

“**A**nd when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in diverse places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows”
(Mark 13:7-8).

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

By Jeff Reich

We live in a time when wars and rumors of wars abound. We see Bible prophecy being fulfilled around us on every side. Many are tense, believing that we are headed to Armageddon as nations take sides in the Middle East. Truly the “end is not yet” — howbeit close.

If you are familiar with military terminology, you might have come across the expression “Rules of Engagement” or ROE. These rules are directives on the use of military force and define the circumstances, conditions, degree, and manner in which it may be used. Some actions might be construed as provocative, so these rules are applied to the situation. The rules might spell out what degree of force may be used and in return is not overly disproportionate. These rules are also meant to shelter civilians as much as possible. But we all know that war is often not fair!

Spiritual Warfare

How about spiritual war? Are there Rules of Engagement in connection with it? I’m sure we all agree that there’s a spiritual war going on between the forces of good and the forces of evil—between Christ and His angels and Satan and his angels. We, as Christians, often refer to this war as The Great Controversy or the Conflict of the Ages. Many books have been written dealing with this long-standing conflict.

As we look at the Rules of Engagement in connection with this spiritual war, we see things are rather lopsided. Satan can use every dirty and evil tactic he has in his arsenal. He can lie, cheat, manipulate, coerce, and even kill. He has a myriad of evil methods and armaments. If it were not for the restraining power of God, evil forces would plunge this whole world into total ruin and death. We are told:

“Angels are now restraining the winds of strife that they may not blow until the world shall be warned of its coming doom, but a storm is gathering, ready to burst upon the earth, and when God shall bid His angels lose the winds there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture” (Education, 179, 180).

God is ultimately in control, but He is limited as to what He can and can’t do because of His divine Rules of Engagement. God is love, and He is bound by the very nature of love. He can use His love, as well as truth and compassion. He has revealed His character through Jesus so that people can see the contrast between His character and that of Satan. From the very beginning, Satan’s war against God started with the subtle accusations that God is arbitrary and unjust—that He doesn’t keep His own law

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and His followers can't either. These are the continual accusations that are being made by the adversary.

Ultimately, in this war every individual will have to decide on which side he or she stands. God is doing everything in His power to reveal His true character to humanity so that people will make a final choice where they stand in this great battle. The final test will include a people who reveal Christ's character, thus proving Satan wrong in all his accusations.

One of the reasons God sent His Son, Jesus, was to help bring clarity to God's true character. Satan is doing all he can to malign God's character by misrepresenting Him, accusing Him of being unfair, arbitrary, and unjust.

The Accuser of the Brethren

As I have pointed out, when you look at what Satan can do versus what God can do, it may seem that Satan has the advantage. There are two totally different ROEs at play in this battle between Christ and Satan. Some-

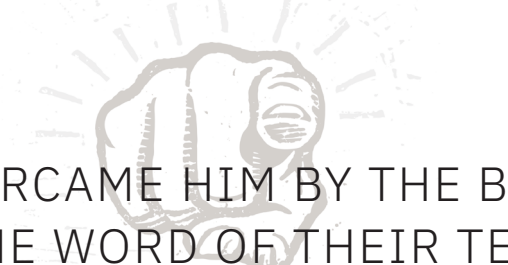
times it seems hard to understand, but there are things God cannot do. God cannot do anything that contradicts His holy character, such as lying, sinning, or changing.

One of the greatest setbacks to Christianity is the misrepresenting of God's character by His supposed people. And one of the greatest ways that they've done this is by using Satan's ROE to further God's work. A lot of damage has been done because of things like the crusades and inquisitions that have taken place for the sake of truth. Even on a personal level, this is true, as sometimes God's people try to use Satan's ROE to further God's work. It is a tragedy when God's people misrepresent God's character. God's work has to be done in God's way, and His followers need to use His ROE and not the one of the enemy.

As people come to an understanding of spiritual things and seek God's help, the accuser is right there. As soon as God intervenes—to help, to bring healing—to those who are responding to the influence of His Spirit,



INTERCESSORY PRAYER



... AND THEY OVERCAME HIM BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, AND BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY; AND THEY LOVED NOT THEIR LIVES UNTO THE DEATH.

Satan and his nymphs are there as the accuser of the brethren, casting seeds of doubt. He also accuses God of playing favorites by not obeying His own ROE. Satan plants bad thoughts in the mind and does everything he can to try to thwart the salvation of the soul. He calls foul on any interceding on God's part. This is exactly why Satan is called the accuser of the brethren:

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:10-11).

God's love in the heart is a constraining power, which leads men to reveal Him in the conversation, in the tender kind spirit, in the uplifting of the lives of those with whom they associate. Christians who succeed in their efforts must know Christ, and in order to know Him, they must know His love. In heaven their fitness as workers is measured by their ability to love as Christ loved and to work as He worked.

Intercessory Prayer


God's followers need to truly understand His Rules of Engagement. One of the most powerful weapons we can use in God's defense is intercessory prayer. In spiritual battles, we must follow Christ's methods. Little do people understand the reason why we should pray for each other. There is power in prayer.

So many lose the battles they deal with in their daily life, partly by just giving up and partly by not understanding the weapons we have at our disposal as Christians. This is extremely important. We can have victories in our spiritual warfare. When we pray for each other, angels of God can come and assist in a situation. We can help mediate for others as Christ mediates for us. "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). It is

part of the Rules of Engagement that Christ's followers help others defeat the accusations and attacks of the enemy. We must understand that while Satan and his forces are trying to hinder God from being able to help us, it is intercessory prayer that can break the stalemate. God can call a cloud of witnesses that are there to defend a struggling soul against the charges of the accuser. Intercessory prayer helps untie the hands of God so that He can assist a struggling soul. He desires to help those who are calling out to Him.

Christ gave us an example of intercessory prayer in the seventeenth chapter of the book of John. That chapter contains important lessons for every Christian. This prayer is written for our instruction. "Neither pray I for these alone," Christ says, "but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word."

It may be hard to understand the power of intercessory prayer, but it works. I can't help but think how many times people have said, "We will be praying for you," but never do. Often the words are shallow, and the statement is merely a catchphrase that is never followed up on. I can speak from experience when I say that I have told people I'd pray for them and promptly forgot about it a half hour later. We need to be diligent and vigilant. We need to recognize the power in helping others in the great battle of life. We do need to pray for each other. "Let us not love in word," the apostle writes, "but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

"The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within. It is the atmosphere of this love surrounding the soul of the believer that makes him a savor of life unto life and enables God to bless his work" (Acts of the Apostles, pp. 551). 



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