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Spiritual Weapons to Defeat the Enemy: Overcoming the Wiles, Devices, and Deception of the Devil

8. Wrestling With Principalities and Powers

This chapter unpacks Ephesians 6:12 word by word to identify who the real enemy is. Paul's term 'wrestle' (Greek pale) points to the brutal, no-rules combat sports of the ancient Palaestra, framing spiritual warfare as an intense, all-out struggle against unseen demonic forces rather than people.

Key takeaways

- Our fight is 'not against flesh and blood' — the true adversaries are unseen wicked spirits working behind every disaster and moral failure.
- But those spirits can only act when our flesh cooperates, so we must deal with the flesh first; living a crucified, 'dead to sin' life neutralizes their attacks — dead people don't respond to temptation.
- The repeated 'against' (Greek pros, a face-to-face word) warns that every believer will at some point come into direct, eyeball-to-eyeball contact with evil forces.

- Paul lists four ranks of demons: principalities (highest, oldest authority), powers (delegated authority), rulers of darkness (kosmokrateros — organized military rank-and-file), and spiritual wickedness (poneros — vile malignance).
- The Church's defeat isn't a shortage of power or authority but a lack of discipline, organization, and commitment; the devil organizes his forces like troops while believers stay scattered and uncommitted.

Passages worth keeping

“The reason the Church is experiencing so much defeat is that the devil has something the Church does not have!”

Sets up the chapter's core diagnosis — the enemy's organization and discipline, not superior power.

“Dead men and women do not have the capacity to respond!”

The chapter's key to victory: a crucified life gives temptation nothing to grab onto.

How it connects

The violent imagery serves one practical point: since there are 'no rules' in this fight, victory comes from preparation and a disciplined, sanctified life — matching the enemy's organization rather than relying on raw power alone.

Scripture referenced

- **Ephesians 6:12** -- The whole chapter's text — names the four ranks of demonic foes.
- **Romans 6:6,7,11** -- Reckoning ourselves dead to sin, which neutralizes attacks on the flesh.
- **John 1:1** -- Shows pros ('with'/'face to face') as intimate, close encounter — applied to meeting demons.