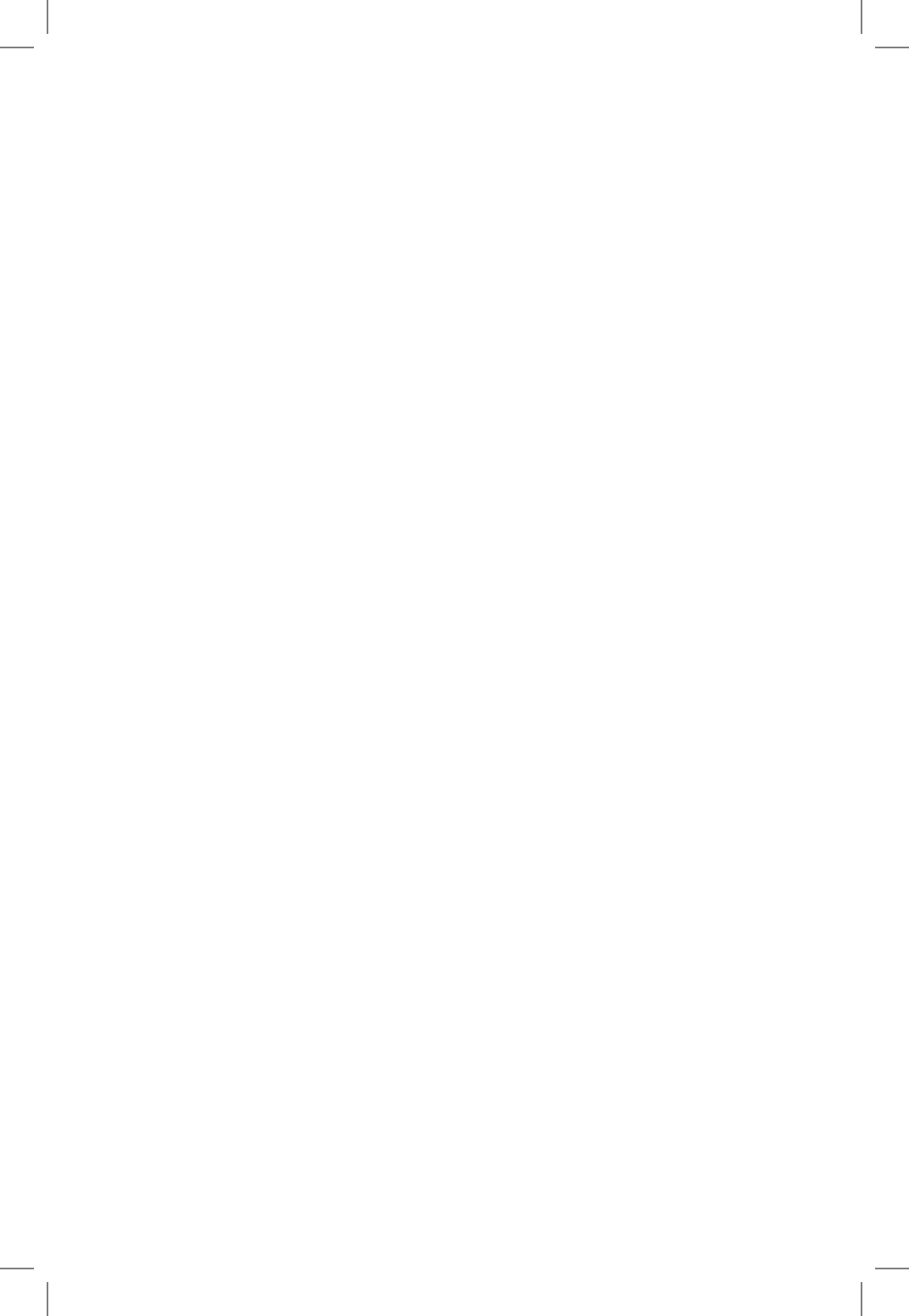


FIGHTING SATAN



FIGHTING SATAN

Knowing His Weaknesses, Strategies,
and Defeat

Joel R. Beeke



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Fighting Satan

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In memory of and with heartfelt appreciation
to my faithful colleague,
spiritual friend, and *gabba*
(a friend that is like a very close brother),

Martin Holdt (1941–2011),

affectionate husband and caring father,
prayer warrior,
passionate preacher,
lover of Christ, souls, sound books,
and Reformed experiential theology,
encourager of the brethren,
and a brother of godly conviction and persuasion.



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Preface

In his book *Power Encounters*, David Powlison rightly argues that we urgently need to fight Satan by reclaiming biblical, traditional, spiritual warfare as set forth by Paul in Ephesians 6:10–20. We live in a society that has become increasingly pagan and has brought itself into a pervasive array and bondage of addictions. Troubled or bizarre behavior has become commonplace; many people are experiencing a heightened sense of the presence of evil. Missionaries and anthropologists alert us to animistic cultures and demon possessions. Satanism is flourishing in Western nations. Since the 1970s, numbers of charismatics, dispensationalists, and theologians have been teaching and practicing various forms of “deliverance ministries” to cast out inhabiting demons. Frank Peretti’s books have only added to the confusion, influencing thousands to see demons lurking everywhere.

On the other hand, millions in modern civilization don’t believe the devil exists—or at least have exorcised him from their working vocabulary, even though the devil is a primary explanation for the plight of modern civilization. This attitude has even permeated the church. Nineteenth-century preacher Charles H. Spurgeon could already say in his day, “Certain theologians, nowadays, do not believe in the existence of Satan.

It is singular when children do not believe in the existence of their own father: but it is so, that those who are most deluded by him are the loudest in repudiating all faith in his existence.”¹

Biblical, clearheaded thinking about Satan and spiritual warfare is sorely needed today. Particularly as believers, we need to be cognizant that the battle against Satan and his forces of evil is fierce, spiritual, and necessary. We must know our adversary. We must know Satan’s personality and history. We must know his strategies, his power, and his weaknesses. We must know how to withstand him and what spiritual weapons to take up against him. We must defeat him by faith through lives that bear fruit and spread the truth.

The present book addresses this need from a practical perspective. Its chapters enlarge upon five addresses given at the Metropolitan Tabernacle School of Theology in London. The first address (chapters 1–2) examines the personality and history of Satan. The second address (chapters 3–4) shows how believers are to exploit Satan’s weaknesses by fighting defensively and offensively. The third address (chapters 5–6), relying heavily on old classics, exposes Satan’s devices and expounds our remedies for them. The concluding addresses examine how we can defeat Satan in our personal lives and in our churches and nations (chapters 7–9).

This book, which now includes study questions for individuals and groups, is a revised version of *Striving against Satan*, formerly published by Bryntirion Press, Wales, in 2005. I am grateful for their relinquishing of publishing rights to Reformation Heritage Books and have taken this opportunity to

1. C. H. Spurgeon, “The Warnings and Rewards of the Word of God (sermon 2135),” in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (1901; repr., Pasadena, Tex.: Pilgrim Publications, 1974), 36:160–61.

produce an updated, revised edition. Thanks to Paul Smalley and Annette Gysen for assisting me in readying this edition for publication.

I again wish to thank Dr. Peter and Jill Masters for their hospitality and friendship and for repeatedly inviting me to serve the historic Metropolitan Tabernacle. Thanks, too, to the helpful staff at the Tabernacle. What a joy it is to speak and fellowship at the Met Tab School of Theology! Hearty thanks to my dear wife, Mary; to my children, Calvin, Esther, and Lydia; and to the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids for granting me the time to absent myself from my regular round of duties to serve at the Tabernacle.

May God graciously use this book to teach us all how to be more aware of Satan and his devices and how to wage a more successful battle against him.



Introduction: A Holy War

If you are a true believer, Satan hates you because you bear the image of Christ, because you are the peculiar workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and because you were snatched from his power. You deserted Satan and fled his territory. By grace, you acknowledged Christ as your Lord and Master. You testify with Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). Satan hates you because Christ is within you and because you love Christ.

Satan wants you back. As Jesus said to Peter, “Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). Satan wants to sift you like wheat.

Do not overestimate or underestimate Satan. He is not God or even a fallen deity, and he is not almighty. He is only a fallen angel. Yet Satan is a powerful enemy. John Blanchard writes, “We are opposed by a living, intelligent, resourceful and cunning enemy who can outlive the oldest Christian, outwork the busiest, outfight the strongest and outwit the wisest.”¹

Every true believer is engaged in what the Bible describes as spiritual warfare (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:7). John Bunyan called it a

1. John Blanchard, *The Complete Gathered Gold* (Darlington, Eng.: Evangelical Press, 2006), 555.

holy war.² This spiritual warfare, or holy war, involves a perpetual battle against three enemies: the devil, the world, and the flesh.

A Fierce Battle

The battle against Satan and the devils is *fierce*, involving forces of light and darkness. Dark principalities and powers are under Satan's dominion and are subject to his orders, which his lieutenants, the devils, delight to carry out. Satan's army is aggressive, malignant, and cruel, and its power is in high places above us and around us. It is too powerful for us to fight in our own strength, yet we cannot compromise with Satan or surrender to him. Rather, we must resist him by conscientiously following the Bible's directions for victory over him (James 4:7). Life and death are at stake.

A Spiritual Battle

The battle against Satan and his devils is *spiritual*. We do not fight this enemy with guns, tanks, or nuclear weapons, nor do we fight merely against flesh and blood. As Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). This battle is not for worldly power, possessions, or honor, Paul says. It aims higher, at the spiritual realities of truth, righteousness, and the glory of the living God and His Son. Behind our visible enemies of flesh and blood is an army of spiritual, invisible adversaries. Spiritual warfare is a battle

2. John Bunyan, *The Holy War Made by Shaddai upon Diabolus, For the Regaining of the Metropolis of the World: Or, the Losing and Taking Again of the Town of Mansoul*, in *The Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offor (1854; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 3:245–373.

against invisible enemies with invisible weapons who oppose the cause and kingdom of Jesus Christ.

We wrestle against Satan's invisible, innumerable, powerful army. Wrestling is close, spiritual conflict. It is intense and strenuous. In wrestling, opponents do not maintain distance from each other; they seize on each other. Whether as the Prince of Darkness or as an angel of light, Satan engages us hand to hand and foot to foot in life-and-death spiritual warfare.

A Necessary Battle

The battle against Satan and his devils is *necessary*. Just as our world today cannot escape the war against terrorism, so we cannot escape war with Satan. Like it or not, we are at war. To be in the midst of war and not realize it is most dangerous. If we ignore the enemy, we set ourselves up for defeat. Paul commands us to "put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11).

Too many Christians today pay little attention to Paul's command. Too many churches speak more about disarmament than armament. And too many preachers promote universal brotherhood rather than expose the antithesis between two opposing kingdoms in this world.

As unpleasant as the subject of Satan is, we need to study it. The Puritan Thomas Brooks wrote: "Christ, the Scripture, your own hearts, and Satan's devices, are the four prime things that should be first and most studied and searched."³ If we have poorly formed ideas about Satan's goals, strengths, and limitations, we become careless. We underestimate the power of our enemy.

3. Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 15.

We must know our adversary Satan, including his personality, history, strategies, power, and weaknesses. We must know how to withstand him and what spiritual weapons to take up against him. We must defeat him by faith through lives that bear fruit and spread the truth. Question 127 of the Heidelberg Catechism, an explanation of the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer ("Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"), tells us of the help we must have to know and defeat our enemy:

Since we are so weak in ourselves that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us, do Thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes till at last we obtain a complete victory.⁴

Through this study of Satan and his devices, I trust that what we learn will assist us to fight strenuously, to fight well, and to fight on, until we obtain complete victory over the enemy. May God help us in the battle.

4. Heidelberg Catechism, in *The Reformation Heritage KJV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), 2005–6.