to distract you, and to ultimately try *to devour* you and me. The key for us is that we have God's *spiritual armor*, and we have God's *spiritual weapons*. There is a spiritual adversary, so the onus really is on you and me to do our part — to be very watchful, to be very vigilant, and at all times to submit to God and to *resist the devil* —and we are promised that he will then flee from us!

Transcribed by Patricia Plunkett (many thanks Tricia!)