

The Unseen War

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[0:00] I want to talk about the unseen war.

The unseen war! 1 Peter 5, verse 8-9! A familiar one. It says of the devil and of the unseen war, it says, Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

An unseen war, an unseen adversary, yet a real one. And we are the Lord's army. There is a war going on. It's no picnic.

It's a war. And some of you are in the thickest part of this battle. Even in the thickest part of the fight. Perhaps even now, different things going on.

And yet, for others, for some of you, you scarcely even think of the concept. You scarcely give a passing thought to the fact of this war, of this adversary.

[1:19] All around us, a battle is raging. An invisible battle. An unseen war. And we are occupying enemy territory, as it were.

In 2 Timothy 2, verses 3 to 4, Paul urges Timothy, he says, Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

No man that wreath and tangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. We are to be soldiers.

To be soldiers. Good soldiers of Jesus Christ, our Lord. And this means that we're in much more than just a parade ground.

We are in a battleground. And we are in a time, not a peacetime, but a time of war. And we are to be soldiers.

[2:24] To be soldiers. Soldiers disciplined. Soldiers trained. Soldiers armed. Soldiers ready to fight. Soldiers in a cosmic conflict.

In an unseen, intense spiritual struggle. Called to engage in a warfare. An unseen war. In which we are pitted against a faceless enemy.

As believers, we are urged to war a good warfare. A hidden warfare. We're called to battle.

To the good fight of the faith. And warring against us, we have the world, the flesh and the devil.

Dogging our steps. This is the time to rally the troops.

To rally round the banner. The stakes in this war are high. The price is heaven or hell. Life or death. Bondage or freedom.

[3:28] And our committed enemy is a master of camouflage. He wears many disguises. So it's important that we identify his works.

And friends, today there is a propaganda campaign all about us. And the devil's tactics are various. Think of the enemy and what he would do.

I mean, if you were him, what would you do? You know? Think of how he goes about his wily ways of distracting, of deceiving, of discouraging, demoralizing, desensitizing the population.

You know, you see in times of warfare how the enemy sends radio signals and radio messages into the foreign lands and drops paraphernalia from the skies.

I'm sure people in the world wars of past would have heard of such stories of that. And I know as a young lad I had an interest in aircraft at one time.

[4:30] And I had a big library of aircraft books. I was sort of a bit of a fan that I had. And the minister at the time was a pilot. And he gave me his old flying lessons.

And I had all these things I was really interested in flying and planes. And then amongst my collections there was this old World War II book.

And it had silhouettes of different planes. And, you know, when you see a silhouette, you know, just a black shape and just an outline of a plane, you've got to be able to recognize a different aircraft.

Because obviously in time of war they had to discern between what was a Spitfire and a Messerschmitt, for example, and such things as that. And in an outline, in a silhouette, it's not always easy to tell the difference.

And so we need to be very guided and guarded about such things as that. Because the enemy would be, just as in times of real earthly warfare, it can be easily deceiving.

[5:38] And his battle plan, his cunning deceptions are all around us. He works hard. He works hard. He tempts. Sometimes he can be more subtle as he perverts the truth, as he opposes God's will, as he hinders the gospel.

Satan is hell-bent on bending people away from the truth, on blinding people to the truth, on creating confusion, on selling sin to the masses.

As we see through the propaganda campaign that he's watching, I saw a book and I meant to show you the title of it. It was Mind Siege.

The Mind is being besieged. And it talked about TV and how there's just a constant barraging of the enemy propaganda through such media.

And the enemy wants to demolish families. He wants to tear homes apart. He wants to preach another gospel. Whether it's humanism, whether it's moralism, whether it's universalism, ritualism, or evolution, or you name it.

[6:41] Anything but the gospel. He wants to undermine the church of God. And friends, we're instructed in our text, be sober. Be sober. There was talk of that earlier.

Be sober. What does it mean? It means be self-controlled. It means be guarded. Be balanced. Be clear-headed. Don't lower your defenses to Satan's influence.

Be sober. Be sober. Then it goes on, be vigilant. Be vigilant. In other words, be ever-watchful. It's the opposite of sleep. Be vigilant.

We must never be off our guard in this battle because our enemy is constantly about his work. And he constantly stands ready to attack us. Cromwell of old told his troops, trust in God and keep your powder dry.

Be watchful. Be watchful. Be watchful. As a century on guard. We've got our families that the battle is attacking. Just as the devil messed up the very first family in Genesis, right back at the start of your Bibles, in the Garden of Eden.

[7:50] The devil wants to demolish families. And we've seen the result of Adam's sin. The consequences still for us today. So keep watch. Keep watch. Be vigilant.

It's the same word our Lord used when he says, watch and pray. Watch and pray. He said his soul is at the point of death. This is Matthew 26, verse 38.

In the Garden, as he needed our prayers, as he needed the disciples' prayers. Well, not that he needed them, but he sought them. He says, watch and pray.

What did they do? They didn't last very long. They were sleeping and snoring. They weren't watching and praying.

And friends, we like that too, can't we? Be watch and pray. Keep watch. It's got the sense of keep watching. Keep praying. Be vigilant. What are we fighting for?

[8:48] The battle is about all that matters today. It's about the most critical things. It's about eternal things. And what is it that lasts for eternity? The Word of God.

It's forever settled in heaven. The Word of God is something forever. It's something eternal.

Something precious. And the souls of men, women and children. These are worth fighting for.

Amen? The Word of God is worth fighting for. The souls of men and women are worth fighting for.

That is what we are fighting for today. The battle is about all that matters.

All that matters. This is a battle that ought to engage our intense ardor and strength and vigor. And the text tells us of a lion roaring.

The lion uses his roar to frighten his prey. The lion goes about roaring. It's the howl of a beast in intense hunger.

[9:45] In fierce hunger. And it tells us that he is going about. He's seeking whom he may devour. He's looking for opportunities always, all

the times. He's looking for the opportunities to trick, to take us, an enemy that is bent on our destruction, on discouraging, on deterring, on blinding for those that will yet believe that his work is all about us.

And we need to be vigilant. Be vigilant. Be watching. You know, the old time castle at Edinburgh, I was, as a young lad, I went to see that castle.

And I remember how very steep one side was on the Edinburgh Castle. A giant structure, a great fortress. And the people grew careless.

Because they thought no one could climb the steep side and attack the castle. So they would rarely be concerned about that. They wouldn't really guard that as much.

People thought that no one could invade Edinburgh Castle by climbing the steep side. And yet that is where the enemy came and took them by surprise. So we need to be watchful, brothers and sisters.

[11:04] Be watchful where you think you stand. Take heed lest you fall. And so, be watchful. And then it says, resist the devil. Resist him. Withstand him.

It's a face-to-face confrontation. To keep on the alert. To be ready. To resist the devil. To recognise his attacks and his schemes. And to refuse to give in to that evil that confronts us.

It's a moment-by-moment awareness that he wants us to have. A readiness, a battle readiness. To be constantly on our guard. Satan, it tells us in 2 Corinthians 11 verse 4.

He's like an angel of light. He disguises himself so well. He's transformed into an angel of light. We need to understand the enemy's tactics.

So that we can overcome him. I heard a story about, apparently, Montgomery was in a battle against Erwin Rommel.

[12:05] And he said, he shouted out, Rommel, I've read your book. He'd read Rommel's tactics. He knew how Rommel was going to fight his battles.

And so Montgomery was on the front foot. And he was prepared for what the devil was going to do. And likewise too, we need to be alert to what are the devil's tactics?

What kind of ways is he going to attack us? How is he going to attack us? And I read recently how someone put it that Satan is a gradualist.

He's a gradualist. He uses a slow methodical process. Bit by bit. Just a little sin here. Just a little sin there. Just make some allowances here or there.

And before we know it, we're in big sin. And a little sin leads to a lot. It's just how he does things. As it says in James 1, that every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.

[13:08] And then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. And then sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Inch by inch.

Bit by bit. A gradualist. Just a little leaven. That's how he does things. Paul told Timothy to watch out. And to be on the alert.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. You know, the devil would like us to fall for pretty much anything we can.

So we've got to be constantly on the watch. And not wanting to let him undermine. And rather join the resistance.

Join the resistance. Let's be a part of the resistance today. And not follow the crowd. Resist the devil. As it says, it goes on.

[14:10] Resist steadfast. Resist steadfast in the faith. Stand firm in your faith. Brother, sister, stand firm. Stand firm. Hold your guard.

Hold your ground. As we battle Satan, let us be steadfast. Stairfast. Rock solid. Unmovable. Always abounding. Resolute in the faith.

This word steadfast has a military connotation of maintaining your rank and formation.

Maintaining your rank and formation. And the soldiers of old, as they gathered with shields about them and interlocking in a strong, firm, steadfast force, would overcome a solid front of soldiers.

That is what we need to be. As God's people. As soldiers. Together. Marching. Arm in arm. Step by step. Lockstep.

[15:12] Holding our formation. Keeping steadfast. It's interesting. In Acts 16, 5. Where it says, The churches were strengthened.

And they increased in number daily. Acts 16, 5. Where it says, It says, Strengthened is the verb form of this word steadfast.

Steadfast. The churches were, the sense of it, being strengthened. Being strengthened. The same root word of steadfast in this text here.

So the sense is that the church of God was being strengthened, made strong, being made firm, and solidified like muscles in the faith.

And increasing in number daily. Isn't that a wonderful picture of the church of God? Steadfast, strong in the faith. You know, it makes me think of this time of year when you see those muscly men and women in the Olympics, with all their muscles rippling, and the powerful muscles that they have.

[16:21] As much as we know, the Olympics is a godless thing. But we know that the muscles that we can have as God's people should solidify us and strengthen us, make us steadfast in the faith.

And likewise it says in Ephesians 6 verse 10, Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. There's a strength there.

In Christ, in His strength, in the power of His might, there's an empowerment there that comes from the power of His might. Of His might. It means His strength, His force, His ability.

The power, it speaks of God's dominion, of His sovereign ability to exercise His power. And God wants you and me, as soldiers in this conflict, to be strengthened, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Of course, Ephesians 6 tells us of all the parts of the armour, to put on the whole armour. We won't explore that today, but likewise in the spiritual conflict, we need to be armed.

[17:25] We need to take up arms. Be armed with God's Word. We need to claim it and stand upon it. The battle lines are being drawn all around us. Brothers and sisters, just a couple of arenas in this conflict that I'd like to touch on today.

Two main arenas for this unseen battle. And one of the main areas in this battle is the mind. The mind. The battle rages within us.

Satan fights for control of our mind, just as the propaganda experts of old, just like Goebbels, however you say it, Goebbels would take the machinations of his propaganda campaign, just as the devil incarnate in Adolf Hitler himself were saying just tell a little, just tell a big lie and tell it often enough and people will fall for it.

You know, the propaganda that he waged against his own people, against his own nation, so that they were all mesmerised and followed him as a God, as it were.

And Satan likewise wants to invade your mind. He wants to manipulate your mind as a drug, as it were, as something that would control you and move you in his direction.

[18:50] As it says in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, In whom the God of this world, that's a little g, hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Friends, it's a mind game. It's a mind warfare that he is waging. As he enters minds, he impacts lives. As he pollutes, as he poisons, through his nefarious schemes, in the battle for your mind. And it's going on today. It's going on, moment by moment, the battle for your mind. As Satan wants to invade our thinking through the toxic culture of this world.

What does the Bible say of your mind? There's so many verses just to touch on some. The Bible speaks, It's a carnal mind. A mind fleshly.

A mind alienated from God by wicked works. A defiled mind. A doubtful mind. We read of a blinded mind, as we've read.

[19:59] A seared mind. A mind evil. Or double-minded. A reprobate mind. A corrupt mind. There's much that the word says about the mind.

There's lots of verses. Take a concordance and look up the word mind. And you'll see these things. In 1 Peter 1.13, it says in part, gird up the loins of your mind.

It's got the sense of those days that people would have a big flowing robe. And it's got the sense of tying it up so that you're not cumbered. And friends, we need to gird up.

Take control, as it were. Hold together the things of our mind. Gird them up as you would gird on a belt. Take charge of your thoughts. Some good things you can do with your mind.

There's many positive things that you can do with your mind, with your mental abilities. The Bible says of having a ready mind. Be ready. Have a mind that is pure.

[20:58] A renewed mind. A humble mind. A sober mind. It's important that we think about what does our mind dwell upon?

Does it dwell on things above? Is it thinking on these things? That's the Philippians 4. Verse 7 to 8. The godly things. The pure things. The noble things.

Think on these things. Look at that one. Philippians 4. Verses 7 to 8. What about Matthew 22.

Verse 37. The Lord Jesus says, Unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.

Our thoughts should dwell upon him. They should be in tune with his thoughts. In Isaiah 26.3. Again, God is interested in our thoughts.

It says, Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee because he trusteth in thee. God is interested in our minds and our thinking.

[22:00] How can we keep our mind pure? Prayer. Prayer will grant us God's peace and comfort as we place our thoughts and cares in his hands, as we take attention to God's will, God's way for us.

Prayer. In a battle analogy, it's our direct communication link with our commanding officer, with the battle commander. It's our supply line with HQ.

Pray. And keep on praying. So, one arena is the mind. A second one, just to touch on a second one today, is the battle with the tongue.

A battle with the tongue. James 3.8 it says, The tongue can no man tame. It is an unruly evil form of deadly poison. James 3.8.

What does the Bible say about the tongue? As much in James 3 and other places, for example, a tongue is compared to a fire, a beast that needs taming, a fountain that can bring fresh or bitter water.

[23:05] Whether it's cursing or praise, your tongue can be used in either way, in either direction. The tongue is called a sharp sword. In Psalms, it's called a serpent, a poisonous serpent.

The word tells us that the tongue is powerful. It's got the power of life and death. In Proverbs 18.21. And friends, Satan wants to control your words.

He wants to use your mouth, the words that you say, for his glory. Satan wants to control our words.

The Lord says, I say unto you that every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof, on the day of judgment.

So, friends, be guarded about what you say, how you say it. Be careful what you say. Avoid words that are unworthy of your Lord.

Idle words, foolish words, flattering words, proud words. Another way that the enemy can use our tongue is to bring accusations against believers.

[24:16] Evil reports, gossip, murmuring, lying. All of these ways the enemy can use our tongue. We're also told to speak evil of no man.

Titus 3.2. We're instructed in Psalm 141. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth. Keep the door of my lips.

That's a prayer we can pray. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth. Keep the door of my lips. Friends, the enemy will try hard in all manifest ways, but we've just touched on a couple this morning, of the battle for your mind, of the battle for your tongue.

The enemy wants to make you sin. He wants to detour you and deter you. We need to be guarded against all of these things. Question yourself, before you speak, of the lost, it says in Romans 3.14, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

Colossians 3, it says, put off all these anger, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. It's so easy when the world conditions us and desensitises us, desensitises us to, just flippantly using expressions about God, or of our dear Saviour.

[25:41] They would use His word just as a flippant curse word, as a gutter word, the name of our Saviour, the name of our God and Lord and Master. We ought to be guarded about our mouth and be watchful.

And rather, use your mouth to declare God's glory, to be a witness for Christ, that you'll be ready to give an answer out of your mouth for the reason of the hope that is in you as a Christian man, woman.

Be a witness. It says, use your confession for the glory of God. For example, Romans 10.9 and 10, if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Confess Christ as your Lord, as your Master.

Friends, if you're not saved today, I'm speaking to save people. Trust Him. Believe in your heart. Confess with your mouth. Trust Christ died on the cross.

[26:50] He rose. He's glorified. He's coming back. Confess Him as Master, as Lord, and believe in your heart.

But go hand in hand. So you can use your mouth at that moment of salvation as you confess Him for the first time. And then keep on confessing Him. The Lord Jesus says, confess me before men. I'm going to confess you before my Father which is in heaven. So, to close friends, it says that we ought to be sober, be vigilant, because your enemy, your adversary, the devil, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

He wants you for breakfast. He wants you for breakfast, or he doesn't mind having you for lunch as well. So, just watch out, okay? Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

Look out and think about it. This is an unseen war. As I started this message, some of you are in the thick of the fight. You know it's happening. You know you're getting a few fiery darts in your direction.

[28:07] You're holding up that shield of faith, and you know things aren't all that rosy at times, whether it's sickness in you or your family, discouragement, despair, challenges, needs.

You're not sure how you're going to meet. Some of you know what it is to be in the thick of the fight, but some of you have been oblivious to this unseen war. You're just going about your day by day. You don't even realise the attacks of temptation, the attacks of discouragement that are from his hand. Friends, be aware that you're in an unseen war.

And of the enemy's tactics, he wants to ambush you. He's a terrorist. He's an aggressor. And this combat means that we're dealing with his tactics all the time.

And yet, for many of us, we're not even aware of it. We've seen how this conflict is being waged on many fronts. In the area of the mind, of the tongue, as many things else we could say.

[29:11] But friends, just to wrap up, I want to leave you with an encouraging thought that thankfully, victory is assured. Victory is assured.

1 John 5, verse 4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.

And this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world? But he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.

Victory is assured believer today. We're not walking in any defeat or under a cloud. We're walking on the clouds. We're walking with our Lord and God, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

And he has already won the conflict. He did it at Calvary. As he expired, it is finished. Satan was demolished at the cross.

[30:11] He's got his tail between his legs already. And the teeth in his mouth can't hurt you. His roar might frighten you now and again, but friends, we've got no reason to fear him.

The war that we're in is unseen, but that does not mean, that does not make it make believe. It's very real. And so be alert. I urge you, each one here today, enlist.

Enlist in the Lord's army. If you're not saved, confess with your mouth, believe in your heart, trust him for time and eternity. Enlist in this army.

Sign up today. If you haven't already. And friends, as soldiers together, let us prepare and train. Take the opportunity when it's available.

Ready yourself to enter active military service and be mobilised to be a part of the Lord's army. While even in the midst of a war, we can know great peace.

[31:15] Great peace. Just to flick back to Philipppians 4. We have that context of the thinking on these things, of the precious good things we can use our mind to think on things that are honest, just, pure, lovely, of good rapport, any virtue, any praise.

Think on these things. And the God of peace shall be with you. And verse 7, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

There's both aspects there. The thinking on these things. The thinking on these things and the God of peace. We're in a war, but we've got the God of peace.

And He's with you. He's with you. If you're saved today, you've got peace with God and you've got the peace of God. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for your grace. It's so great.

it's so amazing, Lord, that you would deign to visit this planet even and more so to take our sin in your own body and it be nailed there for us by cruel hands.

[32:24] And yet, Lord, in some aspects, it's almost like you held the hammer and nailed it down because you loved us so much. Your own love drew you to the cross for us, to that awful place.

Yet, Lord, it's a place of victory. As you slew Satan there and you overcame him by the power of your blood, Lord, we thank you that we can know a victory assured, we can know a peace, each one that trusts you today.

We thank you, Lord, that you will help us to recognise the enemy's works, though he's disguised, and sometimes it's hard to tell, help us to discern, help us to have a vigilance, a readiness, to look out, to be sober, to be watching and praying, Lord, to be ready for whatever faces us in this conflict ahead, for some who are going to go through some tough battles.

Some here will go through tough battles, Lord, times of sadness and sorrow, sickness, pain, yet, Lord, not defeat, because we have the victory, the victory that is our faith, and Lord, whatever life throws our way, we know that you are our Lord and Master, and we march in your army, under your direction, at your command, help us to be ready soldiers, to go through the hardness, to be good soldiers, help us, Lord, not to be deterred, but to stand firm, give us strength in the battles ahead, Lord, because we know the battle is not ours, it's yours, you've already won, grant strength to those that have got challenges just now, whether it be employment, or sickness, whatever it be, Father, help us to see that the enemy's trying to get us down, but we can stand strong, because your word says we are more than conquerors, because you love us, in Jesus' name, Amen.

[34:42] ending ending Thank you.