

THE WAR

***A STUDY TO PREPARE BELIEVERS TO STAND FIRM
AGAINST THE ASSAULTS FROM THE DEMONIC REALM***

MARTIN PURYEAR

Copyright © 2021 by H. Martin Puryear III. All rights reserved.

Steward of Truth Publications
PO Box 4763
Greensboro, NC 27404-4763

Certificate of Registration Number, Copyright Office: TXu 2-236-530

“Scripture quotations taken from the *NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE*®, © Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.” www.Lockman.org

HE TRAINS MY HANDS FOR BATTLE SO THAT MY ARMS CAN BEND A BOW OF BRONZE. YOU HAVE ALSO GIVEN ME THE SHIELD OF YOUR SALVATION, AND YOUR HELP MAKES ME GREAT. YOU ENLARGE MY STEPS UNDER ME, AND MY FEET HAVE NOT SLIPPED.

I PURSUED MY ENEMIES AND DESTROYED THEM, AND I DID NOT TURN BACK UNTIL THEY WERE CONSUMED. AND I HAVE DEVoured THEM AND SHATTERED THEM, SO THAT THEY DID NOT RISE; AND THEY FELL UNDER MY FEET.

FOR YOU HAVE GIRDED ME WITH STRENGTH FOR BATTLE; YOU HAVE SUBDUED UNDER ME THOSE WHO ROSE UP AGAINST ME.

THE LORD LIVES, AND BLESSED BE MY ROCK; AND EXALTED BE GOD, THE ROCK OF MY SALVATION, THE GOD WHO EXECUTES VENGEANCE FOR ME AND BRINGS DOWN PEOPLES UNDER ME, WHO ALSO BRINGS ME OUT FROM MY ENEMIES. YOU EVEN LIFT ME ABOVE THOSE WHO RISE UP AGAINST ME; YOU RESCUE ME FROM THE VIOLENT MAN.

– 2ND SAMUEL 22:35-40, 47-49

“A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD”

Our God is a mighty Fortress, a never-failing Bulwark.
He (is) our Helper, prevailing amid the flood of mortal ills.
For our ancient foe still seeks to *[cause]* us *[anguish]*.
His craft and power are great and armed with cruel hate.
His equal is not on earth.

[Were] we *[to]* confide in our own strength ... were the right Man not
on our side, the Man of God's own choosing ... our striving
would be losing.

[Do you] ask who that may be? It is Christ Jesus.
His Name (is) LORD Sabaoth. (He is) the same from age to age.
And He must win the battle.

And though this world – filled with devils – should threaten to undo
us, we will not fear, for God has willed (that) His Truth triumph
through us.

We (do) not tremble *[because of]* the grim prince of darkness.
We can endure his rage, for *[let us take careful note]*, his doom is sure.
One little word shall *[cut]* him *[down]*.

That word abides above all earthly powers – no thanks to them.
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who sides with us.
Let goods and kindred go. Also, (let) this mortal life (go).
They may kill the body; God's Truth still abides.
His Kingdom is forever.

– Martin Luther

THE WAR**A SNAPSHOT OF THE COURSE**

The Reality of Spiritual Battle	6-8
A Profile of Our Enemy	9-40
The Original Status of “Star of the Morning,” “Son of the Dawn”	9-20
The Fall of the Holy Cherub	21-25
The Present Status of Satan	26-35
The Present Character of Satan	36-40
The Assurance of Spiritual Victory	41-54
Accomplished by the Son of God ~ Shared with the Saints of God	
The Tenacity of a Conquered Foe	55
The Tactics of the Demonic Realm	56-78
Satan Will Try to Undermine the Witness of <i>God’s Word</i>	57-63
Satan Will Try to Rupture the Witness of <i>the Church</i>	64-65
Satan Will Try to Silence the Witness of <i>a Believer’s Life and Ministry</i>	66-78
The Battle Gear of the Christian Warrior	79-100
The Battle Plan of the Triumphant Church	101-106
Read and Meditate on God’s Word	102
Quote God’s Word	102-104
Cling to God through Prayer	104-105
Obey God	105-106
Conclusion	107-108
Appendix: Discussion Questions	109-127

THE REALITY OF SPIRITUAL BATTLE¹

If you are a reborn Christ-follower, you are in this world to serve as God's ambassador. You are His representative, left here to reflect the radiance of His character before a broken and confused world that desperately needs to know the one true God. You have been entrusted with what is, most surely, an extraordinary calling:

to gratefully proclaim to those living under God's death sentence His merciful pardon through Jesus Christ His Son,

to solemnly warn those who reject this deliverance of God's wrath,

and to strengthen God's people for this witness by employing your gifts and resources and time and energy in your service to them.

For the believer to carry out this staggering commission demands nothing less than the power of almighty God. That power, of course, comes from the Spirit of God Who resides in you, enabling you to impact your world far beyond anything you could ever imagine. It is this same power

that raised the Son of God from the dead,

that established Him at the Father's right hand in the realms of glory,

that one day will subject all nations under the authority of the King of kings,

and that, one day, will redeem creation itself from its bondage to corruption.

This is the power you have at your disposal to honor God's Name and to prepare yourself and others for eternity.

So, how are you doing?

This question, of course, cannot be answered ... at least, not in this life. But it *is* possible to have a somewhat general sense of the influence your life is having on the eternal souls around you; and that awareness comes from a most unlikely source.

THE PLACE TO LOOK IS ***NOT IN THE FRUIT*** YOU SEE.
IT IS FOUND, INSTEAD, ***IN THE OPPOSITION*** YOU FACE.

More than likely, the Lord Jesus will not show you – at least on this side of the resurrection – how much He is using you to exalt His Name and advance His Church. Much of the fruit you are bearing – perhaps even *most* of it – is being hidden from your sight, only to be revealed at the proper time. It is while bowing before Him for your

evaluation at the Judgment Seat of Christ that the influence you had in the lives of others will be fully – and joyfully – revealed to you.

In the meantime, your life and service have attracted the unwanted attention of an adversary, an ancient ... evil ... highly intelligent ... cunning ... intimidating foe who will not let you trespass on “his” property for long before he does something about it. *As fully as he is allowed by God*, this dreadful creature is going to let you know that your invasion of his kingdom has not gone unnoticed.

Most surely, the committed Christian is on a collision course with the forces of hell. Spiritual warfare is inevitable for any believer who threatens the ambitions of this army of demons to discredit God’s Person, destroy God’s people, and derail God’s plans and purposes. This enemy is going to push back; and when they do, it will not take the servant of God long to realize that he is not in a pillow fight. Indeed, it will be the intention of these killer angels to make the Christian warrior wish he had *never* tried to tangle with them.

At the head of this demonic realm is Satan ^{2,3}

- who attempted to overthrow the throne of God in heaven’s realm (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28),
- who succeeded in tempting an innocent man and his unsuspecting wife to join him in his rebellion against God and, in the process, corrupted all their unborn children as well as all creation itself (Genesis 3),
- who, since Abraham, has sought to annihilate the Jewish nation to discredit Yahweh’s (Jehovah’s) ability to keep His promised covenant with Israel,
- who attempted to prevent the birth (Matthew 2), the continued life (Luke 4:29-30), the crucifixion (Matthew 16:21-23) and the resurrection (Matthew 27:62-66; 28:11-15) of the Savior,
- who, today, attempts to discredit the Church in Her faithful representation and service of Jesus Christ on earth,
- and who, in the future, will attempt to retain his title, “the ruler of this world,” when Jesus Christ returns to take His rightful place as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:19).

But who *is* this person? *What* is this person? From where did Satan come? Has he always been evil? And if not, what made him that way? He claims to have authority over this world. Is that true? Or is it merely the empty boast of an arrogant rebel? But

if his claim *is* legitimate, over whom does he have authority? And can anything be done to stop him?

To answer at least some of our questions about this evil being, we will use the only reliable source of truth, the Word of God. And we will begin our quest by taking a giant step back into eternity past.

1 Although this study focuses our attention on only one of our enemies (Satan), the believer's war is waged on three fronts.

1st John 2:15-17 reveals the first front as a conflict between the believer and *the world* (those who live by an *evil value system* ... and pressure the Christian to do so as well).

Romans 6:12-13 reveals the second front as a conflict between the Holy Spirit Who indwells the believer and the believer's *flesh* (his inner *evil cravings*).

This course reveals the third front as a conflict between the believer and *the devil* (an *evil angel*).

These three enemies often work together to attack God's people. Satan uses the world and the flesh to assault humanity. The world uses the believer's flesh for its attack.

2 "*Satan*" means "*adversary*" or "*opposer*." Occurring 52 times in the Bible, this name portrays him as a "self-proposed rival of God whose purpose is to set up a counterfeit and rival kingdom. In his opposition to God, he also opposes God's people (Revelation 12:9-10)." (Dickason, C. Fred. *Angels: Elect and Evil*. Chicago. Moody Press, 1975, page 122.)

3 Satan is also called by other names in the Bible: the devil, the evil one, the great red dragon, the serpent of old, a roaring lion, Beelzebul, Belial, the god of this age, the prince of demons, (the one) who deceives the whole world, the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the prince of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, the enemy, the tempter, the murderer, the father of lies, the accuser of our brethren.

A PROFILE OF OUR ENEMY⁴

THE ORIGINAL STATUS OF “STAR OF THE MORNING,” “SON OF THE DAWN”

His Original Nature

He Is a Creature

First, it is important that we clearly understand and firmly grasp this truth: Satan is *not* God’s *equal*. He is, in fact, a finite creature, brought into existence by the infinite God.

YOU WERE BLAMELESS IN YOUR WAYS FROM THE DAY YOU WERE CREATED (EZEKIEL 28:15)

As with all creatures, Satan is far, far inferior to his Creator. Unlike the eternal God, there was a time when he did not exist. Unlike the all-powerful God, his strength has boundaries. Unlike the all-knowing God, his knowledge is restricted. Unlike the ever-present God, he is not present everywhere at the same time. Because he is a creature, Satan has limitations.

He Is an Angel

We also learn from the Scriptures that this creature was (and still is) an angel. That is, he is a spirit being. This can be inferred *by his association with other angels*.

WHERE WERE YOU (JOB) WHEN I LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH ... WHEN THE MORNING STARS (PERHAPS THE ANGELIC LEADERSHIP?) SANG TOGETHER AND ALL THE SONS OF GOD (THE ENTIRE ANGELIC REALM) SHOUTED FOR JOY? (JOB 38:4-7, PARENTHESES ADDED)

NOW THERE WAS A DAY WHEN THE SONS OF GOD (THE ENTIRE ANGELIC REALM) CAME TO PRESENT THEMSELVES BEFORE THE LORD, AND SATAN CAME ALSO AMONG THEM. (JOB 1:6, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

We are, in fact, given his rank within the angelic realm. Satan was created to be (and perhaps still carries the *authority* of) *a cherub*.

YOU WERE THE ANOINTED CHERUB WHO COVERS (EZEKIEL 28:14)⁵

He Was Created Sinless

Furthermore, we are told that Satan was *not* created with an evil disposition. Just as Adam and Eve were created without sin, the *original* nature of this angel was without corruption. He was “blameless.”

YOU WERE BLAMELESS IN YOUR WAYS FROM THE DAY YOU WERE CREATED (EZEKIEL 28:15)

His Original Titles

HOW YOU HAVE FALLEN FROM HEAVEN, O STAR OF THE MORNING, SON OF THE DAWN! YOU HAVE BEEN CUT DOWN TO THE EARTH, YOU WHO HAVE WEAKENED THE NATIONS!" (ISAIAH 14:12)⁶

“Star of the morning” (Hebrew: *helel*, pronounced *hay la’*) is a title that carries the idea of brightness. He was “a shining one.”

“Son of the dawn” (Hebrew: *shachar*, pronounced *shock’ ar*) carries this same idea. He was “the rising, early light of morning.”

Perhaps both titles, “star of the morning” and “son of the dawn,” point to his position of leadership. (If so, according to Job 38:4-7, he would have been one of several leaders within the angelic realm.) That is uncertain. But most surely, these titles reveal this holy cherub’s *spiritual condition*. They speak of the dazzling radiance of his character ... that is, before his failed attempt to seize control of the throne of God.

His Exquisite Perfections

Before sin was found in him, the “star of the morning,” “son of the dawn” was flawless in moral perfection, strong in wisdom, and beautiful in appearance.

THUS SAYS THE LORD GOD, "YOU HAD THE SEAL OF PERFECTION, FULL OF WISDOM AND PERFECT IN BEAUTY." (EZEKIEL 28:12)

"... EVERY PRECIOUS STONE WAS YOUR COVERING: THE RUBY, THE TOPAZ AND THE DIAMOND; THE BERYL, THE ONYX AND THE JASPER; THE LAPIS LAZULI (PRONOUNCED LAP’EES LA’ZOOLEE), THE TURQUOISE AND THE EMERALD; AND THE GOLD, THE WORKMANSHIP OF YOUR SETTINGS AND SOCKETS, WAS IN YOU. ON THE DAY THAT YOU WERE CREATED, THEY WERE PREPARED." (EZEKIEL 28:13)

His Exalted Status

As mentioned above, Satan belonged (and may still belong) to the class of spirit-beings known as the *cherubim*. This is perhaps the highest order within the angelic realm. From Ezekiel 28 we are given a clue as to the ministry of a cherub. From verse 14 “the star of the morning,” “son of the dawn” was referred to as the “cherub who covers”; and in verse 16 he is called, “O covering cherub.” To be a “covering” is to be a *guardian*. Thus, Satan was a high-stationed guardian for God. This may have been a personal commission he alone was given; or (more likely) this is the role of all the cherubim.⁷

His Distinguished Stewardship in Heaven: “the Anointed Cherub”

But notice how he is further described. He was “*the anointed cherub.*”

YOU WERE THE ANOINTED CHERUB WHO COVERS (EZEKIEL 28:14)

When an individual was ceremonially recognized as a God-ordained leader of Israel (such as a king or a priest), he was *anointed* with oil. The oil represented the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering him to lead the nation by the guidance and authority of Yahweh. Likewise, this cherub had been *officially* entrusted with – and *ceremonially* recognized (anointed) as having – great authority and power.

We should also take note that he did not *seize* this status in an insurrection against the throne of God. He did not *usurp* God’s authority to acquire this high-ranking position. No, this was a stewardship that was *handed* to him. And the One Who did so was *God Himself*.

YOU WERE THE ANOINTED CHERUB WHO COVERS; AND I PLACED YOU THERE. (EZEKIEL 28:14)

Interestingly, he seems to have been the *only* cherub with this status. He is not described as being “*an* anointed cherub” but rather “*the* anointed cherub.” We can infer from this that this holy cherub was probably *the single* most highly exalted creature among heaven’s angelic leadership. His authority was unique.

YOU WERE THE ANOINTED CHERUB WHO COVERS (EZEKIEL 28:14)

Because of his exalted position, “the anointed cherub who covers” did not merely live in heaven. He seems to have had direct access to the very presence of God. In Ezekiel 28 we are given a brief, but fascinating, glimpse into the Paradise of God as it existed in eternity past.

There, Satan had savored the beauty and fragrances of “*EDEN, THE GARDEN OF GOD.*”
(EZEKIEL 28:13)

There, he had worshipped, fellowshiped with, and ministered to his Creator “*ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF GOD.*” *(EZEKIEL 28:14)*

And there (perhaps on this same mountain), he had the privilege to walk “*IN THE MIDST OF THE STONES OF FIRE.*” *(EZEKIEL 28:14)*

No other angel within the Biblical record (including Michael the archangel, Jude 1:9) has ever been entrusted with as much responsibility (along with its rights and privileges) as this favored cherub: a stewardship over, what may have been, the entirety of the

heavenly realms. We are about to see that this was not the only stewardship given to him. This spirit being was also “*handed*” a certain trust over God’s earth.

His Distinguished Stewardship on Earth: “the Ruler of this World”⁸

The Age of Angels

Sometime *before* the material universe was created, *the angels were created*. We know they were already in existence before the formation of the earth because they were singing while its “*foundation*” was being laid.

WHERE WERE YOU (JOB) WHEN I LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH? TELL ME, IF YOU HAVE UNDERSTANDING, WHO SET ITS MEASUREMENTS ... SINCE YOU KNOW? OR WHO STRETCHED THE LINE ON IT? ON WHAT WERE ITS BASES SUNK? OR WHO LAID ITS CORNERSTONE, WHEN THE MORNING STARS SANG TOGETHER AND ALL THE SONS OF GOD (THE ANGELIC REALM) SHOUTED FOR JOY? (JOB 38:4-7, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Although we know that the angels are older than the earth, we do not know how much older they are. These spirit beings could be one day older than the earth. They could be trillions of years older. We simply do not know.⁹

The Earthly Stewardship of this Holy Cherub

Apparently, sometime *after the creation* of the universe, the “*anointed cherub who covers*” acquired a second title, “*the ruler of this world.*” It is my intention to prove that this was *not* a position of authority *seized* by a wicked angel *after* his attempted – but failed – coup d’état. To the contrary it was a position of high honor bestowed upon this holy cherub as he was *handed* a *second stewardship* (this one over God’s *physical* realm), some time *before* his failed attempt to seize the throne of God.¹⁰

The Scope of His Authority and Power

First, what *earthly* authority was given to “*the ruler of this world*”?

According to the inspired writings of the Apostle Matthew, this high-ranking angel was given, at some point in the past, *the right (by God’s permission) to place individuals in positions of political authority*. This can be seen in the offer he made to Jesus. And he did so in no small measure:

AGAIN, THE DEVIL TOOK HIM TO A VERY HIGH MOUNTAIN AND SHOWED HIM ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD AND THEIR GLORY; AND HE SAID TO HIM, "ALL THESE THINGS I WILL GIVE YOU, IF YOU FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP ME." (MATTHEW 4:8-9)

We should take note that this was a valid offer. If it had been an empty proposal, the Son of God would have disputed Satan's claim to have such authority. Indeed, it would have been an opportune time for Him to do so. But that is not what our Savior rejected. What He *did* reject was Satan's "IF." "If You fall down and worship me." For the Son of God to receive from the tempter "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory," He would have to commit idolatry, a clear violation of the will of God.

THEN JESUS SAID TO HIM, "GO, SATAN! FOR IT IS WRITTEN, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" (MATTHEW 4:10)

Therefore, though still under the *supreme authority of God* (Romans 13:1), "the ruler of this world" (later to be called "Satan") was given the authority to place individuals in positions of *political authority*, a right acknowledged by the Lord Jesus Himself. ¹¹

The Means by which He Received His Authority

This brings us to one of the most startling claims ever made by Satan, a declaration that leaves us stunned because of its magnitude ... and amazed because Jesus, once again, does not refute it.

AND HE (SATAN) LED HIM (JESUS CHRIST) UP AND SHOWED HIM ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD IN A MOMENT OF TIME. AND THE DEVIL SAID TO HIM, "I WILL GIVE YOU ALL THIS DOMAIN AND ITS GLORY; FOR IT HAS BEEN HANDED OVER TO ME, AND I GIVE IT TO WHOMEVER I WISH. (LUKE 4:5-6, PARENTHESES ADDED)

In this verbal exchange between the devil and the Son of God, "the ruler of this world" offers the Lord Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world." Then, to prove that he has the right to give Christ "all this domain and its glory," he adds, "for it has been *handed over to me*, and I give it to whomever I wish." We should give special attention to these words, for they add some surprising insight into the "resume" of this mutineer-angel.

We learn from this phrase, "handed over to me," that his authority was not *self-appointed*. It was *received from someone*.

We can also be sure that this authority was not *violently seized* by Satan during his unsuccessful attempt to make himself "like the Most High." He did not take this right to rule the world away from God during an angelic insurrection. How could he?

He and his co-conspirators were soundly *defeated* as they attempted to overthrow God. Therefore, the devil was in no position to negotiate the terms of a treaty, especially one that awarded him so great a prize as “ruler of this world.”

Furthermore, the very notion that Satan could take *anything* away from God, including His management of the world, violates the Bible’s clear teaching about God’s perfections and Satan’s limitations. How could any creature possibly overpower his *omnipotent* Creator?

How, then, *did* this angel receive such authority? Interestingly, the Greek word translated “handed over” (*paradidomi*, pronounced *par ad id’ o mee*) carries the idea, “to place someone in a legal position of guardianship over something that belongs to you.” In other words, we are talking about a *stewardship*, the management of someone else’s property entrusted to a *reliable* person by the owner himself. ¹²

So, the title, “the ruler of this world,” was neither *self-appointed* nor was it *violently seized by a rebel*. It was *voluntarily granted to a trustworthy steward by the owner of the property*.

The Source of His Authority

The only one who could have handed this high-ranking cherub such a commanding stewardship is someone who possessed authority *over the world*. There is no record of any other creature having that authority; so, it is reasonable to assume that God, Who *owned* the world, “handed over” its affairs to this angel to oversee.

*THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS, THE WORLD, AND THOSE WHO DWELL IN IT.
(PSALM 24:1)*

*THE HEAVENS ARE YOURS, THE EARTH ALSO IS YOURS; THE WORLD AND ALL IT CONTAINS, YOU
HAVE FOUNDED THEM. (PSALM 89:11)*

We should remember that it was the Creator-Owner of *heaven’s* realm Who had assigned him the position, “the anointed cherub.” *YOU WERE THE ANOINTED CHERUB WHO COVERS; AND I PLACED YOU THERE.* (EZEKIEL 28:14) Therefore, we can be sure that *this* authority over the world was also “handed over” to this cherub by God Himself.

The Time He Received His Authority

Although the time of this appointment is not recorded, it is believed to have been after the earth had been created but *before the demonic rebellion* in heaven.

It would violate *the wisdom* of God – as well as *the Word* of God (Matthew 25:29) – to entrust such an influential position to one who had already shown himself to be unfaithful.

Furthermore, we should keep in mind that this “star of the morning,” “son of the dawn” had already been *entrusted* with the tremendous oversight of heaven’s Throne, its guardian angels, and perhaps the entire population of angels *before* his failed coup.

Therefore, there is every reason to believe that *this* stewardship over *earth’s* realm was “*handed over*” to this “anointed cherub” sometime after the earth’s creation but *before* his attempt to make himself “like the Most High.”

Summary

Satan did not appoint himself as “the ruler of the world.” Nor was the Creator forced to bestow this title upon him. Rather, the most highly exalted creature within the angelic realm, the highest-ranking guardian of heaven’s throne, “star of the morning,” “son of the dawn”

- received the *legitimate and distinguished stewardship*, “the ruler of this world” ...
- *by divine appointment* (God acting voluntarily, not under compulsion) ...
- sometime *after the creation of the earth* but *before a segment of the angelic population rebelled against God* ...
- and, *though marred, his authority over the world’s political leadership (by God’s permission) continues to this day and will remain intact until the Return of Jesus Christ.*

The Weight of Stewardship

We would do well to pause here to ponder a sobering truth. Stewardship *does* have its rights and privileges; but it also has its responsibilities. The question before every steward is,

“WILL I BE RESPONSIBLE ...
TO OVERSEE THE PROPERTY OF GOD...
THAT HE HAS ENTRUSTED TO MY CARE ...
TO THE BEST OF MY HOLY SPIRIT-EMPOWERED ABILITY?”

“WILL I BE FAITHFUL TO MY MASTER’S TRUST?”

Beloved, *faithfulness* is the *heart* of stewardship.

(IT) IS REQUIRED OF STEWARDS THAT ONE BE FOUND TRUSTWORTHY. (1ST CORINTHIANS 4:2)

This was the issue concerning the trust given to God's "star of the morning," "son of the dawn." It is also the issue concerning the trust given to each of *us*. The question is

"WILL I, A STEWARD OF GOD, INVEST THE RESOURCES GOD HAS ENTRUSTED INTO MY CARE ...

(TIME, ABILITIES, HEALTH, ENERGY, MONEY, MATERIAL RESOURCES,
EDUCATION, OPPORTUNITIES, EXPERIENCE)

TO PREPARE MYSELF AND OTHERS FOR ETERNITY ...

(AS I PARTICIPATE IN THE GREAT COMMISSION)

ALL TO THE HONOR AND GLORY OF GOD?"

FROM EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN GIVEN MUCH, MUCH WILL BE REQUIRED; AND TO WHOM THEY ENTRUSTED MUCH, OF HIM THEY WILL ASK ALL THE MORE. (LUKE 12:48)

The "*measuring stick*" of faithfulness is the *quality* of one's work. Did the steward give his best to the task before him ... or did he just throw something together? Were his efforts whole-hearted ... or half-hearted?

(WE) ARE GOD'S FELLOW WORKERS; YOU ARE GOD'S FIELD, GOD'S BUILDING. ACCORDING TO THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WAS GIVEN TO ME, LIKE A WISE MASTER BUILDER I LAID A FOUNDATION, AND ANOTHER IS BUILDING ON IT.

*BUT EACH MAN MUST BE CAREFUL HOW HE BUILDS ON IT. FOR NO MAN CAN LAY A FOUNDATION OTHER THAN THE ONE WHICH IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. NOW IF ANY MAN BUILDS ON THE FOUNDATION WITH GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, WOOD, HAY, STRAW, EACH MAN'S WORK WILL BECOME EVIDENT; FOR THE DAY WILL SHOW IT BECAUSE IT IS TO BE REVEALED WITH FIRE, AND THE FIRE ITSELF WILL TEST THE **QUALITY** OF EACH MAN'S WORK. IF ANY MAN'S WORK WHICH HE HAS BUILT ON IT REMAINS, HE WILL RECEIVE A REWARD. IF ANY MAN'S WORK IS BURNED UP, HE WILL SUFFER LOSS; BUT HE HIMSELF WILL BE SAVED, YET SO AS THROUGH FIRE.*

DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOU ARE A TEMPLE OF GOD AND THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU? IF ANY MAN DESTROYS THE TEMPLE OF GOD, GOD WILL DESTROY HIM, FOR THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS HOLY, AND THAT IS WHAT YOU ARE. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:9-17)

Dear friends, let us not miss this. The quality of one's efforts always carries *consequences*. To those who give the Master their best, greater responsibilities and privileges will be bestowed. But to those who are not faithful, there will be tragic losses.

TO EVERYONE WHO HAS, MORE SHALL BE GIVEN, AND HE WILL HAVE AN ABUNDANCE; BUT FROM THE ONE WHO DOES NOT HAVE, EVEN WHAT HE DOES HAVE SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY. (MATTHEW 25:29)

That is,

TO EVERYONE WHO HAS (A LIVING FAITH THAT MOTIVATES HIM TO FAITHFULLY SERVE HIS MASTER), MORE (KINGDOM RESPONSIBILITIES) SHALL BE GIVEN, AND HE WILL HAVE AN ABUNDANCE (OF AUTHORITY AND HONOR);

BUT FROM THE ONE WHO DOES NOT HAVE (A LIVING FAITH THAT MOTIVATES HIM TO FAITHFULLY SERVE HIS MASTER), EVEN WHAT (RESPONSIBILITIES) HE DOES HAVE SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY. (MATTHEW 25:29, PARENTHESES ADDED)

So, would this angel-steward be faithful to his God-entrusted responsibilities; or would he disregard the will (and power) of his Master? May we all *learn* from his choice while there is still time for us.

4

A word of caution is in order:

There is only one Being more powerful than the creature we are about to consider. Only God, the Creator Himself, has more power than Satan. No other *created being*, angel or human, has more. Even Michael, “*the Archangel*,” did not rebuke this fallen angel directly but, instead, deferred to the Lord.

BUT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL, WHEN HE DISPUTED WITH THE DEVIL AND ARGUED ABOUT THE BODY OF MOSES, DID NOT DARE PRONOUNCE AGAINST HIM A RAILING JUDGMENT, BUT SAID, "THE LORD REBUKE YOU!" (JUDE 1:9)

Likewise, human beings have been *strongly warned* not to view with arrogance or hold in contempt the *residual majesty* of this evil angel and his demonic forces, seeing that even the holy angels – mightier than we – do not do so.

... THE LORD KNOWS HOW TO ... KEEP THE UNRIGHTEOUS UNDER PUNISHMENT FOR THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, AND ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO INDULGE THE FLESH IN ITS CORRUPT DESIRES AND DESPISE AUTHORITY. DARING, SELF-WILLED, THEY DO NOT TREMBLE WHEN THEY REVILE ANGELIC MAJESTIES, WHEREAS ANGELS WHO ARE GREATER IN MIGHT AND POWER DO NOT BRING A REVILING JUDGMENT AGAINST THEM BEFORE THE LORD. (2ND PETER 2:9-11)

Therefore, dear friends, let us take care how we approach this study. It has a different subject than most discipleship courses. We are not dealing with the fictional Darth Vader. We are about to become oriented to the background, the character, and the tactics of a killer angel who seeks to destroy the Name, the purposes, the plans, and the people of the One you love: your heavenly Father, your blessed Savior, your indwelling Helper. We need to know what we are up against and what we can do to prepare ourselves for our war with him.

God forbid that we enter this study with a casual attitude.

- 5 Some interpreters believe that **Ezekiel 28:1-19** announces a judgment against *one man*, the “leader” or “king” of Tyre. Others see the judgment of *two persons*: the human leader of Tyre (verses 1-10) and *Satan, the superhuman power behind this earthly monarch* (verses 11-19). The latter view is preferred because (1) different titles are used (“leader of Tyre,” vs. 2 and “king of Tyre,” vs. 12); (2) different natures are used (“man,” vss. 2, 9 and “the anointed cherub” ... “O covering cherub,” vss. 14, 16); and (3) the superlatives used of the king (“full of wisdom and perfect in beauty ... blameless in your ways from the day you were created,” vss. 12, 15) cannot apply to an imperfect and sinful man. (Dickason, C. Fred. *Angels: Elect and Evil*. Chicago. Moody Press, 1975, pages 127-128.)

It is not uncommon for the Scriptures to acknowledge the *close association* between an evil spirit and the human being over whom the demon has influence:

When Simon Peter rebuked Jesus as He prepared the disciples for His rejection and execution, it is recorded, “But He turned and *said to Peter*, ‘Get behind Me, *Satan!* You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.’” (Matthew 16:23)

Upon His arrival at the country of the Gerasenes, Jesus was met by a man possessed by a multitude of demons. As Jesus sought the identity of the demon, He addresses it by addressing the man (through whom the unclean spirit was speaking), “And He was asking him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said to Him, ‘My name is Legion; for we are many.’”

- 6 As with Ezekiel 28:1-19, some interpreters believe that **Isaiah 14:4-21** announces judgment against one man, the *historic* king of Babylon. Others believe that the judgment of two individuals are in view: (1) the *future* king of Babylon [*that is, the coming Antichrist associated with a rebuilt Babylon, a political / religious system existing just before the Second Coming of Christ*] and (2) Satan, the spiritual power behind the Antichrist (vss. 12-17). The latter view is preferred because (1) the passage presents (a) the utter defeat of world rulers and (b) the whole earth at rest, neither of which has yet happened. Furthermore, (2) the language of verses 12-17 befits an angel’s abode (“heaven”) and title (“star of God”), not a man’s. (Dickason, C. Fred. *Angels: Elect and Evil*. Chicago. Moody Press, 1975, page 130-132.)

- 7 “Cherubim speak of God’s presence, glory, holiness, and sovereignty. They were created for this specific ministry ... This could refer to (Satan’s former) role as a guardian and proclaimer of God’s glorious presence and holiness.” (Dickason, C. Fred. *Angels: Elect and Evil*. Chicago. Moody Press, 1975, pages 118, 128, parenthesis added.)

- 8 The following discussion is taken from the author’s *“Our Approaching Evaluation, ‘God’s Judgment of the Evil Angels,’”* pages 95-96.

- 9 Genesis 1:1 is a summary statement of God’s creation of the *material* universe, that is, the earth and the *physical* “heavens” that surround it.

IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH. (GENESIS 1:1)

What follows this statement is a (somewhat more) detailed account of God’s creative work over a period of six days. We should take note that all the objects listed throughout chapter 1 are *physical* in nature: the expanse between the surface of the earth and the canopy of water above

the earth, the land, the vegetation, the sun, the moon and stars, the animal kingdom, and humanity. Even the visible light created on day one is physical (being a form of radiation that travels as electromagnetic waves.)

Thus, the creation account of Genesis chapter 1 includes only that which is physical in nature. That being the case, to what, then, do “the heavens” of verse 1 refer? Second Corinthians 12 sheds some light on this question.

Second Corinthians 12:2-4 records the account of a man who “was caught up into Paradise.” That is, he was transported into the *spiritual realm* of God. This realm is further identified as “the *third heaven*” (vs. 2). This term implies the existence of a “first heaven” and a “second heaven.” These *two heavens* are “the heavens” (plural) of Genesis 1:1.

As with everything else created on days 1-6, the “heavens” of Genesis 1 are physical in nature, having physical boundaries and containing physical objects. The “*first heaven*” is a physical “expanse” separating the ocean waters below it from the canopy of waters (that formerly existed) above it. This is the realm in which birds fly (1:6-8, 20-22). The “*second heaven*” is the physical “expanse” we call “outer space,” the location of the stars, the planets and their moons, meteors, asteroids, etc. (1:14-19).

The point is, *no details are mentioned in Genesis 1 concerning the creation of God’s abode or its angelic inhabitants.* The reason the creation of the “third heaven” is not mentioned in Genesis 1 is because *it was already in existence.* The spirit-beings (angels) sang as the physical realm was being created.

Therefore, Genesis 1:1 is intended to be a summary statement of God’s creation of the *material* universe, including its two *physical* “heavens.” ***When God’s residence and its angelic population were created is not found in the Biblical record.***

10 “the ruler of this world” (cosmos). The word “cosmos” has more than one definition. It can refer to the physical universe (Revelation 13:8), the earth’s population (John 3:16), and the evil value system of unregenerate mankind (1st John 2:16). When referring to the physical universe, this word often carries the idea of “an orderly arrangement,” “a decoration,” something “adorned.” This definition suggests that when this high-ranking angel was handed this stewardship, the earth was in its pre-fall state: uncorrupted, orderly, and adorned.

11 According to Thiessen, “This (title, ‘the ruler of this world’) seems to refer to his influence over the *governments* of this world. Jesus did **not** dispute Satan’s claim to some sort of right here on this planet (Matthew 4:8f). God, however, has set definite bounds for him, and when the time comes, he will be superseded by the rule of the Lord Jesus.” (*Lectures in Systematic Theology*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Thiessen, Henry Clarence, pages 142-143, parenthesis added)

But *why* would a holy God **continue** to allow this angel-turned-rebel to have that right?

If a *person* continually rejects the authority of God over his life, the result will be an ever-worsening decline into spiritual darkness and moral decay. “**(Giving) them over** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity ... to degrading passions ... to a depraved mind” is *an act of divine judgment against an unrepentant reprobate* (Romans 1:18-32). This act of divine judgment has also been applied to *nations* that refuse to submit to God (Egypt at the time of the Exodus) as

well as the population of *the entire world* in rebellion against God (the flood of Noah's day, the future Great Tribulation). Unless the citizens of that nation / the world repent, God will gradually remove His restraint of sin, permitting immorality – and its resulting chaos – to saturate its society.

One way God “lifts His hand of restraint” from a nation (or the world) is by giving “the ruler of this world” *permission* to place certain individuals in positions of political authority. If given that opportunity, we can be sure this evil angel will not appoint righteous men to these posts. Rather, he will raise up evil men to lead that nation / the world progressively further into rebellion, spiritual blindness, and confusion. Again, *this is an act of divine judgment against* a nation (or the world) that is *choosing* to digress progressively deeper in its revolt against the authority of God and His Word. As rebellion increases, God's hand of restraint is “taken out of the way” (2nd Thessalonians 2:7), permitting Satan to carry out his evil purposes and, at the same time, God's just punishment.

The coming antichrist is the ultimate example of a *political* appointment by Satan (Revelation 6:1-2, 13:1-10). We should take note that when Satan places this man in that position, “all who dwell on the earth will *worship* him” (verse 8). That is, they will *readily submit* to him. The antichrist's rise to power will be the **result** of a world that *willingly* made itself ripe for destruction.

Therefore, within the political arena, God uses Satan to accomplish His **holy** purpose, namely, to exalt His Name before all creation, both angelic and human. In this case the perfections He seeks to magnify are His *justice* (through the punishment of sinners) and His *longsuffering patience* and *mercy* (in giving them time to repent). This is why our holy God continues to allow this angel-turned-rebel to exercise his pre-fall stewardship as “ruler of this world.”

For other examples of God's use of evil spirits to accomplish His *holy* purposes, see Job 1-2; 1st Samuel 16:14-16, 18:10, 19:9. Also, compare 2nd Samuel 24:1 with 1st Chronicles 21:1.

[Furthermore, as “ruler of this world,” Satan has authority over other world affairs. *As our sovereign God grants him permission to do so*, he can appoint evil *religious leaders* (e.g., The False Prophet, Revelation 13:11-18; Matthew 24:4-5) ... cause *military* conflicts between nations (Matthew 24:6-7a; Revelation 6:3-4) ... destroy national / global *economies* (Revelation 6:5-6) ... create turbulent conditions in *weather*: drought, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes (Job 1:12, 16, 18-19; Matthew 24:7b, Revelation 6:7-8, 12) ... cause cosmic disturbances in *the heavens* (Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12-14) ... and inflict *illnesses and injury* upon human lives, including global pandemics (Job 1:12, 18-19; Revelation 6:8).]

12

“*handed over*” (Greek, paradidomi, pronounced par ad id' o mee) meaning “to entrust,” “to give into the hands of another,” “to give over into one's power or use,” “to deliver to one something to keep, use, take care of, or manage,” “to place someone in a legal position of *guardianship* over something that belongs to you.”

(Notice the word “guardianship.” The one appointed “ruler of this world” was the “covering cherub” or “the *guardian* cherub.” Before his fall, that had been his purpose as a cherub: to guard. With this second stewardship, this “cherub who covers” was also given something else to guard: God's physical realm.)

THE FALL OF THE HOLY CHERUB

We do not know how long this esteemed angel delighted in the pleasantries of Paradise. For three days? For three weeks? For three months? For three trillion years? The Scriptures are silent as to the length of time heaven was his *residence*. But we *do* know that this sinless creature, highly exalted in status, majestic in position, perfect in character, complete in wisdom, and exquisite in beauty ... we know that this high-ranking angel, this “anointed cherub,” this angel-turned-rebel tragically forfeited his responsibilities and his privileges and his perfections on the day that unrighteousness was found in him.

His Sin

YOU WERE BLAMELESS IN YOUR WAYS ... UNTIL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WAS FOUND IN YOU. (EZEKIEL 28:15)

The first sin committed by a *human being* was, of course, the sin of Eve (then Adam). *How* that sin took place within the human realm is easier to understand than how the first sin took place within the angelic realm.

What *tempted* Eve to sin came from outside herself, that is, from a Satan-possessed serpent. Even though she did not have a sin nature at the time of her disobedience, one who *already had a bent toward rebellion* was there to lure her into his revolt against the authority of God.

On the other hand, the sin of “the anointed cherub who covers” is harder to understand because, until *he* chose to sin, evil did not exist. Unlike Eve, he was not enticed to sin from an evil source outside himself. There was no creature with an inclination to sin standing in front of this angel, tempting him to rebel against God.

How, then, did sin come into existence when there was no sin? The clearest explanation as to how this first sin occurred is found in Ezekiel 28:

YOUR HEART WAS LIFTED UP BECAUSE OF YOUR BEAUTY; YOU CORRUPTED YOUR WISDOM BY REASON OF YOUR SPLENDOR. (EZEKIEL 28:17)

“His sin is obviously a proud heart and self-occupation. Reflecting upon his God-endowed beauty, he became enthralled with himself and was lifted up with pride.” (Dickason, C. Fred. *Angels: Elect and Evil*. Chicago. Moody Press, 1975, page 129)

This was also the reason given by the Apostle Paul for the fall of Satan.

(ONE WHO ASPIRES TO THE CHURCH OFFICE OF ELDER MUST NOT BE) A NEW CONVERT, SO THAT HE WILL NOT BECOME CONCEITED AND FALL INTO THE CONDEMNATION INCURRED BY THE DEVIL. (1ST TIMOTHY 3:6, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

Although the circumstances of these two temptations differ, it is worth noting that this fallen spirit-being and this fallen human being shared a few things in common. (1) Both had been entrusted with great oversights of God's properties. (2) Both were not satisfied with what they had been given but, instead, wanted more. (3) And the "more" both wanted was *to be like God*.

I (SATAN) WILL ASCEND TO HEAVEN ... I WILL MAKE MYSELF LIKE THE MOST HIGH. (ISAIAH 14:12-14)

GOD KNOWS THAT IN THE DAY YOU EAT FROM (THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT) YOUR EYES WILL BE OPENED, AND YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD, KNOWING GOOD AND EVIL. WHEN THE WOMAN SAW THAT ... THE TREE WAS DESIRABLE TO MAKE ONE WISE, SHE TOOK FROM ITS FRUIT AND ATE. (GENESIS 3:5-6, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

Nevertheless, it is the sin of Satan that is the most monstrous of all the sins ever committed, not only because of the crime itself but because of the unsurpassed level of knowledge, privileges, and perfections this angel possessed:

His direct access to the throne of God gave him greater knowledge and understanding of his Creator.

His moral perfections allowed him to savor an unhindered, intimate fellowship with his God.

His exalted rank as the anointed cherub provided him with the greatest authority and respect throughout heaven's realm.

Exquisite in beauty, he lacked nothing as the greatest of all creatures.

The one who had received such breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding of his God ... the one who had been given such a cherished fellowship with his Creator ... the one who possessed such splendor in appearance and such dignity and power among the angelic population ... this angel of the highest order ... this "anointed cherub" (within the spiritual realm) and now "ruler of this world" (within the physical realm) ... the who had everything ... wanted still more

... but ended up losing the fullness of his glory. The one now known as "Satan" failed to remember how he got to be what he was and how he came to have what he had. And the consequences of his *self-generated pride* were devastating. By taking credit for his privileged status ... by trying to raise himself to the same level as "the Most High" ... by attempting to rob God of *His* exalted position, he forfeited *his own* exalted position.

HOW YOU HAVE FALLEN FROM HEAVEN, O STAR OF THE MORNING, SON OF THE DAWN! YOU HAVE BEEN CUT DOWN TO THE EARTH, YOU WHO HAVE WEAKENED THE NATIONS! BUT YOU SAID IN YOUR HEART,

*"I WILL ASCEND TO HEAVEN;
I WILL RAISE MY THRONE ABOVE THE STARS OF GOD,
AND I WILL SIT ON THE MOUNT OF ASSEMBLY IN THE RECESSES OF THE NORTH.
I WILL ASCEND ABOVE THE HEIGHTS OF THE CLOUDS;
I WILL MAKE MYSELF LIKE THE MOST HIGH."*

*NEVERTHELESS, YOU WILL BE THRUST DOWN
TO SHEOL,
TO THE RECESSES
OF THE PIT. (ISAIAH 14:13-15)*

His Judgment

God's judgment of Satan and his angels is not a one-time event. It takes place *in stages*, based upon *our sovereign Lord's continued use of these evil spirits to fulfill His holy purposes*.

The first two phases of their sentence have already been executed:

- (1) immediately after Satan's original sin in heaven and
- (2) at the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ.

The last three will take place in the future:

- (3) approximately three and a half years before the Return of Christ,
- (4) at the Second Coming of Christ and
- (5) at the end of the Millennial Kingdom.

We should take note that, with each phase of judgment, something more is taken from them.

- 1) *Once unrighteousness was found in him, "the anointed cherub who covers" was removed from his privileged position and banished from having his residence in heaven. (According to Job 1:6 and 2:1, he is still allowed limited access to the presence of God.)*

YOU WERE THE ANOINTED CHERUB WHO COVERS, AND I PLACED YOU THERE. YOU WERE ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF GOD; YOU WALKED IN THE MIDST OF THE STONES OF FIRE ... I HAVE CAST YOU AS PROFANE FROM THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD. AND I HAVE DESTROYED YOU, O COVERING CHERUB, FROM THE MIDST OF THE STONES OF FIRE. I CAST YOU TO THE GROUND (EZEKIEL 28:14, 16-17)

This expulsion from heaven's realm may have been what Jesus was referring to when He said to His followers,

"I WAS WATCHING (PAST TENSE) SATAN FALL FROM HEAVEN LIKE LIGHTNING." (LUKE 10:18, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

- 2) As a result of *the Death and Resurrection of Christ*, the devil's authority and power over the believer were broken. Those who are in Christ are no longer subjects of his kingdom, a domain of darkened understanding, sin, and eternal death.

... THE ONE WHO PRACTICES SIN IS OF THE DEVIL; FOR THE DEVIL HAS SINNED FROM THE BEGINNING. THE SON OF GOD APPEARED FOR THIS PURPOSE, TO DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL. (1ST JOHN 3:8)

THEREFORE, SINCE THE CHILDREN SHARE IN FLESH AND BLOOD, HE (CHRIST) HIMSELF LIKewise ALSO PARTOOK OF THE SAME, THAT THROUGH DEATH HE MIGHT RENDER POWERLESS HIM WHO HAD THE POWER OF DEATH, THAT IS, THE DEVIL. (HEBREWS 2:14, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

(I AM SENDING YOU, PAUL, TO THE GENTILES) TO OPEN THEIR EYES SO THAT THEY MAY TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND FROM THE DOMINION OF SATAN TO GOD, THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND AN INHERITANCE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME.' (ACTS 26:17-18, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

- 3) The seven-year period right before the Second Coming of Christ will be a time of global upheaval. It is believed that, *at the midpoint of these seven years*, Satan and his angels will be *fully and forever banished* from having any access to heaven's realm. At that time, they will be confined to the earth.

*AND THERE WAS WAR IN HEAVEN, MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELS WAGING WAR WITH THE DRAGON. THE DRAGON AND HIS ANGELS WAGED WAR, AND THEY WERE NOT STRONG ENOUGH, AND THERE WAS NO LONGER A PLACE FOUND FOR THEM IN HEAVEN. AND THE GREAT DRAGON WAS THROWN DOWN, THE SERPENT OF OLD WHO IS CALLED THE DEVIL AND SATAN, WHO DECEIVES THE WHOLE WORLD; HE WAS **THROWN DOWN TO THE EARTH**, AND HIS ANGELS WERE THROWN DOWN WITH HIM ... **WOE TO THE EARTH AND THE SEA, BECAUSE THE DEVIL HAS COME DOWN TO YOU, HAVING GREAT WRATH, KNOWING THAT HE HAS ONLY A SHORT TIME.*** (REVELATION 12:7-9, 12)

- 4) *Immediately after the Second Coming of Christ*, the devil will be seized and thrown into "the abyss" where he (and presumably all the demons) will be imprisoned for 1,000 years. (That is, during the millennial reign of Christ, they will be banished from the earth.)

*THEN I SAW AN ANGEL COMING DOWN FROM HEAVEN, HOLDING THE KEY OF THE ABYSS AND A GREAT CHAIN IN HIS HAND. AND HE LAID HOLD OF THE DRAGON, THE SERPENT OF OLD, WHO IS THE DEVIL AND SATAN, AND BOUND HIM FOR A THOUSAND YEARS; AND HE **THREW HIM INTO THE ABYSS**, AND SHUT IT AND SEALED IT OVER HIM, SO THAT HE WOULD NOT DECEIVE THE NATIONS ANY LONGER, UNTIL THE THOUSAND YEARS WERE COMPLETED.* (REVELATION 20:1-3)

- 5) The final phase of God's judgment upon evil angels will take place *toward the end of Christ's 1,000-year reign on this earth*. At that time, Satan will be released from the abyss for a short time to instigate one last rebellion against God, His Messiah, and His people before finally being cast into the Lake of Fire.

*WHEN THE THOUSAND YEARS ARE COMPLETED, SATAN ... WILL COME OUT TO DECEIVE THE NATIONS ... TO GATHER THEM TOGETHER FOR THE WAR; THE NUMBER OF THEM IS LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEASHORE. AND THEY CAME UP ON THE BROAD PLAIN OF THE EARTH AND SURROUNDED THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS AND THE BELOVED CITY, AND FIRE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND DEVoured THEM. AND THE DEVIL WHO DECEIVED THEM WAS **THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE**. (REVELATION 20:7-10; SEE MATTHEW 25:41)*

SO IT WILL HAPPEN IN THAT DAY (THE RETURN OF CHRIST), THAT THE LORD WILL PUNISH THE HOST OF HEAVEN ON HIGH (SATAN AND HIS ANGELS), AND THE KINGS OF THE EARTH ON EARTH. THEY WILL BE GATHERED TOGETHER LIKE PRISONERS IN THE DUNGEON, AND WILL BE CONFINED IN PRISON (HADES); AND AFTER MANY DAYS (1,000 YEARS) THEY WILL BE PUNISHED (LAKE OF FIRE). (ISAIAH 24:21-22, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Notice the *downward spiral* of Satan and his angels as each stage of judgment is executed against them:

After his failed attempt to be "like the Most High," *he was stripped of his perfections, his privileges, his responsibilities, and his residence in heaven.*

At the Cross of Christ, *he was stripped of his authority and power over the believer.*

Sometime before the "Great Tribulation," *he will be forever banished from having any access to heaven and God's Throne.*

At the end of the "Great Tribulation," *he will be expelled from having any access to this earth during the 1,000-year reign of the King of kings and Lord of lords.*

And finally, at the end of the millennial reign of Christ, *he will be "thrown into the Lake of Fire," forever prevented from having any access to the new heaven and new earth.*

AND THE DEVIL WHO DECEIVED THEM WAS THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE ... AND WILL BE TORMENTED DAY AND NIGHT FOREVER AND EVER. (REVELATION 20:10)

THE PRESENT STATUS OF SATAN

We have seen that, before his rebellion, the “star of the morning, son of the dawn” was likely the highest-ranking angel among the cherubim, the guardian angels of *God’s throne*. We have also seen that, before his rebellion but sometime *after* the earth was created, the political arena of *God’s material world* was another stewardship “handed over” to him as well. In other words, this angelic creature seems to have been entrusted with the highest levels of administration within all God’s properties: heaven and earth. He was both “the anointed cherub who covers” and “the ruler of this world.”

But what about now? What is Satan’s *present* status within the realms of heaven and earth?

His Present Status among the Angels

Apparently, the downfall of this high-ranking cherub did not lessen his *rank* among the angels. His *character* is, of course, no longer admired; and his orders are no longer obeyed (at least, not by the holy angels). But his *status* – though corrupted – *was not lost*. It continues to be acknowledged by both unholy and holy angels, including those of high rank.

... THE LORD KNOWS HOW TO ... KEEP THE UNRIGHTEOUS UNDER PUNISHMENT FOR THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, AND ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO INDULGE THE FLESH IN ITS CORRUPT DESIRES AND DESPISE AUTHORITY. DARING, SELF-WILLED, THEY DO NOT TREMBLE WHEN THEY REVILE ANGELIC MAJESTIES (RULERS WITHIN THE DEMONIC REALM), WHEREAS ANGELS WHO ARE GREATER IN MIGHT AND POWER DO NOT BRING A REVILING JUDGMENT AGAINST THEM BEFORE THE LORD. (2ND PETER 2:9-11, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

FOR CERTAIN PERSONS (FALSE TEACHERS) HAVE CREPT IN (TO THE CHURCH) UNNOTICED ... (WHO) DEFILE THE FLESH AND REJECT AUTHORITY AND REVILE ANGELIC MAJESTIES (RULERS WITHIN THE DEMONIC REALM). BUT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL, WHEN HE DISPUTED WITH THE DEVIL AND ARGUED ABOUT THE BODY OF MOSES, DID NOT DARE PRONOUNCE AGAINST HIM A RAILING JUDGMENT, BUT SAID, "THE LORD REBUKE YOU!" (JUDE 1:4, 8-9, PARENTHESSES ADDED)

This, then, is the status of our adversary among all angels, both holy and fallen. Satan retains to some degree a legitimate – but evil – “majesty.”

But notice the majesty of *our Savior, the Lord Jesus*, among the angels (including Satan):

AND HE (JESUS CHRIST) IS THE RADIANCE OF HIS (GOD THE FATHER’S) GLORY AND THE EXACT REPRESENTATION OF HIS NATURE, AND UPHOLDS ALL THINGS BY THE WORD OF HIS POWER. WHEN HE HAD MADE PURIFICATION OF SINS, HE SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE MAJESTY ON HIGH, HAVING BECOME AS MUCH BETTER THAN THE ANGELS, AS HE HAS INHERITED A MORE EXCELLENT NAME THAN THEY.

FOR TO WHICH OF THE ANGELS DID HE EVER SAY, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"? AND AGAIN, "I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"?

AND WHEN HE AGAIN BRINGS THE FIRSTBORN INTO THE WORLD, HE SAYS, "AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM."

AND OF THE ANGELS HE SAYS, "WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE. BUT OF THE SON HE SAYS, "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.

BUT TO WHICH OF THE ANGELS HAS HE EVER SAID, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET"? ARE THEY NOT ALL MINISTERING SPIRITS, SENT OUT TO RENDER SERVICE FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE WHO WILL INHERIT SALVATION? (HEBREWS 1:3-8, 13-14, PARENTHESES ADDED)

FOR IN HIM ALL THE FULLNESS OF DEITY DWELLS IN BODILY FORM ... AND HE IS THE HEAD OVER ALL (ANGELIC) RULE AND AUTHORITY. (COLOSSIANS 2:9-10, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

His Present Status over the Earth

*"Satan's work is in *high places*, religiously and politically." (John MacArthur, online sermon, Revelation 19:11-20:15) ¹³*

Just as his *angelic* authority was not totally stripped from him, Satan's *earthly* authority – though defiled – was not completely removed from him either. Despite the heavy losses he has suffered, it is clear from the inspired writings of the Apostle John that Satan still holds the title, "the ruler of this world," and will continue to do so until he is banished from the earth at the return of the King of kings. ¹⁴

We know that he still held this position *at the time of Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane*.

I (JESUS) WILL NOT SPEAK MUCH MORE WITH YOU, FOR THE RULER OF THE WORLD IS COMING, AND HE HAS NOTHING IN ME. (JOHN 14:30)

He also still held this position, *even as his power was being crushed by Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection*.

BUT I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, IT IS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE THAT I GO AWAY; FOR IF I DO NOT GO AWAY, THE HELPER WILL NOT COME TO YOU; BUT IF I GO, I WILL SEND HIM TO YOU. AND HE, WHEN HE COMES, WILL CONVICT THE WORLD ... CONCERNING JUDGMENT, BECAUSE THE RULER OF THIS WORLD HAS BEEN JUDGED. (JOHN 16:7-8, 11) ¹⁵

Furthermore, though defeated at the Cross, Satan will continue to hold this title *until he is "cast" into the Abyss* at the Return and Coronation of the King of kings (Revelation 20:1-3).

NOW JUDGMENT IS UPON THIS WORLD; NOW THE RULER OF THIS WORLD WILL BE (FUTURE TENSE) CAST OUT (FROM THE WORLD INTO THE ABYSS). (JOHN 12:31, PARENTHESES ADDED)

So, at the time of Jesus' arrest ... at the time of His crucifixion and resurrection ... even up to the time of our Lord's Return, the authority of this high-ranking angel-gone-bad remains intact ...

... but his moral perfections do not. Because of his insurrection against the throne of God, this holy cherub became evil. Consequently, his administration of the earth also became evil. We see this in the condition he attached to his "deal" with the Son of God:

ALL THESE THINGS ("ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD AND THEIR GLORY") I WILL GIVE YOU, IF YOU FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP ME." (MATTHEW 4:8-9)

As mentioned above, the "if" in Satan's offer was an attempt to lure Jesus into an act of idolatry. But it was also an attempt by the devil to thwart the Father's plan of salvation. We should take note that when he offered our Lord political authority over the entire world, there was no mention of a cross. That is, the tempter was trying to get our Savior *to sidestep the Father's will* (the Cross) to obtain – prematurely – the right to rule over the nations (the Crown). When Jesus refused this offer, we see yet one more extraordinary example of the Son's faithful submission to the Father's will.

There *is* coming a day when the Lord Jesus will be given "the kingdoms of the world." And on that day when the nations are given to Him, they will come, not from the hand of Satan but from the hand of His Father, the only One before Whom our Lord ever bowed in worship.

BUT AS FOR ME (GOD THE FATHER), I HAVE INSTALLED MY KING UPON ZION, MY HOLY MOUNTAIN. I WILL SURELY TELL OF THE DECREE OF THE LORD: HE SAID TO ME, "YOU ARE MY SON. TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU. ASK OF ME, AND I WILL SURELY GIVE THE NATIONS AS YOUR INHERITANCE AND THE VERY ENDS OF THE EARTH AS YOUR POSSESSION." (PSALM 2:6-9, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

In the meantime, "all the kingdoms of the world ... all this domain and its glory" are still in the devil's possession. Satan retains his title, "the ruler of this world"; and with that title, he retains the right to assign positions of political authority to anyone he chooses (*when given permission by God*). But his wicked "if" still stands:

ALL THESE THINGS I WILL GIVE YOU, IF YOU FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP ME." (MATTHEW 4:8-9)

One day he will find a man who is willing to do just that. Sometime in the future a man will appear on the world's stage, willing to bow before this spirit-monster in worship and service. It is to this man that Satan will give "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory."

AND THE DRAGON (SATAN) STOOD ON THE SAND OF THE SEASHORE. THEN I SAW A BEAST (THE ANTICHRIST) COMING UP OUT OF THE SEA, HAVING TEN HORNS AND SEVEN HEADS, AND ON HIS HORNS WERE TEN DIADEMS, AND ON HIS HEADS WERE BLASPHEMOUS NAMES ...

*AND THE DRAGON GAVE HIM **HIS POWER AND HIS THRONE** AND GREAT AUTHORITY ... AND THE WHOLE EARTH WAS AMAZED AND FOLLOWED AFTER THE BEAST; THEY WORSHIPED THE DRAGON BECAUSE HE GAVE **HIS AUTHORITY** TO THE BEAST; AND THEY WORSHIPED THE BEAST, SAYING, "WHO IS LIKE THE BEAST, AND WHO IS ABLE TO WAGE WAR WITH HIM?"*

THERE WAS GIVEN TO HIM A MOUTH SPEAKING ARROGANT WORDS AND BLASPHEMIES, AND AUTHORITY TO ACT FOR FORTY-TWO MONTHS WAS GIVEN TO HIM.

IT WAS ALSO GIVEN TO HIM TO MAKE WAR WITH THE SAINTS AND TO OVERCOME THEM, AND AUTHORITY OVER EVERY TRIBE AND PEOPLE AND TONGUE AND NATION WAS GIVEN TO HIM. ALL WHO DWELL ON THE EARTH WILL WORSHIP HIM, EVERYONE WHOSE NAME HAS NOT BEEN WRITTEN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD IN THE BOOK OF LIFE OF THE LAMB WHO HAS BEEN SLAIN. (Revelation 13:1-5, 7-8, parentheses added)

This, then, is the present status of our adversary over an *unbelieving world*. His is a legitimate – but wicked – rule.

His Reign Over a Dominion of Rebels

Today, Satan's jurisdiction stretches over a realm of rebels, both angelic and human. The citizens of his kingdom are those who habitually reject the authority of God over their lives. If God says, "Do 'A,'" they might do 'B' ... or they might do 'C' ... or they might do 'D.' But they *will not* do 'A.' It makes no difference how *logical* the will of God is or how *beneficial* it would be for their lives. Nor does it matter how *insane* their *own* will is. Their heels of defiance are dug in. "No one is going to tell me what to do" is the prevailing attitude of Satan's subjects.

Whether spirit beings or human beings, the devil's empire is populated by *practicing* (unrepentant) mutineers who have subjected themselves – whether they know it or not – to the tyranny of a Satanic dictatorship.

His Leadership Over Rebel Angels (Demons)

It is clear from the Bible that Satan has “his angels” who follow his orders and fight for his cause. His authority and power are without equal among their ranks.

BUT WHEN THE PHARISEES HEARD THIS, THEY SAID, "THIS MAN CASTS OUT DEMONS ONLY BY BEELZEBUL, THE RULER OF THE DEMONS." (MATTHEW 12:24)

THEN HE WILL ALSO SAY TO THOSE ON HIS LEFT, "DEPART FROM ME, ACCURSED ONES, INTO THE ETERNAL FIRE WHICH HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS." (MATTHEW 25:41)

AND THERE WAS WAR IN HEAVEN, MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELS WAGING WAR WITH THE DRAGON. THE DRAGON AND HIS ANGELS WAGED WAR, AND THEY WERE NOT STRONG ENOUGH ... AND THE GREAT DRAGON WAS THROWN DOWN, THE SERPENT OF OLD WHO IS CALLED THE DEVIL AND SATAN, WHO DECEIVES THE WHOLE WORLD; HE WAS THROWN DOWN TO THE EARTH, AND HIS ANGELS WERE THROWN DOWN WITH HIM. (REVELATION 12:7, 9)

It is believed that as many as one third of the angels followed Satan in his defection.

THEN ANOTHER SIGN APPEARED IN HEAVEN: AND BEHOLD, A GREAT RED DRAGON HAVING SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS, AND ON HIS HEADS WERE SEVEN DIADEMS. AND HIS TAIL SWEEPED AWAY A THIRD OF THE STARS OF HEAVEN AND THREW THEM TO THE EARTH. (REVELATION 12:3-4)

His Dictatorship Over Rebel Humans (Unbelievers)

As with the fallen angels, human beings who refuse to submit to the authority of God have placed themselves in the hands of the devil.

WE KNOW THAT WE ARE OF GOD, AND THAT THE WHOLE WORLD LIES IN THE POWER OF THE EVIL ONE. (1ST JOHN 5:19)

Concerning his authority over unbelievers, this evil angel carries another somewhat surprising title. He is also called “the god of this world.”

AND EVEN IF OUR GOSPEL IS VEILED, IT IS VEILED TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, IN WHOSE CASE THE GOD OF THIS WORLD HAS BLINDED THE MINDS OF THE UNBELIEVING SO THAT THEY MIGHT NOT SEE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD. (2ND CORINTHIANS 4:3-4)

But isn't God the “god of this world”? How can Satan carry this title?

When the Apostle Paul described Satan as “the god of this *world*,” he used the Greek word “aion.” Satan is “the god of this aion.” “Aion” carries the meaning “age” or “era” or “period of time.” Satan, therefore, is “the god of this present *age*.”

This word can also refer to “the *spirit* of an age.” The spirit of any age is determined by the person who is in authority during that period. Thus, when Christ returns to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, the *character* of that future millennium will be righteous because the *One Who will reign* during that age is righteous. Likewise, because this present age remains under the rule of Satan, it has the character of Satan. *We live in an evil age because it is dominated by an evil angel.* ¹⁶

GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR OUR SINS SO THAT HE MIGHT RESCUE US FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE (AION), ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF OUR GOD AND FATHER. (Galatians 1:3-4)

Being *willingly* conned to follow this evil angel’s string of lies, most unbelievers have no idea they are choosing to “dance with demons” as they live

... ACCORDING TO THE COURSE (AION, THE SPIRIT OF THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE) OF THIS WORLD, ACCORDING TO THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR, OF THE SPIRIT THAT IS NOW WORKING IN THE SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE. (EPHESIANS 2:2) ¹⁷

This is the character of Satan’s children. They are just as rebellious toward God as their spiritual father is.

On the other hand, *this* is the character of *God’s* children:

YOU ARE A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR GOD’S OWN POSSESSION, SO THAT YOU MAY PROCLAIM THE EXCELLENCIES OF HIM WHO HAS CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT. (1ST PETER 2:9)

... AND HE HAS MADE US TO BE A KINGDOM, PRIESTS TO HIS GOD AND FATHER (REVELATION 1:6)

... INSTRUCTING US TO DENY UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY DESIRES AND TO LIVE SENSIBLY, RIGHTEOUSLY AND GODLY IN THE PRESENT AGE (AION) ... WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US TO REDEEM US FROM EVERY LAWLESS DEED, AND TO PURIFY FOR HIMSELF A PEOPLE FOR HIS OWN POSSESSION, ZEALOUS FOR GOOD DEEDS. (TITUS 2:12, 14)

His Fields of Operation

Access to Heaven

Although expelled from heaven *as his residence*, Satan is still allowed to stand in God's Presence. In fact, it seems that he – along with the holy angels ("sons of God") – are *expected* to appear before His throne.

NOW THERE WAS A DAY WHEN THE SONS OF GOD (ANGELS) CAME TO PRESENT THEMSELVES BEFORE THE LORD, AND SATAN ALSO CAME AMONG THEM. THE LORD SAID TO SATAN, "FROM WHERE DO YOU COME?" THEN SATAN ANSWERED THE LORD AND SAID, "FROM ROAMING ABOUT ON THE EARTH AND WALKING AROUND ON IT." (JOB 1:6-7, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

AGAIN THERE WAS A DAY WHEN THE SONS OF GOD CAME TO PRESENT THEMSELVES BEFORE THE LORD, AND SATAN ALSO CAME AMONG THEM TO PRESENT HIMSELF BEFORE THE LORD. THE LORD SAID TO SATAN, "WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM?" THEN SATAN ANSWERED THE LORD AND SAID, "FROM ROAMING ABOUT ON THE EARTH AND WALKING AROUND ON IT." (JOB 2:1-2)

Apparently, the holy angels are summoned from time to time to give an account of themselves (likely, the discharge of their *duties*). Furthermore, Satan himself (and perhaps all the fallen angels) are expected to give an account of their *whereabouts* (and perhaps their *activities*). We should take note of that. Even in his present fallen state, this evil angel remains under the sovereign authority of God.

We should also take note from Job chapters one and two that, while Satan is in God's presence, he uses these opportunities to accuse God's people.

THEN SATAN ANSWERED THE LORD, "DOES JOB FEAR GOD FOR NOTHING? HAVE YOU NOT MADE A HEDGE ABOUT HIM AND HIS HOUSE AND ALL THAT HE HAS, ON EVERY SIDE? YOU HAVE BLESSED THE WORK OF HIS HANDS, AND HIS POSSESSIONS HAVE INCREASED IN THE LAND. BUT PUT FORTH YOUR HAND NOW AND TOUCH ALL THAT HE HAS; HE WILL SURELY CURSE YOU TO YOUR FACE." (JOB 1:9-11)

SATAN ANSWERED THE LORD AND SAID, "SKIN FOR SKIN! YES, ALL THAT A MAN HAS HE WILL GIVE FOR HIS LIFE. HOWEVER, PUT FORTH YOUR HAND NOW, AND TOUCH HIS BONE AND HIS FLESH; HE WILL CURSE YOU TO YOUR FACE." (JOB 2:4-5)

THEN I HEARD A LOUD VOICE IN HEAVEN, SAYING, "NOW THE SALVATION, AND THE POWER, AND THE KINGDOM OF OUR GOD AND THE AUTHORITY OF HIS CHRIST HAVE COME, FOR THE ACCUSER OF OUR BRETHREN HAS BEEN THROWN DOWN, HE WHO ACCUSES THEM BEFORE OUR GOD DAY AND NIGHT. (REVELATION 12:10)

It is interesting to observe the *position* of Satan when he presents himself to God. He is portrayed as appearing “*before the LORD*” (Job 1:6, 2:1). But consider the present position of our Savior relative to that same throne:

... (JESUS) IS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, HAVING GONE INTO HEAVEN, AFTER ANGELS AND AUTHORITIES AND POWERS HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO HIM. (1ST PETER 3:22)

AND HE IS THE RADIANCE OF HIS (GOD THE FATHER’S) GLORY AND THE EXACT REPRESENTATION OF HIS NATURE, AND UPHOLDS ALL THINGS BY THE WORD OF HIS POWER. WHEN HE HAD MADE PURIFICATION OF SINS, HE SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE MAJESTY ON HIGH ... BUT TO WHICH OF THE ANGELS HAS HE EVER SAID, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET"? (HEBREWS 1:3, 13 PARENTHESES ADDED)

Today, as this rebel-angel stands before the Son of God, enthroned in the heavenlies, he is keenly aware of the authority He possesses. Jesus Christ has been given what this evil creature tried – but failed – to seize by force when he attempted to “make (himself) like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14). The devil also knows that when Christ returns to establish His kingdom on earth, he will no longer retain his title, “the ruler of the world” (Revelation 20:1-4). “All the kingdoms of the world and their glory” will be taken from him when the Father gives His Son “the nations as (His) inheritance and the very ends of the earth as (His) possession” (Psalm 2:8). *Everything* Satan wants has been given to the One before Whom he stands.

ALL AUTHORITY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH. (MATTHEW 28:18)

To be sure, Satan’s wrath is kindled; and his goal is to destroy everything that promotes the authority of God: the integrity of His Word, the witness of His people, the orderliness of His creation, the fulfillment of His plans and purposes ... anything that exalts the Name of Jesus Christ.

Operates from the Heavens

Satan’s *base* of operations is in what the Scriptures call “the heavenly places.” It is from there that he directs his war *against* anything that promotes the will and glory of God.

FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE POWERS, AGAINST THE WORLD FORCES OF THIS DARKNESS, AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF WICKEDNESS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES. (EPHESIANS 6:12)

These “heavenly places” do not refer to a physical place (that is, our own atmosphere or outer space) but, rather, to another dimension. A spiritual dimension. And within this realm is stationed a demonic force, expelled long ago from God’s abode, that is highly organized and dispatched to do battle with God’s forces, both angelic and human.

This vast army of rebellious spirit-beings is classified into (what *may* be) a system of *ranks*: “rulers,” “powers,” “world forces,” and “spiritual forces” that abide in spiritual darkness and have the character of wickedness. Therefore, it is with understandable seriousness that the Apostle Peter warns us of their access to our own dimension:

BE OF SOBER SPIRIT, BE ON THE ALERT. YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR. (1ST PETER 5:8)

Active on Earth

Satan and his angels “prowl” throughout the earth, seeking to oppose and defeat God’s purposes for individual saints and for His Church as a whole. It is a sobering thought that his attacks would come at us *full strength* if it were not for God’s merciful protection. But thanks be to almighty God, the devil has limits placed on his operations:

He attacks only those God gives him *permission* to assault.

SIMON, SIMON, BEHOLD, SATAN HAS DEMANDED PERMISSION TO SIFT YOU LIKE WHEAT. (LUKE 22:31)

The intensity of his strikes is only to the degree he is allowed ... *and no more*.

THE LORD SAID TO SATAN, "BEHOLD, ALL THAT (JOB) HAS IS IN YOUR POWER, ONLY DO NOT PUT FORTH YOUR HAND ON HIM." (JOB 1:12, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

SO THE LORD SAID TO SATAN, "BEHOLD, (JOB) IS IN YOUR POWER, ONLY SPARE HIS LIFE." (JOB 2:6, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

And by no means should we miss this. Every evil assault our sovereign God permits this killer angel to carry out is meant to eventually further *God’s holy purposes*.

WHEN JOSEPH’S BROTHERS SAW THAT THEIR FATHER WAS DEAD, THEY SAID, "WHAT IF JOSEPH BEARS A GRUDGE AGAINST US AND PAYS US BACK IN FULL FOR ALL THE WRONG WHICH WE DID TO HIM!" SO THEY SENT A MESSAGE TO JOSEPH, SAYING, "YOUR FATHER CHARGED BEFORE HE DIED, SAYING, 'THUS YOU SHALL SAY TO JOSEPH, "PLEASE FORGIVE, I BEG YOU, THE TRANSGRESSION OF YOUR BROTHERS AND THEIR SIN, FOR THEY DID YOU WRONG.'" AND NOW, PLEASE FORGIVE THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE SERVANTS OF THE GOD OF YOUR FATHER" ... BUT JOSEPH SAID TO THEM, "DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR AM I IN GOD’S PLACE? AS FOR YOU, YOU MEANT EVIL AGAINST ME, BUT GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT THIS PRESENT RESULT, TO PRESERVE MANY PEOPLE ALIVE. (GENESIS 50:15-17, 19-20)

According to Daniel 10:10-21 and Jude 9, a battle is apparently raging between the two armies of angels. *It may be* that God's *holy* angels are continuously dispatched to make sure the activities of Satan's *rebel* forces do not exceed the limitations put on them by our sovereign God. It is also likely that Satan sends forth *his* angels to prevent God's holy purposes from being fulfilled.

13 Satan himself seems to be directly involved in opposing God's purposes among the *highest* of leadership within both the angelic and human realms. (He does not send one of his subordinates to do so.) He himself tempted Jesus Christ. He himself "entered Judas, the betrayer." He himself argued with Michael the archangel over the body of Moses. And he himself will give the antichrist (the beast) "his power and his throne and great authority" (Revelation 13:2). When Satan gets personally involved, he focuses on those with great influence. He does not strike low; he strikes high.

14 After his sin against God, "the anointed cherub's" authority as "the ruler of this world" was corrupted ... but not lost. This same situation exists with the stewardship entrusted to Adam and Eve. Before their rebellion against God, they were given the responsibility as caretakers of God's creation.

THEN GOD SAID, "LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE, ACCORDING TO OUR LIKENESS; AND LET THEM RULE OVER THE FISH OF THE SEA AND OVER THE BIRDS OF THE SKY AND OVER THE CATTLE AND OVER ALL THE EARTH, AND OVER EVERY CREEPING THING THAT CREEPS ON THE EARTH" (GENESIS 1:26).

After this couple rebelled against God, their spiritual condition before God fell from a state of innocence to a state of corruption. As a result, their rule over creation became burdened with sorrowful toil, thorns and thistles, hard labor, dangerous animals, and violent weather (Genesis 3:17-19). Nevertheless, as with Satan, their defection from God did not strip them of their authority. They and all their children still possess the right to rule creation (Psalm 8:3-8).

WHAT IS MAN THAT YOU TAKE THOUGHT OF HIM, AND THE SON OF MAN THAT YOU CARE FOR HIM? YET YOU HAVE MADE HIM A LITTLE LOWER THAN GOD, AND YOU CROWN HIM WITH GLORY AND MAJESTY! YOU MAKE HIM TO RULE OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET, ALL SHEEP AND OXEN, AND ALSO THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD, THE BIRDS OF THE HEAVENS AND THE FISH OF THE SEA, WHATEVER PASSES THROUGH THE PATHS OF THE SEAS. (PSALM 8:4-8)

15 Formerly under the control of Satan's lies, once a sinner is convicted by the Holy Spirit for his wrongful judgment of Christ, he is drawn unto a "repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18).

16 "*the god of this world.*" Satan rules over "this present evil age" (aion). The emphasis of this present era "is on a system of philosophy or a spirit of the age that expresses a creature-centered manner of life and religion that rejects the true God and sets up a counterfeit life and substitute religion (false cults)." (Dickason, C. Fred. *Angels: Elect and Evil*. Chicago. Moody Press, 1975, page 121, parenthesis added.)

17 "*the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*" Satan constantly promotes rebellion against God, energizing other rebels to submit, not to God but to their own (and his) self-centered ambitions.

THE PRESENT CHARACTER OF SATAN

He Is a Habitual Sinner

YOU WERE THE ANOINTED CHERUB WHO COVERS, AND I PLACED YOU THERE. YOU WERE ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF GOD; YOU WALKED IN THE MIDST OF THE STONES OF FIRE. YOU WERE BLAMELESS IN YOUR WAYS FROM THE DAY YOU WERE CREATED UNTIL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WAS FOUND IN YOU. BY THE ABUNDANCE OF YOUR TRADE YOU WERE INTERNALLY FILLED WITH VIOLENCE, AND YOU SINNED. THEREFORE, I HAVE CAST YOU AS PROFANE FROM THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD. AND I HAVE DESTROYED YOU, O COVERING CHERUB, FROM THE MIDST OF THE STONES OF FIRE. (EZEKIEL 28:14-16)

Sin first made its appearance within “the anointed cherub who covers.” As an act of his will, lawlessness came into existence; and by his diabolical influence, it spread outward, first to other angels and then to man. Thus, the *source* and *promoter* of sin is the devil.

THE ONE WHO PRACTICES SIN IS OF (HAS THE SAME REBELLIOUS NATURE AS / UNDER THE LAWLESS INFLUENCE OF) THE DEVIL; FOR THE DEVIL HAS SINNED FROM THE BEGINNING. (1ST JOHN 3:8, PARENTHESES ADDED)

From the moment he first defected from God, it has been in Satan’s nature to break God’s Law. He *is determined* to rebel against His authority. This evil angel is, in the truest sense of the word, “hell-bent.” He has practiced wickedness from the very beginning of his rebellious career.

Such is the immoral character of our adversary; but *this* is the moral character of *our Savior*:

HE MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF, SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:21)

FOR WE DO NOT HAVE A HIGH PRIEST WHO CANNOT SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR WEAKNESSES, BUT ONE WHO HAS BEEN TEMPTED IN ALL THINGS AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN. (HEBREWS 4:15)

FOR YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED FOR THIS PURPOSE, SINCE CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED FOR YOU, LEAVING YOU AN EXAMPLE FOR YOU TO FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH. (1ST PETER 2:21-22)

YOU KNOW THAT HE APPEARED IN ORDER TO TAKE AWAY SINS; AND IN HIM THERE IS NO SIN. (1ST JOHN 3:5)

He Is a Murderer

YOU (UNBELIEVING JEWS) ARE OF (HAVE THE SAME REBELLIOUS NATURE AS / UNDER THE LAWLESS INFLUENCE OF) YOUR FATHER THE DEVIL, AND YOU WANT TO DO THE DESIRES OF YOUR FATHER. HE WAS A MURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING (JOHN 8:44, PARENTHESES ADDED) **18**

From the moment of his fall unto today, Satan seeks to steal the life out of everything he touches. He is a death-angel; and the weapon he uses to murder his victims is the *temptation* to sin. If successful, the consequence of *their choice* to sin *separates* creatures from the fellowship of their Creator and the blessings He offers them.

As a result of his deadly persuasion in the glory of Paradise, a large segment of the angelic population chose to follow this mutineer in his rebellion against the throne of God. Now sealed in their fallen state, *myriads of demons are eternally separated from their Creator's fellowship and blessings*. They are forever dead to God, having no hope of ever being restored to their former state of holiness.

As a result of his deadly persuasion in the Garden of Eden, the original parents of all humanity – Adam and Eve – were tempted to reject the authority of their Creator. Choosing to follow the enticement of this murderer, *they and all their unborn children* entered a state of *spiritual death, separated from God's fellowship and blessings (Genesis 2:16-17)*.

As a result of his deadly persuasion, all humanity experiences *physical death when their souls separate from their bodies*.¹⁹ (The only exceptions to this are Enoch, Elijah, and a generation of Church-Age believers alive at the Rapture.)

As a result of his deceptive blindness, billions of unbelievers choose to remain unrepentant of their sins. As a result, they will experience *eternal death* in the Lake of Fire, *separated forever from God's Presence*.

The Lord's people should never have a casual attitude toward this adversary or any of his spirit-henchmen. If the restraining hand of our God were removed, they would likely kill us. They would welcome the opportunity to rid the world of our testimony.

But notice the *Savior's* purpose for God's people:

THE THIEF COMES ONLY TO STEAL AND KILL AND DESTROY; I CAME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY. (JOHN 10:10)

¹⁸ For Jesus to declare Satan a murderer "from the beginning" may be a reference to his influence over Cain to murder his brother Abel.

¹⁹ Contrary to the way many view physical death, it is not "a natural part of life." The Word of God does not portray death as being a "part of life." Death was never part of God's original design for mankind. In fact, He declared it to be the consequence of rebellion against Him, Genesis 2:16-17.

JESUS SAID TO HER, "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE EVEN IF HE DIES." (JOHN 11:25)

I AM THE LIVING BREAD THAT CAME DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN; IF ANYONE EATS OF THIS BREAD, HE WILL LIVE FOREVER; AND THE BREAD ALSO WHICH I WILL GIVE FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD IS MY FLESH. (JOHN 6:51)

He Is a Liar

YOU ARE OF YOUR FATHER THE DEVIL, AND YOU WANT TO DO THE DESIRES OF YOUR FATHER. HE ... DOES NOT STAND IN THE TRUTH BECAUSE THERE IS NO TRUTH IN HIM. WHENEVER HE SPEAKS A LIE, HE SPEAKS FROM HIS OWN NATURE, FOR HE IS A LIAR AND THE FATHER OF LIES. (JOHN 8:44)

Satan tells lies. The reason he tells lies is because he is a liar. That is his nature. But not *everything* Satan says is a lie. In fact, as revealed in Matthew 4:3-11, Satan can quote Scripture – at least portions of it and perhaps even all of it – from memory. He mixes God’s Truth in with his lies; but his purpose in doing so is to deceive. It is to give his lies a veneer of credibility.

NO WONDER, FOR EVEN SATAN DISGUISES HIMSELF AS AN ANGEL OF LIGHT. (2ND CORINTHIANS 11:14)

Satan does not want you to believe God. He wants you to believe him. He wants you to believe that he is the one who has your best interest in mind and that you can trust him. But as for God, He does not care about you and, therefore, should not be trusted. Satan wants you to believe that God is the liar, but that he is the one who will tell you the truth. And so, he will give you some truth. But his use of a little truth does not make him any less a liar.

This is the integrity level of our adversary; but *this* is the integrity level of *our Savior*:

AND THEY SENT THEIR DISCIPLES TO HIM, ALONG WITH THE HERODIANS, SAYING, "TEACHER, WE KNOW THAT YOU ARE TRUTHFUL AND TEACH THE WAY OF GOD IN TRUTH, AND DEFER TO NO ONE; FOR YOU ARE NOT PARTIAL TO ANY. (MATTHEW 22:16)

JESUS SAID TO HIM, "I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT THROUGH ME." (JOHN 14:6)

He Is an Oppressor of the Saints

BE OF SOBER SPIRIT, BE ON THE ALERT. YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR. (1ST PETER 5:8)

Not only does this liar seek to destroy the credibility of God's Word, he also seeks to destroy the witness and – if allowed – the lives of God's people.

Through persecution, he will attempt to silence our testimony.

Deceiving us to believe in our own abilities and strength, he will try to weaken our sense of dependence upon God.

Through peer pressure, he will tempt us to compromise our convictions.

Using the cravings of our physical bodies, he will entice us to abandon God's moral will.

Dangling the world's pleasantries before us, he will try to dilute our zeal for Christ.

Using the weight of mental oppression, he will try to suppress our victories in Christ.

Through these various attempts to resist God's purposes, our adversary is trying to prevent our minds and hearts and strength from being given to Christ and His Kingdom. In the process, what he offers us is nothing but emptiness and weariness and frustration and misery. But notice what *our Savior* offers us:

COME TO ME, ALL WHO ARE WEARY AND HEAVY-LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND HUMBLE IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. FOR MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT. (MATTHEW 11:28-30)

A Warning

Fellow soldiers of the Lord of hosts, this is what we are up against: a wicked, yet highly intelligent, well-organized, and powerful leader of a massive army of demons. And at the top of their hit list is every reborn follower of Jesus Christ whose life and service are guided by the Word of God and empowered by the Spirit of God. We would be wise, therefore, not to casually dismiss the strength of this wicked creature nor underestimate his cruel hatred.

Tragically, the wounds received during spiritual battle is a major reason so many pastors and missionaries leave the ministry. With each departure what could have been an abundant and fruitful witness is forfeited (but not necessarily forever). Some who seek to serve God naïvely march onto this invisible battlefield of evil without understanding what they are facing. Then, to make themselves an even softer target, the battle gear

they wear is that of *self-reliance*: confidence in *their own* strength ... or in *their own* abilities ... or in *their* personality ... or *their* eloquence ... or *their* intellect ... or *their* education ... or *their* experience. They may know all the words to the Church's battle hymn, "Onward Christians Soldiers"; but if they are not *applying* the full armor of God Almighty, they are going to find themselves in full retreat because they underestimated the intensity of the darkness they invaded.

FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE POWERS, AGAINST THE WORLD FORCES OF THIS DARKNESS, AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF WICKEDNESS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES. (EPHESIANS 6:12)

Those who are oblivious to the evil of this empire or who shrug off the reality of its strength have given themselves over to both temporal misery and eternal loss. Being ill-prepared for this warfare, they have made themselves vulnerable to every scheme the enemy uses. And the *certain* defeat they face is both needless and tragic.

Ironically, what compounds the tragedy of these unnecessary losses is that the hordes attacking God's unsuspecting and ill-prepared Church is an enemy that has already been defeated.

THE ASSURANCE OF SPIRITUAL VICTORY

ACCOMPLISHED BY THE SON OF GOD

~

SHARED WITH THE SAINTS OF GOD

THEREFORE, WHEN HE COMES INTO THE WORLD, HE SAYS, "[ANIMAL] SACRIFICE AND [MEAL] OFFERING [THAT IS, THE LEVITICAL SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM] YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME" ... THEN I SAID, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD." (HEBREWS 10:5, 7, BRACKETS ADDED)

For nine months God the Father prepared a body for His Son within the uterus of a teenage virgin. As a developing fetus, the eternal Second Person of the Trinity was clothed with the flesh and blood of humanity ... and for more than one reason. Indeed, the Bible reveals several purposes for this miraculous pregnancy and wonderful birth. In becoming a Man, the Son of God was able

- to reveal God the Father to us (John 14:7-9)
- to provide us with an example of a holy life (John 13:15)
- to take away our sins (Hebrews 10:5-10)
- to serve as our sympathetic High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16)
- to be a qualified Judge (John 5:22, 27)
- to fulfill the Davidic Covenant (Luke 1:31-33)
- and to rule over all creation (Psalm 8:3-8; Hebrews 2:5-9)

But there is another reason for this wondrous miracle. It was

- to destroy the works of the devil.

THE ONE WHO PRACTICES SIN IS OF THE DEVIL; FOR THE DEVIL HAS SINNED FROM THE BEGINNING. THE SON OF GOD APPEARED FOR THIS PURPOSE, TO DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL. (1ST JOHN 3:8)

One of the most important truths we should firmly grasp in our study of spiritual warfare comes from a verb in 1st John 3:8. Observe carefully the word "appeared." It is in the past tense. That is, this verse describes something that has already taken place ... at the *First* Appearing of God's Son, not something that *will* take place in the future ... at His *Second* Appearing.

Already accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ, every possible spiritual triumph has been secured at “the Place of a Skull” ... and from the inside of a tomb with a rolled-away stone ... *and* from heaven’s realm at the right hand of the Father. The Events that took place at these three sites – the Death, Resurrection, and Exaltation of Christ – totally devastated *all* the devil’s works. Our adversary no longer has authority or power

- to snatch away the Christians’ assurance of eternal life
- to keep the holy ones “chained” to their former lifestyles of sin
- to prevent the saints from experiencing their new life in Christ
- to terrify the believing community with eternal death
- to hold believers under his evil authority
- to defeat the faithful through persecution, temptation, and oppression
- to keep the redeemed from growing in Christlike character and fruitful service
- to mislead God’s Church through false teachers

As we are about to see, Satan’s authority and power over *those who are in Christ* has been fully and forever crushed to death.

**By the Death of Christ,
the Penalty for Sin Was Paid in Full**

OTHERWISE, HE WOULD HAVE NEEDED TO SUFFER OFTEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD; BUT NOW ONCE AT THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGES HE HAS BEEN MANIFESTED TO PUT AWAY SIN BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF. (HEBREWS 9:26)

The “consummation of the ages,” at which time the Son of God was “manifested,” refers to the first coming of Christ. Beginning with His miraculous conception and birth and culminating in His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to His throne in glory, the first advent of our Savior calls for great rejoicing. Indeed, if there had been no Christmas (when the Son of God was born as a Man), there would have been no Good Friday or Easter Sunday ... which means there would have been no salvation of sinners.

The fact is, we are *all* sinners. Every single one of us has broken the moral laws of God.

ALL HAVE SINNED. (ROMANS 3:23)

The crimes we have committed against God are not minor violations. In the sight of a holy God, these acts of rebellion are *capital crimes* deserving *capital punishment*. We are, in fact, objects of God's wrath, sentenced to eternal death, and awaiting execution. Out of all the problems we will ever have in our lives, this one is the worst:

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH. (ROMANS 6:23)

Because we have broken God's Law, we owe Him a debt. The debt we owe Him is not an apology, followed by our promise to "try harder to do better." No, the debt we owe God is our death. God has in His possession a "certificate of debt" from each of us ... an IOU (so to speak), written by *our sinful lives*. And recorded on this IOU are the words, "GOD, I OWE YOU MY DEATH."

But amazingly, in response to our deadly situation, and flowing from the kindness of His love and mercy, the Father clothed His Son in "flesh and blood" so that He could die *for* us, the condemned ... so that He could be executed in our place ... as our Substitute ... so that we would not have to die.

BUT GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US IN THAT, WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US. (ROMANS 5:8)

When the sin-Bearer was nailed to the cross, He took upon Himself our debt of death. Not part of it, but all of it. His death was not a downpayment, leaving the rest of the bill for us to pay. Our blessed Savior *paid off* our IOU in its entirety. "It is finished" was His shout from the cross. "Your debt of death (It) is paid in full (is finished)."

... (GOD) CANCELED OUT THE CERTIFICATE OF DEBT CONSISTING OF DECREES AGAINST US, WHICH WAS HOSTILE TO US; AND HE HAS TAKEN IT OUT OF THE WAY, HAVING NAILED IT TO THE CROSS. (COLOSSIANS 2:14, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

At the expense of His Own Son, the Father made it possible for each sinner's debt of death to be forgiven. God is now able to pardon the criminal. And He will ... *if the sinner will depend on Christ's Execution to serve as the punishment for his sins.*

BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST, THE PENALTY FOR SIN WAS PAID IN FULL.

BELIEVERS NO LONGER LIE UNDER SIN'S CURSE (ETERNAL DEATH).

By the Death of Christ, the Power of Sin Was Shattered

HOW SHALL WE WHO DIED TO SIN STILL LIVE IN IT? OR DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT ALL OF US WHO HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH? ... KNOWING THIS, THAT OUR OLD SELF WAS CRUCIFIED WITH HIM, IN ORDER THAT OUR BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DONE AWAY WITH, SO THAT WE WOULD NO LONGER BE SLAVES TO SIN; FOR HE WHO HAS DIED IS FREED FROM SIN. (ROMANS 6:2-3, 6-7)

When a person trusts in Christ as his personal Savior, he is “baptized” – *spiritually* – into Christ. Being “fully immersed” in the Savior, every single believer is “fully identified” with His crucifixion, His burial, and His resurrection.²⁰ Because Christ Jesus died on the Cross, we died on the Cross with Him. Because He was buried, we were buried with Him. And because He rose from the dead, we rose from the dead with Him. These, of course, are *spiritual realities* describing our priceless *position* in Christ.

We are told in Romans 6 that those who have died with Christ are “freed from sin.” That is, we are – *right now* – free from its *authority* and *power* over our lives. We are no longer slaves to this cruel master, Sin. We have been delivered from the emptiness and misery of its tyranny. Sin’s ruling power – once our dictator – has now, and forever, been overthrown.

Dear friends, it is unthinkable that we who have died to sin would *deliberately choose to practice* our former sins. Think back for a minute. Do you remember what it was like to be a “slave to sin”? Indifferent toward God ... angry toward Him ... rebellious ... irresponsible ... foolish ... immoral ... empty ... miserable ... insecure ... unstable ... confused ... aimless ... lacking in understanding ... void of power ... and useless to God. This is what one experiences when he practices sins. And some of these traits (perhaps even most of them) describe what you and I were once like. Why would anyone want to return to that! If we belong to Christ, we do not have to. Why not? Because

OUR OLD SELF WAS CRUCIFIED WITH HIM, IN ORDER THAT OUR BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DONE AWAY WITH, SO THAT WE WOULD NO LONGER BE SLAVES TO SIN; FOR HE WHO HAS DIED IS FREED FROM SIN. (ROMANS 6:6-7)

Let us, therefore, no longer allow our minds to linger over / grieve over the memories of our old way of life as though we were still under its evil influence.

BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST, THE POWER OF SIN WAS SHATTERED.

THE HOLY ONES ARE NO LONGER “CHAINED” TO THEIR FORMER SINFUL LIFESTYLES.

²⁰

The New Testament ritual of water baptism (whether by immersion, sprinkling, or effusion [pouring]) does **not** place an individual “into Christ Jesus.” Water baptism is a *physical picture* of a *spiritual reality* that has *already taken place*. It does not *cause* a person to be “in Christ”; it is one’s *public testimony* that he *already is* “in Christ.”

By the Resurrection of Christ, Believers Can Walk in Newness of Life

THEREFORE IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE; THE OLD THINGS PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, NEW THINGS HAVE COME. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:17)

As stated above, Church-Age believers have undergone a spirit “baptism.” ^{21, 22} We are spiritually immersed into Christ. Therefore, because He died, we died with Him. Before our salvation, we were dead *in* our sins (Ephesians 2:1); but now we are dead *to* sin, that is, to its authority and power over our lives. *By the power of the indwelling Spirit of God*, we can now say “No” to *all* our entrenched patterns of sinful behavior.

But that is only one side of the coin. We have also been raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. Before our salvation, we were *separated from God* (we were “dead” to God) because of our lawless deeds.

AND YOU WERE DEAD IN YOUR TRESPASSES AND SINS ... (EPHESIANS 2:1)

But now we are “*alive to God.*” Now we share in His resurrection life. And this new life we have is the life of Christ Himself. Not only can we say, “No” to sin; we can say “Yes” to righteousness.

THEREFORE WE HAVE BEEN BURIED WITH HIM THROUGH BAPTISM INTO DEATH, SO THAT AS CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD THROUGH THE GLORY OF THE FATHER, SO WE TOO MIGHT WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE ... EVEN SO CONSIDER YOURSELVES TO BE DEAD TO SIN, BUT ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS. (ROMANS 6:4, 11)

21 The physical symbol of this spiritual reality is the believer’s baptism by water.

22 Likewise, at salvation Church-Age believers undergo a spiritual “*circumcision*.” This *positional* truth provides the foundation a believer needs to

- *practically* remove the sins of the flesh (as one who is “dead to sin”) and, instead, to
- *practically* “walk in newness of life” (as one who is “alive to God”).

AND IN HIM YOU WERE ALSO CIRCUMCISED WITH A CIRCUMCISION MADE WITHOUT HANDS, IN THE REMOVAL OF THE BODY OF THE FLESH BY THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST; HAVING BEEN BURIED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM, IN WHICH YOU WERE ALSO RAISED UP WITH HIM THROUGH FAITH IN THE WORKING OF GOD, WHO RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD. WHEN YOU WERE DEAD IN YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS AND THE UNCIRCUMCISION OF YOUR FLESH, HE MADE YOU ALIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM, HAVING FORGIVEN US ALL OUR TRANSGRESSIONS. (COLOSSIANS 2:11-13)

“The Greek word ‘newness’ speaks of life that has a new or fresh *quality*. The resurrection of Jesus was not just a resuscitation; it was a new *form* of life. In the same way the spiritual lives of believers in Jesus have a new, fresh quality.” (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament Edition*, Romans, John A. Witmer, page 462)

... THAT, IN REFERENCE TO YOUR FORMER MANNER OF LIFE, YOU LAY ASIDE THE OLD SELF, WHICH IS BEING CORRUPTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LUSTS OF DECEIT, AND THAT YOU BE RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND, AND PUT ON THE NEW SELF, WHICH IN THE LIKENESS OF GOD HAS BEEN CREATED IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS OF THE TRUTH. (EPHESIANS 4:22-24)

How do we “put on the new self”? *Through the renewal of our minds*. That is, by asking the Holy Spirit to help us move our thoughts *away from* the sinful lifestyle of our past (laying aside “the old self”) and place our thoughts, instead, *on* the freshness of our new lives in Christ (“putting on “the new self”) *as presented in the Scriptures*.

BY THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, BELIEVERS CAN WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE.

SATAN’S POWER TO ROB *THE SAINTS* OF AN ABUNDANT LIFE HAS BEEN THWARTED.

By the Resurrection of Christ, Satan’s Power to Terrify the Believing Community with Eternal Death Is Crushed

According to the Scriptures, the devil has the power to kill a man. From Job chapter 2, we should take note that he is able to take the lives of believers (and, presumably, unbelievers) ... unless God forbids him to do so.

SO THE LORD SAID TO SATAN, "BEHOLD, (JOB) IS IN YOUR POWER, ONLY SPARE HIS LIFE." (JOB 2:6)

Satan can *still* take the life of a *believer* (but only by God’s permission) (1st Peter 5:8; Revelation 20:4). But there is another aspect of death over which the destroyer has become powerless: the ability to *hold* a believer in *permanent (eternal)* death.

THEREFORE, SINCE THE CHILDREN SHARE IN FLESH AND BLOOD, HE HIMSELF LIKEWISE ALSO PARTOOK OF THE SAME, THAT THROUGH DEATH HE MIGHT RENDER POWERLESS HIM WHO HAD THE POWER OF DEATH, THAT IS, THE DEVIL, AND MIGHT FREE THOSE WHO THROUGH FEAR OF DEATH WERE SUBJECT TO SLAVERY ALL THEIR LIVES. (HEBREWS 2:14-15)

When Satan possessed “the power of death,” he held mankind in a grip of despair and fear. Despair over the *certainty* of death ... and fear over its *permanence*. But when Christ was raised from the dead, that power was once and for all cancelled!

Because of this victorious resurrection, eternal death was stopped dead in its tracks. And since the devil is no longer able to hold believers in a *permanent* state of death, this fear no longer grips the Christ-follower.

Physical death, of course, still exists among believers. But we who trust in the Resurrected One now view our “passing” as a mere transition into something higher ... spiritually *and physically*. We can now face death, not in distress and terror but with the composure of Christ as we place our confidence in God’s promises and power!

TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, HE WHO HEARS MY WORD, AND BELIEVES HIM WHO SENT ME, HAS ETERNAL LIFE, AND DOES NOT COME INTO JUDGMENT, BUT HAS PASSED OUT OF DEATH INTO LIFE. TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, AN HOUR IS COMING AND NOW IS, WHEN THE DEAD WILL HEAR THE VOICE OF THE SON OF GOD, AND THOSE WHO HEAR WILL LIVE ... AND I MYSELF WILL RAISE HIM UP ON THE LAST DAY.” (JOHN 5:24-25; 6:40)

Never-ending life! Can this be true! Most certainly, it can be! And it is! It is a promise worth shouting from the rooftops! A day is approaching when the saint’s perfected soul will be reunited with his glorified body. (There is as much hope for your *body* as there is for your soul, Philippians 3:20-21.) It will be the day when all “the sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36) will be summoned to “Come forth” from our graves to live in the presence of the risen One forever. Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!

BUT WHEN THIS PERISHABLE WILL HAVE PUT ON THE IMPERISHABLE, AND THIS MORTAL WILL HAVE PUT ON IMMORTALITY, THEN WILL COME ABOUT THE SAYING THAT IS WRITTEN, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN, AND THE POWER OF SIN IS THE LAW; BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHO GIVES US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. (1ST CORINTHIANS 15:54-57)

BY THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST,
SATAN’S POWER TO TERRIFY *THE BELIEVING COMMUNITY* WITH ETERNAL DEATH IS CRUSHED.

By the Resurrection and Exaltation of Christ, Believers Are Now Free from Satan’s Evil Authority

Satan’s goal is to destroy the *reputation*, the *purposes*, the *plans*, and the *people* of God. To do so, one of the tactics he used was to “chain” Adam and Eve’s family to sin, turning those created to be children of righteousness into slaves of unrighteousness.

JESUS ANSWERED THEM, "TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, EVERYONE WHO COMMITS (PRACTICES) SIN IS THE SLAVE OF SIN. (JOHN 8:34, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

Since sin originated with Satan, those who habitually practice sin are “of the devil.” That is, *they live under the tyranny of his evil influence*. By choosing a lifestyle of rebellion

against the authority of God, those who were created to bring their lives in alignment with God's Truth are, instead, imprisoned within the darkness of Satan's lies.

*THE ONE WHO PRACTICES SIN IS OF THE DEVIL; FOR THE DEVIL HAS SINNED FROM THE BEGINNING.
(1ST JOHN 3:8)*

When we were citizens of this evil empire (that is, before our salvation), we were locked in bondage to the world, the devil, and our flesh.

- Blind followers of blind men, we were willing to submit ourselves to this world's wicked value system (*"the course of this world"*), a demon-energized *"current"* that opposes the one true God ... opposes the integrity and authority of His Word ... opposes the Person and work of His Son ... opposes the Gospel of His grace ... and opposes His people.

... YOU FORMERLY WALKED ACCORDING TO THE COURSE OF THIS WORLD. (EPHESIANS 2:2)

- We were willing to follow Satan in his opposition against God (*"the prince of the power of the air"*).

... YOU FORMERLY WALKED ... ACCORDING TO THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR, OF THE SPIRIT THAT IS NOW WORKING IN THE SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE. (EPHESIANS 2:2)

- We were willing to violate the moral laws of God in order that we might indulge the natural appetites of our bodies (*"your flesh"*).

... WE TOO ALL FORMERLY LIVED IN THE LUSTS OF OUR FLESH, INDULGING THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH AND OF THE MIND. (EPHESIANS 2:3)

All of this resulted in God's just sentence of eternal death.

... (WE) WERE BY NATURE CHILDREN OF WRATH, EVEN AS THE REST. (EPHESIANS 2:3)

As prisoners living under Satan's dictatorship, *this* was once our plight. But thanks be to the mercy of God through Christ Jesus His Son, we who are of faith have been rescued from the devil's domain of deception and mental oppression and perversion and misery and emptiness and confusion, transferred into a realm of truth and peace and purity and joy and abundant life and soundness of mind. Like birds released from their cages, those who are purchased of God by the blood of His Son are forever unshackled ... forever liberated ... forever free from Satan's empire of evil.

FOR HE RESCUED US FROM THE DOMAIN OF DARKNESS AND TRANSFERRED US TO THE KINGDOM OF HIS BELOVED SON. (COLOSSIANS 1:13)

Let *this*, then, be our declaration of freedom:

Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we're free at last!

BY THE RESURRECTION AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST,
BELIEVERS ARE NOW FREE FROM SATAN'S EVIL AUTHORITY.

**By the Exaltation of the Son of God,
Satan's Power to Triumph over Those in Christ Has Been Defeated**

Having raised His Son from the dead, God the Father

... SEATED HIM AT HIS RIGHT HAND IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES, FAR ABOVE ALL RULE AND AUTHORITY AND POWER AND DOMINION, AND EVERY NAME THAT IS NAMED, NOT ONLY IN THIS AGE BUT ALSO IN THE ONE TO COME. AND HE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET (EPHESIANS 1:20-22)

The magnitude of this Event, the Exaltation of Jesus Christ, is incomprehensible. God has placed "all things" under the authority of His Son. He is sovereign over all creation in this present age as well as "the one to come" (the Millennial Kingdom). This would include all of nature as well as the entire human realm, both those who are in Christ (the saints) and those who are not (unbelievers).

But what is of primary interest to us from this passage in Ephesians (since this is a study on spiritual warfare) is the term "all rule and authority and power and dominion." Interestingly, this was a phrase used by the Jewish rabbis of Paul's day to include the different orders of high-ranking angelic beings (Ephesians 3:10, 6:12; Colossians 1:16, 2:10, 2:15). Therefore, the authority of the Son of God covers all the natural world as well as all the heavenly realm *and its population of angels*, both those who are holy and those who are fallen. The Son's authority is "far above ... **all things**."

ALL AUTHORITY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH. (MATTHEW 28:18)

This authority "above all things" includes Satan. Christ has authority over Satan. They are not peers. They are not equals. The latter is the vanquished. The former is the Victor.

This victory that Christ has secured extends to all reborn believers. Because we are "in Christ," we, too, are seated at the right hand of the Father in the heavenlies! We, too, share in Christ's conquest of Satan! We, too, are the victors! The overcomers! The super-conquerors! We are no longer the losers; we are the winners! We are no longer the defeated; we are the vanquishers! No longer the captives, but the liberated! No longer the ones lying on the ground all beaten up, but the ones left standing after the fight! Through Christ's victory, the world, the flesh, and the devil have been defeated.

BUT GOD, BEING RICH IN MERCY, BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE WITH WHICH HE LOVED US, EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, MADE US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST (BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED), AND RAISED US UP WITH HIM, AND SEATED US WITH HIM IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST JESUS (EPHESIANS 2:4-6)

BY THE EXALTATION OF THE SON OF GOD, SATAN'S POWER TO TRIUMPH OVER THOSE IN CHRIST
(THROUGH PERSECUTION, TEMPTATION, AND OPPRESSION) HAS BEEN DEFEATED.

**By the Exaltation of Christ / the Indwelling Holy Spirit,
the Saints Can Become Christlike in Character and Fruitful in Service**

It is unfortunate that many in the believing community do not understand the connection between the return of Christ to the Father in glory and the *presence* of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

BUT NOW I AM GOING TO HIM WHO SENT ME ... BUT I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, IT IS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE THAT I GO AWAY; FOR IF I DO NOT GO AWAY, THE HELPER WILL NOT COME TO YOU; BUT IF I GO, I WILL SEND HIM TO YOU. (JOHN 16:5, 7)

Without our Lord's return to His Father in glory, this ever-present Helper would not have been sent to *indwell* the Church of God.

I WILL ASK THE FATHER, AND HE WILL GIVE YOU ANOTHER HELPER, THAT HE MAY BE WITH YOU FOREVER; THAT IS THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, WHOM THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE, BECAUSE IT DOES NOT SEE HIM OR KNOW HIM, BUT YOU KNOW HIM BECAUSE HE ABIDES WITH YOU AND WILL BE IN YOU. (JOHN 14:16-17)

In both 1st Corinthians 3:16 and 2nd Corinthians 6:16, the Church of God is viewed as *the* Temple of God in which the Spirit of God resides. Every *assembly of true believers* is indwelled by the Holy Spirit. (In the following verse the word translated "you" is plural.)

DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOU (THE CHURCH) ARE A TEMPLE OF GOD AND THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU ... ? (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:16, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

... WE ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD; JUST AS GOD SAID, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE." (2ND CORINTHIANS 6:16)

Therefore, the reborn Church – rather than the church's *building* – is to be considered the Temple of God. (God has not "resided" in a physical structure since His departure from the Jewish Temple right before Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC, Ezekiel 10:18-19; 11:22-23.) So, instead of saying on Sunday morning, "It is good to be *in* the house of the Lord!" let us instead say, "It is good to be *with* the house of the Lord!" The

saints of God are the house of God. That is true whether a local church is meeting inside a brick building ... or in a forest ... or on a mountain ... or in someone's home.

The same is true for *every individual believer*. Because of his faith in Jesus, the Spirit of God resides in every reborn follower of Christ. The *physical body* of each individual Christian has become a Temple of God.

OR DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOUR BODY IS A TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO IS IN YOU, WHOM YOU HAVE FROM GOD, AND THAT YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN? (1ST CORINTHIANS 6:19)

YOU ARE NOT IN THE FLESH BUT IN THE SPIRIT, IF INDEED THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU. BUT IF ANYONE DOES NOT HAVE THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, HE DOES NOT BELONG TO HIM. (ROMANS 8:9)

What believer can fully comprehend the extraordinary privilege of having the third Person of the Trinity make His home within him! Furthermore, consider this divine Helper's various ministries! Each one is a priceless blessing, lavished upon the individual Christian so that he might live – with resurrection power – a life that is pleasing to the Father. According to the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit's "help" includes:

- life-giving refreshment (John 7:37-39),
- the ability to understand God's will (John 14:26),
- the sensitivity to grieve over sin, leading to repentance (Ephesians 4:30),
- comfort during affliction (Acts 9:31),
- power for a fruitful witness (John 15:26), and
- guidance based on God's Truth (John 16:13).

BY THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST / THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT,
THE SAINTS CAN BECOME CHRISTLIKE IN CHARACTER AND FRUITFUL IN SERVICE.

By the Indwelling Spirit of Truth, Satan's Power to Deceive Believers through False Teaching Is Thwarted

NOW WE (BELIEVERS) HAVE RECEIVED, NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHO IS FROM GOD, SO THAT WE MAY KNOW THE THINGS FREELY GIVEN TO US BY GOD ... BUT A NATURAL MAN (AN UNBELIEVER) DOES NOT ACCEPT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, FOR THEY ARE FOOLISHNESS TO HIM; AND HE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY APPRAISED. (1ST CORINTHIANS 2:12, 14, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Those who are led by "the spirit of the world" follow an entirely different set of values than those who are led by "the Spirit Who is from God." Because their minds are

blinded with foolishness and confusion, unbelievers respect and follow the only spirit they *can* understand, the spirit of “this present evil age.”

GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR OUR SINS SO THAT HE MIGHT RESCUE US FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE, ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF OUR GOD AND FATHER. (Galatians 1:3-4)

These darkened values of an unbeliever merge with the darkened values of other unbelievers into an evil “current,” energized by Satan and promoted by those whose will is wicked and rebellious. The specifics of their value systems vary; but at the core of each is a disposition that is anti-Bible, anti-God (of the Bible), anti-Gospel, anti-Christ, anti-Jewish (the race), and anti-Christian (the reborn people of God). As a result of their rebellion against God,

THOSE WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY DEAD ARE UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND GOD’S WORD.

Believers, on the other hand, have been delivered from the darkness of this evil age: its doctrines of lies, foolish reasoning (its wisdom), and polluted attractions.

FOR HE RESCUED US FROM THE DOMAIN OF DARKNESS, AND TRANSFERRED US TO THE KINGDOM OF HIS BELOVED SON. (COLOSSIANS 1:13)

Now indwelt by the Spirit of Truth, they have received a built-in safeguard against false teaching, a protection leading them into sound, wholesome, stabilizing doctrine.

BY THIS YOU KNOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD: EVERY SPIRIT THAT CONFESSES THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS COME IN THE FLESH IS FROM GOD; AND 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 (YOU HAVE BEEN DELIVERED FROM BELIEVING THOSE WHO TEACH FALSE DOCTRINE); BECAUSE GREATER IS HE WHO IS IN YOU (THE HOLY SPIRIT) THAN HE WHO IS IN THE WORLD (SATAN). (1ST JOHN 4:2-4, PARENTHESES ADDED)

The minds of the saints have been “awakened” (illuminated). The light of God has been “turned on.” These have the God-given capacity to understand His Word and to crave its moral wholesomeness. Standing in opposition to Satan’s lies, their allegiance is to the one true God of the Bible, to the authority of His Word, to His Gospel of grace, to His Son Jesus Christ, to the Jewish people (the race), and to his fellow believers in Christ.

This difference between those who can understand God’s Truth and those who cannot is most clearly seen in their understanding of the Gospel. Whether from ignorance or because of rebellion, unbelievers do not grasp the significance of the cross of Christ. But they *do* sense their separation from God. And if this ruptured relationship bothers them, they try to soothe their conscience by obeying a system of moral laws, by

observing a religion's rituals, or by serving others. That is, they believe they can ease the tension that exists between themselves and God by their own efforts. God's anger is something *they* can fix. Likewise, the ones who hold this view also believe that *continuing* to do good deeds is what *keeps* them right with God. For them, *staying* in God's favor is also something that can be earned.

This lie is known as "legalism"; and the one behind it is Satan, the father of lies, who seeks to distort the Gospel of grace. The god of this world has convinced sinful mankind that they do not need Someone else to save them. *They* can save themselves. The One God sent is not necessary.

AND EVEN IF OUR GOSPEL IS VEILED, IT IS VEILED TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, IN WHOSE CASE THE GOD OF THIS WORLD HAS BLINDED THE MINDS OF THE UNBELIEVING SO THAT THEY MIGHT NOT SEE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD. (2ND CORINTHIANS 4:3-4)

Living by a set of rules is not – nor ever has been – God's answer to man's lost condition. It is true that man's sins have separated him from God. And it is true that, to solve this problem, God demands righteousness. But the *perfect* righteousness that God demands cannot be produced by the *imperfect* efforts of man.

*FOR ALL OF US HAVE BECOME LIKE ONE WHO IS UNCLEAN; AND ALL OUR **RIGHTEOUS** DEEDS ARE LIKE A **FILTHY** GARMENT (ISAIAH 64:6)*

No system of law (including the Mosaic Law ... or the New Testament ... or the Ten Commandments ... or the Golden Rule ... or the Sermon on the Mount ... or the teachings of Islam or Hinduism, etc.) can make us acceptable to God. If that were possible, then Jesus Christ died for nothing.

I DO NOT NULLIFY THE GRACE OF GOD, FOR IF RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES THROUGH THE LAW, THEN CHRIST DIED NEEDLESSLY. (GALATIANS 2:21)

God rejects the idea that man can *make himself* ... and *keep himself* ... righteous. According to the Bible, the only righteousness God accepts is *His own*.

HE MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF, SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:21)

Thus, the death and resurrection of Christ is God's response to Satan's lie that man can save himself. Only God can save man. Man cannot save himself. According to the Gospel of grace, *the sinner becomes – and remains – as righteous as God by his faith in Christ's work on the cross*, not by his own continuous (and imperfect) performances.

(I DO NOT HAVE) A RIGHTEOUSNESS OF MY OWN DERIVED FROM THE LAW, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH COMES FROM GOD ON THE BASIS OF FAITH. (PHILIPPIANS 3:9, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

*... AND **IN HIM** YOU HAVE BEEN MADE COMPLETE. (COLOSSIANS 2:10)*

God's Truth (a *faith*-based righteousness) and Satan's lies (a *works*-based righteousness) could not be any further apart. Those who believe one way are *dead* ("crucified") to those who believe the other way.

BUT MAY IT NEVER BE THAT I WOULD BOAST, EXCEPT IN THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THROUGH WHICH THE WORLD HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED TO ME, AND I TO THE WORLD. FOR NEITHER IS CIRCUMCISION ANYTHING, NOR UNCIRCUMCISION, BUT A NEW CREATION. (GALATIANS 6:14-15)

Through the awakening ministry of the Holy Spirit, the believer rejects a man-made salvation. For him salvation is by grace alone ... through faith alone ... in Christ alone.

BY THE INDWELLING SPIRIT OF TRUTH,
SATAN'S POWER TO DECEIVE *BELIEVERS* THROUGH FALSE TEACHING IS *THWARTED*.

WHY THEN ARE WE STILL IN THIS WAR?

If every reborn Christ-follower shares in the Savior's triumph over Satan (and we do), why then are we still in – what seems to be – a never-ending struggle with this *defeated* foe? If Satan's *authority and power* over the true and living Church has been crushed to death (and it has), why is spiritual warfare a fact of life for the Christian?

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are not dealing with a compliant, submissive creature. Satan is an arrogant and deadly rebel ... through and through. He has not accepted his defeat; nor does he plan to. (He does not plan to wave a white flag of surrender.) It is true: his *ruling power* has been annulled. It is equally true that his *will* to overthrow God has not weakened in the least. The *tenacity* of this foe is as strong as ever.

THE TENACITY OF A CONQUERED FOE

BE OF SOBER SPIRIT, BE ON THE ALERT. YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR. (1ST PETER 5:8)

Jesus Christ has already destroyed the works of this “roaring lion.” And those who are redeemed by His blood share in His victory over Satan. So, if this evil foe has already been defeated (and he has), why then is the Church in this continuous “hand-to-hand combat” with him?

Although Satan’s authority and power *over the believer* have been broken by Christ’s Work on the Cross (Hebrews 2:14; Romans 6:8-9), this father of lies *has no intention of letting you believe that.*

Furthermore, although the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ was God’s judgment against him (John 12:31, 16:11), “the ruler of this world” – fully aware of the prophesied Return of the King of kings – *has no intention of relinquishing that title.*

Therefore, even though he is defeated, to have a casual attitude toward this creature is less than wise. We are dealing with a defiant rebel. And the army under his command is a host of sinister, battle-hardened demons who are unwilling to accept defeat. Refusing to surrender, the destroyer and his forces fight on.

“... while the supernatural antagonistic powers are disarmed and defeated, they are not (yet) destroyed” (*Paul, Apostle of Liberty*, Longenecker, Richard N., page 176; parenthesis added).

So yes, the devil has been defeated; but we can be sure that his presence and evil influence are still alive and well on planet earth. But we can also be sure that *those who are in Christ can fully experience* – right now, by faith – every victorious deliverance their Savior has *already* secured for them.

Furthermore, the day will come when all God’s people living on *the new earth* – its total population – will be free from Satan’s *presence* when he is finally cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10). Then his assaults on God the Father, God’s Anointed One, and God’s people will be forever finished.

AND THE DEVIL WHO DECEIVED THEM WAS THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, WHERE THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET ARE ALSO; AND THEY WILL BE TORMENTED DAY AND NIGHT FOREVER AND EVER. (REVELATION 20:10)

THE TACTICS OF THE DEMONIC REALM

BELOVED, DO NOT BE SURPRISED AT THE FIERY ORDEAL AMONG YOU, WHICH COMES UPON YOU FOR YOUR TESTING, AS THOUGH SOME STRANGE THING WERE HAPPENING TO YOU. (1ST PETER 4:12)

Satan is still dangerous. *If we let him*, this whispering liar will convince us that God cannot be trusted ... but *he* can. *If we let him*, this conquered foe will drag us down into the pit of despair, persuading us to believe that *we* are the ones who have been defeated. *If we let him*, this divider of the brethren will change those who are called to be assets to their local church into those who are detriments to their local church. The ruler of this world views us who are soldiers of the King of kings as invaders of his territory. And he *will* drive this threat off his property ... *if we let him*.

We would do well, then, to take care. The war we are in is not going to be like a boxing match where rules are observed. Satan does not observe any rules of war. At times, his attacks will be conducted in the form of guerilla warfare ... ambushes that seem to come out of nowhere. At other times, it will be an all-out frontal assault. By God's grace there will be periods of rest. But in God's wisdom, this struggle will never become easy, and it will never just "go away." To the contrary

THE MORE EFFECTIVE A BELIEVER BECOMES IN LIVING AND MINISTERING
IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,
THE MORE INTENSE SATAN'S RESISTANCE WILL BE.

Therefore, we would be wise to learn his tactics: *his strategy* of attack, *the timing* of his attacks, and *from where* they will come. In so doing, we will not be caught off guard.

First, we can expect this adversary to attack *our weak points* ... our "Achilles' heel," so to speak. We all have these vulnerable areas; and our enemy knows where they are.

We can also expect him to attack *when we least expect it*. There will be occasions when the onslaught seems to come "out of the clear blue" ... unprovoked "darts" that will surprise and confound us if we are not on the alert.

Furthermore, the source of the attack may surprise us, coming at us *from those we would least expect resistance*, those we would have sworn would stand with us through "thick and thin": family members, old friends, professing believers in the church who are not born of the Spirit of God ... even professing believers in the church who are (Matthew 16:21-23).

We should also know in what *forms* his attacks will come. We will at least know what is happening to us and why. This is the purpose of the next section.

SATAN WILL TRY TO UNDERMINE THE WITNESS OF GOD'S WORD

The father of lies does not want the mind of man to contemplate the Truth of God, for if he does, he might understand It ... then believe It ... and then obey It. To prevent this from happening,

“the evil one” will try to *prevent* God’s Word from being received

“the serpent of old” will try to *corrupt* God’s Word by means of false doctrine

“the god of this age” will try to *impair* one’s ability to understand God’s Word

“the devil” will try to *discredit* the integrity of God’s Word

“The Evil One” ²³

Will Try to Prevent God’s Word from Being Received

BUT WE, BRETHREN, HAVING BEEN TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU FOR A SHORT WHILE – IN PERSON, NOT IN SPIRIT – WERE ALL THE MORE EAGER WITH GREAT DESIRE TO SEE YOUR FACE. FOR WE WANTED TO COME TO YOU – I, PAUL, MORE THAN ONCE – AND YET SATAN HINDERED US. (1ST THESSALONIANS 2:17-18)

Satan seeks to prevent both the unsaved and the saved from being *exposed* to God’s Word. To do so, he will attempt to *remove its availability* from us using family members in the home, employers at work, officials in the government, and false prophets in the Church.

REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST, RISEN FROM THE DEAD, DESCENDANT OF DAVID, ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL, FOR WHICH I SUFFER HARDSHIP EVEN TO IMPRISONMENT AS A CRIMINAL; BUT THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT IMPRISONED. (2ND TIMOTHY 2:8-9)

The evil one also tries to hinder the lost from thinking about the Gospel they *have heard*. To do so, he will *distract* them using the world’s sparkling enticements, personal problems, peer pressures, and persecutions. He wants to snatch God’s Word from their minds.

AND HE SPOKE MANY THINGS TO THEM IN PARABLES, SAYING, “BEHOLD, THE SOWER WENT OUT TO SOW; AND AS HE SOWED, SOME SEEDS FELL BESIDE THE ROAD, AND THE BIRDS CAME AND ATE THEM UP ... HEAR THEN THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER. WHEN ANYONE HEARS THE WORD OF THE KINGDOM AND DOES NOT UNDERSTAND IT, THE EVIL ONE COMES AND SNATCHES AWAY WHAT HAS BEEN SOWN IN HIS HEART. THIS IS THE ONE ON WHOM SEED WAS SOWN BESIDE THE ROAD.” (MATTHEW 13:3-4, 18-19)

**The “Serpent of Old”²⁴
Will Try to Corrupt God’s Word by Means of False Doctrine**

“It does not matter what *truth* you are teaching, there is always someone out there teaching just the opposite.” (John F. Walvoord, past president, Dallas Theological Seminary)

NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE CRAFTY THAN ANY BEAST OF THE FIELD WHICH THE LORD GOD HAD MADE. AND HE SAID TO THE WOMAN, "INDEED, HASSSSSSSST GOD SAID, 'YOU SHALL NOT EAT FROM ANY TREE OF THE GARDEN'?" (GENESIS 3:1, EMPHASIS ADDED) (Only one tree was forbidden, Genesis 2:16-17.)

FOR MANY DECEIVERS HAVE GONE OUT INTO THE WORLD, THOSE WHO DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE JESUS CHRIST AS COMING IN THE FLESH. THIS IS THE DECEIVER AND THE ANTICHRIST ... ANYONE WHO GOES TOO FAR AND DOES NOT ABIDE IN THE TEACHING OF CHRIST, DOES NOT HAVE GOD; THE ONE WHO ABIDES IN THE TEACHING, HE HAS BOTH THE FATHER AND THE SON. IF ANYONE COMES TO YOU AND DOES NOT BRING THIS TEACHING, DO NOT RECEIVE HIM INTO YOUR HOUSE, AND DO NOT GIVE HIM A GREETING; FOR THE ONE WHO GIVES HIM A GREETING PARTICIPATES IN HIS EVIL DEEDS. (2ND JOHN 1:7, 9-11)

Satan Wants to Confuse Us with His Lies

For one reason or another, many true *believers* are ignorant of God’s Word. Some of these reasons are not their fault:

Perhaps they do not have the ability to read nor the means to hear the Scriptures preached (an illiterate inmate in a prison without a Christian witness).

It may be that the churches they attend do not preach God’s Word, and there is no evangelical church in their area (rural villages in South America).

Or perhaps it is because their government has outlawed the availability of God’s Word. They have no access to the Scriptures (Iraq, Vietnam, North Korea).

On the other hand, some *believers* are ignorant by choice:

Rather than cultivating a devotion for Christ Jesus, they allow their hearts to be carried away by “the things that are on earth.” As a result, their passion for “the things above” becomes lukewarm (North America, western Europe).

THEREFORE IF YOU HAVE BEEN RAISED UP WITH CHRIST, KEEP SEEKING THE THINGS ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST IS, SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. SET YOUR MIND ON THE THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THE THINGS THAT ARE ON EARTH. (COLOSSIANS 3:1-2)

LISTEN TO THIS! BEHOLD, THE SOWER WENT OUT TO SOW ... (AND SOME) SEED FELL AMONG THE THORNS, AND THE THORNS CAME UP AND CHOKED IT, AND IT YIELDED NO CROP ... (NOW THE PARABLE MEANS THIS:) THE SOWER SOWS THE WORD ... THE ONES ON WHOM SEED WAS SOWN AMONG THE THORNS, THESE ARE THE ONES WHO HAVE HEARD THE WORD, BUT THE WORRIES OF THE WORLD, AND THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES, AND THE DESIRES FOR OTHER THINGS ENTER IN AND CHOKE THE WORD, AND IT BECOMES UNFRUITFUL. (MARK 4:3, 7, 14, 18-19, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Others may know that their pastor does not preach God's Word; but because they are tied emotionally to the people of their church, they stay on rather than move to a church in the area that is Bible-centered.

Whatever the reason, when a believer is not grounded in the Word of God, his level of spiritual maturity will be low. (One's level of spiritual discernment is determined – in part – by his level of Biblical understanding.) His limited ability to distinguish between truth and error will make him vulnerable to false doctrine.

HE WILL BE AN EASY PREY TO THE DIFFERENT HERESIES HE ENCOUNTERS.

As to *unbelievers*, many of them *do not want to listen to the Truth*. Willing to hear only what they want to hear, they are spiritually blind to God's Word by choice.

THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE; BUT WANTING TO HAVE THEIR EARS TICKLED, THEY WILL ACCUMULATE FOR THEMSELVES TEACHERS IN ACCORDANCE TO THEIR OWN DESIRES AND WILL TURN AWAY THEIR EARS FROM THE TRUTH AND WILL TURN ASIDE TO MYTHS. (2ND TIMOTHY 4:3-4)

As a result, those who *reject God's Truth* will readily accept Satan's lies.

BUT THE SPIRIT EXPLICITLY SAYS THAT IN LATER TIMES SOME WILL FALL AWAY FROM THE FAITH, PAYING ATTENTION TO DECEITFUL SPIRITS AND DOCTRINES OF DEMONS, BY MEANS OF THE HYPOCRISY OF LIARS SEARED IN THEIR OWN CONSCIENCE AS WITH A BRANDING IRON. (1ST TIMOTHY 4:1-2)

“The God of this Age” Will Try to Impair One's Ability to Understand God's Word

Satan Seeks to Blind the Minds of Unbelievers

Because of unbelief, the minds of the unrepentant are clouded in spiritual darkness. *Their capacity to grasp spiritual Truth is blocked*, making it impossible for them to comprehend the danger they are in. Since they do not grasp the reality of the death sentence they are under, they see no need for God's pardon. To them, “The Good News” of Christ's Death and Resurrection is “The *Irrelevant News*.”

FOR THE WORD OF THE CROSS IS FOOLISHNESS TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, BUT TO US WHO ARE BEING SAVED IT IS THE POWER OF GOD. (1ST CORINTHIANS 1:18)

This inability to understand the Gospel is a *divine judgment* against those who have rejected the Truth they *heard in the past*.

AND HE WAS SAYING TO THEM, "TAKE CARE WHAT YOU LISTEN TO. BY YOUR STANDARD OF MEASURE IT WILL BE MEASURED TO YOU; AND MORE WILL BE GIVEN YOU BESIDES. FOR WHOEVER HAS (THE CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND AND OBEY GOD'S WORD), TO HIM MORE (UNDERSTANDING) SHALL BE GIVEN; AND WHOEVER DOES NOT HAVE (THE CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND AND OBEY GOD'S WORD), EVEN WHAT (UNDERSTANDING) HE HAS SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM." (MARK 4:24-25, PARENTHESES ADDED)

According to the Scriptures, the *agent* God uses to dull one's ability to grasp the Gospel's significance is Satan.

AND EVEN IF OUR GOSPEL IS VEILED, IT IS VEILED TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, IN WHOSE CASE THE GOD OF THIS WORLD HAS BLINDED THE MINDS OF THE UNBELIEVING SO THAT THEY MIGHT NOT SEE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD. (2ND CORINTHIANS 4:3-4)

But notice who is ultimately to blame. Those who willingly reject God's Truth are *personally responsible for giving their minds over* to Satan's pull into the blackness of his kingdom. True, their darkened understanding *is* a work of Satan; but only *after they have "given him permission" to do so by their unbelief*. He blinds "*the unbelieving*."

No choice in this life is more foolish than to ignore or deliberately reject the Gospel of God, for in doing so, one opens himself up to the blinding influence of Satan. With each act of unbelief, he makes himself less able to understand God's Truth. Dear friends,

NO CONDITION ON EARTH IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN BEING BLIND TO THE GOSPEL

Satan Wants to Stunt the Spiritual Growth of Believers

The father of lies is not stupid. He knows how to deceive man. To do so, he mixes a little bit of truth in with his lies. (Nevertheless, *what is "almost true" is still a lie*.) So, for one to be sensitive to Satan's deceptions, he must be thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures. As the believer saturates his mind with God's Truth, he forms a "plumb line" by which he can evaluate the different doctrines he hears.

But those whose understanding of the Scriptures is shallow are handicapped in their ability to discern between truth and error. And because of this inability to distinguish between what is true and what is "almost true," the maturity level of those believers is stunted, undermining the unity and witness of the Church.

FOR THOUGH BY THIS TIME YOU OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS, YOU HAVE NEED AGAIN FOR SOMEONE TO TEACH YOU THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD, AND YOU HAVE COME TO NEED MILK AND NOT SOLID FOOD. FOR EVERYONE WHO PARTAKES ONLY OF MILK IS NOT ACCUSTOMED TO THE WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR HE IS AN INFANT. BUT SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE, WHO BECAUSE OF PRACTICE HAVE THEIR SENSES TRAINED TO DISCERN GOOD AND EVIL. (HEBREWS 5:12-14)

“The Devil”²⁵

Will Try to Discredit the Integrity of God’s Word

The devil does not want us to believe that the inspired Word of God is the Truth. Just the opposite. He wants us to question its credibility. He wants us to believe that the world’s value system, inspired and empowered by him, is *today’s* truth ... but the Bible is nothing but an outdated myth. Perhaps more to the point, Satan wants us to trust him, not God ... that *he* is the one who tells the truth, and that God is the liar.

Satan Wants Us to Doubt What the Bible Says about God’s Character

The slanderer wants us to doubt everything the Bible says about God: His control over the details of His creation, His awareness of what is taking place in our lives, His presence with us, His never-ending faithfulness, His readiness to strengthen us in times of weakness, His protection over our lives, His love for us, His almighty power, His wisdom, His holiness, His justice, His trustworthiness, His grace, His mercy ... all the perfections of the One Who deals with His creatures in kindness and love.

Satan will even distort the *motives* behind God’s commandments, portraying Him as One Who selfishly guards His Own self-interests at the expense of man’s well-being.

THE SERPENT SAID TO THE WOMAN, "... GOD KNOWS THAT IN THE DAY YOU EAT FROM (THE TREE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GARDEN) YOUR EYES WILL BE OPENED, AND YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD, KNOWING GOOD AND EVIL." (GENESIS 3:4-5)

Satan Wants Us to Doubt What the Bible Says about God’s Works

The deceiver wants us to reject the (seemingly) bad judgment of our sovereign God.

He wants us to bitterly resent God’s “cruel indifference” for placing us in some wretched situation *we did not deserve*.

He wants us to fume over the unfairness of what is happening in our lives because *it does not make any sense*. “How can this possibly be good for me?”

He wants us to seethe in our anger toward the injustice of God when *the unrighteous go unpunished*, especially when their wrongs are hurting us.

Satan Wants Us to Doubt God's Promises in the Bible

He wants us to become cynical toward the trustworthiness of God's assurances. Rather than savoring – by faith – the promised peace of God, he wants us to worry and fret over our painful situations. He does not want us to be filled – by faith – with the joy of God's promised deliverances and blessings. With his whispered lies, he wants us to wallow in the defeat and despair of unbelief.

Satan Wants Us to Doubt God's Warnings in the Bible

The serpent of old wants humanity to disregard the consequences of disobedience, penalties that God has clearly stated in the Scriptures.

THE WOMAN SAID TO THE SERPENT, "FROM THE FRUIT OF THE TREES OF THE GARDEN WE MAY EAT; BUT FROM THE FRUIT OF THE TREE WHICH IS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GARDEN, GOD HAS SAID, 'YOU SHALL NOT EAT FROM IT OR TOUCH IT, OR YOU WILL DIE.' " THE SERPENT SAID TO THE WOMAN, "YOU SURELY WILL NOT DIE!" (GENESIS 3:2-4)

Nothing would please the deceiver more than to convince the world that the warnings of a wholesome and just God are nothing but hollow threats.

This, then, is the will of our adversary: for the Word of our God to be *blocked* and *corrupted* and *misunderstood* and *discredited*.

But *this is our Savior's* will regarding God's Word:

*(FATHER), I HAVE GIVEN THEM ("THOSE WHOM YOU HAVE GIVEN ME") YOUR WORD; AND THE WORLD HAS HATED THEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT OF THE WORLD, EVEN AS I AM NOT OF THE WORLD. I DO NOT ASK YOU TO TAKE THEM OUT OF THE WORLD, BUT TO KEEP THEM FROM THE EVIL ONE. THEY ARE NOT OF THE WORLD, EVEN AS I AM NOT OF THE WORLD. **SANCTIFY THEM IN THE TRUTH; YOUR WORD IS TRUTH.** AS YOU SENT ME INTO THE WORLD, I ALSO HAVE SENT THEM INTO THE WORLD. FOR THEIR SAKES I SANCTIFY MYSELF, THAT THEY THEMSELVES ALSO MAY **BE SANCTIFIED IN TRUTH.** I DO NOT ASK ON BEHALF OF THESE ALONE, BUT FOR THOSE ALSO WHO BELIEVE IN ME THROUGH THEIR WORD; THAT THEY MAY ALL BE ONE; EVEN AS YOU, FATHER, ARE IN ME AND I IN YOU, THAT THEY ALSO MAY BE IN US, SO THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT YOU SENT ME. (JOHN 17:14-21, PARENTHESES ADDED)*

-
- 23 *“the evil one”* (Greek: ho poneros). *“the vile one.” “the wretched one.”* Satan does not sin because he has fallen in with bad company. He *is* the bad company. His depravity is deep-rooted, down to his very core. To describe him as *“the evil one”* is to say, *“He is cruel, tyrannical, and wicked through-and-through.”*

Furthermore, he is not satisfied with his own ruin. He seeks to destroy every person he can.

The article *“the evil one”* limits this designation to a *specific person*, one whose corrupt nature is well known (that is, it does not refer to the general concept of evil.)

- 24 *“the serpent of old.”* *This name focuses on Satan’s crookedness and deceitfulness.* His crafty deceptions include hiding his own existence, promoting false philosophies and religions, and perverting morals and behavior.

- 25 *“the devil”* (Greek: ho diabolos) means *“slanderer”* or *“one who trips up.”* He is *“the accuser of the brethren,”* slandering man to God, God to man, and man to man. Occurring 35 times in the Bible, this name portrays him as one who *“utters maliciously false reports that tend to injure the reputation of another.”* It is his goal to discredit the Name and purpose of God, His Son, and His people. (Dickason, C. Fred. *Angels: Elect and Evil*. Chicago. Moody Press, 1975, page 122.)

SATAN WILL TRY TO RUPTURE THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH

BEHOLD, HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS FOR BROTHERS TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY! (PSALM 133:1)

It is the will of the Father that His Church dwell together in unity.

THEREFORE I, THE PRISONER OF THE LORD, IMPLORE YOU TO WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE CALLING WITH WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED, WITH ALL HUMILITY AND GENTLENESS, WITH PATIENCE, SHOWING TOLERANCE FOR ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE, BEING DILIGENT TO PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE. (EPHESIANS 4:1-3)

Notice from this passage that the Church is not responsible to *create* unity but, rather, to *preserve* it. This “bond of peace” *already exists* among the saints because of our oneness in Christ. We are the true “E Pluribus Unum” (“out of many, one”). As a result of our position in Him, we are expected to recognize no distinction and practice no division between social or economic classes, between the many races, or between the two genders. The Body of Christ is a true “melting pot” of great diversity into one holy people.

THERE IS NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK, THERE IS NEITHER SLAVE NOR FREE MAN, THERE IS NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE; FOR YOU ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS. (GALATIANS 3:28)

This unity among such a diverse group as the Church is surely one of the strongest validations of the Christian faith. While the world witnesses

one nation warring against another nation ...
 and one ethnic group trying to exterminate another ethnic group ...
 and one race fighting with another race ...
 and one generation clashing with another generation ...
 and one gender badmouthing the other gender,

the Church’s “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” stands out as nothing short of a miracle. As believers “from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues” (Revelation 7:9) extend the peace of God toward one other, the claims of the Lord Jesus are validated before a watching and marveling world:

- that He is, indeed, sent from God and should thus be believed and obeyed
- and that the Father loves those in Christ as much as He loves Christ Himself

THE GLORY WHICH YOU (FATHER) HAVE GIVEN ME (JESUS) I HAVE GIVEN TO THEM, THAT THEY MAY BE ONE, JUST AS WE ARE ONE; I IN THEM AND YOU IN ME, THAT THEY MAY BE PERFECTED IN UNITY, SO THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW THAT YOU SENT ME, AND LOVED THEM, EVEN AS YOU HAVE LOVED ME. (JOHN 17:22-23)

No wonder the unity of the Church is such a target for demonic assault. Satan does all he can to cause division in the Body.

A senior pastor becomes accustomed to the admiration of the congregation ... until the new *assistant* pastor arrives and proves to be a better preacher. Or a veteran Sunday School teacher enjoys the praises of his class ... until a substitute teacher with better teaching skills comes along. As the people express their desire to hear more and more from the junior minister, *jealousy* and *strife* may soon raise their ugly heads in the heart of the senior minister.

The personality of one church member grates against the personality of another. If that relationship is not kept in check with spiritual maturity and nurtured with love, sparks of the flesh will fly, coming in the form of *slanders from behind the back* and *insults to the face*.

When a certain freedom expressed by one person's lifestyle violates the conviction of someone else's conscience (in a **gray** area), relationships can unravel in the form of *spiritual pride* and *accusations*.

Differing political opinions, minor theological persuasions, family feuds, business deals turned sour, miscommunications, cultural differences, racial differences, conflicting strategies of ministry, differences in the priority (and funding) of ministries, etc. (the list seems endless) ... all these pose potential rifts in the unity of the Body of Christ. If these differences are not met with the love and mature composure of Christ, the local church will be filled with *critical thoughts* and *critical words*, *frictions* and *quarrels*, *bitterness* and *malice* and *anger* and *wrath*.

These works of the flesh are like spiritual piranhas, biting and tearing away at the Church's oneness. As a result, the testimony of Christ's representatives is ripped apart ... which is exactly what our adversary wants for the Church. But *this* is what *our Savior* wants for the Church:

... BE HARMONIOUS, SYMPATHETIC, BROTHERLY, KINDHEARTED, AND HUMBLE IN SPIRIT; NOT RETURNING EVIL FOR EVIL OR INSULT FOR INSULT BUT GIVING A BLESSING INSTEAD; FOR YOU WERE CALLED FOR THE VERY PURPOSE THAT YOU MIGHT INHERIT A BLESSING. (1ST PETER 3:8-9)

For the sake of protecting the reputation of our Savior before a watching world, let us pursue unity with one another, *even if it means taking a personal loss*.

AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CHOSEN OF GOD, HOLY AND BELOVED, PUT ON A HEART OF COMPASSION, KINDNESS, HUMILITY, GENTLENESS AND PATIENCE; BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND FORGIVING EACH OTHER, WHOEVER HAS A COMPLAINT AGAINST ANYONE; JUST AS THE LORD FORGAVE YOU, SO ALSO SHOULD YOU. BEYOND ALL THESE THINGS PUT ON LOVE, WHICH IS THE PERFECT BOND OF UNITY. (COLOSSIANS 3:12-14)

SATAN WILL TRY TO SILENCE THE WITNESS OF A BELIEVER'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

*FOR WE WANTED TO COME TO YOU – I, PAUL, MORE THAN ONCE – AND YET SATAN HINDERED US.
(1ST THESSALONIANS 2:18)*

When a believer's life and ministry are guided by the Word of God ... when his witness and labor for the sake of Christ are empowered by the Spirit of God ... when lives are being changed because of his character and service, Satan loses ground. And he will not stand for that. He has no plans to release – without a fight – those who have been under his deceptive influence. We can, therefore, expect this determined adversary to strike back.

Using the *world*, “the great red dragon” will *persecute*

Using the believer's *flesh*, “the tempter” will *entice*

Using the believer's *mind*, “the accuser of our brethren” will *oppress*

Using the believer's *circumstances*, “Satan” will *disrupt*

Using the World, “the Great Red Dragon” Will Persecute ²⁶

THESE THINGS I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU, SO THAT IN ME YOU MAY HAVE PEACE. IN THE WORLD YOU HAVE TRIBULATION, BUT TAKE COURAGE; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD. (JOHN 16:33)

When an encounter takes place between one whose mind and life are controlled by the Holy Spirit and one whose mind and life are spiritually darkened, there will be conflict. Compared to those who submit to God's values, those who follow the world's values look foolish and feel guilty about their actions. A few will repent; but many will persecute. Tragically, these assaults do not come only from those *outside* the Church. Attacks of slander and criticism sometime come from *within* the Church itself.

Satan Will Use Peer Pressure in his Attempt to Silence Our Witness

When our faith in the Lord Jesus is first made public, we are often stunned by the disapproval of our peers. Their opposition to our wonderful news of deliverance from death to life gives us a jolt. We thought they would be happy *with* us. And perhaps they were at first ... that is, until our new-found “religion” started to clash with their worldly values and habits (perhaps the very lifestyle we have begun to abandon). Gradually, our relationships begin to polarize. Some of the tight-knit circles we once enjoyed with family and friends begin to unravel. For no reason other than our identification with the Savior, we now find ourselves on the outside looking in.

Regarding our *families*, it is not uncommon to be shunned by some (or all) its members. Because of our shared background, we used to be on the same page with our parents and siblings and aunts and uncles and cousins; but now we feel estranged from them ... and they from us. They, too, sense this unwelcome separation. A clash has begun – a civil war, so to speak – between two opposing values in the same family. We do not, we cannot, relate as well as we used to. Conversations are not as rich and enjoyable as they once were. Perhaps they have begun to belittle us. Remarks toward our new faith take on a mocking – perhaps even hostile – tone.

DO NOT THINK THAT I CAME TO BRING PEACE ON THE EARTH; I DID NOT COME TO BRING PEACE, BUT A SWORD. FOR I CAME TO SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; AND A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.
(MATTHEW 10:34-36)

As for our *friends*, we should not be surprised to find ourselves rejected by some who once accepted us. We may be slandered behind our back or insulted to our face. We may be denied invitations to join school clubs or programs to which we would like to be invited.

At first, we are caught off guard. We had no idea that taking a stand for the Lord Jesus might carry the cost of straining our long-standing relationships. This pressure feels foreign to us. Uneasiness sets in. No one wants to be viewed as being different. We do not want to lose the closeness of our loved ones and friends ... to drop (or be dropped) out of the circles we are in. We do not like being disliked.

As a result, we will be tempted to become (or remain) silent about our relationship with Jesus Christ out of fear over what our family and friends will say ... tempted to cut corners in “the little things” to stay accepted ... tempted to stay conformed to everyone else. Perhaps even tempted to deny being one of His followers. (It has been known to happen.)

Satan Will Use Persecution in his Attempt to Silence Our Testimony

I KNOW WHERE YOU DWELL, WHERE SATAN'S THRONE IS; AND YOU HOLD FAST MY NAME AND DID NOT DENY MY FAITH EVEN IN THE DAYS OF ANTIPAS, MY WITNESS, MY FAITHFUL ONE, WHO WAS KILLED AMONG YOU, WHERE SATAN DWELLS. (REVELATION 2:13)

Some of the most extreme tactics Satan will use to silence our witness will be through persecution. Antagonism will come from those who claim to have enlightened understanding and acceptable lifestyles but who, instead, have darkened minds and values that violate the holiness of God.

This form of attack is more intense than the pressure coming from one's peers. The purpose of the persecutor is to *destroy* something about us.

We may be falsely accused, charges which threaten the integrity of *our reputations*.

We may experience distress from public criticism and humiliation which threatens *our emotional or psychological wellbeing*.

Regarding our *educations*, we may be denied admission into certain universities or scholastic societies.

Regarding our *careers*, we may be denied opportunities for employment. We may be overlooked for a deserved promotion or raise. We may be fired from our jobs.

Regarding our *civil rights*, we may be arrested and imprisoned.

Regarding our *lives*, we may be deprived of necessities, physically beaten, tortured, or threatened with death (martyrdom).

Those who strike at Satan's authority can expect him to strike back. And when he does, he will not pull his punches. Indeed, there is a certain promise every Holy Spirit-controlled believer has been given:

ALL WHO DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST JESUS WILL BE PERSECUTED. (2ND TIMOTHY 3:12)

That is the desire and goal of our adversary: to destroy the lives and ministries of God's people. But *this* is the desire of *our Savior*:

THE THIEF COMES ONLY TO STEAL AND KILL AND DESTROY; I CAME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY. (JOHN 10:10)

... FOR THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO DESTROY MEN'S LIVES, BUT TO SAVE THEM. (LUKE 9:56)

Using the Believer's Flesh, "the Tempter" Will Entice ²⁷

Satan Will Tempt Us to Play the Hypocrite

BUT A MAN NAMED ANANIAS, WITH HIS WIFE SAPPHIRA, SOLD A PIECE OF PROPERTY, AND KEPT BACK SOME OF THE PRICE FOR HIMSELF, WITH HIS WIFE'S FULL KNOWLEDGE, AND BRINGING A PORTION OF IT, HE LAID IT AT THE APOSTLES' FEET. BUT PETER SAID, "ANANIAS, WHY HAS SATAN FILLED YOUR HEART TO LIE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT AND TO KEEP BACK SOME OF THE PRICE OF THE LAND? WHILE IT REMAINED UNSOLD, DID IT

NOT REMAIN YOUR OWN? AND AFTER IT WAS SOLD, WAS IT NOT UNDER YOUR CONTROL? WHY IS IT THAT YOU HAVE CONCEIVED THIS DEED IN YOUR HEART? YOU HAVE NOT LIED TO MEN BUT TO GOD." AND AS HE HEARD THESE WORDS, ANANIAS FELL DOWN AND BREATHED HIS LAST; AND GREAT FEAR CAME OVER ALL WHO HEARD OF IT. (ACTS 5:1-5)

It has been rightly said that the true character of a person is revealed by the way he conducts himself when (he thinks) no one is watching. When off by himself, will he say "No" to temptation ... or will he say "Yes"?

The world often charges us Christians with being hypocrites, perhaps more times than we deserve. But the fact is, we *can* put on a mask and try to convince others – and ourselves – that we are something we are not. We need to know that, when faced with that choice, there is a lot more at stake than our personal integrity.

What is ultimately hanging in the balance is *the reputation of God*. Satan wants to destroy the integrity of God. And he will try to do so by making God's people – those who are called to reflect His character – look like imposters.

Satan Will Try to Weaken Our Sense of Dependence upon God by Cultivating an Attitude of Self-Reliance

THEN SATAN STOOD UP AGAINST ISRAEL AND MOVED DAVID TO NUMBER ISRAEL. SO DAVID SAID TO JOAB AND TO THE PRINCES OF THE PEOPLE, "GO, NUMBER ISRAEL FROM BEERSHEBA EVEN TO DAN, AND BRING ME WORD THAT I MAY KNOW THEIR NUMBER." JOAB SAID, "MAY THE LORD ADD TO HIS PEOPLE A HUNDRED TIMES AS MANY AS THEY ARE! BUT, MY LORD THE KING, ARE THEY NOT ALL MY LORD'S SERVANTS? WHY DOES MY LORD SEEK THIS THING? WHY SHOULD HE BE A CAUSE OF GUILT TO ISRAEL?" NEVERTHELESS, THE KING'S WORD PREVAILED AGAINST JOAB. THEREFORE, JOAB DEPARTED AND WENT THROUGHOUT ALL ISRAEL, AND CAME TO JERUSALEM.

GOD WAS DISPLEASED WITH THIS THING, SO HE STRUCK ISRAEL. DAVID SAID TO GOD, "I HAVE SINNED GREATLY, IN THAT I HAVE DONE THIS THING. BUT NOW, PLEASE TAKE AWAY THE INIQUITY OF YOUR SERVANT, FOR I HAVE DONE VERY FOOLISHLY." (1ST CHRONICLES 21:1-4, 7-8)

When Satan moved David to take this census of Israel's warriors, the king was placing his trust in the strength of his military rather than in God. What is worse, throughout the nation any military victory would be attributed to King David's great army instead of King David's great God.

Likewise, we wander onto dangerous ground when our trust in God's strength lapses into self-assurance. When we think we can handle a situation without God's help. This change of attitude from dependence to independence often follows success; and it usually comes upon us gradually. Often, we do not know it is even happening to us. But when it does, when we have lost our sense of weakness, our prayer lives lose their

fervency. Our depth of devotion to God fades into shallowness and, eventually, is lost altogether. This is how Satan can use **success** ... if we let him. We turn to our own abilities rather than to God for His power. The result is a flattened, dulled, weakened, lifeless, and defeated spiritual condition.

It is when we face a responsibility that makes us feel inadequate that we pray. When we are given something for which we do not feel qualified to do or a task which we failed to accomplish once before ... that is when we pray. A sense of helplessness makes for a strong prayer life, resulting in a powerful impact in the lives of others.

Satan Will Use the Cravings of Our Physical Bodies to Entice Us to Disobey God

AND AFTER HE HAD FASTED FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS, HE THEN BECAME HUNGRY. AND THE TEMPTER CAME AND SAID TO HIM, "IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD, COMMAND THAT THESE STONES BECOME BREAD." (MATTHEW 4:2-3)

Satan wants us to rebel against God's moral will as revealed in His Word; and he will use our bodies' *natural appetites* to do so. If we do not consciously keep these desires in check, we can easily stray from a lifestyle of moderation into a lifestyle of excess, most often in the areas of food (gluttony), drink (alcoholism), sex (lust), rest (laziness), and play (hedonism).

Self-control, of course, is the answer to keeping these desires under control, desires for what God has given us to enjoy *within certain boundaries*. And according to the Scriptures, self-discipline is a work of the Spirit of God. That is, we must look to Him to provide us with the motivation and strength we need to "do all things in moderation."

*... THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, **SELF-CONTROL**; AGAINST SUCH THINGS THERE IS NO LAW. (GALATIANS 5:22-23)*

Satan Will Try to Dilute Our Zeal for Christ by the World's Pleasantries

DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD NOR THE THINGS IN THE WORLD. IF ANYONE LOVES THE WORLD, THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IS NOT IN HIM. FOR ALL THAT IS IN THE WORLD, THE LUST OF THE FLESH AND THE LUST OF THE EYES AND THE BOASTFUL PRIDE OF LIFE, IS NOT FROM THE FATHER, BUT IS FROM THE WORLD. (1ST JOHN 2:15-16)

It is hard to fervently cling to a life preserver – depending on it to save you from drowning – when you are standing on dry ground. Likewise, it is hard to *cling* to Christ with *all* your soul when family and friends are all fairly healthy ... when all of life's necessities are paid for and there's ice cream in the freezer ... when material goods are readily available and easily affordable ... when one's job is fairly secure ... when Johnny and Susie are fairly good kids ... when the police are rounding up criminals, not Christians ... when there is political freedom ... and civil peace ... and financial affluence.

On the other hand, something special takes place in the heart of one who finds himself “at the end of his rope,” and all he **can** do is hold on to Christ. No one, of course, would choose to suffer. But the fact is, a certain heavenly richness floods the soul of those who, by faith, are clinging to Christ as they endure the pain of suffering.

This section of our study does not exactly fit into what is commonly thought of as being spiritual warfare. Nevertheless, believers need to be on the alert. *The ease of life makes Satan’s will (our spiritual demise) easier to achieve.* What’s worse, the one who has become halfhearted toward the things of God often does not know just how lukewarm he really is, especially when everyone else around him is just as indifferent. This is what makes the world’s pleasantries so deceitful ... and dangerous.

I KNOW YOUR DEEDS, THAT YOU ARE NEITHER COLD NOR HOT. I WISH THAT YOU WERE COLD OR HOT. SO, BECAUSE YOU ARE LUKEWARM, AND NEITHER HOT NOR COLD, I WILL SPIT YOU OUT OF MY MOUTH, BECAUSE YOU SAY, "I AM RICH, AND HAVE BECOME WEALTHY, AND HAVE NEED OF NOTHING," AND YOU DO NOT KNOW THAT YOU ARE WRETCHED AND MISERABLE AND POOR AND BLIND AND NAKED. (REVELATION 3:15-17)

It is ironic. We know that persecution makes it hard to live for Christ. But do we know that peace and prosperity make it *even harder*? If we are not on the alert, the ease of life can turn into a spiritual lullaby, gradually rocking us into a spiritual sleep. It is when life becomes comfortably routine that one no longer *feels* his need to “know Christ and the power of His resurrection.” While he allows his *body* to savor life’s luxuries, his *soul* can easily slide into a drowsy indifference. And he will likely not even be aware of it.

Perhaps something is missing from life when *nothing* is missing from life. Perhaps it is necessary for a steady pressure to be placed upon the believer from time to time. Is this not the purpose of pain? Is this not “why bad things happen to God’s people”? Affliction forces our hearts to grab hold of Christ, which is precisely what our all-wise God wants us to do.

Our adversary would like nothing better than for God’s people to compromise their zeal for the Savior and His calling upon our lives. *Our Savior*, on the other hand, would like nothing better than for His people to turn to Him for strength in their hours of temptation and weakness.

FOR WE DO NOT HAVE A HIGH PRIEST WHO CANNOT SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR WEAKNESSES, BUT ONE WHO HAS BEEN TEMPTED IN ALL THINGS AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN. THEREFORE LET US DRAW NEAR WITH CONFIDENCE TO THE THRONE OF GRACE, SO THAT WE MAY RECEIVE MERCY AND FIND GRACE TO HELP IN TIME OF NEED. (HEBREWS 4:15-16)

FOR SINCE HE HIMSELF WAS TEMPTED IN THAT WHICH HE HAS SUFFERED, HE IS ABLE TO COME TO THE AID OF THOSE WHO ARE TEMPTED. (HEBREWS 2:18)

Using the Believer's Mind, "the Accuser of Our Brethren" Will Try to Suppress Our Victory in Christ Under the Weight of Mental Oppression

Satan Wants Us to Feel Like Defeated Losers

THEN HE SHOWED ME JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST STANDING BEFORE THE ANGEL OF THE LORD, AND SATAN STANDING AT HIS RIGHT HAND TO ACCUSE HIM. THE LORD SAID TO SATAN, "THE LORD REBUKE YOU, SATAN! INDEED, THE LORD WHO HAS CHOSEN JERUSALEM REBUKE YOU! IS THIS NOT A BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE FIRE?" (ZECHARIAH 3:1-2)

... THE ACCUSER OF OUR BRETHREN ... ACCUSES THEM BEFORE OUR GOD DAY AND NIGHT." (REVELATION 12:10-11)

One of Satan's tactics is to overwhelm us with anguish and despair. And *if we let him*, he will succeed. For as long as we hand our *minds* over to him, he will whisper his criticisms of us over and over and over.

But how does one know if he is being accused by Satan? Could it not be that what troubles the believer's mind is really the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit? How do we distinguish between the *condemnation* of Satan and the *conviction* of God?

First, God's motive is *love*. He wants to build us up. Satan's motive, however, is *hate*. He wants to tear us down.

God's goal is *constructive*. He convicts the erring one of sin to *restore* him to fellowship with Himself. Satan's goal, however, is *destructive*. He condemns the believer to hold him in a state of defeat.

The content of the Holy Spirit's conviction is *a specific thought or attitude or word or deed*. The content of Satan's condemnation is often quite *vague*, focusing our thoughts on some *general flaw* of character (whether true or not).

Most surely, the accuser wants us to *dwell* upon our failures (including those we have already confessed to God as sin). One of his most effective tactics is to *keep us in our past*. He wants us to believe that the way we *were* 5 ... 10 ... 20 ... 40 years ago is the way we *still are* and the way we *always will be* ... nothing but an object of contempt. The devil will follow this strategy for as long as we let him; and the way we let him is by *choosing* to ignore or reject God's Truth.

FOR I AM CONFIDENT OF THIS VERY THING, THAT HE WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK IN YOU (SALVATION FROM SIN'S PENALTY) WILL PERFECT IT (SALVATION FROM SIN'S POWER) UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST JESUS (SALVATION FROM SIN'S PRESENCE). (PHILIPPIANS 1:6)

We should ponder this promise ... often. God does not want us to wallow in the waste of our “yesterdays.” He wants us to confess our sins (1st John 1:9). And then He wants us to *claim His forgiveness*. “*Forgetting* what lies behind and *reaching forward* to what lies ahead,” He wants us to “*press on* toward the goal” of sanctification (Philippians 3:12-13). Yes, most surely, He wants us to *learn* from our past mistakes and failures. But He does not want us to *relive* our past over ... and over ... and over. He wants us to *live in the present*, rejoicing by faith in His *daily* work of sanctification in our lives (Romans 8:28-29). Dear friends, this will require us to replace some old thoughts with some new thoughts (which takes mental effort). If we do not do that, not only have our “yesterdays” been ruined but so *will* our “todays” and our “tomorrows.”

Satan’s oppressive lies come in other forms as well. The destroyer wants us to believe that those who adhere to *his* value system are enlightened; but those who conduct their lives according to the Scriptures are nothing but fools.

This is a lie.

The tempter wants us to believe that those who give themselves over to their natural appetites live in freedom; but those who submit their lives to the wholesome will of God are living in an outdated “Victorian straight jacket.”

This is a lie.

This “serpent of old” wants us to believe that he is the winner, but we are the losers because we are following a Loser. Are you listening to these lies? Or are you listening to God’s truths?

WHO WILL BRING A CHARGE AGAINST GOD’S ELECT? GOD IS THE ONE WHO JUSTIFIES. WHO IS THE ONE WHO CONDEMNS? CHRIST JESUS IS HE WHO DIED, YES, RATHER WHO WAS RAISED, WHO IS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, WHO ALSO INTERCEDES FOR US. (ROMANS 8:33-34)

Our adversary does not *want* us to believe that the grace of God is greater than all our sins. But that *is* the truth!

... WHERE SIN INCREASED, GRACE ABOUNDED ALL THE MORE, SO THAT, AS SIN REIGNED IN DEATH, EVEN SO GRACE WOULD REIGN THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS TO ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. (ROMANS 5:20-21)

He does not *want* us to believe that we have been freed from the tyranny of his dark dominion, both its power and its authority. But that *is* the truth!

I AM WRITING TO YOU, YOUNG MEN, BECAUSE YOU HAVE OVERCOME THE EVIL ONE. (1ST JOHN 2:13)

He does not *want* us to believe that we have the power to shed our former patterns of sinful behavior to walk in newness of life. But that *is* the truth!

... OUR OLD SELF WAS CRUCIFIED WITH HIM, IN ORDER THAT OUR BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DONE AWAY WITH, SO THAT WE WOULD NO LONGER BE SLAVES TO SIN; FOR HE WHO HAS DIED IS FREED FROM SIN. (ROMANS 6:6-7)

He does not *want* us to believe that we have been liberated from the sway of the world's value system, a belief that leads to nothing but emptiness and misery and weariness and death. But that *is* the truth!

WHO IS THE ONE WHO OVERCOMES THE WORLD, BUT HE WHO BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD. (1ST JOHN 5:5)

The accuser of the brethren does not want us to believe any of God's truths. He wants to suppress the unchanging and eternal blessings of God:

that *we* are the victors ...

that *we* are the ones who have already overcome ...

that *we* are the super-conquerors ...

that *we* are the real winners ...

and that *he and his fellow rebels* are the real losers.

As we shall discuss below, there is one way – and only one way – to overcome the lies of this liar. And that is by *continually reminding ourselves of God's truths*.

Satan Wants Us to Doubt What Is True about God

The one who wants to destroy us not only tries to discredit God's *promises*; he also tries to discredit God's *character*.

He does not want us to believe in the *lovingkindness of God*. He wants us to be angry at God for withholding from us what is best ... for not dealing as fairly with us as He has with others ... for not blessing us as He has blessed others. This is the lie Satan wants us to believe about God. But this is the truth God wants us to believe:

WHO WILL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST? WILL TRIBULATION, OR DISTRESS, OR PERSECUTION, OR FAMINE, OR NAKEDNESS, OR PERIL, OR SWORD? JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." BUT IN ALL THESE THINGS WE OVERWHELMINGLY CONQUER THROUGH HIM WHO

LOVED US. FOR I AM CONVINCED THAT NEITHER DEATH, NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS, NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR POWERS, NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATED THING, WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. (ROMANS 8:35-39)

This angel of darkness does not want us to believe that *God is good* and that His will for our lives is in our best interest (namely, that we might become more and more like His Son). He wants us to bitterly resent our sovereign God for placing us in some wretched situation in which we do not deserve to be ... or for not getting us out of it as soon as we think He should. This is the lie Satan wants us to believe about God. But this is the truth God wants us to believe:

AND WE KNOW THAT GOD CAUSES ALL THINGS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, TO THOSE WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. FOR THOSE WHOM HE FOREKNEW, HE ALSO PREDESTINED TO BECOME CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, SO THAT HE WOULD BE THE FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN. (ROMANS 8:28-29)

Our opponent does not want us to believe that *God is just*. He wants us to complain against His strictness toward us – those who are trying to obey Him – while prospering those who could not care less about His Name or His Word. He wants us to “fume and fuss” when the unrighteous go unpunished. This is the lie Satan wants us to believe about God. But this is the truth God wants us to believe:

REST IN THE LORD AND WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM; DO NOT FRET BECAUSE OF HIM WHO PROSPERS IN HIS WAY, BECAUSE OF THE MAN WHO CARRIES OUT WICKED SCHEMES. CEASE FROM ANGER AND FORSAKE WRATH; DO NOT FRET; IT LEADS ONLY TO EVILDOING. FOR EVILDOERS WILL BE CUT OFF, BUT THOSE WHO WAIT FOR THE LORD, THEY WILL INHERIT THE LAND. YET A LITTLE WHILE AND THE WICKED MAN WILL BE NO MORE; AND YOU WILL LOOK CAREFULLY FOR HIS PLACE AND HE WILL NOT BE THERE. BUT THE HUMBLE WILL INHERIT THE LAND AND WILL DELIGHT THEMSELVES IN ABUNDANT PROSPERITY. (PSALM 37:7-11)

Using the Believer’s Circumstances, “Satan” Will Disrupt Our Labor for the Kingdom in his Attempt to Resist God’s Will ²⁸

BUT WE, BRETHREN, HAVING BEEN TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU FOR A SHORT WHILE – IN PERSON, NOT IN SPIRIT – WERE ALL THE MORE EAGER WITH GREAT DESIRE TO SEE YOUR FACE. FOR WE WANTED TO COME TO YOU – I, PAUL, MORE THAN ONCE – AND YET SATAN HINDERED US. (1ST THESSALONIANS 2:17-18)

Demonic attack seems to be concentrated in places where the work of the Holy Spirit is focused. Satan is not threatened by the mere exertions of human effort, no matter how well-intentioned or skillfully performed. But when the power of God is present and active through the lives and ministries of God’s servants, the devil will sense the threat. And he *will* strike back.

In his effort to resist the work of God, Satan will disrupt the *circumstances* of those who faithfully labor under the control of the Holy Spirit. (He will be able to do so only if allowed by the Sovereign One and only for as long as He permits.) He will use innumerable roadblocks to do so; and they will often come out of the clear blue when least expected. His purpose in doing so is to rob us of time and energy and resources that would have, otherwise, been used to advance the Kingdom of God.

He will use the breakdown of technology and machinery, devices on which we depend: computers, smart phones, automobiles, household appliances, etc.

He will use those who promise to do something for you but, for one reason or another, do not do so.

He will use all sorts of distractions that arise at home, at school, and at work.

He will use financial setbacks through a loss of income.

He will use accidents, and he will use vandalism.

He will use fatigue and sickness and physical disabilities.

This is the resolve of our adversary: to use anyone and anything to resist the servants of God as they labor in the Great Commission.

FROM THAT TIME JESUS BEGAN TO SHOW HIS DISCIPLES THAT HE MUST GO TO JERUSALEM, AND SUFFER MANY THINGS FROM THE ELDERS AND CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES, AND BE KILLED, AND BE RAISED UP ON THE THIRD DAY. PETER TOOK HIM ASIDE AND BEGAN TO REBUKE HIM, SAYING, "GOD FORBID IT, LORD! THIS SHALL NEVER HAPPEN TO YOU." (MATTHEW 16:21-22)

But *this* is the resolve of *our Savior*: to resist Satan (after He is through using him).

BUT HE TURNED AND SAID TO PETER, "GET BEHIND ME, SATAN! YOU ARE A STUMBLING BLOCK TO ME; FOR YOU ARE NOT SETTING YOUR MIND ON GOD'S INTERESTS, BUT MAN'S." (MATTHEW 16:23)

CONCLUSION

This represents the battle plan of Satan. These are the schemes he will use in his attempt to thwart the will of God. Sometimes the assault will be subtle. At other times, it will seem like something has slammed into us. Whichever tactic he uses, this is what the Lord's warriors can expect. These are the enemy's maneuvers for which we should be on the alert.

Beloved saints, Satan is not threatened by a believer who relies primarily on his own intellect ... or logic ... or Biblical knowledge ... or theological education ... or eloquence ... or personality ... or emotions ... or gifts ... or organizational skills. These traits can, most surely, enhance one's ministry; but they cannot alter the eternal wellbeing of a single soul. Only the power of God can change a life. Those whose lives and ministries are guided – daily – by the Word of God and empowered – daily – by the Spirit of God are the only ones who can and will have an impact on eternity.

But as they do, they will draw fire from this killer angel and his savage forces. They can expect a clash with something unearthly.

FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE POWERS, AGAINST THE WORLD FORCES OF THIS DARKNESS, AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF WICKEDNESS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES. (EPHESIANS 6:12)

As the Christ-follower learns how to submit his will to the will of the Father ... as he learns to yield his life more and more to the control of the Holy Spirit ... as he gradually becomes conformed to the image of the Son ... as his life and ministry impacts the lives of others ... the intensity of the battle will increase.

At the same time, his understanding of the stratagems used by demons will also increase. He will learn their ways. He will begin to win more battles than he loses. And he will become acutely aware that he is too weak to fight this enemy on his own. He will, over time, realize his need for the wisdom and power and protection of almighty God for this war.

So, how does one fight against an onslaught of demons? We can only see what they *use* to get at us; but we cannot see *them*! How are we *human beings* supposed to resist *spirit beings*, superhuman creatures who are invisible and powerful and intelligent and deceitful. Surely, we are not supposed to just stand there and take it, are we! Has God left His own children defenseless against this formidable foe?

Of course not! In fact, there is some good news about spiritual warfare. Every cunning tactic, every deadly assault Satan can throw at us can be defeated if we

PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD (EPHESIANS 6:11)

-
- 26** “the great red dragon.” With this title Satan is “portrayed as a terrifying, destructive beast whose wrath against God and His people seeks their total devastation.” (Dickason, C. Fred. *Angels: Elect and Evil*. Chicago. Moody Press, 1975, page 123.)
- 27** “the tempter (peirazo).” In the Greek, this title is a present tense participle. That is, it denotes current and continuous action. Satan is “the one who keeps on enticing,” constantly trying to seduce both unbelievers and believers to break God’s moral law. The lawless one is devoted to his heinous goal of making others lawless.
- 28** “Satan” means “adversary” or “opposer.” *He is the adversary of both God and man.*

THE BATTLE GEAR OF THE CHRISTIAN WARRIOR

FOR THOUGH WE WALK IN THE FLESH, WE DO NOT WAR ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, FOR THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT OF THE FLESH, BUT DIVINELY POWERFUL FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF FORTRESSES. (2ND CORINTHIANS 10:3-4)

THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT. PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL. FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE POWERS, AGAINST THE WORLD FORCES OF THIS DARKNESS, AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF WICKEDNESS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES. THEREFORE, TAKE UP THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO RESIST IN THE EVIL DAY, AND HAVING DONE EVERYTHING, TO STAND FIRM.

STAND FIRM THEREFORE, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, AND HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND HAVING SHOD YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; IN ADDITION TO ALL, TAKING UP THE SHIELD OF FAITH WITH WHICH YOU WILL BE ABLE TO EXTINGUISH ALL THE FLAMING ARROWS OF THE EVIL ONE. AND TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION, AND THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD. WITH ALL PRAYER AND PETITION PRAY AT ALL TIMES IN THE SPIRIT, AND WITH THIS IN VIEW, BE ON THE ALERT WITH ALL PERSEVERANCE AND PETITION FOR ALL THE SAINTS. (EPHESIANS 6:10-18)

We know that the war between God and Satan *has already been decided*. We have seen what our almighty Sovereign did to win this victory over Satan ... that He has *already* shared this triumph with His saints ... and that they *already* carry the status of “super-conquerors.” All these are *past* accomplishments.

This next portion of our study, however, has to do with the *present*. We are about to discover what the “super-conquerors” must do to *experience* that victory. With this section we will consider the actions we must take to overcome Satan’s assaults. But first, let’s begin with an understanding of those things for which we are *not* responsible:

We do not have to know *why* God is allowing Satan to attack us. God does not owe us an explanation for the assault; nor are we in a position to demand one from Him.

Furthermore, we are not responsible to know *what eternal good* this evil angel is trying to thwart.

To experience victory in this war with God’s enemy, we do *not* have to understand what is going on behind the scenes in the spiritual realm. That world is too hidden, too complex, too incomprehensible for us to grasp. But there *is* something we need to *do*:

WE NEED TO LIVE WITH OUR ARMOR ON

That is what matters. We “soldiers of the Cross” need to become familiar with the armor we have at our disposal; and we need to learn how to “put on” each piece. This we shall now do. So first, let’s become acquainted with our battle gear.

THE BELT OF A SINCERE AND READY COMMITMENT TO FIGHT

*STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL ... HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH.
(EPHESIANS 6:14)*

A Description of Roman Armor: the Belt

“The soldier wore a tunic of loose-fitting cloth. Since ancient combat was largely hand-to-hand, a loose tunic was a potential hindrance and danger. A belt was necessary to [tighten up] loosely hanging material.” (*The MacArthur Study Bible*, MacArthur, John, footnote: Ephesians 6:14, page 2477, brackets added)

In “girding” the loose ends of his tunic, the warrior was getting ready to do something that would require of him an intense, concentrated focus. What he is facing is serious. He is about to go into a life-and-death struggle. He, therefore, must be free from entanglement. He cannot be distracted by a loose tunic. He must be prepared to fight.

The Spiritual Significance of “Girding One’s Loins with Truth”

The Apostle Paul was well-acquainted with the challenges of spiritual warfare. He had experienced its ferocity and, therefore, knew that this battlefield was no place for those who were less-than-committed. Perhaps that is why he began his list of battle gear with “truth.”

The Greek word translated “truth” (*altheia*) does *not* refer to “*the Truth*.” With this piece of armor, we are not being told to quote Scripture in our fight against Satan. Most surely, the Word of God *is* part of the Christian’s armor, a piece that will be portrayed as a “sword” later in this list. But this word “*altheia*” does not refer to the *content* of Scripture. Instead, it refers to the *attitude* of the soldier.

Each of Christ’s warriors must enter spiritual combat with a certain mindset. That is, he must have a *sincere commitment* to the fight ... a *truthful resolve* that says, “I mean business.” Noticeably absent from his life is the mere lip service of hypocrisy. Noticeably present is the attitude, “I’m all in.” He faces his life-long battle with spiritual grit, determined to withstand the onslaught of hell’s forces.

“The belt that pulls in all the *spiritual* loose ends is ‘truth’ or, better, ‘truthfulness.’ The idea is of *sincere commitment to fight and win without hypocrisy – self-discipline in devotion to victory*. Everything that hinders is tucked away.” (*The MacArthur Study Bible*, MacArthur, John, footnote: Ephesians 6:14, page 2477)

Because he cannot afford to have a casual attitude toward his enemy, the Christian soldier “girds” himself for battle. That is, he prepares himself for it. He places himself on the alert, clothed with an *ever-present readiness* to separate himself from worldly distractions to focus on God’s calling upon his life.

NO SOLDIER IN ACTIVE SERVICE ENTANGLES HIMSELF IN THE AFFAIRS OF EVERYDAY LIFE, SO THAT HE MAY PLEASE THE ONE WHO ENLISTED HIM AS A SOLDIER. (2ND TIMOTHY 2:4)

THEREFORE, ... LET US ALSO LAY ASIDE EVERY ENCUMBRANCE AND THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGLES US, AND LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US, FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH (HEBREWS 12:1-2)

... PREPARE YOUR MINDS FOR ACTION, KEEP SOBER IN SPIRIT, FIX YOUR HOPE COMPLETELY ON THE GRACE TO BE BROUGHT TO YOU AT THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST. (1ST PETER 1:13)

BE DRESSED IN READINESS, AND KEEP YOUR LAMPS LIT. BE LIKE MEN WHO ARE WAITING FOR THEIR MASTER WHEN HE RETURNS FROM THE WEDDING FEAST, SO THAT THEY MAY IMMEDIATELY OPEN THE DOOR TO HIM WHEN HE COMES AND KNOCKS. BLESSED ARE THOSE SLAVES WHOM THE MASTER WILL FIND ON THE ALERT WHEN HE COMES. (LUKE 12:35-37)

*This, then, is our **belt** for the heat of spiritual battle:
our sincere and ready commitment to fight God’s enemies.*

THE BREASTPLATE OF APPLYING GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL ... HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. (EPHESIANS 6:14)

A Description of Roman Armor: the Breastplate

The breastplate was intended to protect the soldier’s heart and vital organs. To do so, it hung down low, covering his full torso. It was usually sleeveless, allowing the arms to move with ease.

The material used in its construction was, of course, tough-enough to deflect the opponent’s weapons. Some were made of leather or a heavy linen, then covered with thin slices of an animal’s hooves or horns hooked together and sewn on. Others used

little pieces of metal to form a chain mail covering. The breastplate we are most familiar with was constructed of molded metal that protected the soldier's body from the base of his neck to the top of his thighs.

Obviously, if the enemy could pierce the breastplate of the Roman soldier, it would mean his certain defeat.

The Spiritual Significance of "Putting on the Breastplate of Righteousness"

Every believer has in his arsenal a breastplate. It is a spiritual covering of protection, constructed with an extraordinary "material," *the righteousness of Christ*. Tragically, some believers are not aware that they possess this piece of armor. Others know they have it but do not understand its importance. Still others are not sure how to use it.

Satan, however, is *acutely aware* that every saint owns this breastplate. He fully understands its significance. And he knows how it can be effectively used *both defensively and offensively* against his forces. He also knows the exact steps he should take to defeat the uninformed believer.

This breastplate consists of (what we might call) two "layers" of righteousness:

The first layer is known (in theology) as "the *imputed* righteousness of God." The moment one trusts in Jesus Christ as his Savior, he "becomes" – in the sight of God – as righteous as God Himself: immediately ... fully ... and forever.

HE (GOD THE FATHER) MADE HIM (JESUS) WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF, SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:21, PARENTHESES ADDED)

(I DO NOT HAVE) A RIGHTEOUSNESS OF MY OWN DERIVED FROM THE LAW, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH COMES FROM GOD ON THE BASIS OF FAITH. (PHILIPPIANS 3:9, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

The one who defends himself – by faith – with this first "layer" of Christ's righteousness can be *secure in his salvation*. *All the accusations of Satan against him are thwarted*. He knows that he is not keeping himself saved by his own imperfect righteousness but, instead, God is keeping him saved by the perfect righteousness of Christ. His standing before God is *perfect ... and permanent*.

So, the first layer of protection with which the breastplate of righteousness is constructed is the *imputed righteousness of Christ*, given to every believer. This layer forms the *foundation* for the second layer of righteousness, known (in theology) as "*the imparted righteousness of God*." ²⁹

This “second layer of protection” is the *offensive* use of the breastplate. It is a *lifestyle* involving moment by moment choices to live out the righteousness of Christ. The ability to do so, of course, depends upon the power of God to say “No” to sin and “Yes” to obedience. It requires us to live by faith. That is, we are to trust the Holy Spirit for His power *to understand* what we are called to understand, *to be* what we are called to be, and *to do* what we are called to do.

AND DO NOT GO ON PRESENTING THE MEMBERS OF YOUR BODY TO SIN AS INSTRUMENTS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS; BUT PRESENT YOURSELVES TO GOD AS THOSE ALIVE FROM THE DEAD, AND YOUR MEMBERS AS INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS TO GOD. (ROMANS 6:13)

BRETHREN, I DO NOT REGARD MYSELF AS HAVING LAID HOLD OF IT YET; BUT ONE THING I DO: FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND AND REACHING FORWARD TO WHAT LIES AHEAD, I PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL FOR THE PRIZE OF THE UPWARD CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS. (PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14)

The believer’s purity of life is the second layer of our breastplate of righteousness. Those believers who disregard the will of God make their souls vulnerable to the assaults of a relentless demon. But those who submit themselves to God’s moral will *guard their minds and hearts from Satan’s deceptions*. In doing so, they are given this wonderful assurance of victory:

SUBMIT THEREFORE TO GOD. RESIST THE DEVIL AND HE WILL FLEE FROM YOU. (JAMES 4:7)

*This, then, is our **breastplate** in the heat of spiritual battle:
our confidence in God’s power to live out God’s righteousness.*

THE BOOTS OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S STEADFAST SUPPORT

STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL ... HAVING SHOD YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE. (EPHESIANS 6:15)

A Description of Roman Armor: the Boots

Hand-to-hand combat was not uncommon for the Roman soldier. He knew what it meant to fight for his life; and he also knew that the man opposite him was doing the very same thing. He, therefore, needed footwear that allowed him to grip the ground or make quick moves without slipping or falling. Otherwise, he would likely be killed in battle.

The Roman soldier wore a “semi-boot”: half boot, half sandal. It was made of strong leather with straps that secured it tightly to the foot. The sole of this boot was thick and studded on the bottom with hobnails, little pieces of metal driven into the sole to increase traction and improve durability. This design gave the combatant a sure-footedness, enabling him to *stand firm against his adversary*.

The Spiritual Significance of “Shodding One’s Feet with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace”

What exactly does this mean, to “shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace”? At first glance it seems to exhort believers to prepare themselves to share the Gospel. After all, aren’t evangelists praised for their work in Romans 10:15?

HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!

Although evangelism *is* the issue of Romans 10, it is not the issue of Ephesians 6. The passage before us is not focused on the evangelism of an *unbeliever*; it is focused on the conflict of a believer. The command here is not to “go forth and preach the Good News”; the command is to “stand firm and fight the enemy.” So, how is the Gospel of peace connected to spiritual warfare?

Let us first consider the spiritual *condition* of a lost person.

*FOR WHILE WE WERE STILL **HELPLESS**, AT THE RIGHT TIME CHRIST DIED FOR THE **UNGODLY**. FOR ONE WILL HARDLY DIE FOR A RIGHTEOUS MAN; THOUGH PERHAPS FOR THE GOOD MAN SOMEONE WOULD DARE EVEN TO DIE. BUT GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT WHILE WE WERE YET **SINNERS**, CHRIST DIED FOR US. MUCH MORE THEN, HAVING NOW BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, WE SHALL BE **SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD** THROUGH HIM. FOR IF WHILE WE WERE **ENEMIES** WE WERE RECONCILED TO GOD THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON, MUCH MORE, HAVING BEEN RECONCILED, WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE. (ROMANS 5:6-10)*

Notice how the unsaved individual is described. He is helpless. He is ungodly. He is a sinner. God is his enemy, and he is God’s. (They are hostile toward each other.) Nowhere in Scripture is the unbeliever called a child of God. In fact, he is called just the opposite: a child of wrath, deserving the just punishment of the Lake of Fire (Romans 9:22; Ephesians 2:3). This is the lawless nature and deadly plight of the unsaved.

But all that changed at the Cross of Christ. The Father’s wrath, deserved by the sinner, was, instead, poured out upon His Son. And in doing so, the anger of God was satisfied, making it possible for peace to be restored between Him and man.

GOD WAS IN CHRIST RECONCILING THE WORLD TO HIMSELF, NOT COUNTING THEIR TRESPASSES AGAINST THEM (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:19)

This, then, is the Gospel of peace. God and man once had a perfect relationship (in the Garden of Eden). But man violated the will of God (when Adam ate fruit from the forbidden tree), causing the two to become hostile toward each other. But thanks be to the compassion of God, Christ's death restored the peace. That is Good News. If you are a reborn Christ-follower, you and God have *become close friends again*. You have been *reconciled*.

FOR IT WAS THE FATHER'S GOOD PLEASURE ... THROUGH (CHRIST) TO RECONCILE ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF, HAVING MADE PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS. (COLOSSIANS 1:19-20, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

Therefore, just as a Roman soldier depended on his boots to secure his stance in battle, the believer can also be "sure-footed" – by faith – in his spiritual struggle with Satan. How? By securing his mind, heart, and soul upon this bedrock assurance:

GOD IS ON MY SIDE!

Our confidence in God's ever-present support is likened to wearing cleated boots that allow us to stand firm in the war against Satan. Knowing that we are at peace with God, we can *"BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT"* (Ephesians 6:10). Beloved saints, we are the victors. We are the overcomers. We are the triumphant. We are the super-conquerors. In this truth, therefore, let us stand our ground:

IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO IS AGAINST US? HE WHO DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON, BUT DELIVERED HIM OVER FOR US ALL, HOW WILL HE NOT ALSO WITH HIM FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS? WHO WILL BRING A CHARGE AGAINST GOD'S ELECT? GOD IS THE ONE WHO JUSTIFIES. WHO IS THE ONE WHO CONDEMNS? CHRIST JESUS IS HE WHO DIED, YES, RATHER WHO WAS RAISED, WHO IS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, WHO ALSO INTERCEDES FOR US. WHO WILL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST? WILL TRIBULATION, OR DISTRESS, OR PERSECUTION, OR FAMINE, OR NAKEDNESS, OR PERIL, OR SWORD? JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." BUT IN ALL THESE THINGS WE OVERWHELMINGLY CONQUER THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US. FOR I AM CONVINCED THAT NEITHER DEATH, NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS, NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR POWERS, NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATED THING, WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. (ROMANS 8:31-39)

THANKS BE TO GOD, WHO GIVES US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. (1ST CORINTHIANS 15:57)

May this be our ever-present assurance:

GOD IS ON OUR SIDE!

*This provides us with **cleated boots** for the heat of spiritual battle:
our confidence in God's steadfast support.*

THE SHIELD OF FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISED DELIVERANCE

STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL ... TAKING UP THE SHIELD OF FAITH WITH WHICH YOU WILL BE ABLE TO EXTINGUISH ALL THE FLAMING ARROWS OF THE EVIL ONE. (EPHESIANS 6:16)

A Description of Roman Armor: the Shield

The Roman army used several kinds of shields. Each was designed to protect against certain types of offensive weapons (swords, daggers, arrows, etc.), used during certain types of combat (hand-to-hand, artillery, etc.).

The Greek word translated “shield” in Ephesians 6:16 is *thureon*, a large shield (2½ x 4 feet / .75 x 1.2 meters) designed to protect the entire body from arrows shot from a distance. This shield was constructed of wood and overlaid with either metal or thick leather treated with oil.

Sometimes, flaming arrows were used in battle. The archers would fasten to the tips some type of material covered in pitch. Then, right before shooting the arrows, the pitch would be lit. Upon striking the target, the fiery pitch would splatter, causing painful burns and death among the soldiers. The shields overlaid with metal would deflect the arrows; those covered with leather would extinguish the flames.

There were also “darts ... sometimes used in ancient warfare that were literally ‘fiery.’ They were hollow reeds filled with naphtha or some other combustible material and, being set on fire, were shot from slack bows. Whatever the arrows struck, the flames consumed. Water served (only) to increase their violence.” (*Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Logos International, Freeman, James M. pages 462-463).

The Spiritual Significance of “Taking up the Shield of Faith”

It is clear from both the Old and New Testaments that God expects His people to live by faith.

“... the righteous will live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). “... as it is written, ‘BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH’” (Romans 1:17). “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH” (Galatians 3:11). “MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM” (HEBREWS 10:38).

Most certainly, faith is to be the defining trait of a believer’s life. But how does he turn his faith into a “shield” during spiritual warfare? Let us first consider what it means to “have faith” ... then what it means to “live by faith” ... then what it means to live by faith during the heat of spiritual battle.

To Have Faith

First, to have faith is **to trust God**. It is *to believe* what God has said ... *to have an unwavering confidence* in the integrity of His Word. Not in what we *want* His Word to say but in what it really does say, written with black (and sometimes red) ink on the white pages of Scripture.

In the Bible the one, true God has revealed to us His character, His moral will for our lives, the spiritual blessings He has already lavished upon us, and the promises He will keep in the future, all for the good of His people and the glory of His Name.

Concerning His character. To have faith is to believe that the Bible's description of God is fully and forever true: in eternity past ... right now ... and throughout the ages to come.

Concerning His moral will. To have faith is to believe that God does, indeed, love His children, a love that is expressed in each of His commandments. It is to believe that obeying these commands is in our best interest and will bring Him the highest honor.

Concerning His spiritual blessings. To have faith is to believe that the favors God says He lavished upon us when we were saved are truly ours. Every one of them. In full. Right now. And forever.

Concerning His promises. To have faith is to believe that what God says He is going to do in the future He will do. This would include both rewards and punishments.

Faith says, "I trust You, O God. I believe that what You have told me in Your Word is true." This is what it means to *have* faith.

To Live by Faith

Second, to "*live by faith*" is **to obey God**, *trusting Him to provide us with everything we need to do so*. It is to build our lives upon the foundation of His Word ... to address all of life's issues and decisions with the attitude, "What God says about this situation is true. Therefore, by His power I will conduct myself as He directs.

One who has a true and living faith in Jesus Christ will *obey God* more and more over time because he is learning to *trust God* more and more over time. Trust and obedience are the distinguishing traits of his life.

To Live by Faith during the Heat of Spiritual Battle

When it comes to *spiritual conflict*, the faith of a believer says this: “O God, I know from Your Word that Satan wants to lead me astray, even unto death. But I trust You Father, for Your Word assures me that I am already victorious over this evil angel. Therefore, because You say so, I am confident that I am.” Dear friends, these are *statements of faith in the context of spiritual warfare*, each one based upon the written Word of God.

To *live out that faith* while battling Satan, the believer must entrust his eternal soul and wellbeing to God.

Right up front, he is to submit to God’s will. He accepts God’s holy purpose for allowing this evil attack to come upon him. God’s purpose is to conform His child to the image of His Son (Romans 8:28-29), all to the glory of His Name.

He is to resist the devil’s temptations while under attack. In Ephesians 6:16 the Apostle Paul likens these demonic strikes to “flaming arrows.” To live by faith while being assaulted is to *reject* the deceiver’s enticements:

“I can ease the pain of your suffering. But if you want me to do that, you must submit to *my* will, not God’s. Here, this will make you feel better.”

He is to obey God. The believer, instead, clings to God’s promise that, if he says “No” to Satan’s temptations and “Yes” to God’s will, the enemy will eventually flee (James 4:7) and the saint will be stronger than ever (James 1:2-4).

He is to patiently endure. The believer is to trust the Spirit of God to provide him with everything he needs to *patiently endure* the battle that, at times, never seems to ease up. Faith will strengthen him to accept short-term pain in exchange for long-term glory.

*This, then, is our **shield** in the heat of spiritual battle:
our confidence in God’s deliverance from Satan’s destruction.*

THE HELMET OF DELIVERANCE FROM SIN’S PENALTY, POWER, AND PRESENCE

STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL ... TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION. (EPHESIANS 6:17)

A Description of Roman Armor: the Helmet

The helmet, of course, protected the soldier’s head, always a major target in battle. It was made from basically two materials: leather with pieces of metal attached to it or

solid cast helmets. Being hot and uncomfortable, it would be put on by a soldier only when he faced impending danger.

The Spiritual Significance of “Taking the Helmet of Salvation”

The appeal to “take the helmet of salvation” does *not* mean “You need to get saved.”

If this warrior were not already saved, he would not have been instructed to enter this battle with a sincere and ready commitment to fight Satan (the belt of truth). How could he be expected to do that? An unbeliever has no power over Satan.

He would not have been told to live out the holiness of Christ (the breastplate of righteousness). How would that be possible? An unbeliever does not *have* God’s righteousness.

He would not have been told to have confidence in God’s support of him (the boots of the Gospel of peace). How could he have that confidence? He and God are *not* allies; they are enemies.

Nor would he have been told to have faith in God’s promised protection (the shield of faith). How could he do that? An unbeliever has no faith.

No, this warrior is already saved. In fact, the “material” of which his helmet is constructed *is* his salvation. It is a helmet “*made of*” salvation, offering protection from three different kinds of attack, each assault aimed at *the believer’s mind*.

A believer’s salvation has three aspects: the past, the present, and the future. He *has been* saved from sin’s *penalty*. (He has been *justified*.) He *is being* saved from sin’s *power*. (He is being *sanctified*.) And he will be saved from sin’s *presence*. (He *will be glorified*.)

The Past Aspect of Salvation (Justification) ³⁰

The past aspect of salvation rescues the believer from the eternal wrath of God. He no longer lies under God’s death sentence because God’s Son was executed in his place.

THEREFORE THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION (NO PUNISHMENT) FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS. (ROMANS 8:1, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

This truth forms part of the helmet of salvation for the Christian warrior. It relieves the *mental anguish* caused by one of Satan’s most effective lies: the loss of salvation.

“Because your sin is so great, God has condemned you – once again – to eternal death. Even though you *were* His child, your salvation has been taken away from you. And you can never get it back.”

But through faith in Christ’s death, the believer can rest in knowing that he has been rescued – *forever* – from sin’s *penalty*.

WHO WILL BRING A CHARGE AGAINST GOD’S ELECT? GOD IS THE ONE WHO JUSTIFIES. WHO IS THE ONE WHO CONDEMNS? CHRIST JESUS IS HE WHO DIED, YES, RATHER WHO WAS RAISED, WHO IS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, WHO ALSO INTERCEDES FOR US. (ROMANS 8:33-34)

The Present Aspect of Salvation (Sanctification) ³¹

The present aspect of salvation frees the believer from being *dominated* by sin as he learns that he is no longer under its lordship. Throughout his Christian life, he is released from the bondage of one sin ... then another ... and then another as he *learns to claim, by faith*, Christ’s victory over *all* sin’s authority and power.

Now, saints have the power to say “No” to their former master (sin):

HOW SHALL WE WHO DIED TO SIN STILL LIVE IN IT? OR DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT ALL OF US WHO HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH? ... KNOWING THIS, THAT OUR OLD SELF WAS CRUCIFIED WITH HIM, IN ORDER THAT OUR BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DONE AWAY WITH, SO THAT WE WOULD NO LONGER BE SLAVES TO SIN; FOR HE WHO HAS DIED IS FREED FROM SIN. (ROMANS 6:2-3, 6-7)

Now, saints have the power to say “Yes” to their new master (righteousness):

*DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT WHEN YOU PRESENT YOURSELVES TO SOMEONE AS SLAVES FOR OBEDIENCE, YOU ARE SLAVES OF THE ONE WHOM YOU OBEY, EITHER OF SIN RESULTING IN DEATH, OR OF OBEDIENCE RESULTING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS? BUT THANKS BE TO GOD THAT THOUGH YOU WERE SLAVES OF SIN, YOU BECAME OBEDIENT FROM THE HEART TO THAT FORM OF TEACHING TO WHICH YOU WERE COMMITTED, AND HAVING BEEN FREED FROM SIN, YOU BECAME SLAVES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ... FOR JUST AS YOU PRESENTED YOUR MEMBERS AS SLAVES TO IMPURITY AND TO LAWLESSNESS, RESULTING IN FURTHER LAWLESSNESS, SO NOW PRESENT YOUR MEMBERS AS SLAVES TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, RESULTING IN **SANCTIFICATION**. (ROMANS 6:16-19)*

This truth also forms part of the helmet of salvation for the Christian warrior. It drives away from *his mind* a sense of moral failure caused by Satan’s lie:

“You call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ! Your life is a detriment to His reputation. You are nothing but a failure.”

Through faith in Christ's overcoming work, the believer can rest in knowing that he is constantly being delivered from the tyranny of sin's *power*. And as he matures in Christ, he will – over time – sin less and less (but he will be bothered about the sins he *does* commit more and more). Now he has the motivation of God to resist temptation. Now he has the power of God to walk in newness of life.

The Future Aspect of Salvation (Glorification)

The future aspect of salvation will deliver the believer from the very *presence* of sin.

Because he is identified with Jesus Christ, every believer is “a marked man,” frequently moving from one conflict to the next, facing different kinds of adversaries as he goes through life. His fight is with sin: its tempters, its temptations, and its corruptions. And it seems to go on and on and on (interrupted by periods of refreshment).

“Will this war with sin ever stop? Will I ever *fully* possess *everlasting* joy and honor? Or will eternity just be more of the same? Isn't there a finish line to this struggle?”

According to the Scriptures, the believer has the *assurance* that there is!

FOR I CONSIDER THAT THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY THAT IS TO BE REVEALED TO US ... FOR IN HOPE WE HAVE BEEN SAVED, BUT HOPE THAT IS SEEN IS NOT HOPE; FOR WHO HOPES FOR WHAT HE ALREADY SEES? BUT IF WE HOPE FOR WHAT WE DO NOT SEE, WITH PERSEVERANCE WE WAIT EAGERLY FOR IT. (ROMANS 8:18, 24-25)

This “hope” that the saints have is not a mere wish for something good to happen. This is not a “maybe it will; maybe it won't” kind of anticipation. When the word “hope” is connected to God's sovereign plan for His people, there is nothing “maybe” about it. It is not a possibility. It is not even a probability. We do not have to “keep our fingers crossed and ‘hope’ for the best.” We can be sure that what we have been promised, we *will* be given. It is guaranteed. We can take it to the bank.

THIS HOPE WE HAVE AS AN ANCHOR OF THE SOUL, A HOPE BOTH SURE AND STEADFAST (HEBREWS 6:19)

So, just what is this “hope”? This “anchor of the soul”? This blessed assurance? As MacArthur explains: “Hope for *the fulfillment of God's salvation-promises* is the ‘anchor of the soul,’ keeping the believer secure during the times of trouble and turmoil” (*The MacArthur Study Bible*, Thomas Nelson, MacArthur, John, footnote, Hebrews 6:19, page 2593).

This, then, is the guarantee of our salvation: *the day when all our battles with sin and its consequences will finally be over:*

- when – upon seeing our Savior face-to-Face for the first time – this world’s temporary afflictions stop, and the fullness of eternal glory begins

HE WHO RAISED THE LORD JESUS WILL RAISE US ALSO WITH JESUS AND WILL PRESENT US WITH YOU ... THEREFORE WE DO NOT LOSE HEART, BUT THOUGH OUR OUTER MAN IS DECAYING, YET OUR INNER MAN IS BEING RENEWED DAY BY DAY. FOR MOMENTARY, LIGHT AFFLICTION IS PRODUCING FOR US AN ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY FAR BEYOND ALL COMPARISON. (2ND CORINTHIANS 4:14, 16-17)

- when – upon seeing our Savior face-to-Face for the first time – the battle with our own physical frailties is finished

FOR OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN, FROM WHICH ALSO WE EAGERLY WAIT FOR A SAVIOR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST; WHO WILL TRANSFORM THE BODY OF OUR HUMBLE STATE INTO CONFORMITY WITH THE BODY OF HIS GLORY, BY THE EXERTION OF THE POWER THAT HE HAS EVEN TO SUBJECT ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF. (PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21)

- when – upon seeing our Savior face-to-Face for the first time – the struggle between the indwelling Holy Spirit and our sin nature ceases, resulting in the perfect likeness of Christ

BELOVED, NOW WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND IT HAS NOT APPEARED AS YET WHAT WE WILL BE. WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE APPEARS, WE WILL BE LIKE HIM, BECAUSE WE WILL SEE HIM JUST AS HE IS. AND EVERYONE WHO HAS THIS HOPE FIXED ON HIM PURIFIES HIMSELF, JUST AS HE IS PURE. (1ST JOHN 3:2-3)

- when – at the Judgment Seat of Christ – the rewards for our labor (for which we patiently wait) are fully revealed and joyfully bestowed

FOR NO MAN CAN LAY A FOUNDATION OTHER THAN THE ONE WHICH IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. NOW IF ANY MAN BUILDS ON THE FOUNDATION WITH GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, WOOD, HAY, STRAW, EACH MAN’S WORK WILL BECOME EVIDENT; FOR THE DAY WILL SHOW IT BECAUSE IT IS TO BE REVEALED WITH FIRE, AND THE FIRE ITSELF WILL TEST THE QUALITY OF EACH MAN’S WORK. IF ANY MAN’S WORK WHICH HE HAS BUILT ON IT REMAINS, HE WILL RECEIVE A REWARD. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:11-14)

- when – at the Second Coming of Christ – creation’s curse is removed

FOR THE ANXIOUS LONGING OF THE CREATION WAITS EAGERLY FOR THE REVEALING OF THE SONS OF GOD. FOR THE CREATION WAS SUBJECTED TO FUTILITY, NOT WILLINGLY, BUT BECAUSE OF HIM WHO SUBJECTED IT, IN HOPE THAT THE CREATION ITSELF ALSO WILL BE SET FREE FROM ITS SLAVERY TO CORRUPTION INTO THE FREEDOM OF THE GLORY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD. FOR WE KNOW THAT THE WHOLE CREATION GROANS AND SUFFERS THE PAINS OF CHILDBIRTH TOGETHER UNTIL NOW. (ROMANS 8:19-22)

- when – after the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth is over – the presence of Satan and his angels comes to a complete and victorious end

*AND THE DEVIL WHO DECEIVED THEM WAS THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE
.... (REVELATION 20:10)*

- and when – after the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth is over – this corrupt world is incinerated (2nd Peter 3:7, 10-12), and new heavens and a new earth are created (2nd Peter 3:13)

*THEN I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH; FOR THE FIRST HEAVEN AND THE FIRST EARTH PASSED AWAY, AND THERE IS NO LONGER ANY SEA ... AND HE WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR FROM THEIR EYES; AND THERE WILL NO LONGER BE ANY DEATH; THERE WILL NO LONGER BE ANY MOURNING, OR CRYING, OR PAIN; THE FIRST THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY."
(REVELATION 21:1, 4)*

These truths also form part of the helmet of salvation for the Christian warrior. It drives away *the oppressive weight of discouragement and threats* caused by Satan's lies:

"Your suffering for the cause of Christ is for nothing. The time, money and effort you are investing in God's Kingdom is going to blow away like dust in the wind. No one is listening to you. Your family and friends are still lost. There is no one growing in his faith. You are having no eternal impact whatsoever in the lives of others. Your battle scars are many; and the medals that await you are pitifully few. You're weary, aren't you. But I'm not; and I intend to chew you up and spit you out. Your fight with me is in vain. It's time for you to throw in the towel."

But that is all a lie. And by taking the helmet of salvation, we remind ourselves of these truths: that all our labors and all our sacrifices and all our sufferings are *not* in vain ... that there *is* an end to this uphill battle with sin and the demons of hell ... and that what is in front us is an eternal weight of glory. Therefore,

LET US NOT LOSE HEART IN DOING GOOD, FOR IN DUE TIME WE WILL REAP IF WE DO NOT GROW WEARY. (GALATIANS 6:9)

*... AND LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US, FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH, WHO FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME, AND HAS SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD.
(HEBREWS 12:1-2)*

*This, then, is our **helmet** in the heat of spiritual battle:
our assurance that the penalty for our sins **has been** fully and forever paid in full,
that the chains of our sinful patterns **are being** broken,
and that our struggle with sin **will** one day **be** over.*

THE SWORD OF GOD'S WORD

STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL ... TAKE THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD. (EPHESIANS 6:17)

A Description of Roman Armor: the Sword

In Ephesians 6:14-17 the Apostle Paul mentions six items used by the Roman soldier in battle. The first five – the belt, the breastplate, the boots, the shield, and the helmet – were all pieces of armor designed for *protection*. The sixth item, the sword, is the only *weapon* recorded in Paul's list of battle gear.

The Roman army had more than one kind of sword in its arsenal. The broadsword (*rhomphaia*) was a two-edged sword, measuring up to 40 inches or more in length (longer than a yardstick). Because of its size, the warrior had to use both hands to handle the broadsword.

The sword of Ephesians 6, however, was the everyday sword used by the Roman soldier. The *machaira* was a smaller weapon, anywhere between a 6-inch dagger and an 18-inch sword. It was carried in a sheath on the side of the soldier and used in close combat.³²

There is something else about this sword we should not miss. The *machaira* was used for both defensive and offensive purposes, defensively to protect oneself and offensively to defeat the opponent.

The Spiritual Significance of "Taking the Sword of the Spirit (the Word of God)"

As with all the other pieces of armor, the sword is yet another physical symbol of the spiritual battle gear we are to use in our fight against the spiritual forces of wickedness.

We are told that this is "the sword of the Spirit." This phrase could be translated "the *spiritual sword*." We are to "take the spiritual sword." The fact is, all the armor listed is spiritual in *nature*: the belt is spiritual ... the breastplate is spiritual ... the boots are spiritual ... and so forth.

*JUST AS A PHYSICAL BATTLE REQUIRES PHYSICAL WEAPONS,
A SPIRITUAL BATTLE REQUIRES SPIRITUAL WEAPONS.*

FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE POWERS, AGAINST THE WORLD FORCES OF THIS DARKNESS, AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF WICKEDNESS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES. (EPHESIANS 6:12)

FOR THOUGH WE WALK IN THE FLESH, WE DO NOT WAR ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, FOR THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT OF THE FLESH, BUT DIVINELY POWERFUL FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF FORTRESSES. (2ND CORINTHIANS 10:3-4)

There is also another way to correctly understand this phrase, “the sword *of* the Spirit.” It could also be translated “the sword *by* the Spirit.” That is, we are told of its *origin* ... from where this sword comes. This sword is given to believers “by the Holy Spirit.” So, putting these two ideas together, the sword of Ephesians 6:17 is a *spiritual sword*, given to Christians *by the Holy Spirit*.

“Forging” the Spiritual Sword

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Fight

The Apostle Paul identifies this sword as being “the Word of God.” But don’t unbelievers have copies of the Bible? What makes the Scriptures a *spiritual sword* to the Christ-follower but not to the Christ-rejecter? The difference, of course, is that the Holy Spirit *indwells* the believer but not the unbeliever.

FOR TO US GOD REVEALED (HIS WISDOM) THROUGH THE SPIRIT; FOR THE SPIRIT SEARCHES ALL THINGS, EVEN THE DEPTHS OF GOD.

FOR WHO AMONG MEN KNOWS THE THOUGHTS OF A MAN EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF THE MAN WHICH IS IN HIM? EVEN SO THE THOUGHTS OF GOD NO ONE KNOWS EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

NOW WE HAVE RECEIVED, NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHO IS FROM GOD, SO THAT WE MAY KNOW THE THINGS FREELY GIVEN TO US BY GOD, WHICH THINGS WE ALSO SPEAK, NOT IN WORDS TAUGHT BY HUMAN WISDOM, BUT IN THOSE TAUGHT BY THE SPIRIT, COMBINING SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS WITH SPIRITUAL WORDS.

*BUT A NATURAL MAN (AN UNBELIEVER, ONE WHO DOES **NOT** HAVE THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT) DOES NOT ACCEPT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, FOR THEY ARE FOOLISHNESS TO HIM; AND HE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY APPRAISED. (1ST CORINTHIANS 2:10-14, PARENTHESES ADDED)*

It is by the Holy Spirit’s ministry of “illumination” that the mind of a believer is awakened to *understand* the Scriptures and *apply* Its principles to his life. In doing so, this resident Truth-Teacher transforms the Word of God into a spiritual weapon powerful enough to silence and drive off the gates of hell.

The Role of Bible Study in the Fight

There is a second requirement for God's Word to be forged into a spiritual sword. Not only must the Christian warrior be indwelt by the Spirit of God; he must also *know* the Word of God. He must bathe his mind in the Scriptures to know how to apply its truths to each assault he faces. Through Bible study, his sword is sharpened for the spiritual war.

This is what Jesus did. When challenged by His opponents to defend His teachings or His actions, He would quote the Word of God (Matthew 21:42, 22:29, 26:54-56; Mark 12:10, 24, 14:49; Luke 4:21; John 10:34-35). "It is written" ... "It is written" ... "It is written" (Matthew 4:3-10). Obviously, from an early age Jesus had saturated His mind with the Scriptures.

Using the Spiritual Sword

As a weapon the Word of God has both defensive and offensive purposes. It is used defensively to *stop* – at least temporarily – the oppressive lies of the enemy. It is also used offensively to *stabilize* the believer in his faith, equipping him to face any future "run ins" with an enemy he most surely will encounter. (Knowing the Scriptures can *prevent* an assault from *accomplishing Satan's purpose* and *place* the believer *on alert*, preparing him for future attacks.)

The Defensive Use of the Sword

The best example of using the Scriptures *defensively* is our Lord's responses to Satan's temptations in Matthew 4. We should take note that (1) Jesus is being *led by the Spirit of God* in His battle with Satan, and (2) He responds to temptation by *quoting Scripture*.

1st Temptation

THEN JESUS WAS LED UP BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS TO BE TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL. AND AFTER HE HAD FASTED FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS, HE THEN BECAME HUNGRY. AND THE TEMPTER CAME AND SAID TO HIM, "IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD, COMMAND THAT THESE STONES BECOME BREAD.

(the will of God) It was God's will that Jesus fast for 40 days and nights. Satan was tempting Jesus to use His authority as God's Son to satisfy His hunger, violating His Father's will in the process.

(the deception) "What is *best* for You is possible to have **by disobeying** the will of God."

(the Truth) But He answered and said, "*It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'*"
(Matthew 4:1-4, parenthesis added)

2nd Temptation

THEN THE DEVIL TOOK HIM INTO THE HOLY CITY AND HAD HIM STAND ON THE PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE, AND SAID TO HIM, "IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD, THROW YOURSELF DOWN; FOR IT IS WRITTEN, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; AND 'ON THEIR HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"

(the will of God) It is inappropriate for someone to expect God to protect him as he foolishly places himself *out of God's will* (in this case, unnecessarily placing oneself in a life-and-death situation). Satan was tempting Jesus to commit a reckless act of folly (stupidity) in the name of "faith."

(the deception) "God promises to take care of you. Do you really believe that? If you do, you should have no fear. Let's see just how strong your faith is. Force Him to prove His faithfulness to you and see if He does."

(the Truth) Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, *it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'*" (Matthew 4:5-7, parenthesis added)

3rd Temptation

AGAIN, THE DEVIL TOOK HIM TO A VERY HIGH MOUNTAIN AND SHOWED HIM ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD AND THEIR GLORY; AND HE SAID TO HIM, "ALL THESE THINGS I WILL GIVE YOU, IF YOU FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP ME."

(the will of God) It was the Father's will that Jesus be crucified for the sins of the world before being crowned to reign over the nations. He must wear a crown of thorns as Savior before wearing a crown of glory as Sovereign. Satan was tempting Him to bypass the Cross.

(the deception) "My will is easier than God's will. I will not force you to endure hardship. I will give you pleasure and glory without going through the suffering that comes from following God's will. But I will do so only if you worship me."

(the Truth) Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For *it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'*" Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him. (Matthew 4:8-11)

As we watch our Lord quote Scripture time and time again, one thing becomes clear. To address their assaults, Christ knew *exactly* where in God's Word to take His adversaries. We should take note of that. Our Lord handled the Scriptures *with precision*. He did not haphazardly swing this spiritual sword at His antagonists. Instead, He thrust *with pinpoint accuracy* into the bullseye of each target ... that is, into the heart of each Satanic lie.

*GOD'S WORD IS A DEADLY THREAT TO GOD'S FOES
WHEN HIS POWER IS APPLIED TO ITS TRUTHS
WITH PRECISION.*

The Offensive Use of the Sword

TEACH ME GOOD DISCERNMENT AND KNOWLEDGE, FOR I BELIEVE IN YOUR COMMANDMENTS. (PSALM 119:66)

Spiritual discernment is the ability to distinguish between truth and error. But because Satan often mixes in some truth with his lies, perhaps a better description of discernment is this:

*THE ABILITY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN WHAT IS TRUE AND WHAT IS ALMOST TRUE
(CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON)*

To have this ability, one must be indwelt by the Spirit of God; and he must be grounded in the Word of God. He can recognize what is false because he knows what is true. God's Truth, the Bible, is his "plumb line." It is what he uses to measure the integrity of what he hears or reads.

So, for the one who is born of God's Spirit to become more and more sensitive to that which is true – versus that which is "almost true" – he must

*BE DILIGENT TO PRESENT (HIMSELF) APPROVED TO GOD AS A WORKMAN WHO DOES NOT NEED TO BE
ASHAMED, ACCURATELY HANDLING THE WORD OF TRUTH. (2ND TIMOTHY 2:15)*

*AS A RESULT, WE ARE NO LONGER TO BE CHILDREN, TOSSED HERE AND THERE BY WAVES AND
CARRIED ABOUT BY EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE, BY THE TRICKERY OF MEN, BY CRAFTINESS IN
DECEITFUL SCHEMING; BUT SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, WE ARE TO GROW UP IN ALL ASPECTS
INTO HIM WHO IS THE HEAD, EVEN CHRIST. (EPHESIANS 4:14-15)*

This is how the Christian warrior uses his spiritual sword *offensively*. He prepares himself for the next spiritual battle, before it even begins, by *studying God's Word*. And he seeks to protect his brothers and sisters in Christ from Satan's cunning craftiness by *teaching* them *God's Word*. Each time the Scriptures are faithfully preached from the pulpit or explained to one's children ... or friends ... or co-workers ... or classmates ... or small group, Satan's kingdom of darkness is wounded.

Beloved saints, God's Word is the *only effective weapon* we have been given to fight against the doctrines of demons. To triumph over these powerful foes, we must saturate our souls with God's Word. Like dried-out sponges tossed into the ocean, let us "absorb" ... let us "soak in" ... God's Truth. Let us fill our hearts and minds to the brim with the Scriptures. For the sake of the Name and Kingdom of Jesus Christ, let this be our resolve:

*IF WE HAVE TIME TO READ JUST ONE THING, THEN LET IT BE THE BIBLE ...
NOT BOOKS ABOUT THE BIBLE.*

*This, then, is our **sword** in the heat of spiritual battle:
our confidence in God's Truth
to stop – for a season – the enemy's oppressive lies presently confronting the believer
and to stabilize the believer in his faith for the future conflicts he will surely encounter.*

SUMMARY

*FOR THOUGH WE WALK IN THE FLESH, WE DO NOT WAR ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, FOR THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT OF THE FLESH, BUT DIVINELY POWERFUL FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF FORTRESSES.
(2ND CORINTHIANS 10:3-4)*

Soldiers of Christ, we have been told to **be** something as we face the vilest, the most intelligent, the most deceitful, and the most powerful spirit being in God's creation. We who are weak in our *own* strength have been told to

*BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF **His** MIGHT. (EPHESIANS 6:10)*

We have also been told *how* to **do** that. We have been commanded to

PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL. (EPHESIANS 6:11)

And so, we carefully considered the spiritual significance of each piece of our God-given battle gear. We are to put on

the *belt* of our sincere and ready commitment to fight God's enemies,

the *breastplate* of confidence in God's power to live out God's righteousness,

the *boots* of confidence in God's steadfast support,

the *shield* of confidence in God's deliverance from Satan's destruction,

the *helmet* of assurance that the penalty for our sins *has* been fully and forever paid, that the power of sin *is* being broken, and that our struggle with sin *will* one day be over,

and the *sword* of confidence in God's Truth to *stop* – at least temporarily – the enemy's oppressive lies confronting us and to *stabilize* our faith for those future conflicts we will surely encounter.

This, Christian warrior, is the full armor of God. But there is yet one final issue to consider, and that is the issue of *remaining on the alert*. What should we do to “live with our armor on” *each day*? What is the battle plan of the triumphant Church?

-
- 29 One cannot impart what he does not possess. In this case, one cannot live out the righteousness of Christ unless he possesses that righteousness. Both “layers” of righteousness are necessary materials of this piece of armor.
- 30 For a further discussion on the *past* aspect of salvation, see above, “Because of the Death of Christ, the *Penalty* for Sin Was Paid,” pages 41-42.
- 31 For a further discussion on the *present* aspect of salvation, see above, “Because of the Death of Christ, the *Power* of Sin Was Broken,” pages 42-43.
- 32 The *machaira* was the kind of sword carried by those who came to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus (Matthew 26:47). It was this type of sword used by Peter to cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant (John 18:10). And when Herod the king ordered James, the brother of John, to be “put to death with a sword” (Acts 12:2), this was the kind of sword used.

THE BATTLE PLAN OF THE TRIUMPHANT CHURCH

By now we should be fully convinced of the Church's victory over Satan. By the death, resurrection, and exaltation of our Savior, this evil angel has been defeated. This crushing deathblow to the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15) has been fully and forevermore accomplished.

As a result, those who are "in Christ" share in His victory. Because Christ is triumphant, the Church is triumphant. Now identified with the Victorious One, the redeemed of God are no longer under the thumb of Satan's authority and power. We have been liberated from the spiritual prison of our former dictator.

FOR HE RESCUED US FROM THE DOMAIN OF DARKNESS, AND TRANSFERRED US TO THE KINGDOM OF HIS BELOVED SON. (COLOSSIANS 1:13)

Furthermore, we should know by now that we have been given all the battle gear we need to *experience* our release from the tyranny of this spiritual underworld. We do not have to wait for Christ's Return to experience that release. It is ours to have right now ... today. In fact, we have been exhorted to "live with this armor on"!

But how? How does one "put on the full armor of God" *every day*? There are four (so-called) "Christian disciplines" that we should observe *daily*. (Actually, it seems better to call them "Christian devotions," for all of them are designed to cultivate a devotion to the One Who has treated us with nothing but kindness.)

What follows is the battle plan of the triumphant Church. It is a strategy intended to keep us who are warriors in Christ's army on high alert ... four disciplines that will enable us to "live with our armor on." As we practice these daily devotions, our Father is teaching us how to fight. Dear friends, may we learn well how to do so; for if we are resolved to live for God in the power of God, we can expect Satan to push back.

READ AND MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD

It is impossible to thwart the assaults of a demon apart from the Word of God. To be victorious in our fight against the lies of a highly intelligent, cunning, supernatural being, we must turn our minds into “arsenals of Truth.” This is accomplished through a daily reflection upon the Scriptures. Our triumph over Satan begins here: by reading and meditating on God’s Word.

I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU, FATHERS, BECAUSE YOU KNOW HIM (CHRIST JESUS) WHO HAS BEEN FROM THE BEGINNING. I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU, YOUNG MEN, BECAUSE YOU ARE STRONG, AND THE WORD OF GOD ABIDES IN YOU, AND YOU HAVE OVERCOME THE EVIL ONE. (1ST JOHN 2:14; PARENTHESIS ADDED)

Brothers and sisters, this counsel bears repeating. And it should not be ignored. If you have time in your day to read *just one thing*, then let it be the Bible. Not books *about* the Bible, but the Bible itself. If that means cancelling all your secular – and Christian – magazine subscriptions or putting your library – including your Christian library – “under lock and key,” then so be it. If it means being the only believer you know who has not read the latest Christian “buzz book,” then so be it. If it means giving away all your devotionals or trashing every online course *we* offer, then so be it.

To read and meditate on God’s Word will not prevent the father of lies from *attacking* you. Nevertheless, nourishing yourself with God’s Truth is your first line of defense against his *defeat* of you.

Are you *immersing* your mind in the Scriptures? Are you training yourself for battle, not just by reading your favorite books of the Bible (such as the Psalms and Proverbs, John and Philippians) but by pondering *the entire counsel of God*? If not, you need to find – and use – a daily Bible reading schedule. *There is no other way to counter the lies of Satan.*

QUOTE GOD'S WORD

STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL ... TAKE THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD. (EPHESIANS 6:17)

When attacked by the forces of Satan, we are encouraged to “take” the Word of God. We are to “unsheathe” His Truth which we have been storing – over time – in our mind’s “arsenal.” Instead of relying upon our own cleverness or logic, we are to grab hold of the only weapon God has given us to use, “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

But how does the reborn warrior *take* the sword of the Spirit? What does it look like to *grab hold and thrust this weapon into the heart of Satan's deceptions*?

The Greek word translated "word" in Ephesians 6:17 is *rhema*. The sword of the Spirit is "the *rhema* of God." This word carries the idea of "an utterance." That is, the *rhema* of God refers to more than "the written Word" (*logos*). It refers to "the *stated* Word." For the Bible to become a spiritual sword, we must *quote* it (mentally or verbally).

But to whom are we to *communicate* the Scriptures?

First, for the sake of their *salvation*, we are to communicate God's Word (that is, explain the Gospel) to *unbelievers*. Otherwise, they cannot be saved.

NOW I MAKE KNOWN TO YOU, BRETHREN, THE GOSPEL WHICH I PREACHED TO YOU, WHICH ALSO YOU RECEIVED, IN WHICH ALSO YOU STAND, BY WHICH ALSO YOU ARE SAVED, IF YOU HOLD FAST THE WORD WHICH I PREACHED TO YOU, UNLESS YOU BELIEVED IN VAIN. (1ST CORINTHIANS 15:1-2)

FOR "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." HOW THEN WILL THEY CALL ON HIM IN WHOM THEY HAVE NOT BELIEVED? HOW WILL THEY BELIEVE IN HIM WHOM THEY HAVE NOT HEARD? AND HOW WILL THEY HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER? HOW WILL THEY PREACH UNLESS THEY ARE SENT? JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS! ... SO, FAITH COMES FROM HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF CHRIST. (ROMANS 10:13-15, 17)

Furthermore, for the sake of their *sanctification*, we are to communicate God's Word to *other believers*. We are to fill the mind of the Church with His Truth.

ALL SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED BY GOD AND PROFITABLE FOR TEACHING, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS; SO THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE ADEQUATE, EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK. (2ND TIMOTHY 3:16-17)

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST RICHLY DWELL WITHIN YOU, WITH ALL WISDOM TEACHING AND ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER WITH PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, SINGING WITH THANKFULNESS IN YOUR HEARTS TO GOD. (COLOSSIANS 3:16)

And finally, for the sake of our own *spiritual wellbeing and deliverance from Satan's oppressions*, we are to quote God's Word. We are to remind *ourselves* – mentally or verbally – of its truths.

FINALLY, BRETHREN, WHATEVER IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS HONORABLE, WHATEVER IS RIGHT, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS OF GOOD REPUTE, IF THERE IS ANY EXCELLENCE AND IF ANYTHING WORTHY OF PRAISE, DWELL ON THESE THINGS. THE THINGS YOU HAVE LEARNED AND RECEIVED AND HEARD AND SEEN IN ME, PRACTICE THESE THINGS, AND THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU. (PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9)

The Bible, therefore, *becomes* a weapon in the hands of those whose testimonies pierce the core of Satan's lies. To quote it to others and to remind ourselves of its truths is a major step toward victory in our struggle against the enemy.

FOR THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND ACTIVE AND SHARPER THAN ANY TWO-EDGED SWORD, AND PIERCING AS FAR AS THE DIVISION OF SOUL AND SPIRIT, OF BOTH JOINTS AND MARROW, AND ABLE TO JUDGE THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTIONS OF THE HEART. (HEBREWS 4:12)

CLING TO GOD THROUGH PRAYER

It should not surprise us that, after the Apostle Paul presents the spiritual armor we are to "take up" for our battle with Satan (Ephesians 6:13-17), the very next verse is an exhortation to pray.

WITH ALL PRAYER AND PETITION PRAY AT ALL TIMES IN THE SPIRIT, AND WITH THIS IN VIEW, BE ON THE ALERT WITH ALL PERSEVERANCE AND PETITION FOR ALL THE SAINTS (EPHESIANS 6:18)

For many of us – perhaps even for all of us – it takes a failure or two (or three or four) before the *necessity* of Ephesians 6:18 sinks in. We may have read Ephesians 6:13-17 a dozen times. We may even have it memorized. We may have heard a dozen preachers describe what each piece of Roman armor looks like. And we may have heard them tell us how each piece is a physical symbol of the spiritual armor we need for a spiritual war. So, equipped with this information, we march out into the world, naively assuming that Bible *knowledge* is enough to get the job done ... only to be severely thrashed by an army of demons that can quote the Bible from memory.

The fact is, to be victorious in battle, we need more than a knowledge of the Scriptures (as important as that is). We must also *cling* to the power of almighty God. We must *pour out our souls* before His throne to provide the enduring faith and courage and protection we need to face an enemy that – apart from the power of our divine High Priest – can slam us to the ground.

This was the appeal made in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of our Lord's arrest. Knowing that the approaching danger would tempt the disciples to abandon Him, Jesus warned them:

KEEP WATCHING AND PRAYING THAT YOU MAY NOT ENTER INTO TEMPTATION; THE SPIRIT IS WILLING, BUT THE FLESH IS WEAK. (MATTHEW 26:41)

But the warning was ignored. And the result was inevitable. Eleven men who, just a few hours earlier, had pledged their rock-solid loyalty to their Lord and Friend ran for their lives. And to make matters worse, one of those disciples refused to admit he even

knew his Master, not once ... not twice ... but three times. This individual is the very one who exhorts *us* to do what he himself had failed to do:

BE OF SOBER SPIRIT, BE ON THE ALERT. YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR. BUT RESIST HIM, FIRM IN YOUR FAITH
(1ST PETER 5:8-9)

Beloved saints, *much of this war is to be conducted in the room where we pray.* This is where we join forces with the Lord of hosts. It is where we learn how to “slug it out,” not by using the *world’s* fists but by using the *Spirit of God’s* “fists” (so to speak) ... not by using words that satisfy our *flesh* but by using words that satisfy *the Holy Spirit* ... fervently seeking, through prayer, a response to the assault that does not violate the holiness of God ... trusting the almighty One for the wisdom and power and stamina to experience the already-won victory.

Borrowing from John MacArthur, to pray in faith is to

“have an *absolute, unreserved confidence* in what (our) mind knows to be true – the kind of heartfelt confidence that affects (our) actions and decisions.” We are to “*embrace by faith* what God has revealed to be true.” (*The MacArthur Study Bible*, MacArthur, John, footnote: Romans 6:11, page 2334, parentheses added)

Our thoughts and words and deeds must be bathed in “prayer at all times.” But let us not be naïve. Being “on the alert with all perseverance” and praying “for all the saints” will not prevent this “roaring lion” from *attacking* us. Indeed, if we threaten his kingdom, he most surely *will* attack. But by earnestly pleading for *the composure of Christ* during Satan’s assaults will ensure our certain *triumph*.

OBEDY GOD

We are *reading and meditating on God’s Word* each day, storing away His Truth in our mind’s “arsenal.” We are *quoting God’s Word* (either mentally or verbally) to counter the lies of Satan. And we are *depending upon God* to infuse His Word with power that we might gain the victory over the enemy. But the battle plan would not be complete without obedience. We are to “take up our cross” daily. That is, we are to submit our will each day to the will of the Father. (That is what it means to be a *disciple* of Christ.)

Dear Church, our allegiance is either to God or to Satan. There is no other authority in the picture. When we say “Yes” to the one, we are automatically saying “No” to the other. To submit to the will of one is to “resist” the will of the other. To obey the one is to “take our stand against” the other.

But let us not miss this wonderful promise. When we say “Yes” to God’s will (when we obey Him), we have a promise from the One Who cannot lie that Satan will stop enticing us to sin and will run from us ... at least, for a season.

SUBMIT THEREFORE TO GOD. RESIST THE DEVIL AND HE WILL FLEE FROM YOU. (JAMES 4:7)

That does not mean that our circumstances will change. Maybe they will; maybe they will not. Either way, because our resolve to resist the demonic realm has been tempered, we have turned defeat into victory. No doubt, these evil angels will keep coming back. But each time we stand firm against them, we are transformed more and more into what Jesus Christ has *already made us to be* at “the Place of a Skull,” from the inside of a tomb with a rolled-away stone, and from heaven’s realm at the right hand of the Father.

We have become spiritually dead to all we used to be before our salvation.

Our crucifixion with Christ has freed us from being defeated by sin.

We have been delivered from sin’s power over us.

We have the power to drop all our former patterns of sinful behavior.

Now, we are alive to God!

Having been raised from the dead with Christ, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to walk in newness of life.

So then, brothers and sisters, may this be our victory shout:

THANKS BE TO GOD ALMIGHTY!

SATAN AND HIS ARMY ARE DEFEATED!

WE ARE THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT!

CONCLUSION

We have come a long way in this study of our struggle with the demonic realm:

We have been careful to note that our battle with Satan is no illusion. It is a reality, validated by the testimony of Jesus, confirmed by the writings of the apostles, and experienced by every reborn follower of Christ who has ever threatened the interests of this evil creature.

We have considered the character and status of this anointed cherub *before* his fall. We know about his failed attempt to overthrow the throne of God. And we are now somewhat familiar with our adversary's present status and character. Together, we have begun to fulfill one of the basic laws of military science: "Know your enemy."

We have been assured that spiritual victory is ours, accomplished by the Son of God and shared with the saints of God. We have been given everything we need to experience the victory that has already been secured for us by the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ Jesus our Savior and by the arrival of the indwelling Spirit of God.

But we have also been warned that our conquered foe has no intention of waving the white flag of surrender.

Therefore, we have been placed on alert regarding the different tactics he uses to undermine the witness of God's Word, rupture the witness of the Church, and silence the witness of a believer's life and ministry.

We have become familiar with the battle gear issued to every Christian combatant for this war: a belt, a breastplate, a pair of boots, a shield, a helmet, and a sword ... spiritual armor for a spiritual war.

And lastly, we have studied the battle plan that we, the triumphant Church, are to follow in this fight for our spiritual lives. We are to read and meditate on God's Word, quote God's Word, cling to God through prayer, and obey God.

And so dearly beloved,

BE OF SOBER SPIRIT, BE ON THE ALERT. YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR. BUT RESIST HIM, FIRM IN YOUR FAITH, KNOWING THAT THE SAME EXPERIENCES OF SUFFERING ARE BEING ACCOMPLISHED BY YOUR BRETHREN WHO ARE IN THE WORLD. AFTER YOU HAVE SUFFERED FOR A LITTLE WHILE, THE GOD OF ALL GRACE, WHO CALLED YOU TO HIS ETERNAL GLORY IN CHRIST, WILL HIMSELF PERFECT, CONFIRM, STRENGTHEN AND ESTABLISH YOU. TO HIM BE DOMINION FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.
(1ST PETER 5:8-11)

HE WHO DWELLS IN THE SHELTER OF THE MOST HIGH WILL ABIDE IN THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY. I WILL SAY TO THE LORD, "MY REFUGE AND MY FORTRESS, MY GOD, IN WHOM I TRUST!" FOR IT IS HE WHO DELIVERS YOU FROM THE SNARE OF THE TRAPPER AND FROM THE DEADLY PESTILENCE. HE WILL COVER YOU WITH HIS PINIONS; AND UNDER HIS WINGS YOU MAY SEEK REFUGE. HIS FAITHFULNESS IS A SHIELD AND BULWARK.

YOU WILL NOT BE AFRAID OF THE TERROR BY NIGHT OR OF THE ARROW THAT FLIES BY DAY. OF THE PESTILENCE THAT STALKS IN DARKNESS OR OF THE DESTRUCTION THAT LAYS WASTE AT NOON. A THOUSAND MAY FALL AT YOUR SIDE AND TEN THOUSAND AT YOUR RIGHT HAND; BUT IT SHALL NOT APPROACH YOU. YOU WILL ONLY LOOK ON WITH YOUR EYES AND SEE THE RECOMPENSE OF THE WICKED. FOR YOU HAVE MADE THE LORD, MY REFUGE, EVEN THE MOST HIGH, YOUR DWELLING PLACE. NO EVIL WILL BEFALL YOU, NOR WILL ANY PLAGUE COME NEAR YOUR TENT.

FOR HE WILL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE CONCERNING YOU, TO GUARD YOU IN ALL YOUR WAYS. THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP IN THEIR HANDS THAT YOU DO NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE. YOU WILL TREAD UPON THE LION AND COBRA; THE YOUNG LION AND THE SERPENT YOU WILL TRAMPLE DOWN.

"BECAUSE HE HAS LOVED ME, THEREFORE I WILL DELIVER HIM; I WILL SET HIM SECURELY ON HIGH BECAUSE HE HAS KNOWN MY NAME. HE WILL CALL UPON ME, AND I WILL ANSWER HIM. I WILL BE WITH HIM IN TROUBLE; I WILL RESCUE HIM AND HONOR HIM. WITH A LONG LIFE I WILL SATISFY HIM AND LET HIM SEE MY SALVATION."

– PSALM 91:1-16

APPENDIX: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THE REALITY OF SPIRITUAL BATTLE (Pages 6-8)

What do you hope to get out of this course?

A PROFILE OF OUR ENEMY

THE ORIGINAL STATUS OF “STAR OF THE MORNING, SON OF THE DAWN”

His Original Nature

He Is a Creature (Page 9)

What does this section tell us about Satan’s person?

Why do you think we need to know this, that Satan is *not* God’s equal?

He Is an Angel (Page 9)

What does this section tell us about Satan’s person?

He Was Created Sinless (Pages 9-10)

What does this section tell us about Satan?

His Original Titles (Page 10)

What were Satan’s *original* titles?

What does that suggest regarding his original character?

His Exquisite Perfections (Page 10)

What does this section tell us about Satan’s original perfections?

His Exalted Status (Page 10)

What does this section tell us about Satan's original status?

What have we learned so far about the profile of this individual?

His Distinguished Stewardship in Heaven: "the Anointed Cherub" (Pages 11-12)

What does this section tell us about Satan's elevated status among the cherubim ... his special stewardship and Who entrusted that stewardship to him?

His Distinguished Stewardship on Earth: "the Ruler of this World"

The Age of Angels (Page 12)

According to this section, were the angels created *before, at the same time, or after* the earth was created?

According to this section and footnote 9, how old are the angels?

The Earthly Stewardship of this Holy Cherub

The Scope of His Authority and Power (Pages 12-13)

According to the author, when did "the anointed cherub" receive this second stewardship, "the ruler of this world"?

This stewardship gave him at least one right (and perhaps others).

According to this section, what authority does this stewardship give him?

EVERY PERSON IS TO BE IN SUBJECTION TO THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES. FOR THERE IS NO AUTHORITY EXCEPT FROM GOD, AND THOSE WHICH EXIST ARE ESTABLISHED BY GOD. (ROMANS 13:1)

It was stated in this section that Satan "apparently has the right to place individuals in positions of political authority."

How can that be true and Romans 13:1 be true at the same time?

The Means by which He Received His Authority (Pages 13-14)

This section concludes with the statement, "... the title, 'the ruler of this world,' was neither *self-appointed* nor was it *violently seized by a rebel*. It was *voluntarily granted to a trustworthy steward by the owner of the property*."

What support was given for this view?

The Source of His Authority (Page 14)

According to this section, God is most surely the One Who assigned this stewardship, "the ruler of this world," to this high-ranking angel.

What reasons were given to support this?

Do you think that God knew what the future actions of "the star of the morning, son of the dawn" would be when He appointed him "the anointed cherub" and "the ruler of this world"?

If so, why do you think He chose *him* to have such authority?

The Time He Received His Authority (Pages 14-15)

According to this section, when was this stewardship, "the ruler of this world," entrusted to this angel?

The Weight of Stewardship (Pages 15-17)

What responsibilities do *you* have as a steward of God properties?

As a believer, what do you think is the greatest stewardship you have been given?

THE FALL OF THE HOLY CHERUB

His Sin (Pages 21-23)

God could have stopped Satan and his followers from sinning against Him. For that matter, He could have stopped Adam and Eve from sinning against Him. But He did not.

Why do you think He did not do so?

His Judgment (Pages 23-25)

The judgment of Satan and his army of demon-rebels is in several stages. But why? As soon as they failed in their insurrection against His Throne, God could have immediately cast them all into the Lake of Fire.

What reason was given for these different stages of judgment?

THE PRESENT STATUS OF SATAN

His Present Status among the Angels (Pages 26-27)

It was stated that our holy and sovereign God uses evil angels to fulfill His *holy* purposes. One way He does so is by allowing Satan to send his demons to assault God's people. Satan's purpose is, of course, to destroy them; but God's purpose is for their good.

Can you think of any instances in the Bible where such assaults against God's people are traced back to *demonic activity*, yet result in the benefit of God's people?

His Present Status over the Earth (Pages 27-29)

EVERY PERSON IS TO BE IN SUBJECTION TO THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES. FOR THERE IS NO AUTHORITY EXCEPT FROM GOD, AND THOSE WHICH EXIST ARE ESTABLISHED BY GOD. (ROMANS 13:1)

According to this verse, who establishes each nation's governing authorities?

AND THE DRAGON (SATAN) STOOD ON THE SAND OF THE SEASHORE. THEN I SAW A BEAST (THE ANTICHRIST) COMING UP OUT OF THE SEA, HAVING TEN HORNS AND SEVEN HEADS, AND ON HIS HORNS WERE TEN DIADEMS, AND ON HIS HEADS WERE BLASPHEMOUS NAMES ...

AND THE DRAGON GAVE HIM HIS POWER AND HIS THRONE AND GREAT AUTHORITY ... AND THE WHOLE EARTH WAS AMAZED AND FOLLOWED AFTER THE BEAST; THEY WORSHIPED THE DRAGON BECAUSE HE GAVE HIS AUTHORITY TO THE BEAST; AND THEY WORSHIPED THE BEAST, SAYING, "WHO IS LIKE THE BEAST, AND WHO IS ABLE TO WAGE WAR WITH HIM?" (Revelation 13:1-4, parentheses added)

According to this verse, who gives the antichrist his power and authority?

Our sovereign God allows Satan to appoint evil political figures to advance his *evil* purposes. In doing so, God's *holy* purposes are accomplished.

What do you think is *Satan's* ultimate purpose in raising up evil governments?

What is **God's** purpose in allowing "the ruler of this world" to raise up evil governments? How can they further God's will?

According to this section when will Satan *stop* being "the ruler of this world"?

His Reign Over a Dominion or Rebels

His Leadership Over Rebel Angels (Demons)

His Dictatorship Over Rebel Humans (Unbelievers) (Pages 30-31)

Why do you think unbelievers are *more than willing* to follow the lies of "the god of this (present evil) age"?

His Fields of Operation

Access to Heaven (Pages 32-33)

THE LORD SAID TO SATAN, "HAVE YOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT JOB? FOR THERE IS NO ONE LIKE HIM ON THE EARTH, A BLAMELESS AND UPRIGHT MAN, FEARING GOD AND TURNING AWAY FROM EVIL." THEN SATAN ANSWERED THE LORD, "DOES JOB FEAR GOD FOR NOTHING? HAVE YOU NOT MADE A HEDGE ABOUT HIM AND HIS HOUSE AND ALL THAT HE HAS, ON EVERY SIDE? YOU HAVE BLESSED THE WORK OF HIS HANDS, AND HIS POSSESSIONS HAVE INCREASED IN THE LAND. BUT PUT FORTH YOUR HAND NOW AND TOUCH ALL THAT HE HAS; HE WILL SURELY CURSE YOU TO YOUR FACE." (JOB 1:8-11)

THE LORD SAID TO SATAN, "HAVE YOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT JOB? FOR THERE IS NO ONE LIKE HIM ON THE EARTH, A BLAMELESS AND UPRIGHT MAN FEARING GOD AND TURNING AWAY FROM EVIL. AND HE STILL HOLDS FAST HIS INTEGRITY, ALTHOUGH YOU INCITED ME AGAINST HIM TO RUIN HIM WITHOUT CAUSE." SATAN ANSWERED THE LORD AND SAID, "SKIN FOR SKIN! YES, ALL THAT A MAN HAS HE WILL GIVE FOR HIS LIFE. HOWEVER, PUT FORTH YOUR HAND NOW, AND TOUCH HIS BONE AND HIS FLESH; HE WILL CURSE YOU TO YOUR FACE." (JOB 2:3-5)

According to Job 1-2, Satan knew who Job was. He knew his name, and he knew his circumstances. It is likely that he also has this same information on you.

If so, how would that affect his strategies of assault upon you?

Operates from the Heavenlies (Page 33-34)

If our struggle is with an army from a spiritual dimension, what kind of weapons **must** we use against them?

Active on Earth (Page 34-35)

From this section it is obvious that the sovereignty of God is in full operation during Satan's attack of the believer. His assaults are *allowed* by God, they are *kept in check* by God, and they even *accomplish the purposes* of God. When we are experiencing demonic resistance, we should keep that in mind, that our sovereign God is in control of Satan's assaults.

How would keeping this truth in mind strengthen you during times of affliction?

THE PRESENT CHARACTER OF SATAN

A Warning (Pages 39-40)

We have just finished a brief look at the "profile" of Satan. We discovered what his character and status were before his sin against God. We considered his attempted coup against the throne of God and the different stages of his judgment. We know that he has retained certain levels of authority within the angelic realm and over the world's political and religious authorities. And we have been oriented to his immoral character: he is a habitual sinner, a murderer, a liar, and an oppressor of the saints.

We have also been warned to "be ready for him, for the clash between our two forces is inevitable." Yet, in many cases the Church seems oblivious to spiritual war. You would think that if a church were being slammed by Satan, they would be trying to figure out what is happening to them and what they can do about it.

Why aren't more churches trying to understand how they can stand against the onslaughts of an evil creature?

What do you think every believer should do to get ready for this fight?

THE ASSURANCE OF SPIRITUAL VICTORY

ACCOMPLISHED BY THE SON OF GOD

~

SHARED WITH THE SAINTS OF GOD (Pages 41-42)

Our attention was directed to the tense of a certain verb in 1st John 3:8.

What is the significance of the verb "appeared" being in the *past* tense?

Why do you think it is important for believers to know that Christ has *already secured* every single victory over the devil?

Our adversary no longer has authority or power

- to snatch away the Christians' assurance of eternal life
- to keep the holy ones "chained" to their former lifestyles of sin
- to prevent the saints from experiencing their new life in Christ
- to terrify the believing community with eternal death
- to hold believers under his evil authority
- to defeat the faithful through persecution, temptation, and oppression
- to keep the redeemed from growing in Christlike character and fruitful service
- to mislead God's Church through false teachers

According to this list, what *specific* group of people has been delivered from "the works of the devil"?

Only those born of the Spirit of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ have been granted these triumphs over Satan.

What does that mean for those who are *not* the saints of God?

**By the Death of Christ,
the Penalty for Sin Was Paid in Full (Pages 42-43)**

Why did it take a death to solve this problem?

Why did it take the death of a spotless, blameless, innocent Person to solve this problem?

In what circumstances do you think *you* would use this truth?

*... (GOD) CANCELED OUT THE CERTIFICATE OF DEBT CONSISTING OF DECREES AGAINST US, WHICH WAS HOSTILE TO US; AND HE HAS TAKEN IT OUT OF THE WAY, HAVING NAILED IT TO THE CROSS.
(COLOSSIANS 2:14, PARENTHESIS ADDED)*

**By the Death of Christ,
the Power of Sin Was Shattered (Pages 43-44)**

If we are not living victoriously, if we are living according to our old sinful patterns of behavior, it is because we are allowing Satan to do what he no longer has authority to do to us.

In what circumstances do you think *you* would use this truth?

**By the Resurrection of Christ,
Believers Can Walk in Newness of Life (Pages 45-46)**

If we are not living victoriously, if we are living according to our old sinful patterns of behavior, it is because we are allowing Satan to do what he no longer has authority to do to us.

In what circumstances do you think *you* would use this truth?

**By the Resurrection of Christ,
Satan's Power to Terrify the Believing Community with Eternal Death Is Crushed
(Pages 46-47)**

If our lives show fruitful evidence of the rebirth, but we are defeated by doubts over our eternal life, it is because we are allowing Satan to do what he no longer has authority to do to us.

In what circumstances do you think *you* would use this truth?

**By the Resurrection and Exaltation of Christ,
Believers Are Now Free from Satan's Evil Authority (Pages 47-49)**

If we are defeated by demonic oppression, it is because we are allowing Satan to do what he no longer has authority to do to us.

In what circumstances do you think *you* would use this truth?

**By the Exaltation of the Son of God,
Satan's Power to Triumph over Those in Christ Has Been Defeated (Pages 49-50)**

If our witness is being silenced by *the world's* persecutions, it is because we are allowing Satan to do what he no longer has authority to do to us.

And if we are defeated by *demonic* oppression, it is because we are allowing Satan to do what he no longer has authority to do to us.

In what circumstances do you think *you* would use this truth?

**By the Exaltation of Christ / the Indwelling Holy Spirit,
the Saints Can Become Christlike in Character and Fruitful in Service (Pages 50-51)**

So, which is true? The *individual believer's body* is a temple of the Holy Spirit? Or every *assembly of true believers* is a temple of the Holy Spirit? Which is the residence of the living God, the believer or the true and living church?

What "triggered" this magnificent blessing, the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell the believing community?

As you read the list on page 51, did any of these blessings stand out as being especially meaningful to you at this point in your life?

**By the Indwelling Spirit of Truth,
Satan's Power to Deceive Believers through False Teaching Is Thwarted (Pages 51-54)**

*YET WE DO SPEAK WISDOM AMONG THOSE WHO ARE MATURE, A WISDOM, HOWEVER, NOT OF THIS AGE NOR OF THE RULERS OF THIS AGE, WHO ARE PASSING AWAY. BUT WE SPEAK GOD'S WISDOM IN A MYSTERY, THE HIDDEN WISDOM WHICH GOD PREDESTINED BEFORE THE AGES TO OUR GLORY, THE WISDOM WHICH NONE OF THE RULERS OF THIS AGE HAS UNDERSTOOD; FOR IF THEY HAD UNDERSTOOD IT THEY WOULD NOT HAVE CRUCIFIED THE LORD OF GLORY ... FOR TO US GOD REVEALED THEM THROUGH THE SPIRIT; FOR THE SPIRIT SEARCHES ALL THINGS, EVEN THE DEPTHS OF GOD. FOR WHO AMONG MEN KNOWS THE THOUGHTS OF A MAN EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF THE MAN WHICH IS IN HIM? EVEN SO THE THOUGHTS OF GOD NO ONE KNOWS EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF GOD.
(1ST CORINTHIANS 2:6-8, 10-11)*

According to this passage, how is it that the Holy Spirit Who lives within you *can* reveal to you the thoughts and wisdom of God?

Why is it that, when you talk to an unbeliever about God's Word, he cannot understand you?

If obedience plays no part in "getting saved" or "staying saved," what part *does* it play in the life of someone who is *already saved*?

In what circumstances do you think *you* would use this truth?

THE TENACITY OF A CONQUERED FOE (Page 55)

Satan can quote Scripture. He did to Eve (Genesis 3:1); and he did to Jesus (Matthew 4:6). It is true that when he uses Scripture, he "twists" it to accomplish his evil purposes. Nevertheless, Satan is familiar with God's Word which means that he

probably knows about Revelation 20:10. It is likely that he knows about his coming judgment. Yet, he seems to believe that he can thwart God's plans and purposes.

What are some things Satan is trying to destroy in your life and in the life of your local church?

THE TACTICS OF THE DEMONIC REALM (Page 56)

Believers who are ignorant of the tactics of Satan are vulnerable to certain hazards.

What might happen to those who are unaware of his different methods of assault?

SATAN WILL TRY TO UNDERMINE THE WITNESS OF GOD'S WORD

"The Evil One"

Will Try to Prevent God's Word from Being Received (Page 57)

Why is the Word of God such a threat to Satan?

Satan Wants to Confuse Us with His Lies (Pages 58-59)

"One's level of spiritual discernment is determined – in part – by his level of Biblical understanding." Those who are unable to distinguish between truth and error will be an easy prey to the different heresies they encounter.

So, how does one grow in spiritual discernment? Certainly, Bible knowledge is important; but is that the only requirement for spiritual maturity?

CONCERNING HIM (MELCHIZEDEK) WE HAVE MUCH TO SAY, AND IT IS HARD TO EXPLAIN, SINCE YOU HAVE BECOME DULL OF HEARING. FOR THOUGH BY THIS TIME YOU OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS, YOU HAVE NEED AGAIN FOR SOMEONE TO TEACH YOU THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD, AND YOU HAVE COME TO NEED MILK AND NOT SOLID FOOD. FOR EVERYONE WHO PARTAKES ONLY OF MILK IS NOT ACCUSTOMED TO THE WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR HE IS AN INFANT. BUT SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE, WHO BECAUSE OF PRACTICE HAVE THEIR SENSES TRAINED TO DISCERN GOOD AND EVIL. (HEBREWS 5:11-14)

From this passage, can you see any other "ingredients" for being able to "discern good and evil"?

**“The God of this Age”
Will Try to Impair One’s Ability to Understand God’s Word**

Satan Seeks to Blind the Minds of Unbelievers (Pages 59-60)

Some of the hardest people to reach with the Gospel are those who “grew up in church,” those whose lives display a mere outward form of the Christian religion but who lack any real understanding of God’s Word. They sit in their pews Sunday after Sunday; but “the light is not on.”

According to this section, what is causing such blind indifference to God’s pardon through Christ Jesus?

Satan Wants to Stunt the Spiritual Growth of Believers (Pages 60-61)

How can this problem of spiritual immaturity be solved if the believer does not attend a Bible-centered church?

How can this problem of spiritual immaturity be solved if the believer realizes he has allowed the “things of this world” to capture his heart?

**“The Devil”
Will Try to Discredit the Integrity of God’s Word**

Satan Wants Us to Doubt What the Bible Says about God’s Character (Page 61)

Under what circumstances can Satan most easily succeed in getting you to question God’s character?

Satan Wants Us to Doubt What the Bible Says about God’s Works (Pages 61-62)

To be *confused* about a situation in which our Sovereign Lord has placed us is one thing. But to be *angry* toward Him for doing so is something else. It is *never* appropriate to be angry at God.

If you realize that you are angry toward God for allowing some situation to happen to you, what can you do to readjust your attitude from unbelief to trust?

Satan Wants Us to Doubt God’s Promises in the Bible (Page 62)

The only way to fight anxiety and despair is to dwell upon God’s Truth. This would apply to the uncertainties of your situation. Concerning these uncertainties, what *exactly* has God promised He would do for you? Not what do you *hope* He will do for you ... or what you think He *should* do for you ... or what a *Christian friend* thinks He should do for you. But what has *He* promised *in His Word* – written in black and white on the pages of Scripture – to do for you?

When you find yourself anxious about your circumstances, what can you do to discover the promises of God that pertain to your situations?

Satan Wants Us to Doubt God’s Warnings in the Bible (Page 62)

One of the most important of life’s truths that parents can teach their children is *the reality of consequences*, something they will face throughout their entire lives. Every other authority under which they will ever live – teachers, policemen, employers, civil authorities, church leadership – will require them to observe certain laws, laws that have consequences if obeyed ... or disobeyed. Certainly, the supreme authority under Whom they will live is God; and He, too, has laws ... moral laws ... by which He expects them to abide. If they do, they will enjoy a blessing; if they do not, they will suffer a penalty.

How does one teach the reality of consequences to another person?

SATAN WILL TRY TO RUPTURE THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH (Pages 64-65)

According to this section, whose reputation is the Church trying to protect as we strive to “preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”?

When we repay a wrong *with a wrong*, whose name are we trying to protect?

SATAN WILL TRY TO SILENCE THE WITNESS OF A BELIEVER’S LIFE AND MINISTRY

Using the World, “the Great Red Dragon” Will Persecute

Satan Will Use Peer Pressure in his Attempt to Silence Our Witness (Pages 66-67)

What can you do to be made strong *before* facing the temptation to deny your Savior ... to prepare yourself with the resolve, “By God’s help, I will not compromise my faith”?

Satan Will Use Persecution in his Attempt to Silence Our Testimony (Pages 67-68)

Have any of you ever faced any of these types of persecution? If so, how did you respond *or* how would you respond if you had it to do over again?

How should we respond if we face this situation?

Using the Believer's Flesh, "the Tempter" Will Entice

Satan Will Tempt Us to Play the Hypocrite (Pages 68-69)

It is easy to see how a believer's hypocrisy destroys his *own* integrity. But how does a believer's hypocrisy destroy the integrity of Jesus Christ?

Satan Will Try to Weaken Our Sense of Dependence upon God by Cultivating an Attitude of Self-Reliance (Pages 69-70)

Have you ever viewed yourself as "unfit" for a task to which God has called you? You are certain that someone else is more qualified for this ministry than you. You pray for confidence; but those prayers go unanswered. (You continue to feel unsure of yourself.)

How could this sense of inadequacy be the very thing you need to succeed in this calling?

Against what kind of temptation should we be on guard *once we experience success*?

Satan Will Use the Cravings of Our Physical Bodies to Entice Us to Disobey God (Page 70)

It is possible to use Satan's temptations as your "cue" to pray. For example, let's say that you often find yourself criticizing your pastor's sermons. Each time you realize you are doing so, turn those thoughts into a prayer. Ask the Lord to guide him in his sermon preparation and empower him in his preaching on Sundays. Satan will not continue to use that tactic once he sees that it produces righteous behavior in your life. He will "flee."

The fact is, we all struggle with some form of weakness. We all want to indulge ourselves in something to the point of excess. Therefore, it would be a good idea to come up with some plan of "counterattack." When I am tempted to give in to this sinful practice of my flesh, this is what I am going to pray.

Satan Will Try to Dilute Our Zeal for Christ by the World's Pleasantries (Pages 70-71)

Believers who face trying situations that give them a strong sense of helplessness typically find themselves fervently pleading to God for deliverance.

Do you think it is possible for a believer to sense that same “felt need” for Christ *without* such a trying situation? If “Yes,” how so? If “No,” why not?

Using the Believer's Mind, “the Accuser of Our Brethren” Will Try to Suppress Our Victory in Christ Under the Weight of Mental Oppression

Satan Wants Us to Feel Like Defeated Losers (Pages 72-74)

Brothers and sisters, how will *you* overcome the lies of Satan?

Satan Wants Us to Doubt What Is True about God (Pages 74-75)

It may be that one or more of you are facing a problem right now ... something that is troubling you. If so, perhaps you are willing to let us help you carry that burden through prayer. I hope you will. But it may be that you do not feel comfortable describing the situation to us.

If not, would you be willing to tell us *something you know about the true and living God*, a truth you are clinging to – by faith – as you work through this situation? How can God, being the way He is, help you with this problem?

Using the Believer's Circumstances, “Satan” Will Disrupt Our Labor for the Kingdom in his Attempt to Resist God's Will (Pages 75-76)

What should be our first response when any of these disruptions happen?

THE BATTLE GEAR OF THE CHRISTIAN WARRIOR

THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD (Pages 79-80)

I thought we were already victorious over Satan. Why is this discussion about “putting on the full armor of God” even necessary?

THE BELT OF A SINCERE AND READY COMMITMENT TO FIGHT

The Spiritual Significance of “Girding One’s Loins with Truth” (Pages 80-81)

A spiritual belt is to be used to “gird one’s loins with truth.

In your own words, what does it mean to “gird your loins with truth”?

How does a believer end up being *less-than-committed* in this battle for the cause of Christ?

THE BREASTPLATE OF APPLYING GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Spiritual Significance of “Putting on the Breastplate of Righteousness” (Pages 82-83)

In your own words, what does it mean to “put on the breastplate of righteousness”?

How does a person “put on” the breastplate of righteousness?

THE BOOTS OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S STEADFAST SUPPORT

The Spiritual Significance of “Shodding One’s Feet with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace” (Pages 84-85)

In your own words, what does it mean to “shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace”?

Why would that be important, for the Christian warrior to know that God is “on his side” ... especially in the heat of spiritual battle?

THE SHIELD OF FAITH IN GOD’S PROMISED DELIVERANCE

The Spiritual Significance of “Taking up the Shield of Faith” (Pages 86-88)

In your own words, what does it mean to “take up the shield of faith” in the heat of spiritual warfare?

How does one cultivate this life of faith?

THE HELMET OF DELIVERANCE FROM SIN'S PENALTY, POWER, AND PRESENCE

The Spiritual Significance of "Taking the Helmet of Salvation" (Pages 89-93)

In your own words, what does it mean to "take the helmet of salvation"?

THEREFORE, SINCE WE HAVE SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES SURROUNDING US, LET US ALSO LAY ASIDE EVERY ENCUMBRANCE AND THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGLES US, AND LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US, FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH, WHO FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME, AND HAS SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD. (HEBREWS 12:1-2)

To endure the shame and suffering of the Cross, Jesus "focused His faith" on His future exaltation to the right hand of God. We are then told to "fix our eyes on Jesus" (as our Example to follow) as we run our own "race of endurance."

Why do we believers need to know that there is a "finish line" to this war we are in and that, like Jesus, we should "focus our faith" on our own day of glory? Why is that so important?

THE SWORD OF GOD'S WORD

The Spiritual Significance of "Taking the Sword of the Spirit (the Word of God)" (Pages 94-95)

It was stated, "Just as a physical battle requires physical weapons, a *spiritual battle requires spiritual weapons.*"

Sometimes we may find ourselves trying to fight a "flesh and blood" enemy, at the moment we are attacked, using tit-for-tat insults. That is, we are trying to fight the wrong enemy, at the wrong time, in the wrong place, with the wrong weapons. Have you ever felt like that ... that you are in a battle, but you are handling it "all wrong"?

How do you know whether you are trying to conduct a spiritual fight with spiritual battle gear ... or not?

"Forging" the Spiritual Sword

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Fight (Page 95)

What does the Holy Spirit do to turn your physical Bible into a spiritual sword?

The Role of Bible Study in the Fight (Pages 96)

We have seen what the Holy Spirit must do to turn His Word into a spiritual sword. What must **you** do to turn your physical Bible into a spiritual sword?

Using the Spiritual Sword

The Defensive Use of the Sword (Pages 96-98)

What does it mean to use the Scriptures “with precision” and “with pinpoint accuracy”?

The Offensive Use of the Sword (Page 98-99)

According to this section, how does one use the Word of God offensively?

In your own words, what does it mean to “take the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God)”?

THE BATTLE PLAN OF THE TRIUMPHANT CHURCH (Page 101)

It was stated, “Now identified with the Victorious One, the redeemed of God are no longer under the thumb of Satan. They have been liberated from the spiritual prison of their former dictator.”

According to the quote from John MacArthur, how can a Christian turn the victories Christ has secured for him into a daily reality? What must he do to *experience* the victories Christ has won for him?

READ AND MEDITATE ON GOD’S WORD (Page 102)

We have been exhorted to turn our minds into an “arsenal of Truth,” allowing the entire counsel of God – all 66 books of the Bible – to cleanse our minds of this world’s lies. To do so is a lifelong process.

If someone said to you, “I would like to start reading the Bible; but I do not know where to begin,” what would *you* tell him?

How would you counsel him to continue in his reading once he is finished with that book of the Bible?

QUOTE GOD'S WORD (Pages 102-104)

We have been exhorted to respond to Satan's lies by quoting God's Truth – whether mentally or verbally – to ourselves and others. To do so, we need to “treasure” or “hide” God's Word in the “arsenals” of our minds.

Can you think of any ways – either obvious and creative – to “hide” God's Word in our minds and hearts to prepare us for the battles we face?

CLING TO GOD THROUGH PRAYER (Pages 104-105)

Spiritual war is conducted on three fronts: the devil, the flesh, and the world. The devil will oppress us directly. He uses our flesh to entice us. And he also the world to persecute and entice us.

If a believer responds to these attacks by clinging to God through prayer, what *guarantees* does he have. That is, what can he be sure God will do for him?

What *guarantees* does he *not* have?

OBEY GOD (Pages 105-106)

Why would our obedience cause Satan to “flee”?