

FOURTH QUARTER STRATEGIES -Saturday, November 21, 2015

We've all experienced those times when we sensed some spiritual force either accomplished or prevented an incident in our lives. Thirty-four years ago, I could easily have been killed in an automobile accident. If I had swerved to the left, I would have run head on into oncoming traffic. For some reason, I swerved right and bent my right front axle and did not suffer any injury at all. The incident did cause me to become aware of a serious drinking problem. You could say I took a crash course in sobriety. This was simply a stepping stone in my personal journey on the road to Christ. There's a spiritual battle that is continually being waged for lost souls! Good and evil forces are fighting this battle daily in the lives of all who are either convinced or unconvinced that Christ died for our sins.

If you are having difficulty grasping the idea of spiritual warfare, let me recommend two excellent books written late last century by Christian author Frank Peretti. **THIS PRESENT DARKNESS** and its sequel **PIERCING THE DARKNESS** are worth the read. These two best-selling fictional novels paint a vivid picture of what I truly believe goes on in a different dimension unfathomable to the human psyche. Try to imagine angels and demons struggling for control of lives caught up in daily activities without us having any clue of what is going on around us. You probably think it takes a great deal of imagination to conjure up such thoughts. On the contrary, scripture tells us that angels and demons do truly battle over this world and its inhabitants.

In Daniel 10:4-14, the prophet Daniel tells of an encounter with a being who appears to be the pre-incarnate Christ. He shares with Daniel that He was detained three weeks by the King and a prince of Persia (Satan and one of his ungodly angels) until Michael the Archangel came to assist Him. Daniel is then told that He and Michael will again go into battle against the princes of Persia and Greece after He shares with Daniel what is written in the Book of Truth about the future. In Ephesians 6:12 we're reminded that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of the evil in the heavenly realms." (NIV) The battle for souls continues in our modern world and we need to be aware that it exists. You may be saying, "Well, that's fine, but what can I do about it?"

Well, I believe we can follow Paul's directive in Ephesians 6:13-19 and "put on the whole armor of God ... And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests." We have no armor greater than prayer and the Word of God to ward off the enemy. We must also follow the words found in James 4:7-10 and submit ourselves to God and resist the devil. We must draw near to God and He will draw near to us. We must humble ourselves before Him and He will lift us up. There is a spiritual battle that goes on over each of us and Satan and his demons want to render us ineffective for the Lord. They want to do everything they possibly can to discourage us in our daily walk.

I've always been encouraged by the accounts of Jesus being tempted by Satan in the desert for forty days. He did not succumb to temptation and always responded with the phrase "It is written." Our strength can be found in His Word which is made clear by the Holy Spirit Who desires to live in your heart. That's how I've been getting through the spiritual battles that I've faced the past thirty-plus years ever since I accepted Christ as Savior and Lord of my life. He's the Answer you've been searching for as you've faced those things that may seem insurmountable in your life. Jesus instructed His disciples in Matthew 19:26, ".... but with God all things are possible."

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Daniel 10:4-14; Matthew 19:26; Luke 4:1-13; Ephesians 6:12-19; James 4:7-10

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Passages to Ponder: Daniel 10:4-14; Matthew 19:26; Luke 4:1-13; Ephesians 6:12-19; James 4:7-10

Daniel 10:4-14 New International Version (NIV)

⁴On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. ⁶His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

⁷I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; those who were with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. ⁸So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. ⁹Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground.

¹⁰A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. ¹¹He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

¹²Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. ¹³But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. ¹⁴Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

Matthew 19:26 New International Version (NIV)

²⁶Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Luke 4:1-13 New International Version (NIV)

⁴Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

⁵The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and

splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you
to guard you carefully;

¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

¹² Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Ephesians 6:12-19 New International Version (NIV)

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,

James 4:7-10 New International Version (NIV)

⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.