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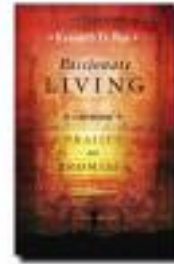
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THE PROMISES OF GOD

WHO ARE YOU? 1 PETER 1:23-25

GOD'S PROMISE TO YOU: "In my truth you will have identity forever."

In *Les Misérables*, the French novelist Victor Hugo posed the questions, "Alas, who are we ourselves? Who am I and who are you? Whence do we come . . . ?" And, we might add, "to what do we go?" The questions of identity occupy the thoughts of every human being. They arise in no small part because of the seeming futility and impermanence of much of life.

But the Apostle Peter leads us to the one permanent, unchanging element of life, and shows how it becomes the anchor of our identity. In 1 Peter 1:24-25 he quotes Isaiah who affirms the transitoriness of man and his glory. Man is like grass and the flowers of the field; here for a season, then gone and forgotten. Grass loses its vitality, turns brown, and withers away. The flowers are resplendent only for a moment and then droop and die. Is that all there is? "Who am I and who are you?"

Not everything is as fleeting as the glory of man. The Word of God is the Rock of Gibraltar of life that is there for every generation to cling to. But even the Gibaltars and Everests of earth will one day crumble before the plan of God. But the Word of our God, Peter says, is *forever*. And, Peter says in verse 23, it is by the Word of God that man answers the great identity questions. For through the Word of God men and women are born again—changed from a mist blown by the wind to a mar-

velous creation borne by the wind of the Spirit. Peter says the Word of God is an imperishable seed, not a perishable one like those giving rise to grass and flowers. What the Word of God bears last forever!

So "Who am I and who are you?" If we are those "born again . . . through the living and enduring word of God" then we are those whose glory will last forever. It is true: grass withers and flowers fade. But those who are born again by the imperishable word of God will themselves never perish but have everlasting life.

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JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

A scientist was using the inductive method to observe the characteristics of a flea. Plucking a leg off the flea, he ordered, "**Jump!**" The flea promptly jumped.

Taking another leg off, the scientist again commanded, "**Jump!**" The flea jumped again.

The scientist continued this process until he came to the sixth and final leg.

By now the flea was having more difficulty jumping, but it was still trying.

The scientist pulled the final leg off and again ordered the flea to jump. But the flea didn't respond.

The scientist raised his voice and demanded, "**Jump!**" Again the flea failed to respond.

Finally, the scientist shouted at the top of his lungs, "**Jump!**" But the hapless flea lay motionless.

The scientist then made the following observation in his notebook: "**When you remove the legs from a flea, it loses its sense of hearing.**"

—Howard G. Hendricks, *Living by the Book*

A TEACHING LETTER TO ENCOURAGE BELIEVERS TO
DEVELOP A CLEAR MIND AND A WARM HEART





WARFARE SPIRITUALITY— PART 10

The spiritual warfare is not optional for believers in Christ. Scripture clearly teaches and illustrates the dynamics of this warfare on the three battle fronts of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The worldly and demonic systems are external to the believer, but they entice and provide opportunities for the flesh, which is the capacity for sin within the believer. This series outlines a biblical strategy for dealing with each of these barriers to spiritual growth.

The Weapons of Our Warfare

The Armor of God

Last month we looked at the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of peace, and the shield of faith.

The Helmet of Salvation

A wise soldier would not think of going into battle without headgear. As Christians, we should regularly cover and protect our minds by being conscious of our new position in Christ. This includes monitoring our thought lives by rejecting those things that are not of God (e.g., gossip, criticism, immoral thoughts, self-condemnation, fear), and dwelling on what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, excellent, and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8). This also means avoiding environments, television shows, films, and books that would distort our thinking or solicit us to evil.

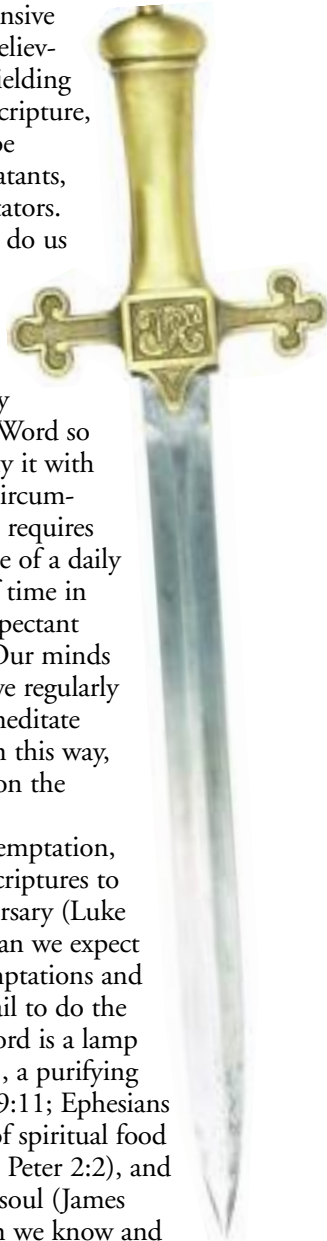
In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul describes the helmet as “the hope of salvation.” When difficult times come, we should not focus on our feelings, but stand by faith on the truth of God’s goodness and love. We have a sure hope in Christ, and in Him, we can overcome the negative thoughts of hopelessness and despair that come from the enemy.



The Sword of the Spirit

This double-edged sword is the offensive weapon in the believer’s panoply. Wielding the weapon of Scripture, believers are to be aggressive combatants, not passive spectators. But a sword will do us little good if we are unskilled in its use. To be effective, we must gain facility in handling the Word so that we can apply it with wisdom to all circumstances. This requires the discipline of a daily investment of time in prayerful and expectant Bible reading. Our minds are renewed as we regularly memorize and meditate on the Word. In this way, we actually put on the mind of Christ.

During His temptation, Jesus used the Scriptures to combat the adversary (Luke 4:1-13). How can we expect to overcome temptations and obstacles if we fail to do the same? God’s Word is a lamp (Psalm 119:105), a purifying agent (Psalm 119:11; Ephesians 5:26), a source of spiritual food (Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2), and a mirror for the soul (James 1:23-25). When we know and understand it, we will be able to use God’s words to pierce through the lies and traps set by the enemy. We will also be able to discern “the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6).



Prayer and Petition

Like the Word, prayer is an offensive weapon that is available to every believer. Nothing accomplishes as much as prayer; it is the means by which we lay hold of our strength in the Lord. Through prayer we put on the armor of God and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Through praise and thanksgiving we silence the enemy and enter into God’s presence (Psalm 100). This is the opposite of the grumbling and complaining that stems from an absence of faith.

We must persevere in prayer. The quality of our prayer life will determine the degree of our spiritual vitality. “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Like Bible reading and study, endurance in prayer requires discipline: continuing to trust, laying hold of our position and God’s

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promises, refusing to doubt or to be overcome by setbacks.

Paul tells us to pray not only for ourselves but also to intercede as prayer warriors on behalf of others as the Spirit directs (Ephesians 6:18-19).

Other Resources

- It is easy to neglect the corporate dimension of the spiritual warfare, and this includes the fact that Paul portrays the armor of God in Ephesians 6 in collective terms. This spiritual equipment is designed for an army, not a group of isolated individuals. Thus, the body of Christ works together as a community of believers who use their spiritual gifts to worship, serve, witness, and fight together against a common enemy.
- Spiritual warfare is more than an encounter between truth and error; it involves both the proclamation of the truth and the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:4).
- Deliverance from spiritual strongholds can take place on a personal level, with the assistance of a brother or sister, on a pastoral level, or through those who have been called to a special ministry of discernment and deliverance.
- The ultimate source of victory over spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places is the reality that Christ has already defeated Satan and his demons on the cross (Luke 10:18; John 12:31-32; 16:11).
- The Lord entrusts us with the resources of delegated authority and team ministry to equip us to overcome the opposition of the kingdom of darkness to the work of winning people to Christ and bringing them into the kingdom of God.
- Since the unredeemed are spiritually lost and under the rule of Satan, God has given us the powerful resource of intercession for the lost through the authority of the mighty name of the Lord Jesus.
- The renewed mind and the committed will are critical resources in the warfare. C. S. Lewis creatively illustrates the battle of the mind in *The Screwtape Letters*.
- Concerning the will, the sequence in James 4:7 is significant: “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” You cannot successfully resist Satan unless you have first submitted your will to God’s plan and purpose for your life. When you choose to “draw near to God,” He will “draw near to you” (James 4:8).



Ken Boa, President Reflections Ministries

A SMOLDERING DISOBEDIENCE

A young boy saw a pack of cigarettes on the ground and decided to try them. He went to a field near his home and after several fumbling attempts, got one to light up. It didn’t taste good; indeed, it burned his throat and made him cough. But it made him feel very grown up.

Then he saw his father coming. Quickly he put the cigarette behind his back and tried to be casual. Desperate to divert his father’s attention, the young boy pointed to a nearby billboard advertising the circus. “Can we go, Dad? Please, let’s go when it comes to town.”

The father quietly but firmly replied, “Son, never make a petition while at the same time trying to hide a smoldering disobedience.”

We would do well to make sure that we have asked the Spirit to search our heart and reveal any areas of unconfessed sin. When we acknowledge these to the Lord and thank Him for His forgiveness, our prayers will not be encumbered by disobedience.

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