

March 30, 2014

Mostly Personal...

Loved Ones,

I want to encourage you to keep fighting the good fight of faith! Here are some thoughts that might be helpful in your journey:

The New Testament makes it clear that our battle against sin is on three levels, the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *devil*. Our goal is **TOTAL VICTORY!**

A. Definitions

1. When we speak of “*the world*,” we are referencing the philosophy, wisdom, or operating system of the unconverted. We do not refer to *the world* as a planet (as in Genesis 1:1), or as mankind in general (as in John 3:16), but specifically to the creation apart from God's redemptive embrace. It is *the world apart from God*.

- 1 John 5:19 NIV We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.
- Revelation 11:15 NIV The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.”
- 1 John 2:15-17 NIV Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.
- 1 John 5:3-5 NIV In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

2. When we speak of *the flesh*, we are not speaking primarily of our body (soma), but of our sinful nature (sarx). Synonyms

include *carnal nature*. Another dynamic of *the flesh* refers to our innate brokenness, defined as *depravity*.

- 1 Peter 2:11 ESV Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.
 - Romans 8:5-8 ESV For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
 - 1 Peter 2:11 ERV Dear friends, you are like visitors and strangers in this world. So I beg you to keep your lives free from the evil things you want to do, those desires that fight against your true selves
3. *The devil* refers to Satan, the fallen arch-angel, and also the demonic entities under his control.
- This is direct temptation from the evil one or his minions.
 - Matthew 4:1 ESV Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
 - Luke 8:12 ESV The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.
 - John 13:2 ESV During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.
 - Acts 10:38 ESV how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.
 - Ephesians 4:27 ESV and give no opportunity to the devil.
 - Ephesians 6:11 ESV Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.
 - James 4:7 ESV Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

- 1 Peter 5:8 ESV Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
- Revelation 12:12 ESV Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!

B. Identifying the Enemy

1. When I am struggling with the world:

- I am assaulted along the lines of:
 - my world view,
 - my standards of holiness,
 - my commitment to God's Word as the authority in my life.
- This conflict rages along the lines of my *core values*.

2. When I am struggling with the flesh:

- I find it difficult to deny my physical or emotional urges.
- My goal is to satisfy the longing of my flesh or mind.
- This has more to do with my *wants* than my core beliefs.

3. When I am struggling with the demonic, satanic realm:

- The struggle may seem to be from the *outside*, though certainly it appeals to my flesh and soul.
- Temptations may be enhanced or *off the charts*, and the sense is often one of being overwhelmed.
- In its deepest, most entrenched form, the battle may involve things such as physical attack from demons, demonic emotional oppression, or behavioral bondages.

C. The Weapons of Our Warfare

1. We overcome *the world* by obedience and faith in God and His Word.

- The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. 1 John 2:17
- Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. 1 John 5:5

- Our World View, the Life Paradigm we embrace is fully grounded in the Word of God.
- That fact must become the faith encounter of your life. You cannot win the battle until you settle the issue of identifying the ultimate, non-negotiable authority in your life.

2. We overcome the flesh by elevating the spiritual man inside each of us.

- Monitor what you permit in your life. - “Dear friends, you are like visitors and strangers in this world. So I beg you to keep your lives free from the evil things you want to do, those desires that fight against your true selves.”
- GIGO - *Garbage in; Garbage out.*
- *What you feed, grows. What you starve, dies.*

3. We overcome the devil by:

- Submitting ourselves to God,
 - resisting the plans of the devil,
 - by embracing the Blood of the Lamb (dependency on Christ as the source of our victory),
 - by adopting a mindset of the Word (testimony),
 - and by unwavering commitment to God's Kingdom (even following Him to death.)
- James 4:7 ESV Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
- Revelation 12:10, 11 NIV Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.¹¹ They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.
- Ephesians 4:27 Do not give the devil any opportunity to infect your lives!

I love you,

Pastor Stephen

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