

Spiritual Warfare Series – Six Seasons Of Temptation

Luke 4:13 KJV And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 KJV To every *thing* there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

I. INTRODUCTION—SPIRITUAL WARFARE

-Sometimes a preacher is cast in the unpopular role of preaching things that either people don't want to hear or that they don't want to believe. There is nothing more disconcerting for a preacher to know that he has some good advice, not his own, but that of Scripture that would mightily help people to serve the Lord much more victoriously than what they are doing.

-There is nothing more scoffed at than the idea of a spiritual war that every man is involved in. Most people just don't want to believe that they are in a skirmish, a battle, or a war for their very soul. Because we don't have spiritual eyes that can see into the world above, it is difficult for our limited

imagination to even consider the thought of a war taking place.

-We cannot see all of the things that are associated with war around us—tanks, armored personnel carriers, jets, guns, and weapons—so there is a tendency to forget that we are in a battle for our soul.

-In fact the devil longs to lull us to a state of sleepy spiritual lethargy and we just fool about thinking that nothing is really taking place.

C. S. Lewis—The safest road to hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, the soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones.

-In that little book that C. S. Lewis wrote called *The Screwtape Letters*, he wrote that the devil wants two things out of saints—either that they ignore him and his demons or that there is a heightened curiosity about them.

G. C. Berkouwer—There can be no sound theology without a sound demonology.

-If you have been filled with the Spirit, whether you like it or not, you are in the fight of your life. It is not my desire to cause you to have great fear of the

enemy; it is my desire to get you to understand that the devil works with great deception and temptation and causes us to fall.

-I have a feeling that if our spiritual discernment has a great improvement, we suddenly are more aware of what is going on about us. That is why when we are praying and spending time with the Word of God, our minds and spirits have a higher sense to be able to see patterns and the way that the devil is taking advantage of us, our families, our friends, and sometimes the Church.

I have had the opportunity to spend time with some of our missionaries over the years and when the conversation turns serious, I am always curious to hear them speak of their thoughts concerning spiritual warfare. My brother-in-law has had some interesting accounts concerning spiritual warfare taking place in Romania. Others have told me that demonic spirits have a tendency to be more openly confrontational in other countries because of the sway of influence they choose to wield over the people to control them through fear. You would find this to fit well with Acts 8 with Simon the Sorcerer who controlled the people with his deception. Again it would be important to note also in Acts 16 with the slave girl who was a fortune-teller.

What is chilling to me is the fact that *all* of these missionaries tell me that when they come home on furlough after a four year period of being out of the United States, they notice a deadened spiritual state among many churches. Very little fervor and passion is noticed. What is passed as worship is usually man-centered entertainment almost devoid of the power of the Holy Ghost. That is what we are up against!

When I asked them why we don't see more confrontations with the demonic here, they have told me that the spirits that confront the American churches are so subtle in their approach because they don't want to be ferreted out and exposed. So they sit quietly on pews in churches and choose to influence through a sense of infiltration to destroy every bit of the godly and righteous influence that they can. Working behind the scenes, they can generate sons of Sceva who appear religious but are not righteous. Their lives are characteristically marked with little prayer, little devotion to God, and little hunger for the Word, no hunger for holiness, no desire for spiritual revival, and no desire for a national harvest of men.

I am convinced that there are people who are sitting here in this Church who are entirely

unconverted and are presently lost. But I am also very convinced that there are some people who are spiritual powerhouses that have a continuous flow of the Spirit in their lives and are constantly seeking new ways to allow God's anointing to help them.

-I want nothing more than to take the Word of God and help you to see that there is much at stake in your spiritual life. The fact of the matter is that you will make it if you endure to the end. It is not without a fight but it is worth the fight!

2 Corinthians 2:11 KJV Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Luke 22:31 KJV And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat:

Ephesians 6:10-13 KJV Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. **[11]** Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. **[12]** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. **[13]** Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of

God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

II. SIX SEASONS OF TEMPTATION

-As we read in the texts from Luke and Ecclesiastes, there is a clear understanding as to the fact that there are certain seasons that take place in our lives. If the devil left the Lord for a season that means that his three temptations took place also in a season, which is pretty elementary.

William Gurnall—Satan knows when to make his approaches, when (if at any time) he is most likely to be entertained. As Christ hath the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season of counsel and comfort, to a doubting dropping soul, so Satan shows his black art, and hellish skill, in speaking words of seduction and temptation in season; and a word in season is a word on its wheels. (From *The Christian in Complete Armour*, p. 72)

-There are probably many more times that we find ourselves in a season of temptation in our spiritual war—but I am going to use only six, which is not exhaustive by any means. You can probably add to these just by reading through the Bible and pin-pointing times when people found themselves under the attack of the devil.

A. The First Season—Immediately After Conversion

-The devil does his best to attack a new saint in the earliest stages of his new life. Because he hates what has taken place with the work of righteousness it becomes his intent to destroy the new faith of the new convert.

-The attack may not come the week after or even the month after because the excitement and desire is at a high pitch. There is new wonder in their soul—for worship, for the Word, for prayer, and for evangelism. The devil shies away from them during this period of time.

-But when the initial inspiration of salvation begins to taper, he attacks:

- Through ridicule from their closest friends and family members.
- Through intense temptation from the old crowd to do the old things again.
- Through reminding them of their failures of the past.
- Through distractions of all kinds—entertainment, eating, shopping, hobbying—so that there is no time to care

for the soul. (Your soul is always going to be cultivated in the quiet places of devotion—private prayer, private Bible reading, private meditation.)

- Through making them to think that they can have the best of both worlds—the Church and the world.

-This pattern is an old one—to attack the young.

- Just as the Pharaoh in Egypt wanted to destroy all of the new babies born in Goshen, the devil does the same thing.
- Just as Herod tried to destroy Jesus by killing all of the young males in Jerusalem, the devil wants to kill all the newly converted.

-The remedy for their escape is for someone to build an ark to save them. Nothing is more crucial for Jochabed and Miriam to rise up to their responsibilities toward these new converts to help them fend off the attacks of the hardened heart of the devil.

-His desire is to bring them back into bitter bondage and the hard labor of the sinful life.

-I encourage every hearty saint of God to get these new converts under your wings and help them to make it to that celestial city.

B. The Second Season—The Pain of Life

- If the **First Season of Temptation** takes place immediately after conversion. . .
- The **Second Season of Temptation** takes place when the pain of life settles in on us. .

-The devil is masterful in attacking us with painful situations—both of mind and body. Sick bodies and sick minds become his playground. In those times of gripping pain, he makes us to think that God has forgotten us or that God does not care. He longs for us to think that the Spirit and the Church has led us into some blind alley of desertion.

-He is like an attacker who goes in to take a walled city and looks for a weakness in the wall. The

- Job in his great loss of health, wealth, and family, the devil attacked with a vengeance for him to curse God and die.
- Jesus fasted for forty days and the devil attacked with a fierceness of temptation.

-When we are hurting, temptation is never stronger as when we are at our weakest point. The devil will paint up sin as a certain way for us to escape through the very sin that will damn us. That is the sly and wily approach of the devil to a saint when he is down.

Revelation 2:10 KJV Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

-Suffering is a fact of our life as long as we are on the earth in a fallen world. What the devil blurs our minds to—he makes us think that once you receive the Holy Ghost that you will be immune from all suffering. But consider what God told Ananias to tell Saul.

Acts 9:15-16 KJV But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: **[16]** For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

-Notice what God says. . . show him the great things he must suffer for my name's sake. . . He did not say. . .

- Tell him what great revivals that will take place in his ministry.
- Tell him what great missionary efforts he will be involved in.
- Tell him that he will write over half of the New Testament.
- Tell him that he will have a great impact on the Church until the return of the Lord.

-Find any man or woman who has been greatly used of God and I will show you a person who has had their share of suffering and attacks from hell. Don't take suffering personal, it will happen to everyone who walks the path toward Heaven.

-The devil is an expert in taking advantage of the deceptive humanistic thinking that is prevalent in our world today.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 KJV For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: **[4]** (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) **[5]** Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of

God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

-If the devil can get our minds thinking opposite of what the Word of God has to say, much of his battle is over.

-What a twisted thing he has done to the modern church in the area of our thinking about suffering.

-Remember this: *The times of greatest spiritual fellowship often comes when we are in our greatest point of pain.*

C. The Third Season—At the Beginning of a Great Victory

- If the **First Season of Temptation** takes place immediately after conversion. . .
- If the **Second Season of Temptation** takes place when the pain of life settles in on us. . .
- The **Third Season of Temptation** takes place when we are about to embark on some great victory. . .

-The devil can sense when God is about to bring you into some great state of revival and victory. He cannot read your mind or God's intent but he can

see the patterns that are taking place and when he notices the potential for a spiritual victory to take place, he goes on the attack.

Genesis 49:17 KJV . . . an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.

-The devil goes on the attack when he becomes alert to the fact that something significant is about to take place.

- He will send a Tobiah and Sanballat to mock the wallbuilders.
- He will put Paul and Barnabas at odds so that they part ways.
- He attacked Jesus at the beginning of His ministry and assailed him all the way through it and then bitterly attacked at the end.

-The more prominent that a person may be—leadership, influence, or spiritual authority—the devil will do his best to fracture these to the point of failure.

-You will discover more often than not that just before God is going to do something great in your life, you will weather your share of storms and

shakings that will attempt to rattle your faith and desire. You can't quit!

D. The Fourth Season—Objects for the Fall

- If the **First Season of Temptation** takes place immediately after conversion. . .
- If the **Second Season of Temptation** takes place when the pain of life settles in on us. . .
- If the **Third Season of Temptation** takes place when we are about to embark on some great victory. . .
- Then the **Fourth Season of Temptation** will take place when the devil puts objects near us that will cause us to fall. . .

-When he tempted Eve and brought her to fall, he used a tree. It was something near that he took advantage of tempting her with. She was near the tree and then put her eyes on it and then the dialogue with the devil started.

-The fact is that what gets into our eyes will soon find its way into our hearts. It was an inordinate desire that Eve started looking at and she fell. When we get into a conversation of rationalizing

and justifying our evil actions, it won't be long before we fall to the temptation.

-You have to fight with all of your heart.

Proverbs 4:23 KJV Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.

Proverbs 23:19 KJV Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way.

Colossians 3:2 KJV Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

- Judas fell with this moneybag.
- Esau fell with the bowl of stew.
- Demas fell with his love of the world.
- Achan fell because of his longing for a wedge of gold and a garment.

-You can count on it, the devil will place things in your way that will be heady and intoxicating to you. . . take it. . . use it. . . get it. . . all to the destruction of your spiritual health.

E. The Fifth Season—After Receiving Great Grace

- If the **First Season of Temptation** takes place immediately after conversion. . .

- If the **Second Season of Temptation** takes place when the pain of life settles in on us. .
- If the **Third Season of Temptation** takes place when we are about to embark on some great victory. . .
- If the **Fourth Season of Temptation** will take place when the devil puts objects near us that will cause us to fall. . .
- Then the **Fifth Season of Temptation** will take place after we have received the great grace and mercy of God. . .

-You may refer to this also as the Ai Principle. After you have experienced a great demonstration of the love of God, the grace of God, and the power of God in your life, the devil will come to attack with fierce temptations.

-More saints find themselves in a place of spiritual relaxation after these moments in time.

William Gurnall—If God smile and open himself a little familiar to us, then we are prone to grow high and wanton; if he frown, then we sink as much in our faith. Thus the one, like fair weather and warm gleams, brings up weeds of corruption; and the other, like sharp frosts, nips and even kills the

flowers of grace. (From *The Christian in Complete Armour*, p. 74)

- Look at the life of Peter in Matthew 16. One minute he has received grand revelation and the next minute the Lord is calling him the devil.
- Look at Joseph in Genesis. One moment he is flushed with the pride of his father's love as he wears his coat and the next moment, he is sold off by his jealous brothers.
- Look at the children of Israel, collapsing the walls of Jericho and then days later, rattled in Ai by a much lesser opponent.
- Look at Moses receiving the Law on the mountain in the thickness of God's glory and then shortly dashing it to the ground because of idolatry at the foot of the mountain.

F. The Sixth Season—At the Moment of Death

- If the **First Season of Temptation** takes place immediately after conversion. . .
- If the **Second Season of Temptation** takes place when the pain of life settles in on us. . .

- If the **Third Season of Temptation** takes place when we are about to embark on some great victory. . .
- If the **Fourth Season of Temptation** will take place when the devil puts objects near us that will cause us to fall. . .
- If the **Fifth Season of Temptation** will take place after we have received the great grace and mercy of God. . .
- Then the **Sixth Season of Temptation** will take place when we are in the hour of death.

-When a saint of God is down to his last moments of life, he may feel stricken in body by pain and the loss of strength may discourage him. Then the cowardly tempter assails him one last time.

-This is the fear that Bunyan described in Pilgrim's Progress when Christian has to swim across the river to go to the Celestial City. He saw the brightness of the Heavenly City but the challenge was the deep, swiftly flowing river that was between him and the City.

-But there can be a rising confidence in knowing that we may look back at our lives and realize that it has not been wasted if it has been faithfully lived out for the Lord.

III. CONCLUSION—I AM NOW READY TO BE OFFERED!

2 Timothy 4:6-8 KJV For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. [7] I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

-One last thing about temptation—you can overcome and need not fall. . .

1 Corinthians 10:13 KJV There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

Jeremiah 29:11 KJV For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

James 5:11 KJV Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of

Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

PERSONAL NOTE: *I used the outline from William Gurnall's classic book, The Christian In Complete Armour, from segment called Direction I—Second General Part—Seasons Chosen to Draw Into Sin. I intend on using this book for numerous other sermon outlines with this series.*