

Spiritual Warfare



Norman Holmes

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**ARE YOU A VICTOR
OR A VICTIM?**



NORMAN W. HOLMES

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Preface

We are in a spiritual war. It began in heaven with the rebellion of Lucifer and his angels but has since engulfed planet Earth.

You might not consider yourself to be involved in the war, but if you are a Christian, you will be a target of the enemy. You are in danger. Civilians and innocent bystanders can become victims of a war just as much as the soldiers who are fighting.

There was a time when I unknowingly walked into the middle of a conflict where two opposing gangs suddenly became violent. I had only been aware that there were a lot of young men milling around the place I was walking through, but then rocks started flying, wood clubs were raised, and the gangs attacked each other. One large, swiftly thrown rock came straight for my head, but I ducked as I quickly exited the area of the fight. In my ignorance I could have become a casualty of this little war if the Lord had not helped me—and the purpose of this book is to help you to be aware of the spiritual battles around you so that you will become a victorious Christian who defeats the powers of Satan.

I am personally well aware of this spiritual war, having fought it on both sides. As a young teenager I was part of the hippie movement of the American 1960s. As a rock musician and vocalist I would sing songs glorifying Satan, drugs, and many corrupt things. I didn't believe in a real Satan, but I could sense the chilling, mysterious changes in the atmosphere as the crowds soaked in our music. As I became more involved in mystic religions and drug abuse, I was more and more aware of the spiritual world around me. However, I ignorantly sought to use

the supposedly “good” spirits to help me as I tried to avoid the openly evil ones.

That all ended just before I turned 20, when the Lord Jesus revealed Himself to me and I became a born-again Christian. The former demon “friends” that had masqueraded as my spiritual guides then proved to be my violent enemies, seeking to kill me! I had many battles before I became safely established on the Lord’s side.

While now in my 50th year of serving the Lord, I have often been on the front lines and seen much of the workings of this spiritual war. In one nation, God rescued me from a fanatical Hindu mob that burned down the church I had just preached in. In a communist nation we repeatedly had to change our location as I secretly taught a group of pastors, staying one step ahead of the secret police who were trying to catch me day by day. In another nation I stood against a death threat given to me by a group of rebels that had been killing Christian preachers. On a large tropical island my family once lived at the edge of a jungle, in an area that was controlled by an Islamic terrorist group that had kidnapped all the other foreigners who lived nearby! These were all obvious spiritual conflicts, but my more usual battles have been invisible ones fought while praying for people, pastors, churches, and nations.

The results of winning these battles have been an abundantly fruitful ministry: many souls saved, churches built, dozens of Bible schools conducted in six Asian nations, books written and published in 20 languages, and much more. And the lessons that I have learned can help you to also become a victorious and fruitful Christian as you read this book and apply it to your life!

CHAPTER 1

WE ARE IN A WAR



Yes, we are in a war. Actually, you may have several wars raging around you. Yet if there are no bullets flying or enemy soldiers to be seen, it can be easy to think that the wars are far away and of no danger. But looks can be deceiving!

The most dangerous wars are the ones we do not see; they are the conflicts that might victimize us without our knowing what dangers we are in. The worldwide war on terrorism, international wars on drugs, or even local gang wars are more dangerous if we remain ignorant of the conflicts stirring around us. Yet the most dangerous war is the unseen spiritual war that engulfs our world.

Satan and his forces are at war with the servants of God, and there is no nation or place where this conflict is not being fought. While many people do not see this, that is one of the most potent weapons of the forces of darkness: that they remain hidden! Many people in countries that lack a strong Christian heritage understand and fear the power of demon spirits. In contrast, the nations that have traditionally had a Christian background have largely become spiritually complacent and only think of Satan as a myth. The very nations where the Bible has exposed this enemy to previous generations now often reduce the concept of a personal devil to mere cartoon characters or horror movies. Our contemporary Western society has been forgetting its Christian foundations. As an example, the Constitution of the European Union now guiding 27 nations has purposefully ignored any

mention of God or Christianity. As societies drift away from former biblical foundations, lies are being portrayed as truth and darkness as light. Many modern movies and video games are teaching this generation that having dragons, sorcerers, witches, and evil powers on your side is *good* for you!

In this chapter we will examine the origin of this war and the nature of our enemy. Knowing who we are fighting and the tactics that he uses are two of the most important factors for us to become overcomers in this conflict. One of the world's most effective armed forces is the IDF, the Israeli Defense Forces. They are a relatively small military force, yet they have repeatedly defeated armies that have massively outnumbered them. One of the main reasons is that their nation has had the world's most effective intelligence network. Knowing their enemy well has helped enable them to gain great victories that have repeatedly surprised the world! Similarly, if we learn to expose the hidden workings of our spiritual enemies, then we are taking the first step toward victory. Ignorance will never help us. Civilians in a war can claim to be uninformed and uninvolved, yet they can become casualties just as quickly as the soldiers. We must grow in spiritual discernment and wisdom so that we will be able to say like the Apostle Paul, "*We are not ignorant of his [Satan's] devices,*" 2 Corinthians 2:11. Then we will become less and less the *victims* of this war, and instead be the *victors*!

The One Who Started the War

Numerous Bible scriptures teach us that before mankind was created there were hosts of angels who were created to serve God. One of the highest angels in Isaiah 14:12 was named Lucifer, which translates as the *Light-Bearer* or *Morning Star*. A prophecy about him in Ezekiel 28:12b-18 tells us,

“Thus says the Lord God: ‘You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you. You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore I brought fire from your midst; it devoured you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you.’”

One of Lucifer’s descriptions mentioned here was “the anointed cherub who covers.” This refers to the ministry of the cherubim (which is the plural of the word *cherub*) of having their wings cover the throne and glory of God. This was symbolically portrayed in Moses’ Tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple by the two cherubim figures whose wings covered the Mercy Seat where God dwelt and revealed His glory.¹

As one of these original covering cherubim, Lucifer was one of the angels closest to God. Repeatedly throughout the Bible we see that those who are the closest to God are entrusted with the greatest ministries. These cherubim helped lead the worship of heaven, for those closest to God are the first to experience His

presence and power and can then release it through their worship to help motivate others to join along.²

Lucifer was also a musician, as can be seen from the original Hebrew in Ezekiel 28:13 which described him as being created with *timbrels* (or *tambourines*) and *pipes*.³ He also had stringed instruments according to Isaiah 14:11. It shouldn't surprise us that Lucifer possessed the ability to make music, as our human bodies are also equipped with musical instruments. Our vibrating vocal cords function as a stringed instrument when we sing. Clapping our hands or tapping our feet serve as percussion instruments. And those of us who can whistle have their own wind instrument!

Lucifer was also a leader over many of the hosts of angels. Just as the High Priest of Israel had twelve precious stones in his uniform, signifying his ministry and leadership over the twelve tribes of Israel, Lucifer had nine of these same precious stones upon his uniform.⁴ This suggests that Lucifer had a place of leadership over many groups of angels, which influence he wrongly used when he led a multitude of angels in rebellion against God.⁵

The Scriptures reveal that Lucifer was perfect when he was created. The prophecy about him in Ezekiel 28:15 said, "*You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.*" And again, in verse twelve we read, "*You were the seal of perfection [the model of perfection, NIV], full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.*" So, if God created Lucifer to be perfect and pure, how could iniquity grow within him and corrupt him into becoming a great enemy of God? Until we get to heaven we will never fully understand this "mystery of lawlessness," as the Apostle Paul described it.⁶ However, many scriptures do help us understand this with some clarity.

Ezekiel 28:17 recorded, “*Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.*” This suggests that *pride* was the beginning of Lucifer’s fall. Instead of fully focusing on the beauty and the glory of God, Lucifer became proud of his own beauty and glory. He could have admired how he was one of the greatest and most glorious of all of God’s creation! But if any created being (including us) starts to look at his own greatness, beauty, or power—whatever he has been gifted with—then pride will begin to grow. This can lead us away from remaining focused on God and instead make us focus on ourselves, which is the beginning of all backsliding!

Ezekiel 28:16 also tells us, “*By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned.*” This shows that Lucifer had been entrusted with many valuable things to be traded or administered. We get a glimpse of this when we consider that his covering was made with precious stones and gold. As the leader of hosts of angels he must have had administrative responsibilities in which he organized and distributed heaven’s riches. As he became proud of his beauty and wisdom, it is logical that he would increasingly gather the riches of heaven under his control for the sake of his greatness and glory.

We have a glimpse of how this can happen when we look at the backsliding of the Apostle Judas. Judas Iscariot used his position as the treasurer of Christ’s apostolic band to first steal some of the money entrusted to his care. Then later he criticized the extravagant “waste” when Mary anointed Jesus’ feet with some costly oil. Judas instead suggested that it could have been sold and given to the poor—but his hidden motive was that the money from its sale would be put into his control, and then he could steal whatever he wanted.⁷ Then finally, when sin and rebellion had fully corrupted his heart, Judas sold Jesus for 30

pieces of silver! What probably began as a small sin of greed grew until Judas finally betrayed Christ. May each of us who are called to Christian leadership take this to heart, if we begin to juggle church finances and resources for our personal benefit we might be starting down a path that could lead us to become like Judas and Lucifer! Too many ministers have gone down a similar path. Instead of remaining focused on God and His kingdom, they instead begin to build their own kingdom and fame. This can lead to progressive compromises until they are effectively betraying Christ for greater wealth and success.

As pride led Lucifer to increasingly focus on his personal greatness and glory, he wanted to attain and accomplish more than what God had entrusted him with. This can be seen in Isaiah's prophetic description of Lucifer's fall: "*How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'* Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit," - Isaiah 14:12-15.

This description of Lucifer's downfall shows that his pride led him to self-exaltation and rebellion. He wanted to exalt his throne and even become equal to God! Yet pride can also motivate us towards dangerous self-exaltation. There can be a dangerous mixture in the hearts of some leaders that they are "climbing the ladder of success" in ministry not just for the glory of God, but also for their own praise. That is why the Apostle Paul wrote that a Christian leader should not be a novice or recent convert, "*or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil,*" 1 Timothy 3:6 NIV. Sadly, immature Christians who are gifted

are sometimes prematurely put into positions of responsibility because their church leaders are desperate for help. But if pride and independence become motivating forces in their untested and inexperienced hearts, they will end up causing conflicts and perhaps even church splits, just as Lucifer caused the first “church split” in heaven.

Lucifer’s pride and desire for independence eventually led him into full rebellion against God. However, he was not alone in this rebellion; he had already persuaded many of the angels to follow him instead of remaining faithful to God. A depiction of what happened next is described in Revelation 12:7-9 concerning the “war in heaven.” This chapter seems to be specifically speaking about a conflict just before the Second Coming of Christ, but since biblical prophecies often have multiple fulfillment it can also help show us what happened the first time that Lucifer tried to exalt his throne: *“Then there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. And the dragon lost the battle, and he and his angels were forced out of heaven. This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels,”* Revelation 12:7-9 NLT.

When Lucifer first lifted himself up in rebellious pride, his casting down was swift and great. The Lord Jesus referred to this when He said, *“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven”* in Luke 10:18. Isaiah saw Lucifer’s downfall when he declared, *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations.... Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit,”* Isaiah 14:12 & 15.

Isaiah further added in verse eleven of this prophetic revelation, *“Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, and the sound of your stringed*

instruments; the maggot is spread under you, and worms cover you.” Just as we already saw from Ezekiel, Lucifer had been created with musical giftings. Lucifer did not lose his musical abilities when he fell; he kept them, but they became corrupted. This is important for us to understand: if servants of God backslide, they do not lose their talents, although they will shift into using them for corrupt purposes. Lucifer did not lose his talents and giftings when he rebelled against God, and he still uses his talents today—no longer to lead people to God but to himself! Yet he can disguise himself and his followers to look like servants of God when the deception suits his purposes. As the Apostle Paul warned us, “*Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness,*” 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 NLT. And as will soon be discussed in a following chapter, it is these invisible deceptions in spiritual warfare that can turn out to be some of our most dangerous battles.

Lucifer, the “Light Bearer” or “Morning Star,” lost that description and title when he rebelled against God. The *morning star* refers to a bright star that rises in the east just before dawn, to signify that a new day is coming soon. Lucifer was created to be a herald and messenger of God, to prepare the way for Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, to arise upon His creation. But he had become discontent with being the messenger—he wanted to be the message! He no longer wanted to point the way to God, he instead proudly wanted to point the way to himself.

In his corruption he received two new names that were descriptive of his changed character. He became Satan, which means *adversary*, and in the New Testament he is also called *the Devil*, which means *the accuser* or *slanderer*. In attempting to justify himself, Satan is ready to oppose everyone else and accuse them

of being no better than himself.⁸ This corrupted nature also made him a tempter, as when he tempted Eve and later tempted Christ in the wilderness.

Satan's Army

When Satan rebelled against the Lord, he did not attempt this rebellion alone. He had already led many of the angels of heaven to look to him for leadership instead of remaining faithful to God. In a symbolic depiction of this, Revelation 12:4 describes that the tail of the dragon “*drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.*” The dragon was explained to be Satan in verse nine, and the stars referred to the angels that he had corrupted to follow him.⁹ This story suggests that Satan was able to get one-third of the angels to join in his rebellion.¹⁰ They are powerful adversaries, so powerful that they proudly thought they could defeat Michael and the faithful angels. However, we should always remember that twice as many holy angels are on our side! As Elisha once said to his fearful servant, “*Don't be afraid....there are more on our side than on theirs!*”¹¹

While heaven has become purged of rebellion, a “pocket of resistance” has remained—and the territory that is still largely controlled by Satan and his rebels is planet Earth. Although God created mankind to rule the world, the corruption of mankind beginning with Adam and Eve has caused Satan and his fallen angels to gain much leverage in controlling the planet. As a result, Satan has also gained the description of being called “the ruler of this world” by Christ, and “the god of this age” by the Apostle Paul.¹² Yet it is important to understand that this is only a temporary description. Satan has usurped control, much like trespassers taking over what does not belong to them, or like a gang that terrorizes and holds a community hostage. However,

the Scriptures clearly show that at the Second Coming of Christ, Satan and his angels will be bound and cast into a prison, to later be cast into the lake of fire.¹³ Our battles will soon be over when Christ comes to establish His kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy over the whole earth!

Yet until that day comes, we must be careful to always remember that the battles are raging around us. Because they are invisible and can only be spiritually discerned, we must be careful to not be ignorant and uninvolved. Every Christian is involved, whether we like it or not! And what is very important for us to understand today is that the nearer we come to the time of Christ's return, the harder Satan and his angels will seek to oppose God and His plans. As Revelation 12:12 tells us about the Last Days before the Second Coming, "*Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.*" Satan will do everything he can to seek to delay Christ's return and destroy God's people. In particular, Satan wants to hinder the fulfillment of the two great signs that the Lord Jesus gave to the Gentiles and Jews that herald His return: that the Church's Great Commission will be completed, and that the Jews would again be ruling over Jerusalem.¹⁴ So the most contested *program* in these Last Days will be the evangelism of the world, and the most contested *place* will be Jerusalem!

Now that we know who we are fighting in this War of all Wars, we need to understand more clearly the enemy's positioning and power. Only a well-informed army of God will have victory in this spiritual war! So let us go forward to the next chapter to become part of the triumphant Church of the Last Days that will prevail over the gates of hell.

CHAPTER 2

PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS



One of the essential ways to become skilled in spiritual warfare is to understand how evil spirits seek to control mankind at the various levels of human society. In life, society functions through levels of authority. From the smallest unit of society—the family—our lives are further influenced by larger groups of social affiliations. Increasingly higher levels of government will also shape and control our lives, from our local community or city up to the national level. While each person has their own free will on how they will direct their life, it is also true that these various levels of community and government have powerful influences over us. What we will now examine is that these various levels of society and government that powerfully influence us are not just earthly human authorities, but there are also corresponding angelic authorities in heavenly places.

The Bible reveals that God regularly works first in the natural, and then repeats that work in a spiritual manner.¹ The Scriptures teach us in Colossians 1:16 how God has created natural and spiritual levels of government that correspond with each other. There we read, “*For by Him [Christ] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.*” Here the Apostle Paul is teaching about two types of authority levels- the invisible levels of authority in the heavenlies, and the visible authorities on earth. The heavenly and earthly authorities are both described as having

the same various levels—thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. These same words are often used in the New Testament to describe both heavenly and earthly levels of authority.

For example, the original Greek words in Colossians 1:16 for *principalities* and *powers* (translated as *rulers* and *authorities* in the NIV Bible) are also used in Ephesians 6:12 to describe levels of heavenly authority. Yet these exact same two words are used in Titus 3:1 to describe earthly rulers and authorities. Many other times the words used to describe various levels of human government are the same words that describe the different levels of spiritual government in the heavenly places.

Everyone sees the visible levels of government ruling society on the earth, but we do not see the invisible corresponding levels of spiritual government that are in heavenly places. Yet whether we see them or not, they are there, and the spiritual powers at work over mankind are what we as Christians are contending with.

This is revealed to us in Ephesians 6:12, where we read, “*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*” These various levels of spiritual authority that we wrestle or fight against are located in “the heavenly places” in the sky or atmosphere above the earth.

Ancient cosmology often described there being *three heavens*. The *first heaven* refers to the sky or atmosphere above us, where the scriptures refer to this heaven as having clouds, wind, and rain.² The *second heaven* is what we now call outer space or the celestial heavens, where there are the stars, sun, and moon.³ The *third heaven* is what we still commonly call heaven; which is the dwelling place of God and the angels.⁴ Satan was cast out of the

third heaven when he originally rebelled against God, yet he still moves about and above the earth. Two New Testament descriptions of him tell us of his present activity in seeking to control the world and the first heavens above it when he is declared to be “the god of this age” and “the ruler of the kingdom of the air.”⁵ And it is in the *first heaven*—in the air and sky above the world—where the Church’s spiritual battles lie. The heavenly principalities and powers that are presently ruled by Satan’s fallen angels seek to control humanity in various spheres of influence, from individuals to families, communities, cities, and up to national control. These various levels of principalities and powers are the forces we wrestle against as the army of God seeks to reclaim lost territory and extend the kingdom of God.⁶

My wife and I once saw this spiritual warfare operating in different levels of government when, many years ago, we had completed a certain number of years of missionary service in one nation. A new law limited the number of years that a missionary could remain there, and after that period had expired our next visa application was rejected although we applied several times. We took our case up through levels of government until we met with the director of the Department of Immigration. Although we had letters of recommendation from some people in high positions of government, he told us that he was denying our request for a visa extension and that we must soon leave.

However, we did not feel that this was what God was saying about our missionary calling to this nation, so we then took our case to a higher level—to the throne of God! And after days of fasting and prayer, the Lord gave my wife a dream about this situation.

Linda saw the levels of spiritual government over the nation to be something like a three-dimensional chess board, with the

chess pieces moving not only horizontally but also vertically over a many-leveled board. One of the sets of pieces was the fallen angels who had various positions of power over this nation, while the other set of pieces was the holy angels. And while the fallen angels at first had the placements that gave them the authority to send us out of the nation, she then saw the hand of God come down and reposition some of His pieces on the board, to give us a commanding position for our visa renewal.

Although everyone said that it was useless for us to apply again for a visa renewal, we did it anyway, without using any bribes or appealing to anyone in authority. This time it was accepted—and after this we never had another visa renewal problem for our next years as missionaries there!

Over the years we have seen from the Scriptures, as well as through experiences in ministry, how the various levels of society and the geographical areas they control can be influenced or dominated by these principalities and powers.

A scriptural example of this is shown to us in First Kings chapter 20. The Syrian army had attacked Israel but was badly defeated. In evaluating their defeat, the servants of the king of Syria said to him, *“Their gods are gods of the hills. That is why they were too strong for us. But if we fight them on the plains, surely we will be stronger than they.”*⁷ Here we see that their spiritual understanding was that various places and tribes had their own “local gods” or “territorial spirits” that exercised control over the people there. This has been a common perception of pagan religions over the centuries, based on their contact with the spirit world and the principalities and powers of Satan. These evil powers that seek to control various locations (and the people in them) have been encountered and battled against by thousands of missionaries, revivalists, intercessors, and pastors over the centuries. Yet even

when people are unaware of the spiritual forces around them, they will still be influenced by them—so to overcome them we need to understand how these levels of spiritual government operate, from the smallest units of society up to the national and international level.

The Individual

Everyone has a large measure of control over their life, yet they can also be influenced or dominated by spirits that can oversee their life. On the good side, guardian angels can watch over people,⁸ not only when they are children, but also when they are adults. A person who has an important call of God on his (or her) life may have a more powerful angel assigned to guide and protect him. Some modern examples would be George Washington and General Douglas McArthur, as they both should have been killed many times in battles.⁹ In one surprise attack George Washington was the specific target of a large group of enemy marksmen, and although they put four bullet holes through his clothes that day, not one bullet hit him! We can contrast that with very evil men who had strong demonic protection and control over their lives, such as Adolf Hitler, who survived at least 42 assassination plots against his life.¹⁰

An angel can guide a person as well as guard them. In Acts 12:7-10 an angel supernaturally guided and rescued Peter from prison, while in Acts 8:26 an angel guided Philip to meet the Ethiopian eunuch. Many times the New Testament also shows how individuals were motivated or controlled by evil spirits, such as the slave girl in Acts 16:16-18 and the man in Mark 5:2-9.

During our more than 45 years in ministry my wife and I have many times been guided by angels in visions or dreams, and at times we have sensed their protection. One notable time

was back in 1985, when my wife, our first daughter, and I lived at the edge of the jungle on a remote island in the Philippines. It was an area that was mostly controlled by rebel forces. God had given us a specific word that He would protect us, and we certainly needed it many times! But after several years there, we felt that the Lord wanted to relocate the Bible school we helped lead there to a more central and safer place. However, we didn't know how to accomplish this as it would be costly, and everyone might not approve of the move.

Then one day, shortly after our yearly graduation, my wife and daughter were about one-third of a mile away from our house, washing in a river that descended from the mountains. No one lived anywhere nearby, it was a very isolated area. Suddenly my wife felt a terror and turned towards the mountains. She saw an angel in the air beside them, and he pointed back in the direction of our house and communicated the message, "Run!" As they quickly arrived home, they saw that a boat had temporarily stopped at the Bible school to trade or pick up passengers. We always kept a bag packed in case there was trouble with the rebels, and because the school was now on summer break we had wanted to go up to the capital of the island and buy supplies. So within a few minutes our family was on a large outrigger canoe heading for civilization.

A few days later, while at the island's capital, the commanding general of the army for that area of the nation visited us. He told us that the very morning when we had departed, a large detachment of rebel soldiers had come down from the mountains to the ocean. They next went north along the beach for about two miles from our Bible school until they had a shoot-out with the military. Then the general mentioned that the pathway that the rebels had used to come down from the mountains to the ocean

was the river where my young wife and daughter had been that morning until the angel warned them to run!

The general requested that we would not return to that area. Then the local pastors as well as our international supporters all agreed that we must relocate to the city. So while my wife was guided to safety, we also had the problem of relocating the school quickly solved.

Family Protection

The most basic unit of society, the family, can also have angelic protection and guidance.

Once at a church service someone prophesied over me and my wife that God had appointed an angel to stand guard over our household. A few weeks later we were home while our two children were climbing a tree in the yard with a neighbor's daughter. Suddenly I heard a crash and saw that our neighbor had fallen out of the tree from a dangerous height. I jumped up to go outside and see how she was, expecting a few broken bones—only to see her jump to her feet and climb back up the tree! I am sure that many of us have had times when we suspected that a guardian angel had protected our life or our family, or perhaps even family visitors. An example of this is in Genesis 19:10-17 & 29, where after Abraham had prayed for his nephew and his family two angels sought to protect them.

An Angel Can Guide and Protect a Church

Another larger unit of society that can have an angel delegated over it is a church. In chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation, Christ addressed letters to each of the seven churches

mentioned there. Each letter begins with the words “*To the angel of the church of...*” and then names each church in turn.

As we seek to understand this, we must consider that the original word in the New Testament for angel can refer to an earthly messenger of God (as this word was used of John the Baptist in Mark 1:2) or also refer to a heavenly messenger (as this word was used in Luke 1:19). So, which are these letters addressed to: the earthly messenger of the church (the pastor), or a heavenly angel over each church? I would like to suggest that it could refer to both, as we already saw from Colossians 1:16 that there are corresponding earthly and heavenly governments.

I have a few times seen, by the Holy Spirit’s gift of the discerning of spirits, a holy angel or a fallen angel sitting on a throne over a church. There is a holy angel over every church that is serving God, but a fallen angel can rule over a backslidden or cultish church.

An important lesson to learn for spiritual warfare is that effective prayer can help protect a church from coming under an evil angelic covering. Prayer can even rescue a church that has lost its spiritual defenses to the point where a fallen angel has been able to gain control over it. I saw this principle in action once when I was invited to speak at a church. Years before it had been a strong church with a large congregation. But as the pastor became quite elderly and could no longer effectively lead the church, he clung to his position instead of turning the church over to a more capable pastor. The result was that, as the years continued, the large congregation slowly shrank until it only had six elderly members left. It was at that time I was invited to come and preach. The church was no longer a powerhouse for God—it was more like a care facility where the few remaining elderly members were just waiting for Jesus to come and take them home to heaven!

When I came on a Saturday night to stay at the church before speaking on Sunday, I spent some time in prayer. Then God opened my spiritual vision to see a fallen angel that sat on a throne above the church. As I kept praying, the Holy Spirit led me to begin to sing and exalt the power of the blood of Christ. Then I saw in the Spirit that a fountain of the blood of Christ started to spring up from the foundations of the church: a fountain to cleanse away sin and uncleanness, as the prophet spoke about in Zechariah 13:1. As I continued to worship and exalt the blood of Christ, this fountain sprang up higher and higher, cleansing away the sins of the church as it arose. Finally, the fountain rose to cover the church, and as it reached to the throne above the church this fallen angel fled in terror! Then a holy angel came and sat in that place of authority.

After this spiritual warfare was completed, I knew we were going to have a good service the next morning. And although it was only the usual six elderly people who came, the Holy Spirit moved powerfully. At the end of the service the members all gathered in a circle, rejoicing in how the Lord had moved. Along with them was their pastor, who was talking to himself. I heard him saying, "It has been years since the Lord has moved in this church. I'm too old for this kind of thing, the church needs a younger pastor." Now, many people had unsuccessfully told him this for years! But when the dark angelic covering over the church was removed, he was finally able to hear and respond to what the Holy Spirit was saying to him.

The result was that the church soon chose a new, younger pastor who quickly began to restore the church to its former position of strength. One year after I had preached there, the church had 100 new members and was rising to again be a bright light to their community.

Towns and Cities

Larger communities of people that will have higher levels of government over them are towns and cities. And again, just as they will each have human governmental authorities ruling over them, each will also have corresponding levels of spiritual government.

When I was a young Bible school graduate, I saw this in action when I was appointed to direct an evangelism center in the center of the large city of Detroit. The night before all the workers were to arrive at the center I was there alone, praying and crying out to God for revival. Suddenly I saw a huge foot come down and fill most of the large room I was in. When I looked up, I saw a huge fallen angel—the angel that ruled over the city. He declared to me with a powerful voice of authority, “THIS IS MY CITY!”¹¹

As a new Bible school graduate, I thought I knew what to do. I began quoting scriptures, rebuking him and swinging my “sword of the spirit.” However, it felt more like I was holding up a toothpick, not a sword, before this mighty angel! He looked down at me with disdain, no more worried about my rebuking him than as if I was a tiny puppy barking at his feet. And while our evangelism center did see dozens of people turn to Christ, there was no revival, and the team was never a threat to this huge angel that ruled over the millions of people in Detroit.

Years later I heard my spiritual father, Brian Bailey, speak of a similar experience that he had. Once when he was at a convention of pastors they all decided to pray and bind the powers of Satan from over many large cities. As they got around to praying for the city where they were holding their gathering, he saw the huge fallen angel that was standing over the city. The Holy Spirit told him, “Don’t oppose him! First, you do not have the power, and

second, it is not his time to come down.” It is a general pattern that God gives people the rulers over them- good or bad- that they deserve. This is also true in the spiritual, that God often allows evil powers to rule over a people, and until it is time for God to show mercy, those powers will remain! Just because someone is a zealous and godly person does not mean that they should fight against every spiritual enemy that they see. This is where we need to let the Lord Jesus be the commander of His army, and not try to be the commander ourselves. The story of King Josiah’s death should be a warning to us as he joined in a battle that the Lord did not want him to fight, with tragic consequences.¹²

However, there is also the glorious truth that in these Last Days before the Second Coming, God will bring revival during judgment.¹³ Revelation 12:7-10 shows us that Satan and his host are going to be cast down from their positions in the heavenlies. This will cause revivals to spring up around the world when it is time for the principalities and powers of Satan to be cast down!

I saw an example of how this will be multiplied in the Last Days when I was holding a pastors’ seminar in the central Philippines. As I prayed for the delegates at the end of the seminar, I had an unusual prophecy for one of them. The Holy Spirit said that he would return to his town to see the powers of Satan cast down and that revival would come.

Three months later he wrote a letter confirming that the prophecy had been fulfilled. He confessed that he has been a pioneer pastor in his town for three years, with his church membership averaging only seven members. He was so embarrassed over his lack of church growth that he had even once prayed that the bus he was riding on would crash and he would die. This was so that he would not have to go report in their monthly pastors’ meeting he was traveling to that he still only

had seven church members! His ministry was ridiculed in his town as being powerless, while the town had a famous *albulario*, or witch doctor, who was renowned for his powers of healing.

When this pastor returned home after the seminar, he was encouraged that some visitors came to his church that Sunday. They turned to Christ and brought more visitors the following Sunday. Then these newest visitors also committed their lives to Christ and invited more new people to attend! The pastor found fresh power in his preaching and prayers, as people for the first time also started to be healed.

Three months after the seminar this pastor wrote his letter to explain the wonderful things that happened after he received this prophecy. He had already baptized more than 70 new converts, and the entire town was coming to his church on Sundays! But he wrote one more detail that revealed the key to this revival. The local *albulario* had just shut his healing business three months after the prophecy was given that God was removing the powers of Satan from over the town. People still came to him, offering much money and pleading that he would heal their sicknesses. However, he told them that he was closing his business because three months before—just at the time of our seminar—he had lost all his powers of healing! What had happened in the spiritual realm was that the fallen angel over the town, which had anointed him to be the town's spiritual leader, was displaced by a holy angel. And when the fallen angel was removed, the *albulario* had lost his healing powers—but at this same time the pastor and his church found themselves with the new power to heal the sick in Jesus' name! When there is warfare in the heavenlies there will also be visible results on the earth.

The Bible and history tell us the story of a repeated transition of the spiritual covering over the city of Ephesus. Acts 19 shows how

Paul and his team brought revival to the city, to the point where the worship of their main goddess, Diana, was being ignored. That revival in the early church changed the spiritual covering over the city for centuries, to where Christianity flourished and the pagan religions became outlawed. The Church of Ephesus became a godly mother church to the daughter churches that sprang up in its neighboring cities.¹⁴

But about 40 years after the church was established Christ gave them a warning which is recorded in Revelation chapter 2:4. The Lord said that while they were still a good church in many ways, they were losing their first love. That slow backsliding continued for centuries until a major transition occurred in the year 415 AD. At that time the churches of the Roman empire held an ecumenical council in the Church of Mary in Ephesus, where they proclaimed it as official church doctrine that the Virgin Mary was *Theotokos*, the “God-Bearer” or “Mother of God.” This opened the door for Mary to be venerated and prayed to as the “Mediatrix” between God and man.

In the spiritual realm, we can see that as the church of Ephesus backslid, the power of the female goddess worshipped in Ephesus once again arose—no longer called Diana, but disguised as an idolized Mary who was titled as the “Queen of Heaven.”¹⁵ While the Christian revival in Ephesus began with Paul and his team casting down the worship of the goddess Diana; due to the gradual weakening of the church, the fallen angel behind this goddess again rose to power—not only to influence the city of Ephesus, but to cause her worship to infiltrate the entire backsliding Roman church! This gives us a glimpse of how powerful spiritual conflicts can be, and how they can even influence nations and empires. It is also a warning for present Western society, which was largely founded on Christianity but has since lost its

first love for God. Popular entertainment has increasingly filled the public's spiritual void with demonic movies and video games. Superhero gods, wizards, and evil powers have often become the idolized replacements in the hearts of those who are no longer seeking God's kingdom, power, and glory.

Nations are Controlled by Angelic Princes

The principle of different levels of society having spiritual authorities over them can function up to national and international levels. Each nation has either a holy angel or else a fallen angel standing over it to influence the events and decisions of that nation.

This high level of spiritual authority in the heavenlies is clearly shown to us in the Book of Daniel. Daniel wrote about a time when he was in special prayer, and after 21 days an angel visited him. Before he delivered to Daniel the answer for which Daniel had been praying, the angel said, *"Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia,"* - Daniel 10:12-13 NIV.

This account shows us that when Daniel began to pray he was heard in heaven, and an angel was sent to answer his prayer. However, the prince of Persia hindered the angel from coming down to earth to visit Daniel. In military terms we would say that this prince of Persia had put a blockade over the nation to not allow this angel from heaven to reach Daniel.

This prince was obviously not an earthly ruler, as a natural prince could never stop an angel. It was a fallen angelic ruler

who had the power over his nation to prevent the holy angel from delivering a message to the prophet, Daniel. Yet as Daniel continued to intercede, God sent reinforcements to this messenger angel by sending “*Michael, one of the chief princes*” to enable the messenger angel to break through the heavenly blockade over Persia, where Daniel lived.

We learn further about this great prince among the angels in Daniel 12:1 where the messenger angel described him as “*Michael, the great prince who protects your people.*” This suggests that the archangel Michael is the angelic ruler and protector of the nation of Israel, just as Persia had a fallen angel who controlled it. The archangel Michael had the responsibility to help Daniel as one of his people, and also had the authority to defeat the power of another national ruler, the prince of Persia. Furthermore, the messenger angel then said in Daniel 10:20 that he would go fight against the prince of Persia until the prince of Greece came. History tells us that after Daniel’s time Greece conquered the empire of Persia. This shows us that the rise and fall of empires are also controlled by battles in the heavenly places.

So, we can see from the Bible that Michael is the guardian angel over the nation of Israel, while the nation of Persia (which is modern Iran) was ruled by a fallen angel. The heavenly authorities that rule over the nations are not all evil, nor are the lesser positions of power all controlled by Satan. Where there has been revival and godly people are praying, the heavens are not always shut, as when Daniel received a visitation from heaven through his persevering prayer and the arrival of heavenly reinforcements—first the messenger angel and then the Archangel Michael.

An example of the differences in spiritual covering that can be over various places was told to Ralph Mahoney, the founder of World MAP. He had a missionary in South America tell him

a very revealing story. This missionary had distributed gospel tracts in a town on the border of Brazil and Uruguay. When he tried to pass out tracts on the Uruguay side of a road, they were rejected, but when some of these exact same people were offered tracts on the Brazil side of the road, they accepted them with gratitude. The missionary concluded that the demonic covering over the nation of Uruguay hindered people from appreciating the gospel there, yet the same people in Brazil (which had known significant revivals and had many more prayer warriors) were much more open to the gospel.¹⁶

Another example of the different spiritual powers at work over a nation was seen by my spiritual father, Brian Bailey. When he first went to visit the USA over 60 years ago, God opened his spiritual vision to see the angel presiding over the nation. It was a holy angel, who had written upon him the title, “America the Beautiful.” As the nation had been largely founded by godly Christians, God appointed a holy angel to watch over it.

However, in later years he saw that while this holy angel maintained his highest position over the nation, the backsliding of the nation was allowing more and more fallen angels to rise up through the ranks of spiritual government over the nation. As the nation has further backslid in more recent years, I am sure more fallen angels have arisen through the ranks to gain more control over the nation. Just as a good national president or prime minister can do little to stop the decay of his or her nation if most of their subordinate leaders are corrupt, the changing tide of moral standards in the nation suggests the changes in spiritual leadership that are occurring in the heavenly places. But just as Daniel saw a breakthrough in the heavenlies as he persevered in prayer, may many intercessors arise in these Last

Days to help cast down the powers of evil and bring revival and righteousness to the nations!

At times the servants of God will perceive the principalities and powers of Satan that they are fighting against. More examples of this will be examined in the next chapters. However, we do not need to see them to understand how they work through people, groups, and institutions. What we need to know is how to guard ourselves in this spiritual war, and how to attack and defeat the enemy. So we will start in the next chapter to see how we can gain—and keep—strong defenses; then in the coming chapters we will study how to go on the offensive in this War of all Wars.

CHAPTER 3

THE WALLS OF SALVATION



Our Spiritual Defenses

As has already been mentioned, the forces of Satan that we fight are invisible foes. That is one reason why our spiritual war is so dangerous! However, we do not need to see our enemies to be protected from their attacks. And to build strong spiritual defenses we need to understand what can scripturally be called “the walls of salvation.”

In the Bible, these defenses are often called walls or hedges.¹ Just as a natural wall, fence, or hedge can protect what it encloses, the Scriptures show that our spiritual defenses are also like a wall or a hedge. In Isaiah 26:1 we read, “*God will appoint salvation for walls,*” and Isaiah 60:18 declares, “*You shall call your walls Salvation.*” These “walls of salvation” can protect a person or a group of people so that God’s blessings will abide on them. But if these walls of salvation are broken down or removed because of sin, then the judgment of God and the attacks of Satan can come in unless intercessors stand in the gap until the walls are rebuilt.

Walls can be many different sizes. For thousands of years towns and cities have often been protected by large walls, such as the walls surrounding Intramuros, the original city of Manila. Huge walls like the Great Wall of China and Hadrian’s Wall in England were built to protect entire nations. Small ones can be made to protect a person or a house. Yet just as natural walls can

protect people, groups, cities, and nations, the walls of salvation can offer spiritual protection for all of these.

Protection for a Person

In Jeremiah 15:20 the Lord said to Jeremiah, *“I will make you to this people a fortified bronze wall; and they shall fight against you, but they will not prevail against you; for I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the Lord.”* The Lord promised Jeremiah that he would be like a strong wall that could not be overcome. Jeremiah needed the protection of God to boldly fulfill the ministry he had been called to. Many people rejected his ministry and even tried to kill him. Then Jeremiah was put in a prison inside a city that was surrounded by a foreign army that invaded and destroyed it! He certainly needed God’s protection back then, but we also need the Lord’s protection to accomplish His works in these Last Days.

To gain God’s full protection we need to heed what the Apostle Paul wrote in First Thessalonians 5:23, *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless.”* Just as God is a Trinity, He has made us in His image to also have a triune nature of spirit, soul, and body. And to become sanctified and be preserved blameless, we need to be protected in all three of these areas. First and foremost we need to learn how to guard our spirit, as Proverbs 25:28 admonishes that *“Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.”*

Guarding Our Heart

The Scriptures give a beautiful picture of a guarded heart (or spirit) in the Song of Solomon. There we read about the bride

of the king. She is a type of the Church, the bride of King Jesus. Chapter 4:12-14 describes the bride as a walled garden that has nine types of fruits and spices growing within. These are a type of the nine fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 that are to grow within the garden of a believer's heart. A garden needs to be enclosed to be protected from any wild animals that could try to get inside and eat everything in it. In a similar way we need to guard our hearts so that sin and evil spirits will not be able to attack and destroy the fruit of the Spirit growing in our hearts.² A person needs to be able to control their attitudes so that things such as anger, pride, bitterness, lust, and fear are not able to enter and remain in their heart. Then when King Jesus comes to visit the garden of our hearts, He will be delighted with the love, joy, peace, and the other good fruits He will find in it.

As an example of how a heart needs to be continually guarded, I once counseled a deacon who had developed some very bad attitudes and was causing trouble in his church. As we first sat down in my office, I suggested we start our meeting with prayer. As I closed my eyes to pray, I could still see the deacon sitting there—but with a little evil spirit sitting on his left shoulder! This evil spirit was holding something like a fishing pole, with the hook on the end of its line embedded in the heart of the deacon. The hook caused this man to flare up in bitterness and anger whenever the evil spirit tugged on the line. Now, this brother was a deacon and was clearly born-again, yet he had not guarded his heart to trust God through the difficulties he was experiencing in his life. He had not heeded the warning of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:27 to not give place to the devil, or as the NIV translates it, “*and do not give the devil a foothold.*”

There is also an example of how the Devil can “get a foothold” in the account about two of the early Christians, Ananias and

Sapphira. In Acts 5:3 the Apostle Peter rebuked them, saying “*Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?*” Perhaps one reason why Peter could discern the Satanic influence motivating them was from what he had personally experienced a few years before. That is recorded in Matthew 18:23 when the Lord Jesus had turned and said to Peter, “*Get behind Me, Satan!*” concerning the wrong counsel that Peter was giving to Jesus.

This is why, to follow Paul’s exhortation that we become sanctified spirit, soul, and body; we need to first and foremost seek to guard our spirit or heart. As Proverbs 4:23 NIV exhorts, “*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*” For if we are careful to rule over our attitudes and guard our hearts, then Proverbs 25:28 tells us that we will be like a secure city with strong walls! From there, we can go on to learn how to also guard our souls.

Guarding Our Soul

The second area of our lives that needs to be guarded is our soul. The functions of our soul can be defined as being our mind and emotions.

Second Corinthians 10:4-5 illustrates that our spiritual weapons are mighty to tear down strongholds of wrong thinking. There we read, “*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*”

One of the major battlegrounds of our spiritual warfare is fought in the mind. The evil principalities and powers that seek to dominate the world often work by promoting deception and exalting the world, the flesh, and the Devil. They can work

through governments that seek to propagandize their people and through the news media that often wants to bend the masses into supporting evil agendas. The entertainment industry is largely led by people who get rich by attracting people to all kinds of evil. All these massive inputs into our thoughts, along with much that is on social media, seek to conform us to worldly and sinful ways. Only as we fill our minds with God's Word and with godly thoughts can we escape being corrupted and controlled by these influences.

When we become Christians, we need to have our minds renewed so that there will be no area of our thought life that will remain under the influence of sin and evil spirits. As Romans 12:2 NLT tells us, *"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."* For example, a bank robber who becomes a Christian will not want to steal again, yet he must begin to tear down the strongholds of wrong thinking in his mind so that he will not walk past a bank and begin to wonder how easy it would be to rob. Or if someone is involved with pornography, that person will need to do battle to control his mind so that he can rebuild a pure thought life. Many Christians do not want to commit sin, but they will think about that sin, or perhaps permit themselves to watch a movie or program that portrays that sin. These strongholds of corrupt thinking need to be torn down and the walls of salvation built in our minds. Then we will be prepared to have victory in the spiritual battles that we face. Philippians 4:8 is helpful as it gives eight tests that should be used before a thought is allowed to remain in our thinking. The NIV translation states, *"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is*

admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Another part of our soul that also needs protection is our emotions. There is an allegorical picture in the Song of Solomon 8:8-9 about how our emotions must be protected and under our control. There we read, “*We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she is spoken for? If she is a wall, we will build upon her a fortress of silver; and if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.*” This scripture is speaking about an immature young woman, and spiritually it is portraying a person who is immature and young in the faith. What will happen to that person when young men start becoming attracted to her and might pursue her for a love relationship? There are two types of emotional character that she might have; she may be like a *wall* or a *door*. A wall speaks of stability and protection. When young persons who are like a wall are spoken to about love, they will not open their emotions to quickly welcome these proposals. They are strong and protected; they are like a wall that will not allow any intruders to enter.

However, those who are like a door allow their emotions to be easily turned this way and the other, just as a door turns on its hinges. And just as a door opens to all, the ones who speak of love will be able at their desire to enter the lives of these unstable persons. So when a young person has emotions that are like a door, then others will have to protect that person. Just as an open door can be nailed shut with boards to make it very secure, the young person’s parents and pastors must make safe rules for them. Keep them away from situations where they may not be able to control themselves. Nail the doorway into their emotions shut, so that others cannot enter! As this scripture says, you should enclose the door with boards of cedar.³ This can protect them from the

dangers within dating and courtship and help their emotions to become stable as they mature to become like a protected wall. For if a young person has control of their emotions like a wall, this scripture says that they will become like a fortress or a castle of silver. They will not only be personally strong but will also be able to help counsel and protect others who seek to find safety in the fortress that God has built into their character and life.

Guarding Our Body

The third part of a person that needs spiritual protection is the body. Satan's complaint in Job 1:10 was that God had put a protective hedge around Job, his family, and all his belongings. To expose Satan's accusations, God allowed Job's protection to be progressively removed. As seen in Job 2:5-7, Job became physically sick when the Lord further lowered His protection, although God still protected Job's life.

Some people have said, "Well, Job lived in the Old Testament times; that would never happen to us New Testament Christians." But in the New Testament the Lord similarly allowed the Apostle Paul to go through many physical sufferings. In Second Corinthians 12:7-10 Paul wrote that the Lord allowed a messenger (or, *angel*) of Satan to be a thorn in his flesh to buffet him. (The word *buffet* means to be hit with repeated blows, as in a boxing match.) While the Scriptures do not say that Paul's thorn in the flesh caused him sickness, Second Corinthians 11:23-27 gives a long list of the attacks that Paul did have to endure in his body while the power of God was being revealed in his ministry. Paul repeatedly experienced whippings, beatings, imprisonments, and other physical sufferings throughout the years of his ministry. Like Job, the Lord did not let Paul die from these sufferings—such as when he was stoned in Acts 14:19—but as Paul explained

in Second Corinthians 12:7-10, God did allow Satan's angel to repeatedly attack his body with all these afflictions.

The Lord had different specific reasons why He allowed Satan to afflict Job and Paul, which will be examined later in this chapter. However, there is one area where Christians commonly open themselves up to having attacks upon their bodies and their health. Paul wrote about this when he said in First Corinthians 3:16-17, *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”*

When a person is born again, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within them. Our bodies become the temple of the Holy Spirit! But just as the Old Testament records how important it was that the temple should not be defiled, this New Testament scripture warns us of the danger of defiling our body. One way this can happen is through immorality, as Paul taught in First Corinthians 6:15-20. A person can also defile their body by taking drugs—not just illegal drugs, but even drugs that are unwisely prescribed. Many legal drugs are abused or have unsafe side effects, such as painkillers, stimulants, and sleeping pills. Overdoses can be addictive or fatal. Psychotic drugs may calm a person down but break down the normal functions of the mind and leave the person open to demonic attacks. Harmful eating or sleeping habits can also damage the body and defile what the Bible calls “the temple of God.”

If we live a wise, healthful lifestyle our bodies will usually remain healthy even well into our mature years. But if we do not honor the indwelling of God's Spirit, and instead abuse our bodies with unhealthy or sinful practices, not only can natural sicknesses develop but also spiritual attacks upon our health can

multiply. Treat your body with great respect, as it is the temple of the Holy Spirit!

Protection for our Family

Each Christian needs to have the walls of salvation in place to protect them, but we also need to have God's protection around our families. In Job 1:10 Satan complained because God had put a hedge of protection around Job's family. While God put the hedge there, Job also helped to maintain this hedge of protection. In chapter 1:2-5 Job regularly gathered his children together for worship services, even though they were all adults who lived in their own houses. Then Job would offer a blood sacrifice as an atonement in case any of them had sinned against God. The hedge of protection that Job had helped place around his family was effective so that even when his first children died, every one of them was saved and is now in heaven as part of Job's eternal inheritance. How can we know this? Because in Job 42:10 the Word of God tells us, "*The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.*" In the list of his double-portion possessions in Job 42:12-13, Job was given twice as many sheep, camels, oxen, and donkeys as he had before his trial in Job 1:2-3. But after the trial Job was only given the same number of children that he had beforehand: he had seven sons and three daughters born to him both before and after his trial. The interpretation of this is that God doubled the animals after his trial because the former ones had died and were gone. Yet the children of Job that died had eternal souls (unlike the animals) and were accounted by God as part of Job's eternal inheritance. Now Job is in heaven along with his double portion of children—fourteen sons and six daughters—that the Lord gave him before and after his great testing! Indeed, we should be encouraged by how our prayers

and righteous influence can help protect our families even when we go through severe trials and difficulties.

Years ago my children and grandchildren were going through an unusual season of sicknesses and health problems. When I sought the Lord about this, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart, “You have not been consistently praying for them—you need to be like Job, who covered his family with a protective hedge.” I knew I had not been praying for them as much as I should, but I had not realized what an effect it could produce upon the family!

I learned another lesson for our family when our firstborn daughter was three years old. One night she woke me up from a deep sleep, and said, “Daddy, the Devil is in my room standing at my bed.” That woke me up! As I started to pray, it became clear that a demonic presence was in her room. So I prayed until we felt that this evil presence was banished and that the Holy Spirit was abiding there.

The next morning I asked my daughter if she slept well, and she told me, “Yes, Daddy! I saw Jesus come down from heaven and bind that devil and throw him away, and then Jesus kept standing by the side of my bed.” We were glad for that victory but were also concerned that our daughter had been attacked like that in our own house. As we further prayed, the Lord showed us what had weakened our family’s defenses and allowed that to happen. The night before, a pastor’s wife had visited our home. She told my wife that God had directed her son to use marijuana (for which he was then in jail), and she also said the Lord told her that her daughter should marry an unbeliever. Those false revelations—doctrines of demons—spoken in our house had not been confronted and countered in word or prayer, with the result being that our daughter had been left open to a demonic attack. I learned through this experience how important it is to

not let wrong words and demonic revelations into our house, even through movies or TV, and to pray for cleansing if they do happen. As King David said in Psalm 101:2-4 & 7; *“I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness.... He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence.”*

Protection for Churches, Cities, and Nations

Larger groups of people, such as a church or a city, can also be protected by the walls of salvation. In Zechariah 2:4-5 the Lord said that He will be a wall of fire to protect Jerusalem. There have been many times in history when armies have turned away from attacking a city by divine intervention. Sometimes the attackers even saw mighty angels lining the walls of the city.⁴

An entire nation can also be given these spiritual walls of protection from God. Israel was given a hedge in Isaiah 5:1-7 so they could be protected and become like a fruitful vineyard. But these verses also show how God took away their protection because of their sins. The Lord declared, *“I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste... for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.”*

Sin Removes God’s Protection

While God gives His protective walls of salvation to the righteous, He also can break down the walls as a judgment upon sin. This can be caused by our own sin, as when the sluggard of Proverbs 24:30-34 had his wall broken down because of his laziness.

It can also be caused by the sin of a group of people, such as a church or a nation. The Lord in His mercy may even allow our defenses to be removed to keep us *away* from sin. This was the situation for the apostle Paul in Second Corinthians 12:7-10 as he wrote, *“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

Paul said that God allowed this messenger (the same word in Greek as *angel*) of Satan to repeatedly attack him. The attacks that this fallen angel buffeted him with helped keep Paul humble so that his revelations and successes would not cause him to become lifted up in pride. Sadly, in our days there have been servants of God that have been used by the Lord in mighty ways for a season, but then they became lifted up in pride and fell into various sins. Paul knew his weakness towards pride, but he was also willing to pay the price to be kept from it. This is why he continued to have the power of God revealed throughout his lifetime of ministry. Let us each determine, by the grace of God, to pay whatever price we need to pay, and daily carry whatever cross the Lord might give us, so that we also will be kept away from sin and become victorious through every battle!

Job’s sufferings are another example of what can happen when God removes someone’s protective hedge or covering. People have theorized that Job must have had some sin in his life for God to lower his protection upon him so drastically. However,

God's testimony of Job was quite the opposite! Twice God testified, "*Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?*"⁵

Now since Job was the most righteous man alive, what caused Job's protection to be removed? When we study Job chapters one and two, we see that Job's sufferings were the result of a challenge or "contest" between God and Satan. Satan's accusation of Job was that he was serving God only because he selfishly wanted God's blessings. Satan then challenged God to let him attack Job to prove it. God allowed this to expose Satan as being a liar, thief, and murderer: it was *Satan's* sins that were the cause of Job's suffering! Yet while the Lord allowed this unusual situation to expose Satan's evil character and to afterward exalt Job, it is usually the case that we lose our spiritual defenses because of our own sin.

Leaders Must Keep the Protection Secure

Leaders must be careful to maintain God's protection and blessings upon the groups of people who are under their care. When a leader sins, the people who are under their leadership and spiritual covering can reap a harvest of problems. A graphic example of how this can work is seen in the life of King David. When he sinned with Bathsheba and killed her husband, his sin tore down the protection upon his family, city, and nation and caused great destruction.

When the prophet Nathan rebuked David in Second Samuel 12:13-14, David instantly confessed his sin and the Lord forgave him: "*So David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' And Nathan said to David, 'The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given great occasion*

to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.”

Here we read that David was instantly *forgiven*, but he was not instantly *restored*. Someone can break down a wall and be forgiven for it, but that does not repair the wall! David’s sin caused much destruction in his family and kingdom before restoration was made complete.

Nathan declared that David’s adultery and murder would result in a much greater harvest of trouble falling back upon David and his family. Nathan prophesied in Second Samuel 12:9-12, *“You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.” Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.’”*

Yet while David’s sin was forgiven when he repented, the effects of his sin were not removed. It had planted corrupt seeds for a much greater harvest of trouble. Everyone under David’s leadership was affected, including his family, his city, and his nation. For example, David’s adultery with Bathsheba made an opening or breach in his family’s protection against immorality, so that later several of his sons committed immorality, and ten of David’s wives were publicly violated to David’s shame.⁶ David had Uriah killed with a sword, which later reaped a much bigger harvest of bloodshed when several of his sons were killed and when his whole kingdom was stirred to civil war by Absalom.⁷

In Psalm 51 as David was praying for cleansing and restoration, he prayed in verse 18 that the Lord would “*build the walls of Jerusalem.*” Now, David’s wrongdoings did not tear down the natural walls of Jerusalem—it was their spiritual protection that had been broken down. David knew he had to flee Jerusalem when Absalom came with his army, that there was no protection for him there.⁸ Yet Absalom’s rebellion happened more than ten years after David had sinned and then repented! There are times when Christians will sin while thinking in their hearts that God will forgive them when they repent, and that everything will be all right again. Yet Galatians 6:7 says, “*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*” A person can be *forgiven* for sinning, but that does not automatically *restore* them from the results of that sin. King David learned this lesson through many tragedies that were the result of his backsliding.

Some churches and families have the same transgression repeatedly occurring over the space of years or even generations. This is often because a former leader committed a sin and broke down the spiritual wall of protection that formerly had been on the family or church. And until righteousness is rebuilt and the walls of salvation are restored, sin and Satan will be able to attack again and again through that breach in their defenses.

I saw an example of these truths in a church shortly after I was born again. This church grew to have almost 1,000 people attending it. The pastor became proud of his success and spent more and more of his time building the church to achieve greater things. However, as he spent more of his time with the church, he spent less of his time with the Lord, and with his wife. The result was that he fell into immorality with several women in the church.

At first, the pastor successfully hid his illicit affairs, yet things began to quickly change in the church. Many of the church members began to fall into immorality. The pastor was supposed to be a guard or protection for the church, but when his personal defenses were broken down by his sin, the same evil spirits that entered his life also entered the church!

The church elders could see that it was like a plague that had invaded the church, yet they did not know its source, so they gave themselves to fasting and prayer. Soon after that, the hidden sin of their pastor was exposed. He was removed from leadership, yet after that, the next pastor of the church also went into immorality, and for about the next 20 years pastor after pastor fell into adultery as the church also lost almost all its members. The first erring pastor had been removed, yet the damage he had done to the spiritual defenses of the church had never been restored. It was only many years later that a very godly pastor was able to break that curse and rebuild righteousness into the church. Only then did the church achieve stability and again grow to be large and victorious.

This church had prayed for many years before their “walls of salvation” were again restored, just as David prayed for years until God restored the spiritual walls of Jerusalem. Leaders: if there is a spiritual attack on your family or church because of your failures, don’t just settle with having your sins forgiven—make sure that you also rebuild the walls of protection around your family and church, your own “Jerusalem.” And never think in your heart “I can commit this sin and enjoy it for a season, then afterward repent and everything will be OK.” If you commit adultery, you might be forgiven by God, but the results of your backsliding are not quickly restored! Your wife could become brokenhearted for years, your children might hate you, and your church may reject

you: don't be deceived, Galatians 6:7 warns us! You could still reap a bad harvest for your sin for many years—whatever type of sin it might be—unless full restoration takes place and the walls of salvation are rebuilt.

Judgment Upon the Nations

These spiritual principles apply at all levels of society, even up to national and international levels. Israel is a clear example of how God can judge the nations. By the time of Ezekiel, the nation had greatly backslidden and the spiritual walls that had earlier protected them had been torn down. In chapter 22 the Lord lists the evil deeds of the government leaders, ministers, businessmen, and people. The Lord concluded His verdict against them in verses 30-31, saying, *“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Therefore I have poured out My indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath...”* God brought great destruction upon the nation because the walls of salvation had been torn down, and no one would stand in the gap of the wall to keep their protection secure.

In these Last Days, the Lord is arising to bring many judgments upon the nations. While we should be preparing for revival, we need to also be prepared for the judgments of God that are coming to the nations. For while the Lord is causing His glory to arise, Isaiah 60:1-2 shows that there is also deep darkness that will cover the earth. We must therefore be diligent in building strong spiritual defenses in our lives, families, churches, communities, and nations; walls of salvation that will stand against the coming storms.

Intercessors Stand in the Gap

Intercessors are needed to stand in the gap when sin has torn down breaches or gaps in the walls of salvation that are protecting a person or a group. This can bring protection from the judgment of God and the attacks of Satan. Moses accomplished this as he interceded for the Israelites when they had worshipped the golden calf. As Psalms 106:23 says about this event, *“Therefore He [God] said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them.”* This “breach” that Moses stood in was the broken place in their spiritual defenses caused by their idolatry. God’s anger and judgment would have poured through this gap in their spiritual defenses had not Moses stood in that gap, asking God to have mercy upon them.

In Ezekiel 22:30 the Lord was searching for someone to stand in the gap in Ezekiel’s time to protect Jerusalem and Judah from His anger. Today also, the Lord is searching for those who will be watchmen on the walls and who will stand in the gap when a person, church, or nation sins. Let us learn to pray to God as Habakkuk did in chapter 3:2, *“In wrath remember mercy.”*

I saw a powerful example of how we can stand in the gap about 47 years ago when I was living in New York State in the USA. The Women’s Liberation Movement was at its height of influence in the nation at that time and was supporting the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution. This would have torn down many godly foundations of the nation concerning family order and gender, such as requiring unisex bathrooms in schools and public places. If two-thirds of the states approve a constitutional amendment, it then becomes national law, and at that time New York State was ready to vote and become one of the last states that was needed. It was known to be a very liberal state, and

everyone expected that the amendment would be approved by a wide margin of votes. But the travail of the Holy Spirit came upon me and many intercessors who were praying before the voting. To the surprise of everyone, the amendment was defeated! All the states that had voted before this time had voted “yes,” but when only a few more states were needed, the next states all began to vote “no.” This amendment to the U.S. Constitution was rejected. The intercessors experienced how the Lord had allowed them to stand in the gap, and then the Lord turned back the hearts of the voters across the nation to vote for righteousness.

Ministries of Restoration Can Rebuild the Walls

While it is part of the character of God to judge sin, another part of His character is that He desires to restore each person from sin. We can hear the cry of the heart of God in Isaiah 42:21-22 when He said, *“The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake; He will magnify the law and make it honorable. But this is a people robbed and plundered; all of them are snared in holes, and they are hidden in prison... and no one says, ‘Restore!’”* God and His laws are indeed honored when He brings judgment. But above this, when He sees the pitiful condition of His people, the Lord desires to restore them.

While intercessors are needed to stand in the gap when the walls of salvation have been broken down because of sin, this is not the full answer. The problem is not permanently corrected until the wall is rebuilt! If there is a hole in the cement wall around your house, and you hear one night that a thief is planning to enter, you may decide to go stand at the hole with a weapon to protect your house. But it would be foolish to stand there night after night and wait for the thief. The next day go buy some cement and repair the wall! Similarly, while the interces-

sors pray and stand in the gap, the body of Christ must arise to rebuild righteousness in their families, churches, communities, and nations.

The Lord is seeking to raise up His people to bring restoration. As Nehemiah believed God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in his time, may we arise in faith to bring restoration and rebuild the walls of salvation that we need today. May we hear the Lord speak to our hearts the message of Isaiah 58:12 that says, *“You shall be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.”*

Intercession and Restoration Work Together

Nehemiah was a man who balanced these two ministries of intercession and restoration. He was constantly interceding to God so that the work of restoring Jerusalem would be completed. These two ministries working together are shown in Nehemiah 4:17. There we read how Nehemiah’s men each held a weapon in one hand to stand guard (like intercession), while they each helped rebuild the wall with their other hand (restoration).

These two ministries could have saved the city of Sodom, but they did not because both were lacking. Genesis 18:20-33 shows us that Abraham stopped interceding too soon for the city of Sodom. He thought that the city was safe when God promised to spare it if there were ten righteous people in it. However, Lot had not been faithful to restore any of the people of Sodom back to God. Lot was a righteous man,⁹ but he had not even kept his own family pure. There were not even ten righteous people in the entire city, so the judgment of God fell. Let us heed this warning and seek to raise up a righteous people in these Last Days. A Christian family or group of ten or less may be able to protect an entire city!

It is Time to Rebuild the Walls

God is preparing His people to be holy and victorious in these Last Days. The Church shall be without spot or blemish and will overcome the gates of hell.¹⁰ Yet to accomplish this God will sometimes first judge those who are sinning, by removing their spiritual defenses and allowing the enemies to attack. These judgments are to encourage repentance and a seeking for righteousness so that through the ministries of intercession and restoration He can then bring His people back into fulfilling their calling.

By understanding these ways of the Lord, we can work together with God to help restore the walls of salvation. This will give us secure spiritual defenses as we arise to become the victorious army of God. So let us hear the exhortation in Nehemiah 2:17, *“Come and let us build the wall...that we no longer be a reproach.”* And let us respond like the people in Nehemiah 2:18, *“Let us rise up and build.”* With the help of God Nehemiah was able to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in only 52 days. And with the help of God, we will also be able to do a quick work to restore many people to the Lord. Then as our defenses are secure and we grow strong in the Lord, the army of God will be able to rise up, attack, and defeat the enemy! So now we will go on to see how we can go forward in victory by gaining important keys for spiritual warfare.

CHAPTER 4

KEYS FOR VICTORY



Spiritual battles are vastly different than the natural wars that are fought around the world. Sometimes they are the exact opposite and therefore need very different battle plans. As the Lord Himself said in Isaiah 55:8-9; *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*” The keys we will now look at can teach us God’s wisdom to help us become victorious in each battle. They are not an exhaustive list of the ways we can gain victories; some keys (such as prayer and worship) are well-known and taught in many good books. The following keys are less understood yet hold strategic battle plans that can help every Christian to become a victorious soldier for Christ.

Key # 1 - Humility

Seeking for humility might seem to be irrelevant or even a hindrance to some who want to be *“strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,”* as the Apostle Paul exhorted in Ephesians 6:10. However, humility is a needed foundation upon which a person can build an overcoming life. To understand this better, James 4:6-10 tells us, *“Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you*

double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

Here we are told that before we resist the Devil, we should first submit ourselves to God. Through humility we learn how to submit to God and cleanse our hearts and lives. Without this preparation we will not have victory over the attacks and temptations of the enemy. This truth was illustrated when a church leader was trying to cast a demon out of a man. The demon replied to him through the person seeking deliverance, “I’m not coming out for you- you are in bondage to a demon of lust!”

Believers are often quick to rebuke Satan when troubles come. Yet as was seen in the last chapter, if we allow sin to break down our spiritual protection, then we are open to having evil spirits attack us. And if God allows us to be attacked, then the Devil is not the first thing we need to be concerned about. The first thing we need to understand is why God has chosen not to protect us! Before we can stand against the enemy, we often first need to humble ourselves before the Lord. If we correct anything in our lives that displeases Him—and through this rebuild our spiritual defenses—then we are ready to stand fearlessly before the powers of hell.

We must remember that the first sin that brought rebellion against God was pride, the pride of Lucifer. If a person is proud, then Satan can gain footholds into their heart through which he will seek to control them. As Paul warned Timothy, he should not appoint a recent convert (or novice Christian) to become an overseer in the church, *“or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil,”* 1 Timothy 3:6 NIV. Our defense against pride is the opposite, to be humble. As our Lord Jesus

said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,” Matthew 11:29 NIV.

It is significant that when Joshua and the Israelites prepared to enter Canaan, their Promised Land, they had to first cross the Jordan River near Jericho. That was near the end of the river just before it emptied into the Dead Sea. An interesting fact is that the lowest place on the surface of planet Earth is the Dead Sea, which is at an elevation of 440 meters below sea level. (The Dead Sea is not connected to the other oceans and is in a deep valley). For the Israelites to enter into their Promised Land, they had to enter at the lowest place on earth! And the name Canaan also suggests the same truth. According to Hebrew scholars, *Canaan* comes from the root word *Kena* which means “to be brought down by a heavy load,” and which by extension can also mean “humble.”¹ So if we want to enter and live in our own “Canaan Land,” we must “go low” and be humble!

An example of how humility can be important in spiritual warfare is shown by John Dawson in his book, *Taking Our Cities for God*. There he shares about a time in 1978 when he led about 200 young people in a mission’s outreach at the city of Cordoba in Argentina. The city was hosting the playoffs of the World Cup football games, and the multitudes of people attending the events there was a great opportunity for evangelism. However, at first no one was listening to them, and no one was turning to Christ. The team seemed defeated until they spent a day fasting and praying.

During their prayers they felt that a spirit of pride ruled over the city and hindered the people from hearing the gospel message. They then felt led to overcome that pride by publicly humbling themselves at all the places where they were conducting their evangelism. So the next day when they had spread out to many

places, the first thing they did was put their faces to the ground and prayed at the outdoor cafés, on the sidewalks, and at a parade. As they publicly humbled themselves there was an immediate breakthrough as crowds of attentive people gathered to see and listen to their message. These large crowds continued for the next several weeks, and many people turned to Christ. A mighty victory was won through the simple act of defeating pride through humility.²

So, how can we develop humility? Some people have joked about how proud they are of their humility! Yet we already read in James 4:10 that the Bible says we are to “humble ourselves,” which means, by God’s grace, that we can do it! James told us we can do this by lamenting, mourning, and weeping.

Other ways to cultivate humility are shown to us in David’s life. He wrote in Psalm 8 that as he considered the greatness of God’s creation, he saw more clearly the “littleness” of man. When we similarly worship and exalt the greatness of God and His mighty works, we position ourselves in a humble place in the great design of life, creation, and eternity. We can also follow David’s example when he said in Psalm 35:13 that he humbled himself with fasting.

In Philippians 2:3 the Apostle Paul wrote, “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*” In the next verses Paul showed how Christ exemplified this when He humbled Himself to become a man and then die on a cross for us. As Paul revealed Christ’s supreme example of humility, he also encouraged us in verse 5 that we should have this same mindset of servanthood and humility.

Just as Lucifer wrongly cultivated pride in his life, the Scriptures teach us how we can rightly cultivate humility in many ways. Let us seek to build humility in each of our lives so that there is no pride in us that Satan can control!

Key # 2 - The Blood of Jesus

Most Christians are aware that there is great power in the blood of Christ. First Peter 1:19 tells us that we are redeemed *“with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”* Revelation 12:11 highlights the victorious Christians who overcome Satan *“by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.”* Yes, there is great power in the blood of Christ!

However, what many Christians are not aware of is that the blood of Christ is only effective when it is *applied* correctly! In the Old Testament, the Israelites were saved from the death of their firstborns *only* if they applied the blood of their Passover lamb to the doorposts of their house. The Tabernacle of Moses, the priests, and everything in the service of God were only made holy when the blood was correctly applied to them.³ For example, for the priests to be consecrated they needed to have the sacrificial blood placed on their right ear lobe, on their right thumb, and on their right big toe. This signified that they needed to be consecrated in the things that they listened to, with the works of their hands, and in their daily walk with the Lord. They were cleansed and sanctified by having the blood symbolically applied to these areas of their lives. Yes, there is great power in the blood—but only when it is correctly applied!

I already described in chapter two a spiritual battle I had at a church, where a fallen angel was defeated by spiritually applying the blood of Christ to the church through worship. Another

account of victory when the blood was applied is what happened to a family's newly rented home.

Years ago a woman in a church asked me to come lead a prayer meeting to cleanse the house that her family was going to rent. The house had a very oppressive atmosphere because of the sins that had been committed there in the past. I brought a prayer team that went into every room, where there was often a dark, demonic presence. We felt led to sing songs about the blood of Jesus until we sensed the presence of God come into each room and cast the evil presence out. We worshiped the Lord and prayed for the blood of Christ to cleanse and protect the entire house and property.

A few days later the husband of this woman had an unusual experience. While she was a good Christian, her husband was a gambler and a drunkard. As he was standing outside in his yard, admiring his new property, he heard voices calling to him from the neighbor's yard. They said, "Come over here, we will go drink and gamble and have a good time." The husband heard the voices clearly, but there was no one there! It was the demons who often controlled him who were calling out to him. He then asked them, "Why do I have to go over there across the fence to my neighbor's yard? Why don't you come over here?" The demons replied, "We can't go over the fence, there is too much of the blood of Christ on your side!" Because of the prayers for cleansing and applying the blood, her family was protected and had peace in their home. They had more than just a natural fence protecting their property—they had the walls of salvation which had been built there through the blood of Jesus! While the woman's husband could leave his house and then come under the control of evil spirits, when he returned home his invisible "buddies" had to stay behind, outside their property. That also

allowed the Holy Spirit to work on his heart when he was at home, so that within a few months he became a repentant and stable Christian.

There is another powerful truth about the blood shown to us in the Bible. This truth is that the closer the blood was brought to God, then the more power it released. For example, in the Old Testament the blood sacrifices in the outer court of the tabernacle or temple usually brought forgiveness to a person or family. However, when the blood was brought close to God in the Holy of Holies, it released a much greater power for national cleansing.⁴ Yet when the blood of Christ was brought to God in heaven, it released the greatest power of all by putting away the sin of the world!⁵

So how does this apply to spiritual warfare? Firstly, as intercessors, how close are we to God? The closer we can draw near to God, the more power our application of the blood can release! An example is the prayer of John Knox, who had a close walk with the Lord. For many years he drew near to God with his agonized prayer, "Give me Scotland, or I die!" In answer, God sent a mighty revival that transformed the nation. A similar example is Queen Esther, who with her access to the throne was able to intercede to the king and save her people from destruction. As Hebrews 4:16 tells us, "*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*"

A second way this truth can be applied to spiritual warfare is when we seek to deal with principalities and powers in the heavenly places. As we have previously seen, there are different levels of spiritual authority in the heavenlies presiding over such groups as churches, cities, and nations. If we can spiritually bring the cleansing of the blood of Christ to their places

of spiritual authority, then we can “bind the strong man” and release his captives.⁶

One time I was conducting a pastors’ seminar in Baguio City, which is titled “The Vacation Capital of the Philippines.” We felt an unusual breakthrough into the heavenlies while worshipping the Lord. There were no visions or prophetic guidance, but we could sense that the high praises and the worship had “bound princes” in the heavenlies above the city, as Psalm 149:6-9 suggests. I told the pastors that we would see visible changes in the city from what the worship had accomplished in the heavenlies. I had no specific idea what changes we would see, but it only took us a few days to find out.

Several days later the vice-president of our ministry was in the national capital, Manila, where he witnessed to a wealthy businessman. He led him to Christ, and the next weekend this new Christian went up into the mountains to Baguio City. The reason he went was to close the chain of prostitution houses that he owned there! He gave money to each of the lady workers, encouraging them to change their ways and go back to their home provinces to start a small business or go back to school. Then he put a large sign out in front of each of these former houses, declaring “This House Is Closed—Jesus Is Lord.” This not only impacted the local community, but it was also discussed on national radio and TV programs.

We will not always have a vision or the discerning of spirits concerning our battles in the heavenlies. In Daniel chapter ten, it was 21 days before Daniel’s prayers helped bring the full victory. It was only then that he was given an understanding of the spiritual battle that he had just helped win. We may not see a vision or have an angel come to us, but we do always need to remain faithful and follow whatever guidance God may give us. And as

we learn to declare Christ's salvation and correctly apply the blood—perhaps in prayer, or perhaps in worship—then we will see what a powerful key for victory we have been given!

Key # 3 - Holiness

When the enemy tries to attack us, he will always go for our weak spots. These can be areas where we battle most against a sin in our lives, or sometimes abuse or traumas from the past that have not yet been fully healed. If our defenses are securely in place the enemy will not be able to gain an opening through which to wound or defeat us. The Lord Jesus is our example of how a holy life is a protected life. At the Last Supper when Jesus knew He would soon be arrested and killed, He said, *"The ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me,"* John 14:30.

The Amplified Bible helps explain that verse, saying that the ruler of the world is coming, *"And he has no claim on Me. [He has nothing in common with Me; there is nothing in Me that belongs to him, and he has no power over Me.]"* There were no areas of sin or weakness in Christ's life that Satan could control or manipulate.

First John 1:9 tells us that the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, but upon one important condition: ***"If we walk in the light as He is in the light... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."*** If there are areas of disobedience in a Christian's life where he or she is deliberately walking in darkness, the blood of Christ does not cleanse that person from sin, and evil spirits can attack and gain footholds in their life.

So what does it mean to "walk in the light"? This can be understood more easily if we consider the natural development of a person from their infancy.

Babies are considered perfect although they cannot do much of anything. They are considered perfect for what is expected of them at their early age and level of development. Similarly, the Lord does not expect a new Christian to be fully mature and Christlike in every word and deed. If the Lord showed every new Christian how completely corrupt and sin-filled their life was, many would become so discouraged that they would never even try to follow the Lord! Just as a growing child will only slowly be held responsible for developing their abilities and learning how to take care of their own lives, the Lord will only require a maturing Christian to step-by-step develop from a “baby” level of holiness into a mature and fuller level of Christlikeness.

The new Christian who repentantly comes to Christ with their many sins can be considered a fully sanctified “saint” through the covering of the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ can give a new Christian a complete covering from their sins and protection from Satan’s attacks. Yet to maintain the covering of God’s mercy and the sanctification of Christ’s blood, the developing Christian must walk in obedience to the increasing light of what God requires of them. As they respond to the brighter light that God shines upon their life, they can slowly develop into becoming saintly, or holy, in their words and deeds. They are changed from “glory to glory” as step by step they are transformed into having mature lifestyles of holiness and Christlikeness.

A great danger in our spiritual warfare is when we know the power of Christ’s blood but do not have it correctly applied to our lives. If we do not progressively develop holiness by continuing to walk in the light, then the blood will not continue to be applied to our lives, to forgive and to protect us!

Some Christians have been taught mistakenly that if you just continue to ask for God’s mercy and grace—no matter what sins

and darkness you might be permitting in your life—then you will automatically receive grace and blessing. Not so! The Apostle Paul addressed this wrong doctrine in Romans 6:1-2 where he said, *“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”* No, if a Christian does not seek to follow the Lord and walk in the light, they will continue to live in their sins—and maybe even add more sin to their life! This person will not qualify to have the blood of Christ continue to cleanse them from their sins: remember, the blood of Christ is powerful for us only when it is properly applied! That is why, in spiritual warfare, we need to make much of the powerful blood of Christ while making sure that it is correctly working in our lives as we walk in the light and develop personal holiness.

The life of Samson is a good illustration of how we need to be forgiven, yet also develop holiness. In Judges 13:5 Samson was called from before his birth to be sanctified to God as a Nazarite, which included never cutting his hair. Yet that consecration to God began to be marred in his life when Samson developed a recurring pattern of immorality.

The Lord did not instantly remove his anointing and cause Samson to fall before his enemies- no, Samson still retained his supernatural strength and victory for quite some time. God was patient with him, offering him warnings through the repeated dangers that his immorality led him into. Yet Samson became so blind to God’s warnings that he could not see through Delilah’s tricks—or perhaps even care—when he revealed how his consecration to God would be lost if his hair was cut.

When Delilah had his hair cut off, she then said to him, *“The Philistines are upon you, Samson!”* So he awoke from his sleep, and said, *‘I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!’* But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him. Then the Philistines

took him and put out his eyes.... They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison,” Judges 16:20-21.

The time had finally come when God was no longer tolerating Samson’s continuing sins. While God’s patience is very long, it does have an end. Yet Samson was unaware of this—he mistakenly assumed that God’s patient tolerance of his sins was God’s acceptance, even perhaps His silent approval, of his sins! And this same sudden downfall can unknowingly come upon anyone who presumes that God’s forgiveness and protection upon their life will continue, even when they repeatedly sin and disobey God. As the Apostle John warned, the blood of Jesus will only cleanse us (and therefore protect us) *if* we are walking in the light.

Too many Christians—even Christian leaders—make excuses for their continuing in sin. As one backslidden evangelist explained, God was allowing his sexual sins as God’s “perks” for his continuing such a demanding ministry! Other ministers have mistakenly rationalized that because the Lord continues to anoint them, He must not consider their sins to be that important. But for those who refuse to walk in the light or seek a holy life, their darkness can blind them to the fact that the blood of Jesus no longer covers their sins. When they are left without this protection the enemy will be ready and will seek to destroy them!

Yet while Samson suffered and lost so much because of his moral failures, in God’s mercies he did not lose everything. In the following verse after he became a blind slave, we read in Judges 16:22, *“However, the hair of his head began to grow again.”* The renewal of this outward symbol of his consecration to God suggests that while he was suffering as a blind slave, Samson was regaining an inward reconsecration—that blind Samson began to *see the light!* When Samson called on the Lord one last time for his anointing and strength to be renewed, the Lord answered

him. Samson was then able to bring down the Philistine temple and gained his greatest victory at the end of his life.

Some have presumed upon God's patience, only to see their spiritual defenses swept away. Perhaps they have lost their ministry, family, or their finances or health. However, that does not need to be their final testimony! The Lord can bring a repentant backslider back again under His forgiveness and blessing. Their sins may have cost them much, but their repentance can still bring them to a triumphant end and a good eternity. For while Samson suffered much as a blind slave who died young, and while he undoubtedly lost much of the eternal inheritance that he might have obtained, he still obtained a gracious placement in God's kingdom. His final testimony in Hebrews 11 was that he was listed among the heroes of faith! You, too, can obtain a good placement in God's eternal kingdom if you embrace the power of the blood of Christ *and apply it correctly to your life* by seeking to walk in the light and develop a holy life.

Key # 4 - The Name of Jesus

As with the blood of Christ, it is widely understood that there is great power in the name of Jesus. He has been given the name above all names, "*...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"⁷ Peter declared in Acts 4:12 that "*there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*" Throughout the book of Acts there were mighty miracles, healings, and deliverances that were accomplished in the name of Jesus.

On one occasion when I was a young assistant pastor, I was called to the front door during an evening church service. A very

large drunk man wanted to come in, but because he was drunk and obviously looking for trouble, I told him that he could not enter. Becoming very angry, he went and picked up the large wooden church sign that was at the roadside. As he came near to the church's front window with the heavy sign lifted above his head, it was clear that he was planning to throw it through the large glass window- while our pastor was preaching just inside at the pulpit! There was no time to call for help from anyone in the church, so I stood between him and the window, pointed my finger at him, and said "The Lord rebukes you!" Instantly he staggered back as if he had been hit hard by a baseball bat, as he dropped the sign and stumbled away into the night.

As I have traveled around the nations for the last 40 years I have had many opportunities to use the most powerful name of the Lord Jesus. Yet I have also seen those who have used the name of the Lord wrongly. Those who were not born-again or were living in secret sin have at times tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus and have had the same empty results as the seven sons of Sceva. This story is recorded in Acts 19:13-16, where we read, *"Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, 'We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.' Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?' Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."*

Like these seven sons of Sceva, some people do not have a personal knowledge or a walk with Jesus, and yet try to invoke His name to no effect. But what is even worse than this is when a cult member or a false preacher invokes the name of the Lord Jesus,

but then releases the power of evil spirits! I first saw this shortly after I had turned to the Lord when two Mormon missionaries came to my door. As they tried to evangelize me, I repeatedly mentioned scriptures that contradicted their false doctrines. Then the main evangelist, in what he thought was righteous anger, rose up to point his finger at me and powerfully declared, “In the name of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Just then a powerful evil spirit attacked me—but the Holy Spirit within me immediately rose up to drive it away! This protection of the Holy Spirit is what the Lord promised us in Isaiah 59:19, “*When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him.*”

Paul warned the Corinthian church about this danger when he wrote to them, “*For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough,*” Second Corinthians 11:4 NIV. Many people preach a false Jesus—perhaps a *Guru Jesus*, or a *Jesus of Many Colors*, or *Our Cult Leader is Jesus*. These same people who preach a false Jesus can teach a false gospel and sometimes impart a false spirit. So while we want to learn how to use the power of Jesus’ name, we also need to develop discernment to recognize what is true from what is false. As the old saying goes, “All that glitters is not gold.”

Key # 5 - Fasting

Another key to gaining power in spiritual warfare is fasting. When fasting is added to prayer it can “turbocharge” or multiply the effectiveness of our prayers.

Isaiah 58:6 shows the results that fasting can produce when it is done with godly motives and not just to fulfill a religious

obligation. There the Lord says, *“Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?”*

I saw my first demonstration of this power when I was a young Bible school graduate visiting a church that my former roommate was pastoring. I was there for a seven-day retreat to fast and pray and was having a wonderful time spending many hours basking in the manifest presence of God.

One night I returned from a wonderful time of private prayer and entered the outreach center that the church used to evangelize the community. The only visitor there was a man from the neighborhood who was greatly demon-possessed. One night he had come to the center with his hands bloody from having beaten up people’s faces!

When I entered the room where this man was, I also brought with me a tangible anointing of the Holy Spirit from my fasting and waiting on the Lord. Almost instantly this anointing touched the heart of the man and he started repeatedly crying out “Jesus save me!” without my saying or doing anything.

As I then prayed with him, I saw and heard a mighty wind sweep in from a side of the room that had no door or window! As this wind of God hit the front of his body, dark things—which I knew were demons—ejected out behind him, and at that moment his pitiful cry for help became joyful praise as he began to thank and praise the Lord. In a moment he was transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God. It was a fulfillment of what Isaiah 58:6 had declared about fasting, that it was *“to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke.”*

The 40-Day Wilderness Fast of Christ

Fasting was even a key to the power in the ministry of our Lord Jesus. In Luke 4:1-2, just after the Holy Spirit came upon Him at His baptism, we read, *“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.”* Now at this stage in His preparation for His ministry, our Lord had become filled with the Spirit and He was led by the Spirit. However, he had not yet begun His ministry or performed any miracles. Yet during those 40 days of fasting and prayer He fought and overcame the temptations of the Devil and of His human desire for food. These 40 days of wrestling with His flesh and with overcoming Satan were like the “Boot Camp” or intensive basic training that a new soldier encounters after they enlist. The difficult training that a new soldier undergoes is to build obedience and perseverance into them so they will be able to endure hardness as a good soldier.

When these 40 days of “intensive training” were completed in Jesus’ life, we then read in Luke 4:14, *“Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.”* Here, for the first time, we read that Jesus had the *power* of the Spirit. Before His fast He was *filled* with the Spirit and was *led* by the Spirit, but through His fast the working of the Holy Spirit within His life was transformed to also give him the *power* of the Spirit! Only then did Christ return to Nazareth and proclaim, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,”* Luke 4:18.

If our Christian development follows the same pattern as our Lord Jesus, we can be *filled* with the Spirit and be *led* by the Spirit, but not yet have the *power* of the Spirit! What can bring us into God's power to heal the sick, cast out demons, and liberate the captives? It might be that we still need a wilderness experience like what Christ had, where through fasting and prayer the working of the Holy Spirit in our life will empower and transform us. God might want to work deeper in your life in a way similar to how a smith takes a piece of iron and heats it red-hot, to then strike mighty blows of his hammer upon the metal to transform and strengthen it. Whatever it takes to become a fully prepared soldier in Christ's army, may we become led and empowered by the Spirit, as Christ was. And may we always pray, "Whatever it takes, Lord, make me a mighty soldier of Christ for these Last Days!"

Two Cautions

Two areas of wisdom need to be developed as we seek to incorporate fasting into our lives. The first is an area of practical wisdom concerning our bodily health. When fasting, the body is no longer using its energy to digest food. Instead, it works to cleanse out chemicals and toxins that have accumulated from pollution and the processed foods that we have ingested. As a result, a person not accustomed to fasting might experience headaches or other physical reactions—not because there is anything wrong with fasting, but because of the junk in their body that is being cleansed out. So for someone who has never fasted before it is wise to begin with short fasts, or with what is often referred to as a "Daniel fast" from Daniel 1:12 and 10:3. That refers to eating a simple meal of mainly vegetables while abstaining from eating meats, desserts, junk foods and beverages.

A “Daniel fast” will give your body important nutrients, while giving your body a break from things that are unhealthy or more difficult to digest. As your body adapts to these partial or shorter fasts, you could then consider trying longer and more complete fasts. And always drink plenty of water while fasting.

Along with having natural wisdom for fasting, we also need to have the proper spiritual preparation. Fasting helps a person to become more open to the spiritual realm. As our flesh becomes weaker, our spirit becomes more perceptive. When the Lord Jesus fasted for forty days He was tempted three times by the Devil. However, in this time of being spiritually perceptive, Christ overcame these temptations and gained a new anointing of power. To properly handle these new spiritual realms, we need solid Christian character that will not be deceived by satanic attacks, and which will not become proud over increased spiritual power.

Unfortunately, this is what sometimes happened in the “Latter Rain” revival that peaked in North America during the 1950s. Many young ministers and evangelists fasted for up to 40 days and received mighty anointings of the Holy Spirit. As they carried that anointing to the nations in great crusades, multitudes were healed, delivered, and saved. However, too many of these young ministers became lifted up in pride by their great successes. Several seemingly ended up with alcohol problems, a few drifted off into the doctrines of demons, and others brought shame to the body of Christ through moral or financial corruption. It was a true revival largely ignited through fasting, yet the cracks in many of the human vessels that carried that revival became more pronounced as the years went on. So yes, let us seek for the power of God as we fast and desire to become good soldiers for Christ—but let us also seek to have solid foundations of character

and righteousness built into our lives so that we can properly handle the power and the battles that lie ahead!

Key # 6 - Let Your Battle Plans be Led by the Holy Spirit

Christians are generally aware that their spiritual battles should be fought according to Biblical guidance. As Psalm 149:6-9 says, *“Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment— this honor have all His saints.”*

For the Christian, this means that we can each bind the principalities and powers of Satan as we execute the judgments written in the Bible. But the big question that remains is, which judgment? For a judge to properly enforce the law, he needs to execute the correct judgment in each case that he judges. For an army commander to have the winning battle plans he cannot just pick one favorite plan of attack to be used all the time—the enemy would know his strategy and could easily defeat him. This is where we must learn to be led by the Spirit, to know what God is speaking about each battle. Then our plans will be guided by the *rhema* spoken word of God that will be effective for the occasion.

Pastors, prayer warriors, and counselors at times have a few biblical patterns for victory from the Scriptures, and then repeatedly use them to try and get victory in all the situations they face. But each battle needs its own battle plan; we need to know what is the “written judgment” that should be applied to each battle we face. Leaders who just pull out a book that teaches something like “Five Steps to Cast Out Demons” might find that it does not work in their situation!

I once knew a pastor who told me that he had just read a new book about church growth. The book detailed a strategy that had worked famously for a certain church. He said that he would use the same strategy to try to make his church grow large. I then asked him, “But what if that strategy does not work for your church?” He answered me, “Then I will go back to the Christian bookstore and buy another book about church growth and try that.” The sad news is that he tried this for over 25 years, and his small church never grew. He tried many strategies and biblical patterns, but because he never heard from God what was the proper battle plan for his own church, he never experienced a spiritual breakthrough.

The Lord has a way and a time for everything that He does, and we need to follow His guidance if we want His victory. When King Saul was still a young king, he was asked to wait seven days until Samuel arrived to offer the sacrifices before a coming battle. However, Saul was impatient and did not wait. Samuel told him that if he had followed the Lord’s instructions his kingdom would have been permanently established, but now it would not continue.⁸ To the opposite, young King David was told by the Lord to have his army wait until they heard the sound of marching in the treetops. As he followed the Lord’s guidance David gained a mighty victory that established his kingdom.⁹ There are reasons why David became so successful—in fact, he never lost a single battle in all his life!

In Second Samuel 5:18, when David had become the next king of Israel, the Philistines marched up from the lowlands to near Jerusalem. They wanted to destroy David and his kingdom before he could become strongly established. So they camped in a valley near Jerusalem that was called the Valley of Rephaim. The name of that valley translates into English as the *Valley of*

Giants! The giants were an Old Testament representation of the principalities and powers that we now face as we seek to help establish the kingdom of Christ, the Son of David.

In the first battle that David faced there, he asked guidance from the Lord and was told to go up and directly attack them. He had a mighty victory and named that place *Baal Perazim*, or *Lord of the Breakthrough*.¹⁰

Soon afterwards the Philistine army returned to that same place. However, David did not presume that he should follow the same battle plan, so he sought the Lord for fresh guidance. Second Samuel 5:23-25 tells us, *“Then the Philistines went up once again and deployed themselves in the Valley of Rephaim. Therefore David inquired of the Lord, and He said, ‘You shall not go up; circle around behind them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees. And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly. For then the Lord will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines.’ And David did so, as the Lord commanded him; and he drove back the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer.”*

To defeat the enemy in this second battle, David was instructed to circle his army quietly around to the back side of the enemy army and wait until he heard marching in the tops of the trees. The army that soon came marching in at the top of the trees was certainly not a natural army, it was the angels of God who would help David gain a complete victory over the enemy in the Valley of Giants.

Have you ever felt like you were battling your enemies in the Valley of Giants? Isaiah 17:5-6 tells us that harvest time in that valley can be very unfruitful, like only having four or five olives to pick from the most fruitful boughs—while a normally fruitful

olive branch could have hundreds of olives! Is your family or church experiencing very little success or growth? The enemy may have camped nearby you and you find yourself trapped in a Valley of Giants. If so, seek the Lord for His guidance. With heaven's help, that place of defeat can be renamed "Baal Perazim" when the Lord of the Breakthrough, the Lord Jesus, gives you His battle plans that will lead to a mighty victory!

As a modern-day example of this, about 45 years ago there was a church in New Zealand that for many years was not able to grow larger than 150 members. But then a new pastor was installed in the church, who prayed about the situation. The Lord showed him that he was to go to the church early every morning to pray, and as he prayed there the Lord gave him a vision. He saw a huge demon that stood over the city which was keeping the congregation from having any numerical growth. But as the pastor kept praying at the church every morning, some of the church members began to join him until the prayer meeting grew large. As they kept praying for months, someone had a vision that the demon was no longer standing in the heavenlies. He had been partly cast down to where only about half of him was above the ground. They continued to pray until someone else had a revelation that only the demon's head was still above ground. They continued to persevere in prayer for more months until the demon was completely cast down—and then a revival broke out. The church soon grew to about 1,500 people, becoming one of the largest churches in the nation!

As another example, years ago a pastor asked me to come to his church for a service. I was to help commission another minister to take his place while the pastor went on a three-month sabbatical leave. After the service, this pastor privately shared with me that he had not told everyone the truth: he was not dropping

out of his pastoral ministry for three months, but permanently! His church had a big problem that he could not overcome, so he was giving up and was quitting the ministry. He explained that the problem was that he had two church elders who had become drunkards. He had repeatedly counseled them, preached at them, and rebuked them, but there were no lasting changes and his church had become a reproach in their small community.

Hearing that, I encouraged him to not tell anyone yet that he planned to permanently leave his ministry. He agreed that we would spend the next three months in prayer and see if the Lord had an answer for the problem.

The Lord soon showed me that these two elders were the spiritual prisoners of a powerful evil spirit, and unless we first “bound the strong man,” as Jesus taught, we would not be able to “plunder his goods” and set the captives free.¹¹ Preaching or counseling was not the answer - how can you counsel a prisoner to leave his jail cell when it is locked shut? So we prayed for weeks until the “strong man” was bound, and when their spiritual prison was unlocked the two elders were again encouraged to leave their sin and escape.

One of the elders soon had a glorious breakthrough and was restored. The other elder, however, chose to remain in his bondage as he willingly rejected the deliverance that God had offered him. And it was at this point that he suffered the result of rejecting the deliverance that the Lord had made available. This backslidden elder went out one night to a bar and got drunk along with his adult son. Some men there got into a fight with them, and his son was repeatedly stabbed and soon died. In anger his father packed up the rest of his family and moved far away.

So the first of these two men received deliverance and returned to a godly life. But when the second man rejected God's offer of deliverance, the terrible results of his sin led him to leave the community, with the result of these situations being the cleansing of the church. The pastor who had initially wanted to quit decided by this turn of events to return to his ministry at the end of his three-month break. Within one year the church had doubled their attendance and was victoriously moving forward. And now, 36 years later as I write this, this pastor who had been ready to give up his ministry is now the leader of 60 churches! Yes, we certainly need to learn the correct strategy for each battle if we want to become victorious leaders of the army of God.

Key # 7 - Breaking the Sins and Curses of the Fathers

Another key that can unlock strong bondages involves the problems that are passed down through succeeding generations. While good things—such as talents and abilities—can be genetically passed down from generation to generation; so can negative things, such as inherited sickness. This also holds true in the spiritual realm: both blessings and curses can be passed down through the generations. As we can read from the NLT translation of Exodus 34:7, *“I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations.”* The results of sin in former generations can be passed down to as many as four generations, but praise God, His mercies last for thousands!

There are many examples of this in the Scriptures. For example, the sin of deception was passed down through Abraham's

lineage, as can be seen through Abraham's lying (Genesis 12:11-13), which was repeated by his son Isaac (Genesis 26:7), and then his grandson Jacob (Genesis 27:18-24), down to the fourth generation of Jacob's sons (Genesis 37:31-33). In the same way, the lineage of Judah had repeated problems with immorality, while Eli's lineage was cursed with short lifespans (1 Samuel 2:31-32).

There are individuals as well as entire families where it seems that everything they touch- every business venture and endeavor- becomes blessed. However, the opposite also happens. In a certain nation I was once asked to counsel a man who came from a very influential family. They all had prosperous businesses or very high government positions, except for this one member of the family. It seemed like everything that he touched crumbled into dust!

As I prayed for him, the Lord gave me a word of knowledge: that as a young man, he had, in a moment of misguided religious fervor, taken a vow of poverty upon himself. I asked him if he had done this, and he answered, "Yes." As I then explained to him the consequences of what this had done to his life, he told me "You have just read my life story like a book." I explained to him how he could turn to Christ and have this curse broken from his life, and we prayed.

A few years later I saw this man again and asked him how things were going. He replied that he had experienced a dramatic turnaround in his finances after we had talked and prayed. He told me that his businesses had become so prosperous that he had to turn away many quality companies that wanted his products and help! His financial turnaround also brought major breakthroughs for his family.

Yes, the good news is that sins and curses can be broken! We know that Christ broke the curse of sin when He took the sin of

the world upon Himself at the cross. Galatians 3:13-14 NIV says, “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus.*”

There is a family in Scotland whose lineage was recorded for many generations. From father to son, through repeated generations, each son became an alcoholic. This continued until one of them became a Christian and called on the Lord for this bondage to be broken out of his life and family line. From that time onward, he never drank- and his son never touched alcohol- and the next generation is also free from this broken curse.

What is even more amazing is that the Lord can take a curse and turn it into a blessing! That is what happened when Balaam was hired to curse Israel. As Nehemiah 13:2 later testifies about that situation, “*However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.*”

We can see how this also happened when Jacob spoke judgment over his son Levi for self-righteously using his sword to murder the men of Shechem. His prophesied judgment in Genesis 49:7 was, “*Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.*” Yet centuries later, when the tribe of Levi properly used their swords to enforce God’s righteousness, Moses blessed them and called them to become the priestly tribe of the nation.¹² At that time the curse upon the tribe of Levi—that they would be scattered in Israel—was made into a blessing, for in their scattering throughout the nation they became the priests who lived among all the other tribes, guiding them as their spiritual leaders. And while the Levites were given no province or natural inheritance of their own, the Lord said in Joshua 16:33 that *He* would be their inheritance!

If you feel that there may be a curse upon you or your family, in broken humility come before the Lord and renounce whatever may have brought that curse. Ask for the blood of Christ to cleanse away the sin and break that curse in Jesus' name! And if you cannot personally get the breakthrough, go to a spiritual leader who can help you permanently break that bondage.

Curses and bondages are only temporary for the blood-washed people of God, and we want to see them broken as quickly as possible. For the final Day will come when all these evils will be done away with. As we can read in Revelation 22:3 and 21:5, the time will come when it will be declared, "*And there shall be no more curse.*" Sin and Satan, death and curses, all will be swept away when God on His throne declares, "*Behold, I make all things new.*"

Key # 8 - Stay Continually Filled with the Holy Spirit

We are told in Ephesians 5:18 that we are to "*be filled with the Spirit.*" However, this is a continuing action according to the original Greek verb used here and can accurately be translated as "*be continually filled with the Holy Spirit.*" It is not enough to have been filled with the Spirit and have had some glorious experiences in the past—we need the continuing fullness of the Spirit in our lives to remain victorious Christians.

Jesus' parable about the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-12 portrays this truth that we need to be continually filled. This story is about being ready for the coming of the bridegroom, which refers to the Second Coming of Christ. At the beginning, Matthew 25:8 says all ten of the women had oil in their lamps, speaking of the anointing of the Holy Spirit in their lives. However, only the five wise ones had sufficient oil to keep their lamps burning bright until the bridegroom (Christ) returned. Just because we have

had the oil of the Spirit burning bright in our lives in the past does not guarantee that we still have a supply today! So let us always pray that we can declare like the Psalmist in Psalm 92:10, *“I have been anointed with fresh oil.”*

The Lord Jesus also more specifically taught that remaining filled with the Holy Spirit is crucial to prevail in spiritual conflicts. Matthew 12:43-45 explains that *“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”*

Here the Lord Jesus showed that when someone is delivered from evil spirits, their house (or *life*) must become occupied (by God) so that the demon cannot return and invade that person—along with more evil spirits! That is why, for someone to have lasting deliverance, he or she must be ready to renounce their old evil ways and let Christ increasingly fill their life with His Spirit and word. Only then will they be safe from “reinvansion.” Leave no room for the devils!

There is always more of God’s Spirit that we can receive to help us grow in Christlike character and spiritual authority. David experienced three anointings in his life. They were three significant impartations of the Holy Spirit that caused him to be able to arise and hit the mark of God’s calling upon his life.¹³ Saul of Tarsus was renamed Paul when a deeper infilling of the Spirit transformed and anointed his life.¹⁴ Later in his ministry, the Apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers (who were already saved and filled with the Spirit) that they would receive further anointings of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ Yes, just as we need more and more of *Christ*—which translates as *“The Anointed One”*—

so we need more and more of His Holy Spirit in our lives as we mature and seek to become full overcomers!

Key # 9 - Forgiveness Builds Unity

One of the simplest yet most powerful keys for Christian victory is forgiveness. It can heal every past hurt and break chains of bondage. However, the results of forgiveness can accomplish much more. It is to help prepare a wholehearted, united people of God who will rise up and become God's mighty army! So first we will look at the *process* of forgiveness, and then at the *product* of forgiveness.

We know that Christ came into the world to offer forgiveness for "whoever will believe" through His work on the cross. But we, in turn, are to carry on and multiply Christ's ministry of releasing forgiveness. Many times God's people forget about this: we rejoice that we are forgiven, but we forget to release forgiveness to others!

When the Resurrected Christ first appeared to His disciples, He told them in John 20:21, "*As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.*" Then two verses later He made that more specific by telling them "*If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.*"

Satan the Accuser loses his grip on a person when they know they are forgiven and are no longer his helpless victims. Instead, they become a threat to him as they join the ranks of the Redeemed! So through our prayers of forgiveness, in loving the lost, and through sharing the Gospel and offering them God's forgiveness, we can see the power of Satan broken in people's lives.

However, we need to do more than just forgive the sinners—we also often need to forgive the saints! Christians all too often

hurt other Christians, which can cause division and sometimes even split churches.

Our Lord Jesus taught in Luke 11:17, *“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls.”* We have an example of this in the history of the nation of China. Their Great Wall was the greatest and longest building project in human history, all to give them strong defenses against their northern enemies. For many centuries the wall was never breached in battle. However, several times their enemies snuck in and defeated the Chinese people when their gatekeepers were bribed to join with the enemy! There are times when just one “Achan,” one gossip, or one “Judas” can bring division and defeat.¹⁶

This truth is also shown in the battle that King Jehoshaphat faced in Second Chronicles 20:20-24. His army did not have to fight the three enemy armies that came against them because those three armies instead fought and destroyed each other! However, Satan commonly seeks to sow division within the army of God, whether it is division in a church, a group of churches, or even in a family or marriage. Wherever there is conflict the people of God will be weak in their ability to stand against the enemy.

Many years ago, I directed an evangelism center in the city of Detroit. Before we went out evangelizing every day, we started with group prayer. On the days when we had heartfelt prayers together, we saw good results. But there grew wrong attitudes between some members of the team where they were criticizing each other and became very distracted from their mission. I had to privately remind the one who was the main source of the problem, that the other team members were not his enemy—the Devil was! And it is only when we are united against the correct enemy that we can stand strong and victorious in our battles.

Forgiving others is so central to the victorious Christian life that Jesus placed in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." This is because it not only releases the guilty person, but it also releases the one who had been wronged. The Lord said very clearly that if we will not forgive others of their sins towards us, then God will not forgive us!

This was the reason the Lord Jesus taught the Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor in Matthew 18:21-35. In this story the king found out that his servant, whose great debt he had forgiven, had not forgiven a very small debt that was owed to him. In response, the king said to him, "*You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you? And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.*"

It has often happened that if a person fails to pay off his debts, there will be increasing pressures put upon him to pay up. Verbal warnings could turn into threats, and then perhaps jail. In this story the unforgiving debtor was "delivered to the torturers," or as the NIV tells it, "*his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.*"

What is of utmost importance is how the Lord Jesus then applied the lesson of this story when He said in verse 35, "*So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.*" If we do not forgive the injustices done to us; if we harbor unforgiveness in our hearts, then our Heavenly Father will allow us to become attacked and tormented by evil spirits! Our unforgiving remembrances of the wrongs we suffered will be the opening through which evil spirits can continually torment us with anger, hatred, bitterness, revenge, or other evil attitudes in our hearts and minds. We

will remain a prisoner of the past where evil spirits will be able to continually pull us down and keep us in bondage. They will become our “jailers,” as this story warns us!

So, forgiveness is not only something that we need to receive—we also need to release it from our hearts to everyone else. Just like pride, unforgiveness is a sin that can keep us from God’s blessings and make us an open target for evil spirits to attack. Yet as we learn to cultivate forgiveness, our hearts will be set free from the hurts of the past and the attacks of evil spirits. Furthermore, extending forgiveness to others can also help transform them. It can build within us a unity that will bring multiplied victories as Satan the Accuser no longer has any foothold in our lives, families, and churches!

For while one godly life can accomplish much, the Scriptures make it clear that when brethren join together in unity it does more than bring *added* power: it *multiplies* power! We can see this principle from Leviticus 26:8, which says, “*Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you.*” Here we see that if there is a small group of five people, they can each defeat 20 enemies, but a larger group of 100 can each defeat 100 enemies!

When we see the power of a united army of God, we will seek to reunite God’s people through releasing forgiveness. Sadly, many Christian marriages, families, and churches are weak and divided. Yet even when that is the case, it need not be the end of the story. We have Ezekiel’s vision of the Valley of Dry Bones as a guide for how the Lord can take His people from division and defeat into great victory.

When Ezekiel had this vision, he was told what the dry bones represented in Ezekiel 37:11—“*Son of man, these bones are the whole*

house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'" God's people were scattered and spiritually dead—like a cemetery! Ezekiel did not know if they could be revived, but the Lord knew how to accomplish this. And by the end of God's work of restoring His people, verse ten tells us *"And they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army."*

The first step towards transforming God's people from being like a cemetery into a mighty army is shown in verse seven: *"So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone."*

This first step was that God's people needed to be united together. We are to be the body of Christ, with each member correctly joined to each other so that we can build each other up. As Ephesians 4:15-16 tells us, *"But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."*

Disconnected Christians become reunited with the family of God when they forgive each other. Motivated afresh by His love, the body of Christ will build itself up to become strong and mature. But Christians who are not properly relating to each other will find themselves becoming weak and defeated. The Apostle Paul even told the Corinthian church that many among them were weak and sick, and had even died, for the reason of *"not discerning the Lord's body,"* I Corinthians 11:29-30.

My spiritual father, Brian Bailey, has told the story about a church whose pastor had suffered from a sickness for a long time. God gave an elderly woman in the church the anointing to heal him, but when she asked the pastor if she could pray for

him, he refused to let her. She did not have a leadership position in the church and the pastor may have felt it was below his dignity to submit to her prayer, even though she was a godly church member. As a result, the pastor remained in his infirmity. He had not “discerned the Lord’s body” to receive the help that could have healed him.

While the people of God recognize the great dangers of outward sins such as immorality, murder, or stealing, they often miss the inner dangers such as pride and unforgiveness. When Christ taught His disciples to pray, He pointed out that one of the most crucial needs that God’s people have is their need to forgive others. If we hold wrong attitudes towards others and do not forgive them, we are also not forgiven; and we multiply division, bitterness, revenge, and all manner of evil. Whenever we feel disconnected and discouraged, we need to pray, exhort, counsel, and preach until the Word of the Lord comes forth in power to bring healing and unity to the body of Christ.

As the Lord began to unite His people, there was one further step that Ezekiel saw towards the dry bones becoming a victorious army. The second work of God and the second prophecy that Ezekiel was to declare is seen in verses nine and ten: *“Also He said to me, ‘Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, “Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”’ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.”*

After the dry bones were reconnected and formed into a body, they still needed the breath of life to be imparted into them. Both the Old Testament Hebrew and the New Testament Greek each had one word that meant breath, wind, and spirit. The wind or breath that would cause them to live again was the Spirit of God

doing a new work of restoration and revival. This is what we need to pray for, preach, and prophesy: that the wind of God's Spirit will again empower His people to become the mighty army of God!

When the people of God have properly united, God will pour out His Spirit in His timing. We read of this happening on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two when the first disciples in Jerusalem had been praying for weeks and were "in one accord." Suddenly the wind of God swept upon them, and the Holy Spirit transformed this small group of disciples into a mighty army. They then went out to the nations in the power of the Spirit and began to build the Church that the gates of Hell would not overcome!

I also experienced a similar turning point when I was a much younger minister. I had an assistant who ended up opposing my leadership. During this conflict our ministry had withered into weakness—it was becoming like the valley of dry bones! Finally, this brother left to pursue his own vision, but when he left our remaining team pulled together with a new unity. Shortly after that we started the next school year for our Bible school, and the Lord unexpectedly multiplied the students that came. Then a few weeks into classes we had a gathering where I visibly saw and heard the wind of God blow into the sanctuary starting from the right side of the room. It swept in with such power that as it hit the students they all started to fall over. As the wind continued to sweep towards the left side of the room, one student saw it coming and tightly held on to his chair—only to have his chair blown over with him still on it! Even the students who had not yet experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit found themselves speaking in tongues for the next hour or more as they lay on the floor.

From that moment on, that ministry has gone forward with multiplied power and fruitfulness. It has been able to make an impact upon many nations as the power of the Spirit continues to be our strength.

Does your life or church feel like you are in a “valley of dry bones?” That should not be the end of your story—God has so much more! But the first step is to build forgiveness and unity into the body of Christ so that even the “dry bones” can arise and become empowered as part of the mighty army of God!

Key # 10 - Our Testimony

While there are many different keys, or battle plans, that can help us to have victory in our warfare, the last one we will look at in this chapter concerns our testimony. As Proverbs 18:21 declares, *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”* Revelation 12:11 more specifically reveals how to overcome Satan in the Last Days: *“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.”*

Words can have creative power, as was first demonstrated when God spoke and created the universe. Words can build up, as when we encourage someone by telling them “You can do it!” Words can also tear down when someone is criticized or condemned. Because of this, we need to understand how the word of our testimony in Christ can help bring us strength and victory.

While Revelation 12:11 describes that they *“overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony,”* in the verse before we are given a description or title of the one we must overcome: *“the Accuser of the Brethren.”* Since the Devil tries to defeat the people of God through negative words, we can combat those attacks by having a positive testimony! As we study and

meditate on God's word and the Holy Spirit quickens promises to our lives, God's words transform us. We become "renewed in the spirit of our mind" and progressively gain "the mind of Christ."¹⁷ As our inner thought life is transformed, we will be able to reject any negative words that have been spoken about us in the past, as well as deflect the fiery darts of the enemy whenever the Accuser seeks to pull us down into defeat. Our testimony can become filled with God's promises and God's word—and then the power that created the universe can work mightily in our own lives!

In the Book of Judges chapter six we read the story of how the Israelites had been oppressed by the Midianites for seven years. At the time of the wheat harvest, a young man named Gideon was fearfully hiding in a winepress, trying to thresh a little wheat in a place where the Midianites would not look and steal his grain. Just then, an angel came and told him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!" Gideon had felt quite the opposite of being a "mighty man of valor," yet this encouraging word from the Lord transformed him. As he believed and acted upon it, he became a mighty deliverer. Then as his small band of 300 soldiers attacked a huge army, he had them shout "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" With the word of their testimony they gained their victory, just as we also can when we confess that God is with us and has a wonderful plan for our life!

When I once conducted a pastors' seminar in the central Philippines, I prayed for some of the delegates after the teaching. I had a word from the Lord for one of them, and told him, "You are like Gideon when he was fearfully harvesting his wheat—but the Lord is also saying to you, that you are a mighty man of valor, and you will defeat the enemy."

After the seminar I asked the host pastor about this man, as I knew nothing about him or his situation. He told me that he was a pastor who had recently received a death threat from the rebels who controlled much of the area. He was just then needing to decide if he would stay at his church in great danger or leave and go into hiding. Yet when he heard what God said about him and his situation, he decided to stay—and it was not the pastor, but the rebels, that ended up leaving!

God's words still have as much creative power as they did in Gideon's time, and in the times when the word of the Lord transformed many others throughout the Bible into becoming men and women of faith and victory. So, if you find you are continually thinking and speaking negative things about yourself and others, recognize that the Accuser of the Brethren is seeking to pull you down. Overcome him by first making sure that the blood of the Lamb has been applied to any failures in your life, and then let the word of your testimony declare your victory in Christ! Memorize and quote scriptures about what the Lord has done for you. Often tell the stories about how Christ has changed your life. Believe and confess what the Lord has shown you about your calling and future. Continually testify of the good things of God, and the Accuser will find no room in your life to tear you down with guilt, shame, or fear. Let the righteous be as bold as a lion—and as the Lion of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ, arises in your life, then the Devil, who goes about seeking whom he may devour, will find he has met his match!

CHAPTER 5

PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD



The Apostle Paul gave us excellent instructions about becoming equipped for spiritual warfare. He had years to think about the subject as he was often in Roman prisons and chained to Roman soldiers! While he was a prisoner in Rome he wrote his letter to the Ephesians, in which he gave valuable wisdom on how a believer's spiritual armor was like the natural armor that the Roman soldiers wore.

In Ephesians 6:10-18 Paul wrote about this, saying, *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”*

Twice Paul referred to our need for “*the whole armor of God.*” While taking the imagery of the Roman soldier’s armor, Paul taught that the Christian’s armor was to be spiritual, not natural armor or weapons. This is important to understand, as there are “Christian” organizations that suggest we fight God’s battles with natural weapons and tactics. But spiritual battles are not fought with earthly weapons. As the NIV version of Second Corinthians 10:4 says, “*The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world.*” The kingdom of God is not defended with natural weapons and battles, as the Lord Jesus declared when He said, “*My kingdom is not of this world; if it was, my servants would fight,*” *John 18:36 NIV.*¹

So, what is the armor of God that Paul said the believers need? First, he points out that we need the *whole*, or *entire*, armor of God. In any battle, the enemy looks for weak spots in their opponent’s defenses. If we are missing even one piece of our protective armor, the enemy can strike there and defeat us! We need to be careful that we do not lack some part of our armor so that there will not be any unprotected place in our lives where the enemy can successfully attack us. It is when we are protected by “the full armor of God” that we can experience consistent victories in our battles.

Paul also taught in the above verses that we need to have the full armor of God on to be ready to “*withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*” Some days can be called “evil” when the powers of Satan are on the offensive. We need to remember that when our Lord Jesus said that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church, He was not just referring to when the army of God would attack hell’s gates and invade the domain of Satan. Gates in the Bible days were also the place where kings and rulers would sit to plan war and send their armies out to

battle.² So while we want to go forward and bind Satan's power while rescuing his captives (as our Lord mentioned in Matthew 12:29) we also have to be ready for the evil days when Satan will have his forces march out and attack the people of God. Yet if we are properly protected by the "full armor of God" we can then be confident that even in the evil day, when the dust of battle settles, we will be the ones who are left standing in victory!

Put on the Belt of Truth

The first piece of Christian armor that Paul described was that we are to "*gird our waist with truth.*" Or as the NIV explains it, have "*the belt of truth buckled around your waist.*" For a Roman soldier, this referred to the large leather belt that he would first put on. From this belt, each soldier would then secure the rest of his armor, such as his breastplate and sword. Each Christian also needs to have something secured on themselves like a belt—truth! This is what can enable the rest of our spiritual armor to be firmly fastened.

First Peter 1:13 says "*gird up the loins of your mind.*" This speaks of mentally disciplining our thoughts, or keeping our minds focused on truth. There is an old saying, "**An idle mind** is the devil's workshop." If we are not careful, our minds can wander off into unprofitable and even corrupt thinking. Modern society is increasingly encouraging people to immerse themselves into thinking about false realities through fantasy books and movies, as well as through computer and video games. But if we are always thinking of the truth, and as Third John 1:3 further tells us if we "*walk in the truth,*" then all the other parts of our armor can be secure and in order.

Furthermore, what is the full truth that can secure our lives and hold all our armor together? As Christ said to the Father in

John 17:17, “*Your word is truth.*” As we know, think, and seek to live the Scriptures, then we are well along the way toward becoming victorious soldiers of Christ!

The Breastplate of Righteousness

The next piece of spiritual armor that Paul mentioned is the Breastplate of Righteousness. The breastplate most notably protects a person’s heart, which spiritually needs to be protected from sin and condemnation.

We have already briefly looked into the fact that every newly born-again Christian is given the legal righteousness of Christ through His redeeming work on the cross. Every “baby Christian” will still have various flaws and unperceived sins in their life, yet God in His patient love will cover those imperfections and let His imputed righteousness be as a breastplate that will guard their hearts. And in the same way that the adults will protect any children that might become caught up in a war, the fathers and mothers in Christ should watch over the immature believers; and while protecting them, help them to grow towards maturity so that they can learn to defend themselves.

As each new believer grows in God, little by little a brighter light will be shown upon areas in their life that still need to be transformed. As they respond to the Lord and walk in that increasing light, then the righteousness of Christ will not just remain an *imputed* covering for their life; it will increasingly become the *imparted* righteousness of Christ that will continue to be a breastplate to guard their heart and help them to stand in victory. As First John 3:21 affirms, “*If our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God,*” and as Proverbs 28:1 declares, “*The righteous are as bold as a lion.*”

Too many Christians walk in guilt, depression, condemnation, or fear because they are not wearing the Breastplate of Righteousness. They are continually “beating themselves up” in self-condemnation—often with the help of the Accuser of the Brethren. Yet we can all become victorious as we commit the failures of our past to the forgiveness of Christ, dedicate our present to walk in the light of God, and look towards a future that is bright with God’s promises! With the armor of our breastplate secure and strong, our hearts will be protected from condemnation so that we will have the confidence of a lion to face whatever battles may come our way.

The Shoes of the Preparation of the Gospel

The next piece of our armor is to have battle-ready shoes. A Roman soldier wore sandals made of thick leather that would protect his feet from cuts and bruises so he could stand through the battles and march onwards in war.

Yet what kind of sandals or shoes does the Christian soldier need? The NKJV of Ephesians 6:15 says, “*and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace*” while the ALT says, “*Put on your feet as shoes the preparation of the Gospel of peace.*”

When the Apostle Paul wrote about having the preparation of the gospel of peace on our feet, he was echoing what had been written centuries before in Isaiah 52:7. There we can read, “*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace.*” Whether we are local soul winners or international missionaries, wherever a good soldier of Christ goes they should always be prepared to share the gospel. As First Peter 3:15 teaches us, “*Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.*”

When I was a young minister, during one season I was praying about whether it was the right time for me to step out into my missionary calling. The Lord answered those prayers by giving me a warning through a dream. In the dream I saw myself traveling to the nations as a missionary. However, as I busily traveled around, one of my shoes fell off. I noticed it and put it back on. That happened repeatedly until I stopped noticing when I had lost a shoe. Eventually as I kept traveling, my other shoe also fell off. Just then a principality in the heavenlies revealed himself and began to oppose me, and then another—and another—until I was surrounded by these powers of Satan. Once they had surrounded me they came in for the kill and I was defenseless, as I was no longer wearing any shoes! At this point I woke up and was aware that my life was not yet prepared for the battles I would face as a missionary. Following this guidance, I continued in other local ministries for several more years until the Lord assured me that I was ready to be a missionary and that my gospel shoes were securely on my feet.

Years later, in a Hindu nation, I was strongly tested on this same issue as to whether I was going to keep my “gospel shoes” on. The battle started as I was traveling overnight on a train to go speak for a pastors’ seminar with another missionary. While sleeping on the train, in a dream a cow came up to me and bit my heel, trying to remove my shoe. I woke up feeling a strong demonic presence in the train cabin, so I prayed for over an hour until I felt victory over this spiritual attack. Then as I slipped back into sleep, I saw the cow still waiting for me—but this time, as he came to bite off my shoe, I raised my foot and crushed his head!

As I then awoke and considered these dreams, I knew what they were about. In Hindu nations the cow is considered sacred and is venerated as a channel of the divine. The cow that confronted me

in this dream I recognized to be one of the strong principalities that opposed my coming as a messenger of the gospel. He was trying to bite my heel and remove my shoes so that I would not be able to travel as an effective messenger of the gospel.

The prophecy in Genesis 3:15 says, *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”* While Satan took the form of a snake in the battle recorded here, the conflict I overcame was similar: the cow attacked my heel to remove my gospel shoes, but I was victorious as I smashed his head! This was also one of the fulfillments of another scripture, where Paul declared in Romans 16:20, *“And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.”*

After experiencing this spiritual battle as I was traveling to my next seminar, I saw the natural outworking of it after I arrived at my destination. There, in this large city with a population of millions, the local organizers had unwisely put a large banner across the main street welcoming the Christian preacher from the United States! This was not wise as this nation was not on friendly terms with the USA at that time, and foreign missionaries were also not allowed! So that evening the police chief of the city came to see us. He was angry at the Christian preaching, and especially at me and my companion who had come to his city. He angrily said that he would soon return with a company of his police and throw us out of the nation: the cow was trying to remove our gospel shoes! But I confidently prayed that he would not be able to follow through on his threats, even though he was, naturally speaking, very capable of accomplishing them. The result was that we never saw him again in the next three days we were there. The seminar was a blessed time of strengthening the pastors, and then we traveled to our next ministry. Our

gospel shoes were securely on, as the Lord had prepared us to be overcoming soldiers for Christ!

The Shield of Faith

As Paul then described the next piece of armor that we need, he wrote, “*Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*” In ancient battles a crucial part of a soldier’s defenses was his shield. When an army fought together with their shields up, they could be well protected from the arrows or darts that might be raining down upon them. That is what faith is to accomplish in our spiritual battles. When evil spirits attack us with fiery darts of temptation, accusation, or fear, then faith can cause them to never penetrate into our spirit to plant their attempted destruction.

In Isaiah 21:5 we read that one of the preparations for war is that the shields are to be anointed. Soldiers rubbed oil or grease on the front of their shields before a battle, so that the blows of an enemy sword or arrow would more easily be deflected. We similarly need to have the anointing of the Holy Spirit always freshly working in our lives so that our faith is never weak but is strong enough to deflect any enemy attack.

An account that helps illustrate this occurred in the ministry of Smith Wigglesworth, a man of God who was called “The Apostle of Faith.” One night he went to bed after an exhausting time of ministry, only to be awakened in the middle of the night by noisy demonic manifestations. As he sat up, he saw Satan at the foot of his bed. Smith only said, “Oh, it is just you,” and then rolled over and went back to sleep! He didn’t need to fight Satan with the sword of the Spirit, his strong faith shielded him—and greatly insulted the Devil!

George Muller was another man of God in church history with strong faith. Without ever asking any person or church for financial support he founded an orphanage that cared for thousands of needy orphans. Numerous times he and his staff were attacked by fiery darts of doubt and worry as the daily needs for food and supplies were always pressing. Yet his faith always shielded him from despair as the Lord miraculously intervened thousands of times to provide the orphans with their daily food.

God's people often face situations where only faith can shield them from fear or danger. There was a time when I was traveling alone through an undeveloped area of a nation. Night fell before I could reach the city, and the local transportation stopped at sundown, so I found myself staying in a village that had no hotels. However, there was a restaurant that had a room where travelers could stay for the night. It was not much of a room—its lightly constructed bamboo door had no doorknob, lock, or bolt. The only thing that kept the door closed was a two-inch-long piece of wood with a nail through the center which could be swiveled as a latch. However, anyone could easily open it from the outside by putting something thin between the door and its frame and lifting the latch up!

After surveying the room, I went into the restaurant area where I ate a meal alone. The only other people there were a noisy group of men drinking at another table. After a while, one of them wandered over to my table. I could tell he had been sent by the group, and after a little bit of friendly small talk, he popped the question he had obviously been sent to ask. He said to me, "You are traveling alone—do you have a gun?" I felt that these men were sizing me up, and naturally speaking, I was defenseless against them. But by faith I gave him a very big smile and replied, "I am *well* protected!" Then he hastily went back to his buddies,

where they had a loud argument in their language. They had not made *me* afraid, but it seemed that I had made *them* afraid! As they kept arguing and drinking I finished my meal, went back to my room, and closed the feeble latch. After reminding the Lord that I was under His protection, I slept peacefully through the night undisturbed. The shield of faith is real!

Do you ever battle with difficult situations, and perhaps have fiery darts thrown at you by evil spirits? Do they try to penetrate your thoughts with fear, temptation, or unbelief? We can pray as the apostles asked the Lord in Luke 17:5, “Increase our faith.” And we can always ask that the Holy Spirit freshly anoints our shield of faith so that we will continually overcome through Him who loves and protects us!

The Helmet of Salvation

The next piece of armor that Paul mentioned in Ephesians 6:17 is that we are to “*take the helmet of salvation.*” Just as a helmet protects a soldier’s head, we each need a spiritual helmet to protect our mind and thoughts. Often our spiritual battles are fought in our minds. As we read in Second Corinthians 10:4-5, “*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*”

There can be strongholds in our minds; wrong patterns of thinking that have been built up over a lifetime. When a person is born-again, the Holy Spirit comes to reside in their spirit and begins to purify their heart. But they also need to have their minds renewed, as Romans 12:2 says: “*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*”

When we are born-again, our spirit desires to do the will of God, yet our body might still desire to live a carnal, fleshly life. It is our mind, or our thoughts, which help connect our spirit and body. Will our thoughts submit to the desires of our renewed heart, or the desires of our carnal flesh? Our thoughts can go either way. As Romans 8:5 tells us, *“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”*

The Helmet of Salvation will guard our minds and help us to set our thoughts on the things of God. Wrong things that we used to think about, that may have grown into strongholds, need to be torn down. Whatever were the former fortresses of sin in your thought-life need to be pulled down, and your thinking brought into subjection to what is good and right. When we are in spiritual battles we need our thoughts to be protected and focused so that the enemy does not find any footholds in our thinking that can bring us into discouragement or defeat. We need to become like David when he declared to the Lord in Psalm 140:7, *“You have covered my head in the day of battle.”*

A further description of the helmet that will protect us through our battles is mentioned in First Thessalonians 5:8, which says, *“Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.”* Here we read that the *hope* of salvation can protect our thoughts. While faith and love guard our hearts according to this scripture, it is hope that specifically guards our minds and our thoughts! As Hebrews 6:19 tells us, hope can be an anchor for our soul, which can keep our thought life secure and stable.

We face a lot of battles in life where we may not have a specific promise from God that can give us faith. But hope has a more general application: we can always find hope in God’s salvation,

that according to His trustworthy character God will work out everything we go through for the good.

Various studies have shown that only a small percentage of the things that people worry about will ever happen, and if they do happen, they usually turn out much better than what they had expected. As Romans 8:28 says, “All things work together for good to those who love God.” There is no good reason why we should give our thoughts to worry! As we keep the helmet of the hope of salvation firmly in place, it will give our thoughts and our lives security and perseverance. When the battles rage around us, all that we need for victory is the full armor of God! Let us ask for the blessing that Paul pronounced in Romans 15:13 when he said, “*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*”

The Sword of the Spirit

In the list of our spiritual armor that Paul mentioned, there is only one weapon for offense. Everything else—the belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, and helmet—are for defense, to protect us from enemy attacks. There is only one weapon mentioned through which we attack the enemy because it is the only weapon we need. This is the “*sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*” As we learn how to use this weapon we can win any battle; there is limitless power available when the word of God is released. King David wrote in Psalm 33:6 “*By the word of the Lord the heavens were made.*” God’s words created the universe, and as the sword of the Spirit is properly wielded—as the word of the Lord is released—Isaiah 55:11 assures us that it will accomplish anything for which it was sent forth.

In seeking to use the sword of the Spirit, the first thing that should be understood is that this does not mean we can just quote any scripture that we want and assume it will fit whatever situation we are in. No, that was how Satan tried to defeat Christ! The devil told Jesus to jump off the temple while claiming that the scripture in Psalm 91:11-12 said the angels would catch Him. However, that scripture from Psalm 91 was not what God was speaking about in that situation, it was what *Satan* was speaking! To wield the sword of the Spirit we must speak the words that *God* is presently speaking concerning the situation we are in.

This is more clearly shown in the original Greek language the New Testament was written in. When Paul wrote about “*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,*” he used the Greek word *rhema* for what is translated as *word*. However, there are two different words in the Greek language for word: *logos* and *rhema*. *Logos* translates more fully as a “written word,” while *rhema* means a “spoken word.”

Our offensive weapon is the *rhema* word being spoken by God. It is a two-edged sword according to Revelation 1:16 because truth, and even life, is two-sided. As Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:2-4, there is “...*a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh.*” As we face a variety of circumstances in life they will often need different responses. The Scriptures show how God’s truth can be applied to these various circumstances in opposite ways. This is how the word of God is like a two-edged sword that is to be skillfully handled.

Second Timothy 2:15 says that to not become ashamed we need to be “*rightly dividing the word of truth*” by finding the balance of truth in each circumstance. Using the correct scripture that

God is speaking will be the *rhema* sword which will defeat the lies and deceptions of the enemy.

Just quoting any *logos* written word of God that we choose will not bring us victory in a situation. There is a story about someone who woke up one morning and wanted some quick divine guidance for the day without praying or seriously studying his Bible. So, he randomly opened his Bible and pointed at something, and he read: “And Judas went out and hung himself.” Not knowing how that could guide him, he randomly opened his Bible again and pointed at something again—to read, “Go and do likewise.” He then quoted the scripture to himself in Second Corinthians 13:1 which says, “*In the mouth of two or three scriptures every word will be established.*” So he decided that he would only follow this guidance if three scriptures would confirm it—so for a third time he randomly opened his Bible and read “And whatsoever you do, do it quickly!”

This fictional story illustrates that we cannot randomly choose what scriptures we will apply to any given circumstance or battle. We need to be guided by God’s Spirit to know what is the *rhema* word that God is speaking for each circumstance, for that is the true “*sword of the Spirit*” that will bring victory. Concerning natural battles, David wrote in Psalm 144:1, “*Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle.*” David needed God’s skill to successfully wield his sword, just as we need God’s guidance to victoriously use the sword of the Spirit!

A few more stories could help illustrate this. Once I was approached by a Christian family that had just moved into an apartment. They told me that they were experiencing spiritual manifestations there, such as repeatedly seeing dripping blood in the corner of a room. They asked me, “Are we seeing the blood of Christ? Are these manifestations from God?” As I prayed about

this, the Lord quickened to my heart part of a verse in Acts 26:26 where Paul spoke about the Lord's workings in those days, that *"this was not done in a corner."* Based on this rhema word to my heart I could confidently tell this family that these manifestations were demonic, as God works openly while the demons seek to hide. Instead of welcoming these manifestations we rebuked and stopped them. After that, the family had a peaceful apartment free from demonic manifestations.

Another example of the rhema words of God bringing victory happened to me many years ago. I had served the Lord in several ministries for over five years and had been repeatedly guided during that time to wait before becoming a missionary. But as I felt that my present ministry was about to be completed, I again prayed about whether I should next aim for the mission field—and this time I received different guidance!

I was given a dream in which I was reading about a missionary who failed on the mission field because he had not become prepared to overcome the powers of Satan in the heavenlies that opposed him. As I was thinking about this, the Spirit of God carried me away across the Pacific Ocean to Asia. There in the heavenlies I stood before a mighty king sitting on his throne. My first impression was not whether he was a good angel or a fallen angel, what struck me was his mighty power as he ruled over millions of people.

This powerful spiritual ruler then disdainfully noticed my intrusion upon his throne room. He condescendingly started to talk to me and said, "What are you doing in my nation? I did not invite you here." His scornful words quickly started to intimidate me, and as my heart began to feel dismayed I opened my mouth and was ready to apologize to him and say that I would leave! However, just as I opened my mouth, the Spirit of God

arose from within me—as the verse in Isaiah 59:19 says, “*When the enemy comes in like a flood, The Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.*” Instead of apologizing, I started to quote scriptures. For each of his accusations and threats, the scriptures that I spoke countered and defeated his words as if we were in a sword fight.

This went on for a while, and as I stood before this mighty ruler he soon began to overwhelm me in the battle. As I grew weak, I cried out to the Lord and looked to Him afresh. Then the Spirit of God arose from within me with a stronger anointing, and I heard myself saying (from Ephesians 1:20-22) “And besides all these things, I am not under your power, for I have been raised with Christ to sit with Him far above all principalities and powers.” As I spoke those words the Spirit of the Lord caught me up to a much higher place. As I then looked far downward I could barely see the ruler that had opposed me, he looked about the size of an ant. I could no longer hear his accusations and threats, he was no more significant or dangerous than a tiny bug! When I awoke from this battle I knew, that by God’s grace, I was now ready for the spiritual warfare that I would face as a missionary.

It is so important that we gain the anointing and wisdom to be able to wield the *rhema* sword of the Spirit in the battles that come our way. May we learn how to put on—and use—the *whole* armor of God, for when we do, the powers of darkness will tremble before the army of God!

CHAPTER 6

DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT



To become effective in spiritual warfare we need to also develop spiritual discernment. Without this we will be like an army who blindly shoots at an enemy when they don't know where the enemy is. But when we gain an accurate understanding of what is happening in the spiritual realm, one prayer, one word of wisdom, or one counseling session can often accomplish more than what years of attempted ministry have achieved!

We can see this truth illustrated in the medical field when a person has a long-standing illness. Doctors can treat the symptoms of a disease for years but obtain no lasting results until they recognize the source of this illness. Yet when the root cause of the patient's disease is addressed and corrected, then the patient can obtain speedy and permanent healing.

Once I was praying for deliverance for a young man who was obviously demon-possessed. He had been seeking the Lord for freedom for some time, but to no avail. Then one night I prayed with him while he was calling on the Lord. He was asking God to forgive his sins and set him free, but as this continued I was surprised that he was not getting any breakthrough! So I began praying in my heart, "Lord, what is the key to his deliverance?" Then the Lord brought to my remembrance how he hated his parents and had verbally abused his mother, while I was also reminded that "Honor your father and your mother" is one of

Moses' Ten Commandments—not an insignificant sin in the eyes of God.

So I steered his prayers into repenting specifically for the sin of dishonoring his parents. Then I asked him to declare after me, “I love my mom.” When he said those words it was like a dam broke, and the Spirit of God fell upon him and drove the demons away.

In that situation, the Lord was not satisfied with the young man praying general prayers of repentance. He needed one specific area of “spiritual surgery” before he was set free from his demonic bondages. And whether we are praying for a person, church, or nation, the need for us to gain spiritual discernment remains the same for us to win each battle.

While our enemies are invisible to our natural sight, they should not remain invisible to our spiritual awareness. The Lord can give us the ability to know when spiritual forces are at work so we can consistently overcome or avoid the battles around us.

Three Sources of Spiritual Activity

We must first understand that there are three basic sources of spiritual activity or power. As we recognize their differences it will be easier to focus on what God is doing, while minimizing what is of human or demonic origin. If the people of God do not discern what source a spiritual force is operating from, they can be building up something that God is trying to tear down or could be tearing down something that God wants to build up! These three sources of spiritual activity are: 1) the Holy Spirit, 2) evil spirits, and 3) the human spirit.

The first and pure source of spiritual activity is the Holy Spirit. God will sometimes send His Spirit directly from heaven, but He often will use people, or even angels, as channels of His anointing.

When someone is functioning under the anointing of the Holy Spirit they will have a true ministry, whether as a true prophet, or true pastor, or whatever ministry in which they are functioning.

The second source of spiritual activity (or power) is evil spirits. This is the influence under which a false prophet, a false teacher, or any false ministry functions. For example, Second Chronicles 18 records the story of when Zedekiah and the 400 prophets of wicked King Ahab prophesied by the anointing of a lying spirit. In Acts 16:16-18 we can also read about the slave girl at Philippi who prophesied by the power of a spirit of divination. Evil spirits anointed these false prophets to have power in their corrupt “ministry” but it only brought forth deception, evil, and death.

Then there is a third spiritual source that a ministry can function under. It does not come from the Holy Spirit or evil spirits, but from the release of the human spirit of the person who is attempting to minister. This can unintentionally happen when someone tries to be a channel of the Holy Spirit. But if the Holy Spirit does not choose to move and empower their ministry, the leaders of a ministry may try to “stir things up” or “get things moving” by their own human strength. This can be released from a person’s spirit, for part of our human nature is that we are each comprised of spirit, soul, and body.¹ From their spirit or soul a person might try to function in ministry—although of course the strength and wisdom of that merely human “ministry” is very inferior to the working of the Holy Spirit! Yet it is common for people to seek to motivate or even dominate others with spiritual manipulations that do not come from the Holy Spirit.

One example of this can be found in the Book of Ezekiel. There he wrote about “foolish prophets” who tried to function by the power of their human spirit. The Lord told Ezekiel, “*Say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, ‘Hear the word of the Lord!’ Thus*

*says the Lord God: 'Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!'"*² Here were a group of prophets who were not categorized as true or false, but as foolish. They did not function in their attempted ministries by the Holy Spirit or by a demonic spirit, but instead by the leading of their own human spirit.

Ministries that are Only of Human Origins

A few modern-day illustrations can also help us understand how this can operate. One example is when a young man is praying that God will show him his future marriage partner. If the Holy Spirit does not give him an answer, from the motivation of his own heart (or human spirit) he might feel attracted to someone. These feelings might grow until he mistakes them as being the work of the Holy Spirit, and then assumes he should marry that person. Again, perhaps a woman has a natural dream about a man that she then wrongly attributes to be a revelation from God. Sometimes three or four people can each think they have received direction from the Lord, but they all feel they should marry the same person! Probably none of them were deceived by evil spirits. Instead, they were misled by their hearts into believing that they had a prophetic word from the Lord. And if this type of activity is not discerned in a church, all kinds of strife and misunderstandings can arise.

Other areas where ministries often try to function—yet they are only being led by their own human ideas and hopes—are when they declare that someone will be elected or promoted to a high position, become wealthy, or be miraculously healed. While the Lord can prophetically declare any of these things and bring them to pass, we need to be careful that the Holy Spirit is motivating a true prophecy and that what is being declared is not

merely the person's human hopes and dreams. True prophetic declarations and spiritual ministries can release powerful blessings when they are from the Holy Spirit, but foolish declarations can discredit a ministry. They can also cause much heartache and disappointment if people hopefully cling to a prophecy that is only the product of someone's human imagination, which never becomes fulfilled. As Ezekiel went on to say in chapter 13:6 about the foolish prophets of his day: *"They have envisioned futility and false divination, saying, 'Thus says the Lord!' But the Lord has not sent them; yet they hope that the word may be confirmed."*

That is why Paul exhorted in First Thessalonians 5:19-21, *"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things, hold fast what is good."* We want to embrace everything that the Holy Spirit wants to do and speak, but if we do not separate the wheat from the chaff—the true from the false—then the mixed results of an individual's ministry can bring reproach to the work of God.³

This is a reason some Christians reject spiritual manifestations. They have seen these things abused by those who have proclaimed foolish prophecies that were birthed out of their own heart, or who have manipulated others through attempted spiritual ministries. For these reasons some churches will not allow and may even despise prophecy and other spiritual manifestations, even though First Thessalonians 5:19-20 clearly says to not despise them. Yet while this scripture portion begins by telling us *"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies,"* it also goes on to say in verses 21-22 *"Test all things, hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil."* If we do not properly test spiritual manifestations to "uproot" that which is misguided or false, then the negative results produced from this mixture can be distasteful and even alarming to many sincere believers.

I observed an interesting event years ago that demonstrated how the human spirit can try to mimic spiritual manifestations. The pastor of a megachurch had come from another nation to conduct a national gathering that I attended. After the final message, this pastor invited the local delegates up to the front so he could “bless” them with personal ministry. When they had lined up in front, the pastor went down the line and blew into each of their faces. However, nothing happened to any of the delegates.

Seeing no results, the visiting pastor walked back up on the platform and called for a row of people who had come with him from his church. The pastor then went down the line and blew into each of their faces. This time, when he blew upon his church members, they each fell over backward.

After seemingly demonstrating what should be the result of his “ministry,” the pastor then returned to the original line of local delegates. This time as he blew upon them, they each fell over backwards! However, this response was not the result of a release of the Holy Spirit. Instead, it was a learned response or ritual that the pastor had just shown them. It was not true ministry by the Holy Spirit, or false ministry by an evil spirit—it was a foolish ministry released by the human spirit of this pastor. This was confirmed to me more than 25 years later as I told this story while teaching a group of leaders in the nation where this megachurch pastor had come from. Afterwards I talked with one of my students who, to my surprise, had formerly been this pastor’s wife! She had been in that same meeting and had also observed what I saw. She told me that her husband had at that time already lost the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He tried to carry on as a “man of power,” but soon afterwards committed

adultery. After that, his megachurch collapsed, and then a few years later he died at a young age.

While we should pray for and rejoice when the power of the Holy Spirit is revealed, it is easy to develop a ritual of what should happen when we try to release the moving of the Holy Spirit. While weeping, laughing, and being “slain in the Spirit” are scriptural responses to the moving of the Holy Spirit, if the Holy Spirit is not genuinely moving among us all these activities can degenerate into merely becoming empty religious rituals. We do not want the Apostle Paul’s admonition in Galatians 3:3 NIV to also apply to us: *“Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?”*

Furthermore, when the Holy Spirit is not moving, yet the leader acts as though the Holy Spirit is moving in power, it confuses the believers. But if we are careful to only declare that God is moving when He actually *is*, then the people will learn to recognize when the Holy Spirit is truly active. The witness in their own spirit will match with what the leaders are declaring, and they will also see the good results of what the Lord is accomplishing! Then they will develop more discernment and the ability to flow with the moving of the Holy Spirit during future events. This will truly build up the people of God and help them to become an anointed, mighty army!

To help our ministries remain pure, the Scriptures repeatedly exhort us to guard our hearts from deception. Obadiah verse three said *“The pride of your heart has deceived you,”* while Jeremiah 18:9 warns us that *“The heart is deceitful above all things.”* A New Testament example of this is when Peter zealously declared at the Last Supper that he would never deny Christ, only to find that he denied the Lord three times that very night. Another example from among Jesus’ apostles was when John and James wanted

to call fire down on the Samaritans for their not receiving Christ. We read how the Lord responded to this in Luke 9:55, *“But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.’”* There is no suggestion in Jesus’ response that an evil spirit motivated them. However, these two “Sons of Thunder” clearly had hotheaded dispositions and would naturally respond that way to this situation out of their own human spirit. A person similarly might proclaim something foolish out of their own natural human heart, while later discovering that the Holy Spirit does not “back them up” to accomplish their attempted ministry.

This is why we need to learn to walk with the Lord and be taught of Him, just as Peter and John were. History records that John, one of the “Sons of Thunder,” was transformed to later earn the title in the early church of “The Apostle of Love.” He learned that the power of God was not given to judge others, but to help them. Years after John had wanted to call down fire and burn up the Samaritans, he had the opportunity to truly call down the constructive fire of the Holy Spirit upon them when he and Peter led the Samaritans into receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as recorded in Acts chapter eight. John learned how to release a ministry of power through being tuned in to the heart of God, instead of following his own formerly unbalanced human motives.

Discernment is needed to know whether a person is ministering only out of their human spirit instead of out of a true anointing by the direction of the Holy Spirit. But something worse than that is when a person functions under the power of an evil spirit in their attempted ministries!

Demonic Mixture in a “Christian” Ministry

Some believers may find it difficult to understand that a Christian can be a channel of each of these three spiritual forces at different times. Can a Christian be motivated or deceived by a demonic spirit into flowing into wrong areas of spiritual declaration or impartation? Some will say “no,” since a Christian has the Holy Spirit.

However, there are many examples in the Scriptures—beginning with Lucifer—of those who had been anointed servants of God, yet later backslid into evil anointings. There is the case of King Saul, who started out being anointed by God so clearly that many wondered if he was a prophet.⁴ Yet after repeated disobedience we find that Saul came under the control of an evil spirit, so much so that he even prophesied by the evil spirit and wrongly killed the priests of the Lord.⁵

There is also the story of Balaam, who is referred to as a prophet in Second Peter 2:16, yet is also referred to in the Old Testament as a soothsayer or diviner who used sorcery.⁶ And the story is recorded in Second Chronicles 18 how Zedekiah, the leader of 400 false prophets, responded when he heard the true word of the Lord coming from godly Micaiah. Verse 23 records, “*Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, ‘Which way did the spirit from the Lord go from me to speak to you?’*” Here the backslidden prophet appears to be reacting to the fact that he had lost the true anointing, which was instead upon the faithful prophet, Micaiah!

We need to carefully guard our hearts because evil spirits seek to bring spiritual deception and false ministry. Christ and the apostles clearly warned that we must keep ourselves from false ministers and satanic deception, even more so just before the

Second Coming of Christ.⁷ An example of how an evil spirit can deceive a believer can also be seen in Peter's life from Matthew 16:17 and 23. A short time after Jesus commended Peter for receiving a revelation from God, the Lord then rebuked him for speaking the words of Satan. And if the Apostle Peter could be so easily influenced by the Devil, this can also be a danger for us!

Our Lord Jesus was tempted by Satan with the offer that he would give Him the kingdoms of the world if Christ would only worship him. If our Lord was tempted with Satan's offer of great power and glory, should we be surprised when the lesser servants of the Lord will face their own temptations? While not offering all the kingdoms of the world, Satan might try to tempt us with lesser offers to see if he can find a price at which we could be "bought."

When I first became a missionary in 1984 my family moved to the island of Palawan, which was titled "The Philippines' Last Frontier." We lived at the edge of the jungle far from any towns, roads, stores, doctors, or any conveniences of modern civilization.

A few days after moving there, I was standing on our porch early one evening when I saw some people approaching on a nearby path that came from deep within the jungle. It looked like it was a procession of the tribal people that lived there, led by a man wearing a variety of fancy furs and feathers that showed him to be the tribal chief. As the procession walked up to me, the chief placed something in my hand. It was a stone with many facets, and each side had strange writings or a symbol on it. As I wondered what this stone was, the chief spoke to me in flawless English- which none of the tribal people in that remote area would understand, let alone speak. He said, "If you will keep this, I will give you the power to heal every sick missionary that you pray for."

Just then the anointing of the Holy Spirit fell upon me. In an instant I realized that this “tribal chief” and his followers were not people, but demon spirits! And the stone I was holding was a magic charm, an *anting-anting* that could give me access to demonic powers of healing—something very common among the witch doctors of that area. I quickly threw away the stone with all my might while shouting “NOOOOO!” The spirit of the fear of the Lord was gripping my heart and keeping me from possibly coveting that power which could make me highly respected among the missionary community. Then just as I threw the magic charm away, the tribal chief and his followers instantly vanished.

Yes, those who desire to move in the power of the Holy Spirit can find that there are other options available if their hearts are not fully loyal to God. Even in natural armies we sometimes hear of soldiers that become traitors when the enemy offers them a faster and easier way to riches and honor. May God help us to always guard our hearts to remain loyal to Him!

The Scriptures clearly show that many attitudes can be at work in a person’s spirit or heart. Some of these include being contrite and humble (Isaiah 57:15), meek and quiet (1 Peter 3:4), guileless (Psalm 32:2), refreshed (1 Corinthians 16:18), troubled, (John 13:21), broken or crushed (Proverbs 18:14), evil (Jeremiah 3:17), hardened (Mark 6:52), adulterous (Ezekiel 6:9), deceived (Isaiah 44:20), foolish (Romans 1:21), quickly angered (Ecclesiastes 7:9), and unrepentant (Romans 2:5).

These varying attitudes of heart can cause someone to be influenced by, and then become channels of, the Holy Spirit or of evil spirits. And even when neither of these supernatural anointings is upon that individual, that person can still influence or manipulate others by the strength of their human spirit, through trickery or dominating willpower. This is why we need

to gain discernment so that we can keep ourselves far away from these mixtures. As Proverbs 13:20 encourages us, if we want to become wise we should associate ourselves with wise people and avoid having misguided companions. Similarly, Proverbs 22:24-25 says do not associate with angry people because you may become like them. Instead, let us learn the ways of God and His godly servants!

A woman of God that I knew years ago told me a story of when she was a teenager. She heard of a powerful traveling evangelist who was going to hold services nearby, and she was excited about attending the meetings. This evangelist was reputed to have the power of God in his ministry, which this young lady desired so that she could also become a mighty servant of the Lord. At the meeting many had powerful reactions when the evangelist laid hands upon them, so she also went forward to be prayed for. But when he laid his hands on her and prayed, she felt a dark cloud come upon her.

For months she found herself unable to effectively pray or sense the presence of God. Her father, who was a pastor, prayed for her until he felt that he needed to bind and cast away a demonic spirit that was oppressing her. He succeeded in doing that, and she found herself released from that dark cloud to again live in the sunshine of God's love. Through this and many other experiences she was able to grow up to become a pure and powerful servant of God, who started pastoring a small church that grew to have about 800 members. But concerning the evangelist who placed that dark cloud upon her when he laid hands upon her? He was later exposed as having been for many years a promiscuous homosexual and a false evangelist!

This account illustrates why the Apostle Paul taught his spiritual son in First Timothy 5:22, "*Do not lay hands on anyone*

hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure." Paul had also taught in the previous chapter that charismatic gifts can be imparted through the laying on of hands, as this can be a valuable channel through which to empower God's servants. But because the laying on of hands can in different circumstances impart evil as well as good, we need to be cautious and discerning in partaking of the anointings of other people.

For these reasons we need to protect the spiritual condition of our heart. As the Scriptures exhort, "*Guard yourself in your spirit,*" Malachi 2:15-16 NIV, and "*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life,*" Proverbs 4:23. Keeping our own heart untainted by sin or compromise will help ensure that our ministry to others will also remain pure.

Steps Toward Developing Spiritual Discernment

To gain discernment about the spiritual realm the first step is to begin testing, or evaluating, the things that are happening around us. First Thessalonians 5:21 says to "*Test all things, hold fast what is good.*" First John 4:1 also declares, "*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are from God.*" Hebrews 5:14 further teaches that spiritually mature Christians are "*those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*"

Some Christians might feel that they are not spiritually mature enough to test or judge spiritual things. Yet Hebrews 5:14 tells us that one way to become mature is to exercise discernment. Use what discernment you have, and just like exercising a muscle, it will become stronger. This growth in spiritual discernment is available for every Christian.

Seeking to exercise discernment does not mean that Christians should try to see a demon hiding behind every tree. However, we can always pray about every spiritual manifestation that we observe. We can search the Scriptures to gain wisdom and talk with more mature Christians to learn from their discernment.

Other Christians sometimes are reluctant to test or judge spiritual things because of the teaching of Christ when He said, *“Judge not, that you be not judged,”* in Matthew 7:1. While it is true that we are not to condemnably judge people, yet the word of God also teaches us that *“He who is spiritual judges all things,”* in First Corinthians 2:15. To mature spiritually and become leaders of the army of God we must grow in discernment. A good shepherd or leader must learn how to protect their “sheep” from poisonous food (wrong doctrines) and wild beasts (evil spirits) while leading them to green pastures (truths in the word of God) and the water of the Holy Spirit.

In Ephesians 4:11-14 we are told that Christ has placed ministries in the Church to help it mature, *“That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men.”* The word *wind* in this scripture can also be translated as *spirit*. Now when we look at the possible spiritual sources of these winds of doctrine, clearly the wind of the Holy Spirit is not being referred to. These doctrines instead could be anointed by Satan, whom Paul had called *“the prince of the power of the air”* two chapters earlier in Ephesians 2:2. These winds of doctrine could also merely be unbalanced teachings wrongly promoted by people with mixed motives, as the phrase *“by the trickery of men”* could suggest. Yet what is very clear is that we need to not be carried about by every wind (or spirit) if we want to become spiritually mature.

As I have lived and traveled extensively around Asia and much of the world for the last 40 years, I have seen unbalanced “winds of doctrine” blow in and out of churches. One example is the recent teaching that we should expect the saints from heaven to regularly come down and guide us. This false teaching uses as a biblical “proof” of their doctrine that the angel that visited the Apostle John in Revelation 22:8-9 was not an angel, but a saint from heaven—although that interpretation is not supported by the biblical text. However, this false doctrine about being taught by the spirits of the “holy saints” of past generations has been taught by numerous Indian religions and cults for centuries. That wind of doctrine is not simply “human,” it is a doctrine of demons.

I experienced this once when I was ministering in India. It was my first night in one of the capital cities, and in a dream, something in the likeness of my deceased spiritual father approached me. I love him dearly and look forward to seeing him when I get to heaven, but in this dream there was something “off” about this manifestation. When he approached me in this dream, he said to me with a lovely British accent, “Oh, I see that you are still traveling around the nations.” He looked like and talked like my spiritual father, but the reply of the Holy Spirit from out of my mouth was “Yes I am, but you are not.” I then rebuked it in Jesus’ name, and that familiar spirit that had come in the form of my deceased spiritual father was unmasked and fled! If I had not discerned that this was a deceiving evil spirit, I could have embraced it and started to receive spiritist impartations into my ministry.

Yes, we must learn to “*test the spirits*” if we want to not be blown about by every wrong wind of doctrine. We do not want to be like a ship that is tossed about by every wind, yet only wanders and never arrives at its destination. We want to become like a

skilled pilot who knows how to navigate with—and sometimes against—the winds to bring our ship, the Church, to its desired goal of maturity and victory.

Evaluate All Spiritual Manifestations by the Scriptures

One of the best ways to test the winds of doctrine, as well as every spiritual manifestation, is to examine what light the Scriptures may shine upon them. Isaiah 8:19 tells us about God's people seeking guidance from wizards and mediums, with God's reply in the next verse being, *"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."* The law and the testimony were the Scriptures available in Isaiah's time. They were God's word that was to evaluate whatever spiritual manifestations might occur. If those manifestations did not line up with the teachings of God's word, it was because these manifestations were false and *"there is no light in them."*

Luke 4:2-13 explains the three battles that our Lord Jesus overcame when He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. In the first two, Jesus overcame the temptations by quoting scriptures that exposed Satan's proposals as unscriptural. When Satan told Jesus to turn some stones into bread, Jesus replied with a quote from Deuteronomy 8:3, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."* Christ was following the words of God as He was fasting, not Satan's suggestion of turning stones into bread. Is there ever a time that we should follow Satan's words to satisfy our natural appetites? *No!* That is *always* unscriptural.

The second temptation in Luke 4:5-8 was that Jesus should worship Satan. Christ replied with another scripture in Deuteronomy 6:13 that says we should only worship God. Now, is it

sometimes OK to worship Satan? The answer again is a categorical “No!” That is also *always* unscriptural!

So, the first two temptations of Christ were defeated by simply showing from God’s word that they were unscriptural and *always* wrong. But for the third temptation, Satan got trickier by quoting a scripture to justify what he suggested! Satan suggested that Christ reveal Himself to be the Son of God by jumping off the high temple while quoting the promise from Psalm 91:11-12 that God would protect Him by having the angels catch Him. Now, is it scripturally true that God will have His angels catch us if we are falling? This time the answer is “Yes- *sometimes!*”

Christ overcame the first two temptations by proving that these were *unscriptural* requests. But the third temptation was not so simple: Satan was quoting scripture to suggest that this could be OK! So it is important to closely look at how Christ exposed this third temptation as being wrong.

In reply, the Lord Jesus again quoted from the Book of Deuteronomy, where Luke 4:12 NAB records: “*Jesus said to him in reply, ‘It also says, you shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.’*” Here the Lord exposed Satan’s third temptation as being *unbalanced* and also *misapplied*.

The lesson that can be learned from this is that we can often apply the Scriptures to a situation and expose it to be unscriptural, as Christ did in the first two temptations. However, actions or events are often not categorically rejected by the Bible, but are presented as “sometimes yes, sometimes no.” Just as a coin has two sides and electricity has a positive and a negative, there are often two sides to a situation where we need to “*rightly divide the word of truth,*” as Paul told his spiritual son in Second Timothy 2:15. So while we will win some battles by exposing

what is *unscriptural*, we will only win other battles by skillfully knowing the balance of biblical truth. Then we can expose what is *unbalanced* or *misapplied*!

Another “wind of doctrine” that has been blowing through part of the body of Christ in recent years is that Christians can learn how to have their spirit leave their body and go anywhere they want, anytime they want! Those who teach this say it is scriptural, and will quote how Ezekiel, John, and Paul were taken by the Spirit to travel to different places.⁸ Just pray with these people and perhaps hold their hand, and they say that you can be taken to Jerusalem, the third heavens, or anywhere else—anytime! Yet if we apply the Scriptures properly, we will see that this teaching is both unbalanced and misapplied. The above-mentioned men in the Bible were moved by the Holy Spirit, not by their human willpower or choice. They could not go “anywhere anytime,” and this was not a common experience for all of God’s people. What this wind of doctrine is teaching is called astral projection, and has been practiced for many centuries by witches, sorcerers, mystic religions, and cults!

These days there are many unbalanced spiritual techniques, experiences, and ministries being taught in the body of Christ. Seminars, books, videos, and conventions can gather crowds by promoting new and unusual spiritual experiences—but are they scriptural and balanced? The Apostle Paul warned the believers in Second Timothy 4:3-4 NIV, “*For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*”

To gain consistent victory in spiritual battles we need to be diligent students of the Bible: the entire Bible, not just a few

favorite books. The Lord Jesus repeatedly defeated Satan by quoting from the Book of Deuteronomy. A good question for us is, could we do the same? Can we quote multiple scriptures from Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, or Hosea? When was the last time we even *read* those books? May we heed the exhortation that Paul gave in Second Timothy 2:15, *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* Yet this will only become a reality in our lives if we are constantly studying the entire Bible, not just reading a few favorite books. As the Apostle Paul also wrote in Second Timothy 3:16, *“All scripture is given by God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”* So study *all* the Bible and make your sword long and sharp!

Judge Ministry by its Fruit, Not its Gifts

The next step towards discerning spiritual mixture is that we must learn to evaluate ministry by its fruit, not its gifts. In Matthew 7:15-17 the Lord Jesus said that we will know false prophets by their fruit. A good ministry that releases the Holy Spirit will produce good fruit, while those who minister from only their human spirit or demonic spirits will bear corrupt fruit such as confusion, division, oppression, and sin. We therefore need to first look at the lives of the ones who are ministering: are they righteous, loving, and properly submitted in the body of Christ? Are their finances and relationships in good order? Then check out the fruit of their ministry. What has been the result of their ministry in their local church? Is their preaching doctrinally sound? When they travel to other places does their ministry leave a lasting blessing, or do they leave a trail of problems?

Unbalanced people can have impressive-looking ministries, so it is very important that we judge ministers by their fruit rather

than gifts. A person's gifts do not tell us much about the person who has received them, as much as these gifts tell us about the generous person who gave them! Spiritual gifts tell us about the goodness of God the Giver, whereas the fruit that develops in a person's life reveals the inner quality of their character. If a person's character is flawed, no matter how impressive their giftings may seem they will release spiritual mixture through their ministry. In the Scriptures we find powerful giftings and anointings in men like King Saul, Balaam, and Samson, yet we also find they had character flaws that were dangerous or even deadly.

As a young minister I worked with an elderly man of God whose ministry had impacted many pastors, churches, and movements. He told me how he had been a faithful pastor for years before the Lord brought a mighty revival. In that revival, the Lord spoke to him that he was being raised up to then become an apostle. He told me that he walked around for a few days "flying high" about his further high calling, until the Lord deflated his pride by telling him, "What is important is not your calling, but what you *do* with your calling. Remember, Judas was also called to be an apostle!"

In Matthew 7:21-23 the Lord Jesus spoke about a large group of people who had prophesied, cast out demons, and worked many miracles. Impressive ministries, but what was the result? On Judgment Day, the Lord said He will tell them "*I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!*" Here we see that the Lord judges by character, not gifting.

This warning from Christ has been misinterpreted, as some say that this could not apply to Christians. They have the view that a Christian cannot backslide and could never end up in hell. Others suggest that when Christ said "*I never knew you*" it proves that they were never true Christians or were only superficial

believers. But in the verse before this, these people were calling on the Lord and were declaring that they had prophesied, cast out demons, and accomplished many wonders in His name. This clearly shows that they had known the Lord and His anointing in the past—so why will the Lord reject them and say to them “*I never knew you*” on Judgment Day? Christ Himself answered this in His next statement, “*Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!*”

Ezekiel 18:21-24 explains this very clearly. Verses 21-22 say, “*But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live.*”

This is a basic doctrine, “Christianity 101.” If a sinful person turns from their sins and serves the Lord, all their former sins will be forgotten. However, the opposite of this is equally true! For the Lord went on to say in verse 24, “*But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.*”

This specifies that if a righteous person turns to a sinful life, God will forget their former good works and their righteous life. This is why Christ will say on Judgment Day “*I never knew you*” to those who had known and served Him in the past and then had turned back to a sinful life. Jesus referred to them as those who *practiced lawlessness*.

So it is vitally important that our lives always bring forth the good fruits of righteousness. We should not trust that just

because God has gifted someone with a notable ministry that this gifting makes them acceptable to God. This was Samson's great mistake: because God was patient in dealing with his sin, he mistook God's patience for being His permission for sin. And while God can be very patient while working with His children, the goodness and patience of God are to encourage us towards repentance, for "*without holiness no man will see the Lord.*"⁹ Jesus said, "*You will know them by their fruit,*" not by their gifts.

Become Sensitive to the Inner Witness of the Holy Spirit

Along with examining the fruit of a ministry, a further help towards discerning spiritual mixture is to become sensitive to the witness of the Holy Spirit when He speaks within our hearts.

Colossians 3:15 tells us, "*Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.*" The word translated here as *rule* can also be translated as an *umpire* or *referee*. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in the heart of every born-again believer, is to act as an umpire or referee. And how does an umpire function? While a sports event is being played properly, the umpire will be silent as he oversees the game. Yet when a rule is broken, the umpire will blow a whistle, raise a card, or throw a flag. Everything stops while the umpire explains what went wrong, and then corrects it. After this, the game can again proceed as long as the umpire remains quiet.

Similarly, the Holy Spirit gives us peace in our hearts when everything is correctly proceeding. But if something goes wrong—if an evil spirit is manifested, or if someone wrongly tries to minister out of their human spirit without a true anointing—then the Holy Spirit removes His peace in our hearts. This troubling of our spirit is there to inform us that something is wrong! And if we are sensitive to this guidance, find out what went wrong,

and correct the problem, then the Holy Spirit will again fill our hearts with peace.

This method of guidance is the spiritual fulfillment of how the Lord gave divine guidance in the Old Testament times through the Urim and the Thummim. These were two objects (perhaps stones) placed inside a pouch in the High Priest's breastplate, to be "over his heart."¹⁰ When guidance was sought, depending upon which one was pulled out from inside the breastplate, a "yes" or "no" answer was indicated for the person inquiring of God.

The spiritual fulfillment of this for the Christian is that we are all to be abiding in Christ, who is our High Priest. When we inquire of God, we are to reach, not into a pouch *upon* our heart, but we are to reach *inside* our heart to see if the answer we pull out is a "go ahead" from the peace of God or a "stop" from the Holy Spirit who is troubling our heart as a warning.

This is what happened in Acts 16 when Paul and his team were evangelizing the city of Philippi. Verses 16-18 say, "*Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, 'These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.' And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And he came out that very hour.*"

The message that this girl prophesied was accurate, and Paul and his evangelistic group might have welcomed the good advertising. But while everything on the natural level seemed good, we see that Paul began functioning on a higher level. His spirit was annoyed or troubled by what this girl was saying. The Holy Spirit had removed His peace from Paul's heart and warned him

that something was not right. It took Paul “*many days*” before he fully understood and dealt with the problem, but when he did, the deliverance of the girl from that evil spirit became a turning point toward establishing a church in that city. It also removed the danger that this girl with a counterfeit gift might be welcomed into the newly established church, which after the departure of Paul could have caused great problems.

The Lord once taught me a similar lesson on how the witness of the Holy Spirit’s peace can be useful in detecting spiritual mixture. I was invited to preach at a church where the pastor had said one of his members was a great prophetess. She would write down prophecies and then have people put them somewhere secure without looking at them. After some days or weeks, she would tell them to read the prophecy—just after it had been fulfilled! Upon hearing this I was interested in meeting this gifted person, so I talked with her after the service.

From our conversation I could tell that she was a spiritually gifted woman, yet the Holy Spirit within me was very troubled. I felt that something about this woman was off course. Her words seemed spiritual, and her prophetic accuracy was proven—but the Holy Spirit was “blowing the whistle” and saying that something was wrong! So as we were talking, I began silently praying, and then from my heart commanded the evil spirit in the name of Jesus to reveal himself. Just then the woman changed what she was talking about and began to tell me about her late husband who had died six months earlier. She said that every day she went to his grave and talked to him and then he would talk back to her! At that moment the Holy Spirit witnessed in my heart that she was a spiritist medium, not a prophetess of God. I told this to her pastor, yet he did not listen to my warning. The result was that this woman later caused great damage to his church.

Learn from the Discernment of Your Spiritual Leaders

A fifth step towards discerning spiritual mixture is that we should let the spiritual leaders involved in the situation give their consensus, or their collective discernment, about the spiritual manifestation that is being examined. We each have blind spots where we cannot see or discern certain things clearly—as the scripture says in First Corinthians 13:9, “*We prophesy in part.*” That is why we must always seek to have a group of spiritual people who can help balance each other and together see the complete picture. Paul went on to write about this in First Corinthians 14:29. There he said, “*Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.*” Proverbs 24:6 offers similar wisdom when it says, “*In a multitude of counselors there is safety.*”

If a prophecy or spiritual manifestation is released in a gathering, it is the responsibility of the leaders to approve or question its source and accuracy. Approval could take place by its acceptance by the leaders, by their saying “amen” or by adding some other verbal confirmation. If the leaders are troubled about a spiritual manifestation that occurred, they can share a prayer or exhortation to steer the service back in a proper direction. Afterwards, the person who released the wrong impartation into the gathering should be privately talked to. Along with offering counsel or help, the leaders could ask the person to not release any prophecies or spiritual manifestations until the leadership feels they are ready to contribute to the gatherings in a pure way.

If an unbalanced doctrine, a conspiracy theory, or anything wrong is being disseminated among a congregation, it is the responsibility of the church leaders to guard the flock. Just as a faithful shepherd must guard his sheep from poisonous food and polluted water, the pastoral team of a church or ministry

should work together to help bring protection and purity to the flock of God.

Learn from the Gift of the Discerning of Spirits

Another help towards discerning spiritual mixture is the Holy Spirit's gift of the discerning of spirits, as mentioned in First Corinthians 12:10. This is a charismatic gift of the Holy Spirit that is given to some, whereby they can discern what is the source of a spiritual manifestation. While that gift is operating a person can see, hear, feel, smell, or taste something that will reveal the spiritual source that is at work in a situation. Perhaps a dream or vision may visually reveal a spiritual power at work in a situation. Perhaps they will audibly hear a word from the Holy Spirit or hear what a person is silently saying in their heart.¹¹ Sometimes people can feel the hair on the back of their head stand up when an evil spirit is present, as in Job 4:15, or they will taste or smell something bad. On other occasions people have tasted or smelled something wonderful, which has indicated the work of God. These revelations can come through having the gift of the discerning of spirits anoint a person's natural five senses to give them supernatural perception.

At times the gift of the discerning of spirits has helped me to understand the spiritual powers that are at work behind different situations. I have had that gift function in my own life, and at times I have received a revelation from someone else that I know has that spiritual gift. Sometimes the Holy Spirit has been like a dove, fire, or wind. At other times angels or demons have been seen. Occasionally my human spirit has been anointed to directly hear what another person is silently saying in their heart. Every time I have been made aware of the spiritual forces at work in a situation, it has helped me to be much more effective in ministry—

whether to help release the work of the Holy Spirit, hinder the works of demons, or help correct the problems in a person's life.

Keep Your Focus on God!

Growing in discernment does not mean we should be judgmental of other Christians, or that we should always be looking for demons and holding deliverance services. If we are always looking for demons we will find them, but if we are always looking for Jesus we will find Him! And if we learn how to always look to God and know the moving of the Holy Spirit, we will more easily discern when something that is not of God is happening.

When my mother-in-law first became a bank teller many years ago, the first week of her work she was given some simple but important training in how to identify counterfeit money. She was not taught about any of the imperfections that counterfeit money might have—for her entire first week, her hours were spent handling true dollar bills and coins. By repeatedly touching them, counting them, feeling their weight and texture, and by dropping coins and hearing their true sound, she was becoming familiar with that which was genuine. By learning what was genuine, she was then able to detect any counterfeit money!

We can see the importance of not just seeing evil or discerning the “dark side” when we read the story about Elisha and his servant in Second Kings 6:14-23. Elisha's servant was afraid when he saw that an enemy army had surrounded them, but the prophet Elisha had a clearer, more balanced vision. We read from there that Elisha replied to his servant, *“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”* And Elisha prayed, and said, *‘Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’* Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around

Elisha.” And in that assurance of God’s greater power Elisha wisely defeated that army.

We similarly need to have Elisha’s balanced vision and faith. The prophet knew that his angelic reinforcements were much greater than the enemy, and that in quiet confidence he could see God’s power bring the victory. Like Elisha’s servant, we also need to see that we are on the winning side! In the book of Revelation chapter 12 we read the story of a war in heaven, where verse four suggests that Lucifer only succeeded in gathering one-third of the angels to join in his rebellion. The two-thirds of the angelic hosts who remained faithful to God are greater than Satan’s forces. The Devil cannot defeat the faithful angelic hosts of heaven, and he also knows that his time is very short! In that knowledge and faith, let us keep our eyes on the Lord, and upon His final triumph as we go through the battles of these days in which we live. Looking to Jesus, He will lead us into a spiritual life and ministry that will help build a mature, victorious church—a church that will triumph over the gates of hell!

CHAPTER 7

NEW DEVIL, NEW LEVEL!



As the Lord has called us to become good soldiers of Christ, we have each faced times of enemy opposition. The Lord's protection has been upon us, yet that does not make us exempt from facing battles. Every generation of Christians needs to learn how to fight the battles of the Lord- and to learn these important truths, God will allow the enemy to oppose us and even at times attack us.

Long after Joshua and the Israelites had conquered the Promised Land, there were still many pockets of resistance left in Canaan. The Lord explained why He had allowed this in Judges 3:1-2 NLT: *"These are the nations that the Lord left in the land to test those Israelites who had not experienced the wars of Canaan. He did this to teach warfare to generations of Israelites who had no experience in battle."*

The Lord allows us to have battles to teach us warfare and develop important areas of our lives. A soldier learns discipline, obedience, perseverance, and wisdom along with many different skills that help build critical areas of character in their lives. We are each called to become conformed to the image of Christ, and one area of God's character we are told in Exodus 15:3 is that *"The Lord is a man of war."* Furthermore, we read in Joshua 5:14 that the Lord described Himself as *"The Commander of the army of the Lord."* So as we increasingly grow into His image, He will be molding us into becoming not just soldiers, but also army commanders!

Each battle that we face is an opportunity to grow in God and mature into His greater purposes for our lives. This is illustrated in the life of David when we read First Samuel chapter 17. As a young shepherd he was faithful to defeat the lions and the bears that had threatened the flock. Because of these earlier victories, he grew in faith and wisdom to become ready to confront a much larger enemy: Goliath. Instead of just gaining victory for his small flock of sheep, God had prepared him to step up and gain victory for the entire nation!

Years later, David became the king of Israel. One of the first things that happened after his coronation was that the Philistines sent their army to kill David. As Second Samuel 5:17 tells us, “*Now when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David.*” Two times they sent their army, hoping to kill David before his kingdom became strong. Yet the Lord had prepared David for such battles, and through the two mighty victories that he gained his kingdom became firmly established.

These stories from David’s life help illustrate an important principle for our own lives: when it is time for us to step up to a new calling, or authority, or ministry, we will face new opposition that will challenge and test us. As the saying goes, “New level, new devil.” Yet God’s purpose for allowing this is to help make us ready for our next level, so we can equally say “New devil, new level!” Greater challenges help build greater faith and wisdom in our lives—and greater victories! This principle was also evidenced when it was time for the Lord Jesus to start His ministry. He was first tested in the wilderness, then became victorious over Satan, and finally left the wilderness with a new abiding anointing of power.

This principle was also a key in the development of the Apostle Paul's ministry. When he was first called to become a missionary, we read in Acts 13 that the first nation that he and Barnabas evangelized was the island nation of Cyprus. When they arrived at the capital, they had the opportunity to preach to the Roman Proconsul (or governor) who ruled Cyprus. However, they not only met the governor, but also a sorcerer who was his advisor! As this sorcerer opposed their message, we can gain a glimpse of the opposition of the fallen angel who operated through him. The powers of darkness would have certainly been at work to try and keep control of the governor (and the nation) through this sorcerer. At this point the missionaries needed more than just good preaching to turn the governor away from his spiritual advisor and his satanic powers—they needed the power of God! It was at this time when Saul (which was Paul's original name) came to this new opportunity of evangelizing a governor and his nation, that he also came to the “new devil” of being opposed by this satanic sorcerer. Yet in this crisis, Saul pressed in and stepped up to function at the “new level” of power and authority that he needed to fulfill his calling. As Saul faced the sorcerer at this critical point of evangelizing the governor, Acts 13:8-12 NIV tells us, *“But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ‘You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun.’ Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.”*

Here we read that Saul, at this critical point of being able to start turning a nation to Christ, had the Lord freshly anoint him with the faith and power to accomplish this new level of ministry. For the first time in the Scriptures, Saul of Tarsus was called by the new name *Paul*. This was a Roman name (his first name, Saul, was Jewish) which indicated his stepping up to his calling to the Gentile Roman nations. And from this time on, Paul and Barnabas are repeatedly referred to by the new title of their being called *apostles*.

With this new anointing, new name, and new apostolic ministry, Paul was able to rise up and curse the sorcerer with temporary blindness. This caused the Roman governor to believe the gospel. History records that this victory helped lay the foundation upon which Cyprus became a Christian nation, which it still is today! While we might not like new challenges and new opposition, we do like the new victories that God has purposed to accomplish through us during these battles.

We all know that our all-powerful God could have eliminated Satan and his followers as soon as they rebelled in heaven. We can think, “Wouldn’t it have been better for mankind, if there had been no Devil?” Yet the Lord has allowed Satan to remain—with limitations—and one of the reasons is for the testing of the saints.

How can someone become a great overcomer unless there is something great to overcome? In Romans 9:17 NIV we read, “*For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: ‘I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.’*” God raised up Pharaoh as a great adversary, so that Moses could become a greater deliverer! Historians have rated Winston Churchill as the greatest man of the 20th century, yet that is only because he faced and defeated Adolf Hitler. President Theodore Roosevelt, who first became famous

as a brave US military commander, once said, “There has never yet been a man in our history who led a life of ease whose name is worth remembering.”¹ Yes, it is by facing and overcoming our battles that we step up to new levels of victory and honor. New devil, new level!

One of the greatest challenges that I have faced in my life helped me to step up to a new level of ministry. I was going to conduct my first pastors’ seminar for hundreds of pastors, but just the week before, a large segment of the Philippine military started a coup in the capital, and confusion reigned as to which parts of the military were for or against the government. As a result, that week all the military troops around the nation were ordered to remain in their barracks.

A national insurgency of guerrillas used this opportunity to start assassinating their opponents. The president of the largest university in the city where I was going to hold the seminar was killed in the middle of his campus. When I arrived in the city the night before the seminar was to start, the leading local pastors told me that on the previous Sunday, one of their pastors was told by a visitor that he would soon be given “a present.” A few days later this man met the pastor at a bus stop, pulled out a gun, and said “This is my present” as he shot and killed him. So when I arrived, the local pastors had a meeting with me, and asked me not to mention the insurgents in my preaching. I agreed to not directly mention them, but I also said that I would speak about whatever the Lord told me to say. Then on the first day of the seminar, the Lord gave me a prophecy for the pastors that I framed in this way: “If the pastors would stand against ‘the darkness in the land,’ the Lord would give them a mighty victory.” Without mentioning them by name, everyone knew who “the darkness in the land” was!

In the late afternoon at the close of that first day of the seminar, I was greeted by several pastors as I was leaving the auditorium. But when the last one greeted me, I quickly noticed how different he was from all the pastors. The words “that was an interesting... spiritual lecture” stumbled out of his mouth—he didn’t know how to talk like a pastor and say something like “good preaching” or “that was anointed.” I then looked at the wide, very dark sunglasses covering much of his face—and by the discernment of spirits I looked through the black sunglasses into the blackness of his heart, to see anger and murder. I then knew he was one of the rebels and had come to spy out the pastors’ gathering.

His purpose in greeting me was to ask if I would attend the outdoor evangelistic rally that night. When I said “Yes” he started repeatedly telling me “Look for me, I have a present I will give you!” When I told this to the local pastors they were afraid and tried to get military or police protection for the outdoor rally, but none was available.

I was not scheduled to preach that night; I was just going to go and support the local interchurch event. Many thoughts raced through my mind. One was that there was an airplane leaving in just two hours at the local airport, I could be on that flight out before anyone knew I was gone. A more “spiritual” excuse I thought of was to tell the pastors that I would not attend the rally because I needed to study for the next day’s seminar! But I had just told them that if they would “stand against the darkness in the land” God would give them a great victory—and if I would not practice what I preached, my words would be empty. So I wrestled in prayer until I gained faith that God would protect me, and then I went to the crusade.

The man did not show up at the crusade that night, nor for any of the rest of the pastors’ seminar. However, the pastors

were encouraged by all these events, and two of them soon began more evangelistic campaigns. Within a few years about 10,000 people had turned to Christ, and when I next returned to that province, it was to start a Bible school for 120 pastors and Christian workers who were mostly converts of that revival. And concerning the lady pastor who let us use her church facilities for our Bible school—she had been part of the rebel’s assassination squad when I had conducted my first seminar there!

That was the first pastor’s seminar that I had ever conducted. I know that if I had retreated from that death threat I would not have been prepared for the new level which my ministry was to step into. Yet from that time onwards I started to travel around to many nations, having now conducted hundreds of pastors’ seminars and leadership trainings. New devil, new level!

The Lord is preparing His people for greater things than we have yet experienced. We know that we are living in the Last Days, when according to Isaiah 60:2, *“Darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.”* In this deeper darkness, God’s people will arise to shine much brighter. Great revivals will help prepare the way for the Great Commission to be fulfilled and prepare for our Lord’s return. Now is the time, these are the days when we must become prepared for the much greater battles—and victories—that are soon coming!

The Days of Quick Promotion are Coming

Psalm 110:3 shows us an important truth about when war arises. In the NKJV we read, *“Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power,”* while the NIV says, *“Your troops will be willing on your day of battle.”* This is speaking of the time when a war starts, and large numbers of people will volunteer to join the military.

Similarly, when God arises in the day of His power and releases revival, there will be multitudes who will want to join the army of the Lord. However, the fact is, everyone who joins the army at the start of a war enters the army at its lowest rank as privates.

However, if someone joined an army before a war, they might have slowly gone up the ranks to become a lower-grade officer—or perhaps they trained in the ROTC, the “Reserve Officers Training Corp.” If they prepared at this earlier time, before war starts and a multitude of new recruits volunteer, then when the war begins and the army quickly grows they will also suddenly be advanced to higher ranks. An example of this happened on the first day that George Washington was made the commander of the newly organized United States Army: he promoted three skilled captains, who were instantly made generals!

In recent years a spiritual fulfillment of this principle happened for the army of God in Nepal. Revival broke out, and for years they had the fastest-growing church of any nation. One of the Nepali pastors told me that almost every Christian group quickly multiplied to be ten times larger. Bible study leaders with seven students became pastors with 70 members, and pastors with 100 members found their church attendance at much more than 1,000! Prayer ministries and evangelistic outreaches multiplied quickly, and anyone with a measure of training and maturity found themselves leading large ministries.

We also saw an example at our central Bible school of how good preparations can pave the way for quick promotions. One brother who enrolled as a student had been a low-ranking officer in the Philippine army before he “enlisted” in the army of God and came to Bible school. He had excellent foundations of character, and quickly grew in God as he diligently applied himself to his studies and spiritual training.

After their two-year course, we have a series of prophetic presbytery meetings just before graduation. We gather a group of mature prophetic ministers who pray over each graduate, seeking to bring them guidance for their future ministries. This is to follow the example of the Apostle Paul, who wrote to his spiritual son in First Timothy 1:18, *“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare.”*

When we prayed for this brother, I had an unusual prophecy: that because of his very good preparations the Lord was going to quickly promote him, and he would soon become a “pastor of pastors.” After his graduation he returned to his home church, where he was a deacon. His pastor invited him to preach for a Sunday service. He spoke so well and had such an excellent message that the church liked his preaching better than their pastor’s preaching! From that point on his pastor did not invite him to speak again or have any ministry in the church.

About two months later he was talking with the pastor of another nearby church in their organization. He said that because he couldn’t do anything in his own church, he was thinking about volunteering to their organization that he could become a pioneer pastor. This pastor told him that their organization was soon having a leadership meeting that he should attend, then only wait and see what the Lord would do for him. So he attended without volunteering to become a pioneer pastor—and the prophecy that he had been given at his graduation became fulfilled when he was asked and then installed to become the overseer pastor over 13 churches!

Perhaps you are a Christian who feels like you have been waiting on the sidelines. The team ministries have already been picked in your church, but you were not chosen for anything

significant. If you are in this situation, you can use it to your advantage, for you have more time to study and pray than those who are already busy. Perhaps you are in God's ROTC as the Lord prepares you for future ministry. Prepare well, so that you will be ready for the day of His power when those who are ready will quickly be promoted and anointed to accomplish great victories for the army of God!

These stories and scriptures have an important message for you who are reading this: if you wait for the day of God's power before you decide to join the army and fight God's battles, then you will join at the lowest of ranks and be given the least opportunities. But if you have been preparing in advance—if you have been gaining skills and wisdom in spiritual warfare—then get ready for quick promotions when revival comes!

The days will soon be upon us that were declared by the prophets of old. Isaiah 60:2-3 prophesied *"For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."* Joel 3:9-14 further prophesied about these days of gloom and glory by saying, *"Proclaim this among the nations: 'Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am strong.' Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O Lord. Let the nations be wakened.... Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.... Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision."*

In the coming Day of His Power, multitudes will be saved, and the army of God will have a huge inflow of untrained volunteers. Now in these days of preparation may we each become more

skilled in spiritual warfare and help train many who will be ready to become commanders in the Lord's army for the coming days of battle. The army of God will fulfill its marching orders and complete the Great Commission, as our Lord declared would happen just before His Second Coming: "*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*"² Even so, quickly prepare us, Lord—and quickly come!"

APPENDIX

Every spiritual Christian will at times be aware that they are fighting against demonic powers. When this happens, the following steps can offer wisdom and safety.

1. Make sure you are cleansed and covered by the blood of Christ before you fight the enemy. As was already mentioned from James 4:7, you need to first submit to God before you resist the devil. Make sure there are no areas of sin in your life, no weak spots in your spiritual defenses. As Revelation 12:11 tells us, we overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony.
2. Seek for discernment and/or confirmations about whether evil spirits are attacking or influencing situations. Sometimes people are blamed for what the devil is doing—at other times, people blame the devil for things that people are doing. There are even circumstances in which the devil is blamed for something that *God* is doing! We need clarity about what is happening in the spiritual realm so that we are always working *with* God and fighting *against* the powers of darkness. Study Ephesians 6:12 and 2 Corinthians 2:11.
3. Ask for guidance as to whether you should join in a battle, and for how to fight it. This can include:
 - a) Do not use human weapons and tactics when trying to win spiritual battles. Our weapons are not natural (2 Corinthians 10:4) and we should not fight spiritual battles the same way

that natural armies, political parties, or militaristic groups fight. Jesus rebuked Peter for defending Him with a natural weapon, Matthew 26:52. Christ said that His kingdom was not defended with armed fighting or physical warfare, John 18:36. The Gospels tell us that Jesus did not use tactics like public demonstrations and protests, Matthew 12:19. Do not use natural forms of conflict and battle, and avoid working with people who try to use human strength or aid to win spiritual battles.

b) If you are protecting someone or something that God has already put under your covering or supervision, be quick to defend it and oppose the enemy, Nehemiah 4:14. Stand your ground! Don't let the enemy steal what God has already entrusted to you.

c) If you have a burden concerning a spiritual problem, you may need to intercede and gain authority from God before you can successfully deal with the evil spirits, 2 Chronicles 20:2-17, Habakkuk 3:2, Psalm 68:28-29 and Esther 4:16. According to Nehemiah chapters one and two, Nehemiah prayed for four months before showing the king his sorrow and then gaining his favor.

d) Do not fight battles that the Lord does not lead you to fight. Just because we see a problem or a battle is not an indication that we should join in. King Josiah is an example and a warning of this. In Second Chronicles 35:20-24 he joined in a battle that God did not want him to fight. He did not heed the warning of Ecclesiastes 7:17, which says, "*Do not be overly wicked, nor be foolish: why should you die before your time?*"

e) Seek for guidance about the specific battle plan that should be used, Psalms 144:1. This can include hearing directly from God (1 Chronicles 14:9-15), being led to a specific Bible battle or scripture that should guide the battle (Psalms 149:9), or discerning the spirit that you are battling, 1 Corinthians 12:10 and Mark 5:9.

4. If you are praying with a person who needs deliverance, try to lead that person into a time of repenting and renouncing of their sins, and then lead them to resist the Devil, James 4:7-10. Sometimes there is a specific sin that is holding them in bondage of which they have not fully repented. This can often be identified by counseling them or by praying for revelation.

5. Use the authority of the name of Jesus and the power of the blood of Christ to rebuke or bind the evil spirits and command them to depart, Mark 16:17, Zechariah 3:2, Revelation 12:11.

6. Persevere in the battle, adding fasting with the prayer, until the battle is won, Daniel 10:12-13, Matthew 17:21.

7. Be sure the person who is delivered allows God to transform every area of their life so there is no room for the enemy to return and repossess them, Matthew 12:43. To help them gain a renewed life filled with God, lead them to salvation, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Help them develop a life of prayer, Bible study, and worship. This will ensure that every area of their life will become filled with pure thoughts and godly actions, as Paul taught in Ephesians 4:22-6:9.

ENDNOTES

Chapter 1: We are in a War

1 . See Exodus 25:18-22, 2 Samuel 6:2, Psalm 80:1, and First Kings 8:7. There were four of these cherubim near the throne and glory of God in Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10. In the Book of Revelation there were four living creatures who are very similar to (or identical with) Ezekiel's cherubim, and again they surrounded the throne of God as in Revelation 4:6.

2. This principle is illustrated in Revelation 4:9-10 and 5:8-13. When the four living creatures (who are the closest to the throne of God in heaven) begin to worship, the twenty-four elders (who are the next closest to the throne) join in the worship, Rev.5:8. Then as the anointing and worship released from the throne continue to spread through heaven, multitudes of angels join in, Rev.5:11-12. Then the worship fills not only heaven but also the earth in the next verse.

3. The Hebrew word "toph" is translated in many Bible versions of Ezekiel 28:13 as tabrets, timbrels, or tambourines. However, many modern translations of this verse do not refer to it being anything musical. Yet this word, numbered H8596 in the Strongs concordance, is used 15 other times in the Bible, and each of the other 15 times these modern translations almost always refer this word to being tabrets or tambourines used in music and rejoicing. This strongly suggests that the correct translation for this refers to some form of a tambourine. And even if it is disputed that this verse refers to Lucifer having a tambourine, the clear fact that Lucifer had musical abilities is also confirmed in Isaiah 14:11.

4. Compare these nine stones in Ezekiel 28:13 (on Lucifer's covering) with being the same as nine of the twelve stones in

Exodus 28:17-20 (on the High Priest's clothing). An even closer resemblance is shown in the Septuagint, which was the first translation of the original Hebrew Bible into another language (Greek). In the Septuagint translation Ezekiel 28:13 lists Lucifer as having the exact same twelve stones as the High Priest.

5. As shown in Revelation 12:7-9. He undoubtedly used all of his leadership abilities to gain the allegiance of his followers, including his musical and worship leading talents. Satan knew that the one who controls the worship can control everything, as shown when he offered Christ the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would only worship him, Lk.4:5-7. Satan is still powerfully using the music and worship of this world to corrupt mankind.

6. Second Thessalonians 2:7

7. John 12:3-6. From John 13:29 we can see that Judas, in charge of the money, was expected to distribute alms to the poor.

8. There are examples of this in Job 1:9-11 and 2:4-5, Zechariah 3:1-2 NIV, Luke 22:31 and Revelation 12:10

9. "Stars" is often used in the Bible in reference to angels, such as in Revelation 1:20, Job 38:7, Judges 5:20, and Isaiah 14:13. That they were cast down to the earth in Revelation 12:4 is also referred to in Revelation 12:9, showing they had joined in the unsuccessful rebellion of Satan and were therefore banished from heaven.

10. An interesting possibility is that the angels who followed Lucifer in his rebellion were the same angels that had originally followed him when he was a pure servant of God. The Bible only tells us the names of three original leaders among the angels (Lucifer, Gabriel, and Michael) who might have each led one-third of the angels. Another inference we might consider about them is that while Lucifer had been one of the cherubim that covered the throne of God, he was cast down when he lifted himself up

in pride. Yet Gabriel and Michael might have been like the two cherubim on the ark of the covenant who are forever fixed in their position of covering the glory of God because they did not lift themselves up in pride- they are symbolically ever looking down on the Mercy Seat (Exodus 25:17). We also should always look to the mercy of God that keeps us from falling—as Jude 21 tells us, “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

11. Second Kings 6:16

12. John 14:30 and 2 Corinthians 4:4

13. Just after the Second Coming described in Revelation chapter 19, we find Satan being bound in Revelation 20:1-3, while the imprisonment of his angelic followers is also mentioned in Isaiah 24:21-22. Then in Revelation 20:10 and Matthew 25:41 there is the ultimate judgment prepared for Satan and his fallen angels.

14. Matthew 28:19-20 & 24:14 refer to the completion of world evangelism as a sign of Christ’s return, while Luke 21:24-31 and Zechariah 14:1-4 show how the Jews ruling over Jerusalem is a prophetic sign concerning the coming of their Messiah.

Chapter 2: Principalities and Powers

1. First Corinthians 15:45-47 expresses the principle that God often works first in the natural, then in the spiritual in a similar way. This principle is illustrated by showing the first Adam was of the earth, while the last Adam (Christ) was from heaven. Other examples of this principle are that the natural children of Abraham (the Jews) in the Old Testament fought natural battles on earth with natural weapons such as swords—while now the spiritual children of Abraham (the Christians) are to fight

spiritual battles in the heavenlies with spiritual weapons, such as the sword of the spirit.

2. Judges 5:4, Psalm 78:26, and Deuteronomy 11:11 are a few of the many scriptures that speak about the first heavens, or the atmosphere above the earth. This is where Satan and his angels still operate, Eph. 6:12 & Is. 24:21. We can see Satan as the “prince of the power of the air” seeking to attack God’s servants in Job 1:12 & 19, Acts 27:20, and Mark 4:37-38.

3. Genesis 1:14-17 & 26:4, Ezek. 32:6-8

4. This ancient concept of three heavens is also seen when the Apostle Paul wrote in Second Corinthians 12:2 about being caught up to the third heavens. He was not suggesting that there are three different heavens in what we today call heaven, the place where God and the angels live.

5. Second Corinthians 4:4 and Ephesians 2:2 NIV. Through the corruption of mankind, Satan has largely gained control of the world. He boasted at the temptation of Christ that he controlled the kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:5-6), a claim which Christ did not refute. Christ even called Satan “the ruler of this world” in John 14:30.

6. Now the Church, the army of God, is called to reclaim lost ground to reestablish the kingdom of God upon the earth. As Christ taught us, we are to pray “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” Mat. 6:10. The Church is to fulfill its Great Commission to evangelize the world and bring lost souls back into the kingdom of God, Mat. 24:14. Yet Satan will vehemently oppose the work of God in the last days (Rev. 12:9-13:8) until our Lord Jesus returns to imprison Satan and fully establish His kingdom throughout the world, Rev. 19:11-20:4 and Zech. 14:1-9.

7. First Kings 20:25 NIV
8. Matthew 18:10 and Hebrews 1:14
9. Two of the many accounts of George Washington being “bulletproof” can be read about in section 2 of: <https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/10-things-you-really-ought-to-know-about-george-washington> Many accounts of Douglas MacArthur being providentially protected through dangerous battles can be seen throughout his long years of military service, such as we can read of in his autobiography titled *Reminiscences*.
10. A list of the many assassination plots that Hitler survived can be read at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_assassination_attempts_on_Adolf_Hitler
11. A Biblical example of a huge angel standing over a city can be seen in I Chronicles 21:15-16.
12. Second Chronicles 35:20-24
13. This pattern of revival with judgment can be found in many prophetic scriptures, such as Isaiah 60:2-3, Matthew 24:9-14, Daniel 11:31-32, and Isaiah 24:9-14.
14. Acts 19:10 shows how the surrounding cities were evangelized from Ephesus, which was the leading city of the area. It also became the spiritual leader of the New Testament churches that sprang up in that Roman province. The elderly apostle John is credited as being their apostolic leader from his residence in Ephesus for many years.
15. The “Queen of Heaven” was originally the title of a pagan goddess that the backslidden Israelites had worshipped centuries before in Egypt, in Jeremiah 44:15-19.

16. <https://www.scribd.com/document/479555196/Territorial-spirits-Peter-Wagner> Page 93

Chapter 3: Walls of Salvation

1. The Biblical words for wall, hedge, and fence were often used interchangeably, as well as to metaphorically speak of someone being (or having) a strong defense, as in 1 Sam. 25:16, Jer. 15:20, and Zech. 2:5.
2. We can see this portrayed in Psalms 80:12-13.
3. The Hebrew word that says she is to be “enclosed” with cedar boards is very often used in the Bible as a military term, about besieging or barricading something. A person who has unstable emotions and is like a door needs to be defended and “barri-caded” from the temptations that could enter their heart and emotions. Also, it is significant that cedar wood is commonly a red color. During the first Passover in Egypt, the Israelites had to apply the blood of a lamb to the doors of their houses to protect themselves. Nailing a door shut with red cedar boards signifies that the red blood of Jesus can close doors from intruders and keep His people safe.
4. Several accounts of this have been documented in the book *The Mighty Hands of God* written by Katherine Carter
5. Job 1:8 and Job 2:3
6. Second Samuel 16:22
7. Second Samuel 18:6-15
8. Second Samuel 15:13-14
9. Second Peter 2:7 and Genesis 19:12-26
10. Ephesians 5:25-27, Matthew 16:18

Chapter 4: Keys for Victory

1. From <https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/names/Canaan.htm>
2. From the book Taking our Cities for God by John Dawson, chapter one.
3. In Exodus 12:23 the Israelites were told how to correctly apply the blood that would protect their families from the death of their firstborns, while Exodus 29:19-21 has the specific instructions for the priests and their garments to be made holy by sprinkling them with blood. As Hebrews 9:22 says, almost all things in the worship of the Israelites were purified with blood, although the methods of applying the blood were varied.
4. Leviticus 16:14-17
5. Hebrews 9:22-26
6. Study Ephesians 3:10, Isaiah 52:13-15, Psalms 149:6-9, and Mark 3:27
7. Philippians 2:9-11
8. First Samuel 10:8 and 13:5-14
9. First Chronicles 14:13-17
10. First Chronicles 14:11
11. Matthew 12:29
12. Exodus 32:26-29, Deuteronomy 33:8-10
13. David's three anointings are shown in 1 Samuel 16:13, 2 Samuel 2:4, and 2 Samuel 5:3
14. Acts 13:9-11
15. Ephesians 1:16-17
16. The story of Achan is found in Joshua chapter 7
17. Romans 12:2, I Corinthians 2:16

Chapter 5: Put on the Whole Armor of God

1. In John 18:36 NIV. One of the groups that tried to destroy Jesus were the Herodians, who were the politicized Jews who compromised with Rome, Mark 3:6 & 12:16. They had hypocrisy in their religious acts (like Herod in Matthew 2:8 when He said that he wanted to worship the Christ-Child) for their hearts were set on the kingdoms of men, not on the kingdom of God. Avoid those who want to entangle you with worldly conflicts even if they seem religious. As Jesus said, “Beware of the leaven of Herod,” in Mark 8:15.
2. Some examples of this can be seen in Second Samuel 18:4, Second Samuel 10:8, Joshua 7:5, and First Kings 22:10-11.

Chapter 6: Developing Spiritual Discernment

1. See 1 Thessalonians 5:23
2. Ezekiel 13:2-3, see also verses 5-7
3. Jeremiah 15:19. Separating the pure from the vile was what Jeremiah needed to do to remain God’s prophet.
4. Saul started out with good prophetic utterance in 1 Samuel 10:9-12.
5. Once Saul lost the anointing of the Holy Spirit in 1 Samuel 16:14, he prophesied in 1 Samuel 18:10 by an evil spirit. Saul later prophesied again by the Holy Spirit in 1 Samuel 19:23-24, even though God was not restoring him. This last time the Lord anointed him was to keep him from killing David! Saul’s evil reign continued as he slaughtered the priests of God and eventually went to a spiritist medium for guidance. Saul shifted repeatedly between the anointing of God’s Spirit and evil spirits, while all the time hypocritically acting spiritual (1 Samuel 18:17, 19:6, 23:21, etc.).

It must have been very difficult for his people to know if he was God's prophet, or a backslidden king! However, there are times that this still happens today if deep spiritual mixture remains in a minister's life.

6. Balaam's good prophetic ministry was exemplified in Numbers 23:5-10 and 24:15-24. However, he also often used sorcery, or divination, as shown in Numbers 24:1 and 22:5-7. These both were intermingled in his ministry until he died by the sword of God's judgment (as recorded in Joshua 13:22) as the Lord had warned him about in Numbers 22:31-33.

7. Matthew 24:4,5,11, and 24; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, and Revelation 13:11-14

8. Examples are Ezekiel 11:1, Colossians 2:5, and Revelation 21:10

9. Hebrews 12:14 and Romans 2:4

10. Exodus 28:30 & Numbers 27:21. An example of David enquiring twice by the Urim and Thummin is in 1 Samuel 23:10-12.

11. See Mark 2:6-8

Chapter 7: New Devil, New Levels!

1. https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/theodore_roosevelt_164482

2. At the beginning of the Church, Christ gave His Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. He declared that it would be fulfilled by His Second Coming in Matthew 24:14.

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To [*Elisey*](#), for designing the shield (without any arrows, and a different color of wood) used on the cover. Copyrighted with [*Creative Commons*](#) for free usage.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

Angels—Good and Bad by Brian Bailey. This book further explains many of the workings of both the good and the fallen angels.

The Book of Joshua: Obtaining Our Inheritance by Norman Holmes. The natural battles through which the Israelites conquered Canaan reveal the spiritual battles we will face to conquer our own “Promised Land.” A free copy of the book can be downloaded from:

<https://www.zionph.com/index.php/free-resources/e-books/send/4-norman-holmes/200-the-book-of-joshua>

These books, and many others that help develop spiritual maturity, can be purchased from Zion Christian Publishers at zcpublishers.com.

Many free resources can be downloaded from the Zion Ministries of the Philippines website at www.zionph.com. These include articles, videos, books, magazines, and other resources that can help you in your journey towards spiritual maturity and discernment.

Many anointed worship songs can be downloaded from the website <https://forworshippers.com>.

Words, chords, and sheet music are freely available. Two specific songs that are very useful to motivate the army of God are:

Soldier Song—also found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmlUfPxLwas>

Cry Out for the Nations—also found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcuuRrS1C8U>