

War with Satan & Battles with Self

Christianity is often spoken of in military terms, and regarded as a war, cf. Eph.6:10-12ff; 2Tim.2:4; 2Cor.10:3-6. But please understand that winning *the war with Satan* requires victories *in the battles with self*, 2Cor.10:7 → 13:5. With these things in mind, let us consider some *personal* admonitions from the Scriptures.

Crucial Military Concepts from Luke 9:23

- **This is war- “take up his cross daily.”** To be victorious in this conflict, each of us must be *daily engaged* in the fight. There are no conscientious objectors, and you cannot flee to a *neutral country*, Luke 9:23c. We must be willing to *go to war* each and every day.
- **Know your enemy- “let him deny himself.”** In this case, the “big picture” enemy is certainly Satan, but he relies on infiltration, and thus the “up-close” enemy is Self, Luke 9:23b. Lack of desire to see and confront *this enemy* renders us useless in the ultimate conflict.
- **Follow your Leader- “If anyone wishes to come after Me... and follow Me.”** To be effective, good soldiers must have a great leader, Luke 9:23a, and be willing to *follow* Him with full confidence and utmost faithfulness.

Four Primary Battlefronts:

1. **Self-Deception, Jas.1:19-27.** We must suffer no *delusions* regarding the *real enemy*, vv.13-16. It is certainly not God (He’s fighting *for* you!). And in practical and personal terms, it isn’t even Satan (though he will certainly fight *against* you); it is *self*. Unless we “see” this, we are *deluding ourselves*, v.22.
2. **Self-Control, 1Cor.9:24-27.** We must *dig-in* and take a *defensive* position to establish a battle line. We can’t keep retreating and giving ground to “I can’t/couldn’t control myself.” Such is just another lie we tell ourselves to feel better about failure (in this case, *sin*). Nancy Reagan was right when she said, “Just say no!” to drugs. If we can’t control ourselves, why does the N.T. consistently require this very thing? Cf. Acts 24:25; 1Cor.7:5; Gal.5:23; 2Tim.3:3; Titus 1:8; and 2Pet.1:6. In all areas and aspects of life, we must fight to and control self! This begins with saying “No” to self and sin, cf. Gal.5:19-22.
3. **Self-Discipline, 1Tim.4:7-10.** If self-control is primarily a *defensive* operation (controlling self in the negative- stop doing the *wrong* things), and it is, then self-discipline must also include taking the *offensive* to begin and continue doing the right things. As Nancy Reagan was right in the negative/defensive realm, so was Nike when they touted the ability to overcome obstacles with, “Just do it!” on the positive side, cf. Gal.5:22-23. We make ourselves *disciples* (followers) but first ceasing sinful activities, then practicing righteousness. In Eph.4:22-24 terms, we *lay aside/off* and then *put on*!
4. **Self-Righteousness, Luke 18:9-14.** The final battlefront with self comes after we get the right view of the enemy of *self*; take up and hold a *defensive* position against self/sin; and then begin to wage war and gain ground on the *offensive* side of things by practicing righteousness. The last barricade to be breached is a difficult one: *self-righteousness*. It is composed of: misplaced trust, v.9a; delusions of our own righteousness/importance, v.9b; and an improper view of others, v.9c. These things lead further to *self-worship*, v.11a; failure to see *self-deception* regarding sin, v.11b; and *self-importance*, v.12. Obviously, such things lead to ultimate defeat, v.14!

Conclusion: If we are to win the war over Satan and sin, we must: 1) be willing to engage in battle *daily*; 2) know the real enemy is *self*; 3) follow the right leader- *Jesus Christ*; and 4) overcome the battles *self-deception, self-control, self-discipline, and self-righteousness*!