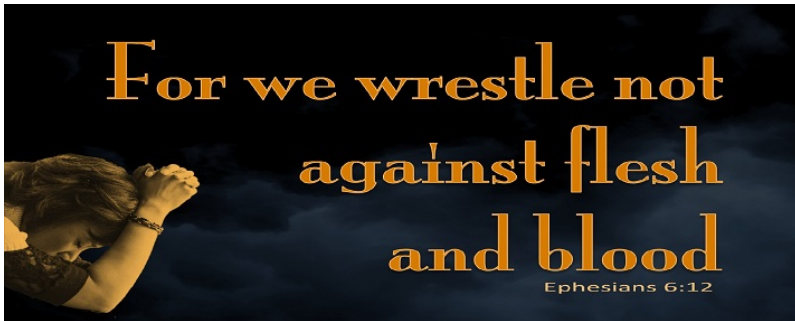


Bulletin Insert – February 2022

**"We Wrestle Not Against Flesh and Blood,
but Against Spiritual Wickedness"**

by Elder Bill Jones

Our theme for the month comes from Paul's communication with the Ephesians. These words direct our attention to the fact that our struggles in this life go beyond the physical. Christ indicates as much when he said, *"And fear not them who are able to kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:25).



We fight many battles in this life. We employ our physical strength. We use our minds and the knowledge or wit we have acquired. We use our learned ability to gain the upper hand over people and circumstances; but when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he wanted them to understand that although their daily struggles with people and things and conditions around them were real, there was more of which they were to be aware. He wanted them to realize that it was Satan himself and the powers of darkness and evil and spiritual wickedness which he represents that they struggle against as well.

If you read the entire 12th verse in the 6th chapter of Ephesians from which our monthly theme is taken, you begin to understand the enormity, the magnitude, the seriousness of the situation Paul is attempting to express to the people.

Paul says, *“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”* (Ephesians 6:12).

What are **PRINCIPALITIES**? In biblical times it was a state ruled by a prince or governor and was usually a relatively small state or a state that falls within a larger state or nation. Therefore a principality can have dominion within the confines of a larger domain or rule. In this context Paul was warning that Satan can, and does, set up dominions within this life which seek to distract us from the principles of the kingdom of God. When Paul was talking of principalities and powers they represented for him the Rulers and Authorities who deal in spiritual wickedness that threaten men physically and spiritually. With an array of evil and malicious **SPIRITS OF INTENT** Satan makes war against mankind. It is his goal to make people miserable as he is miserable, and destroy their lives, and in particular to war against the people of God and defeat the believers of Christ.

Spiritual Wickedness are the Forces of Darkness which war against a believer in Christ, to make him live below Divine expectations. The Gift of the Holy Spirit (that which teaches what is right and leads us to **ALL TRUTH**) is the tool we have which helps us to deal with TEMPTATIONS and DECEPTIONS of the Devil.

Our spiritual welfare against wickedness means we wrestle against deception and against the Devil's efforts to deceive us into believing a lie or partial truths. He does this so we might fall into error. We have to not only be concerned for ourselves but others as we contend against spiritual wickedness. The deception of our fellowmen is harmful not only to them but to ourselves if we consider how such a compromised condition affects our being able to work effectively with them in bringing about God's Kingdom here on earth.



The success of our spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness in this world is dependent upon our ability to resist the lies and deceptions employed by the adversary. To paraphrase the words of King Benjamin in the Book of Mosiah; if after we have known and been taught the things of the Lord and should then transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken and withdraw ourselves from the spirit of the Lord that it has no place in us to guide us that we may be blessed, then we have come out in open rebellion against God, and we choose to obey the evil spirit and become an enemy to all righteousness.

It is important we do not underestimate the determination or the cunning of Satan in this spiritual warfare identified by Paul. Satan is deceptive; Satan is determined, and Satan is subtle in his ability to cause disruptions in our lives and deceive many to follow after him.

Nephi, in the 12th chapter of the 2nd Book of Nephi, sounds the warning that the kingdom of the Devil must shake or be disturbed because those who have become a part of it or are in the process of becoming a part of it, must be awakened to their spiritual condition and moved to repentance.

If they are not persuaded they will continue to be deceived and stirred up to anger against that which is good and that which is the word of God. The scriptures say when that becomes the case there will be rage in the hearts of the children of men. The rage will be put there by the lies of Satan, and men will be persuaded to rebel (or rage) against the truth.

Those who Satan cannot control in that fashion,
“... he will pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say, All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospers, all is well; And thus the devil cheats their souls, and leads them away carefully down to hell. And behold, others he flattereth away and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them, I am no devil, for there is none: and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance” (2 Nephi 12:25-28).

For these people the issues of morality have been muted because Satan has persistently whispered in their ears there is no hell; there is no devil; there is no right or wrong. He will do that until they are his.



The scriptures are filled with many examples of people being deceived by Satan and having to contend with spiritual wickedness. From the very beginning the story in the Garden of Eden, describes the Devil's efforts to deceive Eve (who in turn

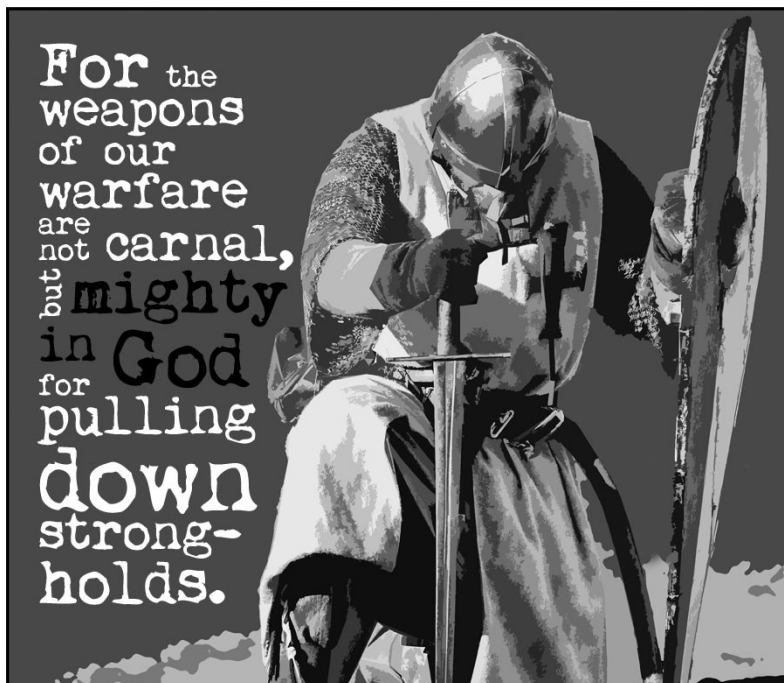
deceived Adam) into thinking God's word was not true so she would be vulnerable and erring in her judgment. **TEMPTATION** follows **DECEPTION**. Eve was told the eating of the fruit would not cause her to die. The truth had been replaced with a lie and the lie was made to look desirable. Eve was therefore tempted (enticed) to sin because she **first** allowed herself to be deceived. This simple format of lying, deception and temptation is a recurring theme.

In the Book of Mormon there is the example of Sherem who went about preaching many flattering things to the people in an effort to refute the words of Jacob and to overthrow the doctrine of Christ which Jacob taught. Sherem publicly ridiculed Jacob, wanting him to show a sign by the Holy Ghost to validate the existence of Christ. Jacob said, "*. . . what am I, that I should tempt God to shew unto thee a sign, in the thing which thou knowest to be true? Yet thou wilt deny it, because thou art of the devil*" (Jacob 5:23-24)

With those words Jacob accused Sherem of being taken in by the same temptation as Eve. He had allowed the truth to be replaced with a lie and the lie was made to look desirable because Sherem thought he could gain the favor of the people if he could convince them the lie was true. He knowingly rejected the truth and because he did Jacob could say to him, "THOU ART OF THE DEVIL."

Sherem's fate was that the power of the Lord came upon him and he was struck down. The people had to nourish him in his affliction for many days until the time came that he verbally could admit the things he taught the people were wrong. He confessed Christ and the Holy Ghost. He spoke plainly that he had been deceived by the power of the Devil. He confessed he lied unto God and had denied Christ and greatly feared his case would be awful and then he gave up the ghost.

We cannot fight this battle alone. We cannot rely solely upon our own human strength or wit or mentality. We need the assistance of Christ. We have to arm ourselves with the things we have received of God that we may be prepared to contend against the spiritual wickedness and darkness mentioned by Paul.



“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). (This scripture is saying that the weapons of our warfare are of God and are capable of helping us to successfully contend against the lies and opinions raised against the true knowledge of God which would lead us away from Him.)

Consider this counsel. *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

I chose this scripture because it illustrates, no matter what the circumstances, Satan’s determination is to inflict himself upon whomever is vulnerable. Section 22 in the Doctrine and Covenants offers a good example. In the early verses of this section the Lord has just withdrawn from Moses after conversing with him. No sooner has Moses recovered from his experience than Satan comes tempting him, saying, “Moses, son of man, worship me.” (Surely Satan is as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.)

Moses rejected Satan and said he would continue to worship God and to call upon Him because he could distinguish between God’s glory and Satan’s darkness. And he told Satan to depart hence.



This scripture reflects exactly what was taking place between Moses and Satan. *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you . . .”* (James 4:7-8).

And it came to pass, that Satan cried with a loud voice, with weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and departed hence; yea from the presence of Moses, that he beheld him not” (Doctrine and Covenants 22:15).



Our struggle is against the spiritual forces of evil which seek to win our hearts and minds. If Satan can gain access and dwell therein, he can separate us from God. It is up to us to acknowledge this warfare exists and continually examine our hearts and minds. If we ignore the existence of this warfare, if we choose to ignore the existence of the devil; if we choose to ignore the evidence of his efforts, we set ourselves up to fall victim to his ways.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness.