

## "The Battle for Your Soul"

You may not realize it, but you—yes you—are in a serious spiritual battle. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to talk about the battle for our souls.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We pray that the Lord's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. And this means that we must take the time to know the will of the Lord by a serious and sincere study of the word of God and we must practice what He teaches. Psalm 119:1 to 3 says, "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!" We want God to bless us, and we know that we must listen to God if we're to please Him. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

We live in a chaotic world with many conflicting voices calling us to believe this or do that. The voice of God in Scripture will tell us the truth, while the world has many voices that'll try to lead us away from God. We have to look to God. Some voices encourage us to leave our faith and to follow the world. Some tell us "there is no God", "the Bible isn't true," what some say, or that "we're just the products of evolution," or "Christians are mean." Others tell us that our sins don't matter. If we believe the lies of the world, and the ones they tell, we can be lead astray just as Eve was in Genesis 3. We're facing an ideological battle and a moral battle for our souls. And I hope this gets your attention! Whether we believe and follow Christ or believe a lie and follow the world will determine how God will deal with us in eternity. Are you committed to Christ? Are you listening to His Word? Are you winning or losing the battle for your soul?

Now if you want to study more, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy of our study on this battle that we face and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

Larry Owsley will lead the Edmond church as we worship in song, and we'll read from Ephesians 6:10 to 13 and consider the battle for your soul.

Our reading from God's holy word comes Paul's epistle to the Ephesians chapter 6 verses 10 to 13.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

That's a great challenge for all of us. To stand firm with the full armor of God. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You can strengthen us through Christ. That You do give us armor to wear in this battle against the Devil and against the enemies of good. We pray Father that You'll help us each day of our lives to give ourselves fully and freely to You and to stand firm. In Jesus name, Amen.

We are at war with the devil, and he's a formidable opponent. He's had many centuries to exploit human weaknesses so that he can lead us into sin and defeat us. This battle is a personal one, like hand-to-hand combat between two soldiers. Now at the end of such a fight in ancient times, one

soldier was standing and the other was dead. This battle is like a wrestling match, where two people were personally involved eye to eye. Now you can't pass this battle off to somebody else; you must face the devil yourself. He's watched you and he knows your strengths and your weaknesses. He'll use every trick he knows to defeat you. He has no qualms about cheating, lying, or using dirty tricks to win. He's serious about defeating you and he intends to win.

This spiritual battle isn't just for your life; it's for your soul. And not only that it's also for the souls of your loved ones. It's the most important conflict you'll ever face. If you're not aware that you're in a fight, you'll surely lose. If you don't have the will to fight, you'll most certainly lose. If you're not prepared to fight, you cannot win. If you fight but don't give it all, well you can still lose your soul. Your enemy, the devil, will do anything to capture your soul. And if that means trickery, he'll lie and twist God's word to suit his purposes.

The apostle Paul particularly warned Christians to hold to the truth. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:2 to 4, "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

The devil blinds people to the truth, so they'll believe a lie and be lost. When people leave the Word of God, they leave the truth. So the devil twists and tampers with the Bible. To tamper with the word of God is to distort it or make it appear false by deception. Satan tampers with the Word to make it teach something that it doesn't actually say. The person who uses God's word cunningly just to advance his agenda is in Paul's eyes disgraceful and underhanded.

Scripture reveals how Satan's schemes follow a common pattern. If we understand the way that he operates, we can prepare for Satan's challenges. Satan, first, loves to ask questions that create doubt in the Word of God. You'll remember that in the Garden of Eden, the devil asked Eve, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3 verse 2) Now, Satan knew what God had said; he wasn't asking the question to learn the truth or to do the will of God. Rather he asked the question to create doubt in God! He wanted Eve to question God. Doubting the truth is the first step to apostasy. The Devil will always give you all the reasons you should not do the will of God. He wants you to forget doing things God's way, to think for yourself, and do what you think is best for you. By urging you to do what is self-focused, he gets you to go against God. He wants you to think that you know more than God.

Satan, second, contradicts what God says. When Eve told Satan that she would die if she ate of that fruit or even touch it, the devil said, "You shall surely not die" (Genesis 3 verse 4). The devil has no qualms about lying to achieve his purpose. Satan always wants people to place their confidence in him not God. Satan claims God has deceived you, cheated you, but he knows what is really true. This desire to know Satan's secrets and to be one of the elite of Satan, has led many unfortunate souls down the path to perdition. You see, he appeals to the worst in people: their flesh, their eyes, and their pride. He makes them feel God is holding them down and cheating them out of some pleasure.

The Lord Jesus told some Jews who followed Satan in John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." Well, all you have to do to promote a lie is to tamper with the truth a little. You know rat poison is 98 percent corn meal and two percent poison. Now if it

weren't mostly corn meal, the rats wouldn't eat it; but two percent poison is enough to kill. And a little lie can still keep you out of heaven. Buy the truth and do not sell it.

Satan appeals to what you want to hear and what makes you feel good. Eve was deceived by his lie. Oh, the devil likes to turn things upside down. He makes what is evil appear good and appealing, and he makes what is good appear evil and ugly. God said in Isaiah 5 and verse 20, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" Have you noticed how our world has labeled anything righteous as wrong, while things that are evil are attractive and enticing? That's the devil's scheme.

Satan, third, produces an alternative version of the "truth." He enticed Eve with these words found in Genesis 3:5 well: "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The devil's alternative mixes truth with error. There's enough truth to sound persuasive, but his message is full of misrepresentations and distortions. "Add it all up and the bottom line is a big lie." Satan wants everyone to believe that he has a better way, that God is trying to fool you, that God is not your friend but is cheating you out of something really good. His strategy is to get people to rely upon him for real "progress." His alternative always sounds appealing but ends up destroying those who follow it.

Satan, fourth, despises and persecutes anyone who exposes him. Jesus explained in John 3:19 to 20, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." Now, Jesus knew that if the world hated Him, it would also hate his disciples too when they preach the truth about sin. The devil loves to put down the church and the truth of the Bible. Peter said in 1 Peter 4 and verse 14 that, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." The devil is a bully, but God sees everything and rewards those who follow Him. If you hold to the truth and righteousness, be sure the devil will despise you and speak evil about you.

Satan, fifth, pretends to be holy. Paul spoke about some deceivers in 2 Corinthians 11:13 to 15. You see they pretended to be men of God, but they actually served Satan. "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." In order to deceive Christians and lead them into his "alternative" churches, the devil pretends to be a Christian leader. There are religions today that pretend to follow the Lord Jesus, but the more you observe them, the more you realize they're not God's people.

With high-sounding phrases, Satan tries to persuade people that Christianity is like a smorgasbord of ideas, from which you can pick and choose whatever doctrines you like. Well, there are thousands of denominations in America, each teaching different doctrines and wearing different names. It has become popular to follow some man's ministry rather than listen to the Word of God. This is the devil's work. He's the one who provides heresies. And heresies are the divisive false teachings that lead people astray and divide the church.

If you listen to the devil, you'll come to believe there's no such thing as heresy, that every view is equally good. And when you believe that, you've already fallen into the trap of the devil. He tried to convince Eve to quit listening to God and to trust her own reasoning. And when people ignore the Bible and start listening to the beliefs of men, they fall prey to the devil's schemes. Their eyes become blind to the truth. God's ways and man's ways, they are not the same. You cannot ignore God's Word, build

your house upon sand, and expect everything to be all right between you and God. Eve was deceived, she lost sight of God, and she did what she wanted. If we are deceived, lose sight of God, and do what we want, we too will have to face the consequences of our sin.

Satan, sixth, preys on the weak and ignorant. Peter said in 1 Peter 5:8 to 9, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." Now the devil is looking for gullible people who will fall prey to his immoral lifestyle and his disobedience to God. He uses false prophets and false churches as alternatives to the truth. He whispers to our consciences that we can sin and not be hurt by it. Oh, he's deceptive.

No matter how appealing his message is, the devil's goal is your spiritual death. So... resist him, firm in your faith. Pay close attention to the Word of God. Keep your eyes focused on the cross. God hasn't left us alone to fight the devil. Paul said in Ephesians 6:13 to 17, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Oh I tell you, these things will help you in your struggle: righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God. The armor protects you from the devil's weapons, but the sword of the Spirit, is God's Word, it's a formidable weapon. It has the truth that pierces hearts and souls. The best thing you can do to fight Satan is to know the Word of God. To put on the full armor of God and to pray. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4 and verse 4). Yes what we need is the word of God; and nothing else will do.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You give us Your word that can build us up and strengthen us. And give us the things that we need in order to fight against the lies of this world and the devil. Father help us to look to You to do Your will, to love You, and to be the kind of child that always walks after You. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

When people follow their own desires rather than listen to and obey God, the devil wins and they lose. My friend, what about you? Is the devil tricking you? If the Lord and His Word doesn't rule in your life, you'll have a master who lies to you to take your soul away. If you follow the devil, he'll take you where you don't want to go. Let Jesus be Lord of your life. And to get right with God and to overcome the devil, you need the Lord's help. You can't win by your own strength. When Christ is in you and you are in Him, He'll give you the help and the strength that you need to overcome Satan. Ephesians 6:10 to 11 says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."

To become a Christian, believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Son of God, our Savior and the risen Lord. And out of love, repent of every sin and start living as God teaches. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Be baptized or immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven. Galatians 3:26 to 27 says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Live the Christian life. Get involved at church. The closer you are to God, the easier it becomes to resist the devil. Do it for yourself, and do it for those you love. Your strong faith will lead others to place their faith in the Lord

as well. Don't let another day go by, till you have made your life right with the living God. Why not be obedient to the Lord today?

Perhaps you've considered your battle for your soul and you want to know more. Well we offer this study free to anyone who asks. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. You can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). And you can also download these lessons or a newsletter, on line at our website [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

Please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. Keep searching God's Word with us. Tell a friend about this program. and as always we say to you, God bless you, we want Him to bless you, and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.