

Introduction: I have no data on this, but I suspect very few Christians in the United States would put spiritual warfare as their first priority in their relationship with God. Some of this is because of the materialistic majority that does not believe in the supernatural. Many Christians might put knowing and doing God's will by faith and in gratitude toward Him for reconciliation through His Son as their highest priority. Others might say they most want their loved ones to come to know Jesus as they know Him so they would have His eternally abundant and meaningful life now. Other highest priorities would be praise and worship to God and knowing His Word in order to obey Him in faithful gratitude. All these, and more, would be above spiritual warfare as a first priority for the majority of Christians in our country. *** This is a good reason why preaching through God's Word book-by-book is so important. Pastors make a mistake if they only preach on topics they think are important. We are going through a significant portion of Matthew's Gospel from now until the Sunday after Easter. Today's chapter is about spiritual warfare. So, this morning spiritual warfare is our highest priority. *** Today's text is about the eternal Second Person of the Trinity as the thirty year old human Son of Man beginning His ministry. He has just been baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He is then led into the rocky wilderness by God's Spirit where He fasted for forty days. *** At the end of this time, the enemy of God and God's people comes to test Him three times. This is an experience unique to the Son of God. None of us ever would or could be tested as Jesus was tested. But, there is something we can learn from how He responded to this spiritual battle to help us in the spiritual battle we fight every day, whether we know it or not. *** Let's look at the Gospel and Psalm for guidance.

I. The enemy maliciously tests The Son of God, and each time Jesus responds with the Word of God. (Matthew 4:1-11)

A. The tempter commands a hungry Jesus to speak to the stones so they become bread. (Verses 1-4)

1. Then Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the slanderer; and, having fasted forty days and nights, afterwards He was hungry. (Verses 1-2)

Wilderness: The Judean wilderness had many rocks and was very dry with little vegetation.

Tempted: The slanderer was putting Jesus to the test to see how He would respond to temptation.

Forty days: This is the number of days Moses spent with Yahweh on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:15-18).

2. The tempter, having come, said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, You must speak to these stones that they might become bread'. (Verse 3)

Tempter: The tempter is the slanderer who is the enemy of God. Stones were all around them.

Make stones to be bread: God, and only God, has the ability to turn stones into bread.

3. But, having answered, He said, 'It has been written: man will not live on bread alone, but on every Word proceeding from the mouth of God' (Deuteronomy 8:3). (Verse 4)

Live on Word: Jesus used the Word of God to rebuke the tempter's test by affirming that people live by God's Word more than food. In this way He rebuked and defeated the tempter. And, we can win our spiritual battles if we will daily feed ourselves by hearing God's Word.

God's Word is victory

B. The slanderer commands God's Son to throw Himself from the highest point of the Temple by misquoting a Psalm. (Verses 5-7)

1. Then the slanderer is taking Him to the holy city and stood Him on the highest point of the Temple. (Verse 5)

Slanderer: Having failed to tempt Jesus to sin in the wilderness, he now brings Jesus to the city.

Temple: Then he stood Jesus at the highest point of the Temple, over nine stories from the ground.

2. And he is saying to Him, 'If you are The Son of God, you must throw Yourself down because it has been written: He will command His angels concerning You, and on their hands they will take You up, lest you strike upon a stone Your foot' (Psalm 91:11-12). (Verse 6)

Throw yourself down: He is testing Jesus with a word spoken by Yahweh Most High to His people.

3. Jesus was saying to him again, 'It has been written: You will not test The Lord your God'. (Verse 7)

Not test God: It is not right to take Scripture out of context. Jesus balances God's Word concerning His people with a Word that prevents people from presuming on God by selfishly testing Him (Deuteronomy 6:16). Spiritual battles are won by correctly applying Scripture in context.

God's Word is victory.

C. The adversary promises Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus worships him. (Verses 8-11)

1. Again, the slanderer is taking Him to a very high mountain; and, he is showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. (Verse 8)

Mountain view of world: From a very high place, the enemy shows Jesus every kingdom on earth.

2. He is saying to Him, 'All these I will give You if, having fallen down, You will worship me'. (Verse 9)

Slanderer: He makes one last attempt to make Jesus fail by offering to make Him king of the world. The apostle John was inspired to write that the whole world has been laid in the evil one (1 John 5:19).

Craves worship: The evil one craves the worship that rightfully belongs only to God.

3. Then Jesus is saying to him 'Adversary, you must depart, for it has been written: You will worship The Lord your God and Him only will you serve in worship' (Deuteronomy 6:13). (Verse 10)

Worship and serve The Lord ONLY: For the third time, Jesus rebukes the evil one with a Word from Deuteronomy. The slanderer should never get from people what belongs only to God.

Bottom Line: Then the slanderer is leaving Him; and, behold, angels came and were beginning to minister to Him. (Verse 11)

Victory: Every time Jesus overcame the evil one with God's Word. As The Son of Man, He rightly used Scripture to win the victory. If we are in Him, we too can win spiritual battles.

God's Word is victory

II. Jesus moves to Galilee after hearing John is in prison to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah; and, the true meaning of the Psalm. (*Matthew 4:12-17; Psalm 91:9-12*)

- A. After Jesus hears John was put in prison, He departs to Galilee. (*Verses 12-14*)
1. After hearing John was delivered (to prison), He went back to Galilee. (*Verse 12*)
John in prison: John would ultimately be beheaded (*Matthew 14:1-12*).
 2. Having left Nazareth, He dwelt in Capernaum beside the sea in the borders of Zebulon and Naphtali. (*Verse 13*)
Dwell in Zebulon and Naphtali: Nazareth (in Zebulon) was twenty miles southwest of Capernaum ('village of comfort' in Naphtali) which was on the north of the Sea of Galilee
 3. That it might be fulfilled what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet. (*Verse 13*)
Fulfill what spoken through Isaiah: Seven hundred and fifty years before this God spoke through Isaiah the prophet about the land around Galilee. Jesus was now fulfilling this Word (*Isaiah 9:1-2*).
- B. This fulfills the prophecy of light in darkness from Galilee to preach The Kingdom of heaven to all. (*Verses 15-17*)
1. Land of Zebulon ('honor', *Genesis 30:20*) and land of Naphtali ('my struggle', *Genesis 30:8*) beyond Jordan ('descender'), Galilee ('circuit') of the nations. (*Verse 15*)
Galilee and nations: In Isaiah's day, the nations had had taken over the region of Galilee.
 2. The people who are sitting in darkness have seen great light; and, to those sitting in the region and the shadow of death – light has risen to them. (*Verse 16*)
Light in darkness: Yahweh said there would come a time when light would rise on those living in the darkness of the shadow of death.
- Bottom Line:** From then, Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent! For has drawn near the Kingdom of the Heavens'. Those who turn to Jesus receive His Kingdom per God's Word. This is victory. (*Verse 17*)

God's Word is victory

- C. And, Jesus is the fulfillment that God will guard those who live in Him. (*Psalm 91:9-12*)
1. Because You, Yahweh, are my refuge; you have made the Most High your dwelling. (*Verse 9*)
Dwell in Yahweh God: The Psalmist addresses anyone who will dwell in Yahweh Most High.
 2. Evil will not happen to you; and a plague will not come near your tent. (*Verse 10*)
No evil: Anyone who lives in the covenant God will be protected from evil doings.
No plague: Anyone who lives in the covenant God will be protected from a plague in his home.

Living in God results in protection

3. Because He will command His angels to guard you in all your ways. (*Verse 11*)
Angels guard: Again, anyone living in God will be protected in all his ways by God's angels. This is the phrase the slanderer omitted when he tested Jesus. All the ways of Jesus included His encounter with the enemy; and, when He won the victory, His Father's angels came and ministered to Him.
4. They will take you up in their hands lest you strike on the stone your foot. (*Verse 12*)
Bear up: Again, the one living in God will be protected from striking his foot on a stone. Let us be sure that as Christ's Body, we are all dwelling in God through His Word and His Spirit in order to be protected by Him. Let's encourage, exhort and pray for one another to do this.

Living in God results in protection

Bottom Line: Since we are in a spiritual battle, let us live victoriously by dwelling in God and using His Word under the direction of His Spirit.

Conclusion: The enemy maliciously tests The Son of God three times, and each time Jesus responds with the Word of God to win the victory. After hearing John is in prison, He moves to Galilee to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah concerning light shining in darkness for all nations. This is how He demonstrates the true meaning of the Psalm the enemy threw at Him, namely those who continually dwell in Yahweh Most High will be protected by Him.

God's Word is victory