SATAN’S TACTICS
The War for Our Hearts and Souls
by David Laton
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Introduction

Satan’s Tactics, The War for our Hearts and Souls is intended to provide insights into Satan’s spiritual warfare, the tactics he uses, and how we can combat against his efforts. Although it would be a fascinating, this study is not about the origins and fall of Satan. Although there is no firm scriptural references to the events that lead to the downfall of Satan, there is no doubt that Satan does exist and that he is active in our lives today just as he has been throughout man’s history.

Satan knows he cannot directly attack God so he indirectly attacks by keeping us from being reconciled to God. He does this by employing a variety of tactics used both singularly at times and collectively at others. God not only offers us a way back to him, but provides the encouragement to do so and the power to remain faithful as we are engaged in our spiritual warfare.

About the Author

Dave Laton currently serves the Prattville Church of Christ, Prattville, Alabama as a deacon with responsibilities for the adult Bible education programs, missions, and internet ministries. He has been a member of the congregation since 1993. In addition to his Doctor of Ministry degree in Religious Education Leadership from the Theological University of America, he holds degrees in Adult Education, Education Administration, and Business Management.

Dave also brings a unique perspective to the concept of spiritual warfare having served more than 20 years as a member of the United States Air Force. During his career he served in command post communications, air base law enforcement and security, and various instructional positions.
Warfare and conflict has been a part of man’s history from early on. A survey of the Old Testament reveals nearly 100 wars, conflicts, or battles between God’s people and the nations surrounding them. Sometimes these conflicts were directed by God as punishment for those persecuting His people or for exercising evil. It is interesting to note that the first recorded conflict in the Old Testament was a battle of rescue (Genesis 14:1-20). Lot had been taken captive and was rescued by Abram. Although today we don’t have a record of such physical conflicts in the New Testament we continue to wage war, a spiritual war that involves rescuing souls from Satan’s influence.

Spiritual warfare can be classified as asymmetric warfare. This is a conflict in which the combatants are not equal in number or strength. Also, the conflict is all around us instead of a traditional head to head.
physical encounter. This accurately describes our spiritual warfare since we are greatly armed when trying to fight Satan by ourselves. As children of God we have Him on our side so the tables are turned. Through Him we overwhelmingly out power our enemy (Romans 8:31).

**WORK OUT**

Satan rarely attacks us directly. Instead he uses a variety of tactics working through individuals under his influence to attack us on multiple levels. The first is to keep one from becoming a Christian. The second is to cause someone who has obeyed God to weaken or lose his or her faith. The third, used in conjunction with the second, is to lessen a Christian’s effectiveness in service for the Master.

There are two key figures in spiritual warfare, Jesus and Satan. A quick comparison shows the gulf between them.

- **Desire:** Jesus’ desire is to bring salvation by reconciling us to God (Luke 4:43). Satan’s desire is to destroy us and lead us into darkness (Colossians 1:13).
- **Motivation:** Jesus teaches us to love and is full of love (Matthew 22:37-39; John 14:21; 15:9, 12). Satan is full of hate (1 John 3:8).
- **Method:** Jesus presents the truth of God’s love (Matthew 22:16). Satan desires to keep us from knowing God’s love through lies and deceit (John 8:44).
- **What we experience:** Through applying Jesus’ teachings we experience spiritual maturity through the application of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). If we submit to
Satan we experience spiritual deficiency through the acts of a sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21).

- **The result:** Jesus offers us freedom from the slavery of sin and grants us eternal salvation (Galatians 5:1). Satan offers enslavement to sin and eternal punishment (Matthew 18:6-9).

Paul tells us that we face an invisible enemy in a spiritual realm (Ephesians 6:12). Although invisible, their effects on us are very real and devastating. Some of his followers are not invisible. There are those around us that greatly affect us and are completely under his influence.

Contrary to what many believe, especially the entertainment industry, Satan rarely attacks us directly. To do so would likely horrify us and cause us to flee. But there were times in scripture where Satan did attack directly. Here are some examples:

- Job 1 – God gave Satan power to test Job;
- Matthew 4:24 – As Jesus’ fame grew among the people, many were brought to him to be healed and to remove the demons that possessed them;
- Matthew 8 – Jesus heals the demon possessed men and drives the demons into some pigs grazing nearby.
- Luke 22:31 – Jesus informs Peter that Satan has asked to test him. This is in the context of Jesus telling Peter that he would deny him.

Satan is not able to possess us against our will (James 4:7). But he is able to bring incredible pressure on us by attacking indirectly. One method is through the attractiveness of the world. We know we must remain in the world as we serve the Lord but we are not to succumb to the influences of this world. That is the definition of being worldly
(1 John 2:15-17). Paul also warns us about this in Ephesians 2:1-2. To paraphrase Paul, we must not forget that we also once went along with this world, and in doing so, placed ourselves under the control of Satan.

We also must not allow the world to squeeze us into its mold (Romans 12:2). The world says, “Go along to get along.” But this is directly opposed to what Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:14. In John 17:15-17, Jesus prayed that we would be protected in this world. As we continue to live and serve in this world, God offers us protection, primarily through the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 1:13-14).

We are also to not focus on the things of the world (Colossians 3:2). Paul frequently informs us of what not to do or what not to focus our thoughts on. He then provided us the antithesis of those actions or thoughts. So by focusing or as Paul states, “setting our minds” on things above, we are removing the focus on worldly things.

Another way of indirect attack is through the flesh. The flesh is a term that describes our self-centeredness which makes us want to be our own god, and leads to rebellion (Ephesians 2:3). The flesh is the presence of our sinful nature. We are not born with sin, but the disposition to sin. James calls this the wisdom which is from beneath (James 3:15). It is Satan attacking indirectly by offering temptations to appeal to our human and sensual nature.

**Overcoming Satan’s Indirect Attacks**

To begin with, we must believe that Satan will attack us. A soldier knows that the enemy will attack him so he prepares accordingly. This sense of awareness includes avoiding the things that we know are our weaknesses (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Satan is clearly described as a lion looking for those unprepared as an easy target to destroy (1 Peter 5:8). This preparedness involves drawing even closer to our Lord, knowing
God’s will for us as revealed in His word, and putting that knowledge into practice.

In addition to maintaining a sense of awareness, we must also arm ourselves and train in the use of our weaponry. As stated in Ephesians 6, the whole armor of God, we have multiple weapons to defend us and to go on the offense. But if we are not trained in their proper use we are not only susceptible to attack, but we are weakened as a result. A weapon is made more effective through the soldier’s familiarity with it. This means we have to use the weapon both as intended and with regularity. The weapon we’re speaking mostly of is God’s word.

We must not underestimate the enemy’s intelligence about our strengths and weaknesses. We use intelligence to know the enemy’s intent, abilities, and tactics. This enables us to be prepared to defeat the enemy’s attacks. Satan knows our strengths and weaknesses better than we do. He will use that knowledge to cause us to fall. By recognizing this we can be better prepared in our spiritual warfare.

Satan cannot directly attack God so he chooses instead to attack God’s greatest creation, mankind. The more we draw closer to God the more Satan or his followers will attack us. He may choose to leave us alone for a while to lull us into a sense of complacency and then, just as we are not expecting it, attack us. The only tactics that counter Satan’s attacks and work to defeat him are found in our relationship with God. By ourselves we are lost. We must continue to be on guard and to grow stronger in our faith. We must continue to draw closer in our relationship with God. The stronger our faith the closer we draw to God and the better we are able to withstand Satan’s attacks.
Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you suppose people continue to choose Satan over Jesus, even when they recognize who and what Satan is?
2. What are some specific ways Satan indirectly attacks us through the attractiveness of the world and the flesh, and how can we overcome them?
3. Discuss how Satan’s multi-level attack plan is affected by his indirect attacks.
4. Have you ever felt at some time in your life that you might have been under the influence of Satan? How did you remove or lessen his influence?
5. Restate what is said in Joshua 24:15 in your own words. What are some practical ways we can choose to serve the Lord?
6. Read Romans 7:15-24. How does this describe the spiritual warfare in which Paul was engaged?