

**THE UNSEEN REALITY:
A PANORAMIC VIEW OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE
DR. NABEEL T. JABBOUR**

To Barbara

my friend and partner
who prayed for me, motivated me,
challenged me, and encouraged me
in our life journey together
to submit to God
and to resist the devil
James 4:7

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. APPROACHING THE SUBJECT**
- 3. PROPER PERSPECTIVE ON SUFFERING**
- 4. THE DEFEATED ENEMY**
- 5. DEMONIZATION**
- 6. SATANIC INFLUENCE IN CULTURES**
- 7. SATANIC INFLUENCE IN LAWS AND BASIC BELIEFS**
- 8. SATANIC INFLUENCE THROUGH STRUCTURES OF POWER**
- 9. SATANIC INFLUENCE THROUGH THOUGHT LIFE**
- 10. HOW THE DEVIL WAGED WAR AGAINST JESUS**
- 11. CONCLUSION**
- 12. APPENDIX**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to the Lord for what He has taught me over the years, especially in the years we spent in Egypt from 1975 to 1990 and in the years in the States especially since the years 2006 regarding this whole area of the unseen reality and spiritual warfare.

My thanks are due to several people who read my manuscript and gave their expert evaluation and valuable suggestions. They were many, and I am grateful to all of them. I am also very grateful to those who helped me prepare the manuscript for publication.

This manuscript first appeared in a book format in 1995. But when it ran out of print the publisher, Navpress of Singapore, gave me the permission to place it on my website and make it available to be downloaded free. Now in early 2010, I am making a revision of it in light of my growth of my understanding of this subject.

May God use this book to motivate the readers to go to the Scriptures and to study this subject and arrive at their own conclusions. My prayer for you, the readers, is that on a daily basis, you will submit to God and resist the devil (James 4:7).

1

INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteen-eighties, Frank Peretti's novel, *This Present Darkness*, along with its sequel and a few other books of similar nature, have brought many evangelicals to a renewed awareness of and interest in the spirit world. Most of these books have to do with what is called "Spiritual Warfare."

As excitement in this subject continued, some discarded it as a fad, and others saw it as a phenomenon, which is being experienced around the world, and should be taken seriously. When the dust settles, time will tell how big this phenomenon really is.

On the other hand, there are those in the Church who are hardly aware of the Devil and his emissaries. They think of him as a mere force or influence. They may be curious, but mere curiosity is not a sufficient response when the invitation is to the *gymnasium for wrestling* or to the *battlefield for fighting a war*. Escapism is not the solution. The battle is already on; and in this war, there will be no truce or cease-fire. Our understanding of spiritual warfare will make all the difference in the way we battle. This is what we will be dealing with in this book.

In 1961, I came to know Christ as my Lord and Savior. Two years later, I met The Navigators' representative in Lebanon, and he trained me in the basics of the Christian life. For years in my university days, my team mates and I witnessed to all types of students, whether nominal Christians or Muslims.

In 1968, I graduated from seminary and became involved in a ministry of evangelizing and discipling high-school young men in Tripoli, north Lebanon. Those two years working in this high-school ministry were very fruitful. While I worked in this ministry, God was doing a very important work in my life. I was literally gripped with Christ's statement, "Without me you can do nothing."

In 1970, I got married, and my wife and I lived in Beirut, Lebanon, where I worked as a teacher in a small university. In 1972, we became full-time staff with The Navigators and led our ministry among college students. In Lebanon, we were exposed to Catholics, Protestants and Muslims.

In 1975, our family moved to Cairo, Egypt, to pioneer and lead The Navigators' work in that country. God led us in creative ways in the ministry because we were like blind people walking in a minefield. Yet His promise that He will lead the blind in ways they know not was assuring (Isaiah 42:16).

In September 1990, Egyptians assumed responsibility for the ministry, and we moved to the United States for a new commission. During the fifteen years we were in Egypt, we worked extensively with the various religious strata of that society. We were heavily involved in counseling and were exposed to spiritual warfare in all its dimensions. We saw God's authority and power very clearly, and we came to appreciate the safety of standing under Christ's umbrella and resting in the safety of His authority. On one of my teams, I had a man whose main ministry was exorcism. God has used him and is still using him tremendously.

Yet, our exposure to spiritual warfare was not merely to demonization but to a much wider and broader battlefield. We came to see a panoramic view of spiritual warfare which includes:

- Demonization
- Satanic influence in Cultures
- Satanic influence in Laws and Basic Beliefs
- Satanic influence through Structures of Power
- Satanic influence through Thought Life.

Years later as I am now reviewing this book, I would like to add another realm to my understanding of spiritual warfare.

- Satanic influence inflicted physically on our bodies.

In 1991, I read an excellent book by David Bosch on the history of missions. Again, I found myself exposed to this panoramic view of spiritual warfare in all its breadth in Church history, and not only in the realm of demonization.

In contrast, if we look at several books written by evangelicals on spiritual warfare, we find that most of them equate spiritual warfare almost exclusively with demonization and Satanic influence in cultures.

My goal in this book is to present a concise overview of this subject which I have called *The Unseen Reality—A Panoramic View of Spiritual Warfare*. My desire is for each one of us to enjoy standing under Christ's protection and to fight from the standpoint of strength and victory. Christ's authority is our umbrella. Christ is already victorious. *Ultimately, the war has already been won for us although many bloody battles are still raging*. The Devil is defeated although he continues to be a fierce tenacious fighter. May God use this book to increase our confidence in Him and to motivate us to walk by faith and to put on the full armor of God.

Shortly after this book appeared in 1995, a friend of mine read it and his response to me at that time was surprising. This friend had gone through a period of severe oppression by the devil and by his principalities and powers and felt that I am only a Biblical *healer* and not a Biblical *wounded healer* who would understand his pain and suffering. Now as I am revising this manuscript I *do understand* what my friend said at that time, and I agree with his evaluation. I hope that the revisions that I am making now to the manuscript will communicate that I have gone through the wine press and have tasted a great deal of oppression by Satan and by his principalities and powers. I do hope that I will connect with you the reader not from a pedestal but from the trenches of the battle field as a *wounded healer*.

2

APPROACHING THE SUBJECT

When we listen to someone or read a book on the subject of spiritual warfare, how can we tell whether what is presented is Biblical and balanced? Just because it happened in Argentina or Indonesia, does that make it Biblical? Or just because many verses from the Scriptures are quoted, does that make it Biblical? What are the filters that should be included in our methodology as we attempt to develop a panoramic view of spiritual warfare?

1. Christ-Centered Approach

In September 1990, I was blacklisted and was given ten days to leave Egypt. This deadline gave me a tremendous appreciation for time. Every appointment was invaluable. As I prayed before and during every appointment, I found myself frequently saying to God, “Lord, I might never see this man again. What would you like me to talk with him about?”

Naturally, those ten days were loaded with demonstrations of God’s tender care, love, sovereignty, authority, wisdom and power. Actually, towards the end of the ten days, I was writing in my journal the evidences of His love, sovereignty and wisdom and found myself literally overwhelmed with God’s love. Christ was very big before my eyes as I saw Him. He was in full control. He was lovely, and it was so easy to worship Him. In my final day in Egypt in the departure lounge in Cairo airport I was recording in my journal and “counting my blessings,” a Western missionary came and sat next to me. He also was on a flight out of Cairo airport. Within half-an-hour, he must have referred to the Devil more than twenty times. “The Devil is at work these days. The Devil is this and the Devil is that . . .” In my case, I found myself talking about God’s love, kindness, authority, sovereignty, graciousness and compassion. I was “bursting at the seams” with God’s love. All of a sudden, it dawned on me: It is wrong to have an anti-Satan-centered theology, but it is right to have a Christ-centered theology.

A good question to ask oneself is this, “When I am in the company of so-and-so, do I talk more about God, or Satan and demons? When I read this book on spiritual warfare, what was my frame of reference: Christ and His authority or Satan and how we must fight him?”

Recently, as I was reading a textbook on theology entitled “Sin,” written by G.C. Berkouwer, the author pointed out that evil could have a hypnotic effect. People who dwell on Satan as their frame of reference could lose sight of Christ and His authority. This is dangerous ground.

2. Biblical Theology

A friend of mine once referred to a book on spiritual warfare that was saturated with verses from the Bible as “Biblical.”

We can easily make the false assumption that just because a manuscript is heavily documented from the Bible, it is therefore Biblical. This is not necessarily true.

A Jehovah’s Witness could write a paper and document it heavily from Scripture, and it could still be un-Biblical. The important questions to ask are, “What assumptions does the manuscript make? Is the emphasis placed on one or two of the strands of evil, or do we see the rope as a whole; i.e., do we see only one way evil invades our lives or do we see evil in its totality?” Diminishing spiritual warfare to mere demonization is not Biblical. Others may focus their attention excessively on Satan and not on God. It is like *gazing* at Satan and merely *glancing* at God. Gazing at Satan and glancing at God is not Biblical either.

3. Importance of the Context

This is a very basic principle in any Bible study, yet we often violate it. At times, this violation does not create a serious danger, like using Revelation 3:20 in evangelism¹. However at other times, it could cause serious theological errors.

Another dimension of this principle is the historical context. Scholars should not only consider the passage under study but also consider its historical setting. Passages that deal with our enemy, Satan, should be considered in relationship to the incarnation of Christ, and especially His crucifixion and resurrection. The Devil, before and after these important historical events, must be viewed differently. What happened to the devil as a result of the resurrection? I will address this question later. We can not and should not quote Scripture out of its literal and historical contexts without the possibility of going into a theological tangent.

4. Doctrinal Rather Than Narrative Passages

¹ "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If any of you hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with you. And you will eat with me."

Teaching passages are passages that contain very clear instructions; whereas, narrative passages are passages that describe how people lived. As I study the Scriptures, I might come across a possible application in a narrative passage, but I will need to confirm whether this was taught clearly in the teaching passages or not. So many times in Church history, we see that heresies started with the error of basing doctrines on narrative passages rather than on teaching passages.

With wrong orientation, one can, for instance, prove that having personal property is sin. Christians should not individually own anything. Instead, they should live a communal lifestyle so that they will be one in heart and one in mind. After all, the Bible says, “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had” (Acts 4:32).

With this approach, one can also twist the Scriptures to prove that it is wrong to get married because Christ did not get married, and it is wrong to live life in one place because Christ and Paul were mobile and so on.

Doctrine should be built on teaching passages rather than narrative passages in Scripture.

5. New Testament Time Unique

When Paul was evangelizing the various cities of Europe, the New Testament was not yet canonized, and parts of it were not even written. Paul and Barnabas had a Bible composed of the Old Testament only. However, on their first journey, they had with them John Mark. John Mark was present on the team not merely to serve Paul and Barnabas, but more importantly because he was able to memorize large portions of the sayings of Christ. The Greek word “helper” which describes John Mark in Acts 13:5 is *huperete* which does not only mean servant but also means the attendant of the word of God (see Luke 4:20; Acts 1:2).

The few young men that accompanied the apostles were gifted with strong memories and were the carriers of the oral tradition that included among other things the sayings of Jesus.

But how can one trust that what these young men quoted was accurate? God confirmed the oral Scripture through signs and wonders.

Later on, the New Testament was canonized; therefore, the particular signs and miracles that were intended to confirm the Scriptures were no longer needed. Therefore, it would be wrong for us to expect that we should have as many signs and miracles as Christ and the apostles had. Expecting to reproduce the New Testament time with its abundance of miracles in this century is not necessarily great faith. It could be presumption on our part. However, it seems that God sometimes continues to confirm the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, through signs and wonders to people who are on the frontiers of mission.

6. Pragmatism and Personal Experience Not Reliable Proof

Personal experiences can illustrate truth, but they are not the foundations of truth. Impressions received from personal experience can be highly deceptive. The impressions I derive from an experience should not be used as the basis of truth. Yet we see so many people using this argument to prove a point. Even missiologists at times fall into this error of citing stories from around the world and using them as the foundations of truth.

If a man prayed with great faith to a tree and asked that tree to heal his sick son, and it so happened that this son was healed, that does not make the tree a God. By the same token, I might see a young man who prayed to Christ, then by faith walked on burning coals and did not get hurt. It would be dangerous for me to conclude that walking on burning coals is evidence of deep faith in Christ.

7. Field Rather Than Blanket Perspective

People's natural tendency is to feel safe in their familiar surroundings. Signs and billboards are written in a familiar language, people's clothes look right and the way people relate and drive their cars seems to make sense, but once a person is removed from her familiar surroundings and is placed in a foreign culture, anxiety creeps in.

It is easy to draw the quick conclusion that Satan is not at work in my culture because I feel safe. On the other hand, when I do not feel safe in a foreign culture, I tend to arrive at the conclusion that the Devil is deeply at work in this foreign land. I call this the "blanket perspective." We tend to draw a "safe" blanket over our culture because it feels familiar, and we tend to draw an "unsafe" blanket over a foreign culture because we lose our sense of security. According to Paul "*Everything is clean to the clean-*

minded; nothing is clean to dirty-minded...” Titus 1:15 (Message). It is easy for us to assume that “all” or most people in our cultures are clean-minded but those who belong to a very different culture to be dirty minded. Is this conclusion accurate?

In contrast, Christ presented another perspective which I call the “field perspective.” He told them another parable. *The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while every one is sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away . . . The servants asked (the owner), ‘Do you want us to go and pull (the weeds) up?’ ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters, “First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn”*” (Matthew 13:24-30).

It seems that God allows the weeds (Satanic influence) to grow among the wheat; and wherever God is at work, the Devil is at work, too. So, whether my culture feels safe or not, God is at work, and the Devil is at work. In every culture there are the clean minded and the dirty minded. Therefore, whether I am in my familiar surroundings or visiting a foreign culture, I need to put on the whole armor of God. Irrespective of where I am, I need to be sensitive to how God is at work and how the Devil is at work.

Some cultures have more weeds than other cultures, yet in every place, God is at work, and the Devil is at work.

8. Truth Versus Power Encounter

When Christ came to Capernaum, *“So many gathered that there was no room left . . . Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them . . . when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone? Immediately Jesus knew in His spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and He said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?” But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” . . . He said to the paralytic, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home”*” (Mark 2:1-11).

Which is easier, to forgive or to heal? For the teachers of the law, to forgive sins was easier than to heal because one could not know when forgiveness had taken place. Furthermore, the paralytic's urgent felt need was for healing rather than forgiveness. But for Christ, healing was easier than forgiving. Healing demanded some power, but forgiving demanded His life on the cross.

In this incident, Christ was teaching the crowds along with the disciples about the function and danger of signs and wonders. The function of the power encounter is to support, authenticate and serve the truth encounter. But when the power encounter overshadows the truth encounter, then people will be *fascinated, amazed and distracted* from the truth.

9. Proper Hermeneutics

There are many books written on the subject of hermeneutics (interpreting the Bible), so what can we say in a short paragraph on this subject? How did Christ deal with the subject of hermeneutics as He interacted with the Pharisees?

It seems that the Pharisees came to Christ not to learn but to argue and to prove their point. Their minds were locked into their theories, and they could not perceive that they were in the presence of the Messiah whom they were looking and waiting for. If they could have surrendered their preconceived ideas and their cemented conclusions, they would have seen God in their midst. No wonder Christ told them, "*If any one chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own*" (John 7:16-17).

It seems that Christ was saying that the key to understanding the truth is being willing to come with an open and teachable mind. The ability to come with a broken spirit and with humility rather than with dogmatism is the key to learning and understanding the truth.

When we come to the subject of spiritual warfare, we could easily come with closed minds and preconceived ideas. Are we willing to place these conclusions on the altar and read with an open mind?

PROPER PERSPECTIVE ON SUFFERING

When it comes to suffering there is a great deal of confusion among God's people. Some people blame God for their suffering and wonder why would God ask Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. They ask the question "Would you like to have Abraham as your father?" Others, with a neurotic tendency blame themselves for all the miseries that they are experiencing not knowing how to diagnose the causes of their suffering. Others still, with psychopathic tendencies blame every one else for their miseries without taking any responsibility for their actions and choices.

A proper perspective on suffering is vital in our understanding of spiritual warfare. If you place a prism by a window where there is sunshine and you place a paper behind the prism a few inches away, you will see the colors of the rainbow on that sheet of paper. When the sun rays go through the prism, the colors in the sunrays come apart. When we look at the Bible as our prism we see a number of causes for our suffering and we learn how to deal with each type.

1. Oppression

The source is the Devil and it could impact our lives through people who abuse us, through governments, through disease or through the enemies of God which include principalities, powers and demonic forces. If we faithfully follow Christ, we should not be surprised when we get oppressed by the evil one. *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."* John 15:18-19.

The *source* of oppression is the devil and the devil's *motive and desire* is to destroy us. His *strategy* is to deceive us and side track us from putting our trust in our heavenly Father and His word and to put our trust in the lies of the devil.

2. Testing

God uses the attacks of the Devil (oppression) to purify us like goldsmiths used to purify gold through fire. The devil wants to destroy us through his

oppression but God uses that oppression as his tool to produce in our lives maturity and Christ-likeness. James, the brother of Christ tells us:

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-3. The Message puts it:

“Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.” Maturity according to this text means being able to cope with all circumstances. God's desire is for all of us to keep moving towards maturity which comes as a result of going through the fire of testing that comes from the devil's attacks and his oppression.

A boy goes to school in the morning and has no problem. In his first hour at school the math teacher gives him a problem. She tells him that a reservoir of water which is a cylinder shape has a diameter of 20 feet and a height of 10 feet, how many gallons of water can it hold? So this boy works on the problem until he solves it and the teacher praises him for getting the accurate answer and then she gives him another problem and another and then a few more to solve at home. The more this boy is able to solve problems the more he will be ready to solve similar problems on the day of the exam. Maturity means being able to cope with all circumstances. I hate having computer problems but they keep growing and learning. When I watch what the experts do, I learn to fix some of those computer problems on my own.

So James is telling us in this text to have a welcoming and a rejoicing mindset about the attacks of the evil one. God will use them in our lives as a purifying process because He wants us to move towards Christ-likeness and maturity where we can cope with all circumstances.

3. Reaping

The principle of sowing and reaping is universal. It applies across the board irrespective of age, gender, nationality and religion.

Sometimes we blame God or the devil for problems in our lives that came as a result of our wrong choices and wrong decisions. If we sow wrong choices we will have to live with the consequences. *“A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”* (Galatians 6:7-8)

4. Cross-bearing

When we the followers of Christ follow in Christ’s footsteps and live an *agape* life style by putting the welfare of others before our own, then selfish people will take advantage of us and we suffer in the process. Paul wrote: *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* Christ lived that life style and paid for it and the climax of the payment came on the cross. Paul goes on to say to us in the next verse: *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”* Philippians 2:3-5

5. Chastisement

Parents discipline their children by giving them a spanking or by depriving them from privileges because they love them and they want to train them to grow in obedience. David saw the love of God when God disciplined him or gave him a “spanking”: *“Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”* Psalm 23:4. The writer of the book of Hebrews quotes Proverbs 3:11-12 *“My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves...”* Hebrews 12:5-6

Our suffering could be caused by one of those factors or by a combination of several factors. When we face difficulties in life we need to stop and look to God for understanding. We could be reaping the consequences of wrong choices and therefore we need to repent and turn back to God. Or we could be facing some difficulties because God is trying to get our attention by giving us a spanking. In that case we need to turn to God with gratitude that He continues day in and day out drawing us to Himself and helping to stay close to Him. At other times we could be suffering because we are

choosing to continue to serve selfish people who take advantage of our love. In that case we should rejoice for the privilege of sharing in Christ's suffering. Or we might suffer because the devil hates us and wants to destroy our lives. When needed God allows the devil to oppress us so that God will use that oppression as a purifying and maturing process.

For some people, suffering is to be avoided, and deliverance from suffering is a proof of God's intervention. Yet James says, "*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything*" (James 1:2-4). Actually, the whole book of Job deals with the issue of suffering and how it could produce maturity in the life of the believer.

Our suffering on this earth should be seen in the light of eternity. On this earth, we live as aliens and pilgrims, and suffering is and will always be a part of our life's experiences. We are called to follow in the footsteps of Him who lived the cross principle and suffered for it (1 Peter 2:21-23).

The people of God, in the history of the church, suffered and were tormented with calamities and pain. Yet they set their eyes on the hope that awaited them. Paul puts it very clearly, "*For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him*" (Philippians 1:29). God in His sovereignty could use even the oppression of the Devil to purify us in the crucible of fire to make us more and more like His beloved son. If we assume that all suffering is a form of oppression, then the natural diagnosis would be the need for deliverance. Ignoring the other dimensions of suffering could result in *using God to solve our problems* instead of *using our problems to know God* more intimately.

In the next chapters, we will consider the various "strands in the rope" of spiritual warfare, but before we do so, we need to look at our enemy.

4

THE "DEFEATED" ENEMY

The Devil has several names, and most of these names are attributes that describe him. Among these names are: the Accuser, the Murderer, the Liar, the Deceiver, the Tempter and the Evil One. The two most important names are Satan and Devil. The word *Satan* appears thirty-three times in the New Testament, and the word *Devil*, which literally means the obstructor, appears thirty-two times.

It would be extremely difficult to give an answer to the question of the origin of evil without getting into the heresy of dualism or attributing evil to God. What we can answer though is how evil started in history. The story of Lucifer, the Angel of Light, and how he rebelled against God, could be one possible theory (Isaiah 14:12).

Avoiding Extremes

Throughout history, people have tended to lean towards one of two extremes as they contemplated the Devil.

One group of people thought of him as a mere idea and not a real person. They claim that he is a thought that comes to the mind and a mere influence.

There are, on the other hand, others who have given to the Devil a prominent place in their thinking and awareness. For them, the Devil is a frame of reference as important as God. Rather than gazing at God and glancing at the Devil, they attempt to gaze at both. In actual practice at times, they tend to gaze at the Devil and glance at God.

I believe that the Devil is a real person and not merely an idea, an influence, or a force. He hates God and hates us, and he is highly motivated to fulfill his desire to destroy us. However, he is already defeated and will be completely destroyed in the Day of Judgment.

Yet we need to make sure that we take our spiritual warfare very seriously because the Bible teaches in great detail, and very plainly, that it is the intention of the Devil to use his demonic powers to keep man in a condition of spiritual darkness and alienation from God, resulting in hell.

The Devil's attributes describe him. He is the Evil One (Matthew 13:19), the Murderer (John 8:44), the Deceiver (Revelation 20:10), the Destroyer (Revelation 9:11); and the Tempter (Matthew 4:3). He conceals and twists truths blinding the minds of people (2 Corinthians 4:3- 4). He uses false

teachers to deceive and confuse the believers (1 Timothy 4:1- 4). He oppresses people by using or causing diseases, physical or emotional, to produce bitterness in man's heart against God, resulting in alienation.

The Devil's names shed more light on his powers and function. His names are Satan (Mark 4:1); the Devil (Luke 8:12); the Dragon, symbol of strength and power (Revelation 12:17); the Serpent, symbol of deception (Revelation 12:9); the Prince of this World (John 12:31); the Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air (Ephesians 2:2); and the God of this Age (2 Corinthians 4:4).

But We Have Confidence

The death and the resurrection of Christ was a cosmic event that was the culmination of Christ's ministry on earth where He confronted the Devil through His mighty acts of exorcism, healing the sick and raising the dead. These mighty acts were the anticipatory signs of the victory of the cross over the powers hostile to God. The cross the resurrection were the turning point in history, for through the blood of Christ, the universe was reconciled with God (Colossians 1:20). Through the cross and the resurrection, Christ took away the power of death (Romans 8:38). His death was a victorious struggle against the demonic power of death which is often personified (Acts 2:24; Revelation 6:8). Death was the last enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26; Revelation 20:14) whose power was broken (2 Timothy 1:10). Since death is the consequence of sin, expiation for sin broke death's power at its roots. Once sin was overcome, as children of God we were liberated from the grip of the fear of death.

In some of Paul's writings, death, which is the last enemy, may be associated with the Devil, since death was his greatest weapon. The Lordship of Christ was declared in His resurrection (Philippians 2:11). This triumph was a decisive blow to the principalities and powers, but their final subjection will be completed on the Day of Judgment.

To sum up what we have been saying so far: we saw that the greatest weapon the Devil possessed was the power of death (Hebrews 2:14-15). Death was formidable. It was not known what would come after death. *Hades* was a vague concept in the Old Testament. But as Christ was crucified and then rose from the dead, He defeated the greatest weapon at the disposal of the Devil. Death became an open door to an eternal life with God. In this way, Christ disarmed the Devil from his greatest weapon, our

fear of death(Colossians 2:15). No wonder that the Devil's biggest strategy, when it comes to our eternal destiny, is deception because when one knows the truth and follows it, the Devil becomes powerless. When it comes to our eternal destinies the Devil's purpose is still the same: spiritual destruction of the human race by keeping humanity in spiritual darkness and alienation from God. However, he has lost his greatest power, so he compensates through deception.

That does not mean that the devil is weak and ineffective in his warfare. In fact, the Devil is extremely powerful, and God in His sovereignty allows him to oppress God's children with a variety of calamities, including death. For example, Paul's imprisonment and execution were an illustration of the Devil's power and his intense hatred. But because of God's sovereignty, we believe that all things, including suffering, disease, persecution and even death, work together for good under God's umbrella of sovereignty.

Personally I do not want to underestimate the Devil's strength and power, but I want to make sure that I will not underestimate what Christ accomplished through His death and resurrection. The pain, the sufferings and calamities we experience are real and heavy, and sometimes seem unbearable. Yet we need to see the pain and suffering during our life span in the context of eternity. We should not allow our suffering to overshadow what was accomplished for eternity.

So for us who put our faith in Christ, the Devil is disarmed from his most powerful weapon, our fear of death. His greatest weapon has been crushed; and therefore, we have no fear of death.

Yet for the people outside Christ's kingdom, the Devil is still equipped with power weapons. Existentially and experientially, Christ's crucifixion and resurrection has no relevance to these people, and is "foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:18). Therefore, Christ's victory over the Devil is meaningless, and so the Prince of the Air continues to rule over and intimidate these people. For when the existential experience does not catch up with the factual truth of the cross and resurrection, people live in depravity. They are like a man who is trying to farm a dry hard desert land in Saudi Arabia, not knowing that underneath that hard surface a huge amount of crude oil is waiting to be tapped. Experientially, this man is poor; but potentially, he is a multimillionaire. The world is intimidated by Satan who is a mighty enemy, but for us who believe, that enemy has lost his most powerful weapon (Colossians 1:13). We live in between two

important events: after the cross and before the return of Christ. In this life, we are pilgrims and aliens, engaged in an unrelenting, daily battle. But we know that when Christ returns, the Devil will be completely crushed and totally destroyed.

However, if we, the body of Christ, attribute to the Devil more power than he actually has, then we are diminishing what Christ accomplished through His death and resurrection. This is an insult to Christ. History took a new direction after the resurrection of Christ. Before that historical event, the Devil had tremendous power. That power, however, was under God's sovereign control, and God used it to allow His beloved children to be tested and purified in the crucible of fire (Job 1:12; 2:6).

But after the death and resurrection of Christ, the Devil was disarmed and his greatest weapon was crushed. Therefore, as we study passages from the Bible, we need to be careful not to take them out of their historical context.

We can also have confidence because the Holy Spirit dwells within us. He is holy, and His holiness is in diametrical opposition to deception and lies. Therefore, the Holy Spirit guides us, reveals the truth to us, and teaches us all things (John 14:26). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit who dwells within us is not a spirit of timidity and fear, but a spirit of power or *dunamis* (2 Timothy 1:7). The power of the Holy Spirit within us is equal to the power, or *dunamis*, that raised Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20).

How sad it must be for God the Father when He looks at His children, seeing them indwelt by the powerful and truthful Holy Spirit, yet intimidated by our enemy. No wonder Paul warns us, "do not grieve the Holy Spirit." Do not underestimate the almighty God.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the following principle:

It is dangerous to be preoccupied with the Devil. In his deception, he hypnotizes God's children, and through his deception, he becomes larger than life, and thus competes with God for His glory.

We should *gaze* at God and *glance* at the Devil. When we, God's children, *glance* at the Devil in light of our *gaze* at God, then the Devil is seen accurately as disarmed although he continues to be a formidable enemy. It is true that he is still the Prince of the Air but he functions under the sovereign will of God. What an inexpressible joy it is to have a God-

centered theology rather than an anti-Satan-centered theology. What glory it is to *gaze* at God and only *glance* at the Devil.

“Praise be to You, O Lord . . .
Yours, O Lord, is the greatness
and the power and the glory
and the majesty and the splendor, . . .
Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom;
You are exalted as head over all.”
(1 Chronicles 29:10-11)

5

DEMONIZATION

On D-Day, June 6, 1944, victory for the allies was guaranteed when the invasion at Normandy was successful, but that did not mean that all battles stopped. Several battles continued for weeks and months. The same is true in our spiritual warfare. When Christ rose from the dead it was D-day. On that day, the war was won and the Devil was defeated. His strongest weapons were destroyed. Yet the battle is continuing. One day, the battles will cease when the Devil is completely crushed.

Proper Perspective

Although the Normandy invasion assured victory for the allies, thousands of people died and were wounded after D-day. The bullets were real bullets, and the blood was real blood.

The same after our D-Day when Christ rose from the dead. The devil was disarmed from his biggest weapon but he could have become even more tenacious and stubborn because of his defeat.

The major difference for us in our warfare is our perspective and frame of reference. Are we wrestling with the Enemy with a pre-D-day perspective or a post-D-day perspective?

Some scholars feel that the build-up of evil we are experiencing today must be similar to what Christ experienced before His crucifixion. Therefore, they feel we should face the Enemy as Christ did in the gospels' record, that is through a power encounter.

Other scholars disagree with this view. They point out that because of the events of the cross, the epistles in the New Testament are the standard to follow in our wrestling with the Enemy. It is not primarily a power encounter but a truth encounter.

Personally, I cannot ignore what Christ accomplished on the cross, but I must build on it. Furthermore, I believe there were power and truth encounters before the cross, and there have been power and truth encounters after the cross. Power does not need to be seen merely through signs and wonders, but power can also be seen in a sanctified life. “The people were amazed at His teaching; because He taught them as one who had authority, not as teachers of the law” (Mark 1:22; Matthew 7:29).

When Christ started His public ministry after forty days of fasting, He encountered the Devil through truth, but there was power in that truth.

And as Christ preached the Gospel and was faced with demonized individuals, He encountered the demons with power, but there was truth in that power. He taught the crowds and His disciples about God and the Enemy. That power encounter was used not to produce “amazement and fascination” but to produce a desire for the truth.

After the events of the cross, we also see power-in-truth encounters and truth-in-power encounters.

Paul taught all night. When the sleepy, young man fell from the third floor window and died, Paul prayed for him, and he rose from the dead. Truth and power were in dynamic tension (Acts 20:7-12).

When the young woman who was demonized cried out and harassed Paul and his team, Paul cast out the demons from her and thus confirmed the message that was preached in that city (Acts 16:18).

When Paul preached to King Agrippa, the king’s heart burned within him because there was power in the preaching and the teaching of the Word (Acts 26:28).

I see history as a horizontal line with the cross in the middle. The cross is D-day. Before that D-day, Christ was fighting a mighty Devil. After that D-day, we are still facing a tenacious enemy, but he has been disarmed from his biggest weapon. How does this perspective help me as a Christian on a daily basis? It gives me the confidence that God is more powerful than

the Devil, and it helps me to shift my focus from fear of the Devil to trust in God. It is very similar to a Christian who walks with God with an assurance of salvation in contrast to the one who is struggling in his Christian life because he has no assurance.

Victory can be experienced in the midst of a relentless struggle against evil.

In his attack, the Devil, along with his emissaries, infiltrates and penetrates the world through the following strands of the rope of evil:

- Demonization
- Cultures
- Laws and Basic Beliefs
- Structures of Power
- Thought Life

In this chapter, we want to focus our attention on *demonization*.

From Experience

My family and I lived in Cairo, Egypt, for fifteen years. During these years, we had a ministry with various strata of society. On one of my teams, there was a man who had a ministry of exorcism. Rami (all names have been changed) worked as an engineer. At church, he was an elder and had a strong ministry of making disciples, but he was famous as a man of God who could cast out demons. As a result of this reputation, he had many contacts with Muslims and nominal Christians that were demonized or possessed and who were brought to him by their relatives. One night each week, a minimum of about twenty-five people would come to his church, from Muslim and Christian backgrounds, to have their relatives delivered from demonization. Out of the twenty-five, there would be five or more that were actually demonized. In addition, several other nights were spent in exorcism as the need occurred. I have personally seen Rami cast out demons several times, but I want to share only two stories to illustrate a principle that will be presented later on in this chapter.

Several years ago Rami had to go to his hometown in southern Egypt. It was a long trip that usually took more than eight hours by bus. That day he

was sitting in an aisle seat in the middle of the bus reading his Bible. One can easily assume that the passengers on the bus would be 90% Muslims.

As Rami stopped reading the Bible and was thinking about what he had read, he noticed that the man sitting in the aisle seat across from was jerking his head forward and backward in a very weird way. Rami did not know what was wrong with this man. Then the thought came to his mind, “perhaps he is demonized or possessed.”

He prayed, “But Lord, what can I do about it? I am on a public bus, and it would be embarrassing to exercise exorcism in public.” Rami wrestled with God for about fifteen minutes before he had the courage to do something about it. Finally in a loud voice he commanded in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that whoever was demonized should raise both arms up.

The only one who raised his arms was the man across from him in the other aisle seat. You can imagine how everybody in the bus was shocked and watched intently. The man’s arms were raised, and his eyes were closed. Rami commanded the demons to respond to his questions. In the process, Rami found out from the demon spokesman using the voice box of the man how those demons were controlling that man and influencing him in all areas of his life.

Finally, Rami commanded the evil spirits saying, “I am going to command you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to come out of him. In whose name am I commanding you?”² The voice answered, “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Then Rami commanded, “Louder,” so the voice answered in a louder voice, “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Again Rami commanded, “Louder,” because he wanted everybody on the bus to know the authority of Christ. The voice again answered, “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Rami then cast the demons out, the man’s arms dropped and he opened his eyes, not knowing what had happened. Rami continued to evangelize those who were around him in the bus during the rest of the journey.

The second story is about a man, his wife and their two teenage children who lived in Cairo, Egypt. Rami was asked to come and visit this Muslim family and find out if the man, Murad, was demonized. This family had been tormented by demons for months; and in desperation, they came to

² Rami used the Arabic Bible name for Jesus (Yasou’ al Massih) which is close to the Hebrew name for Jesus.

Rami and asked him for help. Rami visited them and found out that only the mother was demonized. He prayed and commanded the evil spirits to respond, and they responded. In this way, he found out that the lady was demonized by four demons. When he commanded them to come out, their spokes demon refused. So, he told the family that he would come a week later as he needed to spend the following days fasting and praying.

Murad and his family assumed that Rami was powerless and would never come back again. So, right away, they started looking for others to help them. A nominal Christian and at another time a Muslim exorcists came, and the demons responded but refused to come out. The Muslim exorcists' approach was to appease the demons by offering them blood sacrifices, provided that the demons would decrease their torment of this lady. Finally, months later, Murad went back to Rami and asked him again to come. So, Rami promised that he would come to the home a week later on Friday, after he spent a week in prayer and fasting.

On that Friday of the following week, Rami, along with Sameer from our team, went to the apartment of Murad. The apartment was packed with friends and neighbors who had come to watch.

It was Sameer's first exposure to this kind of ministry. Both Rami and Sameer were very much aware of the potential for evangelism in that situation.

Rami prayed for Siham, Murad's wife, and commanded the evil spirits to talk. Again, he found that she was possessed with four demons and that these demons were responsible for the torment she was going through. The demons also informed Rami that Siham had a growth on her abdomen that the demons were responsible for. Neither Murad nor Siham had told Rami about the growth. Rami commanded the demons to remove the growth but did not command the demons to come out. Rami then asked Murad and Siham to go into the bedroom and check whether the growth was still there or not. They came back beaming with joy, assuming that she was healed. Rami pointed out to them that the symptom was removed, but the cause, namely the four evil spirits, was still there. (Later on, we found out that Siham was supposed to go to the hospital in ten days for surgery to remove the growth. Siham, her husband and the Doctor had not realized, until the demons communicated with Rami, that the growth was produced by the evil spirits).

Rami resumed talking to the demons and said to them, “I want you to come out of this lady and enter that gentleman,” pointing to Sameer. The demon speaking on behalf of the four answered, “We cannot.” Rami asked why? “We cannot, because this man is a man of God.” Sameer sighed with relief!

Rami wanted to teach the crowd in the apartment that there is safety in standing under the umbrella of Christ’s authority.

That same night, Siham invited Christ into her life, and the whole evening was a tremendous opportunity to show the power of Christ to the neighbors who had come to watch.

Two days later, on Sunday evening, Rami, Sameer and I went to visit Murad’s family. Starting that night and for ten months to come, we had Bible study every Sunday night with this family.

When I think of Siham now, she impresses me as one of the very few people I know who prays without ceasing. She stays in the presence of God all day long.

As for Murad, over the months he came to know Christ, then later his son came to know Christ but as far as I know the daughter is still resisting committing her life to God.

I personally believe that demonization and exorcism happen today. I do not believe that this is based solely on what I have seen because my experience cannot prove truth; it only illustrates it. In the next section, I will share some principles that I have learned

Truths and Principles

Demonization does not necessarily mean being owned or possessed by demons, but it means the demonized person is living under the control of Satan.

I have used “being possessed” and “being demonized” interchangeably, simply meaning: being under the control of the Devil. The word “*demonized*” is a better word because it infers the whole spectrum from being under the control of the Devil to being possessed by demons. So, I will continue using the term “*demonized*.”

The following are some truths and principles that I have come to believe. Some of these truths and principles are now convictions, while others are still in the process of being formed.

For some of these truths and principles, we can find clear and obvious teaching from the Word. For others, we can conjecture on the basis that they ring true.

1. Authority Principle

Because of the authority given to us, every Christian should be ready to cast out demons in the name of Christ when the need demands it. Not being gifted should not excuse us.

- “If God is for us, who is against us?” (Romans 8:31)
- We are given the authority over the power of the Enemy (Luke 10:17-19).
- All authority is given to Christ, and He is with us always (Matthew 28:18-20).

2. Giftedness Principle

I have seen, or known of, some men of God who have spent hours in casting out a demon. On the other hand, I have seen, or known of, others that have cast demons out in five minutes.

Is exorcism a gift? We can ask the same question about evangelism. There are people who take a long time to lead a person to Christ, while Dr. Billy Graham expects to see converts after every sermon he preaches.

God has stretched out and enlarged the spiritual capacities of Dr. Graham to the degree that it is somewhat easier for him to believe God for converts. In that sense, he is gifted, and part of that giftedness is acquired through experience.

Rami, my friend in Egypt, is also “gifted,” for it is somewhat easier for him than for others to believe God provides the authority to cast out demons.

3. Confirmation Principle

In the time of the Apostles, the New Testament had not been canonized, and parts of it had not even been written. There were “oral traditions” of what Christ had taught and done. Signs and miracles confirmed the oral tradition.

Nowadays, I believe that God is choosing to confirm, with signs and wonders, the written Word to groups of people on the frontiers of missions.

Mission reports from around the world illustrate this truth. However, the phenomenon of demonization is also real in America. Neil Anderson, Fred Dickason, Tom White and others refer to it extensively. Scott Peck, from a psychological approach to the study of the phenomenon of evil, wrote about demonization in the last section of his book, *People of the Lie*.

Are these indications that even the United States of America, a “Christian country” is becoming secular and is becoming in some ways a heathen country, where the truth needs to be confirmed with power so that people will listen? This could be a sad reality.

4. Power and Truth Principle

Signs and wonders, such as casting out demons, can produce only “amazement” if they are not accompanied by the preaching and the teaching of the Word. In fact, Christ pointed out that it is dangerous to cleanse a human life from a demon and leave it empty.

In Acts 8, there is an interesting contrast between “amazement” on the one hand and repentance and conversion on the other, demonstrated in the life of Simon the sorcerer.

5. Limited Demonic Power Principle

The Devil has no power over me in things that really matter which has to do with my soul and with my eternal destiny. He can infect me with disease, he can injure me in a car accident and he can even kill me. The devil can place an obstacle before me that prevents me from achieving an important but not a critical need, but he can never prevent me from knowing God and from seeking His glory, the primary and indispensable need (Romans 8:33-39).

6. Derived Demonic Power Principle

The authority and power that the Devil has over my life comes from my surrendering my will to him and focusing my gaze on him rather than on God. The Devil has only as much authority as I give him, or as much as God permits, for the purpose of purifying me and making me becoming more like His Son (Job 1:8, 12).

7. Vulnerability Principle

Demonization takes place mainly with non-Christians, but if the born-again Christian makes himself vulnerable to the Devil, he can fall under his control and influence.

Some of the main areas where we can open our lives to the Devil are:

- A life of lies, hypocrisy and manipulating others under the guise of “righteousness.” (I highly recommend the book *People of the Lie* by Scott Peck.)
- Drugs
- Prolonged anger, bitterness or resentment
- Prolonged refusal to listen to and obey the Holy Spirit
- Dabbling with witchcraft, sorcery, the occult and Satan worship
- Covenants or deals with Satan
- Prolonged self-pity

8. Freedom Principle

People can be freed from Satanic influence, be it demonization, in cultures, thought life and so on, through various methods. For some people, it could be through casting out the demons (demonization), and for others, through counseling and renewing the mind with basic Biblical truths (thought life).

Thinking every kind of Satanic influence to be a form of demonization is a microscopic view of spiritual warfare. A panoramic view of spiritual warfare helps us to make a more accurate diagnosis.

9. Saturation Principle

Colossians 3:16 teaches us that the Word of God should dwell within us and saturate our minds. Being saturated with the Word of God by keeping our eyes focused on Christ is not only safe for us but is threatening to the Devil. For the gates of hell cannot stand against the victorious march of God's people.

10. Team Ministry Principle

The person with the "gift" of exorcism should be part of a team and not a loner. He/she should be complemented by fellow team members who are strong in teaching the Word. Otherwise, the fruit of her/his ministry will be temporary, and partial deliverance will be characterized by "amazement" rather than repentance and conversion.

11. Covenant of Grace Principle

Some evangelicals have the tendency to emphasize the ancestral or generational bondages of Satan without emphasizing the covenant of grace. I believe that the vicious cycle of the sins of the fathers can be broken when the covenant of grace becomes operational in people's lives. Paul uses the strongest language when he speaks of this new covenant of grace. *"He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished (gave freely and in abundance) on us"* (Ephesians 1:4-8).

I believe that the visitation of the sins of the fathers has been superseded by the covenant of grace.

Our tendency is to believe that justification and glorification are by sheer grace, and they are. But when it comes to sanctification, it is hard for us to believe that it is also by grace through faith. May God give us the spiritual insight and understanding to realize that He lavished upon us the riches of His grace. (A key passage in the Old Testament on this subject is Ezekiel 18).

12. Suspended Judgment Principle

Perhaps the wise thing to do is to suspend our final judgment on this phenomenon of demonization until we have learned more, especially in areas where the Bible does not teach clearly. Waiting might be a virtue.

We should neither get carried away by stories, believing everything we hear nor have an attitude of refusing to believe and denying the existence of the phenomenon of demonization.

May God help us to be wise and humble as we wait upon Him to teach us primarily from the Bible and secondarily from life and experience.

In conclusion, as we consider Christ, we see that:

- He did not practice deliverance with every demonized person. This was not His primary calling.
- None of his primary disciples, including Paul, came from a demonized background.
- His great victory over Satan did not come through a ministry of exorcism but through choosing the way of the Cross. He was tempted by the Devil to bypass the way of the Cross at the beginning of His public ministry and again in the Garden of Gethsemane before the Cross.
- Before the crucifixion and the resurrection, Christ's spiritual warfare was with a strong and powerful Devil who was threatening humans with his powerful weapon of fear of death.
- In our spiritual warfare as God's children, we face a strong enemy but one who has been disarmed from his biggest weapon. We should live with a post D-Day perspective.

In the next chapter, we will deal with our spiritual warfare against Satan and his influence on cultures.

6

SATANIC INFLUENCE IN CULTURES

The Phenomenon of Cultures

According to Genesis 11:1- 4, the world that this chapter addresses had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a place in Shinar (Babylon) and settled there. They said to one another, *“let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves . . .”*

We see in this text that at first, the world was one culture. All people had one language, the same set of values, customs, traditions and religion, but God confused their language (Genesis 11:7) so that they could not understand one another and thus became scattered. With this dispersion, a multiplicity of cultures came into existence.

Why did God confuse their language and scatter them on the face of the earth?

Farmers who export apples wrap each apple alone in a separate sheet of paper; then they stack these wrapped apples in boxes. They do this in order to protect the apples from rotting. If one apple goes bad, it will not affect the other apples because it is insulated. When God saw that the Babylonians, with their one culture (Tower of Babel), were becoming rotten, He scattered them all over the face of the earth in order to protect the world from going bad. The main purpose for the multiplicity of cultures is to insulate people from infecting one another with evil.

A beautiful contrast to Genesis 11 is in Acts 2. We see God working out a miracle which is the exact opposite of scattering people into a variety of cultures. *“Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language”* (Acts 2:5-6).

To help us imagine what it must have been like in those days, let us consider a modern illustration.

Once a year there is a major Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Muslims from around the world come to Mecca for a very special event. Preparations for it start months in advance as these Muslims begin to save money, practice more religious duties and avoid more sin so that their pilgrimage will be more acceptable to God. As the trip starts for these individuals from various parts of the world, by air, sea and land, religiosity

increases. As they arrive in Mecca, they experience the unity of Islam in spite of the diversity of cultures, languages, customs and traditions. Probably each group that shares one culture and language stays together: the Indonesians, the Nigerians, the Egyptians, the Filipinos, the South Africans, the Turks, the Pakistanis, the Indians and so on. They share unity in religion but have a great diversity of cultures, especially in terms of language.

During the pilgrimage, Muslims who are not bilingual cannot communicate with other Muslims who speak a different language. What would it be like if all of a sudden a Saudi who knew only Arabic found himself able to communicate with Nigerians, Filipinos, Turks and Indians?

Perhaps the situation in Jerusalem was a bit similar to that in Mecca at the time of the pilgrimage. The amazing thing is that the Jews in Jerusalem heard the diversity of God fearers, who probably knew only their own ethnic language communicating with and understanding all the others.

God gave the Jews from diverse cultures the miraculous ability to understand and communicate with one another. It had been necessary to have a diversity of cultures in order to prevent the evil that was present in one group of people or culture from infecting the whole world. But the descent of the Holy Spirit brought communication and unified the people of God.

Erosion in Cultures

Until a certain time in history, one could possibly have said that one country had an evil culture and another country had a relatively good culture. But these days it is impossible to continue using these categories in describing cultures. There is no pure culture, and there is no completely evil culture. All cultures are infected with Satanic influences to some degree or another, and all cultures have some strands of goodness.

Culture is like the atmosphere that people live in. It includes religion, language, customs, traditions, values and social norms. It is like the air we breathe and like the law of gravity that we take for granted. It is like water for the fish and air for the birds, for no one lives in a vacuum.

When a person is totally immersed in his culture and has no exposure to other cultures, he loses his sensitivity to detect evil in his own culture. It is like someone who is cleaning a stable and after being inside the stable for

some time, he becomes accustomed to the bad smell and is not bothered by it. But when he goes out and breathes some fresh air and then comes back into the stable, he will be able to detect the bad smell. Similarly, unless we frequently go to the Bible for fresh air, we lose our sensitivity to detect evil in cultures.

Satan, the roaring lion, along with his principalities and powers, is attempting to bring about alienation from God and spiritual blindness. His goal is the total destruction of man. His main strategy is subtle deception. The channels of his attacks are demonization, laws, basic beliefs, structures of power, thought life and cultures.

Satan's desire is to pollute cultures with evil in order to bring about slow, steady and progressive spiritual blindness. In that familiar experiment where a frog was placed in a container of hot water, the frog immediately jumped out. But when that same frog was placed in warm water which was then gradually heated to the boiling point, the frog did not jump out and was boiled alive.

This is what the Devil is set on doing—slowly polluting every culture until humanity is destroyed without its realization or resistance.

Are we aware of evil in our cultures? Do we hate evil to the degree that we are willing to do something about it? Are we willing to put on the whole armor of God and engage in spiritual warfare?

Pollution in cultures can be as dangerous and even more dangerous than demonization. God's standards in the Bible were very high, especially when it came to protecting the culture of His people from pollution. "*They took things from the tent (of Achan), brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites spread them out before the Lord. Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan . . . , the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons, his daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the valley of Achor . . . Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them*" (Joshua 7:23-25). Evil was totally eradicated from the camp of God's people. This was the way to protect the culture from getting polluted. For pollution is like leprosy, and the way they dealt with leprosy in the Old Testament was by declaring the leper unclean and by demanding the leper to be ostracized from society so that he would not infect others with his disease (Leviticus 13 and 14).

Let me illustrate how pollution endangers our cultures today. Economic systems are not good or bad in themselves, but greed is sin. When greed is not dealt with, it develops into a “spirit of greed” that permeates the culture. Once the “spirit of greed” is justified and philosophized (Isaiah 5:20), it becomes like a disease that causes a slow but sure erosion and, finally, deterioration of the culture.³

The Bible states clearly that greed, witchcraft and sexual perversion are sin. When we allow them to exist in our culture and even justify their existence, we are allowing the sin to eat away at the heart of our culture.

We will sooner or later find ourselves harassed and intimidated by satanic influences which are causing the whole society to drift away from God. Are we willing to engage in spiritual warfare and not be intimidated by Satanic influences in our society? The Christians in Ephesus celebrated their new life by building a bonfire and burning a huge amount of books on sorcery and witchcraft. If they had not done so and instead allowed themselves to coexist with evil, they might have ended up as a weak and colorless church that was full of problems. May we wake up from our sleep, put on the armor of God and engage in spiritual warfare before it becomes too late for our cultures. The Roman empire, with all its greatness, disintegrated and collapsed. May our spiritual alertness help us to detect evil, hate it and do something about it before God removes the lamp stand from our midst (Revelation 2:4-5).

Practical Suggestions

1. *Be Careful.* We need to be careful not to be naïve about defilement in cultures, whether our own or others’ cultures. The Ouija boards, games about dungeons and dragons, occult practices, sorcery and magic rituals are all dangerous. We also need to be careful about what we buy in terms of souvenirs as we travel abroad.

2. *But Do Not Be Crippled With Fear.* We need to be careful but not crippled with fear to the degree that we lose our effectiveness in reaching the secular and people of other religions in the world. If an Egyptian brings me a gift of valuable and expensive papyrus paper that has a drawing of a pyramid on it, and on the top of the pyramid there is a drawing of an eye,

³ This book was originally written in the early nineteen nineties. As I was reviewing it in the early 2009, I could not but think of the melt down of the economy and of how America is now reaping the results of greed and the spirit of greed that went rampant.

will I receive the gift graciously? Will I even be willing to frame it and hang it up in our house, provided I honestly like the art and sincerely desire to honor my friend whom I am witnessing to? Or will I panic and discard the papyrus drawing as soon as my friend leaves because I am intimidated and crippled by fear? Do I do the same with the dollar bills that have the same drawing? Why am I not crippled with fear at the sight of a dollar bill?

3. *Carefulness versus Legalism.* Every individual or family tends to build fences to protect themselves from sin. God gave His people the Ten Commandments. Then, over the centuries, the Jews developed endless lists of fences to protect themselves from breaking the law. No wonder Christ had a hard time with the Pharisees of His day, as He saw them crippled and crippling others with their multitudes of fences that became as binding as God's laws and commandments.

A friend of mine struggled for a while with the problem of spending too much time watching television to the point where he was not exercising responsible self-control. Every night he would drift into the television room and spend hours in front of the screen. So, he decided to build a fence. His fence was to stop watching television for one month. Only after he had regained self-control did he begin to watch television in a disciplined manner.

My friend's fence was merely a fence and not a law. There is no commandment that says, "Thou shalt not watch television." Yet people confuse their own fences with God's law, and they even go a step further by imposing their fences as laws on other Christians.

As we consider this area of sin in culture, we need to be sensitive to:

- 1) Establishing our own fences;
- 2) Not confusing our fences with God's law; and
- 3) Not imposing our fences on others.

In the next chapter we will address the issue of our spiritual warfare against Satanic influence in laws and basic beliefs.

SATANIC INFLUENCE IN LAWS AND BASIC BELIEFS

Laws and Legislations

Laws are extremely important because they set the limits and the boundaries for the behavior of individuals and groups in a community. When laws are observed, order, mutual respect and life can be maintained in a society.

Laws are often seen as a threat to freedom. This could be true, depending on who sets them and with what motives. In a family situation, for instance, when loving parents establish laws, limits and boundaries for their children, they contribute to the children's security and sense of confidence. The same can be true in a nation.

Can you imagine what it would feel like to stand on a balcony on the seventieth floor of a skyscraper and have no railings on that balcony? Have you experienced going up the steps in an unfurnished building where there are no railings by the stairs? Your tendency is to go up the steps, pressing against the wall, out of fear that you might fall. There is great value in having laws, limits and boundaries. They are like railings that give a sense of safety.

There are written laws, and there are accepted conventions or unwritten laws. The written laws form the legal codes or policies of a nation, a company or a church. While the unwritten laws form a bulk of legal, social, ethical and cultural limits and boundaries, these could become as binding as the written laws themselves.

Some laws are bad, and others are inadequate and could be improved upon. There are also some good laws which still can be abused by evil people. In general, laws are good because they are essential to life. Yet, laws can become evil because sinful people can bend them and distort them to accomplish their own sinful purposes.

Basic Beliefs

Many times, unwritten laws are formed on the foundation of basic beliefs. These basic beliefs are the unquestioned assumptions people tend to have regarding the nature of things. Basic beliefs serve as the frame of reference

by which we judge what is important and what is not. In some ways, they are like lenses through which we view reality and determine what is trivial and what is worthy of worship.

Basic beliefs are usually implicit in the culture. A child unconsciously learns them and wears them as lenses. As he grows up, they become part of him and determine his perspective.

Can Satan use written laws and legislation? Can he permeate the conventional or unwritten laws? Can Satan shape the basic beliefs in a nation and thus determine the perspective of multitudes of people on how they perceive reality.

Some Bible scholars, as they studied Ephesians 6:12 regarding the nature of rulers, authorities, cosmic powers and spiritual forces, came to the conclusion that Paul and others in the Bible are talking about demonic hierarchies that rule the earth. Other Bible scholars assert that rulers, authorities, cosmic powers and spiritual forces in Ephesians 6 and other passages are human structures of power, whether political, economic, social or whatever.

Personally, I believe that Ephesians 6:12 is not necessarily talking about either of these two options. Taking either of these two interpretations is, I believe, reading between the lines and bending the Scriptures to fit our already established conclusions. The New Testament does not clearly separate and distinguish between the realm of the spiritual and the realm of human powers. We see very clearly in the New Testament that God establishes human authorities. *“There is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God”* (Romans 13:1). Yet we know that the Devil can penetrate, permeate and control these systems to the degree of making them demonic. Therefore, if in our spiritual warfare, we are programmed only to detect evil in the supernatural realm, we might not even notice that the Devil is deeply working through some of our laws, legislation and, more importantly, in our basic beliefs.

We will be like an army which is trained to combat regular armies with classical warfare techniques but is not ready, trained nor equipped to combat guerillas who use different techniques in their warfare.

May God help us to put on the whole armor of God so that we can engage in a spiritual warfare which is neither partial nor inadequate. May His armor help us not only to close firmly the front door against the Devil but to make sure that the back door and the side windows are closed as well. May God help us to have a panoramic view of spiritual warfare.

Satan can embody, penetrate and control human authorities and use them to serve him and oppose God. This takes various shapes and forms.

1. Laws Formed Because of Evil Intentions

The competitors of Daniel, out of jealousy, maneuvered the king to create a law that would force him to place Daniel in the den of lions (Daniel 6).

There are laws in every country that are created because of evil intentions, and these laws are available channels for the Devil.

2. Inadequate Laws

Some laws, because of inherent loopholes, allow evil people, motivated by greed or other self-centered purposes, to take advantage of them. These inadequate laws are other channels that the Devil uses.

Do you think freedom of worship is abused in North America? How could the rights of minorities be abused? Is Satan taking advantage of these laws? How?

3. Satanic Influence in Laws and Basic Beliefs

In 1948, a young man from Egypt was sent to the United States of America on a scholarship to observe the educational system in the United States and to be exposed to the Western way of life where “dreams can happen.”

Sayid Qutb, at that time, was a semi-secular Muslim although he had memorized the whole Qur’an by the age of twelve.

As he was on the boat on his way to the United States, a half-naked drunken European woman barged into his cabin. He pushed her out, and out of fear that he might lose his moral standards, he decided to pray every day to guard himself against sin.

In the States, he was exposed to many Americans from various walks of life. He was impressed by the cinema industry. He observed the power of

advertising. He attended a church where the youth group meeting ended in a sensual dance. He observed the crude excitement of people watching a boxing match. He also observed the positive value of fine arts such as classical music and ballet.

While he was in the States, he analytically observed the basic beliefs of Americans and decided to become a Muslim fundamentalist. In one of the chapters in his famous book *Milestones*, he vehemently attacked some of the basic beliefs in the United States, pointing out that they fall short of the Islamic standards. What Sayid Qutb did not realize is that these basic beliefs fall short of the Biblical standard as well.

His book *Milestones* is one of the major texts used to disciple Muslims and make them fundamentalists. Qutb is considered to be one of the modern pillars of Muslim fundamentalism, and the irony of it is that his “conversion” to fundamentalism took place while he was living in the USA.

Qutb is an analytical observer assessing American culture from the outside. Bloom, on the other hand, in his book *The Closing of the American Mind*, analytically observes the United States from the inside and reaches similar conclusions from an academic perspective. Noebel, in his book, *Understanding the Times*, observes laws and basic beliefs from an evangelical perspective and points out how the United States has drifted into secular humanism, far away from Biblical Christianity.

Has Satan penetrated our laws and basic beliefs in Europe and in North America? Are we called as Christians to engage in the spiritual warfare against our enemy in this area of laws and basic beliefs?

The following are a few illustrations of how Satan is deeply and effectively at work in this area of laws and basic beliefs in the United States:

- 1) In the early 1960s, a major turning point took place in the United States of America regarding the whole area of materialism. Greed, which is considered as sin according to the Bible, was declared an accepted value. “It is O.K. to be greedy. Actually greed could be the horsepower needed to keep you aspiring for success and achievement.” Greedy people have been around since the creation of mankind; but once it could be openly acknowledged, practiced and even applauded, greed was transformed into the “spirit of greed” that has permeated and infiltrated many walks of

life. One of many illustrations could be the common practice of suing for the sake of making easy money.

- 2) Hiebert, in his paper “The Gospel in Our Culture,” speaks of the myth of the cosmic spiritual warfare in the Western culture. According to this myth, the cosmos is divided into good and evil. “In this battle, the good may use wicked means if the evil side does so first, because winning is the only thing. It enables the victor to gain control and to establish order. If the good party wins, it can institute the rule of righteousness and peace. The battle is never fully won nor internal peace established. The good side may win for a time, but the evil side revives, and the battle is renewed. In fact, the excitement is in the battle.”

Hiebert points out how this myth is played out a thousand times a week on television in programs like Superman, Batman, Lone Ranger, Magnum, Colombo, Rambo and many others. We see it as well in detective stories, western dramas, science fiction, football, boxing and TV wrestling.

It is enjoyable and healthy to watch some of these programs on TV, but the danger is when we use a myth like this one as a lens. Will it affect our judgments of how we perceive “reality”? How?

May God help us to be courageous in examining our basic beliefs and detect whether Satan has been in control without our being aware of him. May God help us to hate and resist the Devil in our basic beliefs and worldviews.

We could have a long list of basic beliefs that have some truth, that we have taken for granted as “Christian,” while in reality the Devil could be using them to control us. The list could include:

- Relativism and avoiding absolutes as an indication of “Christian open-mindedness” versus Christ’s claims of authority and absolute statements, God’s wisdom and the world’s foolishness.
- Pragmatism as a proof of what is true versus obedience to the Word and focus on motives, attitudes and standards
- Individualism versus the body concept, emphasis on family and interrelations, e.g., the “one another” commands.

- Self-actualization versus obedience, dying to self and servanthood.
- Immediate gratification versus sanctification as a process, delayed gratification as embodied in the concept of Biblical hope and trials and testing as God's loving discipline.
- Perceiving ourselves as victims and blaming society or our circumstances for problems and difficulties versus God's sovereignty, control and goodness.
- Workaholism versus faithful and responsible stewardship.
- Success versus giftedness and stewardship, motive, attitude and standards being more important than results.

It will be interesting to add to this list and analyze ourselves in light of each of these basic beliefs. May God help us to come to Him with a "Psalm 139 and 51" attitude and repent of our compromise.

The Devil is trying to cement his laws both outside of us and inside our minds as basic beliefs. May God help us to wage war at both fronts.

8

SATANIC INFLUENCE THROUGH STRUCTURES OF POWER

Power of the Individual

Power is neutral. It can be used either for good or for evil.

Throughout history, individuals, such as Gandhi and Hitler, have stood out either for their constructive or destructive contributions to humanity. They were individuals with power.

What usually gives power to individuals is their riches, their executive authority, their daring courage and their influence upon people.

Saul of Tarsus was given authority to go to Damascus and persecute the Christians.

Herod the Great had executive authority to put to death all baby boys that were below two years of age in order to make sure that the Son of God would not be allowed to grow up and thus compete with him or with his children for the throne.

Joseph of Arimathea, because of his riches and his standing in the community, had the power to enter the palace of Pilate and ask for the body of Christ after the crucifixion.

The High Priest, during the trial of Christ, decided for Judaism that Yashou' of Galilee was not the Messiah. So he tore his clothes in disgust rather than fall on his knees before the incarnate God.

Parents have authority over their children. The younger the children and the more dependent, the greater the power of the parents.

Authority and power can be used as vehicles for loving, serving and developing people. Christ, Paul and others poured out their lives in service and love for people. On the other hand, there is quite a long list of men and women with power that were instruments for evil.

Power in the Group

A young man could be harmless if he is walking alone at night. But if this same young man is a member of a gang and you meet him at night along with his gang members, he could be quite dangerous.

There is Power in the Group

"Two are better than one . . . a cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12). Christ said, *"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in My name, there I am with them"* (Matthew 18:19-20).

Christ's spiritual presence is promised to the two or three that come together in His name. The same could be true regarding the spiritual presence of the Devil, or his demonic assistants, among the groups that are working together for evil. There is special power in unity.

Peter's rebuke to Sapphira was not only on the issue of lying but also on the agreement with her husband on lying. It looks like sin gets compounded

when people plan evil together. *“How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also”* (Acts 5:9).

Ahab and Jezebel are another couple that united together to achieve evil goals. They were available instruments to the Devil.

Yet life is not always differentiated into clear black and white perspectives. Many times, there are grey areas. A group of people could at times unite, in the name of Christ, towards the goal of serving and loving people, and thus experience the spiritual presence of Christ in their midst. The same group of people could consciously or unconsciously unite together and, with impure motives, make decisions that are based on manipulating and using people and thus experience demonic presence and influence.

We could be very sensitive against a certain set of sins, and yet we could have a blind spot against another set of sins. Therefore, at times we could be clean channels for the Holy Spirit, and at other times we could be available instruments to the Devil as we behave in the flesh.

Missionaries are usually considered pillars and on the frontline in God’s service. Herbert Kane summarizes the missionaries’ tremendous accomplishment over the past 200 years with the following (in Scott 1980:25):

- They loved the people among whom they worked.
- They appreciated the cultures they lived in.
- They learned the languages of the people they served.
- They translated the Bible.
- They provided modern education to the people they served.
- They believed in the potential of the nationals.
- They opened hospitals and clinics.
- They planted churches wherever they went.

Yet these missionaries have gone wrong in several areas, either because they have a blind spot or because they had cultural prejudices. Herbert Kane summarizes these wrong directions committed by these missionaries.

- They had a prejudiced view against other religions.
- They failed to differentiate between what is Biblical theology and what is Western culture.
- They brought with them from the West denominationalism.
- Although they had some appreciation for the cultures of the people they served, they did not encourage contextualization.
- They communicated a paternalistic and controlling attitude to the nations.
- They generally identified themselves with colonial powers.

We might disagree with Kane on how he generalized both the strengths and weaknesses by using the word *they* instead of *some*, yet the question is still worth asking—Could God’s people, even some dedicated missionaries who are God’s servants, be used as instruments of the Devil? Not only are God’s eyes searching around the world for individuals and groups who are willing to wholeheartedly serve Him, the Devil is also intently looking for structures of power that could become his channels for evil.

Other Forms of Power

1. Prejudice

People tend to develop stereotypes with which they can easily explain other cultures or other groups and then place them into neat pigeonholes. Prejudice could well be one of the most effective structures of power that the Devil uses.

A Christian who is prejudiced against Muslims will tend to fear them and have a judgmental attitude and no compassion. Even if he prays for them, it could be with the wrong motive. For sure, the Pharisees of Christ’s day prayed for the Gentiles, but I doubt whether God heard their prayers.

Could some of the Christians today, who are pleasing God in their enthusiasm against abortion, drunkenness and the drug culture, be guilty of making themselves available to the Devil through prejudiced stereotypes against people of other religions and some minority groups? We always seem to stand on shaky ground when we fight against something instead of for something. Unless we have an understanding of and compassion and love for pro-abortionists, drunkards and druggies, our fight against these sins will only communicate hatred and bigotry.

May God help us to be alert to the Devil's deceptive schemes in our spiritual warfare.

2. Economic Injustice

Money, position and knowledge can contribute greatly to forming structures of power. With money, knowledge and authoritative positions, a great deal of manipulation and control can take place, and the Devil is quite aware of the potential. The small minority of people on our globe who are in power (whether in First World countries or leaders of the Third World countries) controls most of the resources and services of the world, while the huge majority is deprived of resources and services. This huge majority has little opportunity to catch up with the privileged few.

The privileged versus the underprivileged are called the "Haves" and the "Have Nots." Twenty percent of the world's population possesses about 80 percent of the world's resources and services. More than one billion people subsist on less than \$100 a year. Most of these people are malnourished. Children's brains are mostly developed in the first two years of life; and if the child is not properly nourished in these two formative years, he could lose 25 percent of his mental capacities. So many children of the world, even from the first years of life, are doomed to poverty, lack of potential and dependency (In Scott 1980:124-129).

The privileged few have the power to control and manipulate to their advantage through control of the military, advertising, the cinema industry, blackmail or bribery. Of course, it will never be called bribery or blackmail. These activities are usually called incentives or serious advice. For the privileged few, an advertisement is an option among many other options, where the individual is free to choose whom to believe and what to buy. But the underprivileged, who is not used to advertising, looks at the commercial as if it were the Gospel truth.

Because of the power that the privileged nations have, global decisions are made to their advantage or in accordance with their views. The principle of “might is right” is a powerful tool.

Nevertheless, the underprivileged masses continue to be dependent on the rich nations and the powerful elite in their countries. They are miserably aware of this fact and realize that the changes required for them to catch up with the privileged few nations that mostly claim to be “Christian” nations are almost impossible to achieve. Then these masses of underprivileged people tend to become hostile and bitter and very vulnerable to religious ideas that promise them dignity and false hope. This, in turn, will hinder the mobility of the Gospel in the world.

Are we aware of the Devil at work in structures of power—in the mass media, advertising, the movie industry, the intellectual structures, economic and political structures?

Are we willing to put on the whole armor of God and engage in spiritual warfare with our enemy—the Devil who is efficient in using the power structures of our day?

3. Positions of Power

Recently, as I studied a book on the history of missions by David Bosch, I was impressed by the fact that throughout Church history, the panoramic view of spiritual warfare can be seen. All the various strands of the rope of spiritual warfare were experienced in the history of the Church. Yet it seems that the Devil made the greatest gain and brought the greatest suffering to the people of God through the strand of structures of power. Dictators like Nero, Hitler, corrupt popes and colonial powers that wanted to “civilize” the world are but a few of many illustrations that we can easily point out.

Not only in Church history do we see the impact of evil through structures of power, but we can even see it in Biblical history. The following are a few illustrations:

- Joseph was imprisoned though he was innocent because of the power of his master’s wife.
- Uriah was deceived and murdered through the scheming of King David and his abuse of power.

- Elijah ran for his life out of fear of the structure of power of King Ahab and Jezebel, his wife.
- Christ was sentenced to death by a structure of power (The Sanhedrin) that conveniently passed judgment on the incarnate God—their Messiah.
- Peter was put in prison by the Roman occupiers that wanted to silence truth.
- The Church in Jerusalem experienced severe persecution to the degree that everybody fled except the Apostles.
- John was banished on the island of Patmos with criminals, waiting for his coming execution.

The Devil, throughout history, has been deeply committed to waging war against humanity. He hates God and the people of God. He will do anything and use every means available to bring about spiritual blindness and alienation from God. Of course, he could harm the body, but more serious is what he could do to the souls of the people as he attempts to keep them in spiritual blindness and lead them step by step to hell. The Devil has used and is still using:

- Demonization
- Cultures
- Laws and basic beliefs
- Structures of power
- Thought life

Are we aware of his deception and his open confrontation? Are we sensitive to God as we read the Scriptures to discover what is on His heart and to stand alongside Him and against the Devil?

4. Ethnocentrism

Christ began His public ministry as He entered the synagogue in Nazareth and was given the scroll of Isaiah to read. He looked for chapter 61 and

read the first two verses and stopped abruptly in the middle of the second verse. In this passage, Christ saw His calling; and from that first day, He was in open confrontation with the structures of power of His day (Luke 4:16-30). They were so furious with Him from the first day that they wanted to kill Him.

In Ezekiel 34, we see God the Father confronting the structures of power among His people in Ezekiel's day. He confronted the shepherds who only took care of themselves. They ate the curds, clothed themselves with wool and slaughtered the choice animals, but they did not care for the flocks (Ezekiel 34:2-3). Then God said about the shepherds, "*I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock . . . I will rescue my flock from their mouths . . .*" (Ezekiel 34:10).

Then God, in the same chapter, confronted another structure of power—the fat sheep. He promised that He will destroy the strong sheep (Ezekiel 34:16). Then He said, "*Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample on the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?*" (Ezekiel 34:18-19). God, as He looks at His globe, sees the whole world, not just His adopted children. He is not ethnocentric. His map does not put Europe, Africa nor the USA at the center of the world. In His map, there is no prejudice and partiality.

He looks at His adopted children with compassion and love, whether they are in Sudan, Chad, Nigeria, Mongolia, Iraq, Indonesia, California, Singapore, England or Argentina. His Western children are not of superior value just because they have more of the resources of the globe. Actually, if He would side with any, it might be with the poor, the destitute and the oppressed (Isaiah 10:1-2; Isaiah 26:4-6).

He is involved deeply in spiritual warfare against the Devil and his principalities. In this war, where do we stand? I believe that many Christians in the West stand alongside God and give very generously to His work around the globe. I believe that the American people are some of the most generous people in the world. Yet, as citizens of the industrialized nations, we should still ask ourselves some important questions: When we have the attitude that the world owes us a living and we give in to greed and materialism, are we not the fat and the strong sheep that trample the

rest of the pasture with our feet? Are we the sheep that go for the clear water to drink and muddy the rest with our feet? Do we consider it to be normal that the poor, the destitute and the oppressed must eat what we trample and drink what we have muddied with our feet?

May God have mercy on us, citizens of the privileged nations. May our eyes be opened to see where we as Christians are in this spiritual warfare. May God help us to be the light and salt in our nations and protect us from becoming like the Pharisees whom Christ spoke about saying, *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel”* (Matthew 23:23-24).

Possible Applications

Could we be tempted to be so occupied with one strand of the rope of the spiritual warfare that we missed the rest? Could we be so concerned with firmly closing the front door against Satan that we forget to close the back door and the side windows?

- 1) As you read the Bible, look for the various strands in the rope of spiritual warfare and identify them. So far, we have covered four strands; and in the next chapter, we will deal with the fifth strand—thought life.
- 2) As you read the newspaper or listen or watch to the news, stay alert and observe how our enemy, the Devil, is involved in events and happenings around the world. Identify the various strands in the rope of his war against humanity.
- 3) According to Noebel, in the United States there are more than 100 million Christians in contrast to about 7 million secular humanists. Yet the 7 million are involved and strategically positioned to influence the whole of the United States of America. How can we be involved and not resign ourselves to remain marginal?
- 4) As we read the Bible, we need to learn to perceive issues from God’s perspective rather than from a narrow ethnocentric perspective.

- 5) If you are in a position of authority, realize the impact you could make by being an instrument of God and refusing to allow yourself to be a tool of the Devil.
- 6) When I live in a country where the government tends to be an evil structure of power, I have the responsibility to vote when that is possible and yet continue to view the authority from a Romans 13:1-7 perspective without grumbling.
- 7) As you face daily battles, remember to apply James' simple formula for victory (James 4:7):

Condition #1: Submit to God.

Condition #2: Resist the Devil.

The result: The Devil will flee.

The issue is not how spectacular and complex our strategies are but WHO we are submitting to and what authority and power are at His disposal.

9

SATANIC INFLUENCE THROUGH THOUGHT LIFE

The Analogy of War

In a major war, not only will the army be involved but also the air force, the navy and all the other branches of the military.

If we use this analogy for our war with our enemy, the Devil, then we realize that the scope of this war is very broad and demands that we be alert to the various methods the Devil may use in his attacks. He hates us, and in his attacks he is waging a total war against us with the intention of destroying us.

In modern war, if some airplanes are downed or if some destroyers are sunk or even if a few cities or towns are occupied by enemy parachute troops, that is not the end. There will always be hope for recovery, picking up the pieces and getting ready for the next battle.

However, if our intelligence is infiltrated and if our leadership is confused, then we will invite defeat.

In our warfare with our enemy, the Devil, we have talked about confronting him in several areas where he attacks:

- Demonization
- Cultures
- Laws and basic beliefs
- Structures of power

But his greatest attack on us will be in the area of thought life. This is equivalent to the “operations center” where all the top leaders are gathered. If that group of decision-makers is infiltrated, then the Enemy is well ahead.

In our warfare with the Devil, we find that he gives great attention to bombarding our minds with his thoughts and ideas. This is not surprising because through our minds, we filter ideas, thoughts and basic assumptions. In our minds are the volitional aspects of our being, yet at the same time our minds are extremely capable of self-deception. Ego defense mechanisms, such as rationalization, projection, compensation and identification are but an indication of what the mind is capable of doing to achieve peace even through self-deception. So the mind, I believe, is the equivalent of the operations center; and therefore, it is the primary target of the Enemy.

The Sin Living in Me

In his first epistle, John writes, *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man (lust of the flesh), the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does (the pride of life)—comes not from the Father but from the world”* (1 John 2:15-16).

The word “*world*” has several meanings; but in this text, it means the evil system organized under the dominion of Satan, which is based on lust and pride.

The lust of the flesh means the desires of our sinful and fallen natures. These are the earthly qualities which incite us to respond to temptations.

The lust of the eyes means the tendency to be captivated by outside stimuli that focus on the appearance of things rather than their real value.

The pride of life is the arrogance regarding one’s external circumstances, material possessions, abilities, academic background, success and so on, of wanting to outshine others in luxurious living, achievements and accomplishments.

In Genesis 2, we have a record of how man was created in the Garden of Eden; and in chapter 3, we have a record of the Fall. Since then, man has been in a state of depravity. Paul describes the condition of humanity by pointing out that “*just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned*” (Romans 5:9-12).

So, in our fallen nature, we have inherited and are infected with something which is worse and more deadly than the HIV virus. This “virus” is called original sin, and we are born with it. I believe this “virus” is, in essence, doubting the goodness and power of God and having a desire to live independently of Him.

Life’s experiences do not cause this “virus” but could nourish it. It is like an influenza virus in my body that causes me to have a sore throat. If I am exposed to cold, the cool temperature does not cause my sore throat, but it nourishes and strengthens the virus that causes my sore throat.

Sometimes the “virus” (doubting God’s goodness and power) is dormant, and other times it is very active. And as long as I am in the flesh, I will always have this “virus.” When the “virus” is active, I find myself wanting to be very much in control of my life. It is much easier to put my trust in things I can control than to depend on Him and trust Him. God describes His people by declaring, “*My people have committed two sins. They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water*” (Jeremiah 2:13).

Christ offers that great invitation to thirsty and longing people to come to Him and drink (John 7:37). I could be very thirsty and yet reject His offer when the “virus” is active.

No research can be done to arrive at a cure for this “virus.” We are all infected with it, and we have to live with it as long as we live in the flesh.

Yet we can do something about this “virus.” As we respond in faith and obedience to the Word of God and as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, the “virus” could become more dormant, but it never dies as long as we are in the flesh. At other times, we experience that the “virus” flares up within us, making the struggle against sin even more difficult. Paul in Romans 7 describes this struggle: *“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do . . . It is no longer I myself who do it but sin living in me . . . What I do is not the good I want to do. No, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing”* (Romans 7:15-20). Again, Paul describes this struggle when he says, *“Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature”* (Galatians 5:16-17).

In the earlier sections of this book, we talked about demonization, Satanic influence in cultures, laws and basic beliefs, structures of power and disease. In all of these, it could appear to us that the devil attacks from the outside, and we humans are like this universe exposed to good and evil powers that are competing to control us. Are we victims in this cosmic war or are we more like *agents* being deeply involved?

In this section, “The Sin Living in Me,” we see how we are agents far more than being victims. We experience the struggle in great intensity because the “virus” is living in us. We go down in a spiral when we surrender our thought life to our sinful nature and thus go deeper into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. If we were not involved as cooperating agents, we could have said, “The devil made me do it,” and we could have blamed the devil for our sin.

As we proceed in this chapter, we see the interaction between the sin living in me and my thought life.

The Devil has infected and polluted our cultures, laws, basic beliefs, structures of power and our bodies. Thus, he is the prince of this world.

Furthermore, he is aware of our weak spots and areas of vulnerability and thus exposes our minds to stimuli that arouse in us sinful thoughts, motives and desires. The Devil knows that our minds are deceitful and desperately corrupt. Therefore, he exposes us to lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life. One of the primary targets is the “operations center”—our minds.

Looking at History

With Adam and Eve, the Devil attacked their minds with the question, “Did God say . . .?” As their “operations center” was infiltrated, they lost their harmony with God, with nature, with self and with one another. That battle was a catastrophe.

With Abraham, perhaps the most severe battle he ever had with the Enemy was the three days’ trip to sacrifice his son, Isaac. The Devil could have bombarded his mind with questions such as these:

- At my age, how could I have another child?
- How could God fulfill His promises to me if Isaac dies?
- What if God does not raise him from the dead?
- Did God really ask me to sacrifice Isaac or am I imagining that I heard God?
- What will I say to Sarah when I go back home alone?

These must have been tough days for Abraham; and in his warfare with the Enemy, he brought joy to God’s heart as he must have brought his thoughts into submission to God.

As Joseph was put in prison, he could have been bombarded by the Devil with agonizing thoughts such as these:

- Should I have committed adultery and escaped the rage of that sensual woman?
- Where is God? Has He forsaken me? Doesn’t He know that I am innocent?
- Who will ever find me in Egypt? I am finished.

- Was I stupid to think that I had a special calling?
- My brothers, who were supposed to honor me according to the dream, wanted to kill me!?
- Is my father alive? Does he care? Can he do anything to help me?

As far as we know, Joseph did well in this battle.

As the people of God walked around the walls of Jericho for seven days, their war with the Devil could have been more difficult than ordinary human battles. Perhaps they were bombarded by the Devil with thoughts such as these:

- What Joshua claimed God told him sounds ridiculous. What if Joshua is wrong this time?
- We are going to be ridiculed by all the nations that will hear about this fiasco.
- I wish some of our leaders would challenge Joshua and help him come to his senses.
- Well, we have walked around Jericho for seven days, and this is the fifth lap on the seventh day, and yet I can't see one crack in the wall. I have been a fool. I better stop walking and insulting my intelligence.

The people of God won the major battle. They controlled their thought lives and continued walking around Jericho; and when their obedience was completed, the walls came tumbling down.

We could have a very long list of illustrations from the Old and the New Testaments of how the Devil could have attacked the thought life of the men and women of God. But in conclusion of this section, I would like to illustrate by using David after his sin with Bathsheba. Perhaps the Devil put thoughts like these into his mind:

- I am the king, and I deserve some pleasures in life. God will not deprive me of these.
- Hard luck, she got pregnant. Why didn't God prevent that pregnancy?

- To be humiliated in public will be a catastrophe. I have to think of a way of dealing with this problem without ruining my reputation.
- I will work out a plan where her husband will assume that the child is his, and everyone's reputation will stay intact.

We all know the result of David's surrender to the Devil in the important area of the "operations center" of his life. No wonder the Devil controlled him for several months. Only when David was willing to obey God in his thought life, did he begin getting above the water. And as he started to submit his thoughts to the obedience of God, his downward spiral stopped, and he began moving back to God.

Foundations for Warfare

We often see people using Ephesians 6:10-18 as one of the main passages in Scripture on spiritual warfare; and yet, so infrequently, this passage is taken in its context in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

The church in Ephesus was mostly made up of Gentile converts along with some Jewish converts. When Paul wrote to this healthy church, he was addressing them as a new society. In the first three chapters, he focused on their tremendous privilege of being children of God. He prayed that their eyes would be opened to realize the greatness of their hope, their power, their riches in Christ and the grace that was lavished upon them. Then he spoke of the tremendous unity that can exist among Christians, whether they come from a Gentile or Jewish background. In essence, what Paul wanted to communicate to the Ephesians in the first three chapters was that they, as a new people, are seated in the heavenly places. They are in Christ at the summit, and they are children of God and not just servants or slaves of God. A key statement that could summarize the first three chapters is this—realize who you are in Christ.

Chapters 4:1 – 6:9 dealt with the second major issue of this epistle. It had to do with the kind of behavior and the kind of relationships that God's children in this new society should have. The key words in this section are "live" and "relate" as God's children.

In the third section of this epistle, Ephesians 6:10-18 (a main text on spiritual warfare), we see a message strongly connected to the rest of the

epistle. The key thought in this section is “keep your stand and do not give up your territory.”

In essence, Paul is saying to the Ephesians, “You are a new society; you are precious and privileged children of God; therefore, live and relate to one another as children of God, and do not let the Devil deceive you. Put on the whole armor of God so that you will continue to realize who you truly are and to live accordingly.”

It seems to me that although the Devil could have attacked the Ephesians in various ways and manners, Paul’s greatest concern for them was their thought life since that is where the Devil, along with the “rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of evil,” were focusing their attacks. They were after the “operations center” of the Ephesians.

Therefore, for the Ephesians to succeed in this warfare, they did not need to occupy new territory. Christ had disarmed the “strong man” from his biggest weapon and had already occupied the territory for His family and positioned them on it, and all they needed to do was not give up any territory to the Devil. That is good news! Waging war with that perspective gives God’s children a tremendous advantage. For example, if I am struggling with insecurity in a social situation, what I need to do is remember that I am God’s child and His ambassador, and I need to live according to who I am. I do not need new territory, but I need to live according to the territory that Christ has already given me.

Waging war with the perspective of victors makes all the difference. Christ has stripped the spiritual powers of their arms, displayed them in public as His trophies of victory, leading them in captive chains at His chariot wheels (Colossians 2:15). Paul used this vivid military language to describe what happened in the unseen reality, the invisible world. The mighty spirits which once held men in their “dominion of darkness” (Colossians 1:13) are now reduced to bound captives. We are now invited to live by faith, trusting that we are already seated in the heavenly places, and to wage war from that perspective. This spiritual warfare is both offensive and defensive. Surfing on the wave that Christ produced, and keeping our balance on that surfboard, attacking the gates of hell is certainly offensive and defensive warfare.

Another key passage on spiritual warfare is 2 Corinthians 10:3-6: “*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary,*

they have divine power to tear down strongholds. We demolish arguments (imagination, false pride, deceptive arguments, sophistries) and every pretension (high thing, proud obstacle, wall-imposing deference, arrogance) that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.”

What are the strongholds that we need to tear down? Paul answers this question by pointing out that these strongholds are “arguments and pretensions” that stand as obstacles, preventing God’s children from knowing Him or being deeply and most intimately related to Him. These strongholds of the Devil, or his fortress, are basically thoughts that bombard the minds of God’s children. The challenge for us is to engage in a spiritual warfare and arrest or bring into captivity every thought and present these thoughts handcuffed to Christ. If we continue in this warfare, like God’s people continued walking around the walls of Jericho for seven days and on the seventh day seven times until our obedience is complete, we too will see the strongholds (arguments and pretensions that are in our minds) come tumbling down.

Our spiritual warfare should be both offensive and defensive. In the realm of thought life, God calls us to be holy. Therefore, rather than just waiting passively to defend our minds when we perceive we are attacked, we should rigorously seek to be sanctified and set apart for God. It involves the determination to offensively bring every thought into obedience and present it as a captive to Christ.

In the realm of the *structures of power*, we should be involved in both defensive and offensive spiritual warfare. We need to be alert and sensitive to detect evil in ourselves and outside. We need to carry the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God—and follow in the footsteps of the prophets of the Old Testament. We need to courageously, each in his or her own sphere of influence, challenge the system and dare to be the conscience of our nations. We need to be involved participants rather than mere spectators.

The same applies to the areas of *culture, laws and basic beliefs*. Rather than being satisfied with allowing our cultures to erode and disintegrate, we should be at the forefront of the battle of preserving and upholding God’s truth.

The same is true with the area of *demonization*. Rather than being terrified, fascinated and amazed by the stories we hear and being satisfied to be mere spectators, we should instead remember that the devil is defeated and dare to cast out demons or at least introduce the demonized to someone with faith and experience in this area. All authority is given to Christ, and He is with us always.

We should be on the offensive and not only on the defensive. What makes the difference in our spiritual warfare is the frame of reference that we have. Are we fighting from a pre- or a post-D-day perspective? Do we perceive ourselves as nobodies and weaklings or do we perceive ourselves as conquerors and God's ambassadors? Do we pray, act and think with that frame of reference?

A Personal Illustration

When we lived in Egypt, we found that many Christians (believers and nominals) were bombarded by the Devil with thoughts that resulted in resentment and bitterness against Muslims. Various things contributed to this, one of which was the call of the minaret.⁴

Muslims, since the time of Muhammad, followed the tradition of alerting people to the time of prayer five times a day—the first being at dawn. Although people nowadays have alarm clocks, the tradition continues with microphones and powerful loudspeakers placed on minarets. With calls of the minaret, and especially the one at dawn, many nominal and born-again Christians in Egypt are captivated by Satanic thoughts that I experienced as well.

As I analyzed the way I thought, I found that my thoughts formed a chain of many links. When the first stimulus appeared (call of the minaret—the first link in the chain), it was automatically followed by other links that became deeply engraved on my mind. The chain of my thoughts went as follows:

- 1) Hearing the call of the minaret.
- 2) This is the man that wakes me up at 5 a.m.
- 3) Do they have to have microphones and loudspeakers? Whoever wants to pray can use his alarm clock?

⁴ You might have read this story in more detail in my other book *The Crescent Through The Eyes of The Cross*.

- 4) Muslims do this in order to frustrate us and persecute us.
- 5) I hate them.
- 6) I should love them and witness to them.
- 7) Lord, help me to be alert to witnessing opportunities to Muslims this week.

The last link in the chain contained prayer. I doubted whether this prayer was answered because it was built on guilt and did not follow repentance.

Instead of being a captive to this chain, I cut it after the first link and built a new chain starting with the old link number one but adding brand-new links two through seven. The new chain looked something like this:

- 1) Hearing the call of the minaret.
- 2) Thank You, Lord, that we live in Egypt.
- 3) Thank You, Lord, that in Your providence You allowed the Muslims to be the majority in this country.
- 4) Thank You, Lord, that You are not prejudiced like me, and You love the Muslims.
- 5) Lord, I wonder if this man who is calling people to pray is going through any struggles these days. I wonder if there is anyone sick in his family. Communicate to him somehow that You care for him and love him.
- 6) Lord, help me to love the Muslims.
- 7) Lord, please help me to be alert to witnessing opportunities to Muslims this week.

The last link in the new chain is identical to the last one in the previous chain. However, in the new chain, I believe that the prayers lifted to God were answered because they were based on compassion and on a clean mind.

As I worked on renewing my mind with the new chain several times each day, it became a part of my being.

Until that time, the mosques were not very close our apartment. We could hear the call of the minarets coming from several mosques in the distance. But then the ground floor of a neighboring building fifty yards from our apartment was transformed into a mosque, and a huge loudspeaker was installed on the roof of the building. As they started operating the first “dawn,” I almost fell out of bed because of the shock of the loud noise.

In the following mornings, I found myself praying with the man as he gave the call:

God is great/Transcendent
God is one
Muhammad is the prophet of God
Get up and pray
Do good deeds to people
God is great/Transcendent
God is one

For every statement except one, I could think of several verses from the Bible. I found myself not only praying with him but also praying for him. The hard part for me was the introductory statement that he made before the call to prayer, “Get up to pray. Prayer is better than sleeping.” I thought that this man was faithfully waking up early while I was not willing to get out from under the warm blankets to have a long quiet time with God. I no longer struggled because of my prejudice against Muslims but because of his statement, “Get up and pray. Prayer is better than sleeping.” So I asked God to forgive me for my laziness; and I prayed in bed, then went back to sleep.

What a sense of liberation I experienced of being free of any bitterness or resentment towards Muslims. The thought that the Devil bombarded me with, I arrested, handcuffed and brought it into captivity to Christ my Lord.

How are you doing these days in the “operations center”? Who is in control? What thoughts come to your mind when it is idle? Are you engaged in holy warfare to keep your mind clean?

May God help us to stand and put on the whole armor of God offensively and defensively.

HOW THE DEVIL WAGED WAR AGAINST CHRIST

In preparing this material, I read the Gospels to observe how the Devil waged his war against our Lord. The intensity of the warfare varied according to the situation, but what stood out to me was the intensity of the warfare when it came to thought life and the continued harassment by the Devil through structures of power. The following is a summary of what I found in the Gospel of Luke:

1. Demonization

As far as I could tell, there were five incidents of demonization in Luke. For sure, Christ must have felt pain as He saw these individuals crippled and controlled by Satan.

- Luke 4:33-36: Christ cast the demons out of a demonized man in the synagogue.
- Luke 8:1-2: Mary Magdalene had seven demons. Christ cast them out, and she became one of His faithful followers. Furthermore, she, along with a few other women, were on His support or donors team.
- Luke 8:26-36: Christ cast out the demons that were in Legion and permitted them to enter the herd of pigs. Legion became an evangelist in the ten cities and in his home town (Mark 5:20).
- Luke 11:14: The mute man spoke after Christ cast the demon out.
- Luke 22:3-6: One of Christ's own disciples, Judas, was demonized or controlled by Satan. Out of all the incidents of demonization, this must have brought the greatest pain to our Lord.

2. Cultures, Laws and Basic Beliefs

It is usually hard to distinguish culture from worldview and basic beliefs because they are closely interrelated. So we are looking at these two influences together.

- Luke 4:16-29: As Christ read Isaiah 61:1-2 in the synagogue, instead of making the focus of this message a woe to the Gentiles as expected, He turned it into a confrontation with the Jews. Their Jewish culture and basic beliefs required every teacher to confirm their prejudice. Christ refused to fit into that mold. This made the Jews furious, and they wanted to kill Him.
- Luke 5:21-24: Christ healed the paralyzed man and forgave his sins as well. Christ could sense the Satanic vibrations as He saw the displeasure of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, especially regarding the forgiveness of sins. Christ did not fit into their basic beliefs system.
- Luke 6:1-2, 6:6-11, 13:14-17, 14:1: These were four incidents where Christ experienced Satanic resistance in people regarding His teaching about the Sabbath. Instead of coming to Christ with a teachable attitude desiring to see the Messiah, the Pharisees and other religious leaders came to observe Him and “catch Him in the act” of a theological error. Certainly, the Devil delighted in their trivialities, laws and legislations regarding the Sabbath.

Can you imagine the pain that our Lord must have experienced as He encountered those fanatic and dogmatic religious leaders?

- Luke 5:30-32, 7:39, 15:2, 19:5-7: These were four other incidents where the culture and the basic beliefs of the Pharisees, the teachers of the law, the Jewish crowds and even His own disciples did not correspond to His compassion for the tax collectors, sinners and the Samaritans. Christ must have sensed the Satanic spirit of ethnocentrism and self-righteousness of these people and must have been grieved by the hardness of their hearts.
- Luke 5:33, 11:37-38: In these two passages, the Pharisees were critical of Christ and His disciples because they did not adhere to the Jews’ regulations regarding fasting and ceremonial washings. Christ and His disciples must have been continually annoyed by the Satanic vibes from spectators who were critically watching them in order to prove them wrong. It must have been like walking in a mine field (Luke 10:25, 29).

- Luke 10:10-16: Christ, on seeing the lack of response when He preached in Jewish cities, must have sensed how Satan hardened the hearts of these religious people with self-righteousness. In agony, He compared them to Sodom and other cities that did not have the privileges that these people had. Truly, the Devil blinds the eyes and hearts of people, and that must have broken the heart of our Lord.

3. Structures of Power

In this area, Christ was continually attacked by the Devil. The attacks took different shapes and forms even to the degree of threatening His life.

Right after His birth, Herod the Great wanted to kill the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:7-8, 16-17). So, he sent his soldiers to Bethlehem to kill every baby who was less than two. The baby Jesus was smuggled out to Egypt to escape the tyranny of this autocrat.

In Nazareth (Luke 4:16-29), the people of the synagogue wanted to push Christ from a high cliff and kill Him. Then, after Christ healed the man with the withered hand on a Sabbath, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law began to discuss with one another what they might do to Him (Luke 6:6-11).

After Christ cast out the demon from the mute man, some powerful people started spreading rumors about Christ that He was demonized and that He was casting out demons with the power of Satan. It must have been extremely difficult for the Holy One to be accused of being demonized (Luke 11:15-16).

In Luke 11:53-54, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law schemed to present Christ to the religious court, while Herod was scheming to kill Him (Luke 13:31-32).

In Luke 19:38-40, Christ was advised strongly by some of the Pharisees to rebuke His disciples for recognizing Him as the Messiah. At the Temple, with a hostile attitude, He was questioned by the chief priests and the elders about His authority (Luke 20:1-2). Then the teachers of the Law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest Him, so they sent spies who pretended to be honest people to catch Him in something He might say (Luke 20:19-22). Then the Sadducees wanted to trap Him with a theologically explosive question regarding the resurrection (Luke 20:27).

By the time of the Passover, the Devil's attacks became more blatant. The chief priests and the teachers of the Law were searching for a way to finish Him off (Luke 22:1-2). Crowds rushed into the Mount of Olives to arrest Him as if He were a criminal (Luke 22:47, 52). Then the soldiers mocked Him and beat Him (Luke 22:63-65).

Christ was then presented to three structures of power: the Jewish council (Luke 22:66-71), Pilate (Luke 23:1-5, 13) and Herod (Luke 23:7-11). Through all three, the Devil was radiating hate, pride and deception. Finally, even the mob who had seen Christ heal, love and feed, cried out with demonic fervor, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" They chose Barabbas, the criminal, to be set free and wanted the Holy One to be executed (Luke 23:18-25).

Perhaps the Devil thought that he had finally succeeded as Christ was crucified (Luke 23).

4. Thought Life

Surely, Christ must have agonized in His thoughts as He saw His disciples half-hearted and slow to discern that He was the Messiah. He must have found it very difficult to see His disciples forsake Him and Peter deny Him. He must have also suffered as He was continually harassed by the religious and political leaders of His time. But the three most difficult struggles He had must have been at the Mount of Temptation, the Mount of Olives and on the Cross (Luke 4:1-13, 22:39-46, 23:32-43).

After 40 days of fasting, our Lord was confronted head-on by the Devil. The Devil tried to sow seeds of doubt regarding His identity, His needs, the Father's love for Him and His own goals and means. But Christ brought every thought under submission in order to be obedient to God the Father.

At the Mount of Olives, the agony was almost unbearable. He yearned for His disciples to be aware of what He was going through and to stand with Him in prayer, but they were sleepy. So, "*being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground*" (Luke 22:44). He wrestled intensely against the Enemy, and His agony must have been indescribable.

Finally, as He hung on the Cross, taking the blame for our filth and sin, He must have sensed a black cloud separating Him from His Father. He cried

out to His Father asking, “Why have You forsaken Me?” His heart must have been torn with sorrow as His mind was attacked and tormented.

But That Was the Beginning

Christ went all the way, and He refused to succumb to the Devil’s suggestion of choosing the easy way out. His obedience was complete, and He died. His friends buried Him, and then on the third day the sting of death was broken—Christ rose from the dead! The biggest blow that the Devil ever experienced was on that early morning. The Devil was disarmed. Hallelujah!

12

CONCLUSION

What a privilege we have as children of God that we can look back at that great historical event! We can remember and try to comprehend what was accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ. The day He rose from the dead was victory day. Therefore, Christians can live with a post-victory perspective in spite of the blood, the bullets and the pain. What a difference it will make to our spiritual warfare if we concentrate on God’s victory! What confidence we can enjoy as we know that the strong and deceitful Enemy lost his strongest weapon two thousand years ago! What a joy we can experience when we remember that all authority is given to Christ who has promised that He will be with us always!

At the same time, we need to remember that our enemy hates God and hates us. His goal is to destroy us, and he attacks us in all our vulnerable openings, not just the front door.

At one time I thought the front door for everybody was demonization. Now I believe that the front door varies from one individual to another. Whatever I am vulnerable to is my front door.

Therefore, we need to be careful to put on the whole armor of God and close firmly every door and window against our enemy. For what does it profit us if we fortify the front door and place an electronic alarm system by that door only while the back door and side windows are left open!

Perhaps the Devil, in his deception, explodes a great deal of firecrackers in front of the main door while he sneaks through the window and comes right in, stands next to us and congratulates us for our great fortification of our front door. May God give us wisdom and insights to recognize evil in all its forms and hate it.

As you read your Bible, underline the passages that help you to gaze at God and only glance at the Devil. Memorize some of these passages, delight in God and worship Him.

Here is a list that I recommend for you to memorize. You can choose the exact verses from the larger texts:

- James 4:7
- Proverbs 18:10
- Nehemiah 1:1-7, 11 & 2:1-8
- Ezekiel 34:1-10, 16-19
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-6
- Ephesians 6:10-17

Make notes in the margin of your Bible next to passages that identify clearly the various entrances through which the Devil could attack us, such as:

- Demonization
- Culture
- Laws and basic beliefs
- Structures of power
- Thought life

Identify which one of those is your front door. Fortify yourself with God, giving special attention to your particular front door, but stay alert to the other areas.

In a Sunday school class where I spoke on spiritual warfare, a young lady asked me privately, "Is depression caused only by demonization?" My response was, "No, there could be various causes for depression:

- 1) Unconfessed sin (Psalm 32)
- 2) Wrong basic beliefs
- 3) Chemistry of the brain
- 4) Psychological traumas
- 5) Demonization

The first cause is corrected through repentance; the second and fourth through counseling; the third through medication; and the fifth through casting out of demons."

As she heard my answer, with tearful eyes, she gave a sigh of relief. She had been told by a Christian leader that since she has depression, she must be demonized. After she heard his statement, she lived in tormenting mental pain in addition to her depression.

Are we aware of the various doors and windows of vulnerability? Or do we focus on only one entrance whether in our own lives or when counseling others?

Thank God for His invitation to come to Him and be fortified by Him.

Praise be to you, O God, who chose me (write down your name) before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in Your sight. In love, you predestined me (write down your name) to be adopted as Your child through Christ.

If You are for me (write down your name), who can be against me? You who did not spare Your own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will You not also, along with Him graciously give us all things?

Lord, I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers (including the Devil), neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate me from Your love.

For from You, and through You, and to You are all things. To You be the glory forever. Amen.

APPENDIX

REACHING YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS

When it comes to the topic of spiritual warfare, each Christian tends to see his theological position on this subject to be the balanced position. Others who do not agree with him are off-center and theologically unbalanced.

It is a worthwhile exercise to do a study and come up with your own convictions on the subject. Define your position of preference, then determine your area of tolerance. (What theological views on this subject of spiritual warfare can you tolerate for the purpose of love and unity in the Body of Christ, although these views are not your preference?) Then draw the line between what you can tolerate and what is outside the area of your tolerance. In other words, what is the line outside of which, from your point of view, people have gone into unbiblical views?

It will be very limiting if we attempt to study the unseen reality and spiritual warfare without a broader overview of the signs and wonders in the Scriptures.

1. What is the major role of signs and wonders in the Old Testament and the New Testament? Do you see parallels between what was accomplished in the Exodus and on the Cross?

Exodus 7:3	Exodus 10:1-2	Numbers 14:22
Exodus 3:20	Exodus 11:9-10	Deuteronomy 4:34
Exodus 8:23	Exodus 15:15	Deuteronomy 6:22
Deuteronomy 7:19	Deuteronomy 29:3	Psalms 135:9
Deuteronomy 26:8	Joshua 24:17	Jeremiah 32:21
Deuteronomy 28:45-46	Psalms 105:27	Acts 2:19-22
Other passages		

2. What is another important purpose of signs and wonders?

Deuteronomy 6:20-24
Psalm 77:11, 15

Psalm 105:5
John 20:30-31

3. What are the dangers of signs and wonders?

- a) Are signs and wonders performed only by genuine Christians?

Exodus 7:8 – 8:18
2 Thessalonians 2:9-10
Revelation 13

- b) Could signs and wonders have a deceptive force?

Deuteronomy 13:1-5
Jeremiah 28

- c) Can signs and wonders be sought for wrong motives?

Matthew 12:38-45
Matthew 16:1-4
Mark 8:11-12
Acts 8:9-24

From the above passages, what is the significance of Jonah being a sign?

- d) Can signs and wonders be performed by Christians living in disobedience and hypocrisy?

Matthew 7:21-23
1 Corinthians 12-14

4. When you buy a valuable painting, you would want to frame it with a good frame. The main function of the frame is to invite people to focus on the painting. If the frame competes with the painting, then it is a bad frame. In Christ's ministry, what is the "painting" and what is the "frame"?

Mark 1:14-15, 21, 35-39
Mark 2:2, 13
Mark 4:1
Mark 6:1-2, 34

Mark 7:14
Mark 8:31-34
Mark 9:30-31

Mark 10:1
Mark 12:1, 35
Luke 10:20

5. What connection do you see between signs and wonders performed by Christ and His role as the promised Messiah who will bring the new order or the Messianic age?

Matthew 11:4-6

Acts 2:22

6. By whom were signs and wonders in the post-resurrection period performed?

Acts 2:43

Acts 14:3 and 15:2

Acts 6:8

Acts 8:13

Romans 15:19

2 Corinthians 12:11-12

What is the significance of the abundance of signs and wonders in the New Testament time?

7. How do you see the purpose or limitations of signs and wonders in the following passages?

1 Corinthians 12

Galatians 3:5

James 5:13-16

8. Power, according to Paul, was not associated with signs and wonders nor with evangelism. With what was it associated? What was Paul's consuming desire for the readers of this letter?

Romans 8:31-39

1 Corinthians 1-4

2 Corinthians 10-13

Ephesians 3:14-21

9. Why did Christ say that John the Baptist was the greatest up to that time, although he didn't perform any signs and wonders? Why was he greater than Moses in spite of all the signs and wonders that took place at the Exodus?

John 10:40-42

Matthew 11:2-15

How can we be greater than John the Baptist?

10. In John 14:12, Christ said: "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

What did He mean by "greater things"? Does it mean a greater number of miracles or more spectacular miracles?

(Remember that the context of this verse is before the Cross, the Resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit.)

11. How did the saints overcome Satan?

Revelation 12:11

12. How was Paul's time similar to our time?

2 Timothy 3:2-5

What was the solution offered?

2 Timothy 3:14-16

13. What is the difference between "sin living in me" and demonization (demon possession)?

Romans 7

1 Corinthians 5:4-5

2 Corinthians 2:5-6

2 Corinthians 7:8-10

Romans 6:12-14

Mark 4:1-13

14. Consider James 4:1-10 and Ephesians 6:10-18. What do you learn about spiritual warfare from these passages?
15. How could 1 Chronicles 11:23 be a helpful strategy in our warfare regarding thought life? Do you see a similarity between the "first link in the chain" of thoughts and the spear of the Egyptian?
16. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, what are the strongholds that Paul is talking about? Whose responsibility is it to demolish them?

17. What is your position of theological preference on the issue of spiritual warfare?
18. What is your area of tolerance?
19. What is outside your area of tolerance?

Bibliography

Bosch, D.J. *Transforming Mission*. New York: Orbis Books, 1991.

Noebel, D.A. *Understanding the Times*. Manitou Springs: Summit Press, 1991.

Peck, Scott. *People of the Lie*. New York: Touchstone Book, 1983.

Scott, W. *Bring Forth Justice*. Grand Rapids: William B. Freedman's Publishing Company, 1980.