

Introduction:

- We have been talking about spiritual warfare for the last two weeks. In those two messages, I mentioned a number of epic spiritual battles in the Bible. I want to pick up two of those key epic battles and see what we can learn from them today.
- Here is the take away for today: "The greatest spiritual warriors are those who win over temptation."
- "*Can you build a fire in your lap and not burn your pants?*" (Proverbs 6:27, The Message)
- The two greatest/most decisive spiritual battles in the Bible are found in Genesis 3:1-ff and Luke 4:1-14

I. The Two Most Epic Spiritual Battles In Scripture

A. Two Epic Battles

1. Genesis 3:1-ff The Battle of the Garden
2. Lk 4:1-14 The Battle of the Wilderness (These battles were struggles to overcome temptation.)
3. These battles were not fought in the heavenlies. They were fought in the natural. One in a garden, the other in a wilderness. The outcome of the battles greatly affected the heavenlies by empowering people in the natural realm.
4. The key outcome of these great battles are centered around the battle against temptation. That battle over temptation is the turning point of the war! **The greatest spiritual warriors are those who win over temptation.** This fact is blatantly obvious in our scriptures today.
5. Here is a thought for you. Temptation is not really about you. Temptation is an assault on the Kingdom of God. Ultimately, that is why you are tempted...to be taken out of the fight by neutralizing the threat.

B. Temptation in the verb form means to examine.

1. In a court of law the attorneys seek to cross examine the witnesses/or person being tried to see if there are any weaknesses in their case.
2. The devil is constantly seeking/attempting to examine your life for possible weakness in your testimony for Christ. He want to neutralize you. When you give in to temptation you are being neutralized.
3. "Temptation is *any outside source that appeals to a weakness in your flesh.* That appeal pulls you like a magnet; it lures you mentally, emotionally, and sensually; it fascinates the imagination; it entices the flesh to take a closer peek. If you don't stop this process, it will set its hook in your soul and haul you right smack dab into the middle of some kind of sin!" (from Sparkling Gems from the Greek, © 2003 by Rick Renner) What your flesh responds to is what temptation refers to. It can be anything from being too lazy, to being too easily offended, to unbridled eating habits, or sexual habits.

C. Why are they Epic? They are epic because their impact is outstanding and affects the human heart, human life and eternity. Both for good and for evil. Who we are today is connected to the that reference point of the past. Our family fought in each of those great wars.

1. The people are legends, meaning they are remembered. Their stories are told over and over.
2. The struggle is great: Adam and Eve verses the serpent/Satan. Jesus verses Satan.
3. It is an epic battle because of the strategies that are used. Sun Tzu Art of War
- D. The Strategies of the serpent are to lure us away from the truth.
 1. Three strategies the devils used in both Epic Battles.
 - a) Lust of the flesh. Gen 3:6a Luke 4:4
 - b) Lust of the eyes. Gen 3:6b Luke 4:6
 - c) The pride of life. Gen 3:6c Luke 4:9
 - d) It is the same strategy used against us today. Where Adam failed Jesus overcame!
 - e) Great spiritual warriors are those who overcome temptation!

II. What was at stake?

- A. We have to clearly answer this because it is still the same thing at stake today. The outcome of the fight determines your authority, rank and power to fight spiritual battles. Don't think you can go into the heavenlies and confront principalities and not win over temptation.
- B. I believe there are there are four things at stake:
 1. The image of God in man - identity. Contrary to popular Christian teaching - I am saying that **image is everything!** IE. Biker image. Rich image. Tough image. Sexy image. Life is all about image...and I totally agree! The key is having the right image.
 - a) *"Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over""* (Genesis 1:26, NLT)
 - b) Adam and Eve/humanity were made in the likeness of God. Jesus was a man like Adam and Eve. It was part of the reason Jesus could say, *"If you have seen me you have seen the Father."*
 - c) That image was to be the head and not the tail. The top and not the bottom. It was a place from which they could reign over creation. Ps 8:5-8, Heb 2:6-15. A little lower than God.
 - d) Satan hated that the man bore the image of God. And he also feared it!!!
 - e) A successful spiritual warrior must have the image of God! When you look like God, you scare demons. Seven sons of Sceva trying to cast out a demon: *"I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?"* (Acts 19:15, NLT)
 2. The authority of God in man - dominion
 - a) In the Garden, man had been given authority by God to reign over creation. Jesus the Son of God carried the authority of heaven too.
 - b) Again this is part of the image of God...the seat of authority. Man was to rule over creation. Meaning that he was given authority by God to do this. The serpent was under that authority. The serpent was 'under their feet.'
 - c) Esau sold out his place of authority/inheritance for a bowl of soup. What will you sell out for? What is your price tag? Are you winning over temptation? A successful spiritual warrior must have the authority of God!
 3. The Life of God in man - vitality. It is eternal death to be separated from God.
 - a) The serpent wanted Adam and Eve dead! The serpent wanted Cain and Able dead.

- b) The serpent deals in death. His entire future, personally is about eternal death. He is going to take as many as possible with him.
- c) The Father is all about life. He made creation; it was all about life. He breathed into mans nostrils and he became a living being.
- d) The wages of sin is death but the Gift of God is eternal life. Ro 6:23.
- 4. Ultimately temptation is an attack on the Kingdom of God.
 - a) Satan is after the Kingdom. The Kingdom has to do with the rule of God!
 - b) A God filled marriage, family, business is one in which the Kingdom is operation.

III. The Greatest Spiritual Warriors Are Those Who Win Over Temptation

- A. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Was he being led into temptation?
 - 1. No! He was going into battle to demonstrate his supremacy over temptation and sin.
 - 2. He was going to war over something He was very passionate about! You and me!
 - 3. He WINS in the wilderness and comes out filled with the power of the Holy Spirit!
 - 4. The warrior won over temptation and He was FILLED with the Holy Spirit.
- B. Jesus won in Gethsemane over temptation to quit. *"In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross."* (Colossians 2:15, NLT)
 - 1. He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities! The Passion Bible is really clear: *"Then Jesus made a public spectacle of all the powers and principalities of darkness, stripping away from them every weapon and all their spiritual authority and power to accuse us. And by the power of the cross, Jesus led them around as prisoners in a procession of triumph. He was not their prisoner; they were his!"* (Colossians 2:15, TPT)
 - 2. Jesus won over temptation and He ruled in the heavenlies. All things have been placed under His feet.
 - 3. Do you see this? He became the greatest of spiritual warriors because He won in the ring of temptation.
 - 4. The image of God in man was at stake! The authority of God in man was at stake. The very life of man was at stake! Jesus brought forth the Kingdom because He overcame temptation!
- C. Jer. 20:11 NASB *"The Lord is with me like a dread champion."* Heb Gibbor, mighty warrior!
 - 1. Jesus is my Dread Champion!
- D. Rev. He slays his enemies by the Word of his mouth. Two edge sword that comes from His mouth. Rev 2:12, 16; Rev 19:15, 21.

Conclusion:

- God is calling us to overcome temptation. May we be like Jesus and Paul, so that hell knows we are winners! We are great spiritual warriors!
- The Screwtape Letters, CS Lewis
- When you face temptation, deal with it immediately! "It is easier to suppress the first desire than to satisfy all that follow it" - Benjamin Franklin
- Your convictions are only as strong as they hold up under pressure.