

# **GOD'S WORD ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

*A Bible Study by*  
**Dr. Mark E. Hardgrove, © 2009**  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

I am aware that there are many excellent works on the subject of spiritual warfare available and that my offering may not bring any new facts on the subject to light. However, I do believe that I can present the material in a manner that will reacquaint the reader with biblical truths that are crucial to our understanding of the nature of this warfare and the manner in which we will be able to successfully engage and defeat spiritual enemies.

It is my observation over several years of ministry (most of which as a pastor) that far too many members of our congregations are living defeated lives. They know intuitively that they are in a battle, but they have no sense of the scope or nature of the war they are in. They are more like lost soldiers stumbling through the minefields of life hoping that they do not step in the wrong place—invariably, they do. Furthermore, they often do not understand who the real enemy in this warfare is, so innocent people are getting hurt by “friendly” fire.

It need not be like this. God’s Word provides a spiritual battle plan that can guide us through the battles of life. True enough, most Christians will face a defeat from time to time (1 John 2:1), but that does not mean that we have to live defeated lives. There is a medic on the field of battle who is a great physician, a healer of wounded spirits, and a mender of broken hearts.

Furthermore, we have a Comforter, the *Paraclete*, who walks beside us to guide us and to empower us to walk in victory. The Holy Spirit is that person and He provides the power to be faithful witnesses of the ultimate triumph of truth over deception.

Finally, we have the spiritual armor that we need to stand instead of fall on the field of battle. From head to toe, mind, body, soul, and spirit are covered and protected. Yet if we fail to put on the armor, to take up the shield of faith, or to wield the Sword of the Spirit, then we become vulnerable and subject to defeat and failure.

This study is designed to help us not to hype us. It is not some kind of pseudo-spiritual methodology where you can simply speak the right words and the enemy magically disappears, your health is assured and your wealth is restored. That is not what this study is about. This study is about facing the realities of life with the realities of faith and with an understanding of the spiritual implications of what we think, do and say.

It is about far more than saying the right words; it is about being someone who is ready to be turned on and tuned in to the spiritual realities around us, and to employ the revelation of God (the Incarnation, His prophets and His Word) to the battle at hand. It is, as much as anything else, a matter of submission and obedience to God.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **SPIRITUAL REALITIES**

To begin, we need to address some issues that are prerequisite to understanding the nature of the warfare we will be studying. For starters, we are talking about a reality that lies beyond the realm of the *physical*. Physics is a science that deals with physical, tangible, material things. However, as Aristotle taught, there are things that are beyond the physical, they *metaphysical*. What we are talking about, then, in terms of the spiritual realities are those things that are metaphysical, they lie beyond the material, empirical universe; however, they are no less real.

We are not talking about fairytales or myths, but about that which is real, genuine and true. Some people draw back from and view as superstitious any discussion of the spiritual realities. Because they cannot touch, taste, see or hear the spiritual things then they view them as unreal, as beliefs but not as fact. The truth is that we deal with and believe in things that are not physical or empirical every day, for example, love. Even people who call themselves atheists and secularists claim to believe in love. Yet love, as such, cannot be measured or weighed in any empirical sense of the word. All that can be seen of love are the effects of love. The same could be said of patriotism, or any number of things that are accepted as real, but which cannot be termed physical.

Jesus said of the power of the Holy Spirit, that it is like the wind; you can see the effects, but you cannot see the wind (John 3:8). Similarly, we can see the effects of the spiritual world in the material world, but aside from special manifestations, the spiritual world remains largely unseen. Only the effects can be seen. What effects?

*On the positive side:* Documented healings for which there is no medical explanation; lives dramatically changed after conversion; prophecy that is given hundreds or even thousands of years before the fact but which come to pass; eyewitness accounts of a man named Jesus who was crucified and buried, but who raised from the dead and ascended in clouds into the heavens.

*On the negative side:* Men and women who commit heinous crimes with no apparent explanation; others who claim to hear voices telling them to kill; addictions to habits or substances that are destroying lives, but from which there seems to be no escape; men who fly planes into buildings in the name of their god killing themselves and thousands of others; Satanic ritual abuse.

Fortunately, we live in a time where there is much interest in spiritual realities. Many thought that with the Enlightenment and Modernism most people would leave such unscientific speculations behind and embrace the physical world without any belief in, or reference to a spiritual world. Research, however, shows that this is not the case and people consistently continue to believe in the spiritual realm. A majority of people polled believe in prayer, in angels, in spirits, and in God.

Unfortunately, many of these same people are willing to embrace and believe in spiritual realities that have no redeemable qualities. There is a growing interest and participation in the

occult and this interest is being fed to our children in the form of various popular media such as *Harry Potter* books and movies. There is an ongoing New Age Movement that seeks strength and power from inanimate objects, such as crystals, trees, nature and such. There are people who are seeking for spiritual truths in places where no truth can be found and in places where truth itself is seen as relative and subjective.

There are more people praying, but to whom are they praying? Some research has shown that prayer helps patients recover more quickly from surgery or from treatment for terminal diseases. Does it matter whether or not people pray in the name of Jesus, or is the mere act of prayer sufficient in and of itself? These are spiritual questions and they form the battleground for the spiritual warfare that we are engaged in.

As Christians we accept spiritual realities and embrace the positive implications of what it means to be Born Again, that is, *spiritually* Born Again, and thus “born of the spirit.” Jesus said:

6That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8'The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:6-8, NKJV)

For one to become spiritually alive, born into a spiritual reality that takes them from death unto life, there must be a spiritual awakening. This birth opens us up to hear spiritual realities and to see the effects of the Holy Spirit that we had never seen or heard before. This fact is forcefully made by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:9-15:

9But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

10But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

11For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 13These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.  
NKJV

We live and move and have our being in a spiritual world while, at the same time, we live and move within the context of physical realities. We live in two worlds at one time, but it is the spiritual world that is eternal, and therefore the implications of spiritual realities have eternal consequences.

The Apostle Paul made this point when he wrote:

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor 4:16-18, NKJV)

In other words, Paul notes that while they may have to physically suffer for their faith and for their mission, they realize that there are spiritual realities and rewards that the natural eye cannot see, but which have consequences that are eternal. The suffering that they see and experience is temporal, but the unseen, the spiritual, is a reality that is beyond the physical and carries the promise of “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Almost every religious paradigm acknowledges the existence of the spiritual. Furthermore, most religions also recognize that there are two types of spiritual realities. One is regarded as good and wholesome, while the other is seen as bad or evil. It follows then, that these two spiritual realities would stand in opposition to one another and become a point of conflict.

We have already noted the effects of the spiritual upon the material world, and the result of the conflict between good and evil spiritual realities is evidenced daily in the news. But the conflict that spills out on a global level with terrorist acts begins more intimately with an inner conflict as each man or woman is confronted with evil and must choose which course of action to take. The bloody battles fought in the streets of the inner city begin in the heart of the gang member who chooses to carry a gun, to engage in an angry exchange, and then to pull the gun and take a life.

There are spiritual battles that the church community must face. When someone comes into the church and begins to cause turmoil and to sow seeds of discord, there is a spiritual battle being

waged. People will be pulled into different directions as the spirit of evil seeks to divide and destroy the church.

Spiritual battles are waged in the home as we sit in front of a television and chose the programs that we will allow to fill the air of our home and influence the thoughts and meditations of our hearts.

Each of us will face temptations on a regular basis, and each of us will be confronted by the serpent who tells us to disregard the Word of God and simply pursue our own desires independent of God's will. Each of us will have to make choices between right and wrong, good and evil and each of us face the battles of the spirit.

Paul writes in his Epistle to the Ephesians:

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (6:12, KJV)

This is a warfare that reaches from the secret places of our own hearts, to the "spiritual wickedness in high places." There is no escaping this warfare, but it is possible to be victorious, to overcome and to triumph over the evil and the bad. Some religious systems view good and evil as equal and the struggle as eternal and ultimately without end or resolution. Christianity, however, promises a *teleos*, that is, "a goal a finish," a final and complete victory over the forces of evil.

There is no escaping the spiritual warfare because man is, by nature, a spiritual being. From creation man was created as a living soul with a spirit.

There are various models for defining humanity. The secularists say that man is simply a collection of biological systems that work together to sustain a thinking animal. In this model man is simply the product of billions of years of evolutionary processes.

Others see man as both physical and spiritual, and still others view man as tripartite, that is, as body, soul and spirit. According to this view the body of man is the physical biological part of being which houses the senses through which man may empirically experience his world.

The soul is the seat of thinking, of emotions and intellect. The spirit, however, is the eternal part of man that is able to become aware of and respond to the spiritual realities of the created order.

The Biblical model of creation indicates that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Moreover, we know that “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24, KJV). Therefore, when God breathed into the biological form of humanity, He made man more than a physical being, He gave man a spirit that had the capacity to experience and enjoy the presence of God. But this capacity was tainted by sin, and Satan works to keep man from God.

It is regrettable that a seemingly impenetrable division has developed to separate empiricism from faith. For the empiricist, “seeing is believing,” while for the believer, “I believe, therefore I

shall see.” “Faith is the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). However, faith is not, as some suppose, a denial of reality in favor of believing, but faith is the acceptance of a higher reality, the acknowledgement that pure reason does not exist and that with every supposedly empirical discovery there is the limit of human intellect. The finitude of humanity is limited with respect to comprehending the Infinite. The spiritual world cannot be dismissed as superstition, nor can it be neatly laid out like a Geometry theorem to be proven through a series of postulates. It is real, but it is a reality that defies the test tube in favor of the laboratory of human experience at a level that cannot be held in one’s hand.

The reality of the spiritual world, with both the elements of good and evil, along with the inevitable conflict between the two will not be discovered and defined, canned and categorized by man, but will ultimately have to come through revelation. In other words, man cannot simply walk into a room and produce God, but God is already in the room, out of the room, and around the room, and already knew that we would enter the room before we even thought about a room, and He can reveal Himself if and when He chooses.

I remember having a “vision” as a young teenager. I looked beside my bed and saw a vision of Jesus with a small child next to Him. I pinched myself to make sure I was awake, and then after my initial alarm, I reached out to touch Him. My hand passed through the image with no apparent point of contact. He chose to reveal Himself to me. Yet, I am aware that time has perhaps changed the memory of the event, and that as a young teenager I may have had an overactive imagination. So while I do not doubt my experience, my experience alone does not prove the existence

of God. My belief in God is not grounded in that experience, but my belief in God is grounded by my faith in His revelation as contained in His Word.

Man is, therefore, a spiritual being engaged in a spiritual warfare that is ongoing and unavoidable, however, it is our faith in God and in His self-revelation through His Word—both Written and Incarnate—that is the source and secret to our victory. All other avenues of spiritual awareness and engagement prove fruitless and even dangerous.

In a society that is being defined as “Postmodern” the concept of *spiritual* is becoming less a point of derision and yet more of a point of departure for the Christian in that while we are permitted in this milieu to believe in spiritual things, we are not allowed to declare that one specific revelation of God holds any greater authority than any other. In this milieu the battle lines are blurred as the Postmodernist declares that we are all on the same side even if we are playing by different rules.

Such a view, however, embraces all spiritual realities as equally valid and therefore denies one of the fundamental and foundational aspects of spirituality, namely, that there is good and evil. If it is “all good,” then there can be no evil and therefore we encouraged to sleep with the enemy and view good and evil as variations on a single continuum, instead of points of departure.

Where there are no boundaries conflict becomes either impossible, or a confusing and chaotic eruption of hostilities where friends become foes and the enemy of our enemy becomes our friend. Revelation becomes totally subjective and the authoritative revelation of Christ is but one of many such revelations from which man is free to pick and chose that which most appeals to

him. It may be Mohammad, or Buddha, or some transcendental astral projection of ones self, because all are equal.

Little wonder, then, that in this day and age where demons are pictured as cute little cartoons while evangelical Christians are viewed as dangerous and radical, the concept of spiritual warfare is confusing if even possible. Still, the battle is raging and the confusion that seems to exist quickly clears when the authority of God's Word as His authoritative revelation is embraced.

This is war and there are sides to choose. When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai and from the presence of God to the valley of people dancing naked before the golden calf, Moses told the people that it is time to decide whose side they were on. He said, "Whoever is on the LORD's side, come to me" (Ex 32:26, NKJV). God said in Deuteronomy 30:19, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (NKJV). A couple generations later Joshua challenged the people, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh 24:15, KJV). Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matt 6:24, NIV).

To successfully engage in this warfare we must learn to develop a spiritual awareness. Most of us simply move through life, or most of our life with a very basic level of awareness. For example, most of the time we are aware of physical realities. We are aware of how hot or how cold we are, the volume of the sound

system, the visual scenes that we encounter daily. We are, in effect, sensual rather than spiritual. That is to say, we are more tuned in to our physical biological senses than to spiritual realities.

But even our physical senses can be attuned to a particular stimuli and thereby ignore or disregard other stimuli. To become aware of other stimuli we must focus. For example, while you've been sitting here you've been looking at me, and hearing my words. Your focus on me causes you to become less attuned to the feeling of the pew that you are sitting on. But by merely mentioning it, you immediately begin to become aware of the pew. Is it soft? Is it comfortable? Do you need to shift a bit to get more comfortable? Something that was real and was in touch with your person was practically invisible to you because you were not attuned to its presence. But as you can see, it is possible to become attuned to it. Consider your hands, what do your finger tips feel right now? Most of the time we don't even consider it, but it is possible to "tune in" and focus our awareness.

The second level of awareness is usually found in our soul, that is, our emotions and intellect. We function at this level all the time, but it takes self-examination to consider and contemplate how we feel and what we think. That is why the counselor will often try to get us to focus on our feelings. We feel something all the time, but we usually do not focus on how we feel until we are asked, "How does that make you feel?" At that point we reflect and consider something within us that cannot be seen or measured or placed in the test tube. We reflect upon our "feelings" or our "thoughts." We put them into focus and consider how what we are feeling or thinking is affecting our actions or emotions.

As noted earlier, many believe that there is, and Scripture teaches that man has a spirit. Another view is that man is a spirit that lives in a body, which has a soul. As such, we are spiritual beings living in a spiritual world that coexists with the physical world. One tactic of the enemy is to come into our lives by stealth, to enter into our spiritual world while distracting us by keeping us focused either on the physical world, or the emotional/intellectual world. The enemy constantly barrages us with images, sounds, and feelings that appeal to the sensual side of man. He does this with such force and such persistence that we often fail to realize the spiritual battles going on around us.

For example, we have been standing in line for thirty minutes. We are aware that our back and legs are starting to hurt. This physical pain captivates our attention until we become emotionally engaged. We look up the line and see someone who does not know how to get the self-checkout scanner to work. We engage our intellect; we believe that if we were there we would have figured it out already. We surmise that the individual who is struggling must not be very intelligent. We get angry and mutter to the person in front of us that some people should not be allowed to use the self-checkout if they aren't smart enough to figure it out.

We have engaged our senses and our soul, but have even considered the spiritual realities that are going on around us? Have we considered that God has held up the line so that we would have time to see the tears in the eyes of the person standing behind us? Have we considered the possibility that this is a spiritual appointment arranged by God so that we could show compassion and care to someone who woke up that morning considering suicide because they think no one cares?

Just as we must tune in to physical and emotional/intellectual realities, we must also learn to become aware of the spiritual realities. It takes a concerted willingness to press beyond the flesh and mind and engage our spirit with the spiritual dimensions around us. It usually does not happen by accident, but it takes intentionality. Furthermore, it takes a consistent exercising of the spiritual aspect of our human construct. Prayer, meditation, Scripture reading and worship are all part of the process of preparing and equipping our spirit to become aware of spiritual realities. Just as exercise builds the body, and reading stimulates the intellect, the spiritual disciplines build our spirit and enable us to become more aware and to be more equipped to become involved in this battle, and it is a battle.

Another tactic of the enemy is to whet our appetite for spiritual things and then feed us a spiritual diet that is either empty and powerless at best and dangerous and damning at worse. We are all born with a spiritual hunger and hundreds of years of scientific discovery and technological advance have done nothing to diminish this hunger. Satan has learned that if the revelation of God through His Word does not reach a person first, then he (Satan) has the opportunity to feed the spiritual hunger with cults or with the occult. For this reason the issue of *Harry Potter* is not cute and harmless but has the potential of creating a spiritual awareness that embraces those things that stand in opposition to God and His Word. The same can be said of horoscopes and other attempts to engage the spiritual world independent of God's revelation and His Holy Spirit.

That there is a spiritual war cannot be disputed. The effects of this war are seen daily. I remember watching the news during the Vietnam War and there would be graphic pictures of dead and

wounded men. The effects of the war made denial of the war impossible. Dead bodies were being sent home to grieving mothers and fathers. A distant cousin of mine, whose mother sometimes attended our church, was killed in that war. I went to the Vietnam War Memorial and got a rubbing of his name off the wall. There was no denying that we were at war. My own father was away from our family for over a year to fight in that war. I never set foot in Vietnam, I never touched a dead soldier on the killing fields of that Asian nation, but I know the war was real.

The conflict between good and evil is just as real, as seen by the effects of the spiritual warfare: the young women getting pregnant and the young men who seem willing to run around from bed to bed like animals in heat; the murder of people in areas of cities overrun by drugs and violence; the epidemic of aids that continues to run rampant among homosexuals and I.V. drug users; the alarming divorce rate; the ordination of gays in ministry in some churches; child pornography; terrorism; the rise of the occult; and on and on. The effects of this spiritual warfare are indisputable and undeniable. This is war! The only question that each person must answer is, whose side are we on?

There is a God who is good, who has condescended to reveal Himself by coming to us in human skin and then giving Himself for us to break the hold of sin and allow us by grace, through faith, to become reconciled to Him. He invites us to become soldiers in a spiritual battle where Jesus is our Captain (Heb. 2:10), and the outcome of the war is not in doubt—“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev 20:10, KJV).

There is no neutral ground in this battle. We are with for God or we are serving Satan. But we are all involved in this war. Some seem to stumble through the battlefield without any direction or aim. They seem to live as wounded and defeated believers. They want to serve God but they never seem to be able to take up the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and put the enemy to flight. They seem, instead, to become hapless victims of the enemy who uses them unwittingly to become sources of conflict and dissention, at home, at work and in church.

It's time to choose Jesus. It's time to put the Word to work in your life and take a stand. We do not have to be tossed to and fro like a boat on the stormy sea without a rudder. Instead, we can allow the Word of God to become our map and the Spirit to be the wind in our sails. We can let Jesus place His hand upon the rudder and guide our lives through the storms and battles of life.

But to successfully wage this war we must be willing to submit our will to God's will, our way to His way, until His desires become our desires. We cannot win this war on our own terms. God establishes the terms of victory and when we yield to the authority of His Word, then and only then are we prepared to successfully engage the enemy. As James writes, in his Epistle, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (4:7, KJV).

The reason so many Christians are so defeated is because far too few have learned to submit to God. We will go part of the way, give some of our will and yield some of our desires, but we hold back a little of ourselves. We will go to church on the days most convenient for us. We will do what the Word tells us as long as it doesn't cost us anything. We will go so far, but not all the

way and therefore we have never fully submitted and will never live in victory over the devil.

How do we know if we are winning or losing in this spiritual warfare? We know through the effects, whether good or bad. When depression sets in, or fear, or anxiety so as to result in alienation from God and self, then we know by the effects that we are in a losing situation. But when there is an integration of self (body, soul and spirit) that can exist in reconciliation and rest in the presence of God and man, then we know by this effect, that we are winning.

When we are exposed and vulnerable, when we are naked and running from God instead of being clothed in His righteousness and running to Him, we know from the effect, that we are losing. But when we are able to stand without shame in the face of the skeptics and declare realities that they defy us to “prove,” and when we can abide in and enjoy a peace and joy that often stands in contrast to the circumstances around us, then we know that we are winning.

I want to conclude this lesson by asking you to join me in committing ourselves to total submission to the Lordship of Christ in our lives. This implies putting His will ahead of our own. It involves allowing His agenda to take precedence over ours. Only then will we be prepared to follow our Captain into this battle, and from the battle on to victory. I’m ready for victory, are you?

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **ORIGINS OF GOOD AND EVIL**

We have noted that this is a spiritual warfare between good and evil, so it leads us to the question of the origins of this war, and the source of good and evil. This discussion leads us into to dramatically opposite arenas. One is the study of God, or theology and the other is the study of Satan and sin, or harmartiology. God is the source of goodness and Satan the source of evil.

#### **GOD**

There are many systematic approaches to theology and the study of God. However, in as much as the Bible is God's revelation of Himself, we can turn to His Word as the authoritative sourcebook on Who God is and what He is like.

#### Before the Beginning

Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 tells us several things about God. The verse simply says: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This is a short sentence and yet it yields a wealth of information about God.

First, *it tells us that before anything existed, God already was.* God is not limited to the created order. Before the first atom appeared, God was already. Before light or space, time or matter,

God already was because God is the source of all that is. In the Gospel of John the point is made further:

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:1-4).

Again, “In the beginning,” the Word who is God, was already there, and everything that was made, that is, everything that has been created, was made by God. (We will comment on the relationship between the Word with God, and the Word as God below.) So God exists independently of creation and is the source of everything that is created. This points to the fact that God is eternal. God has no beginning because He is the Beginning. In fact, one of the revealed titles of God is, “Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Rev. 21:6; 22:13).

Only God has an eternal past because by definition, only God is eternal. So “In the beginning, God.” God exists before anything else does or can exist. Even within the atheistic evolutionary model for creation, a creation where they deny the existence of God, they must admit that there had to have been a “First Cause,” or the “Prime Mover.” They acknowledge that something happened and it is at that point that something caused something else to happen in a sequence of events that brings us to the present.

The problem with their paradigm is that when you run the movie backward, you come to a point where there is nothing. Some have concluded that the very vacuum of empty space pulled something out of nothing to create everything. The order of the

universe, according to this model, is the result of chaos and creation that came into being with no reason, no purpose, no creator, and no original matter.

The Christian model is that God had a plan, a purpose and a design. We believe that God existed before anything existed and that He called everything into existence that does exist and is the source of all matter, space, spirit, and time. He created everything out of nothing more than His own will. That is, He created everything *ex nihilo*, or out of nothing.

The writer of Hebrews declares in chapter 11 verse 3:

3By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. (Heb 11:3, NKJV)

So we see that the invisible, the things that existed only in the mind of God, spiritual things, preceded the material. And the Word, that is, the Preincarnate Jesus was the method by which the creation took place. Paul writes in Colossians chapter 1, verses 16 through 17:

16For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. NKJV

So we see first, that God is eternal and second, that He is the creator of *all* that is. This is important because it tells us that

Satan is not eternal and does not possess the attributes of Deity. Satan is a created being and therefore inferior to and subject to God. But before we go on to consider Satan, let's continue to look at the attributes of God.

The fact that God the Father, through the agency of His Son, created everything that is created, informs us that neither Father nor Son (nor Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:2) for that matter) could have a point of beginning because they would have had to have created themselves. And while evolutionists are willing to embrace such illogical propositions, Christians do not have to. There is an answer and He is God.

A third point to be made from Genesis 1:1 is that God, in some way that cannot be neatly packed away in human intellectual or philosophical words, is both One and Corporate at the same time. Make no mistake, there is only One God. This is a point made repeatedly in both the Old and New Testaments. It is the Shema, or the phrase that was repeated by every good Jew at every prayer. "The Lord our God is One Lord" (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29). However, there is a plurality that is mysteriously present in the very first reference to God in the Hebrew and Christian Bible, and while some have tried to explain away this fact, it still remains.

The word for God used in verse 1 of Genesis chapter one is *Elohim*. This is the plural form of the singular *El*. This point is further advanced in verse 26 where *Elohim* said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." The first person plural pronouns are not grammatical mistakes in the text of Sacred Scripture, but they are the first phase in a progressive revelation of God that can only be understood in the *Logos*, that is, in Jesus Christ Himself.

This plurality that exists in the eternality of God is important because through this we can understand the statement that “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). Love cannot exist in a vacuum. Love exists in relationship and between persons capable of loving and being loved. God the Father has eternally loved His Son, and love is expressed within the context of the Holy Spirit who is also a part of and person with Father and Son. We could, perhaps, say that God the Father created the universe through the Son by the Holy Spirit. This is the nature of God, it is eternal and it is indestructible, and it is the context of the presence and possibility of love. Further, this relationship is the source of love.

Love is universally held to be good, and as such, God also is good. If God were not good, then love would not exist. Therefore, we know that God is good, all the time. A fact that is expressed repeatedly in Scripture:

Psalms 34:8

8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;  
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

Psalms 100:5

5 For the LORD is good;  
His mercy is everlasting,  
And His truth endures to all generations.

Psalms 135:3

3 Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;  
Sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant.

Psalms 145:9

9 The LORD is good to all,  
And His tender mercies are over all His works.

Jeremiah 33:11b  
11b "Praise the LORD of hosts,  
For the LORD is good,  
For His mercy endures forever"-

Lamentations 3:25  
25 The LORD is good to those who wait for Him,  
To the soul who seeks Him.

Nahum 1:7  
7 The LORD is good,  
A stronghold in the day of trouble;  
And He knows those who trust in Him.

So we see that God is good, and in as much as God is eternal, God is the source of all that is good. James writes in his Epistle, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

James tells us, therefore, that not only is God the source of all goodness, with God there is "no variation or shadow of turning." God always has been good, and He is not capricious, He always will be good.

Therefore, in this spiritual warfare, in the battle between good and evil, one can only be on the Lord's side if he or she is on the side of that which is good and holy. This is why the Apostle Paul warns us to keep our thoughts and meditations centered on that which is good:

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. (Phil. 4:8)

It should be noted, further, that not only is God good, but all that He does and all that He created was good. In Genesis chapter 1 we are told that everything God created was “good” (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). In fact, the creative process is summed up in verse 31 with this statement: “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”

God is love, and God is good, and God is the source of all that is good. Which begs the question, Where does evil come from?

## **ANGELS**

To answer this, we need to consider the issue of angels. Angels are, by all accounts, created beings. They are spiritual beings (Heb. 1:7) and are called, “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14), but they are created beings.

Angels are the servants of God (Rev. 19:10; 22:9) sent to do His work in the spiritual realm upon the earth, and on behalf of redeemed humanity (Gen. 24:40; Heb. 1:14). They were created good, along with everything that God created, but they, like man, were apparently created with the ability to choose. They could choose to obey or rebel.

Unfortunately, some chose to rebel, Jude tells that some of the angels “did not keep their proper domain” (6). God reserves these angels for final judgment, ultimately “the lake of fire” (Rev. 20).

## **SATAN AND DEMONS**

According to Revelation chapter 12, this rebellion was spearheaded by an angel (probably an archangel) referred to by several names” “the great dragon . . . that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” (Rev. 12:9), but most commonly Satan (55 times in the King James Version of the Bible).

The rebellion of Satan is described as follows:

3And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. (Rev 12:3-4)

So Satan, the “red dragon” drew away one third of the angels of heaven in a revolt against God. These fallen angels, who followed Satan in his rebellion, are now called demons. These demons are the lackeys for Satan; they carry out his orders.

The account in Revelation continues, telling us that as a result of Satan rebellion, there was war in heaven:

7And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who

deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev 12:7-10)

It should be noted that demons are not the spirits of humans who were evil in this life. Nor do the spirits of good people become angels. The spirit of humanity and the spiritual beings called angels are two different things. Angels do not become humans, and humans do not become angels.

What then, is the source of evil? Satan, through the exercise of the free will that God created him and all the angels with, rebelled against the goodness of God and in so doing became the father of rebellion, sin, and evil. Jesus said to the Pharisees:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:44)

So Satan is the source of rebellion, which is the source of evil, which is the root of sin. God did not create evil or sin, but God did create the Devil, as He created humanity, with the power of choice. Satan chose rebellion and has since the creation of humanity tried to draw us into that rebellion. Satan knows his defeat and his doom. He knows that His destiny is set in stone and cannot be reversed, so his only pleasure is in trying to draw as many humans as he can into his rebellion, into evil and sin. He knows that we are the apple of God's eye—"for he that touches you touches the apple of His eye" (Zec. 2:8)—so his only satisfaction is in trying to bring us down with him.

This is the war. It is not waged on the physical stage (though the effects are evident in the physical), but in the spiritual realm. Satan set up a kingdom of darkness, a kingdom that is antithetical to everything the kingdom of God stands for. The kingdom of God is called the kingdom of light, while the kingdom of Satan is called the kingdom of darkness.

There are angelic spirits dispersed by God as His ministers on our behalf, and there are demonic spirits in the world sent by Satan to oppress and if possible to possess humans. As humans we are not merely passive objects in this struggle, but we have the ability, through Christ, to choose sides.

Unfortunately, to refuse to choose Christ is a choice. It is a choice to walk in darkness and, as such, become prey to the spiritual powers of that kingdom. It is possible to become so involved and integrated into that kingdom that demonic spirits can not only influence a person, but to possess them, that is, to virtually control them to the point these people will sink into the lowest depths of evil and engage in thoughts and activities that are destructive to themselves and to everyone else around them. (We will look at this further when we look at the New Testament.)

What needs to be remembered, with regard to spiritual warfare, is that there is another kingdom that is organized and focused on destroying humanity in general, and the Church in particular. A fallen angel heads it, Satan, who has more power than any human power ever dreamed of. However, Satan is not God, and does not possess the attributes of God. Satan is subservient and inferior to God in every way. Satan is not omniscient, so he does not know all things. Satan is not omnipresent, he cannot be everywhere at the same time. Satan is not omnipotent, he is not

all-powerful and therefore he is limited. Satan does have more power than humanity, but fortunately, Satan still has to answer to God. God limits him in what he can do.

Furthermore, when Christ dwells in us we are no longer walking in the power of human ability, but in the power that is inherent in the Name of Jesus. Jesus promised us power over all the power of the enemy:

17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." 18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. (Luke 10:17-19)

So while this is a war against a spiritual kingdom of darkness, led by Satan, who has more power than any human, God is on our side and that makes all the difference. We do not have to live defeated lives. We make choices everyday about how we will live and move and have our being. We can choose to walk with Jesus and in the authority that He gives us, or we can choose to live weak and defeated lives.

Fear is the key that opens us up to the attack of the enemy, and faith is the key to victory. When we place our faith in God, and when we live our lives accordingly, trusting Him in every circumstance of life, then we can rest and possess a peace that passes understanding. In this place we find the joy that is our strength and enables us to live triumphantly over the devil and his kingdom. So, while we are in a war, and no war is without casualties, we do not have to be among those who fall.

## **LUCIFER**

At this point, I want to look at Isaiah chapter 14. Traditionally we have been taught that another name for Satan is Lucifer and that Isaiah chapter 14, verses 4 through 23 refer to Satan's fall. However, the text itself is addressed to the king of Babylon (v. 4). Chapters 15 and 16 are addressed to Moab, chapters 17 and 18 to Damascus, and chapter 19 to Egypt.

Few people argue that chapters 15 through 19 are addressed to anyone other than the one to whom it is addressed. But for some reason, some have chosen to separate chapter 14 from the other texts and draw a straight line to Satan via Lucifer. That is why so many people will refer to Satan as Lucifer. However, I'm not so sure that we can make that assumption.

Looking at the text we see first, that this prophecy is addressed to "the king of Babylon." While I know that Babylon becomes a symbol, in Revelation, for a kingdom that is in rebellion against God, I do not think that "king of Babylon" in verse 4 is addressed to Satan, but to the proud and boastful king of the Babylonian Empire.

Further, notice the statement in verse 11:

11b The maggot is spread under you,  
And worms cover you.'

Satan is a spiritual being, maggots and worms could not cover him, but they could cover the king of Babylon who is but a man.

Notice as well, verse 16:

16"Those who see you will gaze at you,  
And consider you, saying:  
'Is this the man who made the earth tremble,  
Who shook kingdoms,

It speaks of the death of this king. People who once revered him will look at him in death and will say, "Is this the man who made the earth tremble?" He is called, in the text, "a man."

The argument, as traditionally been that there are other statement that could not be made of a mere man. For example, verses 12-14:

12"How you are fallen from heaven,  
O Lucifer, son of the morning!  
How you are cut down to the ground,  
You who weakened the nations!

13For you have said in your heart:  
'I will ascend into heaven,  
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;  
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation  
On the farthest sides of the north;

14I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,  
I will be like the Most High.'

It clearly states that he had "fallen from heaven." Further, he is said to have planned to "ascend into heaven", to exalt his "throne above the stars of God", and to "be like the Most High."

This couldn't have been a man, because man has never fallen from heaven, and man cannot literally ascend to God.

Notice, however, that the people at the tower of Babel (which is believed by some to later become the site of Ancient Babylon) declared, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4).

These people said they were going to build a tower into the heavens. Likewise, the king of Babylon, in his arrogance and pride believed that he was a god and that his kingdom did not have to answer to any other god, but that others would have to answer to him.

There is not doubt that the spirit of Satan was motivating the king of Babylon in his rebellion and pride, and that in Revelation we see the influence of Satan at work in "mystery Babylon" (17:5), but the text of Isaiah chapter 14 is not primarily an address to Satan but to the man who sat on the throne in the Babylonian Empire.

Another argument is that there was never a king in Babylon named "Lucifer." However, the name Lucifer is as much a descriptive title as it is a name. The word is from the Hebrew word *heylel*, which refers to a sense of brightness, or is a reference the morning-star. It is a derivative of the Hebrew word *halal*, from which we get the word "hallelujah." As such, it means to boast, to glory, to make a show. And certainly, this was descriptive of the king of Babylon.

This is the only place in the Bible where the word Lucifer occurs, so it is somewhat curious that this term has become so popularly used as another name for Satan.

## **ASSURANCE**

Again, there is no doubt that Satan influenced and manipulated the king of Babylon, but it is probably not the case that Lucifer is another name for Satan.

Having said all of that, however, we do see in Isaiah that God's kingdom cannot be challenged by any earthly kingdom and that when Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18), He wasn't exaggerating. Earthly kingdoms have risen and fallen over the last two thousand years, and yet the church marches on. When we are Born Again, we are born into an everlasting kingdom (Ps 145:13; Dan 4:3; 7:27; 2 Peter 1:11). Daniel writes:

And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. (Dan 7:27, KJV).

Satan does influence kings and kingdoms, and there have been times when it appeared that entire kingdoms were against the people of God, but eventually they are cast down.

The Soviet Union, for example, was built upon a Marxist-Leninist philosophy that denied the existence of God. But without a shot being fired that kingdom fell and what we found behind that Iron Curtain was that there was still a church, a people who

worshipped God despite the attempts of the godless government to deny the validity of God or His Church.

This is war, it is a spiritual war, and it is a war that the Kingdom of God will win. It is a war between right and wrong, good and evil. God is the source of all that is good and holy, and Satan is the source of the evil. In the next chapter we will explore how he managed to inject evil into the human condition.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **DIALOGUE WITH THE DEVIL: GENESIS 1-3**

In Genesis chapters 1 and 2 we are given the account of creation and of the pinnacle of that creation in God's forming man and breathing life into his nostrils. We noted above that God is "good." Further, we noted that everything God made was "good", in fact, after creating man God saw everything that He had made it was "very good". Therefore we know that humanity was created good, not evil.

We know from the account of creation that God created humanity to be a reflection of Himself. God said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our own likeness: and let them have dominion" (1:26). So man was created to bear the image and likeness of God. There is much debate on what exactly being in the image and likeness of God entails. That debate notwithstanding, we can be certain that at the very least it entails the conferring of the moral attributes of God. That is, humanity (both male and female) was created holy, righteous, and good.

The created order was good, and the free moral agents placed into this environment were created good, so where does evil enter the picture? Evil came into existence at the point in time when the thought to rebel against God entered into the mind of Satan

We noted earlier that at some point Satan rebelled and was cast out of heaven, along with one third of the angels who followed him. The question is when did this fall occur?

Revelation 12:9 says, “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” (KJV)

What we know from this verse is that at some point Satan was cast down out of heaven. When? Well the fact that he was “cast out into the earth,” indicates that his fall came after creation.

Some believe in a Pre-Adamic race. That is they believe that there is a “gap”, that is, a large period of time, between Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 and verse 2. This is known as the “Gap Theory.”

It would look something like this:

1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Everything that God does is good, so the heaven and earth that is created as a paradise which was inhabited by dinosaurs, various mammals and human beings. According to the Gap Theory, the fossil record that we now have, including the prehistoric man, is from this period.

It was during this period, which may have spanned millions of years say the Gap Theorists, that Satan rebelled and was cast out of heaven with a third of the angels. The result of this fall is chaos upon the earth. The created order is, in effect destroyed by Satan and his angels. This condition, then, is introduced in verse 2:

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (KJV)

The Gap Theorists argue that since God does not create disorder and chaos—which is what they translate the word “void” to mean—the condition of the earth as described in verse 2 hints of some intervening catastrophe. This being the fall and activity of Satan upon the first creation of heaven and earth. As we know God has done in the days of Noah, and will do again in the eschaton, God destroyed the earth and all life upon it. In this first creation, there were no Noahs to stand in the gap. God, then, recreates the Paradise and man. Only, in this creation Satan is already an inhabitant of the earth. He is the “serpent of old” who will tempt Eve.

The Gap Theory seems to answer many questions. It has been used as a defense for those seeking to answer the evolutionist challenge to the biblical account of creation. However, (you could see that coming couldn't you?) the text as we have it in Genesis chapter 1 is not friendly to this interpretation. Hebrew scholars are consistent in their position that the grammar of Genesis chapter 1 verses 1 and 2 reflects a unity of thought and is not intended, and does not comfortably allow for the imposition of a “Gap”.

In other words, if we accept the text of Scripture as presented and let it stand on its own, then what we see is an opening statement of fact followed with the particulars relative to that fact. If there were a gap between verses 1 and 2 then it would be introduced by this text. It is not, and therefore probably should not be forced upon the text from scripture texts that are from outside the text—even if these texts are in Scripture.

To begin, the word void can, and often does, simply mean, empty. God spoke the raw matter into existence and then over a six day period began to form it into the world which man would inhabit. God did a similar thing with the creation of Adam. God took the formless dust of the earth and “formed” a man, and then breathed His breath or Spirit into the lifeless form and the form became a living soul. A similar process is followed in the creation of the heavens and the earth. God spoke the raw material into existence, and then His Spirit moved upon this material to form it into what He intended it to be. God the Father spoke Eternal Logos, who was with God and was God (John 1:1-2), and the Holy Spirit moved upon the material to make the earth a habitable place for humanity.

So when did Satan fall? Note that, everything was good. From the creation of the seas to the creation of man, everything was good. This might imply that Satan had not yet fallen. This would mean that sometime after the creation of Adam and Eve Satan rebelled and fell with his angels.

Perhaps Satan was jealous or envious of the attention that God paid to man. Perhaps Satan wanted to bear the image and likeness of man in the same manner that man does. Whatever the reason, Satan chose to rebel and introduced evil into an utterly holy environment. Given the holiness of God, Satan could not be permitted to remain in heaven so he was cast down to earth. But even this played into God’s purposes. God does not tempt man (James 1:13-14). However, God does allow the faith and love of man to be tested (Gen. 22) in order to perfect and distill them (Job 23:10; 1 Pet. 4:11). Satan serves this purpose. That is, Satan serves the purpose of God in providing man with the test of faith and obedience. Satan cannot rob man of his free will, not even

God does that, but Satan offers rebellion and disobedience to gain pleasure in sin for the moment and eternal separation from God, while God offers eternal life and relationship with Him. This is the choice, life and death, blessing and cursing. But it is man's choice to make.

When God placed the perfect couple in the perfect place, He gave them one stipulation; they were not to eat the fruit of one tree. They could eat the fruit from every other tree in the garden, they could eat the herbs of the field, the vegetables and so on, but they were not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

We do not know how long Adam and Eve were in the garden together, walking with God in the cool of the day, before Satan fell and inhabited the body of the serpent. They were created to live forever, so time, up the day of the fall, may have been a relatively insignificant concept. But at some point during their lives in Paradise, Satan fell and came to earth. Given that Satan seems to be the one who introduced evil, his fall may have been before the creation of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The tree was the test of Adam and Eve's love and obedience. God tested them, but Satan tempted them, there is a difference. A test of faith may be a situation where you are out of food and you have to trust God for your daily bread. That is a test. But Satan may tempt you to steal food from your neighbor's garden. God would not tempt you to do something that is unrighteous, so you can be sure that this originates with Satan and is to be declined.

One day Adam and Eve were in the vicinity of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and Satan seized upon the

opportunity to tempt them. Satan is an opportunist. We may think that we will not watch ungodly television on the cable channel, but one night up late flipping through the channels we may happen upon something that we ought not to watch. We did not intend to watch it, we did not plan to watch it, but Satan seizes the opportunity to tempt us to linger a little longer than we should and to allow those images and words to enter our mind and heart.

We must not give the enemy any opportunities that we do not have to. The Apostle Paul says, "Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:26). Satan will find the opportunities to tempt us, but we do not have to provide him with opportunities through a lack of wisdom.

Adam and Eve were near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and Satan took the opportunity to tempt them. He began with Eve.

Look at Genesis chapter 3:

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

Notice that this temptation begins with a question. God had been very clear in His instructions. God is not ambiguous or ambivalent in His commands. He said they could eat from any tree with one exception, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Satan begins this process by getting Eve to enter into a dialogue with him, and then by trying to get her to question God's

Word. He asks, “Did God say that you could not eat of any of the trees in the garden?”

Satan, of course, knew that this is not what God said. It is almost the opposite of what God said. God said they could eat of all the trees of the garden, with that one exception. But the question, when engaged, leads one to ask, Why not that tree?

In this spiritual warfare Satan will always be trying to get us to question the commands of the Lord. But the commands of the Lord are not open to private interpretation or to a pick and choose mindset. God says, “This is the way, walk in it” (Isa. 30:21).

2The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die."

Eve responds to the question. Satan seized the opportunity and now Eve has engaged in the conversation. She attempts to respond by recalling the command of God, but she adds to God’s Word. He simply said, “Don’t eat,” but she adds, “do not touch”.

The Pharisees were guilty of adding to the Word of God, as were the Judaizers who tried to add to the simplicity of the gospel, cultural requirements for salvation. And to be honest, there are churches today who do the same thing. Under the guise of sanctification there have been those who have added cultural and traditional elements that they equate with holiness. Adding to God’s Word does not make one holy; it makes him or her a hypocrite. That’s what God called the Pharisees for adding

weights and burdens to the Law that they themselves could not keep (Matt. 23:2-7).

4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

Here is the first blatant lie found in Scripture. Satan said, "You surely will not die!" No wonder Jesus said of Satan that he is the father of lies; he brought the lie into existence. If you are hearing something, either from the lips of a man or woman, or from within your own mind, that contradicts the Word of God, or your conscience (Rom. 2:15), then it may well be that what you're hearing is from Satan.

God told Adam and Eve that they would die, and there was, in fact, a spiritual death that immediately followed their disobedience. Paul said we were all dead in trespasses and sins before experiencing salvation. This state of spiritual deadness is the result of the sin of Adam. Furthermore, the process of biological aging began to take place and physical death was now a part of the human condition because of sin.

Satan tries to convince us that we can sin with impunity, that is, without any repercussion or price to pay. But this simply is not true. For every sin we commit, every trespass or iniquity, there will be a price to pay.

5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The claim of Satan is that God is just trying to hold back something good from them. That is the allure of sin, namely, that there is something that we want and would make us feel good for a

while, if only God wouldn't deny it to us. That is the lie. The truth is that anything God commands us to avoid is for our welfare and for our good.

Satan tells Eve that if she and Adam partake of the fruit that they will be like God. This is a frequent theme in Scripture. The people of who built the tower of Babel said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens" (Gen.11:4). Also, the spirit of Satan was at work in the king of Tyre who said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; . . . I will be like the most High." And there is Satan himself who tried to get Jesus to bow down and worship him (Matt. 4:9; Luke 4:7).

6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Notice the progression of sin. First she looked at it, and it appealed to her sight. Next she desired it. Finally, she took it and ate. But there was one more thing she did, she passed it on. Sin is like a virus that gets passed on. We see generational sins where the children emulate their sinful parents and they perpetuate the sin of alcoholism, or abuse, or incest, and one generation passes it to the next until someone steps up and says, "The buck stops here!"

When we study the progression of sin, from the temptation, to the lust, to the act, to the passing on, we see that the Apostle John may well have had this very text of Scripture in mind when he said:

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father,

but is of the world.

17And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (1 John 2:16-17, KJV)

When we lay John's statement over the account of Eve, we see that she followed this very pattern:

*First*, she "saw that the tree was good for food," [the lust of the flesh].

*Second*, "it was a delight to the eyes," [the lust of the eyes].

*And last*, "that the tree was desirable to make one wise" [the pride of life].

We need to be aware of Satan's devices in this spiritual warfare. John warns us that anything that follows this pattern is not of God, but of the world. Furthermore, the world is passing away, it is decaying around us, and this very decay was introduced by the sin disobedience. John, however, provides this promise, "But he that does the will of God abideth forever." The sin of disobedience brings death, while obedience to the will of God brings life.

Eve passed on the forbidden fruit to Adam who was with her. The indication is that Adam gave tacit approval to what Eve was doing. Notice the breakdown of Divine order. Adam and Eve, as humans created in the image and likeness of God, were to have dominion over the earth, over the vegetation and over the animals. But instead of taking dominion, Eve allowed herself to be dominated and that was her downfall. Then Adam was called to

have a role of leadership within their relationship, and he failed and fell.

Adam should have stood between Eve and the serpent. He should have stopped Eve from conversing with a creature who would dare challenge the Word of God, but he didn't. Instead, Adam stood by silently watching and perhaps waiting to see what would happen to Eve. But then when she took of the fruit and did not drop dead, he may have felt challenged to eat it too lest Eve become greater than him.

This is always a temptation, to go along with the crowd lest we be left behind, or be seen as less advanced or sophisticated than the rest. We allow peer pressure to push us into something that we know is wrong.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. NASU

Sure enough, when they partook of the fruit they did have their eyes opened. They weren't any wiser, and they certainly were not like God. Instead, all they say was their own shame. Satan had lied and now all they could try to do was to hide their shame with the works of their own hands, but it was not sufficient. Ultimately, an innocent animal had to die, innocent blood shed so that their nakedness and shame could be covered.

### **Life Lessons for Spiritual Warfare**

We need to learn some things from this story.

1. We need to know and obey God's Word. In the Hebrew, the same word translated "hear" is the same word for "obey". We must both hear and obey God's commands. In the Great Commission Jesus told His disciples:

19Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matt. 28:19-20, NKJV)

2. Anytime someone, anyone, teaches or tells us to do, say or be anything that is inconsistent with the Word of God then we need to question that teaching. We need first, to listen to our conscience, and second, to compare all things with the Word. The Word is our Cannon, and that word cannon means, "measuring rod, or standard."
3. We should know the Word of God; it is the sword of the Spirit. It does us no good to add to or take from the Word; it can stand on its own. All we need to do is commit it to our heart and let the Word be our guide.
4. If we see someone being drawn into disobedience and we have any influence in their life, we need to care enough to step in and exhort them to stick with the Word.
5. We cannot let peer pressure or group behavior push us into doing anything that is contrary to God's Will or Word. We should be influencing them to do what is right, and not the other way around.

6. We should not provide opportunities for Satan to tempt us. There will be enough opportunities that we encounter in the normal course of life. We do not need to give Satan any freebies. You know where you are most easily tempted. You know the situation and circumstances where these temptations are most likely to present themselves. Therefore we wise, stay a step ahead of Satan, for we are not ignorant of His devices. We must not give place to the devil.
7. We must be constantly aware of the areas of desire in our own life and avoid and resist allowing the lust of the flesh to rise up and get a grip on our soul, heart or mind.
8. We must guard our eyes and turn away from anything that would draw us into a sinful situation. Job said, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1, KJV). Remember what happened to King David with just one look at Bathsheba?
9. We must be aware of the power of pride. Pride will drive us to do things and say things, and be something that will destroy us. Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18, NKJV).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WARFARE WITH THE FLESH: GENESIS 4:1-15

It is true that we will face the influence of demonic activity just about everywhere we turn. The enemy will always be hanging around looking for and seizing every opportunity to tempt us and to whisper his lies into our ears. However, it should be noted that some of the spiritual battles that we encounter originate within our own spirit and mind.

We know that when a person is born again, “. . . he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17, NKJV). Yet, we also know that that old nature constantly tries to resurrect. Paul said:

26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Cor 9:26-27, NIV)

As believers we must war against the power of the flesh that often yearns to pursue the pleasures of sin for a season. We must discipline our own lives, our own desires and keep ourselves in submission to the Word and the Will of God. Because as sure as we fail to bring discipline into our lives the enemy will provide the opportunity for the flesh to act upon those desires.

Adam and Eve disobeyed the Lord and their sin resulted in judgment and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. But God already had a plan in place to bring humanity back into relationship with Himself. Jesus was and is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth (Rev. 13:8). His death upon the cross would not occur until thousands of years later, yet God walks through time like we walk from one room to the next (see 2 Pet. 3:8). The power of the cross was already at work and was seen in the types and shadows of the Old Testament.

When God killed innocent animals, the first blood shed upon earth, it spoke of the sacrifice of Christ in His blood covering our sin and His righteousness covering our shame. Further, the promise that the seed of woman would crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15) is the first evangelistic message and promise of the victory of Christ upon the cross.

God knows the end from the beginning because He's been there and done that. The history of humanity is not that of God pushing man toward the cross, but a beckoning to, a call, to come and take of the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

The sacrificial system of the Old Covenant would have not power at all were it not for the cross. Other religions practiced animal sacrifice and some even practiced human sacrifice. The thing that separated the Jewish sacrificial system from all the others was the power of the cross flowing back through time and proleptically filling every sacrifice offered by faith with the efficacy of the cross as an anticipation of the cross. Once the cross became an established fact in the history of humanity the old sacrificial system was no longer needed. The power of the cross

becomes the point of separation between the Old and New Covenants.

The Old Testament sacrificial system was codified under the Mosaic Law, yet from the time of the animals killed to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve a pattern was established. There would be a system of sacrifice which represented various things, including gratitude, contrition, obedience, and atonement. There were various types of sacrifices, including the blood sacrifice of various animals, grain offerings, and even drink offerings.

But human sacrifice was forbidden. This was due to the fact that every human has sinned and is therefore worthy of death. As such, no man was worthy to die for others because every man would have to die. It would take someone born without sin, perfect, and spotless. This, of course, was who Jesus was. He alone was the perfect sacrifice and to sacrifice any other human is an affront to God and demeans the sacrifice of God's own Son.

Under the economy of God every man was counted as guilty with Adam so that every man could, by faith, be accounted as forgiven in Christ. If this had not been the case, then Christ would have to die over and over for every sinner, and for every sin. So all have sinned in Adam (1 Cor. 15:22), so that all can be reconciled in Christ.

### **EVERY LIFE IS A GIFT FROM GOD**

4:1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." 2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Adam “knew Eve” (a euphemism for having sexual relations) and they had a son whom they named “Cain.” She acknowledged that this child was a gift from God. Next, she bore a second son, Abel. As these two boys grew up, they chose to different, but equally needed occupations—husbandry and horticulture. One was a rancher and the other was a gardener. Abel kept sheep while Cain tilled the ground.

There is nothing to suggest that one occupation was held in any higher honor than the other. The word translated “but” can also be translated simply as, “and”—which is how the NIV and RSV translate this verse. “Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a tiller of the ground” (RSV).

### **BRINGING AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE**

3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.  
4Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5but He did not respect Cain and his offering.

These verses have resulted in many speculations about why God honored one sacrifice and not the other. Some say that it is because Able offered a blood sacrifice and Cain did not. However, as we’ve already noted, there were other types of offerings that were acceptable to God, including grain and drink offerings. So if the issue isn’t blood, what was the issue?

The Writer of Hebrews tells us that “faith” made the difference:

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh (Heb 11:4, KJV).

Abel came by faith to honor God and to give his best. Cain just came and offered out of mere duty. The words from Genesis point this out. Notice that Abel “brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat.” Apparently, Abel chose the best to bring to God, and his faith made this offering acceptable. His faith, in essence, was able to transcend time and bring into his own existential moment, the benefits of the cross.

Cain, on the other hand, is not depicted as bring his best. It says, “Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.” The words, “an offering” are telling. This wasn’t the “first fruits,” this wasn’t something carefully chosen and it wasn’t given in faith. It was just a ritual to be carried out.

We need to consider this when it comes to our service in the Kingdom of God. We can either give our best, and give it in faith, or we can just go through the motions. However, don’t be surprised or angry when those who are giving their best by faith are being blessed and those who are simply going through the routine are not.

The Bible says God is “no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34), however, it does not say that God does not have the right or the will to recognize when something is done by faith with a pure motive, and something else is done without faith and with mixed motives. Furthermore, the word translated “respected” is from a Hebrew word, which simply means that God accepted one sacrifice

and rejected the other. It literally means that God chose not to look favorably upon Cain's sacrifice.

How Cain recognized that his sacrifice was not accepted is not described. It may be that fire consumed Abel's sacrifice not Cain's, but this is just speculation. Whatever the manner of acceptance was, it was clear to Cain that his was rejected and Abel's was accepted.

The fact is that there will be times when it seems that others are getting blessed and are getting prayers answered when it appears to us that we are not. There will be times when others get the promotion that we wanted, when they get the recognition that we desired. How do we handle this? For some, it is difficult to rejoice with them that rejoice (Rom. 12:15). For some, a battle begins within their own heart and mind. It is not necessarily that Satan placed a temptation before them, but that they have to deal with the old nature, the flesh that tries to rise up and rob us of our victory. And be assured, that Satan will seize upon the flesh to prod us on and to drive us down a road to our own destruction. This is war!

### **THE BATTLE BEGINS**

5b And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

Notice how Cain responded, "his countenance fell." This literally means, "His face fell." In other words, he began to pout,

his bottom lip was sticking out, his smile was gone, and his shoulders were drooping.

The Lord could tell by looking at the appearance of Cain, that he was angry. He asked Cain why he was angry, and why his countenance had fallen, but God already knew the reason. So God does not wait for Cain's answer, but proceeds to provide a way to become victorious in this inner struggle.

Cain hadn't done anything yet. He was just angry. Let's face it, sometime we get angry about situations. But it is possible to be angry, and yet refrain from sin. Paul writes, in Ephesians 4:26, "Be angry and sin not."

God told Cain, "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" This is a rhetorical question that implies an answer. God is saying, "If you do well, if you do what is right, you will be accepted also."

What did Cain have to do in order to do well? He had to go beyond the ritual, he had to give his best, and he had to give in faith. This is a good prescription for us all. If we do well, we too will be accepted. If we go beyond ritual and seek relationship with God, if we give the very best that we can, and if we give it by faith, our gifts will be accepted and we will be blessed.

We cannot buy our blessings, but we can certainly hinder them from reaching us because we are in the wrong place spiritually. In other words, it is not that God didn't send blessings; we were just looking in the wrong mailbox.

God continues to talk to Cain. God knew what was going on in Cain's heart. God knows that struggles we are dealing with, the jealousy and the anger. We gain nothing from denying them,

but we have everything to gain by confessing them and seeking God's guidance in dealing with them. We cannot simply sweep these feelings, these internal conflicts, under the rug of denial. God already knows, so it may be healing to simply say, "God I am jealous, and I know that this is wrong, so help me to be glad for others when they are blessed." Your blessing may be released at the moment when you are able to celebrate the blessings in other people's lives.

God counsels Cain further: "And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." God sees that Cain is angry and that anger is about to manifest in an act of sin. Sin is personified as a lion waiting to pounce upon Cain and to control his actions.

This is the battle. Do I give in to my anger? Do I give in to jealousy and allow it to get its claws into my mind and spirit, or do I "beat my body and keep it under"? Sure this is difficult; this is war. And be aware of the fact that while Satan cannot make you do anything; he is always waiting to leap into action and give you the opportunity to turn your anger into sin.

You may get angry when someone cuts you off in traffic—I know I do. But you do not have to respond in kind, you do not have to utter obscenities, you do not have to wave at that person with only one finger, and you do not have to allow your anger give place to the enemy and turn to sin. You can choose to do well. You can choose to "bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you" (Luke 6:28, KJV). We do not have to let sin have rule over us. We do not have to lose control and fly into a rage that leads us away from our blessing, when God is telling us how to enter into our blessing and into acceptability with Him.

## THE BATTLE LOST

8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Cain apparently disregarded the word of God. He opened the door for the entrance of sin into his life. He talked with Abel in the field; perhaps he lured Abel there for the purpose of killing Abel and then concealed the deed by burying his brother in the very field that he had tilled. We really don't know what the circumstances of Cain meeting Abel in the field were, but based upon the anger and the words of God, it would seem that there was a measure of premeditation on Cain's part.

Cain was jealous of Abel, though the reason for Cain's rejection was his own fault. Then Cain was angry, and Cain allowed that anger to give place to sin, perhaps hatred followed, and from that murder.

When we lose the battle in our own heart and mind, when we allow anger to turn to hatred then the only thing standing between murder and us is opportunity. The opportunity may never come, but hatred itself is a sin (1 John 2:9, 11; 3:15; 4:20).

Contrary to what we may sometimes feel, the truth is that we do not have to be hapless victims to our emotions. We can choose the right over the wrong. We can choose to bless rather than curse, love rather than hate, and obey rather than disobey. We can win this war with the flesh when we lean upon the power of the Holy Spirit working within us. John tells us in his Epistle that; "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." We are not in this battle alone. Just like Cain had God advising him and

guiding him, God will speak the right way into our heart. We can choose to follow the will and Word of God rather than give in to our emotions and anger.

### **THE RESULTS OF THE LOST BATTLE**

9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" 10 And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. 11 So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."

God knew what had happened, but He questions Cain anyhow. "Where is Abel your brother?" God often does this when we have given in to our anger and done something wrong. He gives us the opportunity to come clean and to seek forgiveness. The question may sound different to us. The question God asks may be, "Why did you respond that way? Why did you talk bad about the person who got that promotion?" He may ask, "Is that really how much income you had to pay taxes on?" Or the question may be, "Do you love me more than these things?"

We need to remember that when God asks us a question, He already knows the answer. The question is an opportunity to seek forgiveness and mercy rather than wrath and justice. His Word "is a discerner the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). So when He asks the questions, simply tell the truth and the truth will set you free.

Cain answers with a lie, “I don’t know where Abel is.” Sometimes in a war there will be one battle upon which other battles will either be won or lost. When the dominoes start falling it is often hard to stop the descent. Cain did not come to God by faith, Cain did not offer his best, and Cain was angry when his brother, who did all these things, was blessed. Cain’s anger gave place to sin, and sin resulted in the death of his brother. Now Cain stands and lies to God.

Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), so now Cain is not even going through the motions of serving God, now Cain is revealing who his spiritual father is. The old saying holds true:

Sin will take you farther than you intended to go,  
It will keep you longer than you intended to stay,  
And it will cost you more than you intended to pay.

Cain asks, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Cain intended this to be a rhetorical question, he was implying that he was not his brother’s keeper, but, in fact, we have been called to love and to care for our brother. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-36) powerfully illustrates the necessity to love our neighbor.

God responds by letting Cain know that He knows what has happened, “The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.” Contrary to what I’ve heard some preach, this is not intended to a literal statement. Blood does not have a literal voice. What it does mean is that God is painfully aware of Abel’s death and his death calls for justice. Furthermore, as the Writer of Hebrew’s notes, the death of Abel continues to speak to us, that is, to provide a powerful message about the necessity of faith in our relationship with God.

God said that Abel's blood calls for justice, so there will be justice. God said:

“So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.”

Contrary to what some may believe, we cannot sin with impunity. In other words, there are consequences to our actions. When we fail to win victory over our own flesh—that is, any desire or act of the will that is contrary to the will of God—then we bring upon ourselves the consequences of that failure.

Cain buried his brother in the ground, so now the ground would resist the efforts of Cain to bring forth its harvest. As a man sows, so shall he also reap (Gal. 6:7). Cain had the opportunity reap a blessing by listening to the counsel of the Lord, but he chose instead to sow a curse and reap judgment. He could have simply come back with his best and offered it to the Lord, and he could have been acceptable to the Lord. Instead, he lost the battle in his own heart and chose to ignore the counsel of the Lord.

The earth would resist Cain's efforts bring forth a harvest, and Cain would become a fugitive and a vagabond, which Cain understood to mean that others would be out to kill him. Again, this is the seed Cain had sown in his field, and it was coming time to reap.

No battle is without consequence. Every time we have a battle between our spirit and our flesh, every time our emotions are trying to take us down a trail that leads us away from God and

away from His will, we need to listen to the counsel of the Lord, walk in His ways and do those things that righteous in the sight of the Lord.

### **THE COMPLAINT OF THE CONVICTED**

13 And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! 14 Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me."

Cain knows that he's been found out. However, he complains that the punishment is too much for him to bear. Perhaps he should have considered that before he killed his brother. God was trying to get his attention, but Cain would not listen.

Whenever we are faced with a circumstance that causes us to grow angry—whether it is a righteous indignation or anger born or of our emotions—God's Word is always there to give us guidance as to the right course of action. And frankly, what God is telling us may run contrary to the flesh, and that is why we must walk in by faith, and walk in the spirit that we do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). For example, Jesus says:

27"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. 29To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. 30Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. 31And

just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. 32But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. 35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. 36Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. (Luke 6:27-36, NKJV)

Still, we must be willing to hear and obey the Word of God. If we are willing to trust and obey the Lord, even when everything within us is crying out for vengeance, then we will become a more honest reflection of Christ Himself, and we will be laying up treasure in heaven. Cain did not listen to the Lord, and now he did not like what his actions had led to.

Cain recognizes two consequences, first that his sin had resulted in separation from the Lord. He said, "I shall be hidden from Your face."

Sin always brings about a separation between God and us. Sin destroys relationship, and a broken relationship with God results in a chain of defeats that lead us farther and farther from home. This is the lesson of the Prodigal Son. Isaiah said:

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened,  
That it cannot save;  
Nor His ear heavy,

That it cannot hear.  
2But your iniquities have separated you from your God;  
And your sins have hidden His face from you,  
So that He will not hear.  
3For your hands are defiled with blood,  
And your fingers with iniquity;  
Your lips have spoken lies,  
Your tongue has muttered perversity. (Isa 59:1-3, NKJV)

Through the prophet Jeremiah God said:

25Your iniquities have turned these things away,  
And your sins have withheld good from you.  
26'For among My people are found wicked men;  
They lie in wait as one who sets snares;  
They set a trap;  
They catch men. (Jer 5:25-26, NKJV)

Cain may have ignored the counsel of the Lord, and may have killed his brother, but he could not bear the thought of losing all contact with the Lord. His heart was broken by the prospect that God would no longer even look upon him in his sin.

The second consequence was that his relationship with other humans was broken. Now everyone who findshim will try to kill him. At this point the law concerning murder had not yet been given. Namely that, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen 9:6, KJV). So for other's to kill Cain, at this point in God's economy, would have been as wrong as it was for Cain to kill Abel. Anyone killing Cain would be taking an authority that was not his or hers to take.

## MERCY

15And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

The Lord showed mercy upon Cain provided protection for Cain preventing anyone from trying to kill him. To further protect Cain, God "set a mark on Cain." We are not told what this "mark" was. The word "mark" in the Hebrew simply means, "a sign" and is used in a variety of ways to indicate that something or someone is being pointed out or identified. It can be used of a banner. Perhaps the "mark" was later used on any banners for crests used by Cain to identify his camp or tent.

The old racist idea that the mark was that Cain became the first black man is absurd. It is more likely that Adam and his children were dark skinned. The very word Adam means, "red." As such, the skin of the first humans were probably somewhere between the light white skin of the Scandinavians and the dark black of Africans. Further, the mark itself was not a part of the curse, but an act of mercy on the part of God to provide protection for Cain.

The war that most of us are most familiar with is not war with Islam, or war with witchcraft, or with a Satanist somewhere. The war most of us are most intimately aware of is the war with the flesh. By flesh we are not talking about the skin and blood, but about desires and appetites that are associated with our life before we came to Christ. It is referred to as the "old man," the "old nature," that is to be brought into subjection to the Word and will of God and His Word.

No one is immune to this type of spiritual warfare. Cain succumbed and it changed his life for the worse. However, Cain's example shows us that God will speak to us, and provide guidance, and if we choose to hear and obey, God will guide us to victory and blessing. If we ignore the voice of the Lord, and allow sin to progress, we will find the fruit of our decisions coming to harvest for years to come. We can win this battle if we are willing to follow the Lord as the Captain of our Salvation.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**STANDING STRONG IN MORAL DECLINE:**  
**GENESIS 6**

We will not delve into the controversy concerning the identity of the “sons of God” in verses 1-5. I have studied and written on this subject and I am convinced that a dogmatic position on whether or not these “sons of God” were angels, royalty, or the offspring of Seth, is and will remain an open question. Suffice it to say that the actions of these men and women reflected extreme moral decay and decadence that lead steadily downward to the state of affairs described in verse 5, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Let’s break that down a little. The effects of sin created a downward spiral. Humanity was being drawn downward and Satan was having a field day. Humanity had given itself over to the wickedness and evil of his or her heart and it did so on a continual basis.

**HUMANITY’S SORRY SITUATION**

Notice verse 5 says, “Then the LORD saw.” In other words the events of verses 1 through 4 were bad, but then it gets worse. The wickedness of man upon the earth was great, that is, extreme. Further, it wasn’t just that men and woman occasionally entertained evil in their heart, but that every thought, every

imagination was only on evil on a continual basis. They were consumed with evil and as such were fully participating in Satan's kingdom.

It is important to consider the situation in Noah's day because Jesus tells us:

26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:26-27, NKJV)

In other words, when the world begins to reflect the moral conditions that were present in the days of Noah (and of Lot in Sodom, verse 28), then we can begin to anticipate the return of Jesus. When we live in a time where it looks like Satan is having his way humanity, God will step up and bring it to an end.

Verse 6 of says, "And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." Man had so completely abandoned God and righteousness until even God was grieved by what He saw. He was sorry that He had created humanity. This is a dangerous place to be, because God has the power to build up and to tear down. He has the power to call into existence and the power to call out of existence. So when God looks at the world and sees no redeeming quality, that's trouble.

In verse 7 the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." God made a decision. He decided that evil had gone as far as He

was going to let it go. He decided that regardless of the apparent victory that Satan had won, God was still God and God can pull the rug out from under Satan in a heartbeat. God simply said, "I'm going to put an end to the entire created order."

Given the words of Jesus in Luke's Gospel, we do well to consider the state of the world today. It seems that there are two extremes. In the Western, so called, Christian world, there is moral decay and people are forsaking every vestige of Christian ethics from society. In the place of God's moral absolutes we are embracing situational ethics and a law of relativity with respect to morality. In other words, there is no longer anything that is absolutely right or wrong, but each person must decide this for him or herself. This is the confusion of the Postmodern era.

There are still some who are holding the line, and who continue to stand for godliness and righteousness as defined by God's revelation through Scripture. But these people and churches are becoming little more than a lone piccolo in an orchestra of tubas.

At the other extreme, there is a world of radical religions that reject the Bible as God's revelation in favor of some alternate sacred scripture. The Muslims, at least reject the moral decay of the West, but they do so at the expense of any rational or humane reflection human interaction.

The question, for those of us in the West, then, is how do we continue to stand for godliness in world that has embraced ungodliness? How do we win spiritual battles in a world that looks as though the enemy has already won the war?

## **NOAH'S NOBLE EXAMPLE**

In verse eight we find the first word of hope. "But Noah." The world was going to hell in a hand basket, "But Noah." What was it about Noah that was different? The verse says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." God saw something in the life of Noah that caused God to extend grace rather than judgment on this man and his family. He is a noble example of how we can and should live in a world where it looks as though Satan has won the war. And this is important, but this is what Jesus said the world will look like again just before He raptures His Church.

In verse 9 we are introduced to the man Noah and his three sons. It says of Noah, "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God."

Let's break that description of Noah down and use it as our example.

First, "Noah was a just man." He lived in a world of injustices, but Noah remained just. That word "just" is from a Hebrew word that means, "just, clean, right." In an unclean world, Noah remained pure.

We cannot allow the immorality of the world defile our garments. And we must be aware of the channels through which Satan will introduce this defilement to our minds and hearts. I think it is fairly obvious that Satan has been very effective in using the mass media, the music, the movies, the books and the television to gain access to our homes, hearts and minds. Noah refused to allow the world to stain his life, mind, thought or actions and we must be vigilant in our refusal to allow the world to dictate our moral code.

Second, Noah is described as “perfect in his generations.” The word “perfect” means figuratively and literally to be “entire, or whole.” It carries the idea of integrity. Noah maintained his integrity in a world that could care less about truth or integrity. Noah was entire, he was not one person in one situation and another person in another setting. He was who he was, and who he was, was righteous. Noah was a man of integrity.

Integrity has been defined as doing what is right even when no one is watching you. He was a man of character and courage his entire life.

Last, it is said that “Noah walked with God.” That is a powerful statement that begs further inquiry. What does it mean, that he “walked with God”? Is this to be taken literally, as when God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day? Or does it mean that Noah walked in the ways of the Lord his entire life? I suspect the latter. And for those who say that living for God is too difficult in the days in which we live, I would say that if Noah could do it, then we are all without excuse.

How do we live a victorious life in a world where sin and Satan appear to be winning the war? We do what Noah did. We maintain moral purity, we maintain our integrity, and we walk with God continually. We refuse to follow the crowd; we refuse to allow opinion polls to dictate to us our moral codes. We limit the influence we allow the media to have upon us or our children. We decide that God’s ways are the best ways, and then we walk in God’s ways.

Noah did these things and as a result he saved his life, the life of his wife, his three sons and their three wives. The next generation depends upon someone in this generation being a modern day Noah,

being just, entire, and walking with God. One man saved the human race because he refused to bow to the gods of the world. God told Ezekiel, “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none” (Ezek 22:30, KJV).

### **GOD’S WARNING**

God, seeing that the earth itself had been corrupted by humanity, and that violence filled the earth, said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (v. 13).

Jesus told the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos that there will come a time when the condition of earth becomes so corrupt that He will again destroy the earth. Satan cannot, and will not win the final victory. The Apostle Peter tells us that the earth will not be destroyed with water, but with a fervent heat that will melt the heavens and the earth, thus giving way to the new heaven and the new earth (2 Pet. 3:10-12).

God warns Noah of the coming judgment, and then God gives Noah instructions for the construction of a ship for Noah and his family, and representatives of all the animal life upon the earth. The point is that before it began to rain, God had already sealed Noah in the ark and protected them through duration of the storm and the ensuing flood.

Two points can be made about the ark. First, the ark shows us that God can both judge the unjust and preserve the just at the same time. I believe that the ark is a fitting example of the rapture of the Church just prior to the beginning of the great tribulation period.

Second, I believe that it also illustrates that if we will walk with God and not with the world, God will enable us to weather the storms, the trials and tribulations that come and will come upon the righteous in a depraved world. It is very likely that the world will grow increasingly hostile to the Church. It may embrace those who call themselves Christians, but who are willing to compromise with the world for the sake of acceptability. But for the Church who refuses to bow or bend to the world's attempt to recast Christianity in its own pluralistic image, there will be a price to pay. But God can preserve His own if they will not give in to Satanic pressure to conform to the world.

Finally, it says of Noah that he did, "according to all that God commanded him." This is the key to a victorious life in a defeated world—continue to do all that God's Word commands. Continue to love God, and one another. Continue to stand for holiness, for the will of the Lord, and for the Word of the Lord. Continue to be just, perfect, or wholly devoted to God all the days of your life, and continue to walk with God even if no one else will walk with you. You may not only be saving your own life from the snares of the enemy, but the lives of your children and your children's children. Noah shows us that spiritual victory is possible, even in our day.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DRAFTED INTO THE WAR: EXODUS 3-7**

In the confrontation between Moses and Aaron we see a typology. That is, they depict in vivid form the spiritual warfare that we are engaged in. The use of this as typology is found throughout the New Testament and writers such as Paul, Peter, the Writer of Hebrews, and others understood that the account of Israel coming out of Egypt was both an historical fact and a message of deliverance and salvation through Christ.

In this typology Israel stands for the sinner who is being held captive by sin and Satan. Moses stands as a type of Christ, and Aaron as a type of believer. In fact, in Exodus 7:1 God tells Moses that he would be symbolic of God and Aaron a type of prophet in that Aaron would speak for Moses.

The encounter between Pharaoh and Moses is also a very powerful picture of the spiritual warfare that each believer is engaged in with Satan and his minions. Satan intends to keep everyone captive. He intends to keep us captive to sinful habits, or desires, captive to false teaching or doctrines. We live in a world that is, by and large, being held in spiritual captivity and Satan intends to keep them in captivity, but God has called the church to be His Moseses and Aarons. Our role is to confront Pharaoh with the message, "Let my people go."

This warfare requires boldness and the willingness to confront the enemy in the power and the might of the Lord. Moses was sent by God and with God's authority backing him up.

### **GOD DRAFTED MOSES INTO THIS WAR**

Moses had retreated from the battle; he had gone AWOL from the spiritual warfare that was being waged between the forces of Satan that were trying to destroy Israel, and the people of God. But God called to Moses from a burning bush and drafted him back into the battle.

God that He was sending Moses to Pharaoh to bring God's people out of Egypt. Moses had already been rejected by the Jews and was on the run for his life from the Egyptians, but God said to go back and get busy.

Sometimes we shy away from spiritual confrontations because we've experienced spiritual wounds in the past and we are hesitant to get involved again. I've known people who have been hurt in the church by church folks and they retreat to a safe corner, sing the songs, give in the offering and go home, but they never get involved in the ministries of the church because they don't want to get hurt again. But just like Moses, who had tried to help his own people, but who was rejected by them and hurt by them, we can only hide on the backside of the desert for so long. At some point God is going to call us out and draft us back into the battle.

Moses tried to make one excuse after the other about why he could not get involved in the spiritual battle that was looming. First Moses asked, "Who will I say sent me?" God said, "I Am who I Am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I Am' has sent me to you'" (3:14).

We are not in this spiritual war to represent ourselves, or our own agendas. We are in the Lord's Army. We are His workmen, His soldiers, and we have come by His authority. We need to remember that we cannot effectively engage the enemy in our own might or on our own authority. We cannot simply make our own plans and pursue our own desires independently of the Lord and expect to be successful. Our authority to command the enemy comes when we are speaking as God's ambassadors. When we are marching according to His battle plans, the victory is assured.

### **GOD EQUIPPED MOSES FOR THE WAR**

Second, Moses asked, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The Lord did not appear to you?'" What if we tell someone that we've heard from God and that He has directed us to engage in a ministry and they don't believe us? What if we engage in the spiritual battle and the enemy asks, "Who do you think you are?"

God asked Moses, "What is that in your hand?" Moses had nothing but a shepherd's staff. When God calls us to battle He will begin with where we are and He will use what we've got to do a lot. Sometimes we hesitate to engage the enemy because we look at what others have and we think we could never be as successful in ministry as them because they've got all that talent, and all we have is a stick.

God can use what we've got and do a lot if we will surrender it to him. The question for Moses was not, "What does Pharaoh have?" The question was, "What do you have?" The question isn't how many resources does the enemy have at his disposal, but what do you have that you can give to God?

The Lord told Moses to throw the stick down on the ground. When he did, the stick became a serpent. When he picked it back up, it became a stick again. This wasn't intended to intimidate the Pharaoh, but was to be a sign to the Israelites that Moses had indeed been with the Lord.

Next, God told Moses to put His hand in his cloak and then take it out again. When he did, his hand became leprous, like snow. When he put it back into his cloak and then drew it out the second time it was restored.

This was, again, a sign for the Israelites to know that God had sent Moses. But there is a powerful symbol in this second sign. God is able to use our wounds, our hurts, and our sickness as a sign of His presence with us.

Both the disease and the restoration were signs of God's power. I think that sometimes we miss some potentially powerful demonstrations of God's power because we are unable to understand what God is trying to do through us. We think that because we are sick or because we are afflicted that we must not be in God's will, or that we have gotten involved in the wrong ministry. But it may well be that this sickness is not unto death, but that the glory of God may be manifested in us, and that through this we receive a powerful testimony by which we overcome the enemy.

God said, if they don't believe that I sent you, perhaps some will believe when they see the first sign, others may not believe until they see the second sign. But if they still do not believe, then you "take some water from the Nile and pour it on dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground."

If we have heard and responded to the call of God, God will confirm His Word through signs and wonders. God is under no obligation to back up or substantiate our own little plans and agendas, but He has promised that His Word will not come back void. If we have heard call of the Captain of our Salvation, and we are marching to His cadence, then He will insure the victory. The problems we most often encounter, or the defeats that we experience are usually the result of marching to the beat of the wrong drummer.

### **GOD WAS READY TO WORK WITH MOSES' WEAKNESS**

God had addressed Moses' first two concerns, but then Moses says, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past, nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue" (4:10).

God simply asked, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (4:11,12).

It seems God had had enough excuses. God was saying, "Don't tell me what you can't do. I made you and I can use you if you will just go and do what I told you too."

But Moses persisted and had the audacity to say, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it" (v. 13).

I wonder how many people who are sitting silently on their pews on the backside of the desert could have done something great for God—if only. Moses, considered to be the greatest prophet in the history of Israel, did not want to respond to the draft. First he made excuses and then he simply said, "Send someone else."

I wonder how many ministries never get done because the people whom God is calling are responding, “Send someone else.” I wonder how many spiritual battles are lost because the man or the woman, who should have gone, wouldn’t go and were willing to simply surrender to the enemy?

By this time God was getting angry with Moses. God didn’t make a mistake in calling Moses, but Moses was making a mistake in failing to respond. Finally God said, “Fine, Moses, I’ll send your brother Aaron with you. He’s an eloquent speaker, so I’ll speak to you, you will speak to him, and he will speak to the people and to Pharaoh.

We should never believe that we can simply refuse the Lord’s draft call with impunity. With all that God is willing to do to confirm His Word and ministry in us, and with all the power that He is prepared to provide, we have no excuse not to do what He calls us to do. And He is justified in getting angry with us when we persistently refuse to go where He calls us, do what He commands us, or speak what He tells us.

God did provide a helper for Moses in Aaron, but God did not back down from the fact that He had chosen and was sending Moses. It may be that Moses was afraid that when He went back to Egypt he would be killed. There were those who were waiting to avenge the death of the Egyptian soldier that Moses had killed for beating an Israelite. But the Lord told Moses, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead” (4:19). God had prepared the way for Moses’ return.

## **INITIAL RESULTS DO NOT TELL THE WHOLE STORY**

Moses returned and found his brother Aaron. Aaron rounded up the people and Moses performed the miracles and the people believed. So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says, ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.’”

But Pharaoh rejected this word and instead of letting the Israelites go, increased their workload and forced them to make bricks without straw.

I can hear Moses telling Aaron, “Well, that didn’t go so well.” It must have looked to Moses and to Aaron that they had made a big mistake. This is something that I’ve seen happen many times in people’s ministries. They hear from the Lord, they step out in faith to obey the Lord, but then the initial result seems to indicate that something is wrong. They begin to question their calling and second guessing God. Often they simply take the initial results at face value as a sign of failure and they retreat.

Moses went back to the Lord and said, “O Lord, why have you brought this trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me?” (5:22) In other words, “Lord, I was happy in the desert doing my own thing, but now that I’ve done what you told me to do, things are worse, not better.”

The Lord responded, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country” (6:1).

God is telling Moses, “Hey, I have Pharaoh a chance to do this the easy way, but he has chosen the hard way. When I get done

with Pharaoh He will know that I have sent you, and the people will remember throughout the generations that I have brought you out with a mighty hand.”

Sometimes the initial results of our obedience and our willingness to engage the enemy in ministry may look like a failure, but if we are following God, God can turn it around for good and for His glory. The city zoning committee may say “No” to the churches request to build, but then when God gets done with them, the church will get an even better deal.

I have a friend who was called to minister in the subsidized housing in Lawrenceville, Georgia. When she first when there the director of this community told my friend that she could come and organize games and activities with the children on the playground, but she could not teach or preach or promote Christianity in any fashion. At first blush it would appear that Satan had taken the teeth out of her ministry and she might have questioned God, but instead she simply used what she had and began to work with the children. She did this faithfully for months.

One day the director called my friend to her office. She was visibly shaken as she talked to my friend. She said that she had had a dream that my friend was no longer going to come to the community to work with the kids and that result of that absence was terrible in the community. The director then virtually begged my friend to keep coming and gave her permission to set up a sidewalk Sunday school where she could teach Jesus all she wanted.

A short time later a panel truck was donated to my friend’s ministry and the money was provided to convert it into a ministry vehicle with a sound system, stage, puppets and the works.

The first round of Moses' interaction with Pharaoh was less than encouraging, but God wasn't finished. By the time God poured out the plagues and the first born of all those who did not have the blood of the lamb on the door posts was killed, the people were begging the Israelites to leave and they gave the Israelites their gold, jewel and good clothes on their way out of Egypt.

God is drafting people into a spiritual war. He knows who you are. He knows where you are. He knows what you've got in your hands. He knows your talents and He knows your weaknesses, and He still wants you. We cannot make excuses or pass the buck to someone else.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **LOSING A BATTLE, WINNING THE WAR: 2 SAMUEL 11-12, PSALM 51**

We are talking about spiritual warfare and if there is one thing that is obvious in any prolonged war, it is that sometimes the army that wins the war will lose a battle now and then. There's an old song that says, "We may lose a battle now and then, but we've already won the war." So I want to use the account of David's moral failure and his prayer of repentance as a backdrop to explore the subject of losing a battle, but not losing the war.

We can begin with a couple premises:

God is omnipotent (He has all power)  
Because He is all-powerful, He cannot lose a battle  
If we will follow Him completely, we will not lose either.

If we fail to follow Him completely we will lose a battle  
Because we are not all-powerful  
And the enemy is stronger than we are without God.

If we lose a spiritual battle, it is an indication that we have failed to fully follow God. David was a man after God's own heart. He was a man who conquered a giant when the rest of the Israelite army was hiding in the trenches. He was a man who as a youth had overcome the attack of both a lion and a bear. He was a man who

had successfully led armies into battle and won great victories. He was a man who had become king.

By his own testimony, the source of his success was his relationship with, and dependency upon God. While David walked with God he faced rejection by others, was attacked by the enemy, saw his best friend killed, and wandered as a man without a country, but in spiritual terms, David was not a defeated man, he was a victorious man. But later, after it seemed that the major battles had been won, and after the kingdom seemed secure, David lost a spiritual battle that affected him and his kingdom for the rest of his life and changed the history of Israel.

First I want to look at what led up to David's downfall, and then I want to explore how David was able to restore his relationship with God and maintain his reign upon the throne.

### **AT EASE IN ZION**

The writer of 2 Samuel 11:1 makes the point that this was time of the year when it was custom for kings to go to battle and to encourage and lead their troops. David had once been a great warrior, but now the major battles were over and only Ammonites remained as a threat. They had besieged Rabbah and David's captain Joab was at the front, Joab's servants, and the armies of Israel were at the front, "but David". Those would prove to be some tragic words. It was the time for the king to be at the front, the soldiers and warriors were there, the armies of Israel were there, "but David tarried still at Jerusalem."

Where was the warrior who once went down into the camp of the enemy and reclaimed his people and possessions? Where was the person who stood face to face with a giant and walked away with

the victory? Where was David? He was just hanging around in Jerusalem. He was back at the king's quarters enjoying success while the soldier fought at the front.

There is a lesson here. The lesson is that it is possible to become complacent and think that the war is over, when in reality all we've done is win a few battles. The soldiers were fighting a war, but the king was in his soft bed that night. He was at ease in Zion, he was complacent and satisfied with where he was, and this attitude brought about a disaster.

We may get the promotions, have kids that are doing well in school, have a good marriage and a fulfilling ministry in the church. We may feel like we've achieved all that we ever dreamed of or wanted. And at this moment, when we think we stand, we may be on the brink of a great fall. We can never become complacent. We must always remain diligent, prepared, engaged, and clothed in the spiritual armor.

The enemy knows that he cannot defeat us as long as we stand on the Rock with shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. He knows that greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world. So the enemy, being cunning and a student of human behavior, sometimes does not engage in a full frontal attack, but attempts to lull us into a state of complacency and apathy.

## **THE DESCENT INTO DEFEAT**

Now I want you to look at verses 2 through 4. Here we see a classic example of descent into spiritual defeat. Notice that no one came and forced David into sin. David's defeat came as a result of his own behavior. Millard Erickson once noted that while some define sin as missing the mark, as though we were trying to do right

and we just missed it. But Erickson said that in reality sin is aiming at the wrong mark and hitting it every time.

David was spiritually weakened by his complacency. When he was on the run from Saul, and was depending upon God for his day-to-day survival, David was close to God, David had to fervently trusted God. But with the promotion in hand, with the new castle built, with the battles seemingly won, David grew distant from God and weak in spirit.

With soldiers in the field, David was in his luxurious bed. As the evening was coming on, David got up from his bed and walked out to his roof. And looking out over the kingdom that lay in the foothills below the king's house David saw a woman washing herself on her housetop. Given that it was the evening, perhaps she thought it would be safe to do this. It may be that it was only dusk and the waning light was enough for David to see her, or perhaps she had a torch on the roof illuminating her rooftop. Whatever the source of illumination, David's heart was darkened.

It wasn't a sin for David to look out and innocently see this woman. He had no control over the fact that she had chosen to bath at that time in that location. At this point David was facing more than a bathing woman; he was facing a temptation. He could have looked away and gone back to bed. He could have sent word to the woman to let her know that she was exposed to the view of the castle and recommended that she find a more private place for bathing. He could have done any number of righteous things when faced with the temptation. He should have heeded the words of Job who said, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1, KJV).

Temptation is not a sin, and is not defeat. Jesus “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Channel surfing and briefly seeing or hearing something wrong is not a sin. But we have a choice to make. How fast or how slow do we move on? Do we go back and look again? Do we take note of that channel and time and revisit later? These things will determine whether we just get tempted, or whether we allow it to continue to descend into lust.

David saw her, he was tempted, and then he looked upon her. The writer says, “The woman was very beautiful to look upon.” It was beyond temptation now; it was lust.

Someone asked once what the difference is between temptation and lust. Temptation is merely the initial consideration, or the initial tug of the flesh upon our spirit. Lust, however, is the act of sin waiting for the opportunity. A temptation says, “I’ll bet I could carry that diamond ring home and no one would know.” Lust says, “If I ever get the opportunity, I’m going to put that ring in my pocket and take it home with me.”

David was weakened spiritually because of his complacency, then, when he was tempted he did not have the spiritual fortitude to turn away. He looked, he longed for her, and then he sent for her. There is no indication that she was forced to come to the king's house. Perhaps she was flattered that he would want to see her. Maybe she was lonely, with her husband off to war. But the king's messengers went down to bring her to David.

The words “and took her” do not imply force, only that they brought her back with them. In fact, the next phrase says, “and she came in unto him.” He sent for her, and she came to him. Some have suggested that she knew what she was doing when she went to

the roof to bath. I don't know that we can judge her motives from the text. But it seems clear that after being called, she became a willing participant.

David saw her, he sent for her, and he sinned with her—temptation, lust, and sin. This is the descent that results in a spiritual defeat.

But behold, your sins will find you out! Bathsheba became pregnant and the timing of events made it clear that she was pregnant with David's child. Maybe David and Bathsheba thought that it was just a one-night fling, a one-time thing that they could do and move on. But they had opened the door in their lives for a series of events that led farther and farther down a road they should never have started down.

There is no room in the spiritual warfare that we are in for lapses. We must constantly be alert and aware of our spiritual surroundings. We need to be aware of when and where we may be spiritually vulnerable and to guard our thoughts and desires. We cannot be ignorant of Satan's devices for the enemy is like a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

One sin led, inexorably to the next. David saw, sent and sinned. Bathsheba conceived a child so David devised a plan of deception. He called Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, back from the war under the guise of getting an update on the war. If David had been there, then none of this would have happened, but now he sends for word on the war because he had been negligent in his role as king. He sends for Uriah because David anticipated that Uriah would go into his wife and have relations with her. David gives him permission to go home and refresh himself. Perhaps Bathsheba was

to be waiting in lace and perfume to spend some time with her husband.

The irony is that Uriah, a Hittite fighting for Israel, had more honor than the king for which he fought. Uriah refused to go to his wife while his men and fellow soldiers were still in battle. Instead, Uriah slept at the door of the king's house, that is, in the guard shack that stood watch over the king.

David should have understood such honor, for he had once been a warrior, but instead, David was incredulous.

Next, hoping to soften Uriah up, David got Uriah drunk, but even drunk he had more moral fortitude than David. So David decided that the only thing left to do was to have Uriah killed. David wrote a letter to the brutal soldier Joab and sent the letter by the hand of Uriah. Being the honorable man that he was, Uriah apparently did not read the letter, but dutifully delivered his own death sentence to Joab. The letter said, "Send Uriah to the frontlines, to the most dangerous place in the battle, and then you withdraw from him that he may be stricken and die."

Joab obeyed the king and Uriah was killed. At last, David must have thought, I've concealed my sin. When Bathsheba heard of the death of her husband she mourned. Perhaps she never intended for things to go as far as they had, but when you open the door to sin, he rarely comes alone.

## **GOD KNOWS WHERE WE ARE**

During the Vietnam War many men who were against the war went absent without leave, or deserted and went into hiding when they got their draft notice. Many went to Canada. Often their own

families did not know where they were. They were in hiding from friends, family and most importantly from the government of their own country. David had deserted God. David had conspired to conceal his sins and he thought that he had gotten away with it, but not so. God knew what was happening.

This is war, and we must stand our post. We must remain vigilant. Our failure may put many other people at risk. David sinned, Uriah died, and the baby that Bathsheba carried would be born to die. David's family would fall into disarray. His son would rape his sister and then die in battle. His other son would try to wrestle the kingdom from him and send him into exile for a time. And David would die a tired old man.

Our failures often affect more than ourselves. One pastor falls and half the people of the church become disillusioned and fall away. One father fails and his family falls with him. A CEO fails and the company falls with him. This is war. One defeat in war may lead to a series of defeats. This is why we must never lay down our sword or our shield and act and turn our backs on the enemy.

This is why John writes, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1, KJV).

Living without sin is to be the standard. Living a victorious life is attainable through Christ. We must endeavor to win every battle. There are no excuses for failure. However, "if any man sin," John writes, "we have an advocate with the Father." In other words, if we should happen to lose a battle that does not mean that we have to lose the war.

King Saul lost the battle by disobeying God. Notice that Saul won the battle in the flesh, his army beat the enemy's army on the field, but by ignoring the instructions of God through the prophet Samuel, Saul lost the spiritual battle. But Saul lost the war when he denied his mistakes and failed to repent before the Lord. God already knew of Saul's failure and it was foolish to attempt to lie to God. In the New Testament Ananias and Sapphira attempted to lie to the Holy Spirit and God struck them dead (Acts 9).

### **GOD GAVE DAVID A SECOND CHANCE**

When God sent Samuel to confront Saul for his sin, he was giving Saul a second chance, a chance to confess and repent and seek restoration. But instead of repenting Saul tried to justify himself and to refute the judgment of God for his disobedience. As a result, God removed His anointing from Saul.

In chapter 12 of 2 Samuel, God sends a prophet to David. Nathan did not simply march down and point and accusing finger under David's nose. Instead, he spoke a parable to David:

1 "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. 2The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. 3But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. 4And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." 5So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives,

the man who has done this shall surely die! 6And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity." (2 Sam 12:1-6, NKJV)

It was only after David himself pronounced judgment upon the man in Nathan's story that he revealed that he, as God prophet, knew of David's sin. He said to David, "Thou art the man." Those words must have pierced the heart of David.

Nathan goes on, speaking for God, to let David know that God knew of the adultery and of the murder. The judgment upon David would be that "the sword shall never depart from thine house." In other words, there would be turmoil, murder and death in David's household. And the reason for this judgment is twofold. First, God said, "Because you have despised me." To forsake righteousness is to despise God.

David is condemned because he took Bathsheba to be his wife. Which is to say, through the use of his position as king, a position given to him by God, David took Bathsheba from Uriah and had the innocent man killed.

The judgment decreed upon David continues. There would be evil in his house, his wives would commit adultery and it would not be done in secret but would be a scandal throughout the community. Also, the child that Bathsheba was carrying would die.

## **THE PRAYER OF REPENTANCE**

The thing here that separates David from Saul is that David makes no excuses and he does not try to justify his behavior. Instead, we see David fasting and praying. In fact, Psalm 51 is believed to have been the prayer of repentance offered by David after Nathan confronted him.

This is a very powerful psalm that certainly expresses a true expression of contrition. It is a prayer for mercy because he knows that if he got justice, he would be killed. It is a prayer for forgiveness and cleansing from sin, which he acknowledges.

In this prayer he agrees that he has indeed sinned against God and that while the sin was hidden from the people, it was committed in the sight of God.

David recognizes the universal nature of sin that was present at birth, and this nature seems to be at odds with the fact that God desires truth, not just externally when people are watching, but in the “inward parts.”

David prays to be purged from his sin and to be made clean again. He prays to find joy again and to rejoice again someday. The word translated “rejoice” in verse 8 can and often does communicate the idea of dancing. David is saying, “that the bones which thou hast broken my dance again.”

Sometimes when we have failed God and the results of our failure are affecting the lives of the people we love around us, we fall under such a weight of condemnation and guilt that we feel crushed, we feel as though we may never experience joy again, never dance again. But David is praying that after forgiveness and after cleansing, that the joy of the Lord would be his again and that he

would dance again as he had danced when the Ark of the Covenant returned to Zion.

David knows that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity so he, in essence says, “Lord don’t look at my sins, instead rub the slate clean.” Instead, David prays for a new heart and a right spirit. He prays that he not be exiled from the presence of God that he so treasured and that he not lose his anointing. He prays for a revival of joy.

David promises that if God would grant him this prayer, he would turn and teach transgressors and sinners to obey and to be converted to the Lord.

David asks for forgiveness from the guilt of murder and promises to sing the praises of God again.

Again, this is a powerful prayer and appears to reflect a genuine attitude of repentance and contrition. Which brings us to the title of this chapter, losing a battle without losing the war. David had failed miserably, but he had also confessed and repented sincerely. Unlike Saul, God did not remove His anointing from David from being king over Israel. Indeed, the David covenant, which insured that Messiah would come through David’s lineage, was maintained through Christ. David lost a spiritual battle, but he did not lose the war. He would continue to figure prominently in the plans of God for the salvation of humanity.

We are told not to sin, but knowing human nature, God has already made provision for us if we lose a battle. We have an advocate with the Father who will intercede for us. Chances are that somewhere along the journey we are going to lose a battle. But that does not mean that we have to lose the war. “The LORD is nigh

unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit” (Ps 34:18, KJV).

Satan will try to tell us, when we fail, that we should simply give up and quit. But God is the Father in the parable of the prodigal son, who is always looking, yearning, waiting for our return so that he can restore us to the Father’s house. He wants us to come home so that he can put shoes on our feet, a ring on our finger and a robe on our backs. Sometimes our elder brother pouts and complains, but the Father is always ready to receive us when are ready to get up out of the hog pen of our failure and come humbly home.

We may lose a battle now and then, but we’ve already won the war. If you fail or falter, don’t make excuses, don’t look for someone else to blame, don’t lay there in self-pity. Instead, look up, fess up, and get up. Confess your faults, repent of your sins, and receive by faith the work of the advocate on your behalf.

**CHAPTER EIGHT**  
**THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF THE BATTLE:**  
**1 KINGS 18-19**

In Elijah's ongoing conflict with Ahab, Jezebel and the prophets of Baal, we see a battle that is fought on several different fronts at the same time. There political, social and religious implications in this conflict. Elijah is forced to confront the injustices as well as the moral depravity of King Ahab, while also being forced to flee for his own life.

Elijah is something of an enigma. He appears rather abruptly in the text and then is caught up alive from the scene of human history in a whirlwind. He comes and preaches righteousness without compromise, he declares a famine, raises the dead son of a widow, kills false prophets, prophesies Jezebel's demise, chooses a successor and then passes the mantle to Elisha as he, Elijah, is being caught up into heaven.

In chapters 18 and 19 we see both the highs and the lows of the spiritual warfare that Elijah is engaged in. We will explore the confrontation of Elijah with the prophets of Baal in chapter 18, and then we will look at Elijah in a time of personal inner struggle. Elijah is a great study in spiritual warfare because he so powerfully illustrates the extremes and the vicissitudes of the battle.

## **THE BATTLE WITH BAAL**

During Ahab's reign the worship of Baal and Asherah flourished in Israel. These were the Canaanite gods who were worshipped for the purpose of insuring good crops, as well as fertility in livestock and among the people. To appease these gods human sacrifice was often practiced. The appeal of these false gods, especially during the time of the divided kingdom, was that there was no need for a centralized place of worship or for pilgrimages to Jerusalem or to Samaria. These deities could be worshipped in high places, such as mountain or hilltops, as well as on housetops, and in places called the "groves" where Asherah was worshipped. However, during the reign of Ahab there was a temple to Baal in both Jerusalem and Samaria, and in Israel at this time, there were 450 priests to Baal leading the practice of this religion.

As the prophet of the true God, Yahweh, Elijah was vexed at the spiritual condition of his nation during this time. As such, God used Elijah to confront the idolatry of the leadership of Israel. As part of God's judgment Elijah declared a famine in the land that would not end until Elijah declared its end.

In doing this God was demonstrating His superiority over the deity Baal who was specifically worshipped for the purpose of gaining a good harvest. By standing as Yahweh's spokesman and declaring that the famine would not end until the prophet of Yahweh declared it so, God was demonstrating the impotency of Baal and of the prophets of Baal. They would not be able to end the famine at their word, regardless of how long or loud they prayed. They could not produce water.

During this time Elijah was living beside a brook with birds bringing him food. Later a widow, whose son he raised from death,

cared him for. So while the rest of the kingdom was suffering for their idolatry, God was taking care of his man.

This brings us to chapter 18. Notice that Elijah did not try to put his words in God's mouth. That is not the mark of a true prophet, but the practice of a false prophet. In verse 1 we see "that the word of the LORD came to Elijah" in the third year of the drought. God told Elijah it was time to go show himself and to declare the end of the drought. Both by causing the drought and by ending the drought God was demonstrating His power.

It is interesting that while Ahab and Jezebel were reprobates, God had a man on the inside, Obadiah. "Obadiah" means, "servant of Yahweh." He was the prime minister in Ahab's government. The man, Obadiah "feared the LORD greatly" and, as such, when Ahab and Jezebel would have killed the prophets of Yahweh, Obadiah, the man in the know, separated the prophets into groups of 50 and hid them in various caves. Presumably he also took care of them during the drought.

I think it is interesting how often we are dealing with government, or politicians and they seem deaf to our calls for moral reform or justice in the all levels of society, and yet God so often seems to be able to a man or woman on the inside of the kingdom. I think of Esther, who saved the Jews from the genocide planned by Haman. We could point to Rahab inside Jericho, or Daniel in Babylon. God has a way of getting the right people in the right places for such a time as this. Perhaps we all should be aware of our sphere of influence and ask ourselves if God has is strategically located for His purposes.

Elijah told Obadiah to go tell Ahab, "Elijah is back in town, and he on his way to see you."

Obadiah was a little hesitant. He was afraid that after he told Ahab that Elijah was coming, that Elijah would be whisked away by God and disappear again, as he had during the drought. But Elijah gave his saying, “As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today.” So Obadiah went and told Ahab.

When Ahab met Elijah he called Elijah “the troubler of Israel.” The truth is that the trouble that Israel was now in was the result of the immorality and idolatry promoted by Ahab and Jezebel. The moral decline of leadership can drag a nation down, drag a city down, a church down, or a family down.

Elijah didn’t back down, he simply issued a challenge, “Call out all the false prophets and have them meet me on Mount Carmel.”

Given the three-year duration of the famine that began at the word of Elijah, it may be that Ahab felt that it was in his best interest to comply with Elijah’s challenge. Perhaps he thought the false prophets could best Elijah, after all, as far as Ahab knew, Elijah was the last prophet of Yahweh standing. Whatever the reason was, Ahab sent for and gathered all the false prophets for the challenge issued by Elijah. Furthermore, the nation of Israel was called to see for themselves who the real God is.

Elijah look out at the people and asked them, “How long will you falter between two opinions?” In other words, “Isn’t it time for you to make up your mind as to who you really believe God is? If Yahweh is God, then follow Him, if Baal is god, then follow him, but it’s time to get off the fence and make up your mind who you are going to serve.”

Elijah proposed a test, he said, “Let the prophets of Baal give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Yahweh, and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” And the people agreed that this was a good plan.

God had already demonstrated that Baal could not produce rain, and now He was about to demonstrate that Baal could not produce fire. This would show how utterly powerless and pathetic the worship of the false god Baal was. We should never be afraid or intimidated of the false gods of this world. I often hear the religion of evolution spouted as though it is god and the only answer to creation. But upon closer inspection the entire religion of evolution collapses like a house of cards.

At the University of Maine my professor used to spout evolutionary theory and declare it to be a fact. And I used to grow frustrated watching the younger students taking it all in as though this high priest of the god of evolution could not be challenged. But one day I had just had enough and I raised my hand. He called upon me and I simply said, “Evolution is a faith, it can neither be proven nor disproved, you either believe it or you don’t, but it is not a fact, and according to the definitions of the words, evolution does not qualify as theory, a hypothesis or even a good postulation. It is, instead a metaphysical research program. It is a faith, and it may be your faith but it isn’t mine.”

After class he said he had a chapter from a book he wanted me to read. I agree to read the chapter if he would listen to a tape I

had of James Kennedy addressing the association of creation scientists. He said he would.

The chapter was entitled, “Evolution is a fact,” and was written by Stephen Gould. I had already read a couple of Gould’s books and they had not convinced me of anything. The chapter was the same old jargon that the evolutionists continually spout. It was not impressed.

My teacher, however, stopped his incessant talk about evolution. So after a couple weeks I asked him, “What did you think about the tape I gave you.” He said, “It was very interesting. I gave it to a friend of mine who is a geneticist to listen to.” Isn’t that powerful? I gave it the truth to one man, who, when he found his false religion challenged, passes it on to yet another priest in the religion of evolution. The point is that we don’t ever have to cower or be intimidated by the false gods of this world.

The prophet of Baal cried out to Baal all day long. Elijah could resist chiding them, and mocking their efforts to get a false god to hear them. The truth is that when someone needs an answer, when someone needs a higher power, the false gods of evolution, rationalism, secularism, materialism, will not answer. They may try harder, and cry louder, but the gods of the world are mute. And this is our most powerful source of witness, our God answers. God said, in Jeremiah 33:3, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee the great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

In this spiritual warfare with the false gods of this world, it isn’t even a real contest. They are waging war with imaginary guns, while we have the access to the God whose Word brought the universe into existence. It isn’t even a close contest.

After the prophets of Baal had so convincingly proven that Baal does not hear and cannot answer, Elijah stepped up in the name of Yahweh.

First, Elijah repaired the altar. The altar is the place where we commune with God. It represents sacrifice, service, prayer and power. It represents the place where the transcendent power and presence of God becomes immanent and demonstrable. As a church, or as an individual, we need to repair the altar. But in addition to repairing the altar, Elijah dug a trench around the altar. There wasn't going to be any doubt, at the end of this challenge, that God is God and beside Him there is not other God.

Second, Elijah symbolically reestablished the covenant relationship that God had made with Israel. By this time the twelve tribes were divided, but Elijah brought in twelve stones and used them to rebuild the altar. When we are in a spiritual warfare we need to remember that we serve a covenant making and a covenant keeping God. "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: he hath said, and shall he not do it?" (Num 23:19).

Third, Elijah put the wood in order, cut the bullock and put them in order, upon the altar and then began to pour water upon the sacrifice, wood, altar and into the trench. He instructed that four barrels of water be poured over the altar four times.

Fourth, Elijah prayed. It wasn't a long prayer. He didn't have to convince God to work, only to ask Him. Elijah prayed, "Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Yahweh, hear

me, that this people may know that thou art Yahweh, God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.”

Notice a few things about this prayer. First Elijah clearly identified who God is. Second, Elijah declared and asked God to prove that Elijah was God’s servant. Third, Elijah notes that everything he has done up to this point, he has done at the Word of the Lord. In other words, Elijah was operating in the Will of God. Fourth, Elijah defines the purpose of this exercise, that is, that the people may know who the real God is, and that their hearts may be turned back to Him.

Elijah understands that this spiritual warfare is not just about him. It is about the people of God returning to God. It is about a revival in the land. It is about turning the hearts of the people back to God. At this point, the fire of Yahweh fell. It burned the sacrifice, wood, stones and dust, it caused the water to evaporate and dry up in the trench. What a moment! Naturally, when the people saw this they were moved. In fact, they fell on their faces and began to cry out, “Yahweh is God! Yahweh is God!

Elijah instructed that all the false prophets were to be killed. The source of teaching of these powerless gods was to be exterminated. At this point the people were more interested in what the prophet of Yahweh had to say, then in what Ahab or Jezebel had to say about this. In fact, Jezebel would be furious and would send word to Elijah that she was going to have him killed within 24 hours.

But in the mean time, after the God had shown that He could stop the rain and Baal was powerless to start it again, and after God had shown that He could send fire from heaven and Baal could not, and after the people declared that Yahweh was God, God was willing to end the famine. In doing so, He would be rewarding the people’s

revival, and He would again be demonstrating His superiority over the false gods.

It hadn't rained in three years, and there was not visible sign that rain was on the way, but Elijah said to Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain."

Elijah went out to pray and then sent his servant to search the skies for a cloud. The report, six times was that there was nothing. It would have been easy to have given up, but he sent the servant back the seventh time.

I wonder how many miracles we miss because we lack the persistence to go back the seventh time? On the seventh time the report wasn't overwhelming, but it was enough for Elijah, the servant said, "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand."

By the time Ahab returned to Jezebel, the skies had opened up with a deluge of rain. It was abundantly evident that Yahweh, He is God. And Elijah got anointed and ran ahead of Ahab and got to the king's house before the king.

It looked like maybe Ahab was about to believe, that he, along with the people of Israel was about to acknowledge Yahweh as God. Perhaps Elijah thought that after Jezebel heard about all that had happened, she too would fall into the arms of God. But such was not the case.

Next week we will look at Elijah again. Only this time he is not on the mountaintop, he is under a juniper tree asking God to kill him. Perhaps Elijah had a different outcome in mind. Sometimes God's victory gains Him glory without gaining us any glory or

reprieve from suffering. Are we willing to let the glory go to God? This is a key to spiritual victory.

I've seen God heal someone of cancer and then his wife divorced him. I've seen ministers used of God in a great revival where many people were saved, filled with the Spirit and healed, and yet that man never got the promotion and never saw his own church go beyond a few dozen people.

Why does this happen? I don't know, but what I do know is that anything good that happens is a reason to glorify God, and not man. And I know that there are people out there, people under the influence of the gods of this world, who will not yield to or acknowledge God if they saw someone raised from the dead before their very eyes. The Pharisees were not convinced when Jesus raised Lazarus up. So we cannot expect that even when we have seen and been used by God in the execution of a powerful and seemingly unquestionable miracle, that everyone around us will be convinced and converted.

I get the feeling that Elijah was expecting Jezebel to recognize Yahweh as God. She did not and Elijah allowed that small defeat to overshadow all the good that happened earlier. We cannot allow ourselves to be tossed to and fro on the waves of emotion. We have to stand by faith even when our heart is broken.

There are some people who have a prayer answered and they walk around with their nose in the air like their feet stink. They act like no one has faith like they have faith.

But then a week later they face a trial or have to endure some tribulation and they're in the valley of despair. We haven't been called to ride the waves of emotional highs and lows, but we have

been called to build our house of faith on the Rock, Christ Jesus. Winds and waves will come and go, but our house can stand firm.

### **SITTING UNDER THE JUNIPER TREE**

Many of us have had the Juniper tree experience. We've been on cloud nine one minute and sitting alone wondering what happened the next. We've seen God move in a powerful way one day, and then feel as though God has abandoned us the next. This is a spiritual battle that we all have to deal with from time to time. Elijah provides us with an example of how to get up and get out of the blues.

As noted above, chapter 19 begins with Ahab telling Jezebel of the defeat of the false gods and their prophets. Elijah was already at the king's house before the King Ahab had arrived. It seems he was waiting to hear what Jezebel's response might be, and it also appears that Elijah anticipated a favorable response from the queen. Such was not the case.

Instead of Jezebel falling into the arms of Yahweh, just the opposite happened. She sent a messenger to tell Elijah that he would be dead within twenty-four hours. Notice Elijah's response. He had just stared down over 400 prophets of Baal and the king himself, but now when this wicked queen makes a threat Elijah gets out of Dodge.

Verse 3 says, "And when he saw (or heard) that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there." Why did he leave his servant there? It may be that he was afraid that his servant would become an innocent victim in the conflict between himself and Jezebel. Or it may be that at this point Elijah was growing a little paranoid and didn't even trust

his own servant because in verse 14 Elijah says, “I, even I only, am left.”

Elijah ran into the wilderness and apparently physically and emotionally weary he sat down under the only source of shade he could find, a Juniper tree.

At this point Elijah was ready to die. He wasn't suicidal, but he was willing for the Lord to take him home. Ironically, this great man who came to the point where he was ready to die, never had to die, as he was taken up into heaven alive in the whirlwind.

It is interesting how many times we see a type of Christ in the Old Testament who is brought to the point of death, but who does not have to die. For example, Isaac on Mt. Moriah, Joseph in the pit, and now Elijah. In each of these cases death seemed immanent. Elijah would have starved to death in the wilderness had not an angel provided nourishment. Yet Christ, in the Garden of Gethsemane, prayed for the cup of death to pass, but was willing to drink it if it was the Father's will. Isaac did not have to be sacrificed, Joseph was spared from being killed by his own brothers, and Elijah was spared from death in the wilderness, but Jesus died upon the cross. This illustrates the substitutionary death of Jesus for us all.

Elijah prayed, “It is enough.” Have you ever prayed that? “It is enough Lord, I've done all I can do, I've gone as far as I can go, and yet the queen still will not submit to you, and she still intends to have me killed.” Maybe your prayer sounds more like this, “It is enough Lord, I've done all I can do for my son. I've loved and sacrificed. I've prayed till I'm hoarse, I've fasted and cried until I can't cry no more. I give up.”

Maybe this is where we need to be with God. Maybe we need to come to that place where we no longer place any confidence in the flesh. That place where the enemy has us on the ropes and we reach out with our fingertips and tag God to come in and take our place in the ring of spiritual conflict.

Elijah continues, “O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” At least there is a bit of humility in his words. When we are on the mountain with fire falling in response to our prayers, there is the tendency to think that we reached heights that no one else has ever reached. We have a tendency to believe that we’ve reached a level of spiritual maturity that is reserved for us spiritual elites.

I was at a big church in Gainesville, Georgia on night. I had stood in line for over an hour to get in to hear a speaker who has a big name and is a regular on Christian television. I was looking forward to hearing him speak because he used to be one of my favorite speakers. But then he began to talk about how rich Christians should be, and how we should never get sick if we have enough faith. He testified that he had not had so much as a head cold for over fifteen years. He cautioned us, however, not to mouth what he was mouthing unless we had the faith that he had.

Six months later this same man was in a hospital for back surgery and was out of the pulpit for three months.

How does God handle us when we are under the Juniper tree? Does he kick us to the curb and look for someone else? Does He chide us for our lack of faith? In Elijah’s case, what God did was send an angel to strengthen his prophet:

5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.

6 And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

7 And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. (1 Kings 19:5-8, KJV)

Here is a text that raises some very interesting questions with regard to the interaction between spiritual and physical worlds. The angel is a spiritual being, and yet the angel touches Elijah in such a way as to awaken him. Indication from Scripture is that while angels are physical beings, they have the capacity to interact with the physical world in a way that appears to be physical. A touch would be a physical action. Also, the food that the angel brings is described as being literal, physical food, but it also seems to provide supernatural strength. From these two meals and sleep, Elijah is able to travel forty days and nights through the wilderness to Mt. Horeb.

The example of Elijah is significant because even the New Testament writers point to him as an example of what God is able to do through a believer. James writes in his Epistle, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit" (James 5:17-18, NKJV).

James is telling us that if Elijah can manifest his faith in his works, then so can we. We can use James' argument to add that if Elijah can be strengthened and sustained by God through the agency of His angels, then so can we. As Peter says, "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). When we are in our valley, and it seems we cannot go on, God will not abandon us there. God has a way of tapping us on the shoulder and providing us the opportunity to be strengthened and sustained.

Notice, however, that all the angel did was provide the food, Elijah had to eat it. If Elijah had not responded to God's offer, then Elijah might well have died in the wilderness. When we are in the wilderness, even when we are in a moment of utter despair, I know that God will be with us, and He will sustain us, but we must be willing to partake and participate in whatever God offers us as our strength.

Sometimes God sends a saint to come knocking on our door to pray with us. Sometimes it's a card or letter, or a phone call. Sometimes it's a lesson or a sermon that God wants to use as spiritual meat to give us the strength to stand up and to press on. But if we will not eat, then it is possible to shrivel up and die in our wilderness.

Again, it is interesting that Elijah fasted for forty days and nights after eating these two meals. Likewise, Moses was on the mountain in the presence of God without food for forty days and nights. Also, after being baptized by John, Jesus was in the wilderness where He fasted forty days and nights.

I can tell you from personal experience that a forty-day fast is almost unbelievable. I was in a spiritual wilderness and was in a place of despair in my ministry until, like Elijah, I simply prayed,

“God, if this is all there is, and if I am not better than this, then kill me.” I fasted on nothing but water for thirty-five days, and then another five days on nothing but clear juice. It was something that I had to do to survive spiritually, but something I hope I never have to do again.

Elijah traveled night and day for forty days until he arrived at Mt. Horeb. At Mt. Horeb he found a cave. While he was in the cave, apparently hiding, the word of the LORD came to him and asked, “What are you doing here Elijah?”

It seems to me that this is a rhetorical question. Obviously God knew that Elijah was hiding, but perhaps he wanted Elijah to acknowledge his fear and frustration. But Elijah never says that he is hiding from Jezebel. Instead, Elijah complains to the Lord. He said in verse 10: "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." (NKJV).

Notices what Elijah is saying. He says, in essence, “Lord, look at all I’ve done for you, and now I’m the only one left who will stand for you. And now, because of my commitment to you, they seek to kill me.”

We haven’t ever said that, have we? “Lord, look at all I’ve done for you. Look at all the tithes I’ve given. Look at all the time I’ve committed. Look at all the times when I was the only one who showed up for prayer meeting. Look at all those times when I stayed late while everyone else went home, just to make sure the church was clean for church on Sunday. And what do get for all my hard work? Someone comes in and complains about the way I mopped the floor.”

When you read between the lines what you see is, “Lord you owe me. I deserve better than this.” What you see is the perhaps we weren’t doing what we did purely out of love for God, but out of desire for recognition or reward.

God had gotten Elijah out from under the Juniper tree, through the wilderness and to Mt. Horeb, but Elijah hadn’t reached the summit. Instead, he stopped short and camped in a cave. God said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by” (NIV).

While Elijah stood there the Lord passed by. A hurricane force wind blew with the ferocity to literally rip through the mountains with rocks and earth being tossed through the air. But the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake that caused the earth to quake and the mountains to move. But the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire came and burned upon the mountain. But God was not in the fire. And after the fire, Elijah heard a still small voice. The *New International Version* calls it, “a gentle whisper.”

This was the voice of God. I wonder how many times, when we are in the heat of our spiritual battles, do we miss the gentle whisper of God because we have become fixated upon the ferocity of the battle around us?

When Elijah heard the whisper, he recognized the voice of the LORD and he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out. He stood at the entrance of the cave and the LORD asked him again, “What are you doing here Elijah?”

Elijah’s tune doesn’t change much. Again he responds in verses 14, “And he said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD

God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life" (NKJV).

God knows that Elijah needs to be encouraged and, indeed, to prepare and apprentice to succeed him as God's prophet in Israel. God sends Elijah to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and Nimshi to be king over Israel, and Elisha to be the prophet. God said, "And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place."

God tells Elijah that He will use the King of Syria to bring judgment upon those who worship idols, and anyone the Hazael misses, Jehu (king of Judah) will kill, and if Jehu misses anyone, Elisha will clean up. Then God says to Elijah in verse 18, "[By the way,] I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (NKJV).

And so Elijah found Elisha plowing with oxen and he placed his mantle upon Elisha, which indicated that he was to be Elijah's successor. After telling his folks goodbye, Elisha killed the oxen and cooked the meat by burning the plow and yoke, and gave it to the people to eat.

Elisha was leaving everything behind to follow the prophet of God. God provided the depressed and discouraged Elijah with strength, with a revelation, with a Word and with an apprentice. God did not give up on Elijah, even though Elijah had given up.

Elijah felt as though he was all alone in this struggle and that no one else cared. But God revealed to Elijah that he was not alone,

there were others who had not compromised and who would walk with him into the battle.

Satan cannot defeat us, but he can tempt us to become so discouraged that we simply surrender. One of his favorite tactics is to convince us that we are the only ones who really care. We are all alone and no one really cares about us.

I can't tell you how many times I found people who have quit coming to church and who have basically given up on God, who, when I've called or someone else has talked to them, they say, "No one at that church cared about me." And more often than not, these very people have been sent cards and letters, they have received phone calls and visits, but when the devil has convinced us that no one cares, nothing anyone does will ever be enough.

It is very frustrating to those who try to reach them. But ultimately all we can do is take the meat and cakes to them, we cannot not make them eat. But when we are in that place, we need to remember that despite what the enemy may be telling us, we are not alone. There are always brothers and sisters in the Lord who are as close as the telephone who will pray with us, and visit us and minister to us in our times of need. But we have to be willing to ask for help when we need it.

If you are a soldier alone in a field surrounded by the enemy, it seems logical to surrender. But in spiritual warfare we must never surrender because we are never alone. Jesus said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20, NKJV).

So the next time we are hiding in our cave on a Sunday morning instead of attending being in the house of the Lord, if we

listen a gentle whisper will ask us, “Why are you here?” How will we answer?

**In the end, we need one another, and we need to be willing to call upon on another and to refuse to allow the enemy to convince us that we are all alone and no one cares. If nothing else, remember Jesus, He cares for you.**

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS**

There has been a spiritual warfare involving Satan and Christ from the time before the birth of Jesus. We have reviewed some of the history of this battle in previous chapters. The first salvo in this warfare is found (as previously noted) in Genesis chapter three:

Gen 3:14-15

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent:

"Because you have done this,

You are cursed more than all cattle,

And more than every beast of the field;

On your belly you shall go,

And you shall eat dust

All the days of your life.

15 And I will put enmity

Between you and the woman,

And between your seed and her Seed;

He shall bruise your head,

And you shall bruise His heel." NKJV

Knowing his fate, Satan has declared war in an effort to thwart his destiny, but to no avail. Satan has tried to destroy the nation of Israel, through whom Messiah would come. He tried to kill off David, through whom the lineage of Messiah would come. He tried to kill the infant Jesus under the rule of King Herod. And

no doubt, there were other occurrences of Satan's attempts to kill the young Jesus that are not recorded in Scripture. However, Satan could neither change his destiny, nor stop the coming of the Christ. So we look now at the one on one encounter between Jesus and Satan.

<b>Matt 4:1-11</b>	<b>Mark 1:12-13</b>	<b>Luke 4:1-13</b>
<p>4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' " 5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall</p>	<p>12 And immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. 13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him. NKJV</p>	<p>4:1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. 3 And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." 4 But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.' " 5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for</p>

<p>bear you up,</p> <p>Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "</p> <p>7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.' " 8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' " 11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. NKJV</p>		<p>this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." 8 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' " 9 Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. 10 For it is written:</p> <p>'He shall give His angels charge over You,</p> <p>To keep You,'</p> <p>11 "and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up,</p> <p>Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "</p> <p>12 And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.' " 13 Now when</p>
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		the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. NKJV
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## EXEGETING THE TEXT

### Spiritual in Nature

Here we see Jesus, our example (Jn. 13:15), being tempted by Satan. Often this encounter is depicted in art as a physical material temptation. In other words, Satan is depicted as coming in some physical form to tempt Jesus. However, this would represent a type of spiritual warfare that is uncommon to man. The conflict, according to Paul, is not against flesh and blood, but against “principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12, KJV).

We are told by Matthew, Mark and Luke that the Spirit, which had just anointed Christ at His baptism, lead, or as Mark’s Gospel puts it, “drove” Jesus into the wilderness for the express purpose, according to Matthew, of being tempted by Satan. From the very beginning of this account we are presented with spiritual nature of this event.

This does not make the account any less real, or any less trying for Christ. Anyone who has been engaged in this type of spiritual struggle can attest to the reality of the encounter. Finally, the description of Jesus being transported to a mountain, and then to the pinnacle of the Temple would suggest that is a spiritual temptation that Jesus is experiencing.

In this respect, we understand that Jesus was, in fact, “tempted in every way, just as we are-yet was without sin” (Heb 4:15, NIV). His experience is representative and the example of how we can overcome temptation is also representative.

By saying this is a spiritual encounter we are not discounting the fact that Jesus literally went into the wilderness at the prompting of the Holy Spirit. We would affirm that Jesus went on a literal forty-day fast and that He was, indeed, tempted in the manner described, and spoke the words He is recorded to have spoken. It was real, but it was spiritual.

### **Comparing and Contrasting Accounts**

When we look at the parallels between Matthew, Mark and Luke we find that Mark’s account is very abrupt and without elaboration. He states:

9 It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. 11 Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

12 And immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. 13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him. Mark 1:9-13, NKJV

Jesus appears on the public stage, is baptized in water, the Holy Spirit descends upon Him, the Father affirms Jesus as His

Son, and then the Holy Spirit drives Jesus into a wilderness experience where He is tempted by Satan for over 40 days.

Mark also indicates that the temptation was just the three events recorded by Matthew and Luke, but that throughout the forty-day fast Jesus was being tempted. Furthermore, according to Luke, even though Satan retreated for a time from this encounter, there were other temptations that followed: “Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time” (4:13).

So almost immediately after being affirmed by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit and God the Father, Jesus enters into a wilderness experience. In this respect Jesus’ experience mirrors Elijah’s. A mountaintop affirmation followed by a wilderness experience. While Jesus does not enter into the despair that Elijah does—Elijah asks God to take his life—some feel that Jesus was tempted with suicide in leaping off the pinnacle.

Matthew and Luke have the same three temptations recorded, while Mark does not give any details. We notice, however, that the three temptations are in a different order with Matthew recording the bread, the pinnacle and the false worship, while Luke records bread, false worship and pinnacle. There doesn’t appear to be any significance to the inversion of the last two temptations, though by having the temptation to worship last Matthew seems to build from the least serious infraction to the more serious—from material gain, to tempting God, to false worship.

## **PRINCIPLES FROM THIS ACCOUNT**

The end result in all three accounts is that Jesus was triumphant. The writer of Hebrews said Jesus was tempted in all point like we are, “yet without sin.” We should not minimize the temptation of Jesus. He was tempted, which means that it was something that tugged on His will. Jesus, as a man, was tempted just like any man is tempted. Jesus, therefore, shows us first, that no one is above being tempted. Second, temptation itself is not a sin. And third, it is possible to be in Christ and live triumphantly over temptation and sin.

How does Jesus overcome the temptations? There is one principle that is consistent throughout and that is that Jesus refers to the Word of God as the ultimate authority by which to respond to Satan. When Satan tempts us we should respond with Word. The Psalmist said, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Ps 119:11, KJV). In Ephesians the only offensive weapon in our spiritual arsenal is the Word of God, which is the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).

The first principle for effective spiritual warfare is having the Word of God in our hearts, committed to memory, burned upon our souls. The Holy Spirit will bring the right word to our remembrance if we have committed ourselves to the study of the Word (Jn. 14:26).

The reason Eve succumbed to temptation was because, while she tried to quote the Word of God, she actually added to the Word more than God required. This is legalism. The opposite of legalism is liberalism, which tries to deny the authority of the Word and minimize its authority over our lives. Neither being too strict nor being too liberal is the answer to temptation. The answer to temptation is found in the question, “What does the Word of

God say about this subject.” The John the Revelator warns us in the Apocalypse neither to add to or to take away from what God has revealed (22:19).

The second principle we see in Jesus is that He was engaged in the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting. Later in His ministry Jesus cast the demon out of a boy that His disciples could not. When they asked why they could not cast the demon out, Jesus said first, “Because of your unbelief” (Matt. 17:20), that is, a lack of adequate faith. Second, Jesus said, “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (17:21, KJV).

By going into the wilderness for a time of prayer and fasting, the Holy Spirit was preparing Jesus for victory over Satan in these temptations. Jesus was physically weakened, as the writers say, “He was hungry,” but He was spiritually empowered. If we could attend to feeding our spirit half as much as we feed our flesh we would all be healthier and more victorious.

The third principle is that as quickly as the temptation arises, Jesus dispels it with the Word. Jesus was tempted as much as any man or woman is tempted. There was the tug upon the will of Jesus to do something that was not in keeping with the will or Word of the Father. However, unlike so many people in the church today, Jesus does not allow the temptation to roll around in His head unchallenged. Jesus does not linger over the television station with ungodly content. Jesus does not walk slowly past the obscene magazine rack, Jesus does not allow the person on the other end of the line to continue to talk about His brother or sister, and Jesus does not hold in His hand and fondle that piece of merchandize that does not belong to Him.

As soon as Satan presents the temptation Jesus shoots it down with the Word—"It is written."

A fourth principle is that Jesus never forgets that He has come to do His Father's will. This is a refrain that you see Jesus speak on several occasions. Temptation often involves either doing our own will when it is in contradiction to the will of God, or allowing others, perhaps Satan, to lure us into doing their will when it is in opposition to the will or Word of God. In Matthew's Gospel the encounter ends with Jesus saying, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

In other words, there is only One God, and far from Jesus worshipping Satan, Satan should be on his face at the feet of Jesus. And at that, Satan has to back off and regroup.

I think that worshipping God is something that will enable and empower us to overcome temptation. When we are going through trials and storms in life, when we are being tempted to do things contrary to the will or Word of God, then we need to remember that God is God, always has been God, and Him only shall you serve. When we are being tempted we ought to put on some good worship music, or some good preaching tapes and begin to worship God. Satan hates it when we worship God and therefore when we rebuff the enemy and worship God the enemy will flee.

The James writes, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (4:7, KJV). Submit your will and your heart in worship and service, tell the devil to get behind you, and keep on keeping on.

Jesus was tempted first to fulfill a legitimate need in an illegitimate way. It is not wrong to eat, nor is it wrong to eat bread. It was not wrong to provide food in a miraculous way, for He did this in feeding the multitudes. What would have made it wrong to turn stones into bread was that this was the instruction of the enemy to use miracles in a frivolous manner.

Jesus refused to use miracles as some kind of sideshow, and He refused use the supernatural to provide for Himself material goods or comfort. He was showing us how to walk in faith and trust in the Father.

The second miracle in Matthew (the third in Luke) was to leap off the pinnacle for the purpose of proving that He was the Messiah. After all, Satan reminds Jesus, “If you are the Messiah, the Father will send angels to catch you before you hit the rocks below.” Jesus tells Satan, and us, that we should never tempt the Lord. God doesn’t have to prove Himself to us. If Calvary isn’t enough to prove God’s love, then nothing God does will ever be enough.

Finally, according to Matthew, Satan offers Jesus the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would worship him. But of course, the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. Satan was offering Jesus something that was already His. Sometimes Satan tempts us with pleasures and with joy, but the truth is that these things are already ours. What Satan offers is but for a season. What God offers is for eternity.

## **CONCLUSION**

The three principles that we have in this account are:

First, know the Word. Trust and obey God and His Word.

Second, practice the spiritual principles of prayer and fasting. Be prepared. It is not a matter of if temptation will come, but when it will come and if we will be ready.

Third, do not entertain temptation. Paul said to thing on virtuous things:

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Phil 4:8, KJV)

Fourth, don't forget who you are in Christ. Remember who your Heavenly Father is, and seek to live in a way that is pleasing to Him. Jesus said when we pray we should pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
10 Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
(Matt 6:9-10, NKJV)

Jesus shows us that we do not have to fall victim to temptation, but that we can be victorious by following His example. In spiritual warfare, if we can overcome temptations, then the battle is as good as won.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **JESUS CASTS OUT A DEMON**

In Luke's Gospel, chapter four is very significant as an introduction of who Jesus is and what He has come to do. Chapter four begins with Jesus immediately following His baptism. It tells us of Jesus going into the wilderness to be tempted, as we saw in the previous chapter. From there Jesus comes out of the wilderness after overcoming the temptations, and goes to synagogue where, in His home town, He receives the scroll of Isaiah to read. Luke tells us that Jesus goes directly to the text of Isaiah which declares the anointing and mission of the Messiah. Claims this portion of Scripture as speaking of Himself, for as Luke writes, "He began to say unto them, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears'" (Luke. 4:21).

Luke tells us further that as the people began to question the claim of Jesus, Jesus in turn chastises the people for being like their forefathers who always seemed to be blind to the presence of prophets in their midst. The leaders of the synagogue grew angry and rose up to toss Jesus out of Nazareth. In fact, Luke tells us that they led Jesus up to a hilltop the intention of throwing down and probably stoning Him. But instead, Jesus simply walked through the crowd and when on His way.

This brings us to verses 31 through 37 where we see Jesus' first recorded encounter with a demonic spirit. The parallel to this

is found in Mark's Gospel, but not in Matthew or John. I included the account from both Luke and Mark below:

<b>Mark 1: 21-28</b>	<b>Luke 4:31-37</b>
<p>21 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. 22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" 26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." 28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. NKJV</p>	<p>31 Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. 32 And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. 33 Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, 34 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" 35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. 36 Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." 37 And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region. NKJV</p>

What things do we discover here that are germane to the discussion of spiritual warfare? First, notice that while Jesus was rejected in His hometown of Nazareth, He continued to teach in the

synagogues. Some people, facing the kind of rejection that Jesus did, would have given up, but not Jesus.

### **The Authority of the Teaching of Jesus**

There is something about the teaching of Jesus that was unlike the teaching of any other Rabbi. He taught with authority. Most scribes or disciples would teach by referring to the teachings of another rabbi, but Jesus doesn't refer to any other source than His Heavenly Father. There was an inherent authority that astounded the listeners.

### **Demon Possession**

Verse 33, in Luke, says, "Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon." Mark's Gospel simply says, "Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit." A demon is an unclean spirit, most likely a fallen angel, that is, one of the angels who followed Satan in his revolt against God and was thrown out of heaven.

This is the first time in the Gospel accounts of Jesus that we are introduced to someone who has a demon spirit. They are described as being "demon possessed" or "demonized." It refers to an individual whose mind and will are under the influence, if not the control of a demon spirit.

There are those who debate whether or not a born again believer can be demon possessed. I would say that I do not think that a person can be saved and be demon possessed at the same time. Jesus said, "You cannot serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24, Luke 16:13). He also said that a "house divided against itself shall not stand" (Matt. 12:25). It is the empty house that the demon

returns to occupy with seven other demons (Luke 11:26). So a born again person, who is the temple of the Holy Spirit cannot also be filled with a demonic spirit.

However, demon possession is not the only method of attack that the enemy can bring against a child of God. I believe that Satan can dispatch demons to attack a Christian and can oppress them through affecting and working through other people in our lives.

So, while I do not believe a born again child of God can be demon possessed, we see from this account that a demon possessed person may attend church. This man was in their synagogue. The designation of this man as being in their synagogue suggests that he was not just visiting, but had been a member of their synagogue.

I believe that the devil has a better church attendance than many members. Furthermore, I believe that there are often demon-possessed people who come to church. I believe that Satan uses these people to stir up strife and confusion in the church. He uses them to oppose spiritual leadership and to introduce false teaching in the church.

The best way to find demons in the church is not to go on a witch-hunt and start looking at everyone with a sideward glance. The best way is to lift up Jesus. The best way is to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us, to permeate our praise and worship and to perfume the house with the presence of God. Notice that Jesus did not point out this man, but this man, in the presence of God, revealed himself.

Luke says this man screamed out with a loud voice. I was in a service where a man was demon possessed with a spirit of

pornography and homosexuality. When the pastor and evangelist laid hands on him to pray for him, another woman in the church began to scream with, as they say, a blood-curdling scream. The pastor and evangelist said that the demon was trying to find someone else to inhabit. They went to the woman and began to pray for her until the presence lifted.

### **The Voice of Demons**

What did the demon, speaking through the man say? It said, “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”

The reference to the demon is in the singular, yet three of the four first person pronouns are in the plural. The demon said, “us”, “we”, and “us”. Some believe the demon was speaking for the entire demonic realm. One scholar said the demon may have been speaking for the entire congregation gathered at the synagogue.

Notice also that the demon knew what many of the people sitting there did not know, he knew who Jesus was. He called Jesus by name, “Jesus of Nazareth.” There was a belief in that culture that by calling the name of a spirit one could gain control of that spirit. Perhaps the purpose of the demon calling Jesus by name, and even identifying Him as “the Holy One of God” was to try to control the situation. However, Jesus does not permit the demon to say anything else.

### **The Voice of God**

We don't need to listen to the devil. Eve should have turned her back and walked away from the serpent, but she didn't. Jesus, in His temptation in the wilderness, did not entertain conversation with the enemy, but simply quoted, "It is written." Here Jesus simply said, "Be quiet, and come out of him!"

Unfortunately, in churches we are often so concerned that we do not hurt anyone's feelings, or that we do not offend, that we will allow foolishness to be spoken in the church. We will allow people to talk about our brothers and sisters in Christ. We will let them come and talk about the pastor or about leadership in the church and we let their negativity and complaining get in our spirit and poison us. But I think it would be more Christ-like, if when someone started that complaining and gossiping, that would simply say, "I'm sorry, but I'm not going to talk about someone that Jesus died to redeem."

This is true of much of the secular media as well. We don't need to fill our mind and spirit with a message that is so blatantly and clearly in opposition to the Word and will of God. Jesus said, "Shut up!" We can walk away from conversations where the conversation is not God glorifying. We can turn off the television or change the channel. We have the freedom and the authority to shut the mouth of the enemy.

Then Jesus simply commanded the demon with these words, "Come out of him." During that time there were people who specialized in casting out demons and evil spirits. Usually this involved some special words, incantations, or potions. They would name the evil spirit and then in the name of God, the Temple, the Scriptures and so on, tell the demon to leave. Other

times they would burn some noxious incense that was intended to be so offensive to the evil spirits that they would leave.

Jesus didn't do any of this. Jesus simply said, "Come out of him." The demon threw the man into convulsions and then left. The New Testament never makes the claim that everyone who gets sick, or who has seizures or mental illness is demon possessed. Demon possession is a very distinct and separate infirmity. Often, however, a person who is demon possessed will fall into a fit of convulsions as the demon is being cast out. This man fell into convulsions, but the man was not hurt.

### **The Amazement of the People**

The people who saw this were amazed. Why were they amazed? They were amazed because Jesus had the authority to simply speak to a demon and command it to come out, and it did. They said of Jesus, "What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out."

This is the power of the Word of God. At His word something was spoken out of nothing. At His word the worlds were framed. At His word the sun and the moon were hung on nothing. At His word light pierced the darkness. At His word life came to be. What a word. No wonder then, that at His word demons tremble. And for that reason Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

It is not the authority of our words, but His words in us that will give us the victory in the spiritual battles of this life. They said that Jesus spoke with "authority and power." Authority is from the Greek word *exousia* which means authority and power is

from *dynamis*, which means power. It is interesting that when commissioned His disciples, in chapter 9 verse 1, He “gave them power and authority over all devils.” Furthermore, Jesus promised us, “power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19, KJV).

I think we can learn summarize a few things about spiritual warfare from this. First, demonic presence can infiltrate a church. However, by seeking the face of God, by welcoming the presence of God and the power of the Holy Spirit into the church, the demons will become uncomfortable and will reveal themselves. They will reveal themselves by their words and actions. They will be a source of grumbling and complaining. They will attack the spiritual leadership of the church as well as their other believes in the body.

The second thing we learn from this account is that we do not have to tolerate the demonic in the church. We can shut the mouth of the enemy, or we can allow him to whisper in our ears. The choice is ours. The example of Jesus is to say, “Get thee behind me Satan.” The example of Jesus is to say, “Be quiet.”

The third thing we learn is that God has given us the authority to put the enemy under our feet and walk in victory over the attack of Satan. We do not have to become victims. We don’t have to live our lives like we’re always under attack and everyone is against us. We can stand up and say, “Praise God, God is good and the devil is a liar. My enemy is not the pastor, or the members, the enemy is the enemy and there is no room for him here!”

I don’t know about you, but I made up my mind that I will not live a defeated, sour, and bitter life. I will not fret over things that have no eternal value. I will not allow little things to become

bit issues. Instead, ever moment of every day I intend to have life in Christ, and that more abundant. I intend to rejoice in the Lord, to celebrate His goodness and let the joy of the Lord be my strength.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **BINDING THE STRONGMAN**

**Matt 12:22-32**

22 Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. 23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" 24 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." 25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. 30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

In this passage we have the second recorded account of Jesus casting out a demon. In truth, there are details concerning the casting out of the demon, but the account is summed up in the phrase, "and He healed him." As noted previously, the Bible nowhere makes the claim that every sickness, whether physical or mental, is the result of demon possession. In fact, on one occasion a man who was born blind was brought to Jesus and His disciples asked Him who had sinned, the man or his parents, but Jesus said, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that

the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3, KJV).

The point is that there are times when people are sick simply because we live in world and we live in bodies that have been affected by the sin of Adam. Yet, in delivering us from the infirmities of our present condition, God’s glory, mercy and grace is manifested. There are other times, however, when sickness (physical and mental) are the manifestations of demonic activity in a person’s life.

Verse 22 says, “Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute.” The text doesn’t say who brought this pitiful man to Jesus, it may have been the man’s family, or it may have been this man was brought to Jesus by the Pharisees and scribes as a test. Normally, Jesus would not perform a miracle just to gratify vain curiosity. Jesus never felt like He had to prove Himself to the Pharisees or other religious elite. However, Jesus was a man of compassion, and doubtless, seeing this man in this condition moved Jesus to minister to this man despite the critical eyes of the onlookers.

The effect of the demonic activity in this man had rendered him both blind and mute. Therefore, the immediate deliverance that this man experienced was dramatic and undeniable. How did Jesus deliver this man? The text simply says, “and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw”.

As noted previously, there were other Jews who claimed to perform exorcisms. However, the manner in which these others cast out demons was shown to be weak in comparison to the authority of Jesus who could simply tell the demon to come out, and it did.

The first century Jewish historian Josephus describes his own experience in witnessing and exorcism. Josephus writes:

I have seen a certain man of my own country whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian, and his sons, and his captain, and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The manner of the cure was this: --He put a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he abjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed. And when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commended the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man. (*Antiquities* 8.2.5)

This is the type of activity that Jews were familiar with when an exorcism was performed. But the authority of Jesus was such that He did not need to appeal to any special teachings of Solomon, or use incantations or incense to cast a demon out. All Jesus had to do was speak. It is for this reason, then, that after the man was delivered and began to see and speak that the people began to ask in amazement, "Could this be the Son of David?" (Son of David is a Messianic title.)

### **THE RESPONSE OF THE PHARISEES**

There was no denying the power of Jesus in casting out demons, as well as in healing people, so the only thing the

Pharisees could do was to try to cast doubt on the personage of Jesus. They said, “This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.” In other words, this power is not from God, but from Satan himself.

Such is the response of blind prejudice and hostility against Christ. They could see the miraculous before their very own eyes, and yet fail to give God the glory that is due His name. There are people who will see the works of God in our lives, the deliverance from sin and the creation of integrity and character where none had been, and still deny the power of God in our lives.

### **THE IMPECCABLE LOGIC OF JESUS**

It would seem that these Pharisees were too cowardly to make this claim to Jesus’ face, but we are told that Jesus knew what they were saying behind His back, and He even “knew their thoughts”. So Jesus answers their accusations with a bit of logic for which they had no response. Jesus said, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?”

Jesus presents a simple truth drawn from life. No kingdom, city or house can stand if it is divided against itself. Therefore, if Jesus is casting out Satan by the power of Satan, then the kingdom of Satan will fall. It is, then a logical fallacy to claim that this could be the case. If Satan is casting out Satan, then Satan is negating his own power. How then, could Satan give Jesus power, if by doing so, he is negating his own power? The Pharisees had no answer to Jesus’ logic because it was the logic of the Pharisees that is at fault.

The second response that Jesus give to the accusation of the Pharisees is that if He, Jesus, is casting “out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.” The argument is that if Satan cannot cast out Satan, then Jesus is casting out demons by the same authority as other exorcists. That is, through the power of God. If, then, the Pharisees claim that Jesus is casting out demons by the power Beelzebub, then the Pharisees must make the same claim for every exorcist among the Jews.

What is the other option? Jesus says, “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.” If it cannot be the power of Satan, then the work of Jesus must come from the Spirit of God, and if it is the Spirit of God, then Messiah has come.

Notice that in this passage two distinct kingdoms are contrasted. Jesus refers to the kingdom of Satan in verse 26, and the kingdom of God in verse 28. These two kingdoms stand in diametric opposition to one another and there is no middle ground. Notice also, that this one demon possessed man and his deliverance is tied to more than this one incident. There are kingdom ramifications to what has happened as Jesus delivers the man.

We need to understand that our lives are not island in the sea; we are not isolated individuals with no connection to anything, or anyone beyond our own front doors. The drunk who beats his wife or abuses his children in secret my think that no one outside a small circle of people know what is going on, but the truth is that kingdoms are colliding. The kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light are at war. We know the outcome, and yet there

are still battles raging as we move toward the ultimate destruction and dismantling of Satan's power and influence.

### **BINDING THE STRONGMAN**

Jesus appeals to the "strongman" (or mighty man) analogy, first found in Isaiah. Jesus asks, "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."

Isaiah writes in chapter 49, verses 24 through 26:

24 "Can the prey be taken from the mighty man,  
Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?"

25 Surely, thus says the LORD,

"Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away,  
And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued;

For I will contend with the one who contends with you,  
And I will save your sons.

26 "And I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh,  
And they will become drunk with their own blood as with  
sweet wine;

And all flesh will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior,  
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." NAS

Notice what Isaiah writes. He says that God is going to rescue his people from the hands of the "mighty man" from the grip of the "tyrant." The oppressors will be defeated and God will reveal Himself as their Savior. By using the analogy of "binding the strongman" Jesus is saying that in bringing deliverance to those who are in spiritual bondage, He is showing to all who know the Scriptures, that He is the Messiah, He is the Savior.

Jesus was able to go into Satan's house and plunder him of the souls he thought he had. Jesus was able to bind Satan and thereby work with absolute authority in this world. Some have asked when it was that Jesus bound Satan. It has been suggested that in defeating Satan in the wilderness that Jesus demonstrated power over Satan and that in overcoming the temptations thrust at Him, Jesus rendered Satan powerless to stop or hinder Jesus in His ministry upon the earth.

Going back to that encounter we see that Jesus used the Word of God to bind Satan. Jesus said, "It is written, it is written, it is written" and Satan was forced to flee back into the shadows from which he came. I will repeat again, that there is power in the Word of God. Not so much as an incantation or something we can speak like we are quoting some magical quote that will work for our benefit. The power of the Word is found in that fact that the Word has abides in us, and we live according to the Word. Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7, KJV). Binding Satan is not as much an act of quoting Scripture at him, or praying that Satan be bound at the beginning of a service, as it is of allowing the life of Christ and the teachings of Christ to be real and dynamic in us on an ongoing basis.

As such, living a victorious life is a matter of choosing sides. Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad." There is no neutral territory. There is no middle ground. It is war, and we have to choose sides. The Bible casts this decision in black and white terms. It is either hot or cold, light or dark, right or wrong, good or evil.

The works of Jesus being good, demonstrate that He is from the kingdom of heaven, and those who are a part of this kingdom will reflect that same goodness.

**CHAPTER TWELVE**  
**BLASPHEMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

<b>Matthew 12:31-32</b>	<b>Mark 3:28-30</b>
31 "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 32 Anyonewho speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. NKJV	28 "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; 29 but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"-- 30 because they said, "He has an unclean spirit." NKJV

These words of Jesus are sober words of warning that should be given due respect. However, I suspect that for many, the misunderstanding of these words have caused many people countless hours of panic and despair. After all, this is the one sin in the entire Bible that appears to have no remedy. Jesus clearly says, “the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.”

As a child these words rang in my ears, when after a powerful worship service someone would begin to dance or shout or roll in the floor while under the influence of the Holy Spirit, I would see something that struck me funny and I’d catch myself laughing. Inevitably I would go home and spend a sleepless night wondering if I had blasphemed the Holy Spirit. I would be afraid to close my eyes for fear that the Rapture was coming and I would be left behind because I laughed at someone in the Spirit.

Then there have been those people whom I have counseled who came to me in tears, convinced that they had blasphemed the Holy Spirit and therefore there was no remedy for their sin. I've had parents come to me weeping because they thought that their son or daughter had blasphemed the Holy Spirit and were, therefore doomed to hell.

In each of these instances the despair was needless because in none of these cases did anyone I counseled nor I have anything to fear. Let's break it down and look at what Jesus was saying.

## **CONTEXT**

It is almost impossible to properly understand a text without wrestling with the context. It is necessary to understand where the text stands in relation to the surrounding text, as well as the historical, social and cultural contexts. Our text follows the previous lesson. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus had cast the demon out of the man and His critics were claiming that Jesus had cast the demon out by the power of Beelzebub, that is, by Satan himself. Jesus responded by saying that a house divided against itself could not stand. Then, Jesus says:

He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

Another guide in exegeting Scripture is that when you see the word “therefore,” you should ask yourself what it is there for. Jesus said, in essence, “If you’re not with me you’re against me . . . therefore, every sin will be forgiven except blasphemy against the Spirit.”

In answering the criticism that He had cast out the demon by the power of Satan, Jesus spoke of the divided house, as well as challenging these Pharisees to answer the question as to what power their disciples cast out demons. After pointing out the fallacy of their argument Jesus concludes by saying, “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Jesus is making the claim, then, that He is casting out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the nature of the Messiah; He is the anointed One from heaven. If logic would indicate that Jesus casts out demons by the Holy Spirit, then the logic that follows is that Jesus is the Messiah. And if Jesus is the Messiah, then the kingdom of God was imminent.

These Pharisees were in danger of blaspheming the Holy Spirit because they were attributing the power of the Spirit (because they said, "He has an unclean spirit", Mark 3:30), which was at work in Christ, to Satan. They were denying the reality of who Jesus was, what His source of power was, and the presence of the Holy Spirit at work in Him.

Let’s look that positive statement that Jesus makes in verse 31. Jesus begins by saying, “Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven” with one exception, “blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.” There is good news in that statement. If we lay aside blasphemy of the Holy Spirit for the moment, then we see

that all other sins and blasphemy will be forgiven. That covers a lot of territory. Jesus even said that they could attack Him personally, they could “speak a word against the Son of Man,” and they could be forgiven (v. 32).

However, “the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.” “Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.”

### **WORD STUDY**

According to Strong’s Greek dictionary of the Bible, the word “blaspheme” is from the Greek word, *blasphemos*, which means, “scurrilous, i.e. calumnious (against men), or (specially) impious (against God).” It is from two words in the Greek, *blapto* and *pheme*. *Blapto* means, “to hinder, i.e. (by implication) to injure” and *pheme* means, “a saying, i.e. rumor (“fame”).” Together they would mean, “an injurious rumor that hinders.” It means to knowingly speak against or to misrepresent the truth.

### **WHAT IS BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, however, means more than simply saying something against the Holy Spirit. It would include the idea of saying or believing something which would hinder the Spirit’s work in one’s life.

All of this, of course, begs the question as to what it means to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Many scholars conclude that to blaspheme the Holy Spirit is not a onetimeact that damns a person for eternity, but is an ongoing denial of the work of the Spirit through Christ and in one’s own life. Which is to say, that to blaspheme the Holy Spirit is the continued refusal to respond the

Holy Spirit's work in revealing the truth of Christ as our Savior and therefore to refuse to submit to His Lordship in our lives.

In short, person who refuses the offer of salvation through Christ, as presented to the unbeliever through the work of the Holy Spirit, is denying in word and in action the work of grace in our lives. Further, outside of grace there is no salvation, neither in this life or in the life to come. There is no salvation, there is no hope of heaven, there is no forgiveness for those who will not acknowledge the work of the Spirit in revealing Jesus as the Christ. Salvation is a gift from God, but the gift can only be received through repentance and faith. To refuse to place faith in Christ, or to repent of our sins will keep us from the place of grace in our lives.

#### **FINAL OBSERVATIONS**

I have always assured folks who have come to altar in terror, sure that they have committed the unpardonable sin and are unable to be saved, that the surest sign that they have not committed the unpardonable sin is the very fact that they desire to be saved. There is a place in some the life of some where they have so embraced sin and rebuffed the wooing of the Spirit that God gives them over to, as Paul says in Romans 1:28, "a reprobate mind." They know the truth, but reject it with finality. These are people whom God knows, in His omniscience, will never respond to the Holy Spirit, therefore His Spirit no longer strives with that man or woman. These people who know that their works will lead to judgment, but who do not care. These people will never come crying to altar because they have sealed their own fate and the Spirit no longer pulls upon their heart.

Anyone who desire to know God, to experience His forgiveness and to submit their lives to Him will in no wise be cast

out (Jn. 6:37). The fact that the Holy Spirit is still drawing them is the best evidence that they have not been turned over to a reprobate mind and are, therefore, still candidates for grace.

**CHAPTER THIRTEEN**  
**OUR NAME IS LEGION**

Matt 8:28-34	Mark 5:1-20	Luke 8:26-39
<p>28 When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. 29 And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" 30 Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. 31 So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." 32 And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran</p>	<p>5:1 Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. 2 And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, 4 because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. 7 And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with</p>	<p>26 Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27 And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" 29 For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. 30 Jesus</p>

<p>violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. 33 Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. 34 And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region. NKJV</p>	<p>You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me." 8 For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!" 9 Then He asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many." 10 Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. 11 Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. 12 So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that we may enter them." 13 And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea. 14 So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. 15 Then they came to</p>	<p>asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. 31 And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. 32 Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. And they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. 33 Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. 34 When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. 35 Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. 36 They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-</p>
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	<p>Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. 16 And those who saw it told them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed, and about the swine. 17 Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region. 18 And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. 19 However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." 20 And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled. NKJV</p>	<p>possessed was healed. 37 Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. 38 Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him. NKJV</p>
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This account of Jesus casting the demons out of the demoniac(s) of the Gadarenes is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. However, Matthew's account differs from Mark and Luke in that, Matthew places the event before the account of Jesus

casting the demon out of the blind and mute man, while in Mark's Gospel it would appear that the event of the Gadarenes comes afterward. Also, Matthew includes two men who are demon possessed, while Mark and Luke speak only of one.

These differences do not necessarily mean that we have an error; it only suggests that the events in the life of Jesus are not always in strict chronological order, but may be placed where they are for purposes of emphasis and theme of teaching. John, for example, mentions the account of Jesus cleansing the temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, while the synoptic writers place it shortly before His passion. The reason may be that it happened twice, in which case neither the Synoptic writers nor John give both accounts, or it may be that John has placed the account at the beginning for purposes of developing a Christological theology which presupposes the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Further, with respect to whether there were two demoniacs or one, it seems the most reasonable answer would be that there were two, but that one was more violent and infamous than the other and Mark and Luke focus on him rather than both men.

For the purpose of this lesson we will rely upon the account as given in Mark's Gospel in as much as it provides more detail than either Matthew or Luke.

## **THE ENCOUNTER**

Jesus had just crossed the Sea of Galilee from Galilee into Gadara. On the way come through a storm, which after the disciples awoke Him from a sleep, Jesus miraculously calmed. Surrounding the town of Gadara is a region known as the country of the Gadarenes, or as Matthew calls it, Gergesenes. In this area

was a place called a “necropolis” or “city of the dead.” There were certain people who lived in among the tombs in the graveyard. Often these were outcasts from normal society. This was the case of the demon-possessed man.

Interestingly, when Jesus came to this area and stepped out of the boat this man immediately came out of the tombs to meet Jesus as He disembarked. It seems that Jesus came to this area for one purpose, that is, to meet and deliver this man. There is nothing else recorded that Jesus did here other than deliver this man (or as Matthew notes, these men) from the demons.

One might think that a person who is demon-possessed would avoid Jesus, and yet earlier we saw the demon-possessed man in the synagogue. Now another demon-possessed man comes to meet Jesus as soon as He is in the region. In verse six Mark tells us that as soon as the man saw Jesus coming from afar, “he ran and worshipped him.”

It seems to me that even a person who is demon-possessed possesses the power to seek deliverance. Most of the cases of exorcism that I’ve seen or been involved in occurred in the church. I recall a man who came to my church who needed deliverance and following a Christmas program I prayed with this man and saw his life change from this one powerful encounter.

## **THE MAN**

The text gives us some insight into the effects of demon possession in this man’s life:

**First**, verse 3 tells us that this man chose to live among the tombs, he sought a place of death to dwell in.

**Second**, we are told that this man could not be controlled. Neither society nor law could restrain this man.

**Third**, he apparently possessed superhuman strength. In verse 4 Mark writes, “He had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces.”

**Fourth**, he could not be reasoned with. Mark says, “Neither could anyone tame him.”

**Fifth**, he engaged in self-destructive behavior. He didn’t sleep, he was depressed, and he physically mutilated himself by cutting himself with stones.

**Sixth**, Luke’s Gospel tells us in chapter 8 verse that the man did not wear any clothes.

Having looked at those symptoms, do we see any similarities in society today? Let me make a couple observations that will make some people uncomfortable. I realize that in the past, how a person dressed, especially women, was a topic that was discussed *ad nauseum*, and it seems that churches who came from the holiness movement were obsessed with how people dressed. But as always, the pendulum continues to swing, and now the topic of modest apparel is seldom addressed. However, at the risk of sounding prudish, let me simply observe that when Adam and Eve sinned, they saw that they were naked, and they ran from the Lord. Were they naked before they sinned? Or was nakedness the result of sin?

Notice in the Old Testament that when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai that the people were naked and worshipping a golden calf, “Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) (Ex 32:25, KJV).

When one army wanted to humiliate another, they stripped them naked from the waist down. 2 Samuel 10:4 records this: “Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away.”

I read about Jim Jones and the techniques he used to brainwash people. One of the things he did was force the people to strip naked and walk in front of crowds of people. And it is obvious that Jim Jones was demon-possessed.

Then in our text, one of the symptoms of this man's depraved spiritual and mental state was the fact that he refused to wear clothes. There is something being said here that we need to hear. Then this past Superbowl we saw a woman undulating on stage with a man to the tune of a vulgar song which ended with him baring her breast before a worldwide audience estimated to have been one billion.

There has been an outcry against this act on her part, but the outcry, in my opinion is largely hypocritical because the fact of the matter is that nudity is commonplace on cable television. Further, scantily clad women and men is the norm in most rock and hip-hop videos. I am convinced that the Bible gives us clear evidence that there is a correlation between a willingness to ignore common and time honored values of modesty, and demonic activity in society.

Unfortunately, the church has become so afraid of being called legalists and afraid of turning away potential members that we are more willing to turn our heads to the problem than to simply tell the very truth that can set the people free. Freedom is not baring one's body. That is bondage to peer pressure and media hype. Freedom is the ability to adhere to standards of modesty regardless of what the fashion industry parades as being cool or in style.

### **THE WORDS OF THE DEMONS**

It seems that even though the man came running to worship Jesus, the demons were imploring Jesus to leave them alone. The man said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"

Notice again the extent to which the demons are able to recognize who Jesus really is, while very people Jesus came to redeem seem oblivious to this fact. Also, as noted earlier, it may be the case that by using Jesus' name that the demons thought they could gain control of Him and the encounter.

The demons continued, "I implore You by God that You do not torment me." Mark tells us that the reason the demons said this was because Jesus had already said, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit."

Then Jesus asked the demon what his name was. The demon replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many."

The word "legion" is of Latin origin and was used to refer to a Roman regiment. A Roman regiment varied in number from between 3,000 to 6,000 men. So for the demon to refer to himself

(or themselves) as “Legion” implied that this man was possessed with more than one demon, in fact, he was possessed by a great number of demons. In short, then, Jesus was outnumbered by many demons in one man, but Jesus is always a majority.

Even though there was a legion of demons, and only one Jesus, the demons begged Jesus not to send them out into the country. It seems, that demonic spirits gain some pleasure from experiencing the sensory capabilities of humans. They did not want to become disembodied spirits, which was their natural state. They did not want to be sent out as a vapors in the wind, but wanted another body to reside in.

The demons seeing a large herd of swine feeding nearby begged Jesus to sent them into the swine. They may not have considered the implications of the request, however, it seems Jesus knew what the results would be so “at once Jesus gave them permission.” But when the unclean spirits entered the unclean beasts, the beasts ran violently down a cliff and drowned in the sea. It seems that not even pigs could endure the presence of demons possessing their bodies.

### **THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE**

One would think that the people in the village would have been glad to know that this man, or as Matthew records, that these men were no longer a menace to society. This wild man had been a problem. This wild man could not be tamed. This wild man was frightening and pitiful. No doubt the people would have welcomed anyone who could solve their problem, but they did not want their problem solved, if it cost them their pigs.

A friend of mine wrote a sermon entitled, “Solve Our Problems, But Save Our Pigs.” That’s the attitude of many people. They want God to save their marriage, get their kids off drugs, and help to restore their finances, but they don’t want to give up their pigs, they don’t want it to cost them their pleasures in sin for season. They don’t want to have to lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset them.

The men who had been watching over the herd of swine ran to town to tell the owners what had happened. When the owners of the pigs came to see what had happened, they saw Jesus with the formerly possessed man. But the man was different. Now the man was “sitting and clothed and in his right mind.” Notice the three evidences of this man’s deliverance. First, he was “sitting,” that is, he was able to find rest and repose where once he was restless and wild. Second, the man was “clothed.” God covered Adam and Eve’s nakedness with the skin of an animal. Here this man, now delivered, has covered his nakedness. Third, the man is “in his right mind.” This means that the man was now reasonable, calm, rational and sane.

The people who saw this were afraid. In their fear, and perhaps in their anger at losing their swine, they pleaded with Jesus that He would leave their region. Mark tells us that Jesus got into the boat. Jesus rarely stays where He is not welcomed. Besides, it appears that Jesus had done what He came to do in delivering this man.

This man, however, wanted to go with Jesus. We are not told the whether or not this man is a Jew or a Gentile, but it seems that this region was predominately Gentile or there would not have been herds of swine around. Swine were and are considered a

ritually unclean animal and were avoided by Jews. Therefore, it is likely that this man was also Gentile because Jesus tells the man, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.”

Jesus turned the man into His first Gentile evangelist. Verse 20 says, “And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.”

Several things, relevant to our own personal issues of spiritual warfare, can be drawn from this account. First, it seems that if a person desires to be delivered, that is, to seek Christ in their life and freedom from demonic presence, the demons cannot stop him or her.

Second, it may seem like there is a legion of demons coming against you. It may seem like you are facing demons at work, demons at home, and demons on the highway. You may turn on your television and see demonic influence, pick up a magazine or newspaper and see demonic presence, log on to the internet and see it there. But our text tells us that One Jesus is always more than a match for any multitude of demons, whereas, seven men are no match for one demon.

Third, we do not have to be ignorant of Satan devices. Not in our own lives, not in our home and not in the church. There are some things around us that are evidences of demonic influence and activity and we do not have become the victim. We can submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from us. But instead of resisting the devil, far too many people are resisting God and embracing social evils because it feels good.

I am reading a book entitled *The Sensate Culture*, and Dr. Brown, the author, notes that in history it is usually the case that art (both visual art and music) often predict where a society is headed and that the laws tend to lag behind. Which is to say, the secular music and art that we see and hear on radio, television, theater and museums, are telling us where we are headed. Then, once we get there, the law will then change to embrace and reinforce those changes.

For example, homosexuality was once renounced as a deviant lifestyle. Then it was considered risqué art. Next it was introduced subtly into primetime television. Now you are hard pressed to find a single television show where there isn't at least one homosexual character. The art proceeded. Then society caught up with the art. There are gay politicians, and gay parades, and now there are gay Episcopalian priests. Homosexuality is not taught as a deviant lifestyle, but as an alternative lifestyle in our public schools. No different from being a minority race.

Finally, as Dr. Brown predicted, the law change to embrace the changing social structure. Today the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that it is unconstitutional to ban homosexual marriages. The laws, now, will force every business, even Christian owned businesses, to treat homosexual marriages just like any other marriage.

The point is that there are obvious signs and indications of demonic activity and yet the church has been strangely apathetic or best ambivalent with respect to our response. This is war! It is not a war with flesh and blood, but is a war against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. Whereas some

churches have acquiesced to the social pressures, we must put on our armor, and having done all, to stand, stand!

We must not allow the lies of the enemy to pull us into the hog pen of sin, but we must be so full of Jesus, so powerfully anointed and appointed that when we walk into a situation that demons tremble, not at us but at the Jesus in us. We need to be the light in the darkness. We need to be the salt that seasons the society in which we live. We need to be the alternative to the degradation and depravity that is in the world. This is war!

**CHAPTER FOURTEEN**  
**SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

Matt 17:14-21 NKJV	Mark 9:16-29 NKJV	Luke 9:37-42 NKJV
<p>14 And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, 15 "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. 16 So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him." 17 Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me." 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast him out?" 20 So Jesus said to them, "Because of your</p>	<p>17 Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. 18 And wherever he seizes him, he throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast him out, but they could not." 19 He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." 20 Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. 21 So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22 And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water</p>	<p>37 Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him. 38 Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, "Teacher, I implore You, look on my son, for he is my only child. 39 And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. 40 So I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." 41 Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." 42 And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed him. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him</p>

<p>unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. 21 However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."</p>	<p>to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." 23 Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" 26 Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast him out?" 29 So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." NKJV</p>	<p>back to his father.</p>
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Although I never had to go to war while I served in the United States Air Force, I did have to go through boot camp. The purpose of this little camp in San Antonio was to make Airmen out of young men and women. The purpose was to prepare us to become military personnel who could be counted upon to perform during a time of war. The same is true of the boot camp in other branches of the military. They make them run through the drills so that when the war is on, they are physically and mentally prepared.

Spiritual warfare also requires preparation. If we think we can sit around and grow spiritually lax and lazy and still be ready when the battle is on, we got another think comin'. This is war!

### **THE NEED**

Looking at our text, which is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels, we see a father desperately seeking deliverance for his son. The boy's life is in peril as a result of the demonic presence in this child. So the father, apparently hearing about the ministry of Jesus, took his son to Jesus' disciples to be delivered. Unfortunately, the disciples had been ineffective in helping this father or his son. Chapter 17, verse 14 of Matthew's Gospel tells us that "a man came to [Jesus] kneeling down to Him and saying, 'Lord, have mercy on my son.'"

The man did not appeal to anything other than the mercy of Jesus. He did not claim any special social status, or religious or political influence, all he could hope for was the mercy of Jesus. And thankfully, He is a merciful God.

The man describes the need. In Mark's Gospel the man graphically describes the malady that his son was experiencing. He said, "My son . . . has a mute spirit, and whenever he seizes

him, he throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid.” Further down, in verse 22, the father continues, saying, “He has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him.”

Some have said that this boy had nothing other than epilepsy and that in this pre-scientific society they viewed such things as being the result an evil spirit. However, the text clearly indicates that this boy did, in fact, have an evil spirit because Jesus speaks to the spirit and commands him to leave the boy. This does not teach that everyone who has epilepsy is demon possessed. But it does show us some of the ways that an evil spirit can manifest in a person.

From the description the father gives, it seems clear that this spirit intended to bring bodily harm to this boy and if Jesus had not delivered him from the spirit it may have eventually taken the boy’s life.

Questioning by Jesus reveals that this son had been plagued with this condition since he was a child. We might wonder how or why God would allow a demon to enter into an innocent child. And we have seen far too many accounts where psychotic parents were convinced that their children had a demon and ended up taking the lives of their own child in an attempt to exercise the demon. While this text indicates that it is possible for a child to become demon possessed, there is nothing in Scripture to suggest that we have to go through some kind of ritualistic exorcism to bring about deliverance. Jesus shows us that if we have enough of Him in us, all we have to do is command the demon to leave, and it has to leave. In addition, it should give us pause and consider the

promise that the child of a Christian is sanctified through the faith of his or her parents (1 Cor. 7:14).

### **THE INTERCESSION**

This boy's father was desperate. He reminds me of so many other parents I've know who were desperately seeking God's intervention in their child's life. For some it has been a medical condition, but more often it has been a spiritual condition. I've prayed and cried with many parents through the years who did not know what to do or say to try to turn their wayward children back to God. And I've seen and heard that same desperation that we see here with this father.

The father appeals to the mercy of Jesus (Matt. 17:15), and then to the compassion of Jesus (Mark 9:22). These two things are hallmarks of Jesus' ministry.

The father had already brought the boy to the disciples and their efforts to effect deliverance had been ineffective. He said, "I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast him out, but they could not" (Mark 9:18). Jesus simply says, "O faithless generation, how long shall I bear with you?" Some would question whether Jesus is talking about the father or the disciples, or the entire Jewish race. Others see a reference to all unbelievers here, that is, the human race in its fallen sinful condition. More to the point, however, what we see in Jesus words are a denouncement of religious people, specifically those who claim to be His disciples, but who do not have the power to win the victory in times of spiritual warfare.

### **THE POWER OF JESUS**

In contrast the spiritual impotence of the disciples, Jesus is able to do something. He told the father, “Bring him to Me.” This is the role of pastors, elders, altar workers and intercessors. Our role isn’t to get our hands on them so that we can do something. Our role is to get them to Jesus. Our role is to have the life and power of Jesus at work within us so that when we pray it isn’t us, but is the Spirit of Christ working through us.

When they brought the boy to Jesus the demon recognized the King of kings and immediately begin to convulse the boy. The boy “fell to the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth” (Mark 9:20).

Jesus asked how long the boy had been like this. The man said, “From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and the water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

Notice that this man’s request would not have satisfied many of the Word of faith models for prayer. First, the man said “If”—“If you can do anything.” This doesn’t sound very confident. It sounds like there may be a bit of doubt in the man’s request. Second, the man admits to “unbelief” in verse 24 of Mark’s Gospel. But the man appeals to the compassion of Christ, and it is the compassion of Christ that often moved Him to help people who would later reject Him.

The man said, “If you can do anything.” To which Jesus responded, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Jesus draws a connection between His help and our faith. It isn’t a question as to whether or not Jesus can do something. He is more than able to meet any circumstance or situation and secure the victory. But we must be willing to put our

confidence, trust and hope in Him. Faith is required, but it isn't the power of our faith that makes the difference, it is the power of the God in whom we place our faith that makes the difference. It isn't faith in faith, that will gain the miracle, but faith in Almighty God that will be rewarded.

It may only be faith the size of a mustard seed, but when we place that faith in the God who called the universe into existence out of nothing more than the power of His spoken Word, then that mustard seed faith can move mountains.

Jesus didn't say what He did to discourage the man. He had already encountered ill-prepared disciples for that. He had already asked for help from Jesus' disciples and they had failed. He had already been disappointed. Jesus wasn't trying to push the man further down, but Jesus was about to lift the man up. "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."

The man said, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." Those words are somewhat enigmatic. "I believe; help my unbelief." What does that mean? Jesus could have said, "Hold up. Either you believe, or you don't. Which is it?"

Perhaps the man was saying the same thing many of us have experienced. We believe God can, but we have difficulty believing He will. Or maybe we believe that He will do it for others, but we have a hard time believing He will do it for us.

How does Jesus respond to this level of faith? Does He reject the man and refuse to help him? Or does Jesus restore and revive the man's faith?

Jesus doesn't say anything else to this father. Instead, Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit. He said, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" Not only does Jesus cast the demon out, He locks the door behind him!

The spirit in the boy cried out, the boy fell into convulsions, but the demon came out. The boy looked lifeless and many thought the boy was dead. "But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose" (Mark 9:27).

I suspect that two prayers were answered in this event. First, the request that his son be delivered from this spirit was answered. And second, the prayer that Jesus help his unbelief was answered. Jesus isn't in the business of tearing down our faith, but in building up our faith. In His mercy and compassion, Jesus is able to take our mustard seed faith and make us mountain movers.

### **THE LESSON FOR DISCIPLES**

Later, when they had come into the house, the disciples asked Jesus why they had not been able to cast the demon out of this boy. Many of us have probably asked a similar question. "Lord, why were we not victorious in that spiritual battle?" Or, "Lord, why haven't I seen you work in miraculous ways in my ministry?"

Jesus says in Matthew's Gospel, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

Again, it isn't faith in faith, but faith in God that makes the difference. The implication is that the disciples were trying to cast

the demon out by their own power or strength. You can have great faith in your own ability, and still fail to make a difference. Or you can have small faith in a great God and great things will follow.

In Matthew's Gospel, the first thing Jesus says in response to their question concerning their inability to cast the demon out, is, "unbelief." Which in the Greek simply means, "lack of faith." Yet the father admits to unbelief, and still Jesus answers his prayer. This is because this father was placing no confidence in the flesh, he was not trusting in himself to deliver his boy, but what faith he had, he was giving to Jesus and that made all the difference.

Now in Mark's Gospel, the reference to "unbelief" is not mentioned. Instead, Jesus says, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." In Matthew's Gospel Jesus tells them that lack of faith was one of the problems, "However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

This is where I wanted us to get to in this lesson. The implication is that if these disciples had been paying a little more attention to the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting, and if they had placed their faith in God, then they could have cast the demon out themselves. Yet, even if they did have faith, unless they had been spiritually prepared through prayer and fasting they still would not have been successful.

There is no shortcut to being spiritually prepared for the battles that will come. The enemy is going to show up and he is going to bring situations into our lives which will not be remedied with a "now I lay me down to sleep" prayer. There are going to be battles where the victory or the defeat will hinge upon the extent to which we have prepared ourselves spiritually for the conflict.

The two things Jesus mentions are prayer and fasting. Which begs the question as to how long are we to pray, and how often are we to fast?

### **Prayer**

Prayer should become a lifestyle. Jesus said:

Luke 18:1

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; KJV

Luke 21:36

36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. KJV

The Apostle Paul said:

1 Thess 5:17

17 Pray without ceasing. KJV

1 Tim 2:8

8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. KJV

Often, after ministering to people through miraculous means, Jesus would get alone on a mountain to spend time with His Heavenly Father in prayer (Matt. 14:23). Sometimes He would pray through the night (Luke 6:12).

On the night of His persecution and trial, Jesus went with His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. He separated Himself from His disciples for personal communion with His Father, but He asked the disciples to pray. He came back and they were asleep. He asked them, “Could you not watch with me one hour?” (Matt. 26:40).

The importance of prayer with respect to spiritual warfare is evident in the warning Christ gives us when He said, “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:38, KJV, see also, Luke 22:46).

Prayer is necessary. Not just so we can lay out our wish list to God and ask Him to give us this and that and do this and that for us. Prayer is more than talking and asking.

In addition to the prayer of petition, there are prayers of intercession where prayer itself is an act of war against the enemy’s camp. But there is something else. It may not even require words on our part. Prayer is not only communication, but prayer is an act of communion, that is fellowship, that is dwelling in the presence of God where the power and glory of God permeates our being. The Apostle Paul describes it like this:

Rom 8:26-27

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 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. KJV

There is that place in prayer where we don't even use words, but our groanings become a prayer through the Holy Spirit. In that place the "Spirit helpeth our infirmities". Which is to say, the Spirit strengthens us.

No wonder then, that we told to pray always. We need prayer to prepare us for the battles ahead. Through prayer we seek and find the Captain of our Salvation and from Him we gain direction and obtain the battle plan for the conflict ahead. In prayer God can give us insight into what lies ahead and prepare us for conflicts we don't even see coming. And through prayer, we become spiritually stronger, our faith firmer, and the power of God's presence more tangible in our lives.

### **Fasting**

We are told that fasting is also a part of the preparation for spiritual conflict. While praying is often mentioned apart from the discipline of fasting, fasting is rarely spoken of apart from praying. The mere act of depriving oneself of food for a season may have some health benefits, but for fasting to be of spiritual value it must be connected with a communion with God.

What is the purpose of fasting? Fasting does several things: It reminds us of our dependency upon God. It reveals the weakness of the flesh. It allows us to focus upon our spiritual needs while denying the passions and desires of the flesh. It allows for clarity of thought helps us to become more attuned to the voice of God speaking into our hearts.

Prayer and fasting builds up and nourishes the spiritual man just as a good diet and exercise nurture the physical man. Who often should we fast? In Scripture there were called fasts for times

of repentance and revival. There were scheduled fasts, such as leading up the Passover. In Jesus day the people usually fasted once a week, and the fast was from one sundown to the next—twenty-four hours.

Jesus does not give us some legalistic requirement, but simply says, “when you fast” (Matt 6:16). He doesn’t address how often, but how. He tells us that a fast is not for public display, nor to show others how spiritual we are. A fast is unto the Lord. We are not to be like the hypocrites who try to get public attention and adoration for their self-deprivation. Instead, we are to take a bath, wash our face, and keep the fast unto God.

Prayer and fasting are necessary elements in the process of preparation for the battles ahead. There will be demons, and there will be battles that will be won or lost by the extent to which we have prepared ourselves for the conflict.

When I read this text I have to honestly ask myself, If I had been one of the disciples that day, would I have been ready to face the demon? Or would I have heard Jesus’ stinging rebuke, “O faithless generation, how long shall I bear with you?”

What about it? Are you spiritually prepared for spiritual war? Even as evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, are you ready for the conflict? Unless you are person who regularly engages in the practices of prayer and fasting, you are not as prepared as you could and should be.

## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN**

### **DELIVERANCE FROM A DISTANCE**

Mark 7:24-30

24 From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. 25 For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. 26 The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." 28 And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs." 29 Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." 30 And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed. NKJV

There are time and situations in life when it seems as though the remedy to our problem is beyond our reach. There are times when time or distance seems to separate us from contact or direct confrontation with spiritual attacks and battles. For example, I have not seen my father in over twenty years, and until recently I had no idea where he was. Even now, he does not know that I know where he now resides. He deserted my mother, my sister and me many years ago. Over the years I have not been able to go him or witness to him. But that does not mean that I cannot engage in spiritual warfare for the salvation of my father. Many times I have prayed that God dispatch angels and believers to go to him and touch his life with the gospel.

I have a friend by the name of Hong Yang who is Chinese and he told me of a time when he was in America and he was on the telephone talking to a friend of his in China. His friend was a member of the Communist Party in China, but as Hong talked to and witnessed to his friend the Holy Spirit touched his friend's heart and the man gave his life to Christ. That is the nature of this warfare; we can be kneeling in prayer at the altar in the Conyers Church of God and be doing spiritual battle on the other side of the earth. In fact, as is the case of my father, I didn't even know where he was, but God knows where he is. So I can engage in spiritual warfare even though I may not know where the battle is, but I know that when I pray for my father, God hears my prayers and God can orchestrate events in my father's life so that he flips through the television channels and accidentally find a preacher speaking biblical truth, then he can be tuning in the radio, and come across a Christian song with a powerful message. Then later in the day God could send a believer with a track to my father.

Looking at our text we see that Jesus can cast out a demon from a distance.

### **THE INTERCEDING MOTHER**

Jesus was in the region of Tyre and Sidon and He did not want to cause a stir in the city and tried to slip silently into a house there, but word got out among the people coming to Him was a Gentile woman.

This woman was a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and by custom and culture she knew she would not be welcomed into a Jewish home, but this mother came on behalf of her young daughter. The Scripture says that her daughter had an unclean spirit. Which is a way of saying that her young daughter was

demon possessed. We are not given any detail about how this demon manifest in the girl, but it must have been dramatic and destructive for this mother to break with convention and come to a Jewish miracle worker who was seeking respite in a Jewish home.

She knew that she was not welcome here, but somehow she managed to get close enough to Jesus to ask Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. In fact, she came and fell at Jesus' feet and began to plead with him to deliver her daughter. Mark's Gospel tells us that she kept asking Jesus to do this for her. Apparently Jesus was not initially responding to her because she just kept asking.

As I noted in the previous lesson, prayer itself is one of the ways in which we engage in spiritual warfare. And one of the most common forms of prayer utilized in spiritual warfare is called importunity. That is a type of prayer where we ask and continue to ask until we see a breakthrough. It is a type of prayer where we refuse to become discouraged or doubtful because we do not see immediate results. This woman was importuning for her daughter.

### **THE TEST OF FAITH**

When Jesus finally did respond, His words did not appear to engender any hope that she would get the answer she was seeking. Jesus said, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."

The children He is referring to are the Jews, the people He had come to first as fulfillment of prophetic Scripture. His message and church would later reach beyond the Jewish nation to touch the Gentiles, but during His earthly ministry He restricted His ministry primarily to the Jews.

Jesus said, “Let the children be filled first.” This is, perhaps, and enigmatic way of referring to His ministry. Chronologically, it was to the Jews first, and then the Gentile.

The Gentiles, in Jewish thought, were dogs. And by referring to Gentiles as dogs Jesus is using the common language of the day. Such talk may have been insulting to this woman, but she was desperate for the sake of her daughter and was willing to endure any indignity if only this miracle worker from Galilee would deliver her daughter.

If we wear our feelings on our sleeve and expect to be victorious in spiritual warfare, then we are sadly mistaken. In spiritual warfare there will be times when we have cried all night, and prayed all day, and still it seems God is silent. Then, when He does begin to move, it looks like He is working contrary to what we want Him to do.

Why does God do this? It seems to me the God does this to test our faith. God does not tempt us, but He does test us for the purpose of clarifying our focus and purifying our faith. He sometimes allows us to go through the crucible in order to remove any hidden agenda's or any selfish ambitions. He brings us to the point of pure importunity, that place where nothing else matter except the salvation of our child, or the deliverance of our spouse, or the healing of our parent.

If we are not careful, we can begin to engage the enemy with a pure heart. All we want to do is preach Jesus. All we want to do is tell others of His love. But then the tempter snakes his way into our mind and suddenly it is not just about reaching the lost, but it is about making a name for myself. It is about getting

recognition from man and a stage upon which to perform. It is about money and applause and accolades.

God has a way, however, of bringing us back to the kernel of our original intent and the purity of our motives. He has a way of testing us and of separating the chaff from the wheat until we fall on our face at His feet in utter humility and submission. He has a way of getting down to the heart of the matter. But when we are so tested, we must respond with faith and grace.

### **THE HUMBLE RESPONSE**

Jesus just referred to her, albeit indirectly, as a dog. How would you respond to that? She serves as a good example of how to respond during times of testing. She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs.”

He asked, “Should the little dogs eat the children’s bread?” And she said, “Yes, if only the crumbs that fall from the table.”

She did not get angry. She did not walk away without her miracle. She did not fire back with an insult. All she did was respond in humility and deference. She said, in essence, “Lord, if all you can give me are the crumbs, I’ll take that.”

There are those who argue that we can command God and that we can bind Him by His Word, and all other kinds of nonsense. But the truth is that God is God and we are not. If we can get that premise down, then humility should follow.

When it comes to humanity, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, there is none righteous, no, not one.” Therefore, any good thing that we obtain from God is gain purely

by His grace. He doesn't owe any of us anything. But in grace He has promised us some things that require faith to acquire.

### **LONG DISTANCE DELIVERANCE**

After this woman responded to Jesus' apparent rebuff with faith and humility, Jesus said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." In other words, "Your response was so appropriate, so confident and so humble, that I will grant you your request."

We must remember, even in the heat of the battle, that the Lord is our help in a time of trouble. We are dependent upon Him for the victories we gain. If, then, it seems as though God isn't moving like we want Him to, or when we want Him to, then we need to maintain spiritual composure and trust Him. We must continue to respond humbly, even if we are importuning. That is, even if we have prayed the same prayer every night for the last twenty years and it seems that nothing is happening, the victory or defeat may hinge upon how we respond on the twenty-first year.

I haven't seen my father in over twenty years, and I plan to stop at his home unannounced to see him. I don't know how he might respond, but I know I've been praying for him for over twenty years and even if he slams the door in my face, I'll still be praying for him next year.

The response of this woman gained her the answer. Mark tells us that "when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed."

Notice that Jesus did not go to this woman's home. Yet her daughter was delivered. While we pray here, God can be working

there. We may never visit Jerusalem, and yet must continue to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. We may not be able to have much influence in our child's life after they are grown and moved out. But we can pray and God can be protecting them and ministering to them even in our absence.

I believe that even while our warfare may not be physically in front of us, we can still engage the enemy and win victories because God can reach where we can't do, He can do what we cannot do, and He can touch people that we cannot touch.

I believe that not only can God transcend geographical distances, He can also transcend time. I believe we can pray for our children while they are infants, and God will be going ahead of us in time to answer our prayers. We can be praying for grandchildren that we may never live to see. We can pray our country or our church today and the answer may come after we have already departed from this body and we are in the presence of the Lord.

God can touch from a distance. But we must be persistent and consistent in prayer. We must remain humble willing to respond in faith and submission to God's will in all things. Battles will be won or lost based upon how we respond to disappointment.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### **THE COMMISSION OF THE CHURCH**

Having explored some of the encounters Christ had with Satan and demonic spirits, I want to transition the conversation to the issue of the Church and spiritual warfare. In looking at this subject we will consider the commission Christ gave the church and the authority and power He provided for the Church to effectively wage this war.

One of the reasons Jesus came into humanity, was to serve as an example for believers. He did not come to show us how to live as little gods, but He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7, KJV), so that He might show us how we should live as redeemed humanity. There is a sense then, in which the entire life of Christ is an illustration of what God is looking for in the Church. Briefly, let’s note a few things.

1. At the very beginning of His public ministry Jesus was baptized. Baptism itself is a symbol of our own death and resurrection with Christ.
2. Immediately after His baptism the Holy Spirit descended in the form a dove and remained with Him. This is not to say that Jesus did not already have the Holy Spirit resident within Him (He was conceived through the Holy Spirit) but

that this represents an anointing, not with the oil the symbolized the Spirit, but with the real deal.

3. After being baptized and anointed, Jesus was tempted, where He triumphed over Satan.
4. Coming back from the wilderness, Jesus entered the synagogue and found the place in Isaiah where it is written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for He hath anointed me.”

After this, Jesus begins His public ministry of healing, delivering, and casting out demons. There is a message here for the Church that become clear as Jesus physical earthly ministry ends and the Church’s anointed ministry begins.

### **THE COMMISSIONING OF DISCIPLES**

As the Rabbi, or the Master, Jesus was a teacher. He gathered twelve apostles and several other disciples who watched Him and who listened to Him teach. They were with Him for two solid years. This was an intense internship that was intended to impart ministry skills and spiritual revelation. So, not only did Jesus cast out demons, He instructed His disciples and gave them the authority to do the same.

There were two evangelistic campaigns spearheaded by Jesus through His disciples. One was limited to the twelve, while the second included up to seventy disciples.

## **The Commissioning of the Twelve**

The commissioning of the twelve apostles for their evangelistic campaign is found in Matthew chapter 10, and in Mark chapter 6. Looking first at Matthew, we note that in the commission Jesus specifically instructs them:

5 Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 8 "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matt 10:5-8, NKJV).

Note the instruction in verse 8 to “cast out demons”. Then in the parallel found in Mark’s Gospel we read:

7 And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. (Mark 6:7, NKJV).

In Matthew we read that Jesus instructs the disciples to cast out demons, and in Mark we read that He gave them authority over the unclean spirits. God never calls us to do anything that He will not empower us to accomplish. These twelve were given that authority, however, as we read earlier, even that authority had to be seasoned with prayer and fasting in order to be effective against some particularly strong demons.

## **The Commissioning of the Seventy Disciples**

In Luke's Gospel we do not find the account of the commissioning of the twelve, but instead we find Jesus sending out seventy. Some have suggested that these two accounts are the same, but that in one the writers focus only on the twelve, while Luke includes other disciples who went with the twelve on the campaign.

The commissioning of the seventy is found in Luke chapter 10. Looking at verses 17 through 20 we find that whether this is a separate journey from the accounts in Matthew and Mark or not, there are some parallels in the statements of commission. Also, as verses 17 through 20 reveal, these disciples, and not just the twelve apostles also had authority over demonic spirits in Jesus' name.

17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." 18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:17-20, NKJV).

Notice that these disciples are delightfully surprised to find that "even the demons are subject to us in Your name." They apparently engaged in spiritual warfare and found that in Jesus' name they were able to win the victories. Jesus, however, is not amazed and He tells them that this is expected; this is to be the norm in the Christian life. He said, "I give you authority to

trample on serpents, and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy.” The real source of joy and reason for rejoicing is that our names have been written in heaven.

### **The Commissioning of the Church**

As Jesus was about to ascend to the right hand of His Father, Jesus left the Church with some specific instructions about what our role should be here upon earth. We have what is known as the Great Commission found in Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 28, verses 18 through 20. Here the commission includes going, teaching, baptizing, and making disciples. Another place where the commission is found is in Mark’s Gospel in chapter 16. While some will argue that the last seven verses are not in the original manuscript, the fact is that it is found in many early manuscripts and is recognized early in the life of the Church as a commission from Christ. In this commission we have further instruction to go and preach, but there is also a promise that there will be signs following believers:

17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mark 16:17-18, NKJV)

Notice, Jesus says here, “In My name they will cast out demons.” So this was the commission and the promise to the twelve apostles, it was the promise to and example of the seventy disciples, and it is the commission of the Church. We are to

engage the enemy and to take authority. We are, as James writes in his Epistle, to “submit . . . to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7, KJV).

Along with this commission in Luke, we see further instruction and promise from Jesus in John’s Gospel, chapter 14:

12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.  
13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (John 14:12-14, NKJV).

There is a promise of power in this promise. He gave us an example to follow, and in His name, we can become instruments of healing and deliverance in people’s lives. Furthermore, when we operate in the power of Jesus name the Father is glorified in the Son. Therefore, when we operate and wage spiritual warfare in Jesus’ name, we have the assurance that victory is sure.

### **The Power to Perform the Mission**

Not only does Jesus give us the commission, and instruct us to heal the sick and cast out demons, Jesus promises us that though He must ascend to the right hand of the Father, He will not leave us alone. In John chapter 14, verses 15 through 18 Jesus give us this promise:

15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- 17 the

Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. (John 14:15-18, NKJV).

Notice, Jesus tells the disciples that the Holy Spirit had already been with them, but they were about to enter into a more powerful and dynamic relationship with the Spirit—"will be in you".

Then in John 20:22 we are told that Jesus "breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (NKJV). It is clear that Jesus intended for His Church, which He had commissioned to preach the gospel, teach His commandments, heal the sick and cast out demons, should be empowered by the same Spirit that had descended like a dove upon Him at the beginning of His public ministry.

Indeed, in Luke's Gospel, the commission to the Church makes it clear that Jesus intended for the believers to be empowered by the Spirit before embarking upon their mission and commission:

46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And you are witnesses of these things. 49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:46-49, NKJV).

Jesus told them that the “Promise of My Father” was coming. This is, no doubt the promise that is explained and expanded in John’s Gospel, namely that the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, would anoint them for their ministry. In fact, Jesus tells them to wait in the city of Jerusalem until they are clothed in the power from on high.

Then in Acts chapter one, Jesus clearly states that the promise and the power that He is referring to here is the baptism in the Holy Spirit:

4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:4-8, NKJV).

The power needed to complete the mission of witnessing, preaching, teaching, healing, and deliverance, would come through Jesus name and by the power of the Holy Spirit working in the Church.

## **CHAPTER SEVENTEEN**

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

For various reasons it seems that understanding the Holy Spirit as a “person”, the third person of the Godhead, has been difficult for the Christian world. In cults that have spun off from Christianity the ambiguity is magnified. The Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons have no place for the Holy Spirit, except as an emanation from God. The “Jesus Only” (United Pentecostal) folks view the Spirit as a mode of existence of Jesus. But even within the mainline Christian denominations the place, person and role of the Holy Spirit has been given little attention and when the issue was addressed the result often left much of the work of the Spirit out of the equation.

Hebert Lockyer comments, “The error of treating the Spirit in an impersonal way can be traced back to the third century when the theory was advanced that the Holy Spirit was a mere influence, an exertion of divine energy and power, an emanation from God.”

The rise of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, with a renewed interest in and appreciation for the gifts of the Spirit and operation of the Spirit in the church and life of believers, has resulted in a new emphasis on the Holy Spirit. This emphasis is growing in all segments of Christianity and is not limited to Pentecostals and Charismatics.

To begin a study on the subject of the Holy Spirit, especially as He relates to the topic of spiritual warfare, it is important to lay some foundation. For example, the word for “spirit” in both Hebrew and Greek, is helpful.

### ***RUACH***

The Hebrew word for spirit is *ruach*. The first reference in the Bible to the Holy Spirit is found in Genesis 1:2 where we are told that “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” *Ruach* can mean, variously, “wind, breath, mind, and spirit.” This noun occurs 387 times in the Old Testament, usually in the feminine gender. The basic meaning is “air in motion” (TWOT). The modern Hebrew translation of the Old Testament, the TANAKH, often translates *ruach* as “wind”, and thus in impersonal force and not a distinct part of the Godhead. In Genesis 1:2, for example, the Hebrew bible states, “the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep, and a wind from God sweeping over the water” (*The New JPS Translation*). Whereas a modern Christian translation recognizes the person of the Holy Spirit in the verse. The *New International Version* translates the same verse to say, “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

For our purposes, we will concentrate on the use of *ruach* as a reference to the Spirit of God. This is the use employed in its first occurrence, that is, Genesis 1:2. At most points, context approves and the analogy of the New Testament strongly suggests that *ruach Yahweh* (Spirit of God) is the Holy Spirit, “in the fullest Christian sense” (a. F. Kirkpatrick, *Cambridge Bible, Psalms*, II, p. 184).

### ***PNEUMA***

The Greek word for spirit is *pneuma*. The gender of this word is neuter, however, New Testament Scripture consistently uses the masculine pronoun in reference to *pneuma* when the Holy Spirit is the reference. Which is to say, the Holy Spirit is referred to as “He” and not “It”. Like *ruach*, *pneuma* has various meanings and uses in scripture, such as, “wind, breath, to breath, disembodied man, the Holy (*hagios*) Spirit.”

Some have observed that the change in gender from feminine to masculine was gradual and perhaps inappropriate. Grammatical gender does not, however, imply sexual identity, but might still be important in understanding how “male and female” are collectively the “them” (Gen. 1:27) who are created in the “image” of God.

#### **“SPIRIT” IMPLIES PERSONHOOD**

When one thinks of a person, it is not so much the body that is thought of, but the personality. I have identical twin stepbrothers. Their bodies are genetically identical, but they are clearly two different people. What is it that makes them different? Their personalities.

We usually understand that when there is a death, the person has died, even if they were to keep the body alive on life support. What, then, is a person? It is the spirit, the living element of the biological being, that makes him or her a person. When the spirit is gone, that person no longer lives. Their eyes, liver, heart and lungs may be transplanted to another, but the donor is dead as a person even if many of his or her organs continue to live. The spirit defines the person and only in the spiritual realm does he or she still live.

When referring to the Holy Spirit, the use of the word “spirit” should suggest personhood. A body is not the defining characteristic of personhood, spirit is. Jesus tells us that “God is a Spirit” (Jn. 4:24). The Holy Spirit does not have to have a physical form to be, by definition, a person. Yet, Paul tells us that the body which the Spirit of God inhabits is the collective body known as the church (1 Cor. 3:16). On the Day of Pentecost the Spirit of God breathed the breath of life into the church.

### **THE PERSONAL NATURE OF THE SPIRIT**

A brief perusal of Scripture reveals the personal nature of the Holy Spirit. Note some of the of the following below:

1. Participates with the Son and Father in creation (Gen. 1:2)
2. Incarnation of Christ (Matt. 1:18, 20)
3. Spirit of God (Matt. 3:16)
4. Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11)
5. Anoints Christ (Matt. 3:16; Lk. 4:18)
6. Sent by the Father and Son (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:7)
7. Testifies of Christ (Jn. 15:26)

In addition, the relations of the Holy Spirit with man also provides rich insight into the personal nature of the Holy Spirit:

1. As *Paraclete*—There are five passages where the term *Paraclete* occurs (Jn. 14:15-17; 15:26, 27; 16:7-11; 16:12-14). The term is used by Christ in reference to the Holy Spirit. Literally, it means, “one called to help” (TDNT). Jesus uses the this title to indicate that He was calling upon the Father to send the Spirit to be our Helper. Obviously, it is a title which bespeaks the personal nature of the Spirit.

2. In Fellowship—In 2 Corinthians 13:14, Paul speaks of “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion [fellowship] of the Holy Spirit.” “God has been revealed to us in grace, love, and communion. All these are manifestations of the One God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (Black, p. 16). Have you ever considered the thought that you can have *koinonia*[fellowship/relationship] with the Holy Spirit? This is the word used, it is used also of relationships between the members of the church (1 Jn. 1:3). Fellowship with the Spirit of God is what Paul prays for the church at Corinth, and for us as well.
3. Can be Grieved—As one pastor noted, “The Holy Ghost is a person, or Paul would not have said, ‘Do not grieve the Holy Spirit’ (Eph. 4:30). The Holy Ghost doesn’t just hurt. Hurt operates at the level of the emotions. He *grieves*, and that goes much deeper” (Hinn, p. 91).
4. Can be Quenched—Paul tells the church at Thessalonica, “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19). The word quench is from the Greek, *sbennymi*, which literally means, “to quench” or to “put out.” Paul uses it figuratively to tell the church not to restrain the manifestations of the charisms of the Spirit in the body (TDNT). The problem of excesses in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches is not the result of the Spirit being out of order, but that men and women sometimes move and respond in a manner that may be out of order. When the Spirit is resisted and is not welcome to work in the life of the church, that church is out of order. This type of disorder is manifested in two ways—fanaticism or formalism.

5. Can be Resisted—In Acts 7:51, Stephen chides the Pharisees for resisting the Holy Spirit. The word for resist is *antipipto*, which means, “to oppose.”
6. Can be Vexed—Isaiah, speaking of Israel, said, “But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them (Is. 63:10). “In the original language, to vex carries the meaning of wearing down, troubling, even afflicting. Only a person can become the target of such torments” (Hinn, p. 92).
7. Can be Lied To—Peter told Ananias, when he tried to use deception in the church to make himself look better, that he had not merely lied to man, but Ananias had lied to the Holy Spirit. For this, both Ananias and his wife, Saphira, were struck down in death (Acts 5:1-11).
8. The Holy Spirit Intercedes for Man—In Romans 8:26 Paul tells us that one role of the Holy Spirit, is that of intercessor. When we don’t know how to pray as we should, the Spirit **Himself** will make intercession by taking our groanings and translating them into a heavenly language that the Father and Son will understand. This may be in the form of speaking in other tongues (languages), but not necessarily. It may simply be the translation of our pain and anguish in the form of an inexpressible groan that the Spirit understands and translates in a prayer to the Father.

## **OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT**

When the Bible was originally penned in the Hebrew, there were no upper and lower-case letters. In fact, Hebrew had no vowels. The Greek had no lower-case letters either—though they did have vowels at that time.

The reason this is important to know is that we often assume that if the word Spirit in the Bible begins with a capital letter it means Holy Spirit, and if it begins with a lower-case letter it means some other kind of spirit. This may hold true in the majority of cases, but there are other cases where the type of “spirit” being referred to is in dispute among biblical scholars and a dogmatic position is difficult to take.

In John chapter 4, for example, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that “true worshippers shall worship in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:24). Is Jesus referring to the Holy Spirit or to the spirit of man? The KJV and NIV both have the word “spirit” spelled in lower-case letters here. However, it can be argued that John intended to refer to the Holy Spirit, or to both the Holy Spirit and the spirit of man.

Another question that comes up when studying the King James Version of the Bible, is whether He should be referred to as the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost. The issue should not be a point of contention as long as we understand who we are speaking of. In fact, both Spirit and Ghost come from the Greek *pneuma* but the King James Version is inconsistent in going back and forth between Spirit and Ghost. “Spirit” is preferred by all modern translations because it allows a consistent translation of *pneuma*. One would never speak of being “filled with the Ghost”, but it is acceptable speak of being “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). Neither would one speak of the “fruit of the Ghost,” or the “gifts of

the Ghost”, or of “walking in the Ghost.” So for consistency’s sake, it is preferable to use the word “Spirit” as opposed to “Ghost.”

## **CHAPTER EIGHTEEN**

### **THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity is the Paraclete who is presently with and in the church. As we previously explored, Jesus promised that the Spirit would come into the lives of believers in a new and powerful way that would prepare us for the spiritual warfare that we will face. The subject of the “baptism in the Holy Spirit” is one that deals further with the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*). In the Pentecostal/Charismatic paradigm the baptism in the Holy Spirit is viewed as an experience that comes subsequent to salvation. That is, after the initial benefits of salvation in the life of a person. In fact, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is only available to those who have already been Born Again.

In Acts 19:1-8 we see the following account:

19:1 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on

Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 7 Now the men were about twelve in all. 8 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. NKJV

The Day of Pentecost was never intended to be a one-time experience in the life of the Church, and the baptism, or the infilling of the Spirit, is not a onetimeexperience in the life of the believer. The infilling of the Spirit is not a static state, but a dynamic ongoing reality in the life of the Spirit-filled believer. It is not enough to point back to a time ten years ago when you spoke in other tongues and say that you are Holy Ghost baptized. The book of Acts demonstrates that the baptism in the Spirit is to be realized by the power, by the fresh anointing, by the boldness and witness of the believer every day of their life.

## **THE ENCOUNTER**

The Apostle Paul, while on a trip to Ephesus, found some men whom the writer, Luke, calls "disciples." The Greek word for disciples is *mathetes*, and is consistently used by Luke to refer to Christian believers. I know that there were disciples, of followers, of men other than Jesus, but Luke appears to reserve the word for those who were believers in Jesus and the Gospel. There is no reason to assume that this is the lone exception.

Paul made it a habit to meet with believers in other cities. He often stayed with them, and they ministered to him on his missionary travels. The word translated "finding" is from the Greek word *eureka*, which is often used of finding something you

were looking for. It appears that Paul was looking for these disciples whom he knew were in the region.

### **THE EXPECTATION**

Upon finding these disciples, Paul asks them a question that contains an implied expectation. He asked them, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”

The expectation implied in the question is that every believer moves on to the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Notice, Paul does not question that they are believers—another term used exclusively of followers of Jesus—but he wants to know whether these believers have moved on to receive the promise of the Father. “Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?”

I think that if the Apostle Paul were alive today, he would still be asking that question of disciples, of believers in every denomination and persuasion. He would go into the Baptist churches and ask those good Christians, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?” He would go into Methodist, Lutheran, and Episcopal churches and ask, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?”

Someplace else he would be going would be many Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and he would ask many men and women there, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?”

Before Jesus ascended He told the church to wait for the promise of the Father. He expected every believer to be hungry for more, thirsting for more of the Spirit, more of the anointing, more

power in his or her lives. It is true that you can be a disciple and not yet be filled with the Spirit, this text tells us that. But this text also tells us that it is anticipated that every Born Again believer should desire to walk deeper, and to go further, to reach higher and too long for and look for and wait for the Holy Spirit to fill his or her life.

### **THE EARNEST CONFESSION**

Notice that these disciples did not try to strike up a theological debate about the Holy Spirit. They earnestly and honestly confessed that they had not heard that the Holy Spirit had been given. They replied to Paul's question by saying, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit." They cannot mean that they had never heard of the Holy Spirit because the Old Testament, the only Bible the early Christians used at this time, is filled with references to the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, they say that they became believers under the ministry of John the Baptist and we know that John preached that Jesus would "baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire." In the book of John we are told that the Baptist recognized the Holy Spirit coming down in the form of a dove and remaining with Jesus. From the brief excerpts of John's preaching and witnessing, we see that the Holy Spirit was featured very prominently. So how could these disciples now say they had not heard of the Holy Spirit? Most scholars agree these were pre-Pentecost converts who were not familiar with the events of the Upper Room and the Day of Pentecost. Therefore, they had not heard that the Holy Spirit had been poured out in the prophetic sense of the word and was now available to fill the lives of believers.

### **THE EXPLANATION**

Paul doesn't brow beat these disciples and try to make them feel like second class believers, but he does take the time to explain some things.

*First, in verse 3, Paul inspects,* that is, he takes time to find out what their background was. Sometimes Pentecostals have a naïve belief that everyone knows about the Holy Spirit and anyone who hasn't received the baptism of the Holy Spirit simply doesn't want it. Jesus didn't take this approach with the Samaritan woman at the well. He took time to explain something about the Messiah. He took time to whet her appetite for spiritual things until she virtually begged Him, "give me this water that I thirst not" (Jn. 3:15).

When we testify to someone about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we need to take time to inspect, to find out where they are coming from. We may just find out that they have never received proper instruction on the subject and do not know that God desires to pour His Spirit into every yielded vessel.

*Second, in verse 4, Paul took time to correct.* He tells them that John was preaching about more and pointing to more and that there is more. John preached repentance, and that was good. John preached that people should believe in Jesus and that was good. These disciples had gone that far. They had been baptized by John, and they had come to believe in Jesus, but John also preached that Jesus would "baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." It was this last thing that they were missing.

*Finally, in verse 5, Paul connects.* He does not ask them to repent again, and he does not question their faith in Christ, but Paul does something here that has raised many questions; he baptizes them again, this time "in the name of Jesus." I believe he does this

to help them make the connection between their pre-Pentecost experience, and the Pentecostal faith of the Church. Paul wanted to make sure that their identity was not the baptism of John, even though it was of repentance and of belief in Jesus as Christ. Paul wanted to make sure that their identity was founded first and last on Jesus and His sacrifice for salvation. By saying they were baptized in the name of Jesus, the writer Luke is not providing a baptismal formula, he is identifying the type of baptism, that is, in Jesus' name. And the next logical step, the one which John himself had anticipated, was that they would move on to be filled with the Spirit.

### **THE EVIDENCED INFILLING**

In verse 6 these twelve men allowed Paul to lay hands on them and pray for them. What was Paul praying? Obviously, that they would receive the Holy Spirit in the measure prophesied by Joel and by John, and promised by Jesus. The verse says, "The Holy Spirit came upon them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

Five times in Acts we are told of believers being filled with, or baptized in the Holy Spirit. Three of those five times we are given more detail about the evidence given to the recipients of the Spirit that they had indeed been filled. In these three accounts, there is only one constant, and that is that they all spoke in other tongues as the Spirit gave the utterance.

Speaking in tongues is not the only evidence that a person has been filled with the Spirit, but it appears from Scripture to consistently be the first, or initial evidence that a person has been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Paul's question was not, "Have you spoke in tongues since you believed?" Scripture does not teach that we are primarily seeking to speak with tongues, but that the believer should seek to be filled, or baptized with the Holy Spirit and that the evidence that this has taken place in the life of the believer is the evidence of speaking in other tongues.

In the next chapter we will look at the subject of *glossolalia*, which is the Greek word translated tongues in the King James Version of the Bible.

## **CHAPTER NINETEEN**

### **ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA: ACTS 5**

By Acts chapter 5 the early church was seeing significant growth and the community of believers in Jerusalem were coming together in mutual support and care. The members of the church who had substantial holdings were willing to sell property and use the money for the common good whenever the need arose. This was not a commune, but a community of faith who cared for and ministered to one another's needs.

Verse 1 of chapter 5 begins with the word "but". This little word implies a change or a contrast. In contrast to those, like Barnabas in chapter 4, who genuinely cared for and about one another there is couple by the name of Ananias and Sapphira. They were apparently members of the Jerusalem church and as the occasion arose, they sold some land and gave the appearance that they were giving all of the proceeds from this sale to the church. In truth, he and his wife conspired to keep back a portion of the funds for themselves. As Peter will later observe, it was their right to keep or to sell the land, and after the sale, it was their prerogative to keep as much of the money as they desired. The problem was that they wanted to appear as though they had given everything. They were trying to deceive the Apostles and the other believers. They were more interested in the praise of men more than they were concerned about the welfare of fellow believers, more desirous of the applause of man than the affirmation of God.

Further, it seems their love of money was more compelling than their love of God or man. Verses 1 and 2 state:

5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Peter, apparently given a “word of knowledge” by the Holy Spirit, knew of the deception. Abraham Lincoln once said, “You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you can’t fool all the people all of the time.” Peter would probably add that you cannot fool the Holy Spirit any of the time. Peter stood as an instrument of the Holy Spirit, while Ananias was being used as an instrument of Satan. It is not an issue of demonic possession, but certainly one of satanic manipulation that was at work here. And interestingly, the way Satan gained access into the heart of this couple was probably through their desire to appear to be spiritual and generous. When, in reality, neither was the case.

Ed Murphy, in his book *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, made the following observation with respect to the actions of Ananias and Sapphira:

If the Ananias and Sapphiras are able to work their way into leadership in our churches, our churches are in trouble. The problem people in many of the churches are not so much the carnal Christians who know they are carnal, but the carnal Christians who want to be known as spiritual. They are the functional equivalents of the first-century Ananias and Sapphiras. (p. 311).

The problem with this couple, according to Murphy, was that they desired to appear to be more spiritual than they really were, and this was the root of their deception. We may never be tempted to claim to give more money than we actually did, but we may be tempted to appear to be more spiritual than we are. We may give the appearance of being great people of prayer, when in reality our prayer life stinks. We may give the appearance of being deep in the Word, when in reality the only time we open the Bible is in the church. We may talk a good game and give the appearance of being “spiritual” in the church, but in reality we may be living through the week just as carnal and worldly as anyone else. There is a warning for us in this text. In verses 3 and 4 we read the words of Peter:

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

Notice what Peter says. First, Peter tells Ananias that “Satan filled” his heart to lie. Jesus said of Satan in John 8:44-45:

44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Satan is the father of lies and deception; therefore, any urge or impulse to be less than honest and truthful is the influence of Satan. It is part of the spiritual warfare that we are in, and an

influence that we must combat. We have been called to lives of truth, for the truth will set us free. The Greek word for truth is *aletheia*, which means, “pure, genuine, real, or honest.” As the story of Ananias and Sapphira illustrates, giving in to the temptation to lie or to deceive can have disastrous results. Ministries have come to an end over one lie. Marriages and relationships have ended over one lie. A lie may seem innocent, but the small seed can bring a harvest of hurt.

Peter was speaking as a prophet of God. Peter was, in contemporary terms, serving as the pastor of the church in Jerusalem at that time. He was the most prominent spokesman in the early church until he began to engage in missionary journeys, at which point James the brother of Jesus became a central figure. But in these early stages Peter’s role is pastoral.

Ananias and Sapphira came and laid a certain amount of money at the Apostles’ feet and gave the appearance that this was the entire amount from the sale of their land. But this was a deception and Peter, through the Holy Spirit, recognized the deception and challenged Ananias.

Notice, also, that Peter said that Ananias had not merely lied to him, or the Apostles, or the church, but in doing this Ananias was lying to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is so intricately interwoven into the life and leadership of the church, that to lie to one is to lie to the other. This is similar to the connection between the church and Jesus. When Saul was persecuting the church, Jesus appeared to him in a blinding light and said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And Saul asked, “Who are You, Lord?” And the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” (Acts 9:4-5, NKJV).

There ought to be a powerful warning to us that the church, as the Body of Christ, is near and dear to the heart of God and to cause problems in the church or to speak disparagingly about the church, or to hurt or deceive members of the church is an affront to God and it is an act that God does not take lightly.

It is significant that the penalty meted out was the prerogative of the Holy Spirit. Peter did not pronounce a curse on anyone. He simply spoke the truth in the face of a lie and the Holy Spirit acted as judge, jury and executioner. Nahum the prophet tells us:

2 God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. (Nah. 1:2, KJV)

Likewise, the writer of Hebrews states:

30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." (Heb 10:30, NKJV)

I don't believe we have to get entangled in every dispute in the church. However, we do have to search our own hearts, our own motives and intentions. If we have wronged anyone we should move quickly to make it right. If we have been wronged, we need to do good to those who spitefully use us, return good for evil and leave judgment in the hands of God.

Let me illustrate. While pastoring a church a woman came to my home after the Sunday evening service to tell me that she was leaving the church. She told me, in the presence of my family,

that I was not spiritual and was not anointed. Of course it hurt, and I wanted to lash out in anger, but instead I said, “All I want to do is to be the best pastor that I can be. If you can say anything that would help me achieve that then I am willing to listen.” She seemed stunned by my response and had nothing to say. I called my wife over and took her hand and then I asked this woman to pray for us that God anoint our ministry and give us wisdom. In tears she joined hands with my wife and I and we prayed and cried together. She did not leave the church, but instead became a great worker in the church and is now a pastor of a church she planted.

Peter tells Ananias that he was under no compulsion sell the land or to give the money to the church. It was his land to with whatever he wanted. Likewise, the money from the sale was his to do with, as he desired. But what wasn't acceptable under any scenario was to act deceptively in the church. Peter asks, “Why have you conceived this thing in your heart?” Satan tempted Ananias, Satan placed the thought in the heart of Ananias, but Ananias allowed the conception of the seed. Ananias did not cast out the temptation, but instead, allowed it to remain until his own desires nourished the seed and allowed the temptation to germinate and produce the fruit of deception. Something that, Peter can only respond by asking, “Why?”

Then Peter clarifies something. Ananias and Sapphira may have thought that it was a harmless little “white lie” but it was more than that. It was an attempt to deceive God. Peter said, “You have not lied to men, but to God.”

We need to take this example to heart. We need to learn to be real with God, and that means being honest with the life and leadership of the church. Too often people will die in their spirit

because they will not be real. They will come to church with sin in their lives and act like they don't have anything to repent of. But while they sit and resist the Holy Spirit Sunday after Sunday they are rejecting and refusing to allow the Holy Spirit to bring them to a place of repentance and renewal. God warned us, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:13). In Romans Paul warns that God will give the consistently unrepentant sinner over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28). As the writer of Hebrews says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:31). Peter looked at Ananias and said, without equivocation, "You have not lied to men but to God."

5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. 6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

Because of his sin against God, through the life and leadership of the church, God struck Ananias dead. The same God who had graciously given breath to man, now took that breath from this man. The wages of sin is death. We must never equate the mercy of God with permission to continue in sin. Most of us have probably failed God miserably at some point in our walk with God. Yet we are still here by the mercy of God. However, mercy is not the same thing as permission. Further, mercy cannot be demanded, it can only be given. Which is to say that, if God should choose to strike us down at the moment of our sin, He would be justified in doing it.

That God is longsuffering toward us, and that God is merciful and compassionate, should not to be taken for granted. We are told, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." If, after we

have failed God, we find that we are still alive, we ought to take full advantage of the grace of God and fall on our faces in repentance and contrition. When God gives us the window of opportunity, as He did Sapphira, to confess and repent, we should seize the moment. We must never begin to believe that sin is a small matter or that lies, deceit and deception will ever be acceptable to God. Such things are just as vile to God today as they were the day Ananias fell dead.

Unfortunately, Ananias had apparently drawn his wife into this deception:

7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."

Ananias may have been the mastermind behind the scheme, but Sapphira participates in the deception, not knowing the fate of her husband for his part in this plan. Peter gave her the opportunity to tell the truth, to come clean, but she continues with the charade. Peter asked her, (v.8) "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."

God gave her a chance to change, but she continued down the path to her own destruction. Here was her moment of truth, her window of opportunity, and she missed it:

9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."

Notice that Peter charged Ananias with lying to God, and here he charges Sapphira with testing the Spirit. Clearly, the theology of the early church is that the Holy Spirit is God and this is consistent with the Trinitarian statement that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For her continued deception Peter sees judgment rushing in upon Sapphira. The people who had just buried her husband were coming through the door and they would carry her off as well.

No sooner had Peter made this pronouncement than she too fell dead. Luke writes:

10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. 11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

The church was spiritual enough to understand what had just happened. They saw the implications of what they had seen and heard. Simply stated, they learned that lying to the Holy Spirit is a serious offense and that deception to the life and leadership of the church is paramount to lying to God.

We live in a time where God is often viewed as some sort of grandfatherly type that simply laughs at our indiscretions and peccadilloes, gently pats us on the head and says, “That’s alright, I know that you couldn’t help yourself and you committed that sin, yet again, because you are so frail and weak. Don’t worry about it, you’ll do better tomorrow.” But Apostle Paul warns us, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Gal 6:7).

A view of God that discounts His holiness and His judgment is a dangerous one. It suggests that God is not grieved by our sins and transgressions. In reality, however, the Word of God tells us that God no longer winks at sin and that He is of “purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on wickedness” (Hab. 1:13). Considering the sacrifice made by God, in Christ, to insure us the victory, considering the resources He has placed within our reach to triumph over temptation, and considering the power of the Holy Spirit that He has supplied for us to walk in holiness, it is a wonder that more people are not struck down in the midst of their sins.

In war a traitor is often shot in the field. A deserter can be shot while he runs from the battle. This is war and there is no room for duplicity. James writes, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (Ja. 1:8). We need to make up our mind whose side we are on. If we are on the Lord’s side, then there is no room and no reason to allow Satan to fill our hearts with deception and deceit. The truth will set us free and being honest with the life and leadership of the church is paramount to being honest with God. Anything less can literally place our lives in peril, along with others that we convince or influence to go along with us in our deception.

Let me ask us to consider how we can be deceptive:

- If we claim to tithe, and yet give less than the tenth of the increase, is this deception?
- If we tell people we will pray for them, but we don’t, is this deception?

- If we call ourselves a Christian, and yet our life does not reflect the character of Christ, is that deception?

We could point to many other ways that we could be participating with Satan in deceptive actions, but the bottom line is that we should pursue truth in every relationship and in every setting. Further, we should never minimize the danger of sin and never take the mercy or grace of God for granted. And finally, when confronted by our deception, we should never make excuses but repent and seek restoration and renewal.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### SIMON THE SORCERER: ACTS 8

By Acts chapter 8 persecutions have been growing in the Jerusalem church and the church has seen its first martyr in Stephen who boldly preached the truth and who was roundly rejected and stoned. Standing in the crowd was a man named Saul, at whose feet the vicious crowd laid their clothes so that they could hurl their stones at Stephen. In chapter nine we read that Saul, who is later known as Paul, was a leader in persecuting the believers. He had received official permission and authority to ferret out believers, throw them in jail and to punish them if they were.

As a result of Stephen's martyrdom the church began to scatter, which was God's intent to begin with. God wanted the church to "go" but they were content to stay in and around Jerusalem until persecution forced them to scatter. Stephen's death was not in vain. Acts 8:4 states, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."

One of those who had been scattered was a deacon named Philip. He went to the city of Samaria and proclaimed Christ there. Verses 6-8 state:

6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were

paralyzed and lame were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city. NKJV

So what the enemy intended for evil, namely the death of Stephen and the persecution of the church, God used for good. Satan tried to put out a flame and all he got was a forest fire. Notice also, that Philip, who is identified in Acts 6:5 as a deacon and therefore recognized as a man who was “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (6:3). Operating, then, in the power of the Holy Spirit, Philip had a powerful ministry—“unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.”

This powerful demonstration of God’s power at work in His servant Philip helped to confirm the veracity of the Word Philip preached. Many were becoming believers. Among those drawn to Philip was a man named Simon. Beginning in verse 9 of chapter 8, we get some background on Simon:

9 But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." 11 And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. 13 Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. NKJV

Prior to meeting Philip and believing in the message of Christ, Simon was known as a sorcerer in Samaria. He was a man of some renown and notoriety. He had performed magic and had done things that caused the people to marvel at his power. His magic had given him the power of persuasion in the community and they said that Simon was someone great. That was until someone greater came to town.

The power manifest by Philip through the Holy Spirit so far exceeded anything that Simon was able to conjure up that they shifted their allegiance to Philip and the God he preached. In fact, the miracles that Philip performed were so impressive that Simon himself could not deny or debunk them, so instead he joined Philip. The word says that Simon “believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.”

Is it possible to believe, without becoming a believer? This may be the case with Simon. However, it would seem that Philip would have to have been convinced of Simon’s salvation before he would have been willing to baptize him.

Notice here that the Apostles heard about what was going on at Samaria, they heard that people were being saved and baptized, but it was expected, in the early church, that this would be followed up by being baptized with the Holy Spirit, so they sent the Apostle John to lead them deeper in their walk with God.

Look at verses 14 through 17:

14 Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, 15 who, when they had come down,

prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. NKJV

Notice some things here. First, notice that the Holy Spirit “had fallen upon none of them” even though they had believe the word of Philip and had been baptized in water. Second, notice that it was a separate act of God in their lives, separate from salvation and water baptism, that the Holy Spirit filled them. Notice also, that it was after the Peter and John laid hands on them that “they received the Holy Spirit.” Philip’s ministry of the Good News of Jesus Christ resulted in them becoming believers, though but babes in Christ, and their belief in Christ made them candidates for water baptism, which was a testimony of their faith. This, then, made them candidates for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the early church fully expected that every believer would move forward to this next level in their walk.

Now look at verses 18 and 19:

18 And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." NKJV

Notice that “Simon saw” something that was evidence of that the believers had been given the Holy Spirit. It was an observable outward manifestation that Simon saw and knew was supernatural. What was it?

It would be consistent with everything else we've already studied to believe that these believers spoke in other tongues and that Simon was familiar enough with other languages or dialects to recognize that this was of God and not some trick. As a magician, Simon was familiar with sleight of hand and illusions, but this was something new and undeniable.

Having been a sorcerer, and perhaps having purchased tricks from and information from other sorcerers, Simon wanted to purchase the power to do what the Apostles were doing. It may have been mere ignorance on Simon's part, or it may have been a dishonest effort to gain power that was not his to gain through the use of money. How did the Apostles respond? Quick and direct! Look at verses 20 through 23:

20 But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! 21 You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." NKJV

Peter makes it clear that there are no shortcuts to the power of God. It cannot be purchased, but it can be received. Peter never told Simon that he could not have it, only that it could not be purchased, and it could not be received by someone whose heart is not right with God. Peter's counsel was, "Repent of this wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you." In spiritual warfare, we must even take care of our very thoughts and intents. Peter then looks into the heart of

Simon and says, “I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”

This, of course, causes us to question the initial salvation of Simon. Either his conversion was not genuine to begin with, or from the time of his baptism until now he had allowed old thoughts and behavior patterns to reemerge in his life. Peter counsels him to repent and to do so quickly.

Apparently Simon got the message because he responds by saying, in verse 24, “Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me." (NIV)

What had Peter said would come upon Simon? The only warning was that he would perish along with his money. Simon probably did not want either himself or his money to perish, so he pleads for Peter to pray for him.

What was Peter thinking? Could he have lost a good tithe-paying member by being so direct? Shouldn't Peter have been a little gentler and kinder in his response? Or perhaps pastors today should learn to be a little more direct?

We don't know what happens to Simon after that. We can probably assume that Peter was willing to pray with Simon and that Simon's response was genuine repentance. As such, it is likely that Simon grew in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. We do know that Philip, Peter and John continued for some time in Samaria “and proclaimed the word of the Lord.” They may well have been harvesting the fields that Jesus had planted a few years earlier when He stopped to speak to a Samaritan woman.

What we see in this account is a contrast between the works of darkness and the light of gospel. In the face of the truth, even a sorcerer becomes a believer and when he strays, he is corrected and repents. We must always remember that in this spiritual conflict that we are engaged in, we are on the winning side. We don't have to back down, turn around or give ground, but we must boldly press on and allow the power of the Holy Spirit to work through us.

I think we should also consider the fact, that if we do not move out of our comfort zones, God has a way of making our zones uncomfortable and motivating us to move into unharvested fields with the gospel. When Jesus said, "Go ye, therefore," He wasn't kidding. We must be witnesses, light and salt, in a dying world. If American Christians will not make an honest effort to reach the lost in Muslim countries, if we are unwilling to make the sacrifices and to pay the price, then God can certainly bring the Muslims to our doorsteps and move us from our comfort zones.

We should all become instruments of God's power, wherever we are and allow the Holy Spirit to confirm that very word that we speak. We should be bold in the face of compromise and willing to speak the truth in love, even when it is unpopular.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### CONFRONTATION IN EVANGELISM: ACTS 13

Acts 13:4-12

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant.

In chapter 9 we read of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. He had a powerful encounter with the resurrected Jesus and became a believer. He was stricken blind in his encounter with Christ and it was not until Ananias laid hands on Paul and prayed that Paul the scales fell from Paul's eyes and he was both healed and filled with the Holy Spirit.

As a result Paul began to be powerfully used by the Lord as an evangelist to the Gentiles. In fact, when God spoke to Ananias and told him to pray for Paul's eyes, God said, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." (Acts 9:15-16, NKJV). In our text we see Paul embarking on his first missionary journey with Barnabas. Paul didn't just decide to go out to preach, but the Holy Spirit sent him. This was a God thing. Real missions and evangelism isn't just an itch we feel we need to scratch, but a divine unction, a compulsion instigated by the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Paul first went to the synagogue to preach that Jesus was the Messiah, but more often than not, the response to the message was negative among the Jews, but more positive among the God-Fearers, that is, Gentiles who were worshipping Yahweh.

6 Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

After finding and preaching in the synagogue, Paul and Barnabas began to travel throughout the island preaching. After that, they headed for the capital city of Paphos. Paphos was noted for its worship of Venus, the goddess of love. Venus, also known as Aphrodite, “represented both sacred and profane love. She was goddess of harlotry and prostitution, but also of marriage. She led women into adultery, but also encouraged them to be faithful and chaste.” (Littleton, p. 167). So the message was mixed and conflicting for those who worshipped her.

While at Paphos, Paul and Barnabas found a sorcerer, a false prophet, named was Bar-Jesus, who was a Jew. This sorcerer was with, and no doubt influenced, the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, who is described as an intelligent man. Sergius called for Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

Bar-Jesus, also known as Elymas (Aramic for “the skillful one”), probably made a handsome sum of money as an advisor to

the proconsul and certainly saw that if Sergius was won to the Lord, that his, Elymas', influence and income would be diminished. So Elymas withstood Saul and Barnabas and was attempting to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

We can be sure that when we attempt to lead people to the Lord, or to lead them into a deeper walk with the Lord, that the enemy will arise and do everything in his power to turn them away from the faith. So remember that every attempt to evangelize, every attempt to witness and to lead souls to Christ is spiritual warfare and the person you are trying to reach is not only hearing you, but is also dealing with other voices. It may be family or friends, or it may be the internal voices that the enemy speaks into their hearts, but they are in the crossfire of a great spiritual battle.

9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him

I love this scene. Elymas is trying to turn Sergius away from the message of hope, but the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. There is an inherent power in the very act of proclaiming the truth. The truth has the power to liberate the captives and to set the prisoners free. So Paul is not afraid, or intimidated and he isn't about to back down from this false-prophet. Instead, Paul set his eyes upon Elymas. The anointing of the Holy Spirit was rising up in Paul and I can see Paul's fiery gaze set upon Elymas. I can see Elymas trying to avoid Paul's focus, but as soon as Elymas' eyes meet Paul's, Paul said:

10 O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? 11 And now,

indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.

Paul wasn't handling this sorcerer with kid's gloves. This is war and Paul had the power of the Holy Spirit and the arsenal of heaven at his disposal. When the enemy tries to disrupt our attempts to reach the lost, we need to stand strong. We don't have to be intimidated or scared. We've got the power in the name of Jesus and we can stand!

There will be other who will try to back you into a corner and keep your mouth shut, but souls are hanging in the balance and the time is too short to be giving up and throwing in the towel every time we are opposed. It takes guts to be soldier, to be willing to fight your way to the firing line and to advance the cause of Christ. The song said, "Coward in the service he will find no place, so keep on the firing line."

Paul saw what Elymas was trying to do, so Paul confronted him in a powerful and dramatic fashion. He said, "You shall be blind!"

So what happened? The word says, "And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand."

The response was immediate and unmistakable. The false power of this sorcerer was exposed as he immediately became blind and had to be lead by the hand by others. He had once led others astray, and now he had to be led everywhere by others.

What was the result of this dramatic confrontation? Verse 12 says, "Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been

done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”

God can take the attack of the enemy and turn it around to His glory if we will not back down, if we will stand our ground in the name of Jesus and not allow fear or intimidation to cause us to give up. When the proconsul saw that the power of God was greater than the power of this sorcerer, then he believed the message that Paul and Barnabas preached.

This was not counter-magic on the part of Paul. Paul received, as it were, a word of wisdom and saw that God’s hand of judgment was upon Elymas. This is similar to what Peter saw when he spoke the impending judgment of God upon Ananias and Sapphira. God nowhere instructs Christians to go around pronouncing curses upon other people. But we can be sure that God will defend us and, should God show us what is coming, can be used in prophetic manner to declare the coming judgment. It is just possible that the declaration of the revelation that God gives us may result in the repentance of those who oppose us in our role as servants of the Lord.

We are all called to be witnesses, and as such, we can all anticipate that we will face spiritual warfare similar to what Paul faced here. The enemy will do anything and everything to hold on to a soul that he thinks he has. But we have been called to rescue the perishing. We have been called to push back the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18) and pull souls from the fire (Jude 22). This isn’t a job for the faint of heart, or the weak of stomach. This is war.

One day I was sitting in the physical therapists office looking at a Newsweek Magazine. In it I saw the picture of two American men who had been killed, burned, dismembered and hung like trophies from a bridge in Fallujah. The picture itself

made me sick to my stomach, but this *is* war. As the church, anointed and appointed by the Holy Spirit, we have the power! But the enemy will try to test our will. The enemy will try to get us to back away and give up without calling upon the resources of heaven. The fearful, the faint of heart, and the cowardly will walk away and the enemy will win. But soldier of the Lord will advance the cause of the Kingdom of God because we know that we serve a Captain who has never lost a battle.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO**

### **A CERTAIN SLAVE GIRL: ACTS 16**

Luke writes in Acts 16:16, “Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.”

You will notice in the book of Acts that sometimes the text is written in the first person, and in other places in the third person. Most scholars believe that the first person accounts indicate that Luke was personally present and witnessed the events that he records. Notice in verse 16, Luke writes, “Now it happened, as we went to prayer.” He was with Paul and Silas and personally testifies to that which he saw and heard. The events to which Luke testifies occur in Thyatira shortly after winning a noted merchant, Lydia, a seller of purple dye, to the Lord. She asked them to stay with her at her home.

Though many of the customs and cultural trappings of Judaism were no longer viewed as necessary for observance in Christianity, and the Law itself was seen as having been fulfilled in Christ, there were some things that were continued. One of which was observing times of prayer. (The Jews prayed at the third, sixth, and ninth hour—or sunrise, 3 p.m., and sunset—as per Daniel.) They would often go to the Temple, if they were in Jerusalem, or to a synagogue if they were away from Jerusalem, at times specified for prayer. This was one of those times. There

were on their way to prayer when they encountered this poor slave girl.

Again, the phrase “a certain” indicates there are details that are omitted. There is more to the story, but what is pertinent to this discussion is given. This was a slave girl who was believed to possess the spirit of divination. Which means she was possessed by a demon that made it look as though this girl could tell the future.

The word translated “divination” is from the Greek word *Puthon*, which is equivalent to our English word python, as in the snake. Puthon comes from the name of the region where Delphi, the seat of the famous oracle, was located. This Python was the supposed diviner there who was believed to be able to tell the future. (*Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*. Copyright (c) 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.).

There is something about the imagery of the snake as representing Satan or demonic activity that is significant. We see the serpent in Genesis deceiving Eve, and then in Revelation Satan is referred to as “that serpent of old.” The demonic spirit associated with fortune telling is called by a serpent’s name, python.

A python is not a poisonous snake. Instead, the python silently slips up on the sleeping victim and begins to wrap its coils around them. By the time the victim realizes the danger; it is too late. Then the python begins to squeeze the victim until it can no longer breathe and it dies of suffocation. After which the snake swallows it whole.

Satan is like that and so is demonic activity. While we sleep, while we are distracted or while we fail to be sober and alert, the enemy slips into our homes, our families and then our own hearts. More often than not, he does not come with bells and horns blaring, but subtly and softly, with stealth he slips into our thoughts and imaginations. He slowly wraps his coils of deception around us with words like, “hath God said?” Or, is the Bible really the Word of God. Or, it may have meant that back then, but this is now. And before we know it we are being sucked into the world’s agenda instead of standing for the truth as contained in God’s Word.

This girl was a great asset to her masters. They were using her for personal gain. They were not concerned about her spiritual or emotional well being, all they wanted was the money she brought to them through her apparent ability to tell the future.

When this girl encountered Paul and the others in the missionary team, the demon in her immediately recognized that these men were serving God. Satan knows who you are, and he knows whether or not you are a threat to his kingdom. This demon recognized who these men were and what their message was. Luke writes, “This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.’”

At first glance, what this girl did and said appears to be harmless, even helpful. She began to declare that they were serving the Most High God and that their message was the way of salvation. We need to be very careful about praise of man. What flatters us and feeds our ego may eventually cause us to choke on pride.

Most of us have had the experience of having someone brag on us and flatter us only to turn on us and hurt us later. Just because it sounds good and sound true does not necessarily mean that it is of God. That is why we should all pray for discernment. I believe that if we are walking with God and allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, when we encounter people whose agenda is contrary to the will or Word of God, there will be those proverbial red flags that go up. Unfortunately, too often we ignore what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us because we don't want to hurt someone's feelings, or we don't want to be offensive. But I can tell you from personal experience that every time I have ignored those red flags, those checks in my spirit by the Holy Spirit that something is not right, I have been hurt. And I always tell myself that the next time that it happens I will listen to the Spirit, but I still find myself hoping for and looking for the best in people even when the Spirit tells me that they are being deceptive. Yet the Spirit has never been wrong.

We must remember as parents and church members that there is too much at stake to simply ignore the warning signs and the red flags that the Spirit brings to our attention. It is pointless to pray for discernment and then ignore the Spirit when He warns us of potential problems. So how do you handle someone who follows you around bragging on you, and yet the Spirit is telling you that they are not of God? Luke tells us what Paul did:

18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

They endured this distraction for many days until Paul had simply had enough. He was annoyed to the point that he simply turned around and cast the demon out of her. And the demon came out that very hour.

Who in their right mind would do such a thing to someone who is bragging on them and building them up everywhere they went? It would have to be someone who is more concerned about what God thinks, than about what man thinks. It would have to be someone who is more concerned with the mission, than with personal agendas or self-aggrandizement.

This does not mean that we cannot and should not graciously accept appreciation and respect offered by others. It simply means we need to have enough of the Holy Spirit in us to discern truth from deception, and to remain alert to the subtle methods the enemy uses to bring us down.

In spiritual warfare you will find that you can do what is right and be accused of doing something wrong. In spiritual warfare you may deliver a girl from a demon only to be seized upon and drug before magistrates to be charged with an offense.

19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. 20 And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; 21 and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."

Again, her masters were not concerned with what they taught, nor with the welfare of the girl, nor with religious issues in

general. All they were mad about was that their source of profit was gone. There may come a time in your walk with God where you are going to be called upon to lie for a boss or for a family member.

While I was in seminary I worked nights at a stove factory. Often the shift managers would try to hide or cover-up their mistakes. But they knew that I would not lie for them. Sometimes this made them angry, but I recall over-hearing them talking about me. They said, "There's one thing about it, if Mark tells you something, you know it's the truth." Eventually they gave me a promotion with more money and less stress just to put me in a place in the factory where I was by myself. They did this first, because they could trust me to do the work without supervision, and second, because I wouldn't be able to see what they did to hide their mistakes.

Their accusations against Paul and the others was they were stirring up trouble and teaching things that were unlawful for Roman citizens. Both accusations were false. But it was enough to stir up the crowd.

22 Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods.

If Satan cannot get you to take the bait, that is, to allow the accolades of man to fill you with pride and self-importance, then he will stir up the people around you to come against you. These men never complained about this girl declaring that the missionaries were servants of the Most High God. Her masters never complained that she said that the message of the missionaries was the message of salvation. But when Paul refused to allow that

recognition and publicity to poison him or his mission, and cast the demon out of the girl, then Satan used other methods to combat Paul.

There will be times when, after you have defeated pride and arrogance, and have maintain humility in serving the Lord, that Satan will turn to less spiritual people and use them to stir up strife around you. You may refuse the promotion if it comes with the condition that you go along with the deception of the company. And instead of a pat on the back for your honesty, you find other employee who once treated you as friend, turn on you and treat you as an enemy.

Satan is relentless. If he cannot get you with fear, he'll try to deceive you with flattery. If he cannot get you with through demons, he comes at you with your friends and family. He is like a roaring lion, roaming to and fro seeking whom he may devour. And that is why we are told to be sober and alert. That is why we must keep our feet on the rock. That is why can never subjectify the true and merely go along with the popular opinion of the day. Instead, we must be able to respond to the enemy with "it is written." The truth is objective, that is, the truth is fixed and is found in both the Incarnate Word, Jesus, and the Written Word, the Logos, who is also Jesus.

There are people around us with their own agendas. There are religious leaders and social leaders, leaders of special interest groups, political parties, and people whose orientation is away from, and not in line with God's Word. If we allow these people to pull us away from the objective truth contained in God's Word then we are abandoning truth itself and condemning ourselves to the prison of other people's subjective opinions on what truth is. At

that point we all become like Pilate, unwilling or unable to recognize the truth when He is standing before us. We become pulled and pushed by public opinion until we wash our hands of our responsibility and acquiesce to the demands of the people around us. This is bondage, not freedom.

Paul those with him did the right thing, not the expedient or the popular thing. They refused to give pride a foothold in their lives, and they delivered a young slave girl from her demon. This was the right thing to do, but as a result the people rose up against them. They beat these men. Verse 23 says, “And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely.”

They did what was right and it cost them public humiliation and pain. It appeared to cost them their freedom as well. Verse 24 states, “Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.”

The jailor was commanded to keep them securely so he put them deep into the “inner prison” and chained them up behind locked doors. We might ask, at this point, what they gained. They may have won a battle with a demon, but it looks like they lost the war. Now they are in prison and unable to continue on their missionary quest.

I believe that when we stand for God, it may cost us something. In fact, it will probably result in an attack from Satan. However, the battle is not ours, the battle is the Lord's. He is the Captain of our Salvation and He will never abandon His soldiers behind enemy lines. The story doesn't end with Paul in prison. Read Acts 16:25-40:

25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. 28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." 29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go." 36 So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace." 37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out." 38 And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. 39 Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to

depart from the city. 40 Sothey went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed. NKJV

You cannot lose if you are willing to continue to fight the good fight of faith. You may lose some friends who are not willing to follow you in the paths of righteousness. You may have to give up some habits and some believes you once held dear. But to do what is right when the cost is high is the greatest evidence of faith in a man or woman's life.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### THE SEVEN SONS OF SCEVA: ACTS 19

Chapter 19 of Acts opens with Paul in Ephesus where he found approximately twelve disciples of John the Baptist. Paul began to teach them about the coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of believers. They were baptized according the pattern set forth by Jesus, and then Paul laid hands on them and they were filled with the Spirit and begin to speak in other tongues. So this chapter begins with a demonstration of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit operating through Paul and in the early church.

In verses 8 through 10 Paul has entered the city of Ephesus and has found the Jewish synagogue. This was the usual patter for Paul and his missionary team. They would begin teaching in the synagogue, no doubt expounding from the Old Testament the prophecies concerning Messiah and then teaching how Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled these prophecies in His life, death and resurrection.

Verse 8 says that Paul “went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.” The reference to the “kingdom of God” and Jesus as the King who ushers in that kingdom are fairly synonymous in Luke’s writing. So Paul is still preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Paul preached “boldly for three months.” Often Paul’s welcome was worn out before three months passed so for him to be able to preach boldly in the synagogue for three months is significant.

Verse 9 tells us that even though Paul was bold, and that he reasoned persuasively “concerning the things of the kingdom of God,” there were those people who would not accept the truth. Luke writes, “Some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude.” Some folks will not only reject the truth, they will begin to attack the truth, and those who speak the truth. These people who had hardened their hearts, “spoke evil of the Way before the multitude.”

The reference to “the Way” is a reference to Christians. This terminology may be traced back to the words of Jesus who said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6). Luke first used the word “Way” as a reference to believers in Acts 9 chapter 2, where he tells us that Saul had letters to arrest men or women “who were of the Way.”

As believers we are “of the Way” because we are born of the Spirit through Christ. We are “on the Way” because we have not yet arrived, but we press toward the mark. We are “in the Way” because we are in Christ. We are “preachers of the Way” because we declare unashamed, “This is the Way, walk ye in it!” (Isa. 30:21).

Having been rejected in the synagogue was something that Paul had grown accustomed to, so he moved his mission to another place. He went to “the school of Tyrannus.” There is something of an enigma here. Who was Tyrannus, and why did he allow Paul to use his school for two years to preach the kingdom?

By saying that Paul taught there daily, it does not mean that Paul did not observe The Lord's Day, that is Sunday worship. It simply means that for a period of two years Paul and/or one of his fellow missionaries had the liberty to preach and teach in this hall during hours when the school was not in session.

It seems reasonable to assume that the owner of the hall had been influenced by the message and may well have been a believer. However, no further record the man is found and any assumptions are mere speculative.

Verse 10 tells us that Paul continued to teach in this school for a period of two years and as a result the message of the kingdom of God, the word about the Lord Jesus Christ, was disseminated throughout the region of Asia Minor among both Jews and Greeks. This wasn't a "blow in, blow up, and blow out" operation. They were preaching, teaching and making disciples. They were teaching new believer the things that Jesus both did and said.

In verses 11 and 12 Luke tells us of the great miracles that God was doing through Paul as a confirmation of truth of the word that Paul taught:

11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

A couple things are striking about this synopsis of the miracles. First, Luke attributes the source of the miracles to God—"God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul." The *New International Version* says, "God did extraordinary miracles

through Paul.” Paul was the conduit for the power of God to be demonstrated to the people to whom Paul was teaching. Mark’s Gospel tells us that the disciples “went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16:20, KJV).

Luke’s own words tell us that these works, these miracles were “unusual”. Other translations refer to these as “extraordinary” or “special” miracles. It would imply that these miracles were out of the ordinary, they were somewhat unique and for the purpose of confirming the Word that Paul preached. The one miracle that Luke reports is that of “handkerchiefs or aprons” from Paul being given to the sick, and the diseases leaving them and the evil spirits going out of them. This, of course is the precedent that is used for the practice of providing “prayer clothes” to people.

Notice, though, that Paul did not sell these handkerchiefs or aprons. This was not a moneymaking gimmick by Paul, but an undeniable demonstration of the power of God at work through Paul. With just a handkerchief from his body, evil spirits were cast out of people.

When we are walking in the presence of God, in the power of the Spirit and in obedience to His Word then we are walking in a spiritual authority that does not fear the power of evil spirits. They are merely dust under our shoes as tread on serpents and scorpions. However, if we are not in that place with God where His anointing is resting upon our ministry and lives, then we place ourselves in peril when we think we can confront demons.

Verses 13 and 14 are evidence of this. During this time there were many superstitions. One superstition believe evil spirit

were behind every negative event in life. If someone sneezed it was because of an evil spirit. Evil spirits were believed to inhabit the trees and rocks, people and pets. So there arose a certain class of Jews who specialized in casting out these spirits. They were the original “Ghost Busters.”

The truth is that most of this was little more than superstition and manipulation of perception and emotions. They were, in short, spiritual quacks. Much like the snake oil salesmen of the old west.

Verse 13 tells us of seven of these “Jewish exorcists” who were the sons of one Sceva. Luke refers to the Sceva as “a Jewish chief priest.” However, there is never a record of a “chief priest” named Sceva. Some have suggested that the man named Sceva may have fraudulently claimed to be a chief priest much like snake oil salesmen claimed to be doctors. It was a title meant to evoke trust and confidence.

Seven sons of Sceva tried to use an incantation employing the names of Jesus and Paul in the hopes that they could cast out a demon. This time, however, they were dealing with a real demon. They said, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.”

Notice that these men did not have a personal relationship with Jesus. They were trying to gain power through a second-hand source. They were attempting to use the name of Jesus as a magic charm. However, praying in the name of Jesus, or asking in the name of Jesus requires much more than the mere articulation of the word “Jesus.” It requires a personal and powerful relationship that is the result of a new birth into the kingdom of God. It requires an ongoing and intimate familiarity that is maintained through prayer, personal devotions and obedience to the Word and Will of God.

Anyone who thinks they can simply tag the name of Jesus at the end of every prayer and get what they want is fooling themselves.

I think that what happens next dramatically demonstrates the folly of false allegiance to Christ. God nowhere obligates Himself to answer the prayers of sinners regardless of how often they use the name of Jesus. In fact, to pray and to repeat the name of Jesus as some sort of incantation is to use the name of God in vain.

Some will say, "Well, I prayed as a sinner and God answered my prayer." And they will use that to insist that God does answer the prayers of sinners. I would respond by saying that God does not obligate Himself to answer the prayers of sinners. The Psalmist said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Ps 66:18). The Prophet said, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isa 59:2). God said, "When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood" (Isa 1:15).

So not only does the Word say that God is does not obligate Himself to hear the prayers of sinners, other than the prayer of repentance, God affirms that He will not listen. We cannot approach the throne of grace except through Jesus, and He has said, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

So I can only say that if a sinner thinks God is hearing and answering his or her prayer, that it is much more likely that someone else, their mother or father, their family, friends or church

is praying and God is moving because of the prayers of the righteous.

Psalm 34, verses 15-22 state:

15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

16 The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

17 The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate. (KJV)

Likewise, the Apostle Peter affirms, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12, KJV).

Verse 14 of Acts 19 tells us that these seven sons came again one demon in one man and tried to employ the power of the Jesus whom Paul preaches. The demon responded, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?”

I’m guessing that at this point these boys began to realize that they had just bit off more than they could chew. Verse 16

says, “Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.” This is in stark contrast to the real deal. Paul had the real deal and just the cloths from off his body were enough to cast out demons. But these seven sons, operating in a fraudulent manner, found that they were no match for one demon in one man. They were happy to get away with their lives, even if it meant running away naked.

Without sounding like a throwback to the legalism of bygone days, let me again point out that there is a correlation, even a causal relationship between demonic activity and nakedness. From the Israelites dancing naked before the idol in the wilderness, to the demoniac of the Gaderenes, to these seven sons overpowered by a demon and sent running naked and wounded, there is something being said. Furthermore, I think that modern examples can be easily seen on MTV and other rock and hip-hop music videos, as well as in other secular media.

I was once read in the *The Wall Street Journal* about an FCC hearing where they were cracking down on over the air broadcasting, both radio and television. These over the air broadcasts have more strict guidelines than cable channels supposedly because it doesn't require any special connections to tap into these broadcasts, just a receiver such as a radio or television. These broadcasters complained that since cable doesn't have the restrictions that over the air broadcasters have, they were at a disadvantage and that in order to compete they need to be able to show material that is just as graphic as the cable companies.

There is something spiritual going on here. This is a spiritual warfare. Paul speaks of the nature of this warfare in

Ephesians 2:3-4, when he talks about “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

Yesterday I was in the doctor’s office and as I waited I leafed through various magazines to pass the time. I saw a copy of the magazine *Seventeen*. This is a magazine that appeals to teenage girls from their early to late teens. In it I saw a perfume named “fcuk” being advertised. The picture showed a young looking girl, clad only in underwear, with a young man in a bed and the caption to the picture was, “The perfume to bed down with.” There is a battle going on and the two of the signs of that warfare are that people are running naked and wounded, not even realizing that they have been overpowered by demons.

However, God has a way of taking the enemy’s attack and turning it into God’s victory. These charlatans tried to claim privileges that are reserved for the children of God and they were exposed for who they really were. I believe that when we are proclaiming the truth, and ministering with integrity, the spotlight hungry, self-seeking, and self-serving charlatans will be exposed and those operating in truth will benefit from it.

Verse 17 says, “This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.” The people who were already familiar with the teaching and miracles of Paul heard about what happened to these fraudulent men and it served to place even more credence upon what Paul was teaching and doing.

Verses 18 through 20 tell us that a revival broke out in Ephesus:

18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

I read this and it occurred to me that even with Paul's powerful preaching and irrefutable reasoning from Scripture, even with the miracles that God was doing through Paul, it still took two years and three months before things began to break loose. And we want revival in a week or less.

How did this revival manifest?

First, "many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds." There was a time of confession and repentance among those who were already believers.

Second, "many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all." People began to put away anything that was contrary to the will or Word of God. In Church of God terms, these believers were being "sanctified" or set apart from the world so that they could fully embrace Christ. And this was no small sacrifice. The value of the items they burned was "fifty thousand pieces of silver."

Finally, "the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed." This means that the Word that was being preached, the

word about Christ and the kingdom of God was being accepted and believers were being won to the Lord.

It is warfare, but it is a war that believers who are walking the power of the Spirit are destined to win. It may look bad from time to time, but in the midst of the darkness, there is a light. For example, I recently read that the percentage of college students who believe in the right of abortion is 51 percent. This is bad, but ten years earlier it was 64 percent. There are victories being won.

Before the Homosexuals began to try to force states to accept Homosexual marriages, there was a majority who believed that such unions were acceptable, but the more the issue has been pushed the less the general populace agrees. Now the majority of people polled do not believe that Homosexual marriages should be permitted.

This is war, and in truth, evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, but that doesn't mean that the truth will not prevail. That does not mean that the church will lose. We already know the outcome, it is not in doubt, we win. Let the sons of Sceva do their thing. All that will happen is that they will be exposed for the frauds they are, and the truth, in stark contrast will be even more relevant and obvious than it already is.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### **THE BATTLE SCENE: ROMANS 1:18-32**

We could continue in the Book of Acts and look at how spiritual warfare is manifested through groups and government in opposition to the gospel. However, I want to turn to the Epistles and explore God's instructions to the church through Paul and the other authors of Epistles.

In the opening chapter of Romans Paul paints a picture of the battle from a cosmic perspective, that is, from God's perspective. He vividly shows us the scene as God sees it. He also tells us how God responds to the spiritual degradation that He sees. God's judgment is not only upon those who practice works of unrighteousness, but upon those countries, kingdoms, cities or churches that allow or tacitly approve of such things. What things? Look with my through the eyes of God at the battle scene.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

With God, love is not lust, and wrath is not rage. Wrath is the other side of the coin of love. Without justice there could be no mercy and without wrath there is no love. It takes one to

accommodate the other. God's wrath against ungodliness is in contrast to His love for His children.

Against whom is God's wrath revealed? "Against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." There may be one group intended here, that is, ungodly and unrighteous people whose unrighteousness works to suppress the truth. Or it may be two groups, one made of those who are ungodly and unrighteous, and another who, while also ungodly and unrighteous, are objects of God's wrath because they actively work to suppress truth and to propagate unrighteousness.

Why is God's wrath revealed to them? "Because," Paul says, "what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them." These are people who should know the truth, who know better, but who choose to reject God and to do those things that are ungodly and which suppress the truth that they know.

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

What is the source of the truth these people are suppressing? Paul begins by saying that nature itself declares that there is a God. Further, nature tells us something about God—"His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made."

Just as a watch reveals something about the watchmaker, and the painting reveals something about the painter, the created order tells us first that there is a Creator, and the created order bears the thumbprint of the Creator. We cannot see the invisible attribute of omnipotence, but we know that the Creator must be more powerful, glorious and awesome than the sum of His creation. So the universe declares the glory of God. We cannot see the invisible attribute of omnipotence, but we humans who know very little beyond our small corner of the universe understand that the Creator of the universe must have knowledge, wisdom and understanding beyond our very comprehension.

Paul tells us that humanity everywhere, and anywhere, can see that there is a God and know something about the God who is revealed in nature. This revelation that there is a God calls for humanity to seek God, to submit to God and to worship God. However, nature alone is not enough to reveal the Good News of Jesus Christ. For that God has raised up the Church. Still, in light of creation itself, no man or woman is excused from judgment or wrath if he or she pursues ungodliness when nature declares that there is a God.

Let's take the sin of homosexuality, for an example. The physical structure of the human body and the process of procreation is a commentary by God on the heterosexual design of God. To choose to ignore God's design is to ignore God and pursue unrighteousness. This, in turn, invites the wrath of God who created us with an unmistakable design and plan that is replicated throughout nature itself—from flower and bees, to birds, reptiles and mammals. There is a design, because there is a designer and He is God. There is no excuse for the sin of homosexuality.

Paul says“because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Even though the handiwork of God is evident, they did not give God the glory that He deserves as the Creator, and they did not thank Him for this design that provides a world in which we can live and breathe and have our being. Instead, humanity became futile in their thoughts and their hearts were darkened. They gradually began to lose sight of the design or the designer until, in their hearts, there was no God.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,  
23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

What is the outcome of this downward spiral? First, man begins to think that he is wise. He thinks that he is too intelligent, too sophisticated to believe in the existence of God. Everything can be rationally and scientifically explained, and the explanation no longer needs God as the foundation. Humanity revels in its wisdom, but has only succeeded in becoming fools. “The fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” How is God’s wrath revealed in these people?

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,  
25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

God allowed their sins to run its course and allowed the repercussions of their sins to come crashing in upon them without His mercy restraining the results of their deeds. He could have killed them. He could have stopped the propagation of sin in its tracks, but instead, God's wrath is revealed in the fact that He allows them to continue in their sins, "in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves."

There is a reason why homosexuals are not allowed to donate blood. There is a reason why A.I.D.S. is so prevalent within that community. There is a reason why even Gonorrhea among the homosexual community is different, is more difficult to treat among the homosexual community than it is among the heterosexual community. Fornication is also a sin, and that is why when people have multiple partners they become much more susceptible to a whole host of diseases.

I've heard people say, "God is love and He wouldn't put a disease on people." To which I would say first, people who say that don't know their Bible. God said to Israel in Exodus 15:26, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee" (KJV).

And second, according to our text here in Romans, God doesn't have to put diseases upon people. It is by His mercies that we are not consumed, and all that God has to do is allow the natural results of sinful behavior run its course and we will bring calamity upon ourselves.

God almost always give us warnings. First there were a myriad of venereal diseases that plagued humanity, such as, syphilis and gonorrhea. But God graciously allow us to develop antibiotics to fight these diseases. We should have been grateful and turned to God in gratitude, but instead humanity used His gift of healing to further their degenerate behavior. Next, there was herpes simplex II, which has no cure, but which does not kill. Still, promiscuity and sexual perversion has continued and is even celebrated in secular media and society. Homosexuality came out of the closet and the social stigma gave way to social acceptance. Now homosexuality is embraced and those who would stand with God and nature are rejected and persecuted by society and popular media.

God gave us warnings. But the thoughts of man were darkened and his foolish heart was darkened. Now there is an epidemic around the world. Though it has affected heterosexuals as well, the disease is recognized by world health organizations as being particularly prevalent within the homosexual community.

How is God's wrath revealed? Paul writes, "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions."

Paul said that God let them pursue their "vile passions." How does Paul define "vile passions"?

26b For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Make no mistake, this is a commentary upon homosexual behavior. “For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.” “Men leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful.” Some will argue that Paul was addressing a different time and culture and that those words have no more relevance than Paul’s command, “slave obey your masters.” The homosexual community has tried to tie racism to homosexuality, but this cannot be supported from Scripture. The only question we have to ask is if Scripture has authority for our lives. If it doesn’t then every man can do that which is right in his own sight. And as the book of Judges shows, this always results in God’s judgment.

To those who insist that Scripture dealing with and rejecting homosexual behavior is time and culturally bound I would note two things. First, we are dealing with design not nature. The design of human bodies has not changed. Second, homosexuality was practiced in the Greek and Roman cultures. Still, it is seen as a vile passion.

Where does this downward spiral of depravity lead?

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;

They remove God from their thoughts altogether, their minds become debased, that is, unable to or unwilling to reach for a higher moral code of conduct. Instead, they do those things which are not right, not moral and not consistent with the lessons of nature itself. They become more and more vile in their behavior and character. Without the influence of God we are bound to descend into deeper depths of depravity.

There is a warning here for city, church and state as well. Verse 32 says:

who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Those who know the righteous judgment of God but who embrace this deviancy will be held accountable as well. How do they know the judgment of God? It is in medical journals, social commentary, newspapers and the evening news. The numbers of people who die with AIDS, the murders, the strife, the juvenile delinquency are all symptomatic of the judgment of God upon those who have rejected the very knowledge of God. What does Paul say? “That those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”

They are under the double effect of wrath because not only do they practice these things, but they approve of those who practice them.” Not only should we refrain from doing these things. It is not enough to say “I am personally opposed to

abortion, but I support a woman's right to choose." This is a copout and it is not acceptable. God wrath is revealed against those who practice these things, and it is revealed against those who approve of these things.

This is war! It is not a war against flesh and blood. It is a spiritual war. What is the role of the church? First, it is our role to hold the standard. We cannot compromise with the world and approve of deviant lifestyles or sin in any form. This includes church sins that are not so obvious. Sins like covetousness, maliciousness, envy, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness, whisperers, backbiters, proud, boasters, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful."

The Apostle Peter writes:

17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (1 Pet 4:17-18, KJV)

If the church loves the lost it will not approve of the very behavior that will result in the wrath of God being revealed in them. However, as the church we have been called to "set the captives free." We are called to hate sin, but to love the sinner. We have not been called to shoot the captives, but to speak the truth in love, because it is the truth that has the power to set the captives free.

We are behind enemy lines, and we have been called to rescue the prisoners of war. When you look around you at those who are captive to their own sinful desires, thoughts and actions,

you should not hate them, but love them enough to push back the gates of hell and snatch souls from the fire. We should, as a church, be willing to take up our cross and follow Jesus. And if this journey lead us through the valley of the shadow death, if it cost us our lives to love the lost and to reach them, then we should be able to say with the Apostle Paul:

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24, KJV)

In my studies I ran across a quote that got my attention. It is in the notes of the *Full Life Study Bible* for Romans 1:27. It says:

The apostle likely regarded the homosexual/lesbian abomination as the greatest evidence of human degeneracy resulting from immorality and God's abandonment (see Gen 19:4-5; Lev 18:22). Any nation that justifies homosexuality or lesbianism as an acceptable lifestyle is in its final stages of moral corruption. For other Scriptures about this horrible act see Gen 19:4-5; 1 Ki 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; Isa 3:9; 1 Co 6:9-10; 1 Ti 1:10; 2 Pe 2:6; Jude 7.

God have mercy on America!

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE**

### **THE WAR FOR THE CHURCH: 1 CORINTHIANS 5**

We often look at our time and culture and see the depravity and sinfulness of humanity and conclude that this is as bad as human culture has ever been. In truth, it is bad and getting worse; however, the influence of Christianity on Western culture cannot be dismissed. The influence on laws and social mores are significant and pervasive even though there are those who are trying to cut the threads that still connects modern Western culture with Christian morality.

The times we live in are seeing a steady decline in the influence of the church on culture, and at the same time, a steady increase of the influence of the culture on the church. Spiritual warfare often takes on a personal nature in that each person faces spiritual battles on a regular basis, but there is also corporate dimension to spiritual warfare as the enemy tries to bring down local churches. We often quote the words of Jesus from Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (KJV). However, the fact is that while the church universal or the "invisible" church will endure until the return of Christ, local churches sometimes succumb to spiritual warfare and die.

Again, we look at our times and the increasing marginalization of the church by popular culture, secular media, and national governments, and we might think that there has never

been a time when the challenges facing the church have been as great as they now are. But when we read of the church in Corinth, we are reading about a church that was living in a time and culture that not yet been influenced by Christian morality, and was, instead, functioning from a pagan worldview. Though a church was birthed in Corinth, there remained far too much of Corinth in the church. In both epistles to the church at Corinth we read of the profound spiritual warfare that was going on in the church. This was a war for the preservation and future of the church in that area.

Fausset's Bible Dictionary has the following to say about the city of Corinth:

Famed for its commerce, chiefly due to its situation between the Ionian and Aegean seas, on the isthmus connecting the Peloponnese with Greece. In Paul's time it was capital of Achaia, and seat of the Roman proconsul (Acts 18:12). Its people had the Greek love of philosophical subtleties. The immorality was notorious even in the pagan world; so that "to Corinthianize" was proverbial for playing the wanton. The worship of Venus, whose temple was on Acrocorinthus, was attended with shameless profligacy, 1,000 female slaves being maintained for the service of strangers. Hence, arose dangers to the purity of the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 5--7), founded by Paul on his first visit in his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17).

When one combines the pagan degenerate sexuality, to include prostitution, homosexuality, and goddess worship, with a love of wisdom and a sense of intellectual superiority, one gets a culture that equates enlightenment with an openness to all forms of sexual deviancy. Furthermore, those who do not share these views are depicted as ignorant and unenlightened. This has, of course, a very contemporary ring to it in our postmodern world. This is exactly the argument of those pushing the homosexual and feminist agendas.

In such a culture Paul was able to plant a church. He was able to lead enough people to Jesus Christ to establish a local body of believers. However, unlike Jewish converts who would share the Christian view of the sanctity of human sexuality, these Greek converts were behind the learning curve. They had to receive letters and instruction from Paul regarding a series of subjects, but there was one that was particularly egregious for Paul. He writes in verse 1, “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife.”

There was a man in the church who was having sexual relations with his stepmother. We believe it was his stepmother because if it was the man's mother, Paul would have said so. Many believe that by the time Paul writes, the woman was either divorced from the man's father, or the father was deceased. Furthermore, we can probably assume that this woman was herself a pagan or Paul would have addressed her as well. Instead, what we have is a member of the church who is having sexual relations with the woman who was once married to his father. This was uncommon in the secular world and was forbidden in the Judaic law (Lev. 18:8; 20:11; Deut. 22:30; 27:20).

Paul says that this fact was being talked about everywhere. It was common knowledge in and around Corinth that there was a man in the Christian church who was having sexual relations with his stepmother. This was a disgrace to the church. It was a hindrance to the church and the church should have been grieved by this. But, instead, Paul says, “And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?”

Instead of being grieved, they were proud! They apparently saw their liberality as a sign of sophistication and enlightenment. They did not censor the man for this, but apparently supported him in this behavior.

The word translated “grief” is from a Greek word that was used of mourning a death. They should have been grieving the actions of this man just as though they were grieving a death and they should have forced the man to leave the assembly of believers. It should have been made clear from the beginning that if he was going to engage in such gross morality, that he would no longer be welcomed in the church.

Warren Wiersbe notes that there several types of people that we are warned about in the church who should not be afforded fellowship:

1. The member who will not settle personal differences (Matt. 18:15-17).
2. The member who has a reputation for being a flagrant sinner (1 Cor. 5:9-11).
3. Those who hold false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18).

4. Those who cause divisions (Titus 3:10-11).
5. Christians who refuse to work for a living (2 Thess. 3:6-12).

*(Expositions and Outlines, p. 433.)*

Many churches have hurt themselves because they were unwilling to censor members of the church. To the extent that the church has an “anything goes” attitude, then we can be sure that anything will. Wiersbe writes, “It is harder to join many worldly organizations than it is to unite with the average local church” (p. 432).

God is gracious and merciful. God is longsuffering and loving, but God is a jealous God and He does not countenance willful, flagrant and unrepentant sin in the church that His Son died on a cross to purchase. If a person wants to engage in such behavior, then he or she is making a decision not to be a member of the church. Such a person is in need of church discipline or they will never become a true disciple of the Lord.

Paul gives a stern warning to the church with these words:

3 Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present.

4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present,

5 hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

Next, Paul acknowledges that while he cannot be with the church in body, he is with them in spirit. Which is to say that in disciplining this man the church has both Paul's approval and the presence and power of the Lord Jesus to carry out their responsibility. What should they do? Paul says, "Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."

The discipline that is called for is not vindictive or vicious in nature, but is, in fact, an act of love. To ignore, or worse, to accept blatant and unrepentant sinful behavior in the life of someone claiming to be a member of the church is wrong. We are not loving a person by accepting their bad behavior, but we are encouraging them to continue down a road that will result in their own judgment, as well as casting a bad reflection upon the church and hindering the churches ability to effectively evangelize the lost.

This man was to be handed over to Satan, which simply means excommunicated from the church. There are only two kingdoms. There is the kingdom of God, of which the church is a part (not the whole), and there is the kingdom of darkness. If a person is not in the church, then they are not in the kingdom of God, and therefore are walking in the kingdom of darkness. The purpose of turning this man out of the church was so that he might be confronted with his sin. The purpose is to cut off fellowship until he recognizes the error of his ways and repents. Furthermore, the man should be put out of the church so that the other members of the church do not become infected with a spirit of ungodliness.

6 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?

7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast-- as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

Paul warns them, “Don’t you know that a little sin goes a long way? One compromise leads to another. One immoral act that is sanctioned leads to another and another until there is no longer any discernable difference between the church and the world. So, just as bread that has yeast in it spreads to the rest of the dough, the sin spreads throughout the church unless it is confronted. Paul says, “Get rid of the dough with yeast and make a new batch without yeast.”

In Judaism, yeast almost always represented sin. Therefore, before the night of the Passover Jews would go through their homes with a candle looking for any bread or dough with yeast in it. If they found it, they threw it out of the house. On that night, they would eat only unleavened bread. Paul tells us that Jesus has come and died so that now we do not observe Passover once a year, but every day we are to live with the old sin nature, the leavening of malice and wickedness removed. In its place, we are to have the unleavened bread of the new nature, sincerity and truth.

There is a battle going on for the church. In some places the church is little more than a social club and differs little from the world. I know of a large church here in town that had a ladies

night out. One of our former members went with this group and came back shocked. These women had a party where they were selling risqué women's underclothing and they were drinking, and some were getting drunk. This was a church group and by all appearances, differs nothing from the world.

Wiersbe lists three reasons why the church must exercise loving but firm discipline: (1) it is for the good of the offender, (2) it is for the good of the church, and (3) it is for the good of the world. If our light does not shine, who will the world find Jesus? If we are salt without savor then we are good for nothing but to be cast upon the ground and trod underfoot. If we fail to speak out against premarital sex, adultery and homosexuality, then we are giving tacit approval to this behavior. We must shine a light in the darkness.

9 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people--

10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.

Paul reminds the Corinthian church of a previous correspondence. I said, "I have already written to you not to associate with sexually immoral people." That word "associate" is important here. He isn't saying that we should not try to reach them, or talk to them, or even love them, but that we should not enter into associations with them. That is, we should not be taking in as members of the church those people whose lives do not reflect at least the honest effort at striving after godliness. We should not, for love or money, simply open up the church

membership and leadership to people simply because it might mean we grow or increase the income.

There is a war going on for the heart and soul of the church. The Episcopal Church has been losing members and money for several years. And it seem that the more people they lose, the more they have been willing to compromise their beliefs. Such compromise, however, has not resulted in gaining new members. In their desperation for more money the Episcopal Church recently embraced homosexuality and ordained an openly gay priest. A little leaven is leavening the whole lump and it will not result in a revival but in the death of the denomination.

Apparently some people simply disregarded Paul's previous letter and continued to associate with the immoral people, but others took Paul's words to the opposite extreme and tried to disassociate themselves from anyone in the world who was immoral. Paul says this is impossible. The only way we will be able to keep out of any contact with the world is to be taken out of the world. Jesus prayed, in John's Gospel, chapter 17:

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. (John 17:14-18, KJV)

Our men have not been called to monasteries, nor our women to nunneries. We are in the world with a light to shine and

we must shine it to those who need it. We must show the love and example of Christ to the immoral, the ungodly, and the depraved. We must reach the lost, but we must never cheapen grace by simply ignoring or minimizing the horrendous nature of sin. We must love the lost while simultaneously hating the sins that will lead them to hell. We must evangelize the sinners while maintaining the integrity of the church by requiring moral discipline on the part of those who would seek to become members of Christ's Body. Therefore, Paul writes:

11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

Again, the key word is "associate." We cannot become members of formal associations where we are identifying with and giving our tacit approval to behavior that is clearly out of line with God's Word. This does not mean that we close our doors to the wounded. Paul is not saying the church is a trophy case for perfect little angels. We invite all to come and hear the message of hope, help and healing. We welcome the people to come just as they are to the church. The church is a hospital for the spiritually wounded people of the world. But before anyone formally associates with the church, that is, becomes a member and potentially a leader in the church, then they must be willing to let God's Word sanctify them. To be sanctified is to be set them apart for service in the kingdom of God. Set apart from the world, and unto God, for His use and His glory.

Paul continues:

12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?

13 God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

Paul acknowledges that neither he nor the church has any authority over the conduct or affairs of the world. We are to shine a light, and we are to stand for the truth without compromise, but we cannot force sinners to live like saints. Sinners sin. However, with respect to what goes on in the church, we are called to acknowledge rather than to ignore the sinful actions of those with whom we associate as church members. God will judge the wicked, the ungodly of the world, but the church must be prepared to discipline those in the church.

We live in a wicked world, but we are called to be a counter culture. We are called to be different. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18:

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (KJV)

Who are we being called to be separate from? From the world with all its sinful desires and inclinations. Believers are to be bound to believers and sinners should become believers and be bound to believers. Paul ends chapter 5 with these words, “Expel the wicked from among you.”

There comes a time when, if a person refuses to give heed to those who have authority over them in the Lord that they are to be removed from the rolls of the church. They are not to be coddled and stroked. They are not to be excused and overlooked. Instead, if they will not repent, if they will not turn from their sinful behavior, if they refuse godly council and the admonition of the church, then they are to be removed from membership and denied any position of influence or leadership in the church.

What is the purpose of this? It is that they may hopefully acknowledge their sins and turn back to the Lord. If we as a church never caution the sinful behavior of a person, then it is very likely that the individual will come to believe that their behavior is not sinful at all and will continue in their sins to their own destruction.

Better, says Paul, is it to turn them out of the church with the hope of restoration, than to keep them in the church with the danger of no restoration and the additional danger of infecting the rest of the assembly with a disregard for godliness and holiness.

There is a war for the heart and soul of the church and this war is not for the weak or the faint of heart. It is time gird up our loins like men and women of faith, and fight the good fight of

faith. It is time that we earnestly contend for the faith, for sound doctrine, for godliness and righteousness.

I've never been a half-in and half-out kind of guy. With me it's all or nothing. So I have never understood those people who want to claim to be Christians, put their membership on the church roll, and continue to live like the world. God despises lukewarm, fence straddling, compromising, Christians. It's time we decide whose side we're on. Like Moses in the desert after coming down from Mount Zion, I see God drawing a line in the sand and saying, "Whoever is on my side, come unto me. Make up your mind!"

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX**

### **NO PLACE FOR THE DEVIL: EPHESIANS 4:5:25-32**

Paul appears to be fond of making lists. He has lists of virtues to be embraced, and vices to be avoided. He lists gifts and fruit of the Spirit and he lists the works of darkness. He usually contrasts one list against another. He lists the things in life to be avoided or shunned by believers and those things to be taken on and embraced by believers. There is very little of that proverbial “gray area” in Paul’s writing.

In this lesson I want to look first at the contrasting list of what we are to put off, with that which should characterize the life of the believer, and then I want to consider verse 27, which says, “Neither give place to the devil.” This is an important sentence in light of this study on spiritual warfare.

#### **VICES AND VIRTUES**

To begin, we note with many scholars that nature abhors a vacuum. With everything we are to put off, there are corresponding things that should be taken on. As we strip off the rags of the old sinful nature, we must put on the robes of righteousness.

Jesus gives us a parable that illustrates this necessity. It is found in Luke’s Gospel chapter 11, verses 24-26:

24 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'

25 "And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order.

26 "Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."  
(NKJV)

With this parable as our backdrop, then, let's consider the words of Paul in Ephesians 4:24-32. Paul lists five things to get rid of, or to avoid—lying, anger, stealing, evil talk, and bitterness. In the place of these things Paul tells us to put on truth, work, edification and kindness. Let's break it down verse by verse:

*A Put off falsehood*

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Some translations say, "putting away lying." The word translated "putting away" in the King James Version, can also mean to put off, or to take off. It suggests taking off something undesirable, like a soiled garment. Just as one would hasten to take off a garment that is dirty and disgusting, the believer must put off all manner of falsehood. It may be outright lying, or it may be something more subtle such as half-truths, or even the deception of silence when speaking the truth would clear up any deception.

In contrast to falsehood, the believer's life should be marked by truth in every situation. Our lives should be so full of truth that there is not room for deception. But it is the nature of truth, that it cannot coexist with falsehood. There is no middle ground. A person must be willing to embrace truth in totality or his life is stained with deception. We must put off the old garment before we can put on the new.

*B Do not sin in anger*

26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,  
27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

It is often noted that that the King James Version suggests that it is possible to be angry without sinning. That version states, "Be ye angry and sin not." The *New International Version*, likewise suggests that while we may get angry from time to time, and under the right circumstances, we must not allow righteous indignation to degenerate into vindictiveness and malice.

Jesus was angry what He saw going on in the Temple with the buyers and the sellers. And Jesus even moved to remedy the situation, but His was not some emotional outburst. His was a calculated action intended to bring about a greater good.

There are times when we ought to be angry and we are not. Then there are times when we ought not to be angry and we are. We should know the difference. We ought to be angry over the recent court ruling allowing homosexuals to marry. And this anger ought to move us to action. We ought to be on the phones to congressmen and representatives. We ought to be shining a light in

the darkness and speaking the truth of God's Word concerning marriage.

On the other hands we should not be angry about who parks in our spot, or who sits in our seat. We ought not be angry over little petty differences that the devil will use to divide homes and churches, cities and nations.

Furthermore, Paul tells us that we should seek to be reconciled to one another before the sun goes down. When we allow our anger to fester it usually grows into more than it should have been, or would have been if we had moved quickly to address our differences with one another.

An angry mind is the devil's playground. He loves to fill our imaginations with things that have not happened, and may never happen, but make us angrier when we think they might happen. We have had the unpleasant experience of a restless night because we took our anger to bed with us. Instead of anger, seek to be reconciled before the end of the day. Instead of suspicion and conjecture, seek to clear the air and to find the truth before the sun goes down.

*C      No more stealing*

28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

Theft was a big problem during the days of Paul. There were some people who had known only thievery as way of life and living. Once they became a believer, however, such a lifestyle must be shunned. Instead of taking that which did not belong to

them, the believer must seek to earn a living by the works of his hands.

Notice, however, that the motivation for such work was not merely to gain more material possessions, but that by working and earning a living, the person who once stole may now give. In this way such a person is making restitution for his former actions. Whereas he or she may once have been looking for people to take advantage of, now the believer is on the lookout for people to help and to show benevolence to.

It should be noted that there are many ways to steal, including stealing hours from employers by not giving an honest day's labor for a day's wage. Or it may be keeping something given by accident. I've had many occasions where I was given too much change back after a purchase, and if I catch it, I always return it. On another occasion I found a ten dollar bill in the change return of the self-checkout. I gave it to the cashier.

I'm not trying to pin any medals on my chest. I'm only illustrating that honesty should mark the lives of believers and that it takes many forms.

*D Don't use ungodly language*

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

I have to be honest. When I was out in sin, I had a foul mouth. I swore with almost every breath. It had become such a part of my conversation that I often feared that once I became a believer I would slip up in public and injure my witness. However, once I came back to Christ and surrendered myself to Him, He cleaned up my language. He gave me a new conversation.

Such foul language is not limited to cursing, however. It can also take the form of off-color jokes and foolish jesting. It has often grieved me to hear fellow ministers telling jokes that should cause them to blush. Such conversation grieves the Holy Spirit.

I believe that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence, the first outward manifest evidence that a believer has been filled with the Spirit because it symbolizes a deep and significant level of surrender to the Holy Spirit in our lives. To then use foul language does indeed grieve the Holy Spirit who seeks to speak of the glorious works of God. Instead of foul language, we should speak those words that edify others, that builds up the faith in those around us. We should speak words that bring benefit to others, not words that would bring them down.

*E      Get rid of a bad attitude*

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

In typical fashion, Paul lists a series of related things to be eradicated from the life of the believer—bitterness, rage, anger, brawling and slander. He then summarizes by adding, “along with every form of malice.” I list these under the heading of a bad

attitude. A person who exhibits such behavior certainly has a bad attitude toward others. Nothing resembling these things should be seen in the life of the believer, but instead the believer should be kind, compassionate and forgiving.

Throughout the list of things to be discarded, there is the implication that the believer has the responsibility to cast aside these things. Once coming to Christ He gives us the ability to rip these rags from our being. But He doesn't want us to stand naked and exposed. Instead, He offers the robes of righteousness that we must be willing to put on. It is not enough to put off the former things, we must now put on Jesus.

### **GIVE NO PLACE TO THE DEVIL**

Going back to verse 27 I want to consider the thought of denying the devil a place in our lives. This, as opposed to giving him a place to operate in or through us. The King James Version says, "Neither give place to the devil." The *New American Standard* states, "And do not give the devil an opportunity." The *New International Version* states, "And do not give the devil a foothold."

I think the NIV is probably a good way of looking at this. We are in a spiritual war. The devil is trying to defeat us and to bring us down. In Christ we are battling from a position of strength and from a secure foothold. We are on the Rock that will not roll. We must so fill our lives with the things of God that the devil has nowhere to stand in opposition. We must not give him a ledge or a place from which to attack us. We give him such a place wherever there is a place in our life that we have not fully surrendered to God and filled with God's will and Word.

Let me illustrate. I knew a man who was a great minister of the Word. He saw many miracles in his ministry. He saw thousands won to the Lord, but there was something in his life that he had failed to fully surrender to the Lord. He had a secret sin, a lust in his heart. He would, on occasion come to God in confession and contrition and feel a sense of deliverance from time to time, but he failed to fill that place with things of God. Over time that place became a place for the devil. It became a foothold for the enemy in his life until he finally gave in to his lusts and it cost him his family and ministry.

When Paul admonishes us not to give the devil a place, or a foothold, Paul isn't joking. And for this place to be denied to the enemy we must first seek deliverance from anything that is unlike Christ. We must put off, we must rip away from us anything and everything that is attached to the former sinful self, and we must fill that place with the things of God. Often, what we will fill that place with will be the opposite of what was once there.

If we stole, then we must work and learn to give. If we gossiped and tore people down, we must learn to build people up and to encourage them. If we lusted after sinful desires, we must hunger and thirst after righteousness. If we swore and cursed, we must praise and worship. If we were filled with bitterness and malice, we must be filled with love and compassion. But in this spiritual warfare that we are engaged in, we must never, ever, give the devil a foothold in our life.

How do we know if the devil has a foothold in our life? If we find ourselves falling over and over to the same failure, then it is likely that the enemy still has a base of operations in our life. To defeat the devil we must honestly assess our life, identify the place

of weakness or failure, and target it for eradication of the rags and the replace it with the robes of righteousness.

It may require prayer and fasting, confession and accountability, Word and worship, but whatever it takes to get knock the devil off your mountain, is what you need to do. You will never have the assurance of complete and decisive victory until you do.

It will require complete honesty with yourself and with God, but nothing less will do. Heed the warning of Paul, “Do not give the devil a foothold.”

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN**

### **PREPARED FOR WAR: EPHESIANS 6:10-24**

In Ephesians 6:11 the apostle Paul writes, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (KJV).

A friend of mine was a tank commander during the Gulf War in 1992. They had engaged the enemy and had advanced behind enemy lines. It was dark and though they were not on the move, their radar picked up the movement of a tank on the horizon. They looked through night vision binoculars and determined that it looked like a Russian made tank used by the Iraqi army. Concerned for the safety of their unit they readied to fire but waited for orders from a higher command. They radioed several officers up the chain of command.

"What does it look like?" their superiors asked.

"It looks like a Russian tank," they replied.

"Are all your tanks accounted for?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then shoot it."

With this command coming from a Colonel, they fired and destroyed the tank. When they went to assess the damage they

found that it was an American tank. They killed five American servicemen. The common term for this type of accident is "friendly fire."

My friend is now a minister in the Church of God, but he will never forget, or cease to regret, that dreadful night in the desert.

In our text, Paul makes it clear that it is imperative that we understand who our real enemy is, what our equipment is to defeat the enemy, and where our energy--our true source of power--comes from. The fact of the matter is, "Sooner or later every believer discovers that the Christian life is a battleground, not a playground" (Wiersbe). Unfortunately, far too many Christians have been mortally wounded by friendly fire simply because we did not know who the enemy really was.

In verses ten and eleven Paul provides a synopsis of what will follow. He says three things in these verses. First, in verse 10 Paul reminds us where our energy comes from. He says, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Second, in the first phrase of verse 11, Paul tells us to remember our equipment. He says, "Put on the whole armor of God. . ." And third, Paul reminds us who the enemy is. He says, ". . . that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

Now, in verses 12 through 24, Paul reverses the order and expounds on these three truths. In Greek grammar this is called a chiasmic structure. He expands and explains more about the enemy, the equipment and the source of our energy. Let's look closer at what Paul writes.

## **THE ENEMY**

Paul begins by telling us who the enemy is not. The conflict is not against flesh and blood. In other words, the war is not against other human beings. The war is not against the abortion doctor, or the homosexual, or the pornography people. They are merely pawns, they are simply tools in the hands of the real enemy. The real enemy is bigger and badder than these little people. They are shrimps, punks, in the real warfare.

So who is the enemy? "Principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places."

This sounds rather ambiguous at first sight. We want an enemy with skin on him. We want someone we can punch, scratch and kick. But Paul is telling us that this is a spiritual warfare, the enemy is spiritual and he works through these puppet people who are themselves casualties on the spiritual battleground. We have not been called to kill the perishing but to:

Rescue the perishing,  
Care for the dying,  
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;  
Weep o'er the erring one,  
Lift up the fallen,  
Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.

--Fanny Crosby

Paul is telling us that we have a real war and a real enemy who is organized and very powerful. Satan has had thousands of years to study humanity. He knows our ways and our weaknesses better than we know ourselves. The reason he keeps using the same old tricks to cause men and women to fall is because he

knows they keep working. The reason they keep working is because we fail to recognize the enemy at work.

What is really frustrating for a pastor or for other brothers and sisters in the body is that we can see what the enemy is doing to their life and they cannot, even though they are in the middle of the conflict. As parents we see what the enemy is trying to do to our children and we try to tell them, but it is as though they are blind to what Satan is doing to them. We can preach, yell, rant, rave and cry, but the real battle is spiritual.

Who is the enemy? The enemy is the kingdom of darkness ruled by a spiritual being called Satan. The name Satan means "adversary," because he is the enemy of God. The name Devil means, "accuser," because he accuses God's people day and night before the throne of God (Rev. 12:7-11).

Satan was created as an angel of light. He was, perhaps, the most beautiful creature ever created by God. Unfortunately, his beauty became his downfall. He tried to lead a revolt against God, but with only a Word, God cast Satan like lightning from heaven. Apparently he managed to beguile a third of the angelic host who followed him in this revolt. They are organized and ready to fight against that which God loves—humanity. Satan hates us because we bear the image of God.

Paul calls the army of Satan, "principalities. . . powers. . . rulers. . . spiritual wickedness in high places." The *New Living Translation* describes this army like this:

For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness

who rule this world, and against wicked spirits" in the spiritual realm.

It is as important that we understand that this is a spiritual warfare as it for an athlete to know whether he is playing in a football game or a basketball game. The equipment and the rules are different for each. There are physical wars and spiritual wars and we have to know the difference and we must be prepared to fight the good fight of faith against the spiritual powers of this world. If we are not ready for this war we will lose.

When we forget the nature of the warfare we may win an argument with flesh and blood person, and end up losing the war against the real enemy. We may put a person in his or her "place" and at the same time be allowing the enemy to overcome us by using our emotions to over-ride our spirituality.

## **THE EQUIPMENT**

Once we understand that this is a spiritual warfare, we understand also that our equipment, our spiritual weaponry, is spiritual in nature. Now I know that in the movies they fight ghosts with special plasma generators and stuff like that, but we are not talking about the movies here. This is war, and lives hang in the balance, but it is not a war fought with the weapons of man's invention.

Paul says, "After you've made every spiritual preparation, after you have put on the "whole armor of God, make your stand." Notice that he admonishes us to put on the "whole" armor. Leave nothing undone. Leave nothing exposed to the enemy because the very thing you overlook in your spiritual preparation will be the place he hits you first. Also, Paul is telling us that we will not be

able to stand if we haven't made preparation. Once we put on the whole armor, we are prepared to win.

Not only do we need to know who the enemy is, but we need to know who we are in Christ.

I heard the story of two army men who were doing some guerrilla warfare training. They weren't given real guns because it was just a training exercise. Instead, they were told to put on their best camouflage and go through the jungle and when they found another soldier they were to say, "Bang, bang. . .you're dead," if they were at a distance, or "stab, stab. . .you're dead," if they could sneak up on them.

Well the story goes that one man came up on another man and before the second man could turn around the first said, "Stab, stab. . .you're dead." But the other man just stood there. Then he said, "Bang, bang. . .you're dead." But the man just stood there. The first soldier said, "Hey, don't you know the rules? I said, 'stab, stab and bang, bang' and you haven't played dead!"

The second soldier just looked at him and said, "Rumble, rumble. . .I'm a tank!"

That's the way it is when we have on the whole armor of God. When we have taken our stand in the might and power of God, and when we have put on the whole armor of God, we are like a tank standing against the pitiful stab, stab and bang, bang of the enemy. But without the whole armor of God, the stab,stab and the bang, bang of the devil will bring us down!

Look at the armor Paul lists:

*A. First, there is the girdle of truth (v.14)*

The girdle holds the rest of the outfit together. It also holds the sword. "Truth" is the foundation of the Christian's armor. Without truth, without integrity and honesty everything begins to fall apart. But when we have the truth on our side we can cinch up the girdle and stand like we have a backbone. With truth we can stand with our head high, unashamed, unafraid to look the enemy in the eye and declare, "the truth has set me free and I'm not going back into the slavery of sin."

Pilot asked, "What is truth," and because of his failure to recognize Truth when he was looking Truth in the eyes, Pilot had no backbone, he caved in to public opinion.

*B Second, there is the breastplate of righteousness (v.14).*

This piece of armor was made of metal plates, or chains and they covered the body from the neck to the waist, in front and back. It protects the heart and soul of man. It symbolizes the righteousness of Christ being lived in the life of the believer. It is holiness in action. It is a right standing before God based upon the sacrifice of Christ to cover and forgive our sins.

When Satan accuses the believer, it is the righteousness of Christ which protects us. We are covered by the blood and Satan cannot cross the blood line. It is Christ's righteousness placed on our account, and it is our life lived in conformity to the new account.

*C. Third, there are the shoes of the Gospel (v. 15).*

The Roman soldier wore sandals with little spikes in the bottom of them to give him better footing during battle and to prevent him from slipping. When we live in peace with God and man, we are then prepared to press ahead.

When I played football we had spikes on our cleats which gave us traction in the dirt. If we had good traction we could block and run better. When we were blocking the opponent, our objective was to push him back so that we could advance the ball. We have been called to advance the kingdom of God. We have been called to spread the Gospel of peace, to push back the gates of hell and advance against all odds. But to do this we must have our feet ready to go, to press ahead and never give ground to the devil.

*D. Fourth, the shield of faith (v. 16)*

The shield was large, usually about four feet by two to feet, made of wood, and covered with tough leather. The soldier held it in front of him to protect himself from spears, arrows, and "fiery darts." The edges of the shield were constructed so that an entire line of soldiers could interlock shields and march into the enemy like a solid wall.

This suggests a couple things. First, it suggests that we are not alone on the battlefield. We defend one another. We stand in the gap for our fellow Christian soldiers. Shoulder to shoulder, one puts a thousand to flight and two put ten thousand to flight.

Second, the imagery of the shield shows us that the enemy is trying to shoot us down. He shoots fiery darts of fear, but our shield of faith defends us. He shoots fiery darts of lust, but our shield of faith protects us. He shoots the fiery dart of confusion, or

depression, or discouragement, but we lift up the shield of faith and we keep on keeping on.

The next time Satan tries to shoot a fiery dart of jealousy, or anger at a brother or sister, don't let it land on you. Lift up the shield of faith and stand shoulder to shoulder with those who will pray with you and weep with and rejoice with you.

*E. Fifth, we have the helmet of salvation (v.17).*

Satan tries to attack our minds, just like he attacked Eve. The helmet refers to the mind controlled by God. When God controls our mind, Satan will not lead us astray. When we read magazines, or watch television or movies, or listen to music that pumps an immoral message into our minds, we do not have on the helmet of salvation. When we do those things it is as though we are putting a funnel in our head and inviting the enemy to fill us up with his garbage. And once we have let him fill our mind with that trash, it is only a matter of time until we live out, what has been put in our mind and heart.

*F. Finally, there is the sword of the Spirit (v. 17).*

This is the only offensive weapon in the picture. The Roman soldier wore on his girdle a short sword for close combat. Hebrews 4:12 compares the Word of God to a sword, because it is sharp and it cuts through to the very thoughts and intents of the heart. In the Garden of Gethsemene Peter pulled his sword to defend Jesus, but after the Day of Pentecost, Peter learned that the Sword of the Spirit makes a much better weapon for spiritual warfare. In Isaiah, the Lord said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts."

The Word of God empowered by the Spirit of God will enable you to defeat the enemy at every turn. Even as Jesus used the Word to defeat Satan in the wilderness, we can stand on "it is written," and repel the attack of Satan. In fact, we can depend on the effectiveness of the Word of God to make our advance on the kingdom of darkness.

The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit, don't leave home without it. It's not the size of your Bible that counts, but the place of the Word in your heart that will make the difference. You can walk around with a big Bible in your hand all day long, but unless it is in your heart, you are fooling yourself. But when it is hid in your heart, you can stand. The Psalmist said, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." When the Word becomes a part of your very being then you will not fall.

### **THE ENERGY**

Even with all this armor, we are not ready for the battle until we have heard from the Captain of the Lord's army. Prayer is our communication source with God.

When the Coalition troops moved against the Iraqi army they began by cutting their lines of communication. They were so successful at this that Iraqi got to the place where they couldn't even fly their planes or contact their troops on the front lines.

If we don't pray, we will pay. If we don't stay in constant contact with headquarters we will run amuck and our efforts will be futile. We will be fighting the flesh instead of the enemy, and many in our own ranks will be wounded by our misdirected assaults.

Paul tells us we gain our energy from the power source. We have to stay plugged in, turned on, and tuned in. Pray always. In other words, approach every battle prepared by prayer, sustained in prayer and guided in prayer.

Pray with all prayer, or all kinds of prayer. In this warfare we need devotional prayer, supplication, intercession, thanksgiving.

Pray in the Spirit. We pray to the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

Pray with your eyes open. Watching means "keeping on the alert."

Keep on praying. Perseverance simply means "stick to it and don't quit."

Pray for all the saints. Lift up the other believers by lifting them up in prayer.

This is a real war. It is spiritual, but we know who the enemy is. We have the spiritual equipment to fight the war, and we have the spiritual energy to win the war.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

### FALLING FOR THE DEVIL: 1 TIMOTHY 3:6-7

Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3:6-7

6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.  
(KJV)

The *New International Version* translates it to say:

6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.  
(NIV)

The Epistles of First and Second Timothy and Titus are known collectively as the Pastoral Epistles. In these three epistles the Apostle Paul addresses issues related to leadership and church structure. Specifically, Paul writes to his two young apprentices, Timothy and Titus, encouraging them, warning them and instructing them in their respective roles as overseers of churches in their respective regions.

Timothy, in particular, was going through a time of spiritual warfare, both personally and in some of the churches under his

charge. Paul encourages Timothy, telling him to “stir up the gift of God” and to not let his youth become an issue with respect to leadership. Paul viewed Timothy as a son in the faith and had a personal interest in seeing Timothy succeed.

### **LEADERSHIP QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR**

One of the things Paul tells Timothy, is to insure that local churches were being led by men of mature faith and unimpeachable character. Paul writes about the qualifications and roles of bishops, deacons, elders, and widows. In chapter three, Paul begins talking about the role of the bishop, or the local pastor. He says:

- 1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.
- 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;
- 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;
- 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;
- 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) (1 Tim 3:1-5,KJV)

With all that Timothy was dealing with, both personally and as a leader, one of the things that Paul wants Timothy to do is to insure proper leadership. In war weak leaders lose wars even when they have superior weaponry and manpower. Weak leaders do not inspire confidence, but cause confusion and anxiety. However, strong leaders can face overwhelming odds and snatch

victory from the jaws of defeat. So leadership was and is an important consideration for a church. We know we will face spiritual warfare, so the question is, who do we have in leadership positions and are they prepared for their role as a leader?

The churches under Timothy's leadership were under spiritual attack and Timothy was discouraged, but Paul told Timothy to get stirred up, and to get the right people in the right places for the right reasons. It is time to commit leadership to faithful men and leadership. It is time for people to pray, lifting holy hands, without wrath and doubting. It is not time to choose the person who has the most money, or the person who is the most popular to lead. It is time to find people who are completely dedicated and determined, faith filled and focused, proven and patient.

### **THE DANGER**

In verse six Paul tells us one more thing a leadership should not be, and that is a neophyte. The word translated "novice" in the King James Version is from the Greek, *neos* (neh'-os); "new", i.e. (of persons) youthful, or (of things) fresh. The English word, novice, means, "a beginner." *Neos* is also used of a tree that has just been planted.

The danger is that a person who is a neophyte will "fall into the condemnation of the devil" or will "fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." The second case the implication is that the devil sets traps to catch Christians in. Furthermore, the devil knows that when he strikes down a leader the effects of that victory over a Christian is magnified many times over through the lives of those people whom a leader has influence with.

Paul knew this as well, and for this reason Paul pinpoints inexperience and lack of maturity as a reason to disqualify someone from a leadership position.

Look again at verse 6, “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” The picture of a novice as a freshly planted tree is poignant because such a tree has no roots, not strength to stand on its own. It has the potential, but if left on its own too soon, it will fall.

In my front yard there were two trees planted by the developer. One is a maple and the other is an oak. Both are hardwoods, and both become stout trees, but for the first six months these trees had support lines on them. There were several of these lines anchored to the ground. The roots of the tree were deep enough or strong enough to hold it in place when the storms came, so it needed this support.

I’ve seen people take those support lines off the tree too soon and when the first strong wind blew, they fell. Often new Christians are zealous, they are eager to get involved and they can be a great help to the church, but new Christians should not be placed in leadership positions until they have grown in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior. The enemy loves it when the church becomes desperate and throws new Christians into the storms.

What is the danger? The danger is that new Christians will become “lifted up in pride.” The Greek word for “lifted up” means, “wrapped in smoke.” When immature Christians are placed in leadership positions and have too much responsibility placed upon them too soon, they get wrapped up in the delusion that they know more than they do, can do more than they can, and

are more than they are. They can't even see the truth of the situation, they can't be reasoned with or convinced that they aren't ready for the position.

We are talking about spiritual leadership positions. This doesn't mean that a new Christian can do nothing but sit on the bench and listen. There are ministries to be involved in, things that a new Christian can do to gain leadership experience as they grow. But such opportunities call for humility and a teachable spirit. People who think they already know it all probably will never accomplish much in the Kingdom of God.

When I joined the military the first six weeks we did nothing but learn to fold our socks, T-shirts, and underwear and put them in the right place in the drawer. We learned how to make our beds and how to march together without stepping on one another's heels. We often wondered what folding underwear and placing them in a drawer had to do with the real military. I later understood that if we could not be trusted with underwear, then we could not be trusted with billion dollar planes, or in my case, to work in surgery with people's lives on the line. If I can't fold socks and underwear and put them in the right place in a locker, then how can I be trusted to maintain a sterile field in the operating room?

The devil likes to create panic and anxiety until we think we have to use the first warm body that walks through the doors of the church to fill a leadership position. But this is not the plan of God. God wants the church to be making disciples who will in turn, make disciples.

God does not want unprepared, untrained and inexperienced people leading His church. Paul told Timothy,

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15, KJV).

Failure to prepare is paramount to preparing to fail. Paul tells Timothy that a church leader should not be a neophyte because he will get lifted up in pride, only to fall into the judgment of the devil. The tree that is properly planted, grounded, and anchored, has the potential to grow into a mighty tree. But the newly planted tree that is not anchored will fall. A new believer who is thrust into leadership too soon will fall into the same judgment reserved for the devil when he fell from pride. Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels, but hell hath enlarged her borders and will accommodate all who allow pride to be their downfall.

### **THE POWER OF PRIDE**

I think pride is one of the most successful weapons in the Satan’s arsenal to use to bring people down. The devil will lift you up to let you fall. He will build up a novice, prop him or her up until they think they are somebody, and then he will pull the props out.

Consider what the Bible has to say about pride:

Psalms 10:4

4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. (KJV)

Prov 16:18

18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. (KJV)

I Jn 2:16

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (KJV)

The devil can use the appearance of success as the source of our downfall. I heard about a twenty-something minister in our denomination who was appointed to one of the most prestigious churches in our movement. It wasn't long until he was making the claim that his ministry was the source of the success of the church. In short order, he had become hooked on prescription drugs, lost his church, his wife, and his family. He was caught up in a cloud of pride that lifted him up, only to let him fall.

We could easily begin to count off minister after minister, men and women, who rose to great levels of success—at least as the world defines success—who later fell into sin and judgment.

### **A GOOD REPUTATION**

Not only must a potential leader not be a novice, but he must have a proven record. The man or woman who would be leader must have a good report both within the church and outside of the church. The *New International Version* states, “He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.

A couple things need to be addressed here. First, Paul is telling us that it is perfectly in order to do a little background check on people desiring leadership positions. It would be perfectly in order for me to call a member’s former pastor and ask him or her about the member’s conduct and capability at the previous church. In fact, according to Paul, not only would this be permitted, but it

is preferable that I do just that. If a person has caused trouble at every church they've attended, then I have no business putting them into a position to cause further trouble in this church.

The same is true of the church seeking a pastor. They should do a little background check. I think every church ought to be able to do check the credit rating of a potential pastor. I think they ought to be able to look at the books and ask whether this man or woman has proven himself or herself as a leader. Why? So that he will not fall into disgrace and bring a bad reputation to a good church.

The second thing to note in verse seven is the reference to "the devil's trap." The word for "trap" is *pagis*. According to *Thayers Dictionary* the *pagis* was "a snare, a trap, a noose"

- a) used of snares in which birds are entangled and caught; it implies unexpectedly, suddenly, because birds and animals are caught unaware
- b) a snare, that is, whatever brings peril, loss, or destruction
  - 1) used of a sudden and unexpected deadly peril
  - 2) used of the allurements and seductions of sin
  - 3) the allurements to sin by which the Devil holds one bound

The point is that Satan knows how to set traps for us. In modern warfare they use landmines. These bombs are placed under the sand or ground so that when someone steps on them they explode and kill people. Often, not only does the person who stepped on the mine get killed or injured, people walking with, or following the person who steps on the mine gets killed or wounded as well.

However, we are told we do not have to become victims of Satan's devices. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 2:9-11

9 The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything.

10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven-- if there was anything to forgive-- I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake,

11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (NIV)

Paul is saying that Satan was scheming to cause division in the church, but through forgiveness the division can be avoided. Paul says that we do not have to let Satan outwit us. We know what kinds of things the devil does to cause us to fall and fail. In other words, we do not have fall into the traps that the devil sets.

More often than not, when we are approaching a trap set by the enemy, the Holy Spirit will sound spiritual alarms. There will be things that we see and hear, there will be things that we feel in our spirit that are not right. The proverbial red flags will go up.

It may be the way someone of the opposite sex looks at us or talks to us, or touches us, that tells us that Satan is setting a trap. We don't have to fall into that trap. It may be a discussion that we are having with someone that we see is becoming contentious, and that if we don't stop and pray, or take a timeout will become an argument, or a all-out fight. We don't have to fall into that trap.

We are not ignorant of the devil's devices. He tends to use the same golden oldies over and over. But we do not have to fall over and over. The idea of the snare is to catch us when we are unaware. For this reason we are told to be sober, vigilant, diligent,

watching, waiting and praying. If we fall asleep in while we are to at our watch, we may well fall into the devil's snare. But if we will remain focused on Jesus, if we will keep our eyes on Him, then we do not have to fall into the devil's snare.

Not only are spiritual leaders to avoid falling into the devil's snare, they are also to be used by God in helping others to get out of the snare. In 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verses 25 and 26, Paul instructs leadership on how to respond to people who have fallen into the devil's snare.

25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,  
26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (2 Tim 2:25-26, NIV)

Paul is instructing leadership on how to respond to those people who refuse to recognize or work in harmony with spiritual leadership. The leadership should not strike a defensive posture, but should "gently instruct". And the intention of this instruction is not to prove that the leadership is right, but to lead the opposing party into repentance with the hope that "they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil." Because, to the extent that we fight against or oppose God-given leadership, we are doing the will of devil.

In times of war we want leaders we can trust. We want someone who is mature enough and experienced enough to lead us to victory. Further, we want someone who will be caring enough to come to us and correct us in love when we are wrong. We can choose to grow and mature in our faith and allow God to open the

doors of opportunity and ministry, or we can rush headlong in our own pursuits and chase our own ambitions right into the snare of the enemy. And it may look like we are succeeding, it may look like we are a rising star in the church or in the denomination, only to fall to pride and selfish ambition. But, we do not have to fall into the enemy's snare, and if we have, we can find forgiveness and deliverance when we are ready to repent and exit the door that is opened for our release.

This is war, and it is one that require both godly leaders as well as godly followers. It requires leaders who lead and followers willing to grow into leadership position. It means that while everyone will begin with the milk of the Word, the fundamental teachings of the Word, everyone should desire to move beyond the milk to the meat until they too can teach others.

It may not mean that you hold the office of pastor or teacher, but it means that in your home, or in your sphere of influence, you are grounded in the Word and apt to give a reason for the faith you profess.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE**

### **MAKING THE DEVIL RUN: JAMES 4:1-10**

James writes his epistle to a church in the midst of a conflict. His reference to the wounds caused by the tongue, to the relationship between rich and poor, to partiality and to wars and fights in our text all speak of a congregation (or congregations) that is in a battle. It is time, says James, for these people to decide once and for all who they are and who they intend to serve. He writes, in chapter 1 verse 8, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

In chapter three James begins by writing of the taming of the tongue and the dangers of not doing so. Then he begins talking about peace. He writes in verses 17 and 18:

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

18 Now the fruit of the righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

These words express the desire of James for the church, that is wisdom from above, and peace among the membership. But from this point of desire James jumps into the depths of his displeasure with the church. He asks two rhetorical questions.

### **THE QUESTIONS**

James asks, “1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?”

One can read the incredulity of James in these questions. He is writing people who claimed to be believers, and yet the level of the conflict within the church is referred to as “wars and fights”. Most understand this to be metaphor, that is, the level of acrimony was such that it was akin to war within the church. At least one commentator, however, suggests that the level of conflict may have reached a point where lives were lost (Ralph Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary: James*). He notes that there were former Zealots in the early church, in fact, one of Jesus’ disciples was a zealot. As such, violence was seen as a legitimate way of resolving conflict. At least in terms of the wisdom of the world. Wisdom from above would seek a more peaceful resolution.

In the second question, which is actually an answer to the first, James tells us the source of such conflicts, they “come from you desires for pleasure that war in your members.”

The reference to members is probably a reference to the membership of the church, and not of the members of an individual’s body. Within the church (“among you”) there are those who have a desire for more things to bring pleasure. This desire as resulted in a war among the membership.

James speaks much about the relationship between the rich and the poor, and in the next verse he mentions coveting as one of the motivations for their situation. As such, it may well be that the poorer members of the congregation were in conflict with the more affluent members. They may have seen the rich as representative

of the Romans and, as such, worthy of disdain. While the rich saw the poor as lazy, lacking faith or favor with God.

### **THE PARADOX**

James continues:

2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

The people who were at war with one another are described and the paradox of their predicament is highlighted. James says, “You want things that you do not have. You murder and covet in an attempt to gain, but you do not obtain. You will fight and struggle with live in turmoil, and yet the reason you do not have what you want is that you do not ask.”

Some believe that what James is saying is that if the poor would have only asked for help from the people who have wealth, then they could have found the help they needed and would have avoided the war and struggle that was going on in the church. Others, however, believe that James is talking about prayer here. In other words, instead of coveting what others had, and allowing fleshly and worldly desires to dominate them, they could have prayed and God would have supplied the need.

But then James adds something that almost seems to contradict this. He says, “And even when you do ask, you don’t get what you ask for because you ask with the wrong motives.” The problems with the prayers they were praying was that their

focus was on gratifying themselves, of satisfying their own pleasures, and not on glorifying God.

Much like the world today, they believed that the source of happiness was in more stuff. They believed that it was unfair for others to have so much, when some of them had so little. Instead of loving one another and finding the true fountain of life in Christ, the members of this church were at war.

The fault did not lie with the poor alone. The wealthy apparently failed to show due compassion for the impoverished because James admonishes them to care for the widows and the orphans in their afflictions. He tells them to put works with their faith and to do something about the plight of the poor and not simply to give lip service to it (2:14-20).

In chapter 5 James writes:

1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like a fire. You have heaped up treasures in the last days.

6 You have murdered the just: he does not resist you.

In the Christian life the focus is not on self but is on God and His will for our life. His will may be to live on meager resources among people of meager resources to reach those people. It certainly is not God's will for preachers to propagate a so-called message of faith and grow wealthy on the resources of the impoverished. Unfortunately, this is happening in many places

around the world—especially in third world or two-thirds world countries. In the name of Christianity preachers are living in luxury while the people are eking out a living.

It may also be God's will for some to gain wealth for the purpose of reaching and teaching the wealthy, as well as for becoming an extension of God's blessings into the lives of others. There are some people who, according to the Apostle Paul, have a gift of giving. If the Holy Spirit gives this gift to a man or woman, and if they are willing to let this gift be used in their lives, then I believe God will get the resources to those people so that they can give. The point of James' epistle is that wherever God places us, whatever our role or responsibility in the kingdom, we are not to sit in judgment of others, but to lift up and honor one another.

## **THE PROBLEM**

James sees the problem:

4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

What was the problem in the church James was writing? It was that they were spiritually unfaithful to God. Instead, they were seeking the attention and love of the world. The Greek there is only one word used at the beginning of verse 4. Literally it is the word for "adulteresses." As such, many believe that James is drawing upon the Old Testament imagery of God being married to His people—in this case, the church. But this church was

committing spiritual adultery. They were unfaithful to God and were seeking friendship with the world, rather than fidelity to God.

When we let the world become the source of our approval, when we become more concerned with pleasing the world, then we become prone to doing things that contrary to pleasing God. The only way to cozy up to the world's standards and practices is to be willing to abandon the will and the Word of God. In this, then, we become the enemy of God. We set ourselves in opposition to God and insure that our prayers will become ineffective and the only way to gain those things we want will be to engage in selfish and worldly practices. Practices that will not reap peace, but will reap judgment.

Verse 5 is a very difficult verse to translate. Some translate the word "spirit" to be a reference to the human spirit. Others translate it to refer to the Holy Spirit.

If it is a reference to the human spirit then as the *New International Version* translates it, "the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely." However, if the Holy Spirit is the reference, then as the *New King James Version* states, "The Spirit who is in us yearns jealously." William Barclay translates this to say, "God jealously yearns for the spirit which he has made to dwell within us."

Another problem with this verse is that James appears to be quoting Scripture, and yet no such text exists in the Old Testament. This has given rise to the speculation that James is either summarizing the meaning of the Old Testament, or that James is quoting a lost source, such as the Book of Enoch, which we no longer have available.

The grammar, according to Ralph Martin, suggests that this is a reference to the Spirit of God and that He jealously yearns for us. If we are friends with the world then we are engaging in spiritual adultery against a God whose Spirit jealously yearns for us.

Barclay writes:

It means that to disobey God is like breaking the marriage vow. It means that all sin is a sin against love. It means that our relationship to God is not like the distant relationship of king and subject or master and slave, but like the intimate relationship of husband and wife. It means that when we sin we break God's heart, as the heart of one partner in a marriage may be broken by the desertion of the other.

## **THE ANSWER**

James knows the answer:

6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

What is the answer for the church that is in a time of turmoil, of spiritual warfare among the members? James says, that despite the current state of things, and despite the severity and seeming hopelessness of the situation God's grace is sufficient. James says, "But He (God) gives more grace." The grace to rise above the turmoil is available to anyone, rich or poor, who is willing to do humble himself or herself before the Lord.

“Therefore,” in light of this fact, James says to do the following:

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

There are ten imperative in this passage and they are in a tense in the Greek (aorist) which communicates an urgency in the command. The imperative indicates that these are not suggestions, but instructions expected to be followed out, and the aorist tense, indicates that it is to be done immediately.

The first imperative is to “submit to God.” Do not give in to the desire of the flesh, do not attempt to please the world, but first and foremost, “submit to God.” Only after doing this are the rest of the imperatives possible.

The second imperative is to “Resist the devil.” Accompanying this imperative is that if we will submit to God, then will be able to resist the devil “and he will flee from you.” The word “resist” is a military word meaning, “to stand against” (R. Kent Hughes, *James: Faith That Works*). It implies that we become militant and be willing to stand up against the works of the enemy. In this context it means that we must be willing to make a decision that we will no longer allow our passions or the world’s

pleasure to dictate our direction. We will not allow the influence of the devil to drive us into conflicts and war within the church.

Conflict in the church, whether it take the form of gossip, tale-bearing, hateful speech, aggressive behavior, or a disregard of God-given leadership, the cause can be found in a failure to submit to God and to resist the devil.

Resisting the devil may sometimes seem to be a daunting task. The enemy looks ominous and powerful; after all he is as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Yet when we resist the devil He will flee. He is more bark than bite when we are willing to stand against him in Jesus' name.

When I lived in Cleveland, Tennessee our neighbor had a big, black dog. That dog frightened me. It would often come right up to the fence of our yard with teeth bared, growling and barking at my son, Timothy who was only two years old at the time.

One day I was going to get the newspaper and that dog came out to meet me. He was growling a low deep growl and walking toward me with his ears back and his lip snarled. I slowly picked up the paper and began to walk toward the house with that dog coming up close behind me. About ten yards from the house I started to run, and just as I did, he bit me on the back of my lower leg, just above my ankle. I had jeans on, so it didn't break the skin, but it bruised my leg, and it hurt.

A few weeks later it was dark out and I was heading out to work. I had recently purchased a new car and was about to open the door when this black dog came out of the darkness, startling me with by barking at my heels. I was carrying my lunch box and a steel thermos, but I jumped straight up into the air and landed

with my seat on the roof of my car. When I landed it dented the roof of my car.

It was at this point that I became angrier than scared. I looked at the dog (who was still standing and barking at me), then I looked at the roof of my car with a dented roof, and then I looked at the steel thermos in my hand. Suddenly I made up my mind that I wasn't afraid anymore. I jumped off the car with the thermos raised and I began to rebuke that devil. He jumped back and began to retreat and I began to chase him back into his own yard. I never ran from that dog again and eventually he left me alone.

The devil will win the war of intimidation if you let him. Or you can decide that you aren't going to run from him, and you aren't going to let him run your life, but you are going to submit to God and resist the devil and he will flee from you!

The third imperative is, "Draw near to God." The negative is to resist the devil, and the positive is to get close to God. This imperative also comes with a promise, and it is that when we draw near to God, "He will draw near to you."

The fourth imperative is, "Cleanse your hands you sinners." Sin defiles, while confession and repentance cleanses. Cleansing our hands means that we will no longer do things that are contrary to godliness, but will work righteous works.

The fifth imperative is, "Purify your hearts, you double-minded." By purify, the command is to remove any alloy, to remove anything that competes with our allegiance to Christ, to make up our minds to go with God in every decision, attitude, action and motive.

Next three related imperative are listed, “Lament and mourn and weep.” These, along with the ninth imperative, “Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom,” are intended to convey the need for genuine contrition and repentance for the wrongs committed. When we step back and look at the wounds we have caused; when we consider how we have grieved the heart of God; and when we consider the spiritual adultery we have engaged in over selfish and sinful desires, it should move us to grieve our failures even as we resolve, in Christ, to move into a time of faithfulness and victory over the devil.

The final imperative is, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” It is the promise that weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning (Ps. 30:5). This imperative brings us full circle to humility. It brings us back to where we should have been all along. It brings us to our strength and our source of victory, humility. When we are willing to humble ourselves before the Lord, it is His good pleasure to lift us up, to grant us victory, to give us the desires of our heart, to provide those things we need to accomplish His will in our lives.

This is war, but it should never be a war that we wage against other believers. It is a fight, but not a fight against brothers and sisters in Christ. The person we are to confront is the devil, and in standing against him we are refusing to allow him to set the agenda for our lives. Instead, we submit to God’s will, whether it is gain or loss, whether it is pain or glory, whether it is fame or obscurity, we are submitting to God and resisting the devil. We are putting him to flight.

But we are also making a decision to draw nearer and nearer to God with every passing day. As we draw nearer to Him,

He is drawing nearer to us, and for every step we take, I believe He takes two.

God, forgive us for selfishness, for worldliness, and for unforgiveness. Grant us, Lord, your grace that we may run with patience the race that is before us. Grant us your grace that we may reflect your love and fidelity every relationship in life.

## CHAPTER THIRTY

### RESISTING YOUR ADVERSARY: 1 PETER 5:8-11

Peter writes:

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

11 To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NKJV)

After providing instruction with respect to various relationships, whether it is between husband and wife, slave and master, or elder and younger, Peter now moves to address the relationship between the believer and the devil. By saying “relationship” I am not suggesting that we have a relationship with the devil, but that Peter is addressing the believer in terms of our relationship to the devil, that is, our interaction and warfare with him.

Leading into this discussion Peter reminds us that the true path to success is found in humility. As we act and interact humbly with one another, and as we recognize God-given leadership in the home, on the job, or in the church, we are placing ourselves in a position where God can exalt us. We don't have to worry or fret about promoting or exalting ourselves when we are able to throw all our anxieties and selfish concerns on God.

## **TWO PRELIMINARY COMMANDS**

By way of preliminaries, Peter warns us to “be sober” and to “be vigilant.” The Greek word translated “sober” (*nepho*), literally means, “to abstain from wine.” It thus means to be sober, that is, watchful and alert. The Greek word for “vigilant” (*gregoreuo*) is word from which we get the English word, gregarious. This word means, “to keep awake.” Perhaps Peter was recalling the words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane:

40 Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?

41 "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matt 26:40-41, NKJV)

Just as the enemy had Jesus in his sights with the intention of doing Him harm, the enemy has every believer in the crosshairs of his evil intent. When Peter warns us to be stay off the sauce, and to stay awake, there is a reason. He says, “because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” I've watched many wildlife programs over the years and I've always been fascinated by the big cats, especially the lions. I've noticed that lions will walk on padded paws through the

grassy plains looking for prey. Then when they see something edible they will lay in wait for a long time as the herd of antelope, or some other tasty treat moves toward them. Usually antelope are skittish and alert, but the moment one of them fails to keep its eyes and ears open, the lion will pounce.

Peter tells us that this is the way Satan works. He is constantly looking for someone who has grown lax and lazy in their faith. He is roaming the ranges of humanity looking for a man or woman whose prayer life is now dead, or whose devotional time is nonexistent. He is looking for people who no longer praise and worship and who have allowed themselves to grow complacent in their stand for godliness, righteousness and holiness.

Then when he finds that person, he waits. He waits for the opportunity. He waits for that moment when we despair, when we forfeit our faith and embrace our fears and anxieties. Satan loves to devour people who have given up on God. He loves to devour marriages where love has been replaced by selfishness and bitterness. He loves to devour churches where relationships are no longer Christ centered, and where leadership is no longer respected, but where it is every man for himself.

Peter knew firsthand how easy it is to declare one moment that we will never deny our Savior, and then, to stand in the courtyard the next moment cursing and denying the very one who is enduring a beating for our healing. Peter tells us, from experience, to stay sober and stay vigilant.

In warfare the enemy will monitor the opponents' activities, will take note of areas of fortification and areas of weakness. The enemy will look for a place and time when the defenses are down so that they can attack. There is too much on the line in this

spiritual warfare to fall to sleep. Souls are hanging the balance and they need a church that is sober and alert. We are the watchmen and we must stand at our post. We must sound the alarm. We cannot allow the enemy to come in unawares and steal the sheep from the Savior's fold.

### **OPPOSE THE ENEMY**

So what are we to do when we see the adversary advancing? Peter said, "Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."

That word "resist" means, "to stand against." We are told to take a stand against the enemy. One man said that the only thing that the enemy needs, in order to win this spiritual war, is for good men to do nothing. The word "resist" is not a passive word. The picture is not of the church as a wall weathering the attack of the enemy. The picture is of a church that sees the enemy on the prowl, and who then stands up to send the enemy running. It echoes the words of James, "Resist the enemy and he will flee from you."

But how, exactly does a person resist the enemy? Peter says, "steadfast in the faith." Peter is saying that our trust and confidence in God and the message, by which we have obtained salvation, must remain strong. The enemy will try cause fear to give birth to doubt, and doubt to instability and uncertainty. Instead, Peter says, "resist the enemy, steadfast in the faith." Many translations say, "steadfast in your faith." The very faith that grasped the grace through which forgiveness flowed and reconciliation was realized, is the same faith that will sustain you when the enemy comes prowling.

So we are told to stand against the adversary, and to do so steadfastly, that is, with persistence and commitment. We become Elijah's saying, "I alone am left." Then Peter adds "knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." In other words, Peter wants us to remember that we are not alone in this struggle. Sometimes when problems come and when we are going through a time of suffering or struggle, we ask, "Why me?" As though we are the only person who has ever faced such a struggle or storm. Peter says, "Remember this, the sufferings you are going through are shared by believers around the world."

If one can overcome by faith, then all can overcome by faith. God is no respecter of persons, and if faith in Him will bring anyone through, then faith in Him can bring everyone through, even you. If this were not the case then we would have no hope. If faith in God were not enough, then we would have no hope at all. If your faith is not possibly enough to see you through the storm, then neither would my faith be enough. Faith in God is sufficient, but each of us must make a decision to resist and to do so unrelentingly in faith.

God has given every man a measure of faith (Rom. 12:3), and that faith is sufficient to secure the victory. But faith lying dusty and unused on shelf is of little value. We must exercise our faith and let it work for us.

The enemy can roar, but he cannot defeat the child walking in faith. I've been to the zoo a few times and heard the lions roar. It is ominous and if I were in a jungle, it would be a little unnerving. I would be looking for a safe shelter. Yet, while the enemy can roar at anytime, he can only devour those who have

failed to remain sober and vigilant. He can only devour those who do not exercise their faith and resist him.

## **GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT**

After telling us to exercise our faith in steadfast resistance, Peter tells us, “But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” Paul said that he had been buffeted by a messenger from Satan, and that he had prayed to God three times concerning this “thorn in the flesh.” But God’s response to Paul was, “My grace is sufficient for you, My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

The strength in which we stand is not our faith, but that on which our faith is based, namely, the grace of God. Peter tells us that this grace will sustain us—“after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”

This promise is somewhat unsettling. We might prefer this text to read, “After He has prevented you from suffering.” But that’s not what it says.

The promise is that “after you have suffered a while.” There is an inherent promise here. First, there is the implied promise that what we are suffering will come to an end. It is not forever, but for “a while.” Second, it implies that there is a purpose to the storm. God will use the pain to perfect. The suffering will accomplish four things, “perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”

The word *perfect* means, “to thoroughly complete, repair, adjust.” God can use the suffering that standing in opposition to

the enemy brings, to complete you, to make you a mature Christian. Some Christians have never had to put their faith on the line. They think they have great faith because they haven't had a headache in ten years. But until their life or livelihood is on the line, their faith has yet to be tested. Those people who have gone down into the depths of life's darkest days and come out the other side praising God, are those whose faith has been thoroughly completed.

Second, Peter says that suffering will *establish* you. This word, in the Greek, means, "to set fast, (literally) to turn resolutely in a certain direction, or (figuratively) to confirm." Having gone through the trials and tribulations, and having experience the power of God to deliver, we are more prepared to stay the course when the next storm comes. Like a sailor whose compass proved true even when they could not see the stars, faith in God through the darkest night will prove that we can follow the Captain of our Salvation wherever he leads.

Third, the promise is that we will be *strengthened*. This word literally refers to bodily vigor, however, it has a broader meaning including fortitude and the ability to stay the course in the face of fierce winds of opposition. By being established, we are able to choose to stay the course, and by being strengthened we are provided the power to stay the course.

Last, *settle*, means that we have something to stand on, we have a firm foundation. Euripedies once said, "Give me a fulcrum and I can move the world." Through suffering God is able to perfect us, to establish us, and to strengthen us. He gives us the character, the courage and the capability to stay the course, and he gives us a firm to foundation upon which to stand.

Peter concludes this thought with a doxology, “To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (NKJV). God gets the glory for the victories won. It was the exercise of our faith that prevailed, but it prevailed only because the one in whom we have placed our faith will never fail us. He can even use the attack of the enemy and make it work together for our good. We can indeed do all things through Christ, even send the roaring lion running away in defeat.

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE**

### **DEALING WITH INSURGENTS: JUDE**

Insurgents are people who sneak into a situation and attempt to influence the outcome. They are rebels who fight against the system. In the introduction to the Book of Jude in my Holman *New King James Version* of the Bible, the following is written:

Fight! Contend! Do battle! When apostasy arises, when false teachers emerge, when the truth of God is attacked, it is time to fight for the faith . . . The danger is real. False teachers have crept into the church, turning God's grace into unbounded license to do as they please. Jude reminds such men of God's past dealings with unbelieving Israel, disobedient angels, and wicked Sodom and Gomorrah. In the face of such danger Christians should not be caught off guard. The challenge is great, but so is the God who is able to keep them from stumbling.

I couldn't have said it better, or I would have. We are to contend for the faith. Let's outline this book and look at the challenge Jude gives the believer.

#### **Greeting**

1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:

2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

The first two verses of Jude form the greeting of the letter and, as was common for letter writing of this time, he introduces himself and the intended readers in the opening. Jude introduces himself as a *doulos*, or a bond-slave of Jesus Christ, and brother of James. Then name Jude is literally *Ioudas*, which is more often translated Judas. But, for obvious reasons, the English translators preferred Jude.

Some have questioned why Jude did not refer himself as the brother of Jesus. There are those who have seized upon this as proof that Mary did not have any other children after Jesus. However, it is clear from Scripture that there were men and women who are referred to as the brothers and sisters of Jesus. One reason why neither Jude nor his brother James refer to themselves as the brother of Jesus is that they were aware of the peculiar circumstances concerning Jesus' birth and did not want to give any hint that they too were birthed from similar circumstances. Further, they never claim any advantage by virtue of their physical relationship with Jesus. In fact, it wasn't until after His resurrection that the brother believed in Jesus as Messiah. The basis of their relationship with Jesus is like that of any other believer and it is based on faith. And finally, there was no higher honor in the Early Church than to be the bond-slave of Jesus. As bond slave was a slave who had been given freedom, but who desired to remain as the servant of his master.

The readers of this letter, according to the King James Version, are "them that are sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ and called." However, the majority of Greek manuscripts and thus of other translations does not use the

word “sanctified” here and I don’t think it is a conspiracy. The KJV simply has the poorer translation.

The New International Version has this letter written “To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ.”

The Revised Standard Version translates it, “To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.”

The American Standard Version says, “To them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ.”

The word translated “preserved” means that they are continually guarded and carefully watched by Jesus Christ.

After the writer and readers are identified, a blessing is pronounced, “Mercy . . . peace . . . and . . . love be multiplied.” It is more common to see the word grace than love in the blessing of the Epistles.

### **THE CHARGE TO THE READERS**

3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Apparently Jude originally intended to write a letter addressing their “common salvation,” that is, a letter affirming the doctrines of the church. However, when he became aware of the spiritual attack that these believers were under, Jude changed the tone and content from what he originally intended. His letter

became a powerful charge to the readers to resist the influence and teaching of certain evil influences.

Like any pastor or teacher, Jude was looking forward to a positive letter, one that affirmed points of agreement and builds up and reinforces the faith of the readers. But the severity of and the danger of the false teaching was such that it required an immediate and unambiguous response. The nature was one of warning with a charge to steer clear of the teaching and influence of these “certain men.”

He tells them to “earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints.” The words “earnestly contend” are from the single Greek word *epagonizomai*, from which we get the English words agony and agonize. It is a word used of vigorous, intense and determined struggle between competitors. (Wuest) The church is being called to engage in intense and determined struggle for the faith. The words “the faith” refers to a body of belief, or doctrine, which was handed over to the church to guard or take care of.

Jude was compelled by circumstances and by unction of the Holy Spirit, to warn the church not to get caught up in some new teaching, but to fight for the faith that God had entrusted to the church.

There is certainly a warning for the church today. In a world of Harry Potter and DaVinci Codes, a time of New Age and Occult religion on the rise, the church must hold, to the point of agony, the sound doctrines of Scripture.

## **THE CHARACTER OF THE FALSE TEACHERS**

A) *They creep in and try to change sound doctrine*

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

These “certain men” had come into the church by stealth. They slithered in through a side door. They came in looking like sheep, but they were wolves in sheep’s wool. These men were written about beforehand. By this Jude probably has in mind the book of Enoch. Enoch is not in the canon and Jude never refers to Enoch as Scripture; however, it seems that Jude’s readers were familiar with this book so Jude references it to make his point about these false teachers.

These men are “ungodly men.” That word “ungodly” occurs six times in the book of Jude. It is an important term that means more than simply “without God,” it means that they are without religion, or that they are irreligious, profane, secular, and sensual. They came into the church looking like Christians, but in truth, they had no real relationship with Christ, and no real religious convictions of any persuasion other than fulfilling their own pleasures.

At the heart of their deception was a view of grace that promoted the idea that anything goes. They turned the grace of God “into lasciviousness,” that is, “without restraint, anything goes, nothing is wrong.”

We read of this same deception in the epistles of other biblical writers. The Apostle Paul asked the rhetorical question, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may

abound?” (Rom. 6:1). Which Paul answers in the strongest of terms, “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (v. 2). Grace is not permission to keep sinning and claiming that it’s all under the blood. Grace is the power to rise above sin, to be set free from sin, to be dead to sin and alive to God through Christ.

So what these certain men were espousing was the very antitheses of the Good News. In addition, these men were denying the Lordship and divinity of Jesus.

*B) The comparison from the Old Testament*

Next Jude comments on the character of these teachers by comparing them to various Old Testament examples of rebellion and unbelief.

*1.] The example of Israel*

5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

A generation of Jews who had been saved from Egypt later died in the wilderness because they lost their faith in God. They did not have faith in God to give them victory over the Canaanites so God caused them wander in the wilderness for 40 years until a generation died.

Notice that Jude points out that while these Jews were initially saved from Egypt, they were later lost in the wilderness. They died because of their unbelief. There is a comparison being

made here. These certain men may well have experienced salvation from sin at some point, but now their unbelief would result in their judgment.

2.] *The example of the angels*

6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

The second example comes from the realm of angels. We know from various Old and New Testament scriptures that Satan led a rebellion against God and a third of the angels followed him. Their natural estate was to remain faithful in service to God, but they forfeited heaven for hell. These angels are now bound for hell. Jude uses figurative language to say that they are chained to their destiny. They chose Satan and they are now bound to the kingdom of darkness rather than the kingdom of light. Their destiny is judgment, and ultimately, a lake of fire where they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Rev. 19-21).

These certain men had once known the promise of an eternity in the presence of God, but they had forfeited it to follow their own desires. Like the fallen angels, their destiny was now God's judgment.

3.] *The example of Sodom and Gomorrah*

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

The third example comes from Sodom and Gomorrah. This story is well known and it serves as an example of the result of wanton rebellion against God, and the pursuit of sensual pleasures over godly purpose.

These certain men are being compared with others who gave themselves over to fornication. The word for fornication is the same word we get the word pornography from. Notice also that these men, like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, were guilty of “giving themselves over to fornication.” They had, apparently, once been believers; they had resisted the sexual temptations that all humans are confronted with. But somehow, somewhere along the way, these certain men gave in to their base desires until now these desires controlled them. They wanted to stay in the church, so now they simply attempted to reinterpret grace as God’s permission to do whatever they wanted to do.

In addition to fornication, which includes sexual relations outside of the bounds of marriage, these certain men were guilty of “going after strange flesh.” The story of Genesis tells us that the Sodomites engaged homosexual behavior and the name Sodomite is used to refer to sexual acts associated with homosexual behavior as well. “Strange flesh,” then, refers to flesh other than that which is God ordained, namely, relations between a husband (a man) and wife (a woman).

These certain men, who are being compared to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, should take note of their example. The people of these two cities, as well as surrounding cities, are currently “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

These three examples should serve as a warning to the church today. First we should fight against unbelief, that is, doubt

or the lack of faith in God. Second, we must fight against the temptation to surrender our place in the Kingdom of God for a lesser kingdom—even if we are promised to be king of that kingdom. And third, we must never give in to base sensual desires that take outside of the perfect plan and will of God for our lives.

C) *They are corrupt and arrogant*

8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

Jude refers to these certain men as people whose claims of dreams and visions are corrupt. They defile, or pollute, their flesh through their conduct. The reference may well be twofold, that is, spiritually defile themselves, but also physically defile themselves through venereal diseases, through *pharmekia*, or drugs and alcohol.

Not only do they defile themselves, they despise others. They “despise dominion.” The word “dominion” comes from the same Greek root word for “Lord.” It means authorities, and certainly means that they despise God ordained leadership.

Further, they “speak evil of dignities.” The word translated “dignities” comes from a word that means “celestial beings” which most take to refer to angels. The New International Version translates this verse to say: “In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.”

9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring

against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

In these two verses these certain men are being contrasted with Michael the archangel. Jude refers to a tradition that Michael the archangel was given the responsibility of burying the body of Moses. Many commentators believe this was to prevent Moses' tomb from becoming a shrine. But when the time came to bury the body of Moses, Satan tried to prevent Michael and wanted to assume the responsibility himself. He may well have wanted to provide a shrine for the people to worship at, rather than in the Tabernacle, or later, the Temple.

The tradition goes back to an ancient text known as *Assumptio Moses*. We have not extant copies; however, fragments of this text have been preserved in ancient writings, such as Jude. The tradition has it that Satan tried to seize the responsibility for burying Moses because he claimed to have authority over the material world, whereas God had authority over the spiritual world. Also, Satan charged that Moses was a murderer and therefore did not merit this special burial. The point of the story is that Michael did not argue with Satan over Moses' body, instead, Michael simply said, "The Lord rebuke thee." Michael did not appeal to his own authority, and he did not engage in a debate with Satan, he simply appealed to the authority of God.

In contrast, these certain men "speak evil of those things which they know not." They do not know what they do not know, they are oblivious to their own ignorance, and therefore they speak

evil of things they do not know. Unlike Michael, the archangel, these men open up their mouths and make claims and assertions that they cannot back up and for which they have no appeal. They certainly cannot appeal to God.

When it comes to things they may know through the mere powers of observation and experience, they are like animals. In the things they can experience, they corrupt themselves.

This is the situation in the religious world today. There are people who presume to teach, who still need to be taught. There are people making assertions about moral imperatives who have nothing to appeal to other than their own base desires and opinions. And to the extent that they allow their desires become their authority (If it feels good do it.) they sink lower and lower into the cesspool of sin and moral degradation.

*D) They are consumed with worldly gain*

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. [Korah, Num. 26]

In this verse three more comparisons are made. They are like Cain in that he was not willing to sacrifice the first fruits, and he would not heed the warning of God to stand against the sin that was crouching in wait for his cooperation in the murder of Abel.

They are compared to Balaam who was known for being willing to allow monetary gain become his motive for seeking a word from God.

And they are compared to Korah, who was known for his rebellion against Moses and God's ordained leadership for Israel. Korah's story is found in Numbers chapter 26 where we read that his judgment was swift and sure. God caused the earth to open up and swallow Korah and all who followed him in his rebellion.

We live in a world where certain men and women continue to follow the example of Cain, Balaam and Korah. We live in a world where Cain's where religious people do not want to give their best to God, and they are willing to verbally assassinate those who do. We live in a world of Balaam's who are more interested in money, than in a word from God. And we live in a world of Korah's who are ready and willing to raise up in opposition to God and God given authority.

*E) They are clouds without water—they give nothing in return.*

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

These men are like reefs just beneath the surface of the sea. They cause shipwrecks of unsuspecting and uninformed seamen. They are blemishes in the love feasts.

The Early Church enjoyed fellowship meals as much as we do today. These meals were referred to as love feasts. These certain men came to the love feasts and filled their bellies, but at the same time they sowed their false teaching and practices among the people. They enjoyed the benefits of the church, but they gave nothing in return except trouble.

They are clouds without water. That is, they look like and talk like they have something to give, something to bless others, but they are containers filled with empty promises. They are “carried about of winds.” They blow in, blow up, and blow out.

They are trees with no real fruit. From a distance, it may look like fruit, but upon closer inspection, we find that the fruit is rancid and inedible. They are a promise with no produce. And further, they are “twice dead and plucked up by the roots.” This implies that they had once been Born Again, they have been brought from death unto life, only to forfeit life and die again in sin.

How many people have we seen and know who came into the church with such promise. Some come talking a good game. They tell us all that they’ve done, and all that they want to do for the kingdom of God, and yet after a year or two of enjoying the fellowship, the ministry, and yes, even the food of the church, they blow up and then blow out.

God help us never to be like those certain men.

13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Further, they are likened to “raging waves of the sea.” They are wild and relentless. They are incorrigible and unrepentant. No doubt Jude had Isaiah 57:20, 21 in mind here. Isaiah wrote:

20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

21 There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. (KJV)

These certain men are always stirring up something in the church. They can't seem to stay out of the mire and dirt. They have no peace and so they bring unrest and trouble with them wherever they go.

They are wandering stars who fade into the darkness forever. On commentator (Vincent) said that this is a reference to a comet. It is seen for a while, and then fades into oblivion. It wanders about the night sky unconnected to the rest of the order of the universe. This describes these certain men. They are lone rangers, refusing to become a part of an organized effort to build up the Kingdom of God.

*F) They are condemned to judgment.*

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Jude quotes from Enoch an apocalyptic prophecy. Jude applies this to these certain men and it bespeaks their judgment. God is coming with myriads of saints and He will utilize His saints to execute judgment upon people like these certain men. Notice that in verse 15 the word "ungodly" is used four times. Who will God execute judgment upon? The ungodly.

When the righteous come with God, it will vindicate the righteous who have suffered at the hands of the unrighteous. The ungodly will know that God is God and we are His people.

*G) They are complainers*

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

Jude describes these certain men further as grumbling, discontent complainers who find fault with everyone else while they themselves are walking in their own passions. They love to boast about themselves and brag on themselves and build themselves up, even while they put others down. And when they do give complements to others, it is for the purpose of gaining advantage, that is, to get people on their side. They will butter people up to get them into their little click.

**THE COUNSEL OF THE APOSTLES**

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

Jude reminds the readers that the actions of these certain men should not take us by surprise, after all, this is exactly what Jesus and the Apostles said would happen. In fact, there are many similarities between Jude's epistle and Peter's second epistle. So much so, that many scholars believe that Jude used many of Peter's points. When Jude refers to "mockers" in verse 18, it is the same word Peter used in 2 Pet 3:3:

3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, (KJV)

It is interesting that the first imperative that Jude uses is the word “remember.” We need to remember what we’ve been taught, the Scriptures that preserve the Apostles’ teaching concerning Christ and the Christ-life. There is always a danger that the current generation will fail to pass-on sound doctrine and that we would raise a generation that goes to church, but which has no understanding of what it means to be a Christian. Such a generation would be easy prey for false teachers and false prophets. So Jude commands believers to remember!

Jude says, “These certain men are those men.” They cause division in the church and they respond to natural instincts rather than the prompting of the Spirit. They are driven by personal goals and ungodly ambitions rather than by God or His Word. As such, then, they are a constant source of division.

A person who causes division is not being led of the Spirit. A person who will not give their best (time, talent, treasure) to God is not being led of the Spirit. A person who is more concerned with material gain than with serving others, is not being led by the Spirit. A person who is willing to usurp authority that does not belong to him or her, is not being led by the Spirit. In short, these men were not walking in the Spirit because they were no longer Spirit filled.

Jude says, “these be they who separate themselves.” In other words, these men cause division. Jude uses a word in the Greek that means “the men who divide you” (Green, 197).

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE FATHER AND THE SON**

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Jude has addressed, described and defined these certain men, and their actions are reprehensible. However, the believer does not have to follow suit. Instead, we can draw closer to God and deeper in our walk with Him.

The words, “but ye” imply a contrast. In contrast to these certain men, the church is told to build up itself on the holy faith. We should not be seeking new doctrines and esoteric teaching from self-proclaimed prophets. We have the Word of God, and in this we have the will of God. That is our foundation and we should build ourselves up on this. How do we do that, we do it through study and devotion. We do it in prayer and through the Holy Spirit.

Jude said, “Praying in the Holy Spirit.” This means that we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in our prayer life. Sometimes we don’t know how to pray as we ought to, and in those times the Holy Spirit makes intercession with groanings that we cannot even put into words. Sometimes this will involve praying in other tongues, as the Spirit gives us the utterance, and sometimes we will pray with the understanding, in our own language. But we will still be led of the Spirit in what we ask, and what we say.

Jude tells the readers to keep themselves in the love of God. God’s love does not switch on and off. He is not capricious. His love is from everlasting. He loves us when we are right and He loved us when we were wrong. But we are told to keep ourselves in His love. That means that we remain cognizant of God’s love,

of His embrace, and His desire for our lives. And while we walk in God's love, we look for the mercy of Jesus Christ that will result in eternal life.

There is a clear Trinitarian formula in these verses. We pray in the Holy Spirit. We keep ourselves in the love of God (the Father), and we look for the mercy of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Spirit, Father and Son, this is God, and He is our hope.

### **THE COMPASSION AND THE COURAGE**

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:

23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

What should the response of the believer be with respect to these certain men? Even these men can be reclaimed for Christ. Yet, only after instructing us to build ourselves up in our most holy faith, and before reminding us that Jesus is able to keep us, does Jude instruct us to attempt to rescue these men. Jude would warn us, with Michael's example, that fools rush in where angels will not tread. We are not to get caught up in vain theological hair splitting with them. But instead, we are to rescue them from their own doubts.

Verses 22 and 23 difficult to translate because there are two variations in the Greek and it is challenging to determine which was the original. Many of us have memorized the King James Version here. I have quoted these Scriptures often. In the King James Version there are two groups of people we are to respond to. With one group we are to move with compassion and to make a difference in their lives. But with the other group we are to be more aggressive and with haste, pull them from the fire. That is, to

get the truth to them quickly and convincingly so that they may escape the fires of judgment.

However, the *New International Version*, along with some other versions, identify three groups of people in these two verses:

22 Be merciful to those who doubt;

23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear-- hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Here the three groups are: 1) those who doubt, 2) others in the fire, and 3) others who need mercy. According to this view, which is preferred by many modern translations, we are to show mercy to those certain men who doubt, that is, those men who are wrestling with what they really believe. We will not save them by blasting them out of the church. They need mercy.

There are others who need to be snatched from the fire. They are on the verge of being consumed by their false beliefs and immediate action is needed. Just as one would quickly snatch something from the fire to prevent it from being consumed, these others need someone to move quickly or it will be too late. And finally, there are those who need mercy mixed with a message that elicits a healthy fear of the consequences of their beliefs and actions.

The other question that verse 23 raises (whether read in the KJV or the NIV) is, what does Jude mean by “saving with fear”? Does he mean that we use fear to save them, such as a hellfire and brimstone preaching? Or are we to be fearful lest we become contaminated by the influence of those we are trying to save? I would say that either view can be supported, and both are

important to remember when fighting for the souls of man. In some cases we should both be willing to speak the Word with such conviction that it elicits the fear of the Lord in the sinner's heart. However, we should always do so with a fearful awareness that but for the grace of God we are all sinners. Our only hope to stay strong is to remember that it is the grace of God, and not our own efforts that enable us to stand.

Jude also tells us that we are told to hate "the garment spotted by the flesh." The word for garment is *chiton*, which refers to the inner garment, worn next to the skin, the equivalent of our undergarments. One commentator (Green, 204) believes that Jude has a passage from Zechariah in mind here. He cites Zechariah 3:3:

3 Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel.

4 The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you."

5 Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by. (NIV)

The implication for New Testament believers is that once someone has been snatched like a brand from the fire, they should be prepared to experience a change. The garments are used in Scripture as a symbol of one's spiritual state. In the Law the clothes of lepers were defiled and therefore were to be burnt. In Revelation the church is pictured in fine linen, which is "the righteousness of the saints" (9:8).

Our old garments are spotted, or defiled by the flesh. The word flesh is the Greek word *sarx*, which refers to sinful, worldly desires. We should despise the old nature, the old desires and lusts. In their place we should put on the garments of praise and the robes of righteousness.

This is spiritual war we are talking about, and sometimes we are tempted to get down and roll in the mud with those who oppose us. But we should consider the example of Michael the archangel. He simply said, “The Lord rebuke thee.” God said, “Vengeance is mine. I will repay.”

#### **THE CLOSING DOXOLOGY**

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Having laid some heavy word on us, Jude closes with a doxology. A doxology is simply a word that gives glory to God. In light of the influence of these certain men, Jude reminds his readers that God our Savior is able to keep us from falling. The Greek word for ‘falling’ is *aptaiseos*, which is from the root *ptaio*, “to stumble, to sin, to make a mistake”. By adding the “a” it means the negation of stumbling, sinning, making a mistake. According to Wuest, “The word means in classical writers, ‘sure-footed as a horse that does not stumble.’” This is not a verse to

support the doctrine of eternal security, but it is a reminder that God can give us feet like deer's feet (Ps. 18:33). He is able to make us sure footed so that as we keep ourselves in His love we will not fall even when we are reaching into the pit to pull others out.

The goal of God is for Jesus to present His Bride, the Church, to the Father with exceeding joy. And His Bride will not come in dirty tattered robes. His Bride will be adorned in white linen, fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints.

Jude finishes this letter with these words, "To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

The word 'glory' is from the Greek word *doxa*, which means, "to think, to consider." The Hebrew equivalent is *kabod*, which means, "heavy." If something is heavy it has value. Gold is heavier than steel. A larger diamond has more carats, and is therefore, worth more than the lighter diamond. To talk of God's glory is to recognize His ultimate worth. By saying, "To the only wise God our Savior, be glory," is to say that He has glory, He has worth and when we consider Him, we should be moved to awe.

The word 'majesty' is from the Greek word *megalosune* (meg-al-o-soo'-nay) which means both "greatness and divinity, (often God Himself)." The root word is *megas*, which means, "grand, giant, great." So to refer to God's majesty is to reference His greatness, His awesome presence and power.

The word 'dominion' is from the Greek word *kratos*, which means, "great vigor." It means, 1) force, strength, 2) power, might:

mighty with great power, a mighty deed, a work of power, and 3) dominion. (*Thayers*)

And finally, the word ‘power’ is from the Greek word *exousia*:

- 1) power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases, permission
- 2) physical and mental power, the ability or strength with which one is endued, which he either possesses or exercises
- 3) the power of authority (influence) and of right (privilege)
- 4) the power of rule or government (the power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others and obeyed)
  - a) universally, authority over mankind
  - b) specifically,
    - 1) the power of judicial decisions
    - 2) of authority to manage domestic affairs
  - c) metonymically,
    - 1) a thing subject to authority or rule, jurisdiction
    - 2) one who possesses authority
      - a) a ruler, a human magistrate
      - b) the leading and more powerful among created beings superior to man, spiritual potentates

Notice that these attributes are ascribed to “the only wise God our Savior.” The reference to “Savior” is almost universally held as a title for Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and here He is unambiguously called “the only wise God.” There is only one

God, one Savior, to whom glory belongs, who dwells in majesty, dominion and power, and who is eternal.

These certain men have vexed the spirit of Jude, but his vision of the grandeur of God has not faded. We may be put off by some of the antics of the ungodly in our world. We may even be filled with a righteous indignation for their aggressive and blatant dismissal of everything good, godly and moral. But this present darkness does not dim the glory, majesty, dominion or power of God. In fact, the more base and depraved this world may be, the more gloriously we should exalt the Lord our God.

We may have to deal with some unpleasantries in life. We may be forced to handle some difficult situations and address some conflicts. But at the end of the day we ought always to be able to lift up our head and still see a great God high and lifted up. We ought to be able to gain a fresh vision of the His glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Those certain men may lower themselves, and debase themselves, and even influence others, but we don't have to fall with them. We can be building ourselves up in our most holy faith, and looking up to author and finisher of our faith.

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO**

### **THE BACK OF THE BOOK: REVELATION 2:10; 12:9; 12:12; 20:2; 20:10**

From Genesis through the New Testament we see the evidence of an ongoing struggle, a spiritual warfare that often erupts into the material world. We see how the original design of God appears to have been changed and His plans thwarted by Satan. The truth is that God knew the end from the beginning and before Satan created the problem God already had the answer. Paul writes:

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. (Eph 3:13, NKJV).

Before Satan had the problem God, “from the beginning of the ages” and according to His “eternal purposes”, had the answer. The name of the answer is Jesus, who is the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8).

We have studied this warfare through the Old Testament, in the life of Christ and in the Early Church. But God also lets us look into the future so that we can get a glimpse of the outcome. God's plans are not thwarted. In chapter 5 Jesus, "the Lamb", steps forward and takes the scroll from the hand of Him who sat upon the throne and unfurls the plan of God. Seven seals were opened. Seven trumpets sounded. Seven bowls were poured out. God has a plan and that plan is right on course.

What we see in Revelation is a message to the churches that were contemporary with the Apostle John. It is a message, however, which speaks to the churches of every age. It is a message of victory.

I want to explore every verse in Revelation that specifically mentions the devil or Satan. What we will see is the rapid unfolding of the devil's destiny. Be sure of this, he knows the outcome. That's why the demons cried out to Christ, "Have you come to torment us before the time?" (Mat. 8:29). They know their time is coming. They know that their future is sealed and that there is no repenting or shadow of turning with respect to God's plans for Satan and the demons.

Rev. 2:10

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (KJV)

In this verse the message is to the Church of Smyrna. It is known as the persecuted church. Smyrna is one of only two churches that did not receive any condemnation from Christ. He

tells the church that He knows their works, tribulation and poverty. He tells them not to fear any of the things they are experiencing, nor any of the things that they were going to experience. This is war. He said, “The devil will throw some of you in prison, and that you may be tried, and you will have tribulation ten days. But be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.”

What is Jesus saying? He is saying that in this spiritual warfare the devil has certain powers. He has the power to persecute and power to imprison Christians. But He does not have the power to rob us of our promise of eternal life. We have nothing to fear.

Jesus warned us that in the last days persecution would become worse and worse. It seems the church has been asleep while the enemy has been laying the groundwork for a time of intense persecution of the church. I’m not even talking about The Great Tribulation. I’m talking about a world that is serving the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). I’m talking about the spirit of antichrist that is permeating the world in which we live. As the end approaches the devil will intensify his attack upon the church because the church is the only thing preventing the lawless one from stepping up to take his place of power upon the earth. Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 2:5-10:

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy

with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. NKJV

Satan knows that the church is that restraining force. It is not until the church is raptured from this earth and taken into the heavens to be with the Bridegroom that the Antichrist can step forward and begin his desperate end time attempt to lead humanity in false religion. So Satan hates the church and in the fleeting hours of time he will pull out all stops in his attack. It is going to get worse, much worse and the wheat is about to be separated from the chaff. Everything that can be shaken will be shaken. Dead limbs are going to fall from the vine and only those limbs engrafted in with the life of the vine flowing through them will weather the storm.

We are not immune to the attack of the devil and it may mean jail time. It may mean that we must be willing to lay down our lives here, so that we can obtain a crown there. Jesus tells us that when we see the end approaching, that time of great tribulation such as the world has never seen before, nor shall see again, we should lift up our head, for our redemption is on the way (Lk. 21).

Rev 12:9

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he

was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (KJV)

In this verse John's vision takes us back to the time before time when the Devil rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven.

The point is, as we studied earlier, that this spiritual struggle reaches back to the beginning of time. It illustrates that Satan, at the height of his glory and power was still powerless against God. Not even with one third of the angelic realm was Satan able to overthrow God.

We are told that Satan was cast down to the earth. It is here that he has been able to set himself up as a power and as the ruler of fallen angels (called demons) and sinful man. Because he was powerless to touch or damage God, Satan has turned his attention to humanity, the object of God's affection. Satan has tried to hurt God by destroying man. You might wonder, "Why does Satan attack me? What have I ever done to him?" It's not you, but the image of God that you bear, which he hates and which he tries to destroy. But the story doesn't end here.

Rev 12:12

12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. (KJV)

While the heavens rejoice at the expulsion of Satan, the earth should take note. Satan has come to earth in fury. He has

come to steal, kill and destroy (Jn. 10:10). And while over 6,000 years seems like a long time to us, to Satan who once dwelt in time before time with God, it is but a blink of the eye. It is a short time and in that time Satan has determined to do his worst. He has come with great wrath because he knows how the story ends, and in terms of eternity, it is coming quickly upon him and all who follow him.

Rev 20:2

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,  
(KJV)

In Revelation we find the teaching of the Millennial Reign of Christ. Some take this to be figurative, simply meaning a long time during which Christ, or His Church, establishes righteousness upon the earth while Satan is absent. However, there has never been a long period of time during which the power and presence of Satan has been absent from the earth. As such, we should conclude that this is an even yet to take place.

Others take the thousand years as literal. They believe that at the end of the Great Tribulation, after Jesus has defeated all the armies of Satan upon the earth, that Satan (presumably along with his minions) will be put in a place where he will have no power or influence upon the earth. The old song says:

Satan will be bound a thousand years  
We'll have not tempter then  
After Jesus shall come back to earth again.

According to Millennial teaching, Satan is released for a season at the end of the thousand years and he is allowed to tempt

humans who were raised in temptation free environment. In essence, even these people will have to make the choice to follow God. Absent Satan, there is not real choice to make, but with the season of Satan everyone will have to choose.

Some have questioned why God allowed Satan to come to earth to begin with. God was using Satan to accomplish His purposes. He used Satan to present every human with a choice. We either go with God or we do the bidding of Satan. We either obey the Heavenly Father or we do the desires of the devil.

So Satan is first cast into a bottomless pit for a thousand years. Then he is released for a season and then his ultimate and eternal doom is brought upon him and all who follow him.

Rev 20:10

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (KJV)

There are some who are teaching that everyone is eventually going to go to heaven. To be consistent with their own inconsistency, they have to go the extreme by saying that Satan himself will one day be given the opportunity to serve the Lord and that God's grace will even bring Satan, his demons, and all who died in sin, into the family of God.

What does the Bible say? It says "the devil . . . was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." This is the back of the book. Look at it again. Satan loses. God wins.

Have you read the back of the book? We win!

13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

14 Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Rev 22:13-17, NKJV)

Let me end this study by reminding you that while persecution will be intense and the enemy will win a battle now and then, God has already won the war. There may be times when it seems like there is no end in sight for the struggles and storms you are going through, but the truth is that there is an end in sight. Read the back of the book again. Read about the victory that is available to them that endure to the end. Allow God to remind you that He has already purchased your victory.

We do not have to be defeated. We may not always get the promotion. In fact, we may lose our job for doing what is right. My son, Timothy, is out looking for a job and when he tells them that he does not want to work on Sunday they simply tell him that they can't use him. But I believe that God will open the right door

at the right time and place. God said, “Knock and it shall be opened unto you.”

We may not be able to convince our spouse to stay with us. We may not live to see all our children serving God. We may stand for what is right and get accused of doing something wrong. But we must keep standing. We cannot, and we must not, give in or give up. Victory is sure and it is sweet. The outcome is not, and has never been in doubt. Satan loses, and God and His Church wins. The only question we have left to ask ourselves is, Whose side am I on?