

# Basic Christian Faith and Practice 6

## OVERCOMING THE WORLD, THE FLESH, & THE DEVIL

### Introduction

What are the 3 great enemies of God and his people? In the Christian life we have three great enemies: the World, the flesh, and the Devil. These three forces continually seek to undermine the Christian's walk. In this study, we will begin an overview of these areas and how to appropriate what God has done on our behalf to give us victory.

Ask the Lord to reveal to you where these things might have a grip on your life and ask Him to set you free.

### I. Jesus Has Overcome All of Our Enemies and Shares His Victory with Us.

- Col. 2:8-15 (All three elements are addressed here. Jesus is victor over all.)
  - A. Where do you see the World, the flesh, and the Devil in these verses, and how is Christ presented as overcoming them?
    1. vv 8-10 World: Jesus is God and has all authority
    2. vv 11-13 Flesh; Spiritual circumcision, forgiving our sins, by the cross; Jesus's resurrection
      - What is spiritual circumcision? → Regeneration; the Holy Spirit taking up residence within and the implanting of the character of God in us in the Holy Spirit
    3. vv 9-10, 15 the Devil; God, authority, and cross
  - B. How did Christ defeat these enemies? Through the cross and the resurrection. They reverse these enemies' work and destroy their foundation.
  - C. How can it be said that we also share in Jesus' victory? We share in Jesus's victory because we are in him through faith and therefore share in all that is his. See e.g., vv. 10-11. We have the blessings mentioned here "in Christ."

(So, now that we've established that Jesus has victory over the World, the flesh, and the Devil, and shares that victory with us, let's learn more about what they are and how to walk in that victory.)

### II. The Flesh

A. Biblically, what is the Flesh? Used in 2 main, basic ways in the NT:

1. Neutral physical existence (e.g. literal flesh, body, person, descent, of natural earthly life)
2. Our sinful nature; human existence separated from God and opposed to him. This is the meaning that describes one of the main enemies of God and his people and that we are dealing with in this study.

B. Romans 7:18, 25 (the broader context is 7:14-8:17) and Galatians 5:16-21

1. Do you know this struggle? The part of it that draws you toward sin is the flesh!

2. How does it manifest itself in your life? What are some of the primary ways?

3. When you become a Christian, this battle begins.

C. Total Depravity – The Christian doctrine that every part of human nature has been impacted by sin and that each human being (besides Christ) is sinful and has a natural inclination toward sin, leaving people separated from God, condemned for their sin, and unable to initiate relationship with God or even respond rightly to him apart from God helping them by his grace. The word “total” does not mean that people are bad as they can be but that the totality of human nature has been impacted by sin.

D. Galatians 5:16-26

1. What is the contrast in v. 17? Flesh vs Spirit, i.e., our sinful, depraved nature we were born with and have in and of ourselves vs the Holy Spirit. As Christians, who have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, we have 2 basic impulses within us warring against each other. We have 2 sets of desires at odds with one another within us. And we must choose between them.

- Cf. Romans 7:21-23

2. What happens if you practice the deeds of the flesh? Verse 21; won't inherit the kingdom of God

3. The flesh is in us and constantly wars against us to make us sin, giving us sinful desires. And it never gets any better.

- We should never be surprised by the depths of wickedness in some of the thoughts and desires we find within us. We do not need to deny the truth or pretend that we do not have sinful thoughts and desires. This is freeing! We can say with Paul, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh/sinful nature” (Rom 7:18).

4. How do we overcome the flesh according to Galatians 5:16-26?

a. We overcome the flesh by walking by the Spirit and being led by him (vv 16-18).

1. What does it mean to walk by the Spirit? To continually yield to the Holy Spirit's will, prompting, leading, the desires he gives us, etc. Another way of describing it would be, to be continually filled by the Spirit.

- What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit and how can we be filled with him? Remembering our lesson on walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, it means to be directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We can be filled with the Spirit by faith, trusting the Holy Spirit to fill us. This includes yielding ourselves to the Spirit. One simple way to be filled with the Spirit is to pray, confessing any known sin, speaking out submission to God,+ asking God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Then know that you are filled with the Spirit based on God's promise to give us what we ask according to his will, and act accordingly. Breathe spiritually by doing this as often as necessary throughout the day to be continually filled with the Spirit, coupled with actually obeying the Spirit's direction of course.

2. What does it mean to be led by the Spirit (v. 18)? For him to direct/prompt us, give us his desires, etc. We are to yield to his leading and choose to follow the desires and impulses he gives us rather than the desires and impulses that our sinful nature gives us.

b. We overcome the flesh by faith in another way too: knowing the truth and appropriating it.

- Illustration (from Brian): When I took drum lessons as a teenager, I would bring songs to my teacher for him to teach me how to play. I could not figure out how to play them on my own, at least I did not think I could nor try. But one time, he said something like, “You don’t need me to tell you how to play it. You can play it.” And from that moment on, I could play songs by ear. The problem was not that I could not do it. The problem was that I did not know the truth about myself, and therefore did not live in accordance with the truth. Similarly, knowing the truth about who we are in Christ can empower us to live in accordance with that truth and “be who we are” so to speak.

c. Can you state a truth about you as a Christian from this passage (Gal 5:16-26)?

1. Verse 24: You crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (i.e., your sinful nature with its sinful passions and desires).

-- What does that mean? It means you are dead to sin, that you fundamentally renounced sin and your sinful nature and its sinful passions and desires, that it is dead to you, that you turned away from it and you don’t want anything to do with it and you are fundamentally opposed to it.

--What difference does this fact make in your life?

--When did you crucify your flesh? When you became a Christian; we need constant application of this truth as we live the Christian life.

a. Sin no longer defines who we are. Paul says that we are dead to sin (Rom 6:2-14). Our identity is now “Christian”. We are in Christ.

b. We are Christians who sometimes sin, but sin is not our master; we don’t have to sin.

2. Verse 25: Not only are we now dead to sin, but we are also alive to God, with God, because of God, etc.

- Verse 25: Why does Paul say this right after v. 24? Those who live by the Spirit (v. 25) are those who belong to Christ and have crucified the flesh (v. 24). Verse 25 uses the actual Greek word for “live” in the sense of “have life.” Verse 25 refers to having spiritual, eternal life from the Holy Spirit. If our sinful nature is dead to us, and we have life from the Spirit, that leaves us with following the Holy Spirit’s lead as the only thing that makes sense to do.

E. Our identity in Christ

1. When we believe in Christ, our fundamental identity changes from children of wrath (Eph 2:1-3) to children of God (Gal 3:26), from our sinful nature (the flesh) to our new godly nature (the New Man or New Self) provided by the Holy Spirit.

a. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, what is true of us if we are in Christ? We are new creations.

b. What is our new nature like (Eph 4:24)? Our new nature is godly, righteous, and holy.

c. Colossians 3:9-11

- Verse 10 also indicates the godliness of our new nature in Christ “in the image of its Creator”
- What is the basis of the command to righteous behavior here? Our new nature. Lying and other sinful behavior is incompatible with our new nature/identity.
- What does v. 11 suggest about our new nature? It is our most fundamental identity, more basic and important than anything else about us, even ethnicity, nationality, station in life, and sex or gender (Gal 3:28 adds “male and female” to a similar statement).
- This only makes sense. Our sinful nature will perish, but our godly nature will last forever (1 John 2:16-17; the Holy Spirit, who provides our new nature, will be with us forever [John 14:16]).

d. How might Rom 7:15-20 relate to this point that our new nature is our most fundamental identity? Does anything strike you as odd about vv 17 and 20? These verses confirm the point. Paul goes so far as to say that when we sin, it is not us doing it, but sin living in us.

- How can he say that? Is he saying we are not responsible when we sin? Was he trying to evade responsibility for his sin? No, he is reflecting this truth that our primary and most fundamental identity, the real you and me, is our new godly nature, the New Man/Self. When we sin, we are not acting as our true selves but as the Old Man, our old selves.
- This raises a complicating, confusing factor. Because we have an old, sinful nature and a new, godly nature, the individual Christian can use “I” to speak of either one. I don’t want to sin, but I do want to sin. We can see this in Gal 2:20. Using the NIV, the meaning is, “I [my old self] has been crucified with Christ, and I [my old self] no longer lives, but Christ lives in me [the new self]. The life I [my new self] now lives in the body, I [my new self] lives by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me [old and/or new].”

2. It is critical for us to identify with our new self rather than our old self.

- a. Many Christians make the serious mistake of identifying with the old self rather than the new. They think of the flesh/sinful nature as “the real me.” They think of many of their sinful desires as their real desires and their godly desires as merely what they are supposed to be like, and God will one day transform them to. They think things like, “I don’t want to go to the prayer meeting, but I will go because it is my duty” or “I don’t want to give that money to the Lord, but I will because that’s what I am supposed to do” or “I want to watch porn, but I won’t because I am a Christian.”
- Are these sentences in quotes bad things to say or think? No, they are fine things to say or think. But the problem comes in if the thought underneath those things is that my sinful desires are the real me and what I really want to do, and God’s will + my godly desires are not the real me, but just my position in Christ, the ideal me that I aspire to + God will one day make true of me in reality but are just theoretical now.
- b. We should identify with our new, godly nature as the real me and claim the godly desires of the Holy Spirit within us as what we really want. That is who we truly are because we are in Christ.

1. As mentioned earlier, our new, godly nature is eternal while our sinful nature will pass away.

2. We should say and think things like, “I want to go to the prayer meeting. In my sinful nature, I don’t want to go, but I, the real me, really do want to go” or “I don’t want to watch porn. In my sinful nature I do, but what I (the real me) really want is not to watch porn but to be pure and honor God.” Or more simply, about sinful temptations: “That’s not who I am in Christ; that’s not me.”

And about godly desires: “That is who I am in Christ; that’s what I really want. These sorts of patterns can be applied to any set of contrasting desires.

- Of course, we don’t have to specifically speak this way. That can be helpful to do for a time when trying to train yourself to identify with your new self rather than your flesh, but it is the attitude that is important.

3. As we identify with our new self over time, we may find that we hardly feel the temptation of our flesh in many areas, though we must always remain vigilant, because the flesh can rise up unexpectedly with strong force at any time.

Conclusion to session 1: In this session, we have looked at one of our great enemies as Christians, the Flesh, which refers to our sinful nature, us apart from God and contrary to him and his will. Jesus defeated the World, the Flesh, and the Devil through his death and resurrection and shares that victory with us. And we have looked at a couple practical ways by which we can lay hold of the victory that Jesus provides us over the Flesh: walking by the Spirit and knowing and appropriating the truth of our identity in Christ. We will talk about more ways of overcoming the Flesh when we look at growing in holiness in a later study. But next time, we will look at the other two main enemies of God and his people and overcoming them—the World and the Devil.

Introduction to session 2: In the last session, we began looking at the main enemies of the Christian—the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. We saw that Jesus defeated these enemies through his death and resurrection and shares that victory with us who believe in him. We also looked at the closest of these enemies, our own flesh. What did we say that the Flesh is? us, in and of ourselves, apart from God and opposed to him and his ways. It is our sinful nature. We also looked at a couple practical ways of overcoming the Flesh and sharing in Jesus’s victory over it. What were they? walking by the Spirit and knowing and appropriating the truth of our identity in Christ. And we’ll talk more about overcoming the Flesh in a later study. But in this study, we will look at overcoming another of the great enemies of our souls, the World.

### III. The World

#### A. What is it?

1. Biblically referred to on 3 basic levels. What are they?

- a. earthly creation (often neutral; can be good)
- b. nations, human community in a neutral sense
- c. fallen humanity and its ways, separated and/or opposed to God; the community/culture/ways of fleshly people as a group. Our enemy!

#### B. What corporate phenomenon stands in contrast to the World? The kingdom of God / the Church

1. What is the kingdom of God? → The rule and reign of God; God’s will being done; where God’s will is done (“thy kingdom come, they will be done”)
2. What is the relationship between the kingdom of God and the Church? → The Church is the main manifestation of the Kingdom on earth. And it is the main mechanism of the spread and building of the Kingdom. It is the main place where God’s will is being done on earth, and its members are those who have submitted to and embraced God’s rule in their hearts and lives.

3. Where and when would you say the kingdom of God began? → In the Garden / w/the creation of man
  - a. When and how was the sinful World born? → With the Fall of man into sin
  - b. In a broad sense, redemption involves the process of God fully establishing his kingdom in creation in light of the Fall and its establishment of the rival kingdom of the World.

C. 1 Jn 2:15-17

1. What contrasts do you notice in these verses?
  - a. Love of the World vs. love of the Father;
  - b. From the World vs. from the Father
  - c. The World and its desires are passing away vs. the godly person remains forever
  - d. How would you summarize the contrast? → The World vs. God
2. The World is in opposition to God.
3. What characterizes the world? ◇ See v. 16 ◇ What do these things refer to? → Flesh (sinful human nature), lust of the Flesh (sinful desires), lust of the eyes (sinful desire for what we see; greed; covetousness); pride of life (attitude or action of independence from God, self-reliance, pride) passing away (perishing, transitory, temporary).

D. What is the World's attitude towards true Christians/the Church? → John 17:14 → Hatred

1. What can that lead to? → Persecution. The World is a place of persecution of Christians.
  - How does the World persecute Christians? Do we experience persecution in our culture? If so, how? → These questions are mostly open-ended, but draw attention to 2 Tim 3:12 and that there is a spectrum of persecution, from very minor to major, and we need to be prepared to face any degree of it. Any hostility or ill-treatment for our faith is persecution. What we face in our society is typically minor comparatively. Many Christians die each year for their faith.

E. How do we recognize the world? How do we discern it?

1. Simple litmus tests: Is Jesus honored here? Is submission to God and his word here? If not, that's the World.
2. "Worldliness is that system of values, in any given age, which has at its center our fallen human perspective, which displaces God and His truth from the world, and which makes sin look normal and righteousness seem strange. It thus gives great plausibility to what is morally wrong and, for that reason, makes what is wrong seem normal." — David F. Wells, *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 4.
  - What are some prominent contrasts between thinking and ways of the World vs. kingdom of God?
  - How does the World make sin look normal and righteousness strange? → By an overwhelming mass of people thinking and acting sinfully and against righteousness. By the very environment and system they create. Its ways are pervasive.

-- What are some specific ways the World conveys its values and impacts people?

F. What do we learn about worldliness from James 1:27? → We are called to avoid it at all costs. Avoiding it is of the essence of walking with God. It is critically important.

-- Why is avoiding worldliness so important? → Because it is basically sinfulness. It is opposed to God and his ways and it is unfaithfulness to him. James 4:4-5.

G. Secularism — Definition: No longer holding onto a higher point of reference (God). Society and life are viewed only on a horizontal level. A biblical worldview is rejected and not seen to impinge upon morals, decision making, or going about daily life.

H. Do you think we are affected by these things? If so, how? → We have been deeply affected by societal norms. [Solicit examples from the group and provide some of your own.] We need to commit ourselves to living biblically and figuring out how to do so and devote ourselves to doing so.

I. How do we overcome the World? → Christian Counterculture (the kingdom of God)

- Jesus knew that we would face the challenge of the World and He prayed for us — John 17:11-23.

1. What is our basic relationship to the World as Christians according to Jesus's prayer? → In the world but not of it

2. Do you see any aspects of this prayer that can help us in thinking about being in the World but not of it? → There are four interconnected aspects to this prayer to highlight.

a. Holiness

1. What is holiness for us? → To be set apart for God and his purposes and service. It can also refer to godliness/Christlikeness, as that goes with being set apart for God.

2. The word of God (verses 14 and 17)

a. What is the connection between God's word and the world's hatred of believers? What does God's word have to do with the World's hatred of us? ◇ God's word provides us with the values and ways of the kingdom of God, which is fundamentally at odds with the values and ways of the World. It is the charter of Christian culture, a counterculture that fundamentally conflicts with the identity and culture of the World. The World hates God and his ways, and as we conform increasingly to the word of God, we become more like God/Jesus and more different from the World. Romans 12:2 mentions this process.

b. What is the connection between God's word and personal holiness? → See v. 17.

1. What does the word "sanctify" mean? → To set apart, make holy.

2. God uses his truth/word to sanctify us, to make us holy. As we trust in God's word and obey it, as we increasingly conform to it, we become more holy in practice.

c. The more we trust in God's word and truth, think in accord with God's word, obey God's word, conform to God's word, and become more practically holy, then the more we will walk in victory over the World and its assault on our faith and walk with God.

3. Verse 19 – Is Jesus holy? → Yes!

- a. What does that mean for us? ◇ We are holy.
  - b. Why does Jesus's holiness mean we are holy? ◇ Because we are in him. In Jesus we receive his cleansing and righteousness and holiness. Our fundamental identity is determined by him, and it includes holiness.
  - c. Remembering that our fundamental identity is in Christ and is holy, that we are set apart for God and his purposes and his service, will help us to be who we are and overcome the World.
- b. Community ◇ vv. 20-23
1. How do we see community in vv 20-23? → Love and unity (notice the sharp contrast to the world's way!)
  2. How does community protect us from the World and help us overcome it?
    - a. It gives us a community and environment that has God and his truth and his ways at its center, pervading the environment and making righteousness look normal and sin seem strange. The church community reinforces our faith and relationship with the Lord. We support one another in living for the Lord and against the powerful tide of the World and its values. By living in community together we are able to support one another's marriages, lifestyle, Christian worldview, morality, etc. We in fact see all of life as sacred.
    - b. The church community is a place for learning, training, encouragement, prayer, worship, service, loving relationships, spiritual growth, growth in holiness, etc.
    - c. Normally, you cannot successfully live as a Christian in this World apart from committed church life.
    - d. Counterculture — in the best sense of the word. It is not as if the World is the standard and we live in response to the World. We live according God's standard, and that is in a way that is contrary to secular society because the World is in rebellion against God.
- c. Witness → Where do you see witness in this prayer? → Verse 20-23 again.
1. While we live in this World but not of it, we stand as a witness to the World of the Lord, the love of God, the gospel, the ways of the Lord, etc.
  2. What is our witness tied up with in this prayer? → Community. We reflect God when we love one another. And we work together to reach the World for Christ. This is our Great Commission from the Lord.
- d. Joy → Verse 13
1. What brings the fullness of joy? → The things Jesus speaks about in this prayer—the revelation of God to us, the word of God, belonging to God and Jesus, protection by God and Jesus, holiness, witness, community. Unity, love, the glory of God, etc.
  2. How does joy protect us from the World and help us overcome it? → Joy in the Lord protects us from the temptations of the World because the power of the World's temptations is their promise of joy/satisfaction, but the joy of the Lord is superior. It is our strength and helps us persevere in our faith. We are content.



Conclusion to Session 2: The theological concept of the World refers to fallen, sinful humanity and its ways, separated from God and opposed to him, his kingdom, and his people. It is the community, culture, and ways of people ruled by the flesh. It seeks to undermine our relationship with God and exerts a powerful influence to conform us to its sinful ways. But Jesus has overcome the World, and it is imperative for us to overcome the World as well. And we can overcome the World by persevering in our faith in Christ and his death and resurrection, holiness, the word of God, community, witness, and the joy of the Lord. Galatians 1:3-5

Introduction to Session 3: In the last two lessons, we looked at 2 of the main enemies of God and his people—the Flesh and the World, and how to overcome them. What do the Flesh and the World refer to? → Our sinful nature and fallen, sinful humanity and its ways. In this lesson, we look at our third and final main enemy—the Devil or Satan and how to overcome him.

#### IV. The Devil (Satan)

A. Who is the Devil/Satan? → The Devil/Satan is an angel who rebelled against God and rules over all that oppose God, both other fallen angels (demons) and the World. He opposes God and his people, tempting, deceiving, blinding, and accusing. The name Satan is from Hebrew and means “adversary.” The label “devil” comes from Greek and means “slanderer.”

-- What is an angel? → A spiritual being made to worship and serve the Lord. Angels are higher level beings than humans (Heb 2:6-7).

-- In the following list, for time sake, you might want to skip reading the verses listed and simply review the labels for Satan in the various verses with mention of the verse references.

1. fallen angel – Job 1-2 (No need to read these chapters. Summarize the relevant content, that Satan went before God with and among the angels and challenges God and seeks harm for his best human servant, Job. The phrase “sons of God” in Job refers to angels.)
2. Led humanity into the original sin through deception of Adam and Eve – Genesis 3; Rev 20:2
3. ancient serpent - Rev 20:2 – Why “ancient serpent?” → He worked through the serpent in the Garden.
4. adversary of God and his people - 1 Pet 5:8 [Read this verse out.]
5. accuser of the brethren - Rev 12:10
6. deceiver & counterfeiter - 2 Co 11:14-15
7. tempter - Mt 4:2-3
8. Beelzebub/the ruler of the demons - Mt 12:24, 27
9. the Evil One - Mt 13:19, 38
10. great dragon - Rev 12:3
11. father of lies - Jn 8:44
12. murderer - Jn 8:44
13. sinner 1 Jn 3:8
14. ruler of this world - Jn 12:31
15. the enemy - Mt 13:39
16. god of this world - 2 Cor 4:4
17. power of darkness - Lk 22:53
18. prince of the power of the air - Eph 2:2

B. Why does the Bible call Satan the ruler of this world (Jn 12:31) and the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4)?  
→ He leads the wicked spiritual beings/powers that influence the sinful world and its ways. In the OT, the term “god” can be used of angelic beings. Satan is the angelic being who rules over the sinful world and influences and inspires so many of its ways.

### C. Ephesians 2:1-3

1. What is Satan called in this passage? → “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” and “the spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience”

a. The ruler of the kingdom of the air? → In ancient thought, the air was an intermediate sphere between earth and heaven in which evil spirits dwell. In Ephesians, it is conceived of as part of the heavenly realms, and is probably to be thought of as its “lower level” in which the spiritual forces of wickedness dwell. This label means the ruler of the realm or kingdom of wicked spiritual beings/powers.

b. The spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience? → Satan and his minions influence unbelievers to sin and walk in disobedience to God.

D. What kind of power does Satan have? → Supernatural and immense power. But nothing compared to God. He is a created being. He can impact things in our physical world and things in the spiritual realm. He can't possess believers at all because we have the Holy Spirit, though he can attack us and even oppress us in various ways. He doesn't seem to be able to possess unbelievers unless they give him some sort of specific in; otherwise he would possess every unbeliever. But he can do supernatural things in our world and exercise strong influence.

E. What are demons? ◇ Fallen angels who have joined Satan in his rebellion against God and do his bidding, working against God, his will, and his people. Recall that Satan is called the ruler of the demons and that Jesus battled demons, who were agents of Satan's kingdom (Luke 11:14-22).

1. What is Jesus's illustration in Luke 11:21-22 about? → The strong man is Satan. Jesus is the one who is more powerful than him coming to overcome him and rescue people from his dominion.

F. 1 John 3:8 – What purpose of Jesus's coming do we see here? → To destroy the works of the Devil

-- What are the works of the Devil? → Sin and its result, death; oppression, deception, temptation, “holding people captive to do his will” (2 Tim 2:26), etc.

G. Hebrews 2:14 – What purpose of Jesus's incarnation and work do we see here? → To render the Devil and his power of death powerless

1. How did Satan have the power of death? → Leading humanity into sin, which brings physical and spiritual death; continuing to lead humanity in sin, which leads them to death; influencing people against faith, using the fear of death to influence people, etc.

2. How did Jesus render the Devil and his power of death powerless? → By his death and resurrection, Jesus provided for our salvation and eternal life. He delivers those who trust in him from Satan's power including from death.

H. How do Satan and demons interact with us? → As we have seen, Satan and his demons tempt us (appealing to our flesh), lie to us, and accuse us. Especially strong times of temptation, anger and division, false teaching and lies, and feelings of condemnation can indicate satanic/demonic activity. Again, they can't possess believers, but they can oppress.

I. What sort of tactics does Satan use? → His tactics are often one of two extremes: a.) convincing people he doesn't exist, b.) getting people preoccupied with him and full of fear. Of course, he loves straight up worship and service and people seeking power from him most.

J. There is a whole spiritual realm (another dimension) inhabited by spiritual beings, both good and evil ones, including God, Satan, angels, and demons. Though we cannot see it, what happens in the spiritual realm greatly impacts our earthly realm and what happens in the earthly realm greatly impacts the spiritual realm. We are in a spiritual war between God and Satan, good and evil, light and dark. And the war is over God's will being done vs. Satan's will, and much of this is over the souls of men.

-- For example, in Daniel 10, Daniel gets an awesome vision that is physically overwhelming. An angel comes to him to deliver a message from God. Part of what he tells him is this ("princes" in his message refer to spiritual beings, whether angels or demons): Dan 10:12-14. [If you have time, you could read through the whole chapter going to 11:1; it's a fun chapter!] We do not know all the specifics of how all this works, but God often uses angels to accomplish his will and sometimes (seemingly often) dispatches them in response to prayer. And that can bring them into conflict with demons. Angels and demons apparently fight in the spiritual realm with consequences on earth, though it is hard to know exactly how their fighting works. And their fighting can be in response to things on earth, including our actions, prayers, etc.

-- Are we helpless before Satan and his minions? If not, why? How can we overcome them? → Well, we began this mini-series of studies on the World, the Flesh, and the Devil with the point that Jesus has overcome these enemies of our souls by his death and resurrection and shares his victory with us. And we have been talking about how we can share in his victory and overcome them. So let's talk about overcoming the Devil.

## K. Overcoming Satan and evil spirits

1. Our Authority: Luke 10:17-20 (Jesus speaking) – What do we see here? → Jesus has given his disciples power over evil spirits.

(a. It could be argued that this authority was only for Jesus's disciples at that time. But there is no indication of it being limited in that way, when Christians directly encounter demons after this in the NT, they cast them out, and this goes along with the power over the Enemy we see in passages for the Church, including some additional passages we will look at in this study.)

b. If you encounter a demon directly, cast it out in the name of Jesus, relying in his power, not yours, and on the victory that he has won over the Enemy by his death and resurrection.

## 2. Ephesians 6:10-18

a. What do we learn from v. 12 and what practical difference does that make?

1. We are in a spiritual battle

2. Satan is using people and things to hurt us and lead us into sin and away from Christ. Be alert!

3. We have to address these things spiritually, looking to the Lord and his power + the things of him.

4. Knowing Satan's purpose for things he throws at us can help us to avoid it, such as letting

offenses from others divide us (cf. 2 Cor 2:10-11).

b. Faith in the truth of the word of God – vv. 16-17

1. Identify Satan's lies (his fiery arrows).

2. Counter/replace with God's truth. Claim God's truth in the fight of faith.

a. Cf. Jesus overcoming Satan's temptations by quoting the word (Matthew 4).

b. Countless examples could be given. If experiencing thoughts that you are condemned and God can't forgive you, reject that as false and claim 1 John 1:9. If tempted to lust, you can remind yourself that Jesus says lust is adultery in the heart (Mt 5:28) and promises that the pure in heart will see God (Mt 5:8). If tempted to greed, you can remember that God is greater than money and has promised he will never leave or forsake us (Heb 13:5) or that Jesus says that we build up treasure in heaven when we use our money as he desires such as helping others (Mt 5:19-20). One of the biggest: when discouraged by difficulties, we can remember that God works all things together for our good (Rom 8:28). Etc., etc.

3. Know the word! Give yourself to the word.

4. So much of spiritual warfare is a battle in the mind: 2 Cor 10:3-5

c. Prayer – v. 18 (Goes hand in hand with faith and the word.) What kind of prayer? ◇ all kinds, including prayer about the issue at hand and the Enemy, personal and corporate, etc.

d. Submission and obedience to God – This is what the armor of God is, the character of Christ.

1. Since the kingdom of God is God's will being done, whenever we do God's will, we build God's kingdom and take ground from the Enemy. This is true spiritual battle. Living out the basics!

2. Spiritual warfare is not about special mystical activity. We do not normally have to do special things with a focus on Satan. It can be helpful to ask God to send his angels or to drive back the Enemy, but that is not necessary. Some believers have the gift of discernment, and that can be helpful for direction. God can lead us in these things by his Spirit. But aside from specific guidance from the Lord, we can go about living the Christian life as directed by God's word and we will be engaging in spiritual warfare.

3. James 4:7-11 – How do we resist the devil?

a. By submitting to God (v. 7)

b. By drawing near to God (v. 8). How do we draw near? → Prayer, attention, focus, other things mentioned in these verses.

c. By repentance (vv. 8-9)

d. By humbling ourselves in the presence of the Lord (when we draw near) {v. 10}

e. By pursuing loving unity with his people (v. 11)

V. Putting it all together: How do the World, the Flesh, and the Devil relate to one another? → Satan led

humanity into sin, which resulted in our good and upright human nature becoming fallen and sinful. Our sinful nature is the most basic cause of our sin and the separation from God that results from our sin. Satan appeals to our flesh to try and get us to sin and to turn away from Christ and his ways. The World is the community, culture, and ways of people ruled by the flesh. Satan rules over and drives that community and its ways by his strong influence over the lost through lies and deception and temptation, etc. These are the 3 great enemies of the Christian, but . . .

Conclusion: Jesus has overcome the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and offers that victory to us. Let's receive it and walk in victory! 1 John 4:4; Col 2:9-15.