Please open your Bibles to the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter twenty. And let's read verses 1-4.

**Deuteronomy 20:1-4 (NKJV)**

1. “When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.

2. So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people.

3. And he shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them;

4. for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.’

Before we get into the message, let's ask God's blessings on our time of study tonight.
Introduction

When you carefully study the lives of the great men and women of faith in the scriptures you realize their lives were a blend of great successes and miserable failures.

*None of them were perfect*, except Christ.
*None of them were without sin*, except Christ.
*None of them always got it right*, except Christ.

Everyone of them fought many battles in life; sometimes they won and sometimes they didn't. But it was through those battles........through those victories and defeats....that GOD molded and shaped them into the great heroes of the faith they became.

It has been said, “The Christian life is a battlefield, not a playground.”

Battles are not only a normal part of our Christian life, they are necessary for our spiritual growth and development. It is on the battlefield of life that our faith is tested....our godliness is honed......and our Christ-likeness is molded.

Every child of God will fight many battles in this life, and just like the great men and women of faith in the scriptures, you and I will win some battles and we will lose some. On our journey to heaven we will all experience “the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.”
Have you ever felt like an absolute, miserable failure as a Christian? Have you ever had that hopeless feeling that no matter how hard you try to live for the LORD you are doomed to failure?

Would it surprise you to know that probably everybody in this sanctuary tonight has had those same feelings? And would it surprise you to know that the most devout, most godly people you know have also had those feelings?

Every LORD’S, seated in Church pews all across America and all across the world, are Christian brothers and sisters just like you and me, who are battered and bruised and wounded and discouraged from fighting life’s battles. And like you and me, they are looking for hope......and comfort......and encouragement.

It is with this thought in mind I would like to begin a new series of messages this evening that I am entitling: “WINNING LIFE’S BATTLES.”

Over the course of these next few Sunday evenings we will cover such subjects as:

WINNING THE BATTLE OVER TEMPTATION  
WINNING THE BATTLE OVER WORRY  
WINNING THE BATTLE OVER LONELINESS  
WINNING THE BATTLE OVER LUST AND SEXUAL IMPURITY  
WINNING THE BATTLE OVER PRIDE  
WINNING THE BATTLE OVER ANGER  
WINNING THE BATTLE OVER GRIEF AND SORROW

(And I don't do this very often, but if you have other subjects you would like for me to cover in this series feel free to suggest them to me.)
I want you to understand from the very outset of this series that I will not be speaking to you as one who has mastered life's battlefield; but rather I will be speaking to you as a wounded soldier speaking to fellow wounded soldiers.

Like you, I have lost many, many battles over the course of my Christian life. Like you, I have failed the LORD more times than I care to remember. And like you, I have experienced times of great discouragement and defeat in my walk with Christ.

And I am not joking with you when I say, I probably need this series every bit as much as all of you, if not more!

Tonight as we begin this series I would like for us to consider: “The Christian Life Is A Battleground, Not A Playground.”

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Brief Into To Tonight's Message

We would like for the Christian life to be easy, but it isn’t! In fact living the Christian life is the most difficult and most challenging life anyone can choose to live in this world.

The truth is when we try to live the Christian life we will do battle with three formidable enemies.
First of all, we must do battle with……

I. **AN OUTER ENEMY—-The World**

**I John 2:15-17 (NKJV)** 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

1. The term “world” is used three different ways in the scriptures.

   (A) “The world” sometimes refers to the **CREATED** world.

   Genesis 1:1 (NKJV)  In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

   That is “the created world”……the physical world…..the mountains, the oceans, the rivers, and lakes, and sky.

   (B) “The world” sometimes refers to the collective **POPULATION** of people.

   John 3:16 (NKJV) “For God so loved the **world**…….”

   By “world” Jesus is referring to the people who inhabit the world.
“The world” sometimes refers to the worldly system of THINKING and LIVING. This is the Satanic system that is diametrically opposed to GOD and God's people, and all things holy.

You notice in verse 16 that I read a moment ago, that John mentions three “values” or three “lifestyles” that are promoted by the worldly system: “The lust of the flesh,” “The lust of the eyes,” and “The pride of life.”

**THE LUST OF THE FLESH** refers to HEDONISM or living for the gratification of one's physical and sensual desires.

**THE LUST OF THE EYES** refers to MATERIALISM or living for the accumulation of money and material things for one's own personal gain and enjoyment.

**THE PRIDE OF LIFE** refers to EGOTISM or the pursuit of power, prestige, popularity, or fame.

These values and lifestyles promoted by the worldly system are intended to distract and seduce people away from a love relationship with GOD while promoting the love of SELF.

3. And if you will stop and think about it, we are bombarded with these worldly values and lifestyles every single day. We see it in the TV shows and movies we watch. We see it in the magazines and books we read. We see it on the billboards we see along the highway. We hear it in the music we listen to.
4. It is true that “we are IN this world, but we are not to be OF this world.” In other words, we live in this world, but we are not to live by the worldly system. The worldly system is our enemy. This is why every single day is a battle for those of us who are Christians.

And this is why every single day we have to “be strong in the LORD and in the power of His might, and put on the whole armor of GOD so that we can take our stand.”

But not only must we do battle with AN OUTER ENEMY—THE WORLD……..we must also do battle with…..

II. AN INNER ENEMY——The Flesh

Romans 7:15-25 (NKJV) 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. 16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.
1. Just as the Bible uses the term “world” in three different ways, it uses the term “flesh” in three ways.

(A) Sometimes “flesh” refers to **MEAT**, like the meat of an animal that we eat for food.

(B) Sometimes “flesh” refers to our outer layer of **SKIN**.
    The very first time Adam laid eyes on the woman GOD created for him, Adam said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” (Genesis 2:23)

(C) And then sometimes “flesh” refers to our **SINFUL NATURE**. This is our **INNER ENEMY**!

Some of the greatest battles we fight in the Christian life is with ourselves, our old sinful nature, “the flesh.”

When you and I accepted Jesus Christ as our LORD and Savior we became a **new creation**. In other words, GOD transformed us from the **old man** we used to be into a new man. And the way GOD did this was by giving us the gift of His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit desires to work your life and mine to mold us and shape us and conform us into the likeness of Christ. The Holy Spirit desires to transform the way we think...... the way we act...... and the way we live.
But every single day “our flesh” “our old sinful nature” wants to rear its ugly head to keep us from doing what the Holy Spirit is leading us to do.

The Holy Spirit is leading us to do what pleases GOD, while our flesh is leading us to do what pleases us.

The Holy Spirit is leading us to be humble, while our flesh is leading us to be proud and boastful.

The Holy Spirit is leading us to forgive, while our flesh is leading us to cling to anger and resentment.

The Holy Spirit is leading us to be sexually pure, while our flesh is leading us to do things that are sexually immoral.

Who is winning the battle in your life? Your flesh or the Holy Spirit? Are you driven by your cravings, your lusts, your desires, your feelings, and your emotions? Or are you yielding, and surrendering and following the Holy Spirit?
Don’t believe Satan’s lie that you can live to please your fleshly desires and live to please the LORD at the same time! That is absolutely impossible!

**Galatians 5:16,17 (NKJV)**  
I say then, “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contradictory to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Paul goes on to say in **Galatians 6:7,8 (NKJV)**  
“Do not be deceived, GOD is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption (death) but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

Let’s quickly review what we have learned so far......

**Every day we must do battle with AN OUTER ENEMY ——THE WORLD**  
**Every day we must do battle with AN INNER ENEMY——OUR FLESH**
And thirdly, every day we must do battle with.......

III. A SUPERNATURAL ENEMY—The Devil

*Ephesians 6:10-12 (NKJV)* 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

1. Satan is our “arch enemy”......the enemy of all enemies!

2. The thing that makes Satan such a dangerous enemy is that he doesn't present himself to us in such a way that we can identify him.

   *He doesn't have horns and wear a red suit with a pointed tail and hold a pitchfork, such as we see depicted in cartoons.

   *Nor does he walk up to us and say, “Good morning sir or good morning ma'am, I'm the devil and I want to get you to do things today that will bring terrible misery, shame and guilt upon you.”

3. No, Satan doesn't operate that way at all. He's what we call “a smooth operator.” He's slick......he's cunning.....he's sly.

   *II Corinthians 11:14 (NIV) ........”Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.”*
4. Satan uses **THE ALLUREMENTS OF THE WORLD AND THE APPETITES OF OUR OWN SINFUL FLESH** to lure us into doing things that are contradictory to the will of GOD.

5. He wants us to become **discouraged and downhearted** so we will lose confidence. He works hard to make us **depressed and despondent** so that we want to give up and stop trying. He wants to **weigh us down with guilt and shame** so that we become unfruitful and unproductive spiritually.

He tries to blind us to the truth of GOD. He tries to make us believe that **God doesn't love us when the Bible tells us God's love is unconditional.** He tries to make us believe that **God doesn't forgive us of our sins, when the Bible clearly says, “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive all our sins, and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.”**

6. Satan is a mean enemy! He is a nasty enemy! He is a vile enemy! He wants to destroy everything that is precious and dear to you...... **your marriage..... your family....your career.....your reputation.....your witness.....and most of all he wants to destroy your relationship with GOD.**

This is why the scriptures warn us to..... **“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”** (I PETER 5:8 NKJV)
CONCLUSION

Its easy to see now why the Christian life is described as “a battleground, and not a playground” isn’t it?

Every single day we live we will fight one battle after another with OUR OUTER ENEMY—THE WORLD, and with OUR INNER ENEMY—OUR FLESH, and with OUR SUPERNATURAL ENEMY—THE DEVIL.

With so much against us it would seem it is impossible to live a victorious Christian life. But here is a very important truth to always remember when it comes to WINNING THE BATTLES OF LIFE, and that is don’t focus on who or what is AGAINST you, stay focused on WHO IS FOR YOU!

That brings us back to that passage I read at the very outset of the message from Deuteronomy 20. Let me read it again as we close:

Deuteronomy 20:1-4 (NKJV)

1 “When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.

So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people.

And he shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them;

for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.’

I leave you with this thought: You and I do not fight our daily battles alone! GOD is with us in every battle! And GOD is fighting for us against our enemies!

If GOD is for YOU, who can be against YOU?