

## CHAPTER 5

# Christian Life - A Fight against Evil



The battle between David and Goliath is a very famous incident in the Old Testament. Philistines used to attack Israel, the people of God, constantly. Goliath was a giant. He was a trained warrior from early childhood and was the leader of the Philistines. Goliath was very proud of his ability and laughed at the God of Israel and challenged the Israelites to confront in war. When the whole lot of Israelite army got frightened, David a shepherd boy decided to fight with him. Goliath teased the boy with a sling and stone. But David replied, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." (1 Sam. 17:45) This is the Lord's fight. He will deliver you into my hands. Trusting in the power of the Lord, David took a stone, slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead and he fell. David killed Goliath using Goliath's own sword. At this sight, the Philistine army fled (1 Sam. 17: 1-51).

### Christian Life- A Warfare

We can see this encounter between David and Goliath as a symbol of the warfare, which Christians have to do against evil. Evil powers constantly try to destroy goodness and virtue and to destroy the ones who stand for goodness through temptations and evil deeds. In such contexts, like David, filled with the power of God, we must be able to fight and overcome evil powers. St. Paul also reminds us that Christian life is warfare against Satan and his powers. He also reminds us that we must be strengthened by spiritual weapons so as to resist any attack of the evil one. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. "Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6: 11-12). To be brief, the Disciples of Christ are obliged to fight against the evil powers and overcome temptations.

## Two Phases of Fight

There are two phases in Christian warfare against evil. The first phase is to conquer and defeat the temptations and domination of evil in ourselves. The second phase is the fight against external evil forces. During the temptations in the desert Jesus conquered the attempt of Satan to rule His life. Vatican Council II teaches that as part-takers of the royal mission of Christ, every Christian is obliged to defeat the rule of sin by self-control and holy life (L.G.36).

### 1. Fight against the Interior Powers of Evil

By Baptism we are the children of God, members of the church and heirs to heaven. By this we have become God's own people. Hence, though Christians are in the world, we are called not to belong to the world but to be God's own and live according to His will. When we live differently, opposite to the ways of the world, It is quite natural that the powers of this world will turn against us. Not only that the world will confront us with its tricks and temptations, but also, the world will hate us too. Looking at this reality, Jesus prayed for his disciples thus: " I have given them your word; and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world"(Jn 17:14-16).

It is quite natural that in the life of a disciple of Christ there will be temptations and persecutions because the world hates us and the Evil One desires to destroy us. We may also be persuaded to turn away from goodness and do evil because of the sinful tendencies within us, evil circumstances, people and influences. We will be able to overcome these temptations of Satan only if we live by the word of God and be filled with divine power.

### 2. Fight against External Forces of Evil

The second phase in spiritual warfare is fight against external forces of evil. This is the mission of a disciple of Christ to discern the evil in others and in society in common and to eradicate such circumstances, structures and set - up. Jesus fulfilled this mission, expelling devils and objecting to the false practices and false interpretations of Jewish laws. He resisted sin but He did not hate the sinner. He corrected the sinners. Following the example of Jesus, we, the disciples of Christ are obliged to act against the social evils like liquor, drugs, violence, injustice, bribery that bring the whole society under the dominion of evil and to fight against the consumerist culture, trends of violence, moral degradation etc which modern media impose on us.

## Weapons of Spiritual Warfare

In our fight against evil, the means and weapons we use should not be material but divine.

Jesus asked us to conquer evil with good (Lk. 6:27-36) “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21). Thus reminds St. Paul, the apostle. He clearly teaches us in his epistle to the Ephesians what are the weapons of God which Christians should wear to resist Satan and his cunning tricks: “Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints” (Eph 6: 14-18).

### **Jesus - Our Model**

Jesus' life was a constant fight against Satan, the embodiment of evil and his activities. Jesus who overcomes the temptations of Satan in the desert should be our inspiration (Mt 4:1-11). Jesus defeated the temptations of Satan to act against the will of the Father by empowering Himself through fasting and prayer for forty days and using the sword of the word of God. Thus, after gaining victory over Satan, Jesus began His public life. He continued His fight against evil by expelling devils from those possessed by evil (Mk 1: 21-28, Lk 8: 26-39). Jesus defeated the dominion of Satan forever by His Passion, Death and Resurrection. He constantly fought against the evils of false practice of Sabbath, business at the temple of Jerusalem, hypocrisy of the Pharisees etc prevalent in that society.

We must realize that if Satan tempted Jesus, the son of God, he will tempt us too. It may be in various ways, at different times, in various circumstances. He not only tempted Jesus, but also tortured Him through wicked men. He accepted all these joyfully for the reparation of the sins of humanity. The example of Jesus, who overcame temptations and suffered tortures, should be our inspiration to overcome temptations and to bear tortures.

### **To Become Victorious in Spiritual Warfare**

There are five things which we should pay attention to, to defeat evil powers at individual and community level.

#### **1. Be alert against Evil**

St. Peter instructs Christian disciples like this: “Discipline yourselves, keep alert like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering” (1Pt 5:8-9). Satan always comes to our lives tempting us to drive us away

from doing good and yield to evil. Jesus said: Be alert and pray so that you may not yield to temptations. We must be careful to discern and reject the temptations and advice of Satan, to remain firm in our faith in God and to empower ourselves through prayer. He may come again with new tricks even if we overcome the temptation of Satan once. Jesus has taught us that the evil spirit, once he leaves a person, will come again with more power (Lk.11:24-26). We are naturally inclined to evil. The temporary pleasure which evil gives will always tempt us. So we have to be very alert and awake. Daily examination of conscience, frequent confessions and advice of spiritual fathers will help us to conquer the temptations of Satan and to progress in virtue. Christ's disciples should be ready to recognize the evils destroying individuals, families and communities and to fight against them individually and in an organized way.

## **2. Be Strengthened through Sacraments**

Jesus fought against the evil and became victorious. If we are united with Him, no one can defeat us. If God is for me who can stand against me? (Rom 8:32). One important thing in overcoming evil and becoming victorious is to get strengthened through sacraments. In Christian life, there is nothing to substitute sacraments. The sacraments of reconciliation and Holy Eucharist are the sacraments, which constantly purify and strengthen us, who became children of God through baptism. Since we are empowered through these, we can fight against evil and lead a holy life. The Holy Eucharist is the source of power of Christian life. A Christian can overcome the powers of evil by the spiritual power he receives through the meritorious reception of the Holy Communion.

## **3. Live in accordance with the Word of God**

We must use the sword of the Word to succeed in our fight against evil. "The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). The one who listens to the word of God and live accordingly is like a prudent man who builds his house on rock. No adverse forces could destroy them. Similarly, if we live by the Word of God, we will also become strong and be able to outlive adverse circumstances.

St. Paul wrote to Timothy "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17).

It is the Word of God that helps us to know the will of God. to correct mistakes, to practice justice and to do good. The word of God also enables us to avoid sin, In Psalm 119:11 the psalmist says: "I have laid up thy word in my heart that I might not sin against thee." Hence the Word of God should be with us as the light in our path and lamp to our feet. We must find time to read the word of

God and understand properly the message of the words read. We should try to live by the word of God. Thus, we will be able to overcome the powers of evil.

#### **4. Be Empowered through Prayer**

Jesus became victorious in His fight against evil because He discerned the will of His Father and lived accordingly. It is by being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit through forty days' prayer and fasting that Jesus overcame the temptations of Satan and fought against evil in his public life (Mt. 4:1-11). Jesus used to pray in the morning (Mk. 1:35-38), and at night (Mk. 1:35). Jesus also taught us clearly that one will not be able to liberate ourselves from the snares of Satan except by prayer (Mk. 9:28-29). Jesus has also commanded us to stay awake and pray so that we may not yield to temptation.

We must possess divine power through prayer to resist evil and to grow in virtue. Each morning the moment we get up, pray for the grace to grow in virtue. Participate in the Holy Mass whenever possible and be a regular presence in family prayers. Some people feel prayer dry because they do not realize the power of prayer and do not get deep in God's love. Seeking the intercession of Bl. Virgin Mary, and other saints and guardian angel will also help us very much to defeat evil and progress in virtue.

#### **5. Live in Communion**

Living and working in communion with others is necessary to resist evil and grow in goodness. The presence, communion and co-operation of people united in faith will strengthen the members very much. Parish community and communion have great significances in Christian life. The Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us not to be absent in church assemblies (Heb 10: 24-25). United effort is essential to bring fruit in our fight against evil and our efforts to grow in virtue. When we work together we can do more good than doing things alone. Organized effort alone will enable us to succeed in our fight against the evils in our society and the dominion of evil prevalent in society. Working with Voluntary Organizations in schools and pious associations in the parish will help us greatly to grow in goodness in ourselves and to do good to society. At the same time we must be careful not to join and work in organizations based on atheism, antichristian values and in groups which encourage violence. We must be careful to desire good, see good, hear good, say good and act good deeds.

## **I. Find out the Answers**

1. The power of evil is like Goliath and the Christians like David. Explain
2. What does St. Paul say about the weapons we should wear in our fight against the forces of darkness?
3. What are the two phases in our fight against evil? Explain.
4. How did Jesus defeat evil?
5. What are the things we have to take care to succeed in spiritual warfare? Explain.

## **II. Let us Discuss**

1. How can we confront the crisis of Christian faith and morality, which we experience in the modern age?
2. What can the youth do creatively in spiritual warfare?

## **III. Activity**

I will fight against social evils, individually and in an organized way.

## **IV. Let us Enlighten our Hearts**

“Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:14-17).