

The Battle Within

by Ron Reed

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding spiritual warfare and the battle within, where Christians must resist Satan and put off their old sinful nature to live a new life in Christ.

Duration: 48:20

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having the right training and strategies to win the spiritual war. He highlights the need for discernment to recognize the enemy's strategies before they even begin. The speaker also reminds the audience of God's love for the world and His desire for salvation, contrasting it with the enemy's intention to bring separation between humanity and God. He draws parallels between the nation being at war with terrorism and the spiritual war Christians are engaged in, urging believers not to forget their role in the battle.

Transcript

Father, we thank you for that little child so long ago. We thank you that Mary said, Be it unto me thy hand's servant, according to your word. We thank you for Joseph, who was willing to continue with Mary, because at your word you told him what was happening.

We thank you that Jesus lived a sinless life, and that he died a sinner's death, and yet he rose from that grave. Oh, what a gift that Christmas brings, that our soul can be cleansed and sin no longer clings. Oh, Lord, wash us white as snow.

Let your Spirit flow through us today, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Today we are beginning a series on the war. And it's not the war that you might be thinking of, although I'm not sure what war you are thinking of right now. Maybe later you can tell me.

Maybe it's a national war, international war, or just the one in your home. I don't know, but we're going to talk about the war today. And before I begin, I want to refer to a couple of newspaper articles that I have referenced in the last few weeks.

And I'll tell you already that this is an unusual type of sermon for me. I usually just teach through the scripture, chapter by chapter. But we're going to do a topical study on warfare.

And to illustrate the point, I read about this airliner that was flying from Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, I believe to New Delhi or to a city in India. It was Indian Airlines. And the pilot needed somewhere along the journey to leave the cockpit to tend to something.

And as he was out, the co-pilot, a young fellow with not a lot of training, only 25 years old, was left in charge. And as he was piloting the plane, he decided that his seat wasn't just right. And so I don't know what it's like on an airline.

I'm not sure. Maybe like on my Ford pickup, I just reached down and pull up a little lever and, you know, kind of scooped the seat forward. I'm not sure how it happened.

But when he did this, he bumped the control column and sent the airliner into a steep dive, the kind of dive that if you don't recover from it quickly, you just don't recover. There's so many things that can go wrong. And one of them is, is the velocity increases as you go into the dive and can cause the airplane to break up.

It's just not meant to go that fast. And so the pilot makes his way back up to the cockpit, punches his code in and gets in there, has to get the co-pilot to get his hands off the controls. He gets into his seat and he uses his training to take all the steps necessary to get the plane back to flying level and then take it back up to the normal altitude.

And everyone on board was probably scared to death, but they were all alive. And the reason that that airplane was saved that day. Well, I'm sure someone was praying, you know, people start praying when this happens, right? Loudly.

My wife prays loudly when things like this happen. But also that pilot had gone through training. The pilot had been trained what to do when something like this happens.

When the airplane goes into a dive, here's all the steps that you take to get the airplane back into the normal flying mode. And then another incident that happened recently, it was while Barb and I were in India after we had flown about 13,000 hours to get over there. It was only 30, it just seemed like 13,000.

And we've landed. And then we hear like the next day that this big airliner from Australia had had an engine completely explode and had taken out some of the avionics and so forth. And so the pilots were able to land the plane.

And that's what we read the first day. And then about a week later, I was reading that there were five senior pilots in the cockpit when that happened. The reason was, is the senior pilot was being evaluated, evaluated by another senior pilot who was being evaluated by yet a third senior pilot.

And the copilot had been a senior pilot. He just happened to pull the card to fly that day. And then somehow there was another one in there.

And they have 38 warning lights come on all at once when that engine exploded, each one of which had to be dealt with and they need to be dealt with in the proper order. And I don't understand all these things, although airplanes fascinate me. But because there were five pilots on board, each one was able to take the task at hand and in just a couple of minutes deal with each one of the warning lights the best they could and then get the plane to safety and not one person was lost because of that.

And once again, the reason being, I'm sure people were praying, but also training, training times five, five senior pilots had knew what to do. Training got that airplane on the ground. And then there's an incident where poor training, improper training caused massive failure, where over 3000 people died when hijackers took over airplanes and began to fly them into buildings.

And the training that the crew had on those airplanes was if a hijacker takes over, you just deal with it passively. You don't aggravate things, aggravate things. You just go along with them until you can negotiate a settlement.

There was no negotiation. The planes flew into buildings. People died.

It was a horrendous thing. Only one of the airplanes did the passengers not follow the training or the script, and they were able to crash the plane and keep it from doing whatever it was planned to do. Some say the White House.

Now, in that particular case, the training was incorrect. They followed incorrect training and therefore thousands upon thousands of people died. I can't honestly say that the outcome would have been any different, but possibly it would have and possibly even history would be different today if they had the kind of training that they follow now, which is not passive.

They get quite aggressive if somebody threatens to blow up an airplane these days. There are people all over this and they don't give in so quickly to someone who's threatening to do something on an airplane. Now, because of that event, as you may remember, our nation is at war.

It doesn't exactly feel like war, does it? Unless you're flying and you go through TSA and they do a pretty aggressive pat down or something like that. And I don't know if you've read the horrendous stories. On our trip, I only had one pat down that was unnerving, and that was in Germany coming on on the way home.

Well, I won't describe it. It just was like, oh, my gosh, I'm not sure I want to fly anymore. But this describes that we're a nation and in a sense we're a world at war with terrorism and we're supposed to be vigilant, right? One of the things I think as Christians, just like as we as Americans can easily forget we're at war unless we hear about it, unless maybe we're in the military or we have family military that are tuned in to what's going on, because our lives are so normal, you know, we get up, we go to work, if we still have a job, we come home, we go to the grocery store, we drive around, we go to entertainment, we come to church, whatever, and life just goes on.

And it's so easy for us to forget that we're at war. Before I was born, our nation was in a war to survive. It was called World War II.

And the entire nation got involved in that war, including collecting metal to build ships and all kinds of things. There was rationing. And there wasn't a day that went by that our nation wasn't reminded that we were at war and we lost hundreds of thousands of soldiers, young men, part of an entire generation during that time.

Now, I'm not here at all to debate the politics of war. I'm here to talk about the spiritual warfare that we as Christians are involved with. But interestingly enough, most of us have no awareness of this warfare.

Most of us live as though it's not real, as though it's not true, as though it's irrelevant to us. And so we just go on with our life as though it doesn't matter. I heard one fellow say quite a number of years ago that

most Christians live as though they are atheists.

I mean, they profess a belief in God, but they live their lives as though God isn't real, as though God doesn't exist. And if that's true in any degree whatsoever in anyone's life, then you become unaware of the spiritual warfare going on around us and the strategies necessary to have victory in spiritual warfare. And so today, as we begin a series on spiritual warfare, we're going to look at the battle within, the battle within.

I won't be going verse by verse, but we'll be reading a number of scriptures throughout the Bible. We'll have them on display, at least most of them. And we begin with the nature of the spiritual battle within, which starts with the battle for the soul.

Now, most of you would not argue with me that we are made up of a physical body and we also have a soul or a spirit. And in the Bible, by and large, it starts off arguing the point or presenting the idea that we're simply body and soul. And you can read in Proverbs 11, verse 17, the merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh.

And so you can do good for your soul or you can trouble your flesh. What is the soul, by the way? I think the best way to describe the soul is it's your personality. It's your person.

Have you ever considered oftentimes that your personality can seem to project beyond yourself? And I'm not talking about some weird spiritual mysticism. It's just that some people have a personality that seems bigger than themselves. They walk into a room, the whole room changes somehow because they walk in.

The soul, I believe, is that part of your person that not only is now, but will continue on after this body is long finished. And so we have a soul, we have a body. Psalm 31, 9. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble.

My eye wastes away with grief. Yes, my soul and my body. Matthew 10, 28.

Jesus speaking and do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear him, that is God, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. And so the soul, that personality or personal part of us, continues beyond this life. And then as we're considering, and this again is talking of the believer's life and being at war, we have to understand who our enemy is.

Who is our enemy? The enemy is the one who hates our soul. 1 Peter 5, 8 and 9, Peter warns us to be sober, be vigilant. Now, sober there means more than not being drunk.

It means just to have a sober, real look at life. Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion. By the way, those two words fit very well with being on guard duty.

You're supposed to pay attention and you're supposed to notice everything and take note of everything. Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Now that means he's looking for the weak one.

He's looking for the one who doesn't stay with the rest of them. He's looking for the one who's wounded and straggling and off by him or herself. And that's the one.

The devil is not so interested in going after the ones that are right in the middle of things. He's after the straggler. It says here in the next verse, resist him steadfast in the faith.

How do you resist the devil? Do you do it in your own strength in the flesh? No, you do this steadfast in the faith. You resist him in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. In other words, it's not surprising that as a believer, that the enemy is after us and he wants to cause us harm and he wants to disable us so that we're no longer fit for battle.

One of the things, the strategies that the army has been experimenting with, or one of the, I guess the military, is some sort of a device that causes the soldiers, the enemy soldiers, to become passive. So the soldiers are out there and they want to kill you, you know, if they're, if they're the enemy and they got their weapons or their tanks or whatever it is they've got. And with this device, if it's deployed, it causes them to just kind of not care about the war anymore.

In fact, they kind of see you as a friend and, and they're not interested in shooting you. Somebody would say, well, let's turn that on the whole world and stop all wars. Interesting thought.

But you know what? The devil has been using that same tactic ever since the garden. And his tactic is to get us distracted so that we're no longer useful and so that we're disabled and we're no longer a threat to him. And there's a number of ways that he does that.

And we need to understand that there is one who hates our soul and that we need to understand his strategies in spiritual warfare. And then there's the one who loves our soul. Do you know who that is? God loves our soul.

Say this with me. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved.

Isn't that a wonderful verse for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. There is the enemy of our soul. It started in the garden of Eden when he came to the woman and he beguiled her to eat of the forbidden fruit and to disobey God.

And that one sin brought separation between the soul and spirit of man. And between God, that fellowship was broken and that is reconciled as we believe and put our faith in God through his son, Jesus Christ. That reconciliation happens within our heart as we do that.

And God so loved that he sent his only son for our soul, for your soul. When I was a little boy and it was either Sunday school or vacation Bible school, I grew up in a pastor's home. So I was in meetings.

I even had to go to the ladies meeting. I was an honorary WCTU member. And I think at one point I was even a mission that that was like the girls Boy Scouts or thing because I had nowhere to go and I was being babysat.

So here I am. You know, we are missing that. And so I was always learning about the Lord.

And I remember oftentimes the teacher would do this when they would teach us that verse. They would say, put your name in there for God so loved Ron that he gave his only son, that if Ron would believe Ron would not perish, but Ron would have everlasting life. I can remember that from early in my childhood, and I have no doubt that if I believe that I have everlasting life, you see, there is an enemy who hates my soul, but there is God who loves my soul and wants to redeem and wants to save it.

But once I have given my life to the Lord, it doesn't mean that the battle is over. There's two other verses that I really like to deal with their salvation. Psalm 119, verse 81.

My soul faints for your salvation, but I hope in your word being in the word is such an important part of our walk with God. And then I just love that the poetry, this verse, Isaiah 61, 10. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.

My soul shall be joyful in my God for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation. Just think about that for a moment. He has clothed me with the garments of salvation.

Now, those of you who enjoy clothes shopping, you know, clothes, you go into the store, you pick out some things, you go into the little room, you close the door, you try it on, you look in the mirror. If you have friends, and this is more of a girl thing, but if you have friends, you have your friends, you open the door and they go. And if you're a guy, you call your wife over, say, what do you think? No, that's not you.

Take that off. You know, should I go back in there first? Yeah, I go back in there first. You know, so anyway, you love to go clothes shopping and and imagine that God has prepared a wardrobe for you.

And it's beautiful. And it matches all your colors. He has clothed me with the garments of salvation.

He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. I mean, I love it when clothes fit well and look good. And these clothes are going to fit well and look good because this is what he's done for me.

And he describes it even more as a bridegroom decks himself out with ornaments. Now, you know, here it's the funny looking tux with ruffles that most bride, you know, most grooms put on when they go to a wedding. But in India, where we just came, the grooms are magnificently arrayed with gold embroidered throughout their their gown that they wear.

And they have a turban with jewels in it. And if you think he's amazing to look at, you should see the bride because she is really amazing. She she she looks like a gift ready to be unwrapped.

She's amazing. And so here's how he describes this robe that he puts on us. He's covered me with a robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself out with ornaments and as a bride adorns yourself with jewels.

In other words, that's how much God loves you. The enemy is after your soul to destroy you, to kill you, but God loves you so much that he wants to cover you with salvation. He wants to give you a robe of righteousness.

He wants to deck you out with ornaments. He wants to adorn you with jewels. That's how much he loves you.

And we know that Christ died for us in Romans chapter five, verse six, when we were still without strength in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. And in Romans 14, verse seven, for none of us lives to himself and no one dies to himself, or if we live, we live to the Lord. And if we die, we die to the Lord.

Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end, Christ died and rose and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. We have we have died with Christ, which really brings us to the thrust of what I want to talk about in this.

That's this battle that's within us. And the Bible describes this as the old man versus the new man. Now, when he's talking about the old man, he's not talking about the old guy who lives down the street.

It's interesting that as time is going on for some of our neighbors, I'm now the old guy that lives down the street. There's so much younger than me. For the longest time, I've always known the old guy that lived down the street.

But that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about the inner man and the old you, your old soul, your old person and the new you. When you come to Christ, there's a change that begins to take place as you surrender your life to the Lord.

We begin a new life. We read in Romans chapter six, for if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing that our old man was crucified with him. And when you come and give your life to the Lord, it's as though you are crucified, your old self, your old person, the old you.

Make it personal. The old Ron, the old Jim, the old Bob, crucified with Christ and the body of sin that the body sin might be done away with it. We should no longer be slaves to sin.

What is the purpose of the crucifixion of our identifying ourselves with Christ? It's so that we are no longer slaves to sin. Now, think back to before you were a believer and how that sin just had you by the throat and led you around by the nose. And even when you didn't want to do it anymore, you found yourself doing that.

But then when you come to Christ and you crucify the old man and sin is done away with, you're no longer a slave to it, for he who has died is free from sin. That's God's plan. And then in Colossians three, verse eight.

Now, you yourselves are to put off all these. Who is supposed to do this here in this verse? You yourselves. This isn't something somebody does for you.

You put these things off. Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy. Starting with anger.

We live in such an angry world. And it's interesting how many people have anger issues. We as a society maybe have given up on doing away with anger.

And so we're learning to manage anger. You can actually take anger management classes so that you can channel your anger in constructive ways. But what does the Bible say we're supposed to do with it? Put it off.

It's interesting that the Greek word there that's translated put off here in the scripture actually means to disrobe. So remember the changing room, you're there buying the new clothes. You have to take off the old clothes to put on the new clothes.

And it's the same way you take off anger. Now, a lot of people, when they come to Christ, disguise anger. They put lights, bows, bulbs, a little star on top and try to make it look good.

But it's always there. And you know, you might be able to go the longest time without anger even being exposed. But somebody somewhere is going to come along and they're going to push that button.

Anybody able to push your button like that? And anger comes rolling out of you like a, I don't know, like a volcano. Last service, somewhere along here, when I was talking about putting off anger, we developed a hum in our sound system. There's a lot that I can deal with as a speaker.

I can put up with all kinds of interruptions and it doesn't throw me. I can't deal with hums. And part of the reason is I've been a sound man since I was 12 and I'm compelled to deal with it.

And so it really interrupted the flow of things. We were able to put it back together and the Lord blessed it anyway. But I had immediately a lesson.

Am I going to be angry and wrathful and show malice about this or curse? Well, the Lord put me to the test right on the spot in front of everybody. Put off anger, wrath, malice, and blasphemy. One thing leads to the other by the way, and then filthy language out of your mouth.

Do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man who has renewed in knowledge, according to the image of him who created him. And so in the one case put off, that means to disrobe of the old man, these old ways, anger, wrath, malice, malice, by the way, means the intention to do harm to somebody else. Put that off and then put on the new man.

And then in second Corinthians 5, 17, if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

If you're in Christ, if you're in Christ, if you're in Christ, you're a new creation. If you find that you're not in Christ, you'll find that the old man has resurrected himself in your life. Sin has resurrected itself in your life.

And you're a slave again to that which Christ died to set you free from. How did it happen? It's because instead of leaving the old man crucified on that cross, you began to dress his wounds and you began to give him water and food and nourish him until he came back to life again. And the old man will always lead you back to slavery and back to sin.

So put off the old man, old things are passed away. Now, I would like to describe three voices to you that almost all of us deal with, although maybe not everyone is aware that we deal with those. The first one I would describe as the inner voice, and that is sort of like when your personality talks to you.

And then also there is the voice of the Lord that might be speaking to you. And there's also the enemy's voice who also might be speaking to you. And you might be at this point thinking in your mind, and you can hear it clearly, this guy is whacked.

But the very fact that you're thinking that in your mind means that I'm right. At least one of those voices is talking to you. Now, the inner voice, the inner voice can be loud.

I remember one time the inner voice was, I was having some sort of an argument, I think with myself about something, I don't know. And I was afraid that everybody around me could hear it because it was so loud. And the inner voice is that which, well, I think pulls you aside and distracts you the easiest.

It's your own inner voice, more so even than the voice of the enemy. It's your own inner voice that can cause you to stumble and be distracted and become useless as a believer, more so than anything else. And it's tied very much with these things we're supposed to put off back there in Colossians chapter three, anger being the biggest one.

And so one of those things that I described with the inner voice, and this is one I finally recognized about two years ago. I mean, you'd think that I would have picked it up sooner, but I recognized that I have these phantom arguments with people that I'm unhappy with and I'm angry with people that done me wrong, you know. And so I'll be driving or sitting or watching TV.

I even had one time where I was preaching while I'm having an angry voice argument with somebody, these phantom fights. And I'm so clever in these phantom fights as I'm arguing with my enemy, whoever it might be. I say the most clever things and they just kind of sit there and they have nothing to say because my enemies in my mind, I just make them stupid so they can't say anything.

And this goes on and on and on. And you know what? If that's you, if you're filled with anger and wrath and malice, you're continually going to be having an argument with somebody in your head. And this will be your way of life.

In fact, you'll find it really hard to turn that voice off so that you can go to sleep because it's just always there with you and you've grown accustomed to listening to it and arguing with it. And it's so much a part of you that you would feel lost without it. That's the inner voice.

And one of the problems with the inner voice is it's supposed to be hooked to our conscience. And so if we're about to do something wrong, it says, don't do that. Everybody is born with a conscience, I think.

But over time, as we keep ignoring the conscience, we train the inner voice to begin to say what we want to hear. And so then we convince ourselves, well, I can only be happy if I do this. My happiness lies in taking these actions, which I know is wrong for most people, and ordinarily I would even think this is wrong for me, but you know, my happiness is at stake here, and so I've got to do it.

And so your inner voice convinces you, you know. And that sort of thing happens without the enemy doing anything. He's not there at all.

It's just you and your little voice and your seared conscience leading you away from God. That's one voice, the inner voice. And then there is the Lord's voice.

In John chapter 10, verse 26. But you do not believe because you are not my sheep, as I said to you. Remember, I said, if you are in Christ, if you really belong to the Lord and you're his sheep, you'll hear his voice.

The next part of the verse, next sentence. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. And I give them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand.

And so the sheep, those who belong to Christ, know his voice. Now, let's see what the voice of Christ is like or the voice of God is like. We find Elijah encountering God and hearing from God.

And somehow God says to him, go out, stand on the mountain before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by in a great and strong wind, tore into the mountains and broke the rocks and pieces before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind.

And after the wind, an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire.

But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still, small voice. What is the voice of the Lord? It's a still, small voice.

And, you know, sometimes the voice of the Lord can sound so much like your little inner voice that it takes a tuned ear to know the difference. But here's one of the ways that you can tell the difference. The Lord will never encourage you to do wrong.

The Lord will never disagree with his word. If you find yourself arguing with the word of God, you read something. Well, I don't agree with that.

Well, that's not the Lord's voice in you. That is either your voice or the enemy's voice, because whenever you find yourself disagreeing with the word of God, then you're in rebellion against God. And you're either listening to your own inner voice and you're a rebel and you need to repent if you are, or you're listening to the devil and you become a slave to his voice and you still need to repent if that's true.

But you're not hearing from the Lord. If it's the still, small voice of the Lord, he's not going to go against his word. He's not going to tell you to do something that's wrong, that's immoral, that's against the law.

He's going to instruct you in the ways of righteousness. And most often, here's how the Lord speaks to you when you read his word. Now, I'm going to speak parenthetically.

We're going to put the little parentheses up here and I'm going to go off on a short rant. This might hurt. Brace yourselves.

In our modern times, so many Christians do not have a devotional life. And what do I mean by that? That's where you find a time, sometime during the day, where you are with the Lord and you're opening the word and you're reading it and you're praying and you're talking to him. And so, his word, he's speaking to you.

Your voice, you're praying and talking to him. And then among Christians who do have a devotional life, there are so many who substitute the word of God and prayer for devotional books like Our Daily Bread, John Corson's devotional, Chuck Smith, Chuck Missler, Chuck Swindoll and all the other Chucks. And you know, these guys write great stuff, most of them anyway.

I really trust Chuck Smith and I trust mostly Chuck Swindoll. But I have to tell you this, that too many times when you read someone's devotional, they're not actually telling you what the word of God says. When they read that, it made them think of something.

And so, they write about the something they think about. And so, you read that and you like it because they're a good writer. And you say, I think that's great.

And so, you go away with the impression that that verse that they just quoted or put in their little devotional was about what they had just written. And the fact is, it had nothing to do with it. It was just something that they thought of.

And so, they wrote something down to encourage you. Now, I think devotionals are great because I think they can be very encouraging as long as you're not using them as a study tool. Because the best kind of devotions is when you're with the word of God and you're just soaking it in.

And you're just reading it over and over again. And you're pulling it into your mind with the deliberate idea that throughout the day you want to think about what you just read. So, if you're a brilliant person who can

read 40 verses, memorize them throughout the day, read them in your mind and meditate on them, go ahead and do the 40 verses.

If you're like me, try one verse or two. Pull that into your mind and meditate on it. Find what you want to be thinking about that day and think about it all day long.

Get into the word of God and have a life of prayer. Now, end of parenthesis. We have our inner voice, we have the voice of the Lord and then we have the enemy's voice and I would say that I would call this the inner voice versus the enemy's voice.

We might even say the inner voice and the voice of the Lord versus the enemy's voice. Now, here's what the enemy is after. He's after your soul.

He's seeking whom he may devour, right? That's what he wants to do. And so the enemy is there to resist us when our inner voice wants to do what's right. Or when the Lord is speaking to us to do what's right.

I describe this oftentimes when we're doing when I'm giving opportunity for someone to receive Christ. I'll say, look if there's something happening in your soul or your spirit right now that's saying yes, yes, yes, I want to respond. That's the Lord.

Make sure that you respond to it. But if there's something happening with you that's angry and says no, no, no, then that's the voice of the enemy and he's trying to keep you from responding to what God wants to do in your life right now. Now, that's really what the devil's about.

He stirs anger and disappointment and bitterness. Or he'll cause you to think about something so bizarre right at the most inopportune time that totally takes your mind away from what you need to be doing at that very moment and thinking about. And he is trying to destroy your soul.

He's trying to devour you. And if you've ever seen it yourself, I grew up in Wyoming. I've seen a few occasions where coyotes or wolves were stalking animals.

And I've seen how that, especially if they're working in packs, how that they'll work together to get, you know, one of the animals off by themselves. And if they can do that, then they go attack that animal and take it out. And that's really the strategy of the enemy is one by one to cut us out of the flock and to attack us and to destroy us.

And one of the strategies of the enemy is to get into our mind and to stir up anger or suspicion or speculation. Now, speculation. I think this is the most evil and diabolical tool that the enemy has.

Speculation is when somebody does something or says something or you think they did something or said something. And then you begin to think in your mind about what that meant that they did or said that. And then you make this whole scenario about what that means.

And then you get really mad at it about it. And you have this big phantom argument going on in your mind. And then when you actually see them, you're already really ticked off at them.

For some of you, I'm describing your marriage, aren't I? Anyway, you're really ticked off at them and they have no idea what you're even angry about. And you know what? It was just speculation. You thought that they thought that they said that you said that she did, that she didn't, that he went and he didn't.

And it probably was at Home Depot anyway, and it doesn't matter. You just thought that. And speculation is evil.

I mean, even speculation in our economy has devastated us. You know, one of the reasons we're in such a mess is because speculators began to buy up different kinds of instruments having to do with mortgages, playing one side against the other, and the whole thing fell over like a house of cards. And people are out of work and losing their homes to do over.

And you know what? One of the things that caused was people speculating. Well, spiritually, speculation is a tool of the enemy that will always sidetrack you, always defeat you, and always take you away from the plan of God for your life. And it's one voice that you must never listen to.

As soon as a phantom argument starts in your mind for anything, but especially based on speculation, you've got to shut it off. You have to say, I'm not going to go there. I'm not going to listen to this.

I'm not going to participate in this. Because it will only tear you apart inside. And basically what it does is it singles you out, cuts you off to the side, sets you off by yourself, and you're no longer effective in the kingdom of heaven.

The devil has won simply by causing you to get into an argument with yourself. He's totally disabled you. Now, John 10.10, the thief does not come except to steal, to kill, and to destroy.

Jesus said, I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly. Now, this will be an ongoing series, and we're talking about the battle within. Next week, the Lord willing, I plan to take this up again, but I want to leave you with this.

Some of the strategies that you can use to fortify yourself against the strategies of the enemy. And I've got to tell you a short story. This won't take long.

When we were in India, and I had to buy a suit. I had to have one tailored, as you know. And whenever I went in, they would look at me and either laugh out loud or just shake their head, no, we don't have clothes your size.

And one of the things I had to buy with the suit and the shirt was an undershirt. And so I'm out looking for an undershirt, and it turns out in India, because here we call that stuff underwear, you know. Here it's underwear.

There, in India, it's called innerwear. In fact, I saw the sign, innerwear. I thought, that's interesting.

I wonder what innerwear is. And then, sure enough, as we're shopping, or Barb figured it out before, I don't know, but sure enough, it's the stuff you wear underneath your clothes. You put your outside clothes over the inside.

And so this is the innerwear. And I'd like to give you some innerwear for your soul, for your spirit. I want to tell you how you can fortify this new man to defeat the strategies of the enemy.

And I want you to remember this, because this is real important. Now remember, you have to take off the old stuff, the anger, the wrath, the malice, the blasphemies, all those things. You've got to take that off and lay it aside and don't put it back on.

And this is the new wardrobe that you're about to put on. And it's found in that same place in Colossians. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another, forgiving one another.

Can you see how this unravels every strategy of the enemy? You see how this mutes even your inner voice when you want to have these phantom battles? Because it's pretty hard to yell at someone that you have tender mercies toward. I was in a, well I shouldn't admit this out loud, but many years ago I was in a big fight with my wife. I don't even remember what it was about.

And I think she was probably right, whatever it was, but I wasn't winning. And I just knew that me being angry back was the wrong thing to do. And I said, Lord, I'm just praying, Lord, what do I do? And the Lord said, reach up and touch your cheek and just tell her that you love her.

So I reached up and I touched her cheek and I said, I just love you. And she fell apart weeping and we hugged and we've been married 21 years, so it worked out. I put on tender mercies.

I put on kindness. I had to humble myself to do that because I was in the fight mode. I had to put on meekness.

I had to put on long-suffering. At the moment, I didn't want to put up with whatever it was we were arguing about. And I wanted to be right and I wanted my rights to be stated soundly.

And it wasn't working out near as good as one of my phantom fights, but I wasn't ready to quit. I had to bear with Barbara. I had to forgive her.

It's all here. I had to humble myself before God. I had to take the long view that our marriage isn't about this fight.

Our marriage is about something much bigger than that. And forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you must do. But above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you will call to one body and be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. See, this is the inner armor. We're going to explore this in depth, but I want you to take this home with you that you need to put on the inner armor.

You are not self-righteous. That's only filthiness. You have to humble yourself before the Lord.

Take off the filthy, wretched old man and lay it aside and put on the new man and take up a new conversation. You see, the conversations I have in my heart most of the time now are Lord, will you help that person? Lord, would you bless that family? Lord, would you save our city? Lord, would you keep that one from going to hell? Lord, would you let us reach our city for Christ? And this is what I'm talking about all the time in my my little voice inside me. I'm talking with the Lord.

And when I find a phantom fight coming, I just resist it because I know it's from the devil. The Bible says to do that. Resist it.

Resistance is not passive. Resistance is active. And you have to say I will not go there and I will not put up with this and I will not say that.

Then you're having a not a phantom conversation, but a spiritual conversation where you having done all your standing against the strategies of the enemy. And when you do that, my friends, you have victory. Amen.

As we conclude our time together this morning. I want you to remember the examples we started with this morning where two airliners with hundreds of people in them did not crash because the pilots or in one case the pilot was able to follow his training. I want you to remember that four airliners crashed three of which very much because they had the wrong training.

You need the right training. You need to understand the right strategies to win this war that we're in. The spiritual war.

You need the inner armor. The old armor does not fit with the new armor. The old stuff of the old man does not work with the new armor.

You've got to put that off. And then you need to ask the Lord to help you to have the discernment to recognize the strategies of the enemy even before he gets started. Just like I was praying for Gabe.

Lord, help him to see the enemy before the enemy sees him. Ask the Lord to help you to see what the enemy is doing before he even knows what he's going to do so that you can pray and seek the Lord. Amen.

This morning we're going to open our altars and I invite you to come and spend some time in prayer. If you've never received Christ, tell us that. We'd love to pray with you.

If you just need fortification or deliverance, maybe you've given yourself over to that inner voice so much that you're in torment and that you're in bondage and you want Jesus to set you free. Come up and we want to pray with you. And let's see a victory today.

Worship team, would you come forward? As you come and pray, we're going to be worshipping. I would like to read the scripture that I brought earlier out of 2 Peter. Be sober.

1 Peter 5, 8, 9. Be sober. Be vigilant because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him.

Steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood and the world. Remember to resist him this week. Amen.

The front is open for prayer if you'd like to come. If not, as you go, go quietly, respectfully, and worshiply. God bless you.

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