

# **A PRIMER ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

Notes and commentary on a  
Sermon Series entitled

**"WHISTLING IN THE DARK"**

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## Forward

“You are my hiding place;  
you will protect me in times of trouble  
and surround me with songs of deliverance.”  
Psalm 32:7

These pages reflect two sermons delivered at Church of the Holy Apostles, on the weekends of November 15 and 22. We don't get a chance to reconsider the evil forces in the world, or evil's resistance against the children of God. I believe this paper will prove to be a helpful reminder for us.

Father Candido Amantini, a Catholic Priest, served as exorcist in the Diocese of Rome for over 24 years. In his book, *Un esorcist racconta* (1990: English: An Exorcist Tells His Story, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1999), Gabriele Amorth (his disciple and writing about him after his recent death) recounts Fr. Amantini's immense frustration with the belief of theologians, priests, and pastors in the Roman Catholic Church.

In Italy there are currently 100,000 experienced professionals of the occult. Coupled with that, there are fewer than 38,000 priests who are “practically illiterate” with regard to the subject of demonology. In any culture, he goes on to say, where faith declines, superstition rises. It seems that, in Italy, as well as in the rest of the “civilized world,” people are much more apt to consider going to a psychic before even considering whether the Lord of devils would have anything to say about the situation.

As I have counseled and prayed for people over the years the situations that have most grieved my heart have been situations where the devil has abused, victimized, or cleverly deceived many saints. It's my hope that, in the reading of these pages, the Spirit will clarify your mind with the reality there are indeed forces against us and walk away with some tools you can use as you encounter these “speed bumps” on the highway to heaven.

# I

## Anchors in the Storm

Recently I was a co-speaker in a conference when a woman approached me to schedule an appointment. Later that day she told me her story. She had now “arrived” in her dream job - doing everything she had always hoped to “be” when she grew up – never been happier, nor more fulfilled in the work that God had given her to do.

The problem, however, was not with her but with everyone else around her. Her world was falling apart. Her husband left her after 20+ years of marriage for another, younger and prettier woman. Her health was deteriorating. And memories from the past were assaulting her so much that she simply felt crippled in the work her Father had given her to do. After a few minutes it became clear to me. Here she was, finally getting to the work she had been created to do and the devil was seeking to rob her of the call.

It happened to Jesus, too. Remember when he was inaugurated for ministry? His cousin, John the Baptist baptized him, the Holy Spirit “dove” descended onto him, and the Father spoke the words everyone longs to hear, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

All the same, the Holy Spirit sent Jesus into the wilderness where he was confronted with a series of temptations – each on seeking to rob Jesus of his magnificence of his call – or, and this is important, to compromise the call of God on his life. If the devil can’t take us out of the game, he’ll seek to do one of two things: he’ll either create havoc around us (which may keep us from living wholeheartedly in to the call) or tempt us to bend the rules, seeking to compromise the high standards of our ministry (questioning the integrity of the call). He did it with Jesus. And he’ll do it with us.

So I told the woman, “Your situation is similar to the devil’s temptations over Jesus. Right when Jesus was finally rising into the plan and purpose for his life the devil was there, trying to trip it all up for Jesus.” (Luke 4:14) As I shared about the devil’s wicked agenda she listened politely, nodding at all the appropriate times.

“So what do you think?” I asked her. “Could it be that the devil is seeking to draw you away from the very thing that you were created to do, from the very thing that God created you to be?”

After a pause she confessed, “I appreciate what you’re trying to say but, the problem is that, I don’t have a place in my personal theology for the doctrine of evil.”

I thought to myself, “How could any follower of Christ NOT have room in

their theology for the doctrine of evil? Even **Jesus** had “room in his theology” for the existence of evil. He encountered it daily every day. In fact, his entire mission was to seek out and destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8) I leaned back and invited my sister to consider that **THAT** (the part about not having room in her theology for a devil) may a deception by the enemy in itself.

Before we get into the heart of the teaching I’d like to lay out a couple of anchors for the ensuing discussion. When the subject of evil is brought up it often is accompanied by a lot of random “noise.” We’ve all seen movies about the devil. Many of us have had encounters with the devil both before and after conversion. We all bring to the table our own ideas, fears, biases, and viewpoints to the table. Many times these viewpoints run contrary to what Scripture teaches.

Let’s focus on the big ones.

## **God Wins; Satan Loses**

That’s a big one!

Even in the darkest circumstance Jesus comes out the winner. He is the victor and stands as the King of all Kings and the Lord of ALL Lords, including the devil and his evil minions.

The Bible says something quite remarkable. “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a **public spectacle** of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” (Colossians 2:15) The power of the cross – Jesus’ death, the spilling of his blood, and the ultimate “stealing back” from the enemy the possession of our souls – this has rendered the devil powerless!

In the old days, prisoners of war were often tied together and marched through the streets of the conquering village for all to see, sneer, and mock. In addition, many times their robes were cut back or lifted up so that their bare bottoms were exposed as they processed through the city. This was the ultimate humiliation! It’s what made them a “*public spectacle*.”

I’ve heard it said, “When the devil reminds you of your sinful past, remind him of his certain future!” That certain future is found in the Book of Revelation where it says, “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10)

At the end of the day we know that the devil is a loser. One day, in the glorious power of the resurrected Christ, the Father will toss him and all demons into a pit, shut the door, and throw away the key.

Yet, if you are like me, this certain anchor of Truth can be easily forgotten (or ignored) when we are spiritually assaulted. We can be so consumed with the momentary surge of darkness that we completely forget our everlasting victory over the devil through his Son Jesus Christ.

This momentary cause for our lapse of reason happens to all of us. And we should be careful not condemn ourselves it (which only adds fuel to the fire). There is a certain logic which can be helpful when we fall asunder to the wiles of our enemy. We know "the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." (1 John 3:8) We also know that Christ dwells in us through the Presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) and he is greater than the devil. (1 John 4:4) These verses form an essential foundation in worldview of a disciple of Christ. When you hear there the devil telling you "You're going down," or that you have no hope, calling, or purpose in your life these verses will remind you these are lies. After testing the spirits (1 John 4:1) you will know you're only hearing are the cries of a desperately defeated enemy, plummeting headwords into the abyss of God's judgment and doing his best to drag you down with him as he lies crippled under the all mighty heal of the Messiah. (Geneses 3:15)

Satan is a loser.

## **Satan is at the end of God's leash**

Many believe that Satan and God are polar opposites, sort of like a Christian Ying-Yang or something. They think that life is made up of a time continuum with the key to life (or worse, the key to salvation) being to stay on the "God side" of the string. Some days they are in the black, other days they're in the red, so to speak. Both ends have equal power; both powers have equal influence over us.

Yet that is not true. Scripture is quite clear that Satan is part of God's created order – not an equal cohort but God's property, God's servant – just like everything else in creation. In short, Satan is "God's Satan."

And, as a part of God's created order, Satan is in submission to God. In short, Satan is on God's leash. He can't do anything more, or less, than what God has "leashed" him to do.

And THAT, my brothers and sisters, is a wonderful statement. You see, God is love (1 John 4:8); he knows your thoughts, your dreams, and perhaps most of all, your fears. He knows how much you can handle and, when he sees the devil getting too close to his treasured possession, he yanks the devil's leash and jerks him about an arm's distance away. The Bible says, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when

you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

If you know the love of God you will also know that he is an ever present source of protection and peace, even in the most horrific situations. You may say, "This is a horrible situation" but, believe me, if not for the peace and protection of a God who loves you and oversees the depth of the devil's scratching on ones soul, it would be much, much worse.

This relationship of Satan's ultimate submission before the Lord God is perhaps best detailed in a cryptic passage in the oldest book of the Bible. Job writes, "One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them." (Job 1:6) This reveals that angels are accountable to God – that God checks in with their activity from time to time and they are held accountable for their actions. Secondly, it tells us that Satan is an angel.

Before he was banished to earth Satan was a heavy hitter for the promotion of God's glory. Almost everyone believes he ran in the leagues of the Archangels Gabriel and Michael (and perhaps others). Along with his immense responsibility he was directly influential over innumerable "heavenly hosts" (these are armies) and numerous other angels following him at his service. It is believed that he took a number of these angels with him when he turned against God and fell from heaven – perhaps up to a third of all the angels of God. (Revelation 12:4) These are the "fallen angels," or demons, we encounter in spiritual resistance.

All their warfare is directed against the progression of God's glory on earth. And it can be fierce. There's nothing worse than a disgruntled General, someone who can command troops and execute orders with authority and savvy to the potential ruin of a dissatisfied government.

It is also believed that Satan was "spiritual eye-candy" before he took the fall. He was (and still may be) an indescribably beauty, and may have emitted a glorious luminescence which was built right into his being, radiating magnificently from within. This isn't as outrageous as one might think. The name "Lucifer" itself means "the carrier of light." And we all have seen pictures of deepwater creatures that actually have lights built right into their bodies! The visual effect of this "bio- phosphorescence" is amazing. Rays of teal, brilliant orange, red and beams of light illuminate off these underwater light bearers in amazingly beautiful ways.

Speaking of beauty, there is a strong belief that Satan played a prominent role in the ministry of praise and worship – directing all the creatures of the universe in magnificent adoration of the King of the Universe. Some say he even had numerous vocal chords, or pipes, as a part of his created body. Imagine the sounds, the colors, the expressions of exaltation as Lucifer led

all intelligent life in all creation, all lifting their praise to the One seated on the Throne!

(How frustrating that must have been to Satan! His job was to direct all attention to the one enthroned. Yet, secretly, his greatest desire was that all those voices of praise would be directed to him.)

Yet, with all this pomp, significance, power, responsibility, and authority, he gave it all up. In short, his jealousy had him by the tail. In his pride he sought to rise up against his Creator and do it "my way." (Some refer to Isaiah 14:12-24, Ezekiel 28:13-17, and Revelation 12:4 as prophetic descriptions of this event.) One day he realized every knee was bowing, every tongue confessing that Jesus Christ was Lord and he got jealous. He looked around to see God's creation worshipping God – and became jealous. He wanted everyone to do that to him instead. So he planned, initiated, and carried through an all out rebellion against his Maker.

Apparently he must have been pretty convincing because he took about one-third of all the other angels (whom we know to be "demons or evil spirits") with him. This is when he took the fall, when he was cast to the earth. He was here before Adam and Eve arrived and wasted no time in seeking to thwart their sanctified existence.

Through it all – and right up to this day – Satan remains accountable to God. God hasn't tossed him in the pit. Rather, he has chosen to remain in relationship with him. Why? Only God knows. But so be it. He remains accountable to God for his actions, accusations, for the commands he gives to those serving him, and for the way he seeks to derail the plans and children of God. In this conversation we are privy to their intriguing relationship:

"One day the members of the heavenly court came to present themselves before the Lord, and the Accuser, Satan, came with them. 'Where have you come from?' the Lord asked Satan. Satan answered the Lord, 'I have been patrolling the earth, watching everything that's going on.' Then the Lord asked Satan, 'Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil.' Satan replied to the Lord, "Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God. You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!' 'All right, you may test him,' the Lord said to Satan. 'Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don't harm him physically.' So Satan left the Lord's presence." (Job 1: 6-12)

The conversation happens on a day when God is checking in on the activity of his created angels. Among them is Satan. God asks Satan what he's been up to. He especially is sure to boast on his servant Job. Satan suggests that



the only reason Job served God was because of God's generous gifts and material wealth to Job. "Stretch out you hand and strike everything he has and he will surely curse you to your face," Satan said.

This passage has numerous insights to both the relationship between God and Satan and to the activities allowed between Satan and humans. The big take-a-way is that all the activities of the evil one are completely governed by God.

## **We are assured of Satan's hatred of Christians and equally assured of God's deliverance as we resist the devil**

I once knew a man who was a devoted follower of Christ. One night he found himself gazing at questionable pictures on the internet. The following day he was at church when the Spirit gave him a vision of his arm: sliced, shredded, and clawed – as if a bear had gotten hold of it.

The fact that Satan is on God's leash is encouraging but it in no way lessens his ruthless hatred and flat out agenda of death he has for all things precious to God. The world itself lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19). And the world is in a desperate place.

Let's be realistic: a coral snake is one of the seven deadliest snakes in the world. Whether it's in the wilderness or in a cage, it's still a coral snake. While the devil is being held by the tail, his ways are cunning and his deceitfulness is unequalled among created order. Sure, he may be caged with all the rest of his slithering vipers but his venom is still deadly. And he is patient (more so than most of us). He may wait for decades but, when the exact moment arrives he strikes with a deadly intent, ejaculating his toxic venom with precise aim through the caged bars and onto the unsuspecting surface of the human heart.

The Apostle Peter writes, "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. (1 Peter 5:8,9a) He didn't go on into a Biblical apologetic for the existence for evil. Neither did he think through the politically correctness of suggesting that his "flock" may be in danger of spiritual resistance. He didn't need to. To him, evil simply... was. Why spend time and energy writing about its probability when it's already out there, prowling around and seeking someone to devour?

Many of us hear the roar of the lion but, instead of standing firm against him (as Peter advises); we tend to examine the nature of the beast. We sit back and pontificate as to the audio texture of the roar; whether the roar stems from hunger or perhaps is red-flagging a deeper issue of lion abandonment;

or whether this particular roar is akin to another roar that somebody wrote about in another part of the world. He hold conferences and become obsessed about the "idea of the roar," completely unaware that these activities are feeding the same lion of deception in the first place.

But to Peter, it's simple. You hear a roar; there is a lion behind the roar. Lions roar when they're hungry. Don't question it. Just stand against it.

Likewise, the Apostle James makes no attempt to convince his readers they have a hideous enemy. He only tells them (and us) how to resist him: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." (James 4:7-8)

## **Summary**

This is our backdrop for the discussion.

Firstly, God wins and Satan is a loser.

Second, while the devil is a true threat to the Christian, he is on the end of a leash. God holds his tail and Christ has crushed his head.

His venom is still strong, however. The constrictions God has placed on him and his activities has only increased his hatred of God and anything that evil smacks of resembling his Son, especially Christians. Through it all we have assurance in the Word of God of a sure deliverance from his lethal injections.

As a bear has its favorite foods (meats, berries and honey) so does our enemy. His taste hasn't changed. As we become aware of his "appetite" we can more easily discern both his tactics and his targets. In the next section we'll look at the targets of our enemy.

## II

# Our Enemy's Targets

The enemy's strategy is to target all things, persons, situations, and relationships that are precious to God. If God has an interest in it, you can be sure the devil will also have an interest in it. All activities, possessions, and interests of God are demon magnets. He can't stay away from them. Nor can he resist the opportunity to deceive, pervert, distort, or steal from the pure purposes of the Father.

There is a story of a man in Paris whose depression brought him to the lowest of lows – even to the point of suicide. He went to a psychiatrist, seeking counsel and advice. After listening for a while he said to his patient, "I don't know if you've heard, but there is a new circus in town. At the circus there is a wonderful clown who has an uncanny gift of making people feel good about themselves. Perhaps you could visit the circus and, after watching the clown, your perspective on life will change and your burden will lighten." The man looked down in silence. Then, looking up at the counselor, confessed through saddened eyes, "Good doctor, you don't understand. I am that clown."

The man in the story was robbed of what gave him, and others, the most joy. This is how the enemy works. He'll get us at our most precious place, the place where God's glory has the potential to shine its brightest. He is the great perverter, the great distorter, and the king of illusion.

When I was young I used to watch Captain Kangaroo. On the show there was the dancing bear. (Don't ask me who comes up with this stuff!) Dancing bear had two round eyes and a round mouth. He was a sorry excuse for a life-sized puppet but we loved him. One day he had a magnifying glass. As he moved the magnifying glass across his face his eyes got creepy and his mouth grew dark and eerie. I remember sitting there fearing the very thing I used to love.

That's just like the devil. He will often magnify things – normal every day things – to such extent that we become frozen with fear or, worst yet, begin to act and make decisions based on the distorted illusion of his wicked fabrication. Why is that? It's because the devil is a liar and God is the Truth. (John 8:44; John 14:6) And his strategy is to battle against all things precious to God, all things sanctified by God, and/or all things working towards the fulfillment of God's glorious agenda.

Just the other day, I bought a raffle ticket for my daughters cheerleading team. It cost me \$10. The big drawing was to be on October 31<sup>st</sup> and the big grand prize was for a 2010 Ford Mustang. My wife and I began to dream about what would happen if we won. My idea was to drive it as my car. Her idea was to sell it, take the proceeds and buy a car for our daughter with it.

She said this, I said that and, before you knew, we were in a full fledged fight – fighting about something that we hadn't even seen yet! That's just like the devil. He first gets us believing a lie, then we begin to play it out as if it's really going to happen. But it never does (and it never did). It was all about illusion.

## **The Word of God**

Do you remember the very first words of Satan as recorded in Holy Scripture? They are these: "Did God really say?" (Genesis 3:1)

Since then we've all been questioning whether or not God really said "such and such" or not. Perhaps it was a parable; a deeper truth is embedded in what he *may* have said. "Did God really say we couldn't steal – even if we're hungry?" "Did God really say we shouldn't sleep around, have sex before marriage – even if we're in love and in a committed relationship?" "Certainly," we ascertain, "God wouldn't want anyone to suffer being a forty year old virgin..."

Let me be clear: Yes, God really did say. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16, 17 – and Paul is writing about the Old Testament Scriptures here!)

This rampant questioning of God's Word in our day is no different than what Satan has been doing all along. He did it in the Garden, he did it with Jesus, and so on down the line. In fact, many times the devil will use Scripture itself in his deception – howbeit out of context, but the average person doesn't know the difference (another fine deception indeed).

### *Out of Context*

The devil will seek to use the Word of God in two major areas. Firstly, he will take it out of context and seek to highlight a particular portion of it for the sake of a situation warranting his deceptiveness.

For example there are numerous passages which, if abused, could argue the Bible supports the practice of slavery. "Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven." (Colossians 4:1) "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. (Colossians 3:22) Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything." (Titus 3:9)

And, while slavery was ingrained in the culture to which Paul was writing we know the premier roles of Jesus Christ was to set the captives free and bring release to all forms of slavery and oppression – whether it is social justice issues or spiritual. (Isaiah 61:1, 2; Luke 4:19) Paul is saying – for those of you in slavery (and there were many) – this is how a Christ honoring slave honors Christ in his life situation. He wasn't promoting slavery, only the affirmation of Christ's Presence in the midst of it all.

Yet, the devil has deceived many people into taking these verses as evidence that God is into slavery and thus, in their minds, want nothing to do with Jesus or the new life in Christ that he offers. And he's done that with a lot of other things as well.

Nice job Satan.

### *Compromise*

The second way Satan distorts Scripture is what I call the "compromise of incompleteness." This is where he tries to convince us that it would be alright to compromise on the high standard of Scripture and/or the call of God on our life.

A friend of mine was found peering intently into the Word. A person came up to him as asked, "What are you doing – looking for a loophole?"

This happens all the time. We know the standard but the devil says, "No one can attain that standard, but you probably could do something fun and not break the commandment..." Many teens and unmarried people, for example, know that it's flat out wrong to have sex but (depending on how one defines "sex"!) other activities can be experienced between two people that don't legally qualify as breaking a commandment of God.

At first it sounds kind of good. Have "fun" and not be sinning – or so it would seem. But the latter results of flirting outside the conviction of the Holy Spirit are devastating.

We all know the sad story of Sampson. He flirted with Delilah. He liked the attention she gave him, yet he also was aware of the God's precious treasure of his strength, as seen in his long hair. He tried to walk the razor's edge between conviction and temptation – telling Delilah the source of his strength was this or that – but, in so doing, he became worn out and compromised God's holy standard. (Judges 16:17) Conversation with the devil always sets our feet on a slippery path that leads us to the sludge of spiritual compromise.

Perhaps no story illustrates this better than the dialogue between Moses (a symbol of a Christian) and Pharaoh (a symbol of the enemy). Moses had a

firm directive from God: "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt... And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." (Exodus 3:10, 12) That was the original call – lead all of them out of Egypt and bring them back to Mt. Sinai.

Yet, as Pharaoh's heart began to harden in the midst of God's miraculous signs, he sought to water down the original call on Moses' life. In short, he sought to compromise the call to incompleteness. First he said they could go sacrifice to the Lord only if they stayed in Egypt (Exodus 8:25). But Moses didn't budge. Then he said he's let them go up into Sinai – but only with their men (Exodus 10:11). Still "no go." (Go Moses – you rock!) Finally, after a few more plagues, he said they could all go up to worship the Lord – but they would have to leave their cattle, sheep, and goats behind. (Exodus 10:24) Through it all Moses stayed firm to the original call of God in his life.

This is so Satan. He will often seek to compromise the call of God on our life. Oh, sure – he'll acknowledge God call to completeness. But he'll try to make it easier for it to be attained – and compromise God's intent in so-doing.

Perhaps there are places in your own life where the Pharaoh of your heart has tempted you to fall short of the standard of Christ in your life. While it's a difficult place to be, it is not the end of the trail. The beauty is that Christ makes all things new. You don't have to go back to the mountain top and re-hear the original words of God to get back on track again. You are already clean because of the word of God in you. (John 15:3)

Get up, readjust your perspective, and in repentance and humility rise up and reach again for that which you've fallen short of. You were a victim of an amazingly deceptive animal. By the power of the Blood, toss him aside and move back into the will of God for your life!

## **The Understanding**

A few years ago I was up in my brother's home in New Hampshire. While I was there he asked be to baptize Cal, my six year old nephew. I agreed and we arranged to have the service.

At the part just before I baptized him I told him: *Cal, this is the beginning of a whole new life for you and your biggest job is to learn how to hear the voice of your Heavenly Father. You are going to hear a lot – and I mean a LOT – of voices as you grow into this world. But the most important voice is the voice of your Father – got it?*

He nodded.

Good. I told him we were going to play a game. We'd put him in the middle of the circle and blindfold him. Then all of us would call out his name. It was his job to listen for the voice of his daddy and, when he heard it, to walk to him and give him a hug.

I blindfolded him with my stole, spun him around three times, and the game began! And, let me tell you, it sounded like chaos. Everyone was screaming out his name from every corner of the room, each on vying for his attention. In the middle of the madness by brother – who hadn't called him previously – spoke in a very soft, low voice. "Cal."

At once, Cal zeroed in on the voice and made a bee-line for his daddy, closing out the illustration with a big hug! Through the mix and madness of all the voices Cal was able to separate the voice of his father from all the other clutter vying to veer him onto another venue.

This is the second target of our enemy: our minds. The devil has privy to our minds – our understanding and perceptions on how things work – and seeks to clutter them with voices vying to veer us away from the will of God. Our minds – our thoughts, natural impulses, and imaginations – are the devil's battle ground.

Knowing that; also know this: *You do not have to believe every thought that pops in your head.* Think about it. Consider it carefully. Many of us get an idea and run with it, only to test the origin of the idea at a later time. But the Word tells us to test the spirits. We need to test what we're hearing up and against the Word of God. We'd get into big trouble if we were to believe, fantasize with, and choose to act out on the stuff going on in our minds.

There is a story of a young couple who came to their Pastor so they could get married. They went on and on about how they met, their season of dating, and how God was such a key player in their relationship. Indeed, it did appear their relationship had been supernaturally directed and blessed. Yet, with all that, the Pastor leaned forward, took off his glasses, and said, "I can tell you unequivocally that God has NOT brought the two of you together and it is NOT his will that you marry." The couple was horrified. "Why?" He pointed to one of them. "Because you are already married. And you," pointing to the other, "are already married as well. And you are both married to different people!"

You see, this couple had been deceived by the enemy. Everything pointed to marriage – feelings, circumstances, etc. – but they had not put into practice 1 John 4:1 which says, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

That's why it's so important that we understand the importance of renewing the mind. When we have a renewed mind we will less easily fall prey to the

voice of the deceiver in our minds. Paul writes in Romans, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 1:2.

## **The Body**

The devil also is allowed to nip at our bodies as well.

There's a real balance here. Some say every illness is caused by the devil. Others would say no illnesses are caused by the devil. Jesus, of course, never assumed all physical sickness was backed any demon. He had a healthy theology! Some illnesses were spirit evoked, others weren't. Some definitely had the stench of Satan at their core (Matt. 9:32-33, 12:22; Mk. 9:25) – which he took care of at once – and others didn't (like the healing of the woman with an issue of blood, or when he healed the numerous blind man as he traveled around Israel).

If anything, Jesus was fairly conservative and even cautious with the idea that there is a "demon behind every sickness," which ran against the culture of his day. In his culture, it was believed that bad things happened to people because they had sinned or something, like bad karma. Whenever Jesus came across this falsity he was quick to correct it.

You may remember the time he corrected his disciples for this. "As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' The disciple assumed the man's blindness was a result of someone's sin. But Jesus – knowing their culture and their poor theology was quick to correct. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." (John 9:1-3)

Jesus was making a huge point. Some illnesses are carried through the genes, others come as a result of rubbing shoulders with the sick, and others are about eating too much sugar, infections, and so on down the line. And others, indeed do, originate from spirits.

So, not all illnesses are caused by sin, a demon, or karma. But some are.

### *All Sickness Related to Sin?*

All sickness originates from the Fall of humankind in the Garden. Make no mistake about that. If we hadn't rebelled, Satan wouldn't have gotten into our spiritual DNA. But we did, and he has. In one sense, one could claim that all sickness is from the devil, but it's a long shot. Attributing all sickness directly to the devil is like saying your tire blew out because the person who



built the road was a felon. There's a distant connection, but isn't an equal linking.

When I was in Israel there was a day I was out in the cotton fields when I felt like I was going to die. The world was spinning, the sun was screaming, and I was staggering around, alone in the fields, like a drunken man. When I couldn't stand any longer I fell onto a pile of large rocks and, quite honestly, prepared myself to die. "So this is how it's going to happen, eh, Lord? We'll, I'm ready. Let's do this thing."

As I lay under the blazing sun I began to shiver and jerk. My mind became blurred and filled with thoughts of evil design. My body ached. All I could do was groan as I looked into the Israeli sky. At one point during those hours of pain and confusion I sensed the presence of something. I rolled my head to its side and saw a large black snake, slithering slowly out of one rocky crevice and into another, just inches from my head. Yet, I was so sick, I didn't even care. I just smiled and shut my eyes.

I liken the relationship between the devil and natural illness like that. Evil may not be the direct cause of our illness, but it is certainly in the "neighborhood" of our sickness. At worse, the two are cousins. It takes real spiritual discernment to see the relationship between the serpent and the flesh – something we'll look at later.

[As a post note to the above the reason why I was sick is that I contracted hepatitis. I was quarantined 6 weeks beginning the following day. At the end of that time God healed me in a powerful and remarkable way! So, I was able to rejoice and receive God's words to me, "This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." (John 9:1-3)

Hallelujah!

## **The Church and Her Mission**

The overall movement of the Body of Christ through time and geography is another prime target of our enemy – as it spreads the fragrance and passion of Almighty God deeper into world.

It's interesting that when Jesus gave the word to his followers to go out and capture the world for Christ (i.e. The Great Commission) the unction included the words, "In my name they will drive out demons." (Mark 16: 17) Why did he do that? He knew that where the Kingdom of Heaven progresses there is spiritual resistance.

Anywhere and everywhere the mission of the church is moving, the forces of evil are right there, seeking to thwart its sovereign climax. This is true of anything, or anyone, getting closer to God. From one person making time in

the schedule for a quiet time to a Christian Mission seeking to be established in the heart of Uganda; wherever God is moving Satan is there.

Recently I was asked to go on a mission trip with our church. The moment I heard of the opportunity "I knew" a certain tragedy would happen on the. All the same, I knew the Lord wanted me to go so I wanted to be obedient to him. I said big good-byes to my family said to my wife, "If I don't return..." which, of course she dismissed.

While in Uganda, I knew tragedy was imminent. In a weird way, the urgency made me determined to preach my best, teach my best, minister my best, and evangelize my best. It was my last hoorah and I wanted to go out in style!

We evangelized all week to non-Christians, back-slidden Catholics and Anglicans, and Muslims. At the end of the week three hundred people come to a first church service! In addition, many people gave their lives to Christ over the course of the week – including one witch-doctor.

We had been back from the trip about a week when a fellow team member emailed us that there had been times during the mission we was paralyzed with the fear – the fear of *knowing he was going to die in Uganda!* How interesting, I thought. I emailed him back, "Me, too." Who else may have been barraged by such irrational thoughts? Maybe there were others, too.

You see, wherever God is doing something good, the devil is right there are well. Biblical history attests to this. He was at the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), he was there in Egypt trying to kill Moses and keep him from being born (Exodus 1:16), he was there in Bethlehem trying to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:16), and he was there at the last supper when Jesus instituted the New Covenant (Luke 22:3). He is everywhere God is moving.

Why? Because he has everything to loose.

Praise God that Jesus has given us the warning, the wherewithal, and the glorious word of God to fight against the power of the enemy!

### *Disunity*

If the devil is everywhere that God is, it means the devil is in the church, too. He has both the mission of the Church and the Person of the Church in its sleazy sights.

Many churches are known in their surrounding communities for being too human. Priests do stupid things; parishioners often gossip about their church

and backbite their leadership in social circles. Through time, the church on the corner no longer is seen as a City on a Hill but a Club on the Plain.

Much church division happens around the style, protocol, and music of worship. It's too loud, it's too traditional, it's not traditional enough, it's too country, it's too... *whatever*. As mentioned earlier, Lucifer may have been involved in orchestrating creations' worship to the One enthroned as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He didn't like his job then and, when he sees a church doing the same thing down here; it gets under his reptilian skin. No wonder the wonder of worship can be so opinionated in church people.

In John 17 we see Jesus praying for the Church. In essence, he prays we will be unified, working harmoniously with other members of the Body of Christ, regardless of the denomination. Anything that rises up in opposition to this may be demonic in nature and need to be addressed in the power of the Spirit.

## **Marriage, family, the sanctity of human life, and all sacred relationships**

Of all institutions in the world today, Marriage is the one that is crumbling before our very eyes.

The divorce rate for first time marriage is 54%, for second time marriages, >80%, and >95% for third marriages. Marriage has become a joke. It's no wonder the devil is all about compromising, distorting it, and making it mean everything but what it was intended to mean because of the powerful icon it serves us of the relationship between Jesus and the Church. No wonder the devil is coming against marriage so intensely – it's about a living portrait of how Jesus loves his children!

Paul writes, "[Marriage] is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:32. See also Ephesians 5:22, 23, 25-27)

The devil also had its grip on the slaughtering of thousands upon thousands of unborn children. While the purpose and sanctity of unborn human life ranks significantly in Scripture (See Genesis 25:23, Job 10:18, 31:15, Psalm 22:9, and 139:13.) Many people who God has ordained to rise up to bring Light to the world have been aborted by the Herod's of our day.

Relationships are also a target of our enemy – especially transparent relationships between brothers and sisters in Christ. There are few things sweeter in life than a "friend who is closer than a brother". (Proverbs 18:24) It's completely understandable why Satan seeks to sow seeds of disunity in such sacred relationships.

## The world

Finally we come to the world. When I speak of the world, I'm thinking more-so about the general flow of the cultures of the planet – not so much the physical planet itself.

The decision to make "The Fall" was a decision made by our first parents and, from that moment on, a toxic DNA has infected everyone born thereafter. If you a human you have this in your system. Humans create communities, communities create cultures. The planet, of course, has fallen victim to our poor choices (and continues to do so).

It's a difficult statement, yet the world's systems – her cultures and movements across time – are in direct relationship with the kingdom of darkness. I know that breaks a lot of dreams, hopes and good intent for the future of our planet – as we all long for the day when things like cancer, AIDS, Global Warming, and the like will be no longer a threat to life. I hate to be the bearer of bad news. But that isn't how it's going to happen. We may indeed find a cure for AIDS but another disease will rise up, and then another. Until Christ returns we will always be under one plague or another.

Jesus made no qualms about it. The "world's system" is under the power and influence of the evil one. (Read John 12:31, 1 John 4:4, and Ephesians 6:12) The Scriptures are clear: we are not getting better and better; we are getting worse and worse. We know the end of the story and – while we wind up in a place that is free from suffering, pain, and the like – our excellent medical advancements won't get us there.

God will.

Scriptures inform us that our world system will eventually evolve and form an anti-Christian culture. Morality and ethics will continue to fragment, and – if not for the glorious return of Christ – we would destroy ourselves.

The devil is behind this in two ways. The first is the deception many of us have; that things are getting better and better. Second, the devil is empowering those people who are aligning themselves with his wicked agenda (whether knowingly or unknowingly) with strategies and "powers" that originate from the pit of hell.

You have been warned: All sub-cultures that vehemently resist the expanding Kingdom of God are empowered by the devil. He's where they get their ideas from. In a world empowered by the evil principalities and authorities of the air, we need to be extremely discerning in where we draw the lines of political correctness.

## Summary

In this section we've looked at a few targets of the enemy.

The devil is opposed to all things precious to God – all situations, relationships, and people seeking to draw near to the Father through Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures, our minds and bodies, the Body of Christ and her mission, and the world system have the potential to be huge areas of spiritual resistance.

It's important to remember the hope of his calling (Ephesians 1:18) and that we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:37)

The amazing thing is God actually uses the devil and his ways in our lives for our benefit. Did I just say that? God uses the devil in our lives for good? Most assuredly, "Yes!

In the next chapter we'll see that, anyway you cut it, the devil is a loser. He may think he's bringing down the planet. He may be hell-bent on taking us down, but God is using his activities for the advancement of his own, sacred agenda!

### **III**

## **What “Good” is the Enemy?**

Here we have an interesting dynamic. Although Satan’s strategy is wicked, perverse, and defiant beyond human comprehension God has employed his deepest and darkest tendencies to bring out the best in us.

### **God uses all things for His, and our, own good**

Paul writes to the church at Rome:

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:28, 37-39)

Paul assures us, firstly, that nothing can separate us from God’s love and victory in Christ. Additionally, he goes onto say that God uses all things – and I think he meant ALL THINGS – for the continued transformation, the continued *good*, of those who love him and are called by him. That includes the evil shenanigans of demons.

#### *Increased Strength and Spiritual Understanding*

My daughter cheers on a JV varsity team. At the last pep rally it turned out the varsity cheerleaders didn’t like the idea that the JV-ers got to cheer. So they told people to “boo” and “hiss” when the JV team began their stunts. I watched the confidence in my daughter, and how she was determined to “stunt above the noise.” Sure, she heard it, but the mere sound of hundreds of kids jeering made something rise up in her that couldn’t have happened in a safe place.

Resistance, my friend, isn’t always a bad thing, is it?

Say I place my hand on your forehead and tell you to try to run in my direction. There you are, hugging and puffing, trying to knock me down but my hand is planted there on your head and you’re not going anywhere. An outsider might say “nothing is happening” (you may be saying that as well!). But I would beg to differ. For one thing, you are

becoming stronger. Your muscles are strengthening. The more you fight the buffer you become.

In addition, check out the feel of my hand, planted there on your forehead. It has a grip, it has a temperature, and it seems to change, tightening and loosening as you struggle beneath its grip. What's going on here? You are learning the feel of the resistor. You will recognize it from this time forward.

### *Pruning*

I also believe that encounters with the evil spirits are used by God to prune us. By that, I mean, to trim the fat of our flesh and make us more fruitful in the spirit.

*"He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."*  
(John 15:2)

There is good Biblical evidence to suggest that God uses evil spirits to correct us when we stray and perhaps even discipline us. Like "weed n feed," so God has the ability to use the power of evil to root out the weeds in our life and grow in us lasting fruit, fruit that will last. On our own we bear some pretty raunchy fruit. Yet, every gardener knows, a tree needs to be trimmed in order for it to flourish.

There was a woman in a church I pastured once who absolutely radiated the love of Jesus. When she walked into a room, it seemed to fill with light. Her eyes were clear, her cheeks were vibrant, and her smile could have melted the most hardened heart. She had such grace on her life and it was evident that she had an amazingly close relationship to her Lord.

One day I asked her how she came to know the Lord. What were the events that lead up to the vibrant life she now enjoyed? She grew quiet and introspective. "Well, before I became a Christian I sang." Oh, a singer, I thought. "I was involved in a fairly well-known band. Have you ever heard of the Mothers of Invention?"

My jaw dropped, "Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention?" (Zappa was known for exploiting audio porn and everything else in contrast to the person who was now confessing before me.) "You were a back-up singer for the Mothers of Invention?" I questioned. She nodded in a nun-like fashion. "Yes, Father Bill."

Isn't that just like our God? He takes the broken hearted, the hell-bent and the deceived, and he swings them around so there isn't even the

smell of smoke on them! I looked hard into her eyes, seeking to see something – anything – of the past she spoke about, and saw nothing. She had become a new creation in Christ and no longer exhibited the fruits of the flesh. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."* (Galatians 5:22-24)

In his wisdom, God has piled shame upon the shame by using Satan to perfect the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. He uses the spiritual resistance in the same way he allowed it in the life of Jesus – to crucify the sinful nature.

Satan must have a short memory. Doesn't he realize that power is made perfect in sacrifice? Doesn't he know that, in God's world, death is overshadowed in resurrection? Doesn't he know, the more he fights us in the flesh the more we will manifest the fruits of the Spirit?

## **The enemy creates a Greater Dependency upon God**

A mere mortal does not dare approach an evil spirit in the power of his or her humanity. That would be foolish. Even the smallest demon knows the Achilles Heel of the greatest saint.

In the presence of such resident evil we have only one way out: humility. We can't possibly be victorious on our own so we make our plea to the one who can save our souls. It only takes one or two hits in the gut to realize that we are not even in the same league as our enemy.

James writes a certain key to defeating the devil lies in the humbling of one's own heart before the Lord and submitting it all to him. *"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up"* and *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* (James 4: 10 and 7)

Lack of humility and submission to God were two of the errors Lucifer excelled in. He would not humble himself before God nor submit to him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It's no wonder that as we take on these spiritual postures – and win in doing so – he loosens his grip.



## **God's Attributes are Contrasted Most Dramatically in Darkness.**

A good friend has told me numerous times, "The fire of God shines brightest in the greatest darkness."

Many good things of God we take for granted are only so because of the contrasting bad things of Satan. You see, the wondrous gift of salvation – deliverance from sin and restoration to God through the precious Blood of Christ – *would be virtually unknown to us* outside the wickedness of sin. Without "evil" we could never know the tender mercy, sure forgiveness, and victorious power found in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

### **Summary**

In this section we have looked at the ways that the strategy of the evil one backfires for the glory of the King. God can do no wrong. Satan (in most cases), even when he tries to do wrong, comes out promoting the agenda of the very One he seeks to destroy.

Now that you've learned that – in essence – all things work for the good of those who love God and that we are strengthened and become more Christ-like through our battles, you need to know that this "positive spin" on the craftiness of the enemy doesn't give you permission to put on your spiritual bazooka and engage in battle. Nor does it give you permission to sin so that the grace of God may become more effectively realized in your life.

Nothing could be further from the Truth. These observations are the glorious residue from an experience in hell. Hell is wicked, it changes you. Hell is very, very wrong and no Spirit-filled saint has any business hanging around its gates, reaching into the cage and flirting with the monster in chains. He is a monster. And he hates you with an everlasting vengeance.

He is to be feared, in every sense of the word.

However, God is good. All things are working for a glorious future. Nothing is wasted in the Kingdom. Our close encounters with the enemy – as we are dedicated to following Christ – only serve to keep us humble, ever-reliant on our God, strong in the power of the Lord and in the strength of his might. Through the victory of Jesus Christ as evidence by the empty tomb, we are polished and buffed into a

glorious reflection of the Almighty and Victorious One, irregardless of what this mortal life can do to us.

## **IV**

# **How to Discern When Devils are Deceiving**

For a wonderfully humorous insight as to how the devil works pick up a copy of C.S. Lewis', "The Screwtape Letters." In the Introduction he writes,

"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel and excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves [the devils] are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight." [Footnote here]

Some of us disbelieve in a devil altogether. Others of us see devils everywhere. When we stub our toe on a chair we'd rebuke the spirit in the wood for causing our pain.

## **Spiritual Discernment is Tricky Business**

How do you tell when something is demonic or not? How can you separate your own bias from revelation? How can you be assured of what you cannot see?

It's difficult. But, above all, it is revelatory. That means it relies on a revelatory gift of the Spirit. Spiritual gifts such as "word of knowledge," "discernment of spirits," and/or "visions" are helpful here. You see, since the devil (and demons) he is firstly discerned spiritually.

Here are two stories illustrating what you see in the "natural" aren't always what they are in the "spiritual:"

First story: One evening, when we lived in Pasadena California, my wife and I had just returned from a Bible study and were unloading the trunk of the car. As I was pulling my guitar out of the trunk I sensed the presence of a person. I turned around and, sure enough, a homeless man was standing right next to me. The first thing I noticed was that he smelt like a still. He leaned over to me and, in a long, staggering, slurring, southern accent said, "Pardon me, sir, but do you know Jesus Christ?" I put my guitar on the ground and smiled. "Why, yes, I do. Why do you ask?" His eyes rolled around his head and he stumbled to stand. He slowly pointed his finger into my face and said, "'Cause you're *looking* at him!"

Second story: Once, while on the ministry team in a church conference in

Sydney Australia, we were smack-dab in the middle of a ministry time when one of the church deacons (dressed in his black shirt, white collar, and everything) was thrown to the ground and began to shake and jerk as if he was being electrocuted. I leaned down and asked him what was going on. He looked at me and said, "I have a spirit of homosexuality in me and I want it out." We helped him up and took him out of the sanctuary where we learned that, as a young teen, he and his friends invoked the presence of evil spirits and invited them into their sexual shenanigans. He knew precisely when the devil entered him and was now coming to the Lord of the devil who, after about an hour, lost lordship over the life of this Anglican deacon when Jesus set him free.

Here's the deal. The drunk was masquerading as Christ. At first glance one would think he had the demons. But, no, he was only drunk. The last person in the world you'd think - outside a spiritual revelation - would be demonically oppressed would be an ordained deacon in the church, right?

That's why this is tricky business.

## **Temptation and Deception**

Now, if you're like me, you're probably flashing through the events of your life and wondering if you have accidentally opened your life to the influence of spirits. Chances are, if it was nothing intentional, you haven't.

When we find ourselves obsessively thinking whether or not we have a demon it's probably the devil trying to make us believe that! It's like when people worry whether or not they've committed the unpardonable sin (i.e. blasphemy of the Holy Spirit) I tell them, if they're worried about it, they haven't. Why would they be worried about their relationship with Jesus otherwise? Likewise, the devil is largely responsible for our feelings of being fearful of him in the first place. Remember what I said earlier about not having to believe every thought that comes into your head? It's the same with feelings, too. Not all feelings are of God.)

### *Temptation*

The whole subject of temptation is an area that demons enjoy blowing out of proportion.

In his book *The Beginners Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, authors Neil Anderson and Timothy Warner define temptation as: "A desire to meet a legitimate need in an illegitimate manner."

The devil would have you believe our temptations are synonymous with sin. But temptation is not sin. It's what we do with the temptation that makes it

or breaks it. But what the devil does is, at the peak of the temptation; convince you that you've already done it in your mind so you might as well act out on what you've already done. And so the building topples. But, the truth is we had never sinned in the first place.

When we get in those situations we need to shake the off the dust and rebuke the devil and his false accusations in the Name of Jesus. And, heaven forbid – but it does happen – if he follows the deception to its sinful conclusion we need to get up, be assured of God's forgiveness, and move on quickly, without looking back.

The Word of God states that, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9) If you rise up after asking God to forgive your sin, with your mind set on Christ and the forgiveness offered through the Blood of the Lamb, the devil will flee. Of course, you can expect the usual demonic afterglow that will say things like, "Right, buddy, who do you think you're fooling? You think he's gonna forgive you again?"

No worries. That's par for the course. Just continue your ascent in faith. Rise up in the humility and grace into the all-sufficient power of the Lord. What you're sensing at that moment is the dying whines of the spirit's grip as Jesus unfastened his slimy fingers from the stronghold in your mind. It's like his voice is echoing through the darkness as he's tumbling downwards into the eternal pit prepared for him from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:41) Soon the echoes will fade and you'll find yourself fully freed and once again alive in the joy of Jesus.

### *Complete 100% Victory*

Our fight against the adversary is all the more effective when we've memorized verses that we can confidently claim in the heat of the battle. I have heard it said that when the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his future!

One such verse is Philippians 2:9-11. It reminds us (and the devil) that Jesus is victorious, that he is the King of all demons, and that one day, every knee shall bow, every tongue confesses, that Jesus Christ is Lord.

One of my all time spiritual battle verses is Colossians 2:15. "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

This verse gives ultimate tribute to the power of the Crucified God and the power of Christ over all spiritual "rulers, powers, and authorities." It says that Jesus has firstly *disarmed* them. The power of the resurrection pulverized Satan's backbone to dust and rendered his entire mission

powerless in the shadow of the glorious Cross. Secondly, it says he made a *public spectacle* of them, adding insult to injury.

This language speaks to the custom of marching the defeated armies through the gates of the city for everyone to see. The defeated armies were usually handcuffed and chained to each other as they were paraded through the villages. In some instances, the captors would cut the backsides of the prisoner's robes so that their bare "fannies" were showing. This became their ultimate humiliation. Not only were they defeated, captured, chained, \and paraded before jeering women and children, but they were bare-backed to boot!

That, my friends, is a public spectacle. And that's what Jesus did to all powers, rulers, and authorities seeking to take us down through deceit and deception.

## **Examine Fruitfulness**

I think Spiritual fruitfulness, or lack thereof, is an accurate barometer of demonic activity.

There is a story of a dying King who was on his deathbed and considering which of his two sons should inherit his kingdom. The problem was he had two sons and only one ring. The ring was the signet sign of the authority of his kingdom. Whoever wore the ring bore fruitfulness in all the decisions he made.

Just before the king passed away his servant asked him, "Which of your sons will wear the ring?" After a moments thought the wise king said, "Go, tell our blacksmith to make an identical ring to this one. After I die give each son a ring. The one who bears fruit for my kingdom will be the true king."

When it's unclear whether a person's behavior, situation, or event is demonic in origin or just looks that way, I'd consider the fruit. Is the fruit of the phenomenon peaceful? Is it loving? Is it pure, righteous, and gentle? Does it esteem the character and traits of Jesus Christ, or does it breed death, pride, sensuality, lust, greed, and selfishness?

Jesus said, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them." (Matthew 7:15-20)

The devil is a liar, a robber, a deceiver, and accuser, and hates all things

Godly. He hates Jesus, and he hates the reflection of Jesus found in the saints. Thus, the deeds of the devil - the fruits of the devil - grow darker and darker. They grow more constricted, more legalistic, more confusing, more out of control until they finally end up rotting in a worm infested death.

Conversely, the fruits of Godliness have an entirely different feel to them – a different fragrance, if you will. They are living, light-hearted; they surprise us with increasing elements of joy and excitement. Indeed, the deeds of the Spirit grow brighter and brighter, like the rising of the sun to noonday. The fruit of the Spirit ripens to eternal life. (See Galatians 5:19-25 for a list of the fruit of the Spirit.)

While this type of spiritual discernment is sometimes time-consuming, it is accurate. Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) Over time one "ring" will grow darker, the other brighter. See the difference?

### *Things are not What they Seem*

Sometimes we are too quick to make a demonic call on a situation. Many people have been wounded by an others knee-jerk reaction, calling something demonic when the final word on the situation hadn't been given. Other times, those with the gift of spiritual discernment can walk into a room and instantly know something smells fishy.

Recently I woke up early to take my daughter to school, fumbled my way to the kitchen to make a pot of coffee when I was suddenly – right out of the blue - overwhelmed by a sense there was a spirit of confusion in the room. It took me completely off guard. Once I told the spirit to leave in the Name of Jesus God's peace flooded the kitchen and I went on with my day.

In that scenario an ordinarily peaceful place had a spirit of confusion in it. Its funny how we'd think a spirit of confusion would be in events that are confusing wouldn't we? Not in this situation. The room was quiet and peaceful, yet a demon lingered in the darkness.

In a similar manner, some events that are confusing – even spooky and fearful – can be very much of the Lord. Many times the disciples were petrified of the phenomenon happening around them. The ministry of Jesus was completely out of the box for them - people getting healed, Jesus walking on water "like a ghost" (John 6:19), or walking through a door (John 20:19), or rising from the dead (Luke 24:4-6) - or even dead people rising from their graves and waling all over town (Matthew 27:51-53)! These were all hair-raising experiences that – at first glance – might cause a well-educated Pentecostal to rebuke Jesus in the Name of Jesus! Though these events appeared to be quite demonic, given time to "ripen," if you will, their fruitfulness was very much in sync with the plans and purposes of the

Almighty God.

## **summary**

Due to the highly deceptive nature of evil spirits it is a tricky business when seeking to discern whether or not a particular situation, behavior, or situation is motivated by the devil. As mentioned earlier, the word for Lucifer means "light." Things aren't always as they seem. A homeless man may be an angel, while a deacon may be held in bondage in the grip of death itself.

We can reduce the mistake of making a mistake by taking our time and examining the fruit of the tree. Even then, spiritual discernment is a gift of the Spirit and we need to rely on other gifted members of the Body of Christ for their wise counsel and expertise in ministry.

Though deceptive, demons are dumb. They are confined to predictable patterns of patrol that are quite obvious to the trained eye. To them it's all a game of smoke and mirrors. When you get passed that, you'll find a defeated enemy, whimpering and coiled in a fetal position, shivering powerless at the foot of the Cross.

In the same way demons hated to be in the presence of the Almighty Christ, so they hate to be in the presence of people like you and me who have become united with the Presence of the Holy. When they see us, they squirm. They are reminded of their defeat at the Cross and their all-too-certain final judgment at the end of the age. In the next chapter we'll take a look at exactly why it is that, as the hymn says, "demons tremble at the sight of the weakest saint on his knees!"



# V

## How to Fight Your Spiritual Enemy

As Christians, we stink. Paul says it like this:

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.” (2 Corinthians 3: 14-16)

To some, we smell wonderful – uplifting, sweet, innocent, pure. But that same fragrance becomes a stench to those in rebellion to God. Don’t be fooled, people (and spirits) can smell you.

Once I was leading worship at a renewal conference in Manjimup, Australia (west coast; a few hours south of Perth on Route 1). It had been a glorious conference, with about 1200 in attendance. At the close of a particularly anointed set of songs, I floated off the stage, filled a cup of coffee, and simply wandered around the large convention hall. People were praying for each other, everywhere. It was beautiful.

I meandered over to one of the offices where two women were praying for a third woman. The third woman was physically distraught. She was staring at the ground, breathing heavily, and clasping to the hands of those praying for her. I casually glanced in the room and stopped, just outside the door to see what was going on. Quite to my surprise the, woman slowly raised her head, leaned forward, and stared at me with intense rage. Then, in a – what I’ll call a “non-feminine” – guttery voice, she said, “Who is that bloke? Get him out of here.”

You see – even though I was just standing there sipping coffee from my Styrofoam cup – the evil spirit oppressing that woman recognized the fragrance of Christ in me. It was nothing I had done – or was even trying to be. It was simply the fruit of who I was in the Lord. I couldn’t help it if I tried.

Here’s that same verse in another translation: “In the Messiah, in Christ, God leads us from place to place in one perpetual victory parade. Through us, he brings knowledge of Christ. Everywhere we go, people breathe in the exquisite fragrance. Because of Christ, we give off a sweet scent rising to God, which is recognized by those on the way of salvation—an aroma redolent with life. But those on the way to destruction treat us more like the stench from a rotting corpse. (2 Corinthians 2:14-16, *The Message*)

I believe this is one reason why Christ was so immediately recognizable to demons; they knew him by his holy fragrance. Indeed, the first entity to

confess Jesus as the Son of God was an evil spirit. (Mark 1:23) Whether with Jesus or with Jesus in us, the fragrance of the Holy One is like fingernails on a blackboard to the creatures of darkness – a horrid reminder of their past rebellion, their future judgment, and their current lifestyle of continuous defeat in the Name of Jesus.

I am often surprised with the power of smell. Decades could pass and the smell of a perfume or cologne can bring it all back to you. It's like that with the devil as well. When he smells the fragrance of Christ in Jesus, through us, his body, he is once again reminded of his status and pending judgment before the Throne of God.

This "odor" is a family trait of every child of God. You do not work it up, you do not buy it, and you do not behave good enough to earn it. This, in itself, is a powerful weapon against spiritual resistance – simply being who we are in Christ!

## **Spiritual Authority**

Another way of looking at it is like this:

A friend of mine is a police officer. When we sit around, eat bar-b-que, and chew the fat we get along so well that I forget he's a police officer. He's just a normal guy like me. Yet there have been times when I've seen him decked out with uniform, pistol, taser gun, and motorcycle and I've been hard-pressed to remind myself he's just a normal guy. Why? My friend has now become clothed with impressive authority. No longer do I see him but I see the legal authority that he represents.

This is similar to our authority in Christ. It's an authority that has been gifted to every Christian. It's an authority that carries with it all the privileges, responsibility, and ambassadorship, if you will, of heaven.

Make no mistake, even when we're sleeping, demons can sense heaven in our hearts. They recognize our status in Christ in Christ and, more importantly to this discussion, our authority in Christ more-so than we will ever realize. We don't have anything to do with that. It simply is. Ever since you clothed ourselves with Christ at your baptism (Galatians 3:27) you became – along with a long list of privileges and status – an innate threat to the kingdom of darkness. You see, the mystery is this: *Christ in You, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27).

That, in itself, provides tremendous leverage in our victory over the evil one.

Jesus said it this way,

"Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of

the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He [Jesus Christ] who is in you than he who is in the world [Satan]. (1 John 4:3-5)

It is impossible for demons not to feel threatened in the presence of a Christian. That same Christ – their judge and maker – lives in us. That, in itself, puts us light years ahead of anything God allows to tempt or torment us. When the demons see we are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:17, 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21) they can't help but squirm a little.

## Summary

Our Spiritual Authority is an effective method to fight spiritual resistance. Even when we sleep the ever-churning, ever-burning Shekinah presence of God illuminates our beings and provides shade and protection to the wandering child of God.

This authority – this spiritual fragrance – is given unilaterally across the board to everyone who is in Christ. We are children of the same family, we are co-heirs with Christ.

Paul say's it like this: "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." (Romans 8:15-17)

While the power of the risen Christ is, in itself, a powerful force against wickedness, there are times when it isn't enough. Sometimes wiry clinch of the devil's crooked fingers on a person, event, or behavior needs more.

Don't get me wrong, spirits always recognize Christ. They believe in Christ and tremble at his Name (James 2:19). But God has engineered things as such that there will be times when you need to rise up, take the authority given to you by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and advance in warfare – either with others or on your own.

In short, whistling in the dark is not enough.

## VI

# Practical Postures in the Battle

Before we turn our gaze to some offensive practical moves you can acquire in the war let's glance back and point out a few things.

Firstly, as redeemed saints of the Grace of God in Jesus Christ, we have a real enemy. His name is Lucifer but we generally know him as the devil, or Satan. He is like God in the sense that he is a spirit and, like God, has the ability to operate in both spiritual and physical realms. However, he is not omnipresent - he is not at all places at once. He is only one entity, limited to one geographical location at a time - but his demons and influence are. They operate all over the world, carrying out his evil plans to thwart the ongoing, ever-victorious expansion of the Kingdom of God. So, when we say, "That was the devil," or "Or this smells like Satan big time," we're rarely confessing the actual presence of Lucifer in that place - rather, we are acknowledging the operation of his strategy, or plans, in the situation.

In a similar way, when Nazi soldiers ransacked an innocent village in WWII, Hitler [himself] did not do it. His soldiers did. It's the same way with the devil. We may say that Satan did it but, in actuality, God is keeping the actual Satan very far away from his beloved. What we're really saying is the Satan's *influence*, not the actual interaction with fallen angel - anymore than Hitler was killing innocent people in small villages in WWI. Satan can't be everywhere. What we're getting is his orders, trickling up from a vastly complicated chain of command.

Secondly, God allows Satan to resist us because he [God] thinks it's good for us. This is a win-win situation for us. All spiritual resistance takes place against the backdrop of God's extreme love and purposes. He cares for us more than anyone could care for another. He knows us intimately - thus he knows our ceilings. He has a plan for our life and works everything out to meet the fulfillment of that plan. Nothing can get in the way of the God who loves us.

Thus, in our darkest seasons we can be assured God has allowed it. In other words, we can choose to be content, even if it goes against our better judgment.

In my personal struggles with demons I have actually come out stronger as a result of their interaction in my life. I have learned their smell and know their predictable strategies - all wonderful insights for me. Of course, one doesn't go to war with one's own health in mind. But health can happen as a result of engagement with the enemy.

Even when a person succumbs to the enemy and rises again in the power of Christ's unconditional forgiveness and cleansing of his blood spiritual resistance is still a win-win situation.

## **Who is the Real Enemy?**

Sometimes we see people doing stupid things and find ourselves hating the one who is merely a victim of the devil.

Television fuses this misconception - the misconception that people are to blame - in a very tangible manner. We see snapshots of pedophiles, murderers, and people associated with gruesome crimes and we are at once throwing stones.

In the mid-90's there were numerous Christian leaders getting caught with the backsides of their robes trimmed back so everyone could see their rotten filth. The Bible says that, "judgment must begin at the household of God" (1 Peter 4:17) - and I believe this is a part of that. But - lest you be quick to speak and slow to hear - remember, the devil is behind it **all**. He is the great influencer, deceiver, and master of deception.

Of course we all have our own responsibility over our actions, words, and behavior, all free agents with the ability to make good or bad choices and have to live with ramifications of those choices. At the same time, we wouldn't have the option to sin if evil wasn't in the world, would we? So who's to blame? Does the murder walk because "the devil made him do it" or do we cast our stones because "that man should have known better?"

First and foremost, we are not to judge. (See Matthew 7:1, Luke 6:37, and John 7:24.) That's God's job. (Romans 2:16, 1 Corinthians 5:13, Hebrews 13:4). While it's true that law breakers need to be tried accordingly, we fall short of the real deal if our opinions extend no further than the "restitution and justice" side of the coin. Remember: There is a wicked influence that taints the world. It lies at the root of all evil and injustice. It's a stirs in all man everywhere a strange brew of moral failures that has the potential to mature in a law of court or hell.

I think when we hear of people doing stupid things our first thoughts need to address the evil behind the actions, not the action itself. Many times, the incident leaves the person as confused as anyone else. Let's entrust the law breaker to the law and pray for the person. Perhaps - just perhaps - he himself is a victim of evil and needs the redeeming prayers of the Church to set him free.

## History and Confidence

One of the most confident statements ever recorded in Biblical History has got to be the words young David uttered when faced with the dreaded giant Goliath.

"David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands." (1Samuel 17:45-47)

Young David (a teen here) had absolute confidence that the battle was to be won in the Name of the Lord. His confidence in Yahweh was so high that it overshadowed the barbarian hurling insults at him.

But David's *history* of fighting also played into this. When faced the giant he said, "When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." (1 Samuel 17:34-37)

David had a history of combating the enemy and a history in seeing God victorious in his life. It was in this confidence - a confidence in the Lord - that accompanied him out onto the battlefield and secured a sure victory for Israel.

You may remember that, just before David entered the battle arena, King Saul feared that David's enthusiasm may be preventing him from seeing the true weight of the crises at hand. He gave David his own armor and dressed him in the same things that he himself would wear if he himself was going into battle. He gave him his tunic, a coat of armor, and a bronze helmet for his head, and a sword. (1 Samuel 17:38)

Praise God for David's recognition of his own sacred history. He knew how to fight the enemy - with confidence and simplicity. He took off Saul's armor, pick up a few stones, swung the slingshot around and knocked down Goliath with a single stone, smack-dab in the forehead.

This is a powerful lesson for us. The battle belongs to the Lord. We could no more defeat the enemy in the power of our own strength than David could defeat Goliath clothed with Saul's armor (a symbol of the way the world does things). When we understand that the battle is the Lord's and that God is the giant-slayer, it takes the heat off. We don't have to be strong enough or, as in David's case, big enough. We simply need to stand in confidence and see the salvation of our God.

## **The Name of Jesus and the Power of His Blood**

When I was in fifth grade I used to put a dime in my fingers, get up in the front of the class, and scratch it across the length of the blackboard. When the kids saw me "scratching my fingernails" across the blackboard, they covered their ears and screamed, "Stop it! Stop it!"

I think this is what the devil does when we take a Bible in our hands and say the Name of Jesus!

Paul writes to the church at Philippi:

"At the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10-11)

What a beautiful Name, the Name of Jesus! What power and protection it evokes! Satan trembles at the sound of the Name of Jesus, even if uttered from the weakest saint on her knees!

Say it, right now - right where you are with me, "Jesus."

Say it again, "Jesus."

Isn't it wonderful? His Name shatters the darkness.

Remember the classic song by Bill Gaither called, "There's Just Something About that Name?"

It reads like this:

*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus  
There's just something about that name  
Master Savior Jesus  
Like a fragrance after the rain*



*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus*  
*Let all heaven and earth proclaim*  
*Kings and kingdoms may all pass away*  
*But there's something about that name*

[1970 William J. Gaither, Inc. ARR UBP of Gaither Copyright Management]

That *something* is the power and authority over all creation – fully available to every child of God.

When we lived in Pasadena, California, my wife and I were taking a walk when a furious Doberman pincher came lunging at us from the far side of a yard, making a growling and frothy beeline to where we immediately stood, frozen in fear. Just like that, my wife pointed to the snarling creature and said, "In the Name of Jesus - STOP!"

And it did. Just like that.

The dog stopped in its tracks and – it didn't know any better – just as surprised as I was, standing there, as if frozen in time. We simply scurried past the danger and continued our walk.

I know that dog sensed the authority of Christ in my wife, and submitted to him (remember, *every knee shall bow...*). Now, if that can happen to a dog imagine what the Name of Jesus does to the spirits who actually know the full meaning of the Name!

I once heard the story of a man who had purchased a mansion in Beverly Hills. The place had been previously known as a haven for spiritualists who regularly engaged in occult activities there. No worries. The man purchased home, went out and bought a gigantic stereo system, set it up in the house, and - for a week straight - played praise and worship music that exalted the Name of Jesus Christ through the speakers 24/7. When he returned the place was, in his own words, "as clean as a whistle."

The Name of Jesus, mixed with the Blood of the same, is a powerful weapon in the hands of a child of God. When you mention the Blood of the Lamb when praying against the enemy you are reminding Satan of the sacred Blood of the Passover, the sacred blood of Calvary, and how one drop broke the backbone of the angel of death. The blood of Christ was the "liquid money" used to purchase us from the grip of Satan. We were once in darkness but, when Jesus was slain, his precious and life-giving blood was used to rescue us - used to purchase us - from hell. (Revelation 5:9)

So when we mention the blood and the Name in our resistance the white-knuckled clinch of the demons have to soften. To them, this is spiritual warfare at its fiercest.

In Revelation 12:10-12, Saint John writes:

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

"Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God,

and the authority of his Christ.

For the accuser of our brothers,

who accuses them before our God day and night,  
has been hurled down.

They overcame him

by the blood of the Lamb

and by the word of their testimony.

How did they overcome Satan? By the Blood of the Lamb and by the Word of their testimony - Jesus is the Living Word of our testimony.

## **Appropriating is Everything**

It's one thing to know this stuff; quite another to engage in it. If not used, what good is it?

When I was preaching this sermon to the church I pulled out a poison green spray bottle of water and invited a couple of parishioners to try and get close to me. One kid came up and I immediately sprayed him. Once he figured it out he decided just to stand there. I must have squirted him 20 times. The water rolled down his scrunched up face and dripped to the carpet. After that I took the squirt bottle into the pews and began aiming it people. When they saw me - and my weapon pointed at them - they automatically shirked and covered their faces. And I hadn't even pulled the trigger! They had seen me squirt the first kid and they knew I had a weapon and knew how to use it.

It was a very telling moment.

I'm reminded of the story of Moses when leading the Israelites into the Land of Promise. They were up against a river that was 12 miles wide. Behind them the Egyptian army was closing in fast. The people shouted at Moses, "Get us out of here!" Moses shouted at God, "Get us out of here!" And God turned around and said [essentially], "Dude, get *yourself* out of there! Lift up your hands. Use the rod I gave you. You have been given everything you need already. Just use it!" (See Exodus 14:15. By the way, "dude" isn't in the original manuscript!)

The point here is simple - but it could be the difference between victory and defeat. You have been given much. You have the authority of Christ in you - which is a threat in itself to the evil one - and God has gifted you everything you need to move out in humility, confidence, and assurance that the battle

belongs to the Lord and that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. You got it, now use it!

## **Perseverance in the Life, Mission, Obedience, and Protective Shelter of the Church**

The power of the Name gives the child of God strength to remain in the good things of God as well. Going to church is one of those things.

The Psalmist writes:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.  
I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust."  
Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare  
and from the deadly pestilence. (Psalm 91:1-3)

There is something to be said about going to church. It's not just something we do because "all good Christians go to church." It's much more than that. In the cloistering of the faithful is the re-membering of the Body of Christ.

The Universal Church is the Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 14) Where we are, Christ is. Where Christ is there is grace, love, righteousness, purity, authority, victory, and hope. When we get away from the Body of Christ, when we get away from Jesus as made manifest whenever two or more are gathered in his Name (Matthew 18:20)

### *Staying Fired Up*

Rev. Nikki Gumble, Vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton, UK, gives a wonderful illustration of this in a story he tells on the ALPHA Course. There was a man who was feeling that the fire had left his bones and all his hope had cooled down. He went to a wise man in the Lord and explained his problem. After listening to the hopeless fellow, the elder leaned forward in the chair, and with a fire-poker, gently scooted a dying ember back into the hotbed of the fireplace before them. Within moments, the dying ember flamed up.

When a person is involved in the life of the church community his or her activities in the Lord will, by their very nature, provide a synergistic wave of protection and empowerment and that person, as a result of a lifestyle of corporate devotion, will be less vulnerable to the evil one.

While solitude is a wonderful gift of the Spirit (and needed in the life of every saint – especially in American Christian) excessive isolation works just the opposite. It places the saint onto the devils playground.

### *Staying on the Plow*

Again we look to the life of King David. David was out walking on the rooftop one night when he looked down onto the flat rooftops of the houses around him and his eyes fell upon a young woman who was quite foxy (“foxy” isn’t the original manuscript - but “beautiful” is) bathing herself under the Israeli moon. There she was – in our modern vernacular – only a “click” away. He uploaded her to his bedroom, acted out, and closed the screen. Unfortunately a virus was left behind and the screen wouldn’t close. With a short period of time the sin matured to deceit, murder, birth, miscarriage, and (by God’s grace) repentance. (The whole story can be read in its entirety in 2 Samuel 11, with his prayer of repentance found in and Psalm 51.)

It was a horrific playing out of events which may have never happened if David hadn’t pulled away from God’s call for his life. In a time when kings went off to war, David decided not to go. He sent Joab out instead. “David remained in Jerusalem” (1 Samuel 11:1). He remained isolated and intentionally distanced from where he should have been. He beached himself from God’s River and wound up drowning in his own tears of repentance.

This illustration is repeated in the Exodus. As Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt a number of stragglers were lagging behind, plodding along and taking their sweet time. They had become distanced from the Shekinah pillar of God’s Presence and miles behind the heart of the parade. Deuteronomy describes the stragglers as being faint, weary, and living outside the fear of God. (Deuteronomy 25:17f)

To either side of the Israelites, hiding within the rocky terrain and mountains, were the Amalikites, a barbarian tribe of cowards. To them, the site of the stragglers was a real draw. When they saw their weakened condition they came up and hit them from behind, slaughtering the isolated stragglers with ease. When the rest of the Israelites looked back to see what happened, leadership prayed and the warriors fought until the Amalikites were completely wiped out. (And they remain completely wiped out, even to this day.)

The point here is that when the wandering Jews wandered too far away from the hotspot of the community they became easy prey for the sleazy desires of their enemy. (See Exodus 17:8-13 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19.)

### *The Communion of Saints is Good Place*

Thus, staying connected to the heartbeat of the community of the faithful is essential for spiritual victory to become the norm in the life of any Christian. Staying in fellowship - whether it is a church, mission, small group, or weekly accountability gathering - provides marvelous protection for the believer and disciple of Christ.

Recently I was at a church service and as I was lifting the silver chalice and thanking God for the Blood I was amazed to see the reflection of every person surrounding the altar on the outside of that cup. I paused for a long moment, pondering the miracle of the communion of saints as reflected in the chalice of the Lord's remembrance. We are all there, captured, protected, and dwelling safely within the blood of Christ.

## **Summary**

We are given many weapons wherewith to battle the forces of evil. Our mightiest weapons are the Name of Jesus, his Blood, and the protective covering of the community of Christ.

Yet, the possessing of these gifts doesn't automatically assume victory over the evil one. It is the appropriation of the Name, the Blood, and our own decisions to remain in the mainstream of Life that brings victory or defeat. When a child of God chooses NOT to appropriate all Christ died to give us it comes across as an insult to his work on the Cross. He died that we might be set free. The least we can do is to walk in the grace of his enduring sacrifice.

## VII

# Final Thoughts

We have a real enemy. He is a ruthless deceiver who is doing all he can to take us to hell with him. He knows his time is short and he is doing all he can to take the word with him.

While Satan cannot take the seal of God from our hearts – while he can't make us his children anymore – he can threaten us, numb us, scratch us, and really do a number on us spiritually, physically, and psychologically. While he is a defeated foe, he is a serious threat to the plans and purposes of God in each one of us. He shouldn't be made light of on any level. If not for the protective Almighty Arm of the Enthroned One, we would be completely obliterated.

Many of us place ourselves in arenas where demonic activity runs rampant. I mentioned David's adultery with Bathsheba earlier. I once knew a man who had a real struggle with internet porn. The morning after a particular defeat he was in church and blessing God for his full forgiveness and release from shame. In the spirit, the Lord had the man look down to his right arm. My friend was horrified to see three claw marks. They had sliced through his shirt and into his skin. While his sin was forgiven, the scars were real.

Scripture tells us time and time again to stay away from anyplace the devil is known to inhabit. He doesn't tell us that to keep us from having fun. He tells us that because of the real danger there. Jesus loves us. He doesn't like to see his children in pain anymore than you like to see your children suffering. He knows the potential of the evil one and has done everything he can to keep us away.

### *Protection to One; Panic to Another*

When I pray for other I often have a sense of God's favor towards the people I'm asking God to bless. It's a peaceful presence, filled with grace and unconditional love. At times, it's so strong; I even think I have seen his face, looking upon the person with amazing grace and complete delight in his child.

Recently a woman approached me for prayer – a woman who had been heavily assaulted by the enemy her whole life. As I laid my hands on her head and anointed her with oil I expected to see the same visions of Jesus looking with intense abandonment onto the face of his child. But nothing could have prepared me for what I saw instead. It was a startling vision.

Jesus was there but it was a different Jesus – a scary Jesus. He was sort of hunched over this woman, his robes completely covering and comforting her like “he normally does” but, at the same time, he was looking back, over his shoulder, with such a look of anger and (dare I say?) hatred that I got scared.

He pulled out an arm and pointed it in the direction of his fiery gaze and I heard him say, “You keep your hands off her!”

I was so shaken that I had to stop praying. After a moment of silence I shared with the woman what I had just seen. It was the direct intervention of our Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of a child whom he desperately loved. Since then, the woman has been freed from tons of old baggage and to date (some four months now) her countenance reveals the One who sets the captives free.

That’s the reality of it all. Jesus hates the devil. One of the reasons he hates him is because he hurts, deceives, and even kills the precious lambs of God. I don't know that we'll ever grasp just how precious we are in the eyes of God this side of heaven. When he says we are his treasured possession, or that he loves us so much he gave his life for us, I think he really means it. We carry extraordinary status in the heavenly realms - status worth dying for and status worth living for.

### *The Victory Belongs to the Lord*

It's a fine line we walk. On one side we are joyful in the victory we have in Christ Jesus. On the other side, we can't help but to be drawn to our knees as we experience Satan’s raunchy residue in the events of the world. We need to take him quite seriously, as Christ does, yet with the joyful awareness that he is a defeated foe, rejoicing in the power of the cross.

We have been given everything we need to win the battle. The Bible is clear; the gates of hell cannot not prevail against the onward movement of God.

The Gospel of Matthew says, “Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:17-19)

I love the hymn; *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, by Martin Luther, translated by Frederick H. Hedge. In light of all we’ve discussed I invite you close it out by reading it through slowly, devotionally with the Holy Spirit breathing Life and authority into every line. Allow your heart to resonate with these amazing lyrics!

A mighty fortress is our God,  
a bulwark never failing;  
our helper he amid the flood  
of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe  
doth seek to work us woe;  
his craft and power are great,  
and armed with cruel hate,  
on earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,  
our striving would be losing,  
were not the right man on our side,  
the man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is he;  
Lord Sabaoth, his name,  
from age to age the same,  
and he must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,  
should threaten to undo us,  
we will not fear, for God hath willed  
his truth to triumph through us.  
The Prince of Darkness grim,  
we tremble not for him;  
his rage we can endure,  
for lo, his doom is sure;  
one little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers,  
no thanks to them, abideth;  
the Spirit and the gifts are ours,  
thru him who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go,  
this mortal life also;  
the body they may kill;  
God's truth abideth still;  
his kingdom is forever.

This business of spiritual warfare is a lifestyle we're all called into at one time or another – a victory we all need to affirm. It's a glorious affirmation! Through it all we are assured that God wins, and the devil loses.

We are assured that God in us is greater than all the evil in the world. We have it all going for us. We are on the winning team. We will run into the stadium with crowns on our heads, and the great cloud of witnesses will



cheer and lift their voices at the devils defeat – all because of the glorious victory of our Lord Jesus Christ! Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

And that, my friends, is what keeps us all whistling in the dark!