WP-18 FAITH IN PRACTICE

Resisting the Adversary: Spiritual Warfare

STATEMENT

Scripture describes a real spiritual adversary who works by accusation, deception and attrition. Believers are not told to fear him but to recognize his methods, resist him steadfastly and stand in the armor God provides.

Read time **4 min** Sources & resources **4** Series **Faith in Practice** Author **Lee Gregory**

01 ABSTRACT

The New Testament treats spiritual opposition as real and practical: “we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies” (Ephesians 6:12). This paper looks at what the words used for the enemy actually mean, what he is after, and the specific instructions Scripture gives for resisting him, especially in 1 Peter 5 and Ephesians 6.

02 KNOW THE ADVERSARY

“Your great enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Each word is descriptive:

- **Adversary** (*antidikos*): an opponent in a lawsuit, a prosecutor. He accuses you with what he knows about your past: “Why would God answer you after what you did?”
- **Devil** (*diabolos*): a job description, not a name. From *dia* (through) and *ballō* (throw): he throws lies, accusations and doubts until one penetrates.
- **Looking for someone to devour**: he cannot devour everyone. Like a lion he looks for the isolated, the distracted, the worried, and for doors opened through sin.

Jesus summarized his agenda: “The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10). *Kleptēs* is the root of “kleptomaniac”: theft so skillful it is barely noticed. The word for “kill,” *thuō*, means to sacrifice: he tries to persuade us to give up voluntarily what he could not steal. What remains, he tries to destroy. Jesus’ purpose is the opposite: “to give them a rich and satisfying life.”

Ephesians 6:12 describes an organized hierarchy: rulers, authorities, “mighty powers in this dark world” (*kosmokratōr*, world-rulers) and “evil spirits in the heavenly places.” The Gospels connect some afflictions directly to spirits: a woman “crippled by an evil spirit” (Luke 13:11), a man unable to speak (Matthew 9:32–33), a boy with seizures (Luke 9:39).

03 SEVEN KEYS TO RESIST

1. **Resist, firm in faith.** “Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith” (1 Peter 5:9). *Anthistēmi* means organized, deliberate opposition; *stereos* means solid, immovable.

2. **Humble yourself.** “Humble yourselves under the mighty power of God… Give all your worries and cares to God” (5:6–7). Pride isolates; humility keeps you under protection.
3. **Stay alert.** “Stay alert! Watch out” (5:8). *Grēgoreō* was used of a sentry expecting attack. Expect it.
4. **Prepare your mind.** “Think clearly and exercise self-control” (1:13). Feed daily on the Word, spend time with people who strengthen you, and stop to acknowledge God; the psalmist praised Him “seven times a day” (Psalm 119:164).
5. **Say no.** “Do not give the devil a foothold” (Ephesians 4:27). Stop opening doors.
6. **Put on the armor.** Truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the Word and prayer (Ephesians 6:13–18).
7. **Know God is your defender.** The helmet of salvation (*sōtērion*, deliverance, rescue) is “the confidence of our salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Expect God to save you.

04 THE ARMOR OF GOD

PIECE	MEANING IN PRACTICE
Belt of truth	Integrity: “Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t’” (Matthew 5:37).
Breastplate of righteousness	Right standing with God, the verdict of approval He gives through Christ.
Shoes of the gospel of peace	Footing: a mind steadied by peace with God. Roman sandals had nails that gripped the ground.
Shield of faith	Trust that stops “the fiery arrows of the devil” (6:16).
Helmet of salvation	Confidence that God is your rescuer and defender.
Sword of the Spirit	The Word of God, the only offensive weapon listed. Jesus answered each temptation with “It is written” (Matthew 4).
Prayer in the Spirit	“Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion” (6:18). See WP-14.

05 SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT

OBSERVATION	DATA & SOURCE	CONFIDENCE
The enemy is real and organized	Ephesians 6:10–18; 1 Peter 5:8. Ephesians 6 ↗	HIGH
His agenda	John 10:10: steal, kill, destroy.	HIGH
Some afflictions are spiritual	Luke 13:11, 16; Matthew 9:32–33; Matthew 12:22; Acts 10:38.	HIGH
Resistance works	“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).	HIGH
Humility and casting cares	1 Peter 5:6–7.	HIGH
Jesus used Scripture as a weapon	Matthew 4:1–11.	HIGH

High = directly measured, or stated plainly in the text. **Moderate** = well-supported, with recognized debate. **Interpretive** = consistent with the text, but

depends on how the passage is read.

06 OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

OBJECTION
Blaming the devil lets people avoid responsibility.

RESPONSE
Scripture holds both: “Temptation comes from our own desires” (James 1:14), and the devil exploits them. Resisting him includes saying no to our own desires (key 5).

OBJECTION
Not every illness is demonic.

RESPONSE
Agreed. Scripture distinguishes healing the sick from casting out spirits (Mark 1:34; Matthew 10:8). Some afflictions in the Gospels are tied to spirits; many are not.

07 CONCLUSION

The adversary is real, but he is not unbeatable and he cannot devour everyone. He works by accusation, isolation and slow theft. Believers resist him by standing firm in faith, staying humble and alert, guarding their minds, closing doors, wearing the armor and trusting God as their defender. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

> *“Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.” Ephesians 6:11*

08 FURTHER RESOURCES

SCRIPTURE **Ephesians 6:10–18: the armor of God** New Living Translation
https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%206%3A10-18&version=NLT

SCRIPTURE **1 Peter 5:6–11** New Living Translation
https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%205%3A6-11&version=NLT

TEACHING **Dressed to Kill (armor of God)** Rick Renner Ministries
https://renner.org