



April 30, 2023

“Five Ways to Guard Against Spiritual Warfare”

Acts 8, 13, 16, and 19

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The Bible is a book about two kingdoms—the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. We see the kingdom of darkness interact with the kingdom of light throughout the book of Acts as Satan opposes the work the Lord does through His followers. How should we approach the topics of spiritual warfare, Satan, demons, and occult practices? Some have an unhealthy interest in these things and others dismiss them altogether. In this study, we will learn five ways to guard ourselves against spiritual warfare.

1. The kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness
 - a. We live in a physical world, but there is also a spiritual realm
 - b. The kingdom of light is where God and the angels reside
 - c. The kingdom of darkness is where Satan and the demons reside
 - d. We are each a part of either the kingdom of light or the kingdom of darkness
 - i. **Colossians 1:13** - *“For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son.”* (NLT)
 - ii. **2 Corinthians 4:4** - *“Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.”* (NLT)
 - iii. **Ephesians 4:18** - *“Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.”* (NLT)
 - iv. **Ephesians 5:8** - *“For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light!”* (NLT)
 - v. **1 Peter 2:9** - *“But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.”* (NLT)
 - vi. **1 John 2:9** - *“If anyone claims, ‘I am living in the light,’ but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness.”* (NLT)

- vii. **John 1:4-5** – *“The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.”* (NLT)

2. Spiritual warfare in the Book of Acts

a. Simon the sorcerer

- i. **Acts 8:9-11** – *“But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God.’ And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.”*

b. Elymas the sorcerer

- i. **Acts 13:6-12** – *“Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.’ And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”*

c. A fortune teller

- i. **Acts 16:16-19** – *“Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.’ And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And he came out that very hour. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.”*

d. Jewish exorcists

- i. **Acts 19:11-20** – *“Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of*

them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, 'We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.' Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?' Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed."

- e. Sorcery, divination, fortune-telling, demon possession, and spell books are occult practices and should be avoided

3. The occult

- a. The dictionary defines the occult as, "hidden, secret, and mysterious; particularly pertaining to the supernatural"
- b. Examples of occult practices
 - i. Astrology, witchcraft, Wicca, the Black Arts, fortune-telling, black and white magic, Ouija boards, tarot cards, spiritism, psychic practices, mediums, Satanism, New Age teaching, pantheism, Eastern meditation, and yoga philosophy
- c. The occult is fascinating to us because:
 - i. It appeals to our natural curiosity
 - ii. It provides quick and easy answers to life questions as opposed to waiting on the Lord

4. Where God is actively at work, Satan is not too far behind

- a. Occult practices are present in the Book of Acts because Satan was attempting to interfere with explosion of the Church and the Gospel message going forth
- b. Satan desires to keep Believers distracted and an unbelieving world deceived
 - i. Satan is actively at work in our lives to distract us and keep us in bondage to sin

5. A healthy Biblical balance

- a. C.S. Lewis said, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them." ⁱ

- i. An unhealthy interest in the demonic can make us think every negative experience is a direct result of Satan's power
 - 1. Satan and the demons are not omnipotent nor omnipresent; they are limited in power and sometimes bad things happen simply because we live in a fallen world
 - ii. It is also unhealthy to be dismissive of Satan's influence
 - 1. **1 Peter 5:8** - *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."*
6. We should not be scared but prepared
- a. What God loves; Satan hates
 - i. Your marriage
 - ii. Holiness
 - iii. Purity
 - iv. Maturity
 - b. What God makes; Satan wants you to worship
 - i. Yourself
 - ii. Creation
 - c. What God makes plain; Satan perverts
 - i. Scripture
 - d. What God designs; Satan distorts
 - i. Gender
 - ii. Marriage
 - iii. Sexuality
7. Five ways to **GUARD** against spiritual warfare
- a. Get saved
 - i. **Colossians 1:13** - *"For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son."* (NLT)
 - b. Use the spiritual armor of God
 - i. **Ephesians 6:10-12** - *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 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."* (1984 NIV)
 - c. Avoid evil practices
 - i. **1 Thessalonians 5:22** - *"Abstain from every form of evil."*
 - d. Resist the devil
 - i. **James 4:7** - *"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*
 - e. Draw near to God

- i. **James 4:8-10** - *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Acts 8:9-11**, **13:6-12**, **Acts 16:16-19**, and **Acts 19:11-20** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Discuss and contrast what Scripture says about the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. (See #1 above)
3. What is the occult? Why are people drawn to occult practices? (See #3 above)
4. Why are occult practices recorded in the Book of Acts? Why does Satan use spiritual warfare? (See #4a and #4b above)
5. Discuss a Biblically balanced view of spiritual warfare. (See #5 above)
6. Where are some areas of our lives in which we might face spiritual warfare? (See #6 above)
7. How do we guard ourselves against spiritual warfare? (See #7 above)
8. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)

ⁱ [Know Your Adversary \(harvest.org\)](http://harvest.org)