

How to Be a Good Christian Soldier

Part 3: The Relationship of Humility, Fasting, and Spiritual Warfare

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In the last issue of *Prayer Matters* we continued to look at how godly character traits serve as both offensive and defensive “weapons” in spiritual warfare. This is seen most clearly in the “spiritual armor” in Ephesians 6:10-18 but is evident in other passages as well (e.g., 2 Cor. 6:7; 10:3-5). In this issue I would like to focus our attention on the particular trait of humility along with the godly discipline of fasting.

Jesus was our ultimate example of humility, relinquishing His exalted position in the Godhead to become a servant, even to the extent of laying down His life for the benefit of all mankind. This is the attitude that we too are admonished to have, always regarding others as more important than ourselves (Phil. 3:3-8). In 2 Corinthians 2:7 we see that arrogance is so unbefitting and detrimental to a Christian soldier that God allowed Satan to afflict the Apostle Paul in some permanent way—just to keep him humble.

Second Chronicles 7:14 reveals that when the people of a given country demonstrate humility, coupled with genuine repentance, God will grant forgiveness on a national level and turn away the curses of evil brought on that country for their disobedience. Humility is therefore crucial in the life of a Christian soldier fighting for God’s victory over evil and His blessing on a particular country.

In Daniel 10 we see this faithful prophet of God single-handedly humbling himself and fasting as he prayed earnestly to God about the state of his nation, Israel. Twenty-one days later an angel appeared to him, assuring him that he had been dispatched immediately when Daniel first humbled himself before God and sought insight from Him. So Daniel’s humility (perhaps combined with his other godly character traits) brought an immediate answer from God, but for twenty-one days that answer was delayed because of spiritual warfare occurring between the angel and spiritual forces of evil associated with other specific countries. Therefore, it seems that the fasting that Daniel was also doing through this period was influential in the angel prevailing over his opponents in the spiritual realm.

When the angel arrived, he also told Daniel that no one supported him in this spiritual battle except for Michael, Daniel’s “prince.” This is a very interesting statement from which we can draw a number of possible inferences. First of all, how encouraging it is to learn that Daniel had a particular “prince,” or angel, specifically assigned to him! While Daniel was a specially appointed prophet of God, this is a significant supporting passage (along with Heb. 1:14) to the idea that every child of God has a “guardian” angel.

We might also assume from the passage that the angel sent with the message to Daniel was not supported because no one else was actively involved in prayer and fasting on behalf of the nation of Israel at that time besides Daniel. This is sad and certainly emphasizes the value of an entire army of Christian soldiers involved in warfare for a country rather than a “lone ranger.” On the other hand, it reveals the powerful influence of even one individual willing to prevail in prayer and fasting.

It also seems that Daniel was not overtly waging spiritual warfare, but his prayer and fasting were serving that purpose in the spiritual realm. Ephesians 6:18, which immediately follows the description of the spiritual armor, also seems to indicate that the dynamic of persistent prayer, coupled with the godly character traits represented by the armor, translates into effective spiritual warfare on behalf of the saints without the individual overtly engaging in it. Second Chronicles 7:14 would seem to bear this out as well.

The example in Daniel 10 illustrates that the dynamic of fasting further enhances spiritual warfare and the effectiveness of prayer. This, too, is supported by numerous other passages, which we will continue to examine in our next issue.