



Spiritual Warfare

Volume 1

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Fit for the Spiritual Fight

Spiritual warfare is what I believe Christians should spend more than half their studies on. Once you become a Christian, the battle line is drawn, and the devil, his demonic army, and all the evil spirits under his control try to destroy the trust and faith you have with God and Christ Jesus. The last thing the devil wants to see is you reconciling your connection back with God and Jesus Christ and His blood. As soon as you draw that battle line and become a new convert for Christ, you are in a fight between eternal life and eternal death. For that reason, Christians should spend the first three years after being converted understanding what the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about and what Christ did for them. This should be an intense study and they should live daily increasing their knowledge of what the Bible has to say about spiritual warfare. It is that important. Unfortunately, this is not always available. I challenge you, go to any university or Christian related Bible college and see for yourselves how much time is dedicated to understanding this subject.

The devil has blinded several generations now. I know some of that is because of end time prophesy, but the devil has blinded several generations of man from understanding what spiritual warfare is all about. I have scanned just about everything you can read and everything that people have preached. They want to teach and preach about spiritual warfare, but they spend only a short time on the subject before going off in a different area of the Bible not related to spiritual warfare at all. I am not saying all of them do this, but many preachers, teachers, and pastors do not spend the necessary time to equip their saints making them fit for the battle. As I said, and I will keep repeating throughout this series, the battle is between eternal life and eternal death. If you lose, it is going to be eternal death, but if you are victorious through the blood of Jesus Christ, you will be ruling and reigning with Christ Jesus throughout eternity. At least once a month Christians should spend time studying the battle we are in; how to fight the good fight of faith, using the weapons and knowledge God has given us, including how to apply those weapons to your everyday lives.

I was reflecting and realized, whether from the Lord or from years studying spiritual warfare, that I am more equipped to preach this series than any series I have preached so far. You will see in this series how spiritual warfare is connected to the Fruit of the Spirit I have taught on already. I will point out these connections as I teach in this series. As for myself, I was raised a Catholic with a Portuguese cultural background. I have seen people possessed, people changing personalities, voices, and witchcraft that goes beyond the bizarre. Without going into a lengthy description of what I have been through, before I even became a Christian, I experienced some things that are frightening to most. They were frightening to me then, but now I understand. I guess I have a respect of whom we are fighting against because of the things I have seen. I will probably enlighten you on some of those things, especially when I teach on Ephesians 6:12. I have seen things in the Catholic Church and in the Protestant church, to give you both extremes that would frighten you beyond measure. I have experienced spiritual warfare in a way most have not.

Most preachers that preach on spiritual warfare, especially on the Christian armor in verses 14 to 17 of Ephesians 6, do so to give you some insight, but they really do not concentrate on verses 10, 11 and 12, which is about knowing your enemy. In this series, I will concentrate more on

these three verses and by the time I am done you will know the devil, your enemy. You have to learn in order to know your enemy. For example, how many people can actually give me at least a dozen names for the devil and the reason why those names were given to our enemy? Without going to the internet or some commentary or dictionary, how many could recite back to me at least twelve names? There are more than twelve, but tell me at least twelve names for the devil, devil being number one.

Likewise, do you think this country goes to war without knowing who the enemy is? And even though there may be a lot of intelligence and research, is there really an understanding of the enemy? Often in war, we face things that we never expected because we are not prepared for what happens after the invasion. The invasion is the easy part; it is the continuing day-to-day events that happen afterward. The sneak attacks, the cowardly attacks on not only our soldiers but also civilians, the manipulation of minds to try to convince people one-way or the other. Any country does what it can to figure out who their enemy is, or at least give their best efforts to try to figure out what is to be faced before going into war or battle. However, Christians are often naïve and more excited about going to their praise worship, music concert, or choir practice, but not excited to learn about whom their enemy is and why God's Word makes it important for you to know who he is.

The Bible introduces us to the devil after only a few chapters into Genesis. Our sinful nature makes us what we are today, and even though Christ converts you and you are living as a new person through Christ Jesus, you still have a sinful nature. Those of you who say you do not sin any longer are fooling yourselves. You sin every day. You just sinned by saying that and may not even know how it was a sin. Additionally, it is a shame Christians do not want to understand and it is a shame. The world has a better concept about warfare than Christians do and it aggravates me tremendously to see lackluster preachers that do not want to spend more time on this subject matter. That will not be one of my faults. To repeat myself, Christians should spend at least half their studies on spiritual warfare. At the very least you should dedicate some time once a month reviewing what you have learned and see if there is more you can understand and learn through God's Word about this subject.

It is my intention to use Ephesians 6 as a launching point to all the messages that I will preach on spiritual warfare. Before beginning this series, I prayed, "God where will you have me start this series?" and it came to me after I read verse 10. In this series I will be reading throughout the Bible, but we will begin at Ephesians 6:10 where Paul writes, "***Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.***" It is my hope that when I am done you will have a better understanding of how powerful this one verse alone is.

This book is titled "Ephesians", because Paul is writing to the Ephesian Church in Ephesus. Also relating Jesus' words, John also wrote to the Ephesus church in Revelation 2. There were several letters written by John to the churches of Asia and one of them is the letter to the church of the Ephesians, the Ephesus church.

Beginning in Revelation 2:1, Christ tells John, "***Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;***

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

Now I have read, studied, and heard all kinds of messages on the ***"first love"*** in my 33 years of Christian life. They all want to relate it to your worldly relationship with your partners, your husbands and wives, using it as an example how we lose our first love, but you cannot compare this first love to a relationship you have with anyone here in this world. You have to put a spiritual application on this, not something physical you can see and touch. It is a spiritual application.

"Thou hast lost thy first love." How do Christians lose their first love? Most Christians will answer: I stopped going to church regularly, I stopped choir practice, I should have attended one extra prayer meeting, I should have gone to missions and fed the poor or assisted in any way I could. These are all things you can do by your own works, but this verse is not referring to your own works. Some of these are good to do and I am not saying you should not do them, but do not relate those activities to something spiritual. You lose your first love in the spiritual sense and many Christians lose it quicker than you think, without even realizing what they have done.

To explain further, go to Genesis where Satan caused the division between Adam, Eve, and God through his cunning ability, his methods, which we will also see in Ephesians. Satan's ***"methodeia"*** are what the Kings James Version of the Bible labels as the ***"wiles of the devil."*** It is the Greek word, ***"methodeia,"*** or the ***methods of the devil.*** Satan put a wedge, or division, between Adam and Eve and God. Many want to put all kinds of interpretations on this, but it is simple. The devil's ways are not that complicated. He is consistent and keeps hammering you and hammering you until you just give in. He does not let up. He probably has more patience than all of mankind put together because the devil knows if he just keeps at you, eventually you fall away from God and Christ. You will break and become a victim controlled by his power instead of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Remember, this "first love" is not a worldly relationship you have. It is not some physical relationship. It is a spiritual relationship with Christ Jesus, and you can lose your first love just like Adam and Eve did in Genesis. Satan would not stop questioning God's relationship with Eve in order to accomplish what he did. I can just hear him saying, "Well if God loves you so much why would He keep anything from you? Think about that. If God loves you so much why would He keep anything from you? I thought He had your benefit constantly on His mind. He wants everything that is good for you, everything He has available that is good and everything He has available for Himself. Why wouldn't He want to share it with you also? If God is your creator and He loves you so much, why would He not want you to have the knowledge of good and evil? If He loves you so much why would He keep anything from you?" I believe he kept questioning Eve. We just have a short story of probably what happened in that garden, but eventually she broke. What happened after that was the breaking of the trust connection. When that happens, it separates you from God as it separated them. If you do not have trust, you do not have faith. They were separated from the love of God, sin was allowed to enter in, and you know the

ramifications from that day on because we are still living in it today. God did not create evil. Satan did! Adam and Eve's connection was lost when they broke that trust connection with God. Why? Because they believed Satan's lies more than what God had said.

Christians around this world will backslide or whatever you want to call it because they break that connection with God. That is what it means by losing your "first love." Do not lose the understanding of what He did for you and for mankind. Christ was tortured and suffered. He became that sacrificial lamb to reconcile us back to the Father through His blood. There is no barrier any longer with our relationship and our connection with the Father. It has been taken and put on that cross and Christ is our mediator.

That is why Christ in Revelation 2:5 tells us, ***"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent..."*** We are told to fall in love again with Christ. The Greek for "repent" is ***"change your mind and heart"*** meaning to change it back to what it once was when you heard about the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ when He entered into your life and you started living a life of faith, walking and growing in Christ. ***"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works."*** The Greek word ***"ergon"*** is the word for "works." It has several different meanings, but applied correctly it means ***"get back to the employment of God"*** by walking with God again, by following Him. I have told you many times what Christ said in Matthew 16:24, to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him. You are employed in the Word of God by going back to the Word and by employing the Word. Some of you do what I do, and are called to preach, but most of you will have to find a ministry or church that employs the Word of God and support that church. Hopefully, that church can feed you in the knowledge of what this wonderful Book has to offer. To return to these verses in Revelation, you lost your first love because you broke the connection, the same connection that was broken when Eve allowed the trust connection to be broken because of Satan's lies and questions causing doubt. He continually asked Eve, "If God loves you why would He keep anything from you?"

I have been a Christian for more than 30 years. I receive prayer requests daily asking, "Why is God allowing this to happen? Does He not care for me any longer? Obviously it is something I have done wrong." I do things wrong every day and so do you, that does not matter. Those things have been reconciled and put on the cross by Christ. We are going to fail and we are going to sin, but Christ paid the price for that reconciliation back to the Father. There is no way we can earn reconciliation. He did it for us through His blood. The only thing we can do is get our eyes focused back on Him, start faithing, and return to your first love, as Christ told us in Revelation. You need to do that daily, not just occasionally when you think you fall out of that first love connection. That is why you need to focus your life daily on Him, not just when you want. Following Him happens every minute and every hour of your life. Often Christianity is made cheap because it is presented as if it has no requirements from your life, but it does. It requires your total focus on Him and His Word, as well as the employment of His Word in the capacity that you can.

Paul made devotional love a strong point in I Corinthians 13:13 when he wrote, ***"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."*** In this verse, "charity" is a bad translation. The word is ***"agape"*** in the Greek, which is a total devotional love to Christ without any concern what might happen to you as long as you keep the focus on Him

and His Word. In addition, a better translation of the word “hope” would be the expectation of eternal salvation. With that, the verse should read, “***And now abideth faith, hope [or the expectation of eternal salvation], love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.***” Love is the greatest because it is something we are going to take throughout our eternal life. You will not need faith in eternal life. You need faith here and now. You do not need hope for salvation through eternal life. You will have salvation for your eternal life. However, love is something that goes on forever. That is why it is the greatest of the three. Does that mean faith is not important any longer? No, it is very important. Believe me you will not have love if you do not have faith. However, throughout eternity faith and hope are not necessary any longer, because we are there. We have made it. It is important to understand why we fall away and why we lose our first love. As soon as you become a Christian, or deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus Christ, Satan goes to work immediately to destroy your connection with God.

When Paul wrote to Ephesus, he told them, and now us, to go back to employing the Word of God in the capacity we can and to change, or renew, our heart and mind daily. To remember who we are, and what Christ has done for us. We are to get back on our feet, standing up with the knowledge that the trust connection is not broken and you are a faithful Christian ready to do battle, because Satan and his demonic army never lets up for one minute.

I know some places in scripture it says that Satan will back off, but the Greek is very clear. Satan backs up to see where to find another opening, as a boxer would. He also has a demonic army available to him assigned to you. Just as angels are assigned to you, there are also fallen angels assigned to you by their leader, the devil and they do not let up. God may allow you to have some relief in those tough times, but do not expect that break to last for long, because if you are the type of Christian that is denying yourself, taking up your cross and following Jesus, you have now become an arch enemy of the devil, who is an arch enemy of God. The devil has a hatred for God that is inconceivable in our minds. He wants to make sure that no new Christian realizes what salvation is or the knowledge of the Good News. He works to destroy that trust connection we have.

With that introduction to this series, return to Ephesians 6:10. There are several Greek words that all have significant meaning to spiritual warfare. They are *dunamis*, *endunamoo*, *epignosis*, *hupomeno* (not *hupomone*), *ischus*, *kakopattheo*, and *kratos*. I will be taking this and other verses in pieces to explain each of these words.

Ephesians 6:10 begins, “***Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord...***” ***Strong***, the second word on the list is *endunamoo*. The correct translation for this word is “*be strengthened with God’s strength.*” So this should read, “***Finally, my brethren, be strengthened [endunamoo] in the Lord,***” which is a continuing process that needs to happen daily. “***and in the power,***” ***power*** is better translated “***in the force,***” which is the Greek word *kratos*. With that, this verse now reads, “***Finally, my brethren, be strengthened [endunamoo] in the Lord, and in the force [kratos] of his might [ischus].***”

In II Timothy 1, Paul was telling us we are to be soldiers. Soldiers need spiritual armor, and soldiers need the Christian armor described in Ephesians 6:14 through 18. It is true that some of you like to live in so much peace you have a hard time imagining that you have to be a soldier in

God's army. There will be total peace some day when this world ends and Christ starts all over again with those with Him in eternal life. Until then, we are a soldier in His army, and to be a good soldier we have to understand how to ***fight the good fight of faith***, which brings us back to the point that you need to be equipped for spiritual warfare. Whether you like it or not, you are a soldier if you are any part of His. You need to be equipped and learn how to fight. Some of you peacemakers and peace loving individuals may cringe at that thought, but we are in the fight, not only for our eternal life, but also with others sharing in the capacity we can.

Paul uses these same words in his second letter to Timothy. In II Timothy 2:1, Paul writes, ***“Thou therefore, my son, be strong [endunamoo, or be strengthened continually] in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”*** That is an important part of our spiritual knowledge in spiritual warfare. We need to ***“be strengthened continually in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”***

Verse 3 continues, ***“Thou therefore endure hardness...”*** The Greek word for ***hardness*** is ***kakopattheo***, sufferings, hardships, troubles, constant afflictions that happen to us in our daily lives. So we are told to ***“be strengthened [endunamoo] in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”***

Verse 3 tells us we are going to ***“endure kakopattheo as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”*** This is because there are two armies in the spiritual world with spirit beings we cannot see: good angels, bad angels and demons. Just as there are two armies down here: the ones following Christ and the ones not following Christ. I am not referring to worldly armies like the Marines or the Navy. I am talking about us in the spiritual sense resisting and fighting against the devil and all his cohorts. We are soldiers expected to endure hardness, hardships, troubles and afflictions, ***kakopattheo***.

Verse 4 adds to this, ***“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”*** Once you are called and chosen, you are a soldier for Christ Jesus, and you have no choice. If you do not like the choice, then I suggest you get everything you can out of this world, because this is all there will be for you.

In verse 9 Paul writes, ***“Wherein I suffer trouble, [or kakopattheo] as an evil-doer [or as a criminal], even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.”*** In other words, here Paul is saying, “I kakopattheo, I suffer the hardships and afflictions as a criminal in man's eyes, but the Word of God is not bound. You may imprison me, but the Word of God cannot be imprisoned. No prison can hold it back. No prison can contain it.”

Verse 10 introduces another word from the list. ***“Therefore I endure. . .”*** which is ***hupomeno*** in the Greek. ***Hupomone*** is the endurance created in your life through the trials, afflictions and tribulations. ***Hupomeno*** is the attribute from endurance of character that builds up in you as you go through the trials and tribulations of life. This verse should read, ***“Therefore I bravely endure all things for the elect's sake...”*** You do not endure as a victim thinking, “Oh poor me, I don't know how I'm going to make it” even though we all feel that way at times. You need to bravely endure. Now, do not think I am throwing stones at you. There are times that I have found it hard to continue in faith every moment of every day, because I am the same as you: flesh and blood.

“Therefore I bravely endure all things for the elect’s sake...” Paul did not say, “Therefore I endure all things for my sake.” Too many Christians today are only concerned about themselves. That is the world’s attitude: “Me, me, me” and “What I can get out of it at the least cost possible.” I remind myself that these trials and tribulations I experience on a daily basis are because the devil wants to destroy this ministry and me. If you are a participant in this ministry, outside of destroying your connection with God, the devil’s objective in your life is to break the connection you have with this ministry or whatever ministry you are a part. The devil’s second purpose is to destroy the connection you have with Christ. However, as Paul said, ***“Therefore I hupomeno, I bravely endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”***

How many of you wake up with the thought that although you may not like life’s trials and tribulations, you will bravely endure all so your connection with God does not get broken, but also for the elect’s sake so they may also obtain salvation? As I have said before, we give to God because of obedience and that pleases Him, but what also pleases Him is God’s Word being sent around the world, because that is what the devil despises. God is excited when you are concerned about the elect that still need to hear this message of salvation. That is why you are in a spiritual war. When you are not denying yourself, taking up your cross and following Him, the devil has won the battle. Do not just go through the motions of Christianity following traditions of man. Such as going to church, sitting in the pew, or going to choir practice. Those things are not doing your part for God. There are only two things that God is concerned about you doing; The first is keeping faith, hope, and love with the understanding of what that means through His Word, by applying those to your life through God’s Word. The second is employing the Word in the capacity you can. Of course, it is nice to assemble in a church location and Paul recommends it. I am not saying that is wrong, but it is not your purpose for being. It is not what you should be so concerned about. Put your mind back in the Book, back on what spiritual warfare is all about. Get your mind back to understanding that the devil is trying to break that connection.

Do not forget Ephesians 6:10, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strengthened [endunamoo] in the Lord, and in the force [kratos] of his might [ischus].”*** In addition, we can be more than victors in Christ, and not just with the weapons we have here. More preachers should recognize what type of force we have available to us not of our own power, but all through Christ Jesus. Read Ephesians 1:17, ***“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.”*** Knowledge is the Greek word *epignosis* and means ***“the precise and accurate and correct knowledge of the Word of God.”***

Paul made it very clear that ***“He would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the precise and correct knowledge of him.”*** That is what I am trying to do with this series. To give you the precise and correct knowledge of how to begin understanding what spiritual warfare is about and how to use the weapons and everything available to us to fight against our enemy. You will see epignosis, or knowledge used many other times in the New Testament. When you see it, understand that God wants you to know what is precise and correct when it concerns His Word.

Ephesians 1:18 continues with, ***“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened [so you will be able to see what God’s Word says]; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”***

Pay close attention to verse 19, ***“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power...”*** To understand this verse, begin with the word ***power***, which is the Greek word ***dunamis***, meaning ***His dynamic power***. The Greek word used for ***believe*** is ***pisteuo***, another word for ***faïthe***, a better translation than ***believe***. The following section ***“of his mighty power”*** is reversed from Ephesians 6:10, which said, ***“the power of his might.”*** However, the Greek words are still the same, ***ischus***-might, and ***kratos***-***power***. With this translation, this verse can be better read, ***“And what is the exceeding greatness of his dynamic power [dunamis] to us-ward who faïthe [pisteuo], according to the working of his might and force [ischus and kratos].”***

Verse 20 and 21 are very important and read, ***“Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at this own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”*** It was God’s dynamic power, force, and might that raised Christ from the dead and is available to us! Paul is using the same words in Ephesians 6:10, that same force and might. We get the same strength we are to use in our spiritual warfare that was given to Christ to raise Him from the dead. What a wonderful, powerful message. Before we even understand any weapons used in spiritual warfare, Paul is telling us that the same force and might in Ephesians 6:10 is going to be available to strengthen, or ***endunamoo***, us every day if we just understand where it comes from. We get that strength by faith, and that same force and might is available to us that was available to Christ when He was raised from the dead. It raised Him from the dead and gave us new life. We have that same force for what we face here spiritually in this world and in spiritual warfare.

Moving ahead to chapter 2, verse 8, ***“For by grace are ye saved through faith and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”*** Remember, Paul also said in II Timothy that He strengthened us with His grace. Grace is the gift of God, and once we have that gift we have to understand we are going to war now as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Once you enter into that war, we are to bravely endure and we will be strengthened (***endunamoo***) with His force and His power, the same force and same power that raised Christ from the dead.

The devil had better beware. I say that in respect, and in the knowledge that we fight a fierce enemy. We are no match for him in the flesh. We have to match it with the power given to Christ, the force given that strengthened Him to be raised from the dead. What a wonderful message.

I could not begin any message on spiritual warfare without you understanding how you lose your first love, how to regain it, and now that you are back on track, keeping your eyes focused on Christ, ready to do battle knowing we have a mighty God behind us that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Know that same strength for fighting in the spiritual war is available to you. Get into the battle, or get yourself back into the battle understanding what you are, a soldier of Jesus Christ. Understand now that the same strength, force, dynamic power and might given to Christ

to raise Him from the dead, goes before us also through Christ to go against our enemy to fight the good fight of faith.

Have you ever been told this before? I want to know that you are in the fight as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, going bravely through whatever faces us in this spiritual war. Someday we will be delivered from all of this and we will be more than conquerors, not only here on earth, but forever with Him for eternal life.

Are You Ready for Boot Camp?

II Timothy 2:3 begins, “*Thou therefore endure hardness...*” As you know from the last chapter, the Greek word for *hardness* is *kakopatheo*. “*Thou therefore endure kakopatheo,*” and *hardness* should be translated *sufferings, hardships, troubles, afflictions*, all the things that most Christians do not want to experience. Those of you who have taken a cruise on a ship can identify with this because you know what it is like to be on a cruise. Whether it is a weekend cruise, a seven-day cruise, or a two-week cruise, they all have agendas arranged for you with schedules printed out and put in your room when they turn down your bed on a nightly basis. The whole object of the cruise director on that ship is to keep you busy and entertained. Especially if you are on a week-long cruise, because after the first day of lying around you get restless until you reach a port and are able to get off the ship and visit that particular city. I have been on several cruises and as I said, we are given agendas to keep us active and entertained, which is the whole concept of going on a cruise. I find it amusing that most people think they are going to relax when they go on a cruise. No, in my opinion there are just too many people on the ship to relax. There are people coming and going everywhere, even on the relaxation parts of the decks around the swimming areas and pools where you think you can get away. There is not much relaxation going on. The whole object is to keep you entertained and busy.

Someone was telling me once of a nice church program that reminded him of a cruise and of the agendas that the cruise directors would print out and place on the bed in your room at night. Just like the cruise ship, the whole objective of this church program was to give you an outline of all the activities coming up during the week or month. I call this a “cruise ship mentality,” where the objective is to keep you entertained, keep you satisfied with activities for yourself and kids. These churches think this will keep your mind on the Lord constantly by keeping you busy in church activities, which is the furthest thing from the truth. That mentality is not what being a good soldier of Jesus Christ is about. I know many will disagree with this statement, but this country, the United States, has lost the concept of what “gathering yourselves together” means. It is not gathering yourselves together with the cruise ship agenda to keep you happy and entertained. It is the “gathering yourselves together” from Hebrews 10:24, which says, “*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.*” Here, works is the Greek word *ergon*, meaning *the good employment of the Word of God*. Paul is saying here that if you are going to provoke yourself, do so into *agape* love, unto *the employment of the Word of God*. My mentor used to say you do not have to go to church to be saved. You cannot find chapter or verse in the Bible to back up what many churches want you to believe about attending church. I am not against going to church. I think it is a wonderful place for Christians to gather, but understand what Paul was really saying in Hebrews 10:24 and 25. Often people do not have the Bible correctly explained to them, so they feel guilt and condemnation not knowing the Word of God, and eventually, they fall away because they think the Word is too hard to follow. Yes, it is hard to follow, believe me. If you are living in the will of God, denying yourself, picking up your cross, and following Him, it is nothing like a cruise ship. There is no cruise ship when following the will of God. There is, however, what I told you about in chapter one of this series, *epignosis*, which is, *the precise and correct knowledge of the Word of God*.

In Hebrews 10:24 and 25, Paul says, ***“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love [agape] and to the good employment of the word of God. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”***

It is verse 25 that many churches cause guilt. Look at the beginning of verse 25, ***“Not forsaking.”*** What Paul is saying in the Greek here is ***“do not abandon or desert the assembling, or the gathering of people together as the manner of custom,”*** because the synagogue was the place to go to hear the law read and interpreted. Remember, this letter was written to the Hebrews. As for us, we now go to church to hear the Word of God preached. In verse 25 Paul writes, ***“as the manner of custom but exhorting,”*** which in the Greek means, ***“to come to one’s aid.”*** Where verse 25 ends, ***“. . .and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching,”*** refers to the Day of the Lord, which they were all expecting at that time, but has still not happened to this day.

With that translation, this verse should read, ***“So do not abandon the assembling of yourselves in one place, but exhorting, or coming to one’s aid: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*** Encouraging, coming to one’s aid, knowing the ones following Christ were under persecution. Use that opportunity to encourage each other, and the opportunity to see what each of these individuals might need and how to help them by gathering together and sharing in what they are going through. They needed that encouragement, because the Day of the Lord in their view was approaching quickly. Remember, they were under persecution from the Roman Empire. Eventually, the temple was destroyed and the Siege of Masada happened, where Roman Soldiers massacred Jewish villages.

To repeat, I am not against Christians assembling in a church building, but unfortunately, most church programs only cater to you. They do not to come to your aid to give you encouragement or to feed you the Word of God. Most often, they only keep you, your kids, your relatives, and your friends all entertained in the name of Jesus. You do not need to go to church to be saved, but you do need to hear the word of faith. Romans 10:17 says, ***“Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God.”*** In the Greek, ***hearing*** means a continuous hearing of faith. Just prior to that verse in Romans, verse 14 says, ***“And how shall you hear it unless a preacher is sent?”*** We live in a day where the church is much more than a church building. For example, this ministry has church via the internet, and in a modern day sense, we gather together here. The only difference is I cannot see you, but you can see me. That is why I want to know all your prayer requests and needs and I am open to questions if you have a good spirit in your questioning. As your Pastor, I am concerned about your spiritual growth and your knowledge of the Word of God.

Now returning to Paul’s letter to the Hebrews, he was telling them, ***“So do not abandon the assembling, the gathering of yourselves in one place as the manner of custom; but encourage and come to the aid of the ones assembling there: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching,”*** which is the Day of the Lord. Just as Christians gather in churches, we assemble together through the internet. God’s Spirit could fall on you as you watch the program. All you need to do is hear the Word and let it take root and see what God can do. Do not limit God because you think something cannot be done. All things are possible through Him that literally

faith through Christ Jesus. It does not matter what the situation is, but it matters where your heart and mind is communing at the time with our Lord and Master.

In the first chapter, I discussed *kakopattheo*, the hardness a soldier of Jesus Christ endures. Many Christians do not want the road that endures hardness. They do not want the suffering, the hardships, the troubles, or the afflictions. However, if you keep your eyes focused on Christ faithing in Him, the only thing I can really guarantee you is that Christ will be right there with you to see you through, no matter what. Many Christians cringe because they do not like the concept of being a soldier, but what do you think being a soldier encompasses? Do you think a soldier is going to live in the Disneyland fantasy world? I am not saying there is not going to be times of rest with no afflictions or hardships. If Christ allows that, then be thankful, knowing that you are just getting a break from the war, because soon you will be going back into battle; that is what soldiers do. They fight and they prepare themselves for the fight. Unfortunately, too often Christians never prepare for the fight or go through a spiritual boot camp. That is because they think that once they come to Christ everything is going to be okay. They think, sure, there may be some hardships, but God will see you through because God wants the best for you; everything is going to be rosy and sweet. I am telling you that it is going to be hell. You have a spiritual enemy that is trying to drive a wedge between you and God, you and Jesus Christ; it is going to be hell. But we are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus as Romans 8:37 tells us. So, the bad news is yes, we are going to be soldiers, and yes, we are going to have to be ready to fight, and I guarantee, if you are a good soldier of Jesus Christ you are going to be in the fight. But the good news is Christ is there with us and we are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus. We know the outcome if we stay connected. Whenever a country goes to war, the outcome is unknown, but in this spiritual fight, we have the information available to us to know what the outcome is going to be if we stay connected and stay faithing; we are victorious before we even go into the war if we stay connected.

It is a shame that when most Christians become converted, their pastors and teachers do not prepare them for the good fight of faith just as the military prepares the men and women in the military services. I know it is the same in other countries also, and I found it amusing and enlightening to share in the last chapter one person's account of preparing for boot camp. I will re-read it to you quickly. I am not going to read the whole article, just the interesting parts. ***“Going to Boot Camp had to be one of the toughest experiences I have ever endured in my life. . . Boot camp was not a bed of roses by any means. It required thick skin, a mentality that very few can possess.”***

Just the same, neither should spiritual boot camp be a bed of roses. You are in a fight for your eternal life, not just the years you have here on earth, but for eternity. You are in the fight of all fights. It should not be a bed of roses and I am telling you it is not going to be a bed of roses. You will experience *kakopattheo*, sufferings, hardships, troubles, and afflictions. Being a good soldier of Jesus Christ does not sound like a bed of roses to me. It is also not a place for “thin skin,” meaning that many Christians are too sensitive to be corrected or instructed in the Word of God. Just as ***“faith cometh by hearing,”*** that knowledge develops your skin to a thickness that Christ can make something from you. He will mold you, which requires the knowledge of His Word. Once you understand what His Word has to say, then you realize that although you might not like the battle, it is good for you because Christ is the potter and He is molding you into the

being that He wants you to be and to serve His purposes while you are still here. Then He will start the completion process that is ultimately completed over there someday in eternal life. To return to the article about boot camp:

“It requires thick skin a mentality that very few can possess. I remember standing there rigid because it was colder than anything I had ever experienced in my life. In that same thought, I refused to move for the mere fear that my Drill Instructor was going to make me do sit-ups or something crazy that I definitely didn’t want to find out. I have seen so many recruits go into the military all cocky and sure of themselves because they had just become one of the few, one of the proud.”

I have seen that over my life as a Christian as well, in religious organizations and elsewhere in life. So many people are cocky and sure, with plenty of zeal at first, going out and wanting to save the world, but as soon as some hardships come their way, the questions begin. “Oh no, why is this happening to me? Does Christ not love me? Does Christ not care for me? Why is this happening? Why is Christ allowing this to happen?” It demonstrates to me that although they might be reading the Word of God, they sure do not understand the Word of God. They might be listening to somebody teach the Word of God, but that teacher may not have the ability to explain what the Word of God is really saying. These Christians are not prepared for the spiritual fight that eventually will come because they turned their life over to Christ. The moment that happens, Satan has challenges waiting to bring you down, to put that wedge between you and God, just as he did with Adam and Eve. Do not forget though, we are chosen, and although you might be called, you will never get to the chosen state unless you allow God’s Word to work in you through the Holy Spirit.

“I have seen so many recruits go into the military all cocky and sure of themselves because they had just become one of the few, one of the proud. I know this because I was there once, I thought I was the all mighty one, no one could tell me what to do, I was the hot tamale of my group. The number one rule you are about to find out at 4 am when your bus arrives at your destination. . . You are NOT one of the few and the proud until you are finished with Boot Camp. Boot Camp is a whole new world with a new set of directions that you HAVE to abide by. When you step foot on Paris Island, Camp Pendleton or any other military boot camp. You will listen to what your drill instructor has to say because for the next several weeks, they own you.”

Fortunately, the Bible is not a new set of rules that you have to abide by. We live in the realm of grace. But I guarantee you, as He takes over your life, you see things change in your life that you never thought possible. As you take up the will of the Father and understand what the will of the Father is; denying yourself, taking up your cross and following Him, I guarantee changes, not new rules but changes. We are bought with a price, we are owned by Christ, and we are bond slaves to Him. He does what He wants with us if we are totally His. If you are not, you cannot be molded into the image He wants if you cannot follow His instruction.

About Boot Camp, this author continues to say, ***“You have no idea what you are getting into.”*** And that is the problem with most Christians. After being converted and given the wonderful opportunity to be saved by grace, they have no idea what they are getting into. It is a shame there

are not more shepherds preparing Christians to be fit for the battle, because they have no idea what they are getting themselves into and they have no idea who our spiritual enemy is.

“You will listen to what your drill instructor has to say because for the next several weeks, they own you. You have no idea what you are getting into. Well to give you a gist, these instructors have to break into you, make your skin tough, push you beyond your capabilities, train you for the unspeakable and prepare you for a lifetime! [Just as Christ prepares us for eternity] If you are sensitive, you’ll learn to buck up, if you have extra fat on that waist, it’ll be gone before you know it.”

Just the same, in Christianity, there are a lot of spiritual “know-it-alls.” They think salvation is all by their works instead of the changing power of God in your life to mold and fit you for what He wants you to accomplish. They attach a set of rules to dwell on, the “do’s and don’ts.” They are nothing more than “know-it-alls” thinking they have it all figured out. I have been following Jesus for close to 34 years and I am still just beginning to figure it all out. Often these “know-it-alls” do not want to follow God’s Word or the one Christ has called to shepherd over you. If God wanted you to interpret His Word, He would have called you to preach. It is that plain and simple. Like it or not, very few are called and chosen to preach. That means you have to be a sheep instead of a shepherd, which is the first thing you have to understand in spiritual boot camp; you are sheep. If you have a good shepherd, he has great concern for your soul. Not that he has the right to abuse his privileges over you, but you have to understand the important factor. He has the responsibility of making sure you are equipped for the battle and he knows what is best for you. He has studied God’s Word and is now trying to pass the knowledge onto you, the *epignosis*, the precise and correct knowledge of His Word, so you are fit for battle.

I will finish reading from this article with the following, ***“If you have extra fat on that waist, it’ll be gone before you know it. You had no structure before you went in? Well, you’ll learn it, digest it and breathe it by the time they are through with you! You have no idea what you are getting into but I promise that you will come out the stronger one, I know I did.”***

How many Christians cannot wait for the next pamphlet or schedule of their monthly church activities to keep them entertained in the name of Jesus? God forbid if they have to digest it, breathe it, and learn from it, that would be passion. It takes passion continue digesting, learning, and breathing the Word. Some are able listen to me once a week and cannot wait until the program begins. Thank God that passion is in you to see what this preacher has to say. It may be something you have never heard before or even something you have heard before, but you need to be reminded why we are in this fight of faith. Sometimes there will be messages like spiritual warfare or sometimes it will be a faith, healing, or a giving message. Whatever the need is or whatever the preacher is presenting, you are following a man of God, so pay attention. Even if the message is something you have heard before, there just might be something new for you to learn. That is what learning, digesting, and breathing the Word means; that you have the passion to take one more step of knowing what His Word has to say. If you still have that passion, then thank God.

Just as the author promises that Boot Camp will make you stronger, I can make that same promise, and I do not make very many promises. I promise you that you will come out stronger

than you ever imagined and more than a conqueror, if you just stay connected to Him and the Word of Jesus Christ. You are a part of this ministry because this ministry puts out the Word of God, which is all I am concerned about. I do not seek any glory and I do not boast about it. Most of the time I am here reluctantly even though that might sound bad to you. It is Sunday most often when I preach and that means there is interruption of fun, but that is what the chosen of Christ have to accept. That does not mean you can never take time off. Take it off, but do not get too used to it, because the restful times of not worrying about the battle are far and few between. Christ needs good soldiers following Him; not individuals more concerned about where the next good time is. He needs soldiers of Jesus Christ. You are called and chosen in the last days, which means there are additional responsibilities and pressures regarding *ergon*, the employment of the Word of God. Just as Paul was under pressure to establish the New Testament church, the same pressure is on you and me today because the time is getting short. Of course, it would be a lot more fun and entertaining if I did not preach on a Sunday night, but somewhere someone will see or hear this message, and they might need it. They might be at the verge of falling apart because they have not been taught how to fight the good fight of faith. As I preach this, Satan and his demonic army are going to squeeze me some more because he does not want this word to go out, especially the word that reveals what the devil's true nature is all about and why he is trying to put a wedge between us and God. I expect it. I expect the *kakopatheo*. I expect the sufferings, I expect the hardships, I expect the troubles, I expect the afflictions, but I also am confident that through Christ, because of the faith we have in Him, we are more than conquerors through all of that. I might not like what is happening, but I know what the outcome is going to be and thank God that Christ is my mediator. I am confident, even though I might slip that He will never leave me nor forsake me if I just hang onto faith and the hope that He will see me through. That is my promise to you. God's promise is you will be more than conquerors. I promise to keep preaching it. God's promise is to be there.

The spiritual fight and Boot Camp are alike; ***“You have no idea what you are getting into but I promise that you will come out the stronger one, I know I did . . . One thing I want to mention is that the Military isn't about going in to blow up stuff. You are going in to become one of the few and one of the proud. . .”***

You are entering the spiritual battle because you are one of the few that were called and then went beyond calling to chosen, not to blow up stuff, not for the glory of the Christian life. Most Christian television promises you a wonderful life. I am telling you it is only wonderful because we know what the outcome is going to be, but it is going to be hell getting there. I challenge anyone listening to me to take the word that I preach and compare it to what is preached on television. Study it and see which is *epignosis*; the precise and correct knowledge of Jesus Christ. You have to have the passion to find out who is telling you the truth, which is one of the weapons in Ephesians 6, ***“your loins girt about with truth.”*** I challenge you to get the passion. If you have the passion, I challenge you to dig in. I am telling you what the outcome is going to be and as you read this series, you will wonder why others are not preaching this. The truth is they are not preaching this because the preachers do not want to lose the passengers on the cruise ship called their church. What a shame. Paul called those preachers “perverts,” because they are perverting the Gospel.

With that introduction, we will return to Ephesians 6. In the first chapter of this series, I introduced the Greek words: *dunamis*, *endunamoo*, *epignosis*, *hupomeno*, *ischus*, *kakopatheo*, and *kratos*. I also showed these words in Ephesians 6:10 where Paul writes, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong [endunamoo, or be strengthened and empowered] in the Lord, and in the power [kratos, the powerful force] of his might [ischus].”***

Also, I took us to Ephesians 1:19, defining what Paul was saying, ***“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power [dunamis, dynamic power, also the basis of the English word dynamite] to us-ward who believe [pisteuo, faith], according to the working of his mighty [ischus] power [kratos]. The last part could also be read, “his mighty and powerful force.”*** In verse 20 it is the same force that Paul refers to, ***“Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”*** Paul is saying that the same power and force will strengthen us that strengthened Christ when God raised Him from the dead. That is the same force described to us in Ephesians 6:10, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strengthened or empowered in the Lord, and in the powerful force of his might,”*** the same powerful force and might that raised Christ from the dead and strengthened Him on that Resurrection Day. Before we even go to battle, we have the assurance that if we are connected with Him, we are given that same type of strength.

This chapter will continue with Ephesians 6:11, where Paul writes, ***“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*** You must be able to stand before you even worry about any of the armor, because you have been strengthened by the same power and force that raised Christ from the dead. There are several words for devil in the Greek, but the Greek word here is *diabolos*, and the best translation you will find is ***accuser and slanderer of the brethren***. The devil is the accuser and slanderer of the brethren in God’s Word. I am going read to you from a book by Phillip Larkin, written almost 100 years ago that shares his view of the devil, and what he is like.

Larkin writes,

“There are many who deny the existence of Satan. They claim that what we call Satan is only a ‘principle of evil.’ That this ‘evil’ is a sort of ‘malaria,’ an intangible thing like disease germs that floats about in the atmosphere and attacks people’s hearts under certain conditions.”

I like this author’s description that this evil is a sort of malaria, a principle of evil that abides in the atmosphere and attacks people’s hearts under certain conditions.

“The existence of Satan cannot be determined by the opinions of men. The only source of information is the Bible. [Here, I actually disagree with Larkin. There are other sources.] That is the reason why Satan tries to discredit the Word of God. He is not a ‘principle of evil’ he is a Person.

‘Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a “roaring lion,” walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, 1 Peter 5:8.’

Larkin is referring to I Peter 5:8, where the devil is described “*as a roaring lion.*” Have you ever seen a roaring lion looking for prey? It is vicious and we do not stand a chance. Without any weapons, the lion will win every single time. You do not stand a chance.

Continuing to describe the devil, Larkin says, “*He ‘walketh,’ he ‘roareth,’ he is to be ‘chained’ Revelation 20:1-3. These could not be said of a ‘principle of evil.’ He has many names or aliases- ‘Satan,’ ‘Devil,’ ‘Beelzebub,’ ‘Belial,’ ‘Adversary,’ ‘Dragon,’ ‘Serpent.’ He is mentioned by one or the other of these names 174 times in the Bible. He is a great ‘Celestial Potentate’ [power]. He is ‘The Prince of the Power of the Air’ Ephesians 2:2. ‘The God of this World’ (Age.) II Corinthians 4:4. . . This is more or less shrouded in mystery. One thing is certain, he is a ‘created being,’ and that of the most exalted type. He is before his fall ‘The Anointed Cherub That Covereth.*

That is, he was the guardian or protector of the ‘Throne of God.’ He was perfect in all his ways from the day that he was created, until iniquity was found in him. In him was the ‘fullness of wisdom,’ and the ‘perfection of beauty,’ but it was his ‘beauty’ that caused the pride that was his downfall. He was clothed in a garment that was covered with the most rare and precious gems, the sardius, topaz, diamond, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, emerald, carbuncle, all woven in with gold. He dwelt in Eden, the ‘Garden of God.’ This probably refers not to the earthly Eden, but to the ‘Paradise of God’ on high, for Satan dwells on the ‘Holy Mount of God.’ All this we learn from Ezekiel 28:11-13, where the Prophet has a ‘foreview’ of the Antichrist under the title of the ‘King of Tyrus,’ and as Antichrist is to be an incarnation of Satan, the Prophet here describes Satan’s original glory from which he fell. There never has been as yet such a King of Tyrus as is here described.

The cause of Satan’s fall is given in Isaiah 14:12-14. He is there called Lucifer, Son of the Morning. This was his glorious title when he was created, and this world of ours was made, at which time ‘The “Morning Stars,” (probably other glorious created, ruling beings like himself), sang together, and all the ‘Sons of God,’ shouted for joy.” Job 38:7. It is well to note that the one here called ‘Lucifer, Son of the Morning,’ is in verse four (Isaiah 14:4), also called the ‘King of Babylon.’ As there never has been a King of Babylon like the one here described, the description must be that of a ‘future’ King of Babylon. And as ‘Antichrist is to have for his Capital City Babylon rebuilt,’ this is probably a ‘foreview’ by the Prophet of Antichrist, as indwelt by ‘Lucifer,’ or ‘Satan,’ in that day when he shall be the ‘King of Babylon.’

Some think that when this world was created and fit for habitation, Satan was placed in charge of it, and it was then, as Isaiah declares, that Satan said in his heart- ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the “Stars of God” (other ruling powers); I will sit also upon the Mount of the Congregation, in the sides of the North. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High,’ and that it was for this presumptuous act that the ‘Pre-Adamite World’ became a chaos. . .”

Remember, Genesis 1 is the re-creating of the earth occurs. We necessarily do not know what it was like before, when these ruling powers were ruling and going to and fro between earth and heaven.

“This would justify the claim of Satan that this world belongs to him, and that he had the right and power to transfer the ‘kingdoms of the world’ to Christ, if He would only acknowledge

Satan's supremacy. (Matthew 4:8-9). And it accounts for the persistent war Satan is waging against the Almighty to retain his possession of the earth. The common notion is that Satan and his angels are imprisoned in Hell. This is not true. The angels described in II Peter 2:4, and Jude 6, as having left their 'first estate,' and being 'reserved in everlasting chains in the darkness,' are not Satan's angels. They are a special class of angels whose sin caused the Flood. They are the 'Spirits in Prison' of whom Peter speaks in I Peter 3:18-20. . .Satan and his angels are at liberty. We read in the first and second chapters of Job that it was the custom in Job's day for the 'Sons of God' (angels), to appear at stated times in the presence of God to give an account of their stewardship, and that Satan always appeared with them. When the Lord said to Satan- 'Whence cometh thou?' he replied, 'From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it.' Job 1:7; 2:2. Satan then was at liberty 'on the earth,' and had 'access to God,' and was 'not cast out of Heaven' in Job's day, [approximately around] B.C. 2000 [before Christ] . . . and as he has not been cast out since, he must still be at liberty in the heavenlies and on the earth.

Satan is a king, and has a Kingdom. 'If Satan casts out Satan he is divided against himself; how then shall his "kingdom" stand.' Matthew 12:24-26. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World (Age), against Spiritual Wickedness in High Places, (Heavenlies).' Ephesians 6:12. From this we see that his Kingdom consists of 'Principalities,' 'Powers,' 'Age Rulers of Darkness,' and 'Wicked Spirits in the Heavenlies.' These 'Principalities' are ruled by 'Princes,' who control certain nations of our earth, as in the days of Daniel the Prophet, when a heavenly messenger was sent to Daniel, but was hindered 'three weeks' from reaching him by the 'Prince of the Kingdom of Persia,' Satan's is a ruling 'Prince of Persia, until Michael the Archangel came to rescue. Daniel 10:10-12.

He is the Deceiver of the World. By the 'World' is meant all those who belong to the 'Satanic System.' All those who are entangled in Satan's mesh. 'And we know that we are of God, and the whole World (the Satanic System) lieth in the Wicked One, (Satan).' I John 5:19.

Satan deceives by 'blinding' the eyes of the world. 'If our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that "are lost"; in whom the "God of this World" (Satan), hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' (II Corinthians 4:3-4).

To this end Satan has his preachers who preach 'another gospel.' [the perverted ones I talked about earlier] Galatians 1:6-8. That gospel is a 'doctrine of devils.' I Timothy 4:1. He is the instigator of 'The Great Apostasy.' Peter, speaking of the 'latter times' says- 'There shall be false teachers among you, who. . . shall; bring 'Damnable Heresies,' even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their 'Pernicious Way,' by reason of whom the 'Way of Truth' shall be evil spoken of.' II Peter 2:1-2. These 'false teachers' are to be seen on every hand. They are those who deny the. . . 'Deity,' 'Bodily Resurrection' and 'Personal Premillennial Return' of the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan is very subtle on his methods, and if it were possible he would deceive the very elect."

Satan is trying to deceive the very elect continuously. It is a constant warfare placed on the elect to deceive and refocus their understanding of what following Christ really means.

"He knows all the great Scripture subjects that are of universal interest to humanity, and he is too wise to attack them openly, so he adulterates them with false doctrine. He has tried to rob

the Church of her 'Blessed Hope' of the Lord's return, by mixing with it with a lot of false teaching and 'time setting' as seen in 'Millerism,' 'Seventh Day Adventism' and 'Millennial Dawnism.' To prevent mankind from turning to the Lord for healing, he has invented the systems of 'Christian Science' and 'New Thought.' To satisfy the craving of the human mind to know what is going on in the Spirit World, Satan invented 'Spiritualism.'

Satan seeing that he could not stamp out the Church by violence [which he tried so desperately to do in the beginning New Testament church] and persecution has changed his tactics and is now trying to seduce her into conformity to the world, and to try to better an 'Age' that God has doomed to destruction. His present purpose is to build up a 'magnificent civilization,' and he has deceived the Church into believing that it can bring in the 'Millennium,' without Christ, by the Betterment of Society.

His hope is that the 'Gospel of Social Service' [the cruise ships for Jesus] will take the place of the 'Gospel of Grace,' and by diverting the attention of Christian people to 'secondary' things, they will neglect the primary work of soul saving, and thus delay the evangelism of the world, and postpone the Return of the Lord, and his own confinement in the Bottomless Pit."

Anything but the Gospel of Grace is a perversion of the New Testament Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Like I said, most Christians are stuck thinking all you have to do is come to Christ and grow in Him until you get to eternity, but your life has a two-fold purpose. Yes, you must follow Jesus Christ and allow Him to make changes along your path of faith that He wants to make so you are willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him. The second purpose is to participate in the employment of the Word of God, or *ergon* in the Greek. There are two definitions for *ergon*, but most often it is defined as *the employment of the Word of God*. Christians are too worried about themselves and how to get to eternity, forgetting they are here for a reason, which is to help others reach eternity as well. You are sheep with a purpose and getting the Word of God to others is a primary work.

"The warfare between 'Good' and 'Evil,' as recorded in the Bible from Genesis 3:15 to Revelation 20:10, is most intensely interesting reading. Satan tempts Eve. She eats, and Adam with her."

To paraphrase this section of Larkin's book, the result is the fall. Next, Satan tries to prevent the birth of the promise seed, which causes Cain to kill Abel. To bring about the destruction of the human race, Satan gets the sons of God to marry the daughters of men, resulting in the flood. To destroy the unity of the race, Satan suggests the building of the Tower of Babel, resulting in the confusion of tongues. Throughout the Old Testament, we see Satan at work trying to frustrate the plan of God for the redemption of the race.

Not only that, the last thing Satan wanted to see is Christ coming on the scene stepping in where we failed, to become that sacrificial lamb to reconcile us back to the Father. This is why Satan constantly attacked the very first saint and he will constantly attack the very last one. The devil does not want to see the end of his days. He does not want to see anyone converted, following Christ, or following God. Because of his sinful ways, the devil now wants to convince us that we should be pursuing the betterment of society. This is done through perverted preaching that blinds us to the ways of the world, because after all, all we have is the here and now according to that perverted message.

Satan's methods have always been the same; delay and confuse. Delay the time of his end and to confuse people about God. The devil wants to tell God that His chosen race cannot do it, but thank God that Christ came in and through grace we are saved and through grace we have hope of eternal salvation.

Let me continue with Larkin:

“When the time came that Christ was born, it was Satan who prompted Herod to destroy all the male children at Bethlehem under two years of age. It was Satan who tried to overcome Christ when weakened by fasting in the Wilderness, and who suggested that Christ throw Himself down from the Pinnacle of the Temple. The attempt of the people to throw Him from the hilltop of Nazareth, and the two storms on the Galilee were all attempts of Satan to destroy Christ. And when foiled in these Satan renewed the fight through Priests and Pharisees, and succeeded at last in getting Judas to sell his Master.”

The devil succeeded when he convinced someone to turn on Christ, selling Him to the religious organization at the time. That should put you on guard to beware of the false prophets the Bible warns us about.

“Then amid the shades of Gethsemane he sought to kill Christ by physical weakness before He could reach the Cross [and make atonement for sin]. When Christ was crucified Satan thought he had at last conquered, but when Christ rose from the dead Satan's rage knew no bounds.”

He was madder than ever and his rage only increases in intensity as the time becomes shorter and he knows his time is coming to an end.

“In all probability Satan and his angels contested the Ascension of Christ, and the history of the Christian Church is but one long story of ‘Irrepressible Conflict’ between Satan and God's people. . . As we have seen Satan still has his abode in the ‘Heavenlies’ and has access to God. But the time is coming when he shall be cast out of the ‘Heavenlies’ [onto the earth]. It is described in Revelation 12:7-9.”

Larkin continues describing in detail what will happen at that end time. To again paraphrase, it is Larkin's opinion that at that time there shall be a great woe unto the earth. Satan's wrath shall be exercised through the beast, the antichrist, and he will then know that his time is short. Here Larkin states Satan's time will only be 3½ years. I disagree with Larkin's opinion, and to learn about this 3 ½ year time-period, you may get a copy of my Last Days series on the web site.

Larkin concludes this paragraph by writing, “. . .at the close of the ‘Tribulation Period,’ the ‘Beast’ and the ‘False Prophet’ shall be cast ‘alive’ into the ‘Lake of Fire,’ and an angel from Heaven will seize Satan and bind him with a great chain, already forged, and cast him into the ‘Bottomless Pit, where he shall remain for a 1000 years. Rev. 20:1-3. At the close of which time he shall be loosed for a season, and then with his angels. . . he shall be cast into the ‘Lake of Fire’ prepared for him in the long ago [to spend the ages of ages]. Rev. 20:7-9; Matt. 25:41.”

Thank God we do not have to go through that. We will be gone, raptured along with the true church. Thank God we do not have to spend our eternity in the Lake of Fire as long as we stay connected to Christ who is then mediating our needs and concerns to His Father without the accusations of Satan. Thank God for what Jesus Christ did for us.

Remember, we are to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We are empowered and strengthened by the same powerful force and might that raised Christ from the dead. We are more than conquerors, but you must stay connected and trust what He says to be true. That is what faith is all about.

Thank God for His grace.

Was Satan a Cherubim?

As with the first two chapters of this book, chapter 3 begins in Ephesians 6:10 where Paul writes, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”*** By now, you should know that in the Greek this verse reads, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strengthened in the Lord, and in the powerful force of his might.”*** Verse 11 continues, ***“Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles [or methods] of the devil.”*** This means you are not to be flat on your face knocked down, but standing against your enemy, the devil, and his methods.

This chapter will continue describing what the devil is like. We are fighting a war against unimaginable spiritual entities and we have only glimpsed what they are really like. In the Bible, there is only a small picture of what God created. We necessarily do not even know how Adam and Eve were created. We just know God changed them from the image He originally created when they fell in the Garden of Eden.

The enemies we fight are spiritual entities and beings created by God. I want to expand your knowledge of the devil’s character and what type of angel he is, because there are many different types. For example, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and others classified angels into about nine different categories. The Ethiopic version of the Book of Enoch, the one I recommend, also describes some of the classifications and descriptions of the spiritual beings God created. This is what we fight. Not all of them, just the evil ones that fell away and brought sin into God’s creation. For this reason, we ***“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil,”*** because in verse 12 it says, “For we wrestle.” We do not sit down and have coffee or tea and biscuits with the devil and his demonic army. We are in combat with them. We are in hand-to-hand one-on-one combat with these spiritual beings. Just because you do not see them does not mean that they are not here. They are still influencing you and trying to get into your mind.

Possession by demons does not mean you are going to change faces, change your color, or your physical stature. Those may be some of the attributes once they possess you, but that is not necessarily what possession is all about. These demons get into your mind to change you, to put the wedge between you and God to break the connection of faith. We are in a battle with them. We are not having coffee, tea and biscuits. We are in one-on-one combat continually because there is no stopping this battle of faith, this spiritual fight we are in and it is a good fight.

We are in a spiritual fight when we want to stay connected to Christ. Because of a desire and passion to stay connected to Christ, Satan then goes to war against us and engages in battle to break that connection. That is his whole purpose, and he uses things of this world such as troubles, afflictions, hardships, and sufferings; and the intensity will increase. He keeps the pressure on you to see if you will break that important connection with God. We constantly wrestle against evil forces, which is why you need to know the enemy you are fighting. You do not go to war without counting the cost and part of counting the cost is knowing who your enemy is. In the physical world we live in, our military institutions do not go to war without understanding and gathering all the intelligence they possibly can against the nation or the

government they are going to go to war against. For us, God's Word is the precise and correct knowledge we need to stand firm on against our enemy. How fortunate we are to have the ultimate weapon, His Word, which no physical military army could ever possess here on earth. We possess something spiritual here on earth to go against spiritual enemies, created evil beings, created by God. However, God did not create the evil. They became evil because they had the freedom of choice to fall away from God. We need to know everything we can about these evil spirits and we gain our intelligence through His Word to fight them.

I will be sharing a book with you in this chapter, but unfortunately it is not a book you can find in bookstores, whether Christian or non-Christian and I find it humorous. The closer we get to God's truth through men who have interpreted the Bible by the anointing of God; the least likely you will be able to find this type of information in bookstores. This subject, spiritual warfare, is not appealing to most Christians. I challenge you to go to a Christian bookstore and try to find a small space dedicated on a shelf somewhere to spiritual warfare. There is just not much material on it. Half of the information will be about how to expel demons from someone and much of it is nonsense, like spitting demons onto a handkerchief for deliverance. It is nonsense. Fortunately, I live fairly close to Fuller Theological Seminary. They have a good bookstore, better than most Christian bookstores, but even there I can hardly find a single book that stays close to God's Word, and everything that I am reading from I did not find there.

Today's Christianity does not want to scare you off by teaching about what your enemy, the devil, might be like. As I said in prior chapters, most churches want to give you the cruise ship experience. They would rather keep you busy and entertained with all their wonderful programs. They do not want to frighten you with spiritual warfare or knowledge about your enemy and how wicked and evil he is. Most are fearful of just about everything, so medical science has to come up with a pill for every particular type of fear that you face. Am I against medications if you have a legitimate medical problem? No, I am not, but go to God's Word first and see how He can be your Jehovah Rapha, the God that healeth. God might use medication to give you healing, but quit trying to look for a quick fix when your problems come at you. Start realizing problems are going to come at you continually because you are in a spiritual fight. Get yourself in a church or listen to someone who will prepare you for a spiritual fight that you will come against repeatedly when engaging in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy.

Let us begin looking deeper at Satan, the devil and in Ephesians 6:11, I told you to circle that word 'devil.' In the Greek, devil is *diabolos*, and *accuser and slanderer* is the best translation for the word. In the last chapter, we looked into the traditional way of describing the devil using God's Word. Now I want to expand your minds a little bit further, still using God's Word, but taking it to a different realm so you understand you are no match against the devil without Christ's help and the indwelling spirit of the Holy Spirit in you.

One author writes:

"We frequently hear that Satan is the father of lies, even the father of the Sadducees, scribes and Pharisees. But is Satan really a literal father? Some churches teach that Judas Iscariot was the son of Satan or perhaps a pre-incarnated antichrist. Although these concepts are a bit strange, there could be a thread of truth running through them. However, before we pursue

this line of thought, I want us to look in a different direction. Let's just first hold a magnifying glass up to Satan to examine who and what he is. Is Satan an angel?"

Remember, the only purpose I have for teaching on this subject matter is to expand your knowledge on what Satan might be like and why we cannot do battle or confront him in the flesh. We can only fight him through the Spirit with the blood of Christ protecting us along the way.

"Is Satan an angel? Between the 2nd and 6th centuries A.D., church intellectuals built models of angelic classifications. They contrived ranks of angels and types of angels. Today, traditional theology still accepts these general classifications and still latter centuries these classifications became more numerous and specialized. Some even determined the word angel could be a generic term referring to all spirit type beings including Christ himself. [Which I do not agree with, by the way.] St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, Dante, and other churches constructed a list of celestial angels [or rulers]. Jerome's list included seven: 1) seraphim, 2) cherubim, 3) powers, 4) dominions, 5) thrones, 6) archangels, 7) angels. Other lists include: eons, principalities, hosts, virtues, and many others. However, the specific angel always has two Biblical identities. Angels in scripture are described as either stars, the heavenly host, or glorified looking men. And angelic identities do possess the first ranks and sub-classifications according to the Book of Enoch. The Archangel ranked highest among the technical angels. Only seven are mentioned: Michael, Uriel, Raphael, Gabriel, [and others]. These names vary according to other ancient writers from the Christian Gnostics to the Persian mythology or the Testament of Solomon. Other ranks of real angels include watchers, governors, messengers, plus the mythical archons, mansions, seraph, and others. Because men in the Dark Ages so embellished the story of angels, yet had little knowledge of the Nephilim story, we avoid many of the later writings on the subject."

You would be amazed on how much has been written about spiritual warfare, not so much in recent time, but in the time of St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and others. A lot has been written on spiritual warfare, it just has not been popular to publish and some of the work has been good.

"In another study we will use only the most ancient authentic writings. Let's look at some of these other celestial beings. Scripture does identify other types of identities, which we never address as angels. One of these identities is the seraphim, four of which encompass God's heavenly throne. [You will find that in Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4:8.] Hebrew and Christian mythology designate these seraphim as the highest order of heavenly beings. Scripture identifies the seraphim as fiery beings with six wings and four faces. A face that will resemble a lion, an ox, a flying eagle and a human. These beings cry 'Holy! Holy! Holy!' about God's throne. Jewish legend says Satan is one of these seraphim except he has twelve rather than six wings. Perhaps because these creatures were closest to God's throne and fewest in number [four that is], they were thought to be the highest order of celestial beings. This is likely one reason why many thought Satan was a seraphim. [He is not by the way.] Another reason Satan was placed in this order is that scripture calls him a serpent. The word seraphim has a root meaning of 'fiery serpent.' The most popular of the celestial beings was the cherubim. Like the seraphim, it also has the same four faces, but it only had four wings rather than six. This creature made a rather large

impression on early mankind. [You may have seen a picture of a cherubim guarding a location in Nineveh from history books or archeology magazines.] ***Carved representations of the cherubim are found from Egypt to China, the Sphinx being but one example.***

Scripture speaks of a cherubim even before it mentions angels. The first mention of a cherub in scripture is in Genesis 3:24, 'So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.' Throughout later history the cherubim were noted as creatures which guarded [or were trusted with] various things from entranceways, to kings, and magistrates. ***Baby cherubs with tiny bird wings are strictly fantasy created by later classical artists to give the viewer a familiar and friendly feeling.***

You see baby cherubs on Valentine's Day cards shooting little arrows to capture your heart. That is manmade. It is not from the Book and not part of God's Word.

"Are cherubim angels? Nowhere in scripture is a cherubim called an angel nor is an angel called a cherubim."

Yet we have been brainwashed to believe so. Not all beings God created are angels and that is why cherubim should not be classified in the angel order.

"Seraphim and cherubim have multiple faces and wings, yet believe it or not angels are never identified as having wings, much less four faces. Yes, angels can fly but they are never described as having wings. Yes, angels are different creatures than cherubim. Is Satan an angel, a seraph or a cherub? Today's most popular opinion is that Satan is an angel. The only scriptural evidence for this position comes when Paul says, 'And no marvel for Satan himself is transformed into the angel of light.'"

That is in II Corinthians 11:13-14. ***"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ."*** In other words, these beings are lying about who they are. Paul describes them as ***"false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ,"*** convincing others they are something that they are not. Verse 14 continues, ***"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."*** Satan is just as guilty. In fact, he is the one that created the problem in the first place. Satan is just as guilty as the false prophets and deceitful workers in verse 13, transforming himself into something that he is not, which is what scripture is saying. Paul is not saying that Satan is an angel of light. ***A messenger of light*** is a better translation. Verse 13 would better read, ***"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into a messenger of light"*** or ***'of truth,'*** which we know through God's Word, there is no truth in Satan. He is the accuser and slanderer full of lies.

It is important to keep God's Word in context. Equip yourself with God's Word. The next time one of these preachers comes along and tries to convince you of something that does not confirm God's Word; thank God you heard from someone what His Word really says. As I have said before and will keep on saying, ***epignosis, the precise and correct knowledge of God's Word,*** is important to know.

Back to this book:

“Is Satan an angel, a seraph or a cherub? Today’s most popular opinion is that Satan is an angel. The only scriptural evidence for this position comes when Paul says, ‘And no marvel for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.’ There the Apostle Paul may be using the name angel [or more accurately, messenger] in the generic sense, but even if he were not, this verse still does not predetermine that Satan is technically an angel.”

Remember, this verse never said “an angel” in the original text. King James writers incorrectly translated that word.

“The active word in this verse is ‘transform’ indicating that Satan could be any type of being before his artificial transformation. This verse is usually taught to demonstrate a transformation from a dark angel ‘evil’ to a light angel ‘righteousness.’ But it could just as well mean he is transformed into anything from a seemingly righteous angel. I agree with early church fathers who classify Satan as the cherubim or seraphim rather than an angel. Satan the cherubim: St. Thomas of Aquinas disagreed that Satan was a seraphim. [So do I] He noted that if Satan were the first being to sin, then he was a cherubim. He argued that cherubim is derived from knowledge, while seraphim is derived from the heat of charity [or the heat of the love of being around the throne of God] which is incompatible with moral sin. By now, you may be asking yourself, ‘What does it matter? Who cares whether Satan is an angel or cherubim?’ I will later demonstrate the importance of this matter. [And it does matter] Scripture seems to verify that Aquinas was correct. The ancient prophet Ezekiel makes a strange statement naming attributes, which scholars ascribe to Satan. If this association has viability, it renders loads of wrong data about Satan into our source catalog. In Ezekiel 28:12-19, Ezekiel’s oracles of the king of Tyre says: ‘Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering... [It goes on to list the stones] ...the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.’

Because this king of Tyre was in Eden, the garden of God, and Satan the serpent was also there in Eden, theologians have suspected that this king of Tyre is a representation of Satan. When Ezekiel comes right out and calls the king of Tyre a cherubim then the subject becomes serious. It begins to confirm that Satan is indeed a cherubim. As Ezekiel’s oracle continues,

theologians' suspicions are reinforced. Before analyzing more of the details of this oracle we need to look at what a cherubim is.

Think about it. I want you to expand your mind. I necessarily will not agree with everything I am reading here, but this is to expand your mind about what we are facing.

“If Satan is a cherubim, he is four-faced. Forgive the pun, but if Satan is a cherubim he is a strange looking creature. A being incredibly large with four wings and four faces and many other accruements, which we have yet to explore. When the prophet Ezekiel began writing this book, he actually was an eyewitness to a cherubim. In fact, Ezekiel is called to be a prophet of Israel upon having his encounter with this cherubim. His detailed description of a cherubim is best in the scripture.”

Ezekiel chapter 1 describes a scary ordeal. God called Ezekiel to do His work, but it is frightening in the natural. It would be like having a nightmare in some cases, and that is enough to scare you beyond reason.

Read Ezekiel 1:4, ***“And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.”*** What a calling. What a way to be chosen. Something like that would scare most of us from that calling.

Ezekiel 1:13, ***“As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightening. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightening [in an instant]. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.”***

Turn your imagination loose and try to imagine what these creatures may have looked like. Their descriptions continue in the verses that follow.

Verse 18, ***“As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.***

Verse 22, ***“And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.”***

Verse 24, ***“And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.”***

Verse 26, ***“And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.”***

Verse 27, ***“And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.”***

Verse 28, ***“As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.”*** [or rainbow colors with the brightness of the rainbow]***This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.”***

This author continues,

“What kind of creature are we dealing with? The upper parts of the cherubim incorporated a transparent crystal-like canopy and even contained seats or thrones. Today we associate all these features with machinery. More specifically they resemble a vehicle, a living piece of machinery.”

In my imagination, I see the lower parts of the cherubim have wheels and pillar-like extensions and fire with lightening on the upper parts of the cherubim described here in Ezekiel. That is why you need knowledge about the unseen world we face. We judge everything on what we can see and feel. We box God in because we cannot understand the universe when science has not even found the end of the universe. We cannot even imagine how far away it is, and getting there would be physically impossible in our dimension.

“Centuries prior to Ezekiel, King David also was an eyewitness to this type of thing. He confirms that this was some sort of living vehicle. David confesses that one time he was rescued by a cherubim and transported by it. David writes Psalms 18:10, ‘And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightning, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.’

If anything like this were seen today, it would without a doubt be classified as a UFO, an unidentified flying object. Yet the cherubim is not just a vehicle, it has the ability to self-navigate, to sense danger, plan operations, and has the power to blast holes in the sea even through the sea bed.

Like Ezekiel, Daniel also saw the Lord transported by something presumed to be a cherubim. Daniel says in Daniel 7:9, ‘I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.’ God Himself transported by a cherub?”

Why not? Why is it so hard to imagine God would be transported by a cherubim, seraphim, or any other angel He desired?

“Yet if Satan is a cherub, does this mean that Satan is some type of living spirit being or machine? Even worse, a machine gone awry? With this insight, this strange part of Ezekiel’s

oracle of the King of Tyre begins to become logical. [Which we read about in Ezekiel 28:13-14, God created Satan for a purpose.] Ezekiel does say this covering cherub is made of these elements and if Satan is technically one of these cherubim then a scenario begins to unfold. We may now be able to detect that Satan is not a bio-spiritual identity, such as angels and demons appear to be, rather Satan and fellow cherubim and perhaps even seraphim seem to be a self-aware based spiritual machine.”

I am not saying Satan is a machine, but the way we would describe him, based on this description, would be some type of living being God created that has many attributes of machinery. How would you describe these verses? How else could it be described? Not even artists have been able to depict accurately, in my opinion, what is described here. Do not reject an opinion just because it differs from what you think these spiritual beings look like.

Based on these descriptions, Satan, the devil, or any cherubim, do appear to have machine-like characteristics combined with their spirit-based bodies. Satan was not transformed into a creature with two horns as medieval artists created as an image of what Satan might look like; someone all in red with two horns on top of his head and a tail with a flaming arrow at the end of it is not what Satan looks like. You cannot find anywhere in God’s Word that is what he looks like. That image is manmade. I find it amusing many Christians today will turn off the broadcast when I read information to you. I am reading mostly from God’s Word about the description of these cherubim. Christians will stop listening to this teaching, and still accept a horned, red, devil looking creature. Many of us have been programmed to believe this is what Satan looks like. Often Christians believe that if their parents believed it, their grandfather believed it, and their great-grandparents believed it, and so forth, and so forth, it must be true. If the church has been saying this for decades, centuries and millenniums, then it must be true. No, that is wrong. There are a lot of things the church has been saying, especially in the present day church world, which is far from the truth. Stop believing a lie and start expanding your mind and stop putting God into a box of your expectations. We will never know for sure until we get over there. I am just trying to open up your brain to the possibilities so new information has a chance to penetrate tradition established for centuries with no basis of truth in it.

Let’s go back to this book.

“Ezekiel does say this covering cherub is made of these elements and if Satan is technically one of these cherubim, then a scenario begins to unfold. We may now be able to detect that Satan is not a bio-spiritual identity such as angels and demons appear to be, rather Satan and fellow cherubim, and perhaps even seraphim, seem to be a self-aware based spiritual machine. Ezekiel’s description of his pipes could have several meanings. ‘Thy pipes’ could refer to circuitry or more likely a multi-frequency generator when applying energy in the form of heat, photons, or atomic forces, the type of elements mentioned here by Ezekiel, with results causing matter to dissipate and increase energy levels. Directing frequencies against the different types of crystals and precious stones is now known to affect nature in several ways.”

Again, I am not saying this is the way Satan is or the way he operates. I just want you to take your imagination a little further and expand your mind beyond century old man-made traditions. There is no truth found anywhere for the traditional made up descriptions of what Satan and his

demonic army is all about, what they look like, and what their character is. Ironically, we actually have a better idea what his character is than we have of what he looks like.

When the author stated, ***“When applying energy in the form of heat, photons, or atomic forces, the type of elements mentioned here by Ezekiel...”*** what type of elements does he mean? I remember in the old days the big mainframe computers IBM made were laced, or coated, in gold because the circuitry communicated in a way and at a speed it never had before. Now they have improved those computers, but often those precious metals are still used. Interestingly, not only was Satan created with precious metals, but precious stones among other things also.

To return to this author:

“When applying energy in the form of heat, photons, or atomic forces, the type of elements mentioned here by Ezekiel, the results causing matter to dissipate and increase energy levels. Directing frequencies against these different types of crystals [which is described in the cherubim description] and precious stones is now known to affect nature in several ways. We are literally dealing with super science. The more we learn about the exotic science of frequencies, the more we understand these components of Ezekiel’s cherubim. When energy is applied to silicones, carbons, and gold, strange affects are observed. Adding to the specific frequencies of these elements or receiving frequency harmonics from these elements create theories of photon transmissions, super conductivity, gravity flux, field organization of matter, and perhaps time distortion, folding, pulsing, plus thought transmission. I have always been inclined to envision the spirit world as another dimension totally outside of our four dimensional universe of matter, space, energy, and time. But if Satan is composed of the aforementioned material elements, then the spirit universe is more likely simply a clocking mechanism within our known dimension. For example, the spirit world could assumedly be a time ship only a fraction of a second out of the phase with their own time lapse rate. I favor the older concept that the spirit realm in the universe is a different dimension. Therefore, to try to explain and define the spirit world is outside of today’s comprehension. In any event, now that we have at least some concept of what Satan is [how he was created] we can dare to explore his purpose and his plan and why he rebelled.”

Frankly, when reading through the first chapter of Ezekiel, most people just read right through, because it cannot be easily explain. Like I said, we will never quite be able to figure out exactly what a cherubim looks like, but we can have fun at least imagining the possibilities. It does not take away from God’s Word. If anything, it is fascinating and interesting to see how God created different types of beings. He is a God of variety that is for sure.

This author continues:

“The Bible tells us about three functions or types of cherubim. We have just explored two of their activities; they are adept at guarding and transportation. Let’s review these two and add a third specialty. We already know about the guarding cherubim because they were utilized to guard the entrance to the Garden of Eden. The Sphinx is just a representation designed to guard the pyramids.

The second form of cherubim and most plentiful is the transportation cherub portrayed several times in Holy Script. Ezekiel supplies the most elaborate description telling of its wheels, fire, crystal canopy, and seat.

We are ready to now explore a third type of cherubim. Again, we contemplate the words of Ezekiel's oracle to the king of Tyre, Ezekiel 28:14, 'Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.' Please direct your attention to 'cherub that covereth. What is that? Here covering means to shroud, overshadow, spread out over. The word also means spreading out like the hood of a viper or the spreading of a cobra's hood when it is threatened. Because this particular cherubim is anointed, and especially appointed to that position by God himself, the evidence demands that this is a very special ranking cherubim. God instructed Moses to construct two representations of cherubim and place them upon the Golden Ark of the Covenant. The interesting aspect of these two carvings is that Moses called them 'covering cherubim.' Exodus 25:18-20, 'And thou shalt make two cherubim of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubim on the two ends thereof. And the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be.' Later, Moses again describes the purpose of these two cherubim, which covereth saying in Exodus 37:9, 'And the cherubim spread out their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy seat, with their faces one to another; even to the mercy seatward were the faces of the cherubim. These two unique cherubim with their shrouds on the mercy seat, the symbolic and sometimes literal throne of God. Now we should determine if these two cherubim on the Ark are representations of someone. For example, was one of these two gold artifacts a representation of Ezekiel king of Tyre, himself a self-covering cherub? Because the wilderness Ark is considered a replica of the Ark in heaven, the golden cherubim are likely representations of two real beings in heaven. In the time of Moses while the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, God led them to a spot east of the Jordan River. From this vantage point, Moses takes the children of Israel westward into the sunset. Ahead, across the Jordan River, lay an aboriginal settlement called Shechem. Then Moses began to speak in Deuteronomy 11:29, 'And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal. Are they not on the other side Jordan, by the way where the sun goeth down, in the land of the Canaanites, which dwell in the champaign over against Gilgal, beside the plains of Moreh? For ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein.'

Here, some years before the Israelites would eventually cross over in the promise land, Moses told them that they must enter the promise land traveling over the Jordan from east to west. Why? It would have been much shorter, simpler and easier to enter Canaan on its western borders. [But that is not what God told them to do.] The city of Shechem is flanked by two hills, mount Gerizim to the south and mount Ebal to the north. Notice that in verse 29, God assigns mount Ebal at the north as a mount of curse, while mount Gerizim to the south is to be the mount of blessing.

Why have mounts of blessing and curse? Something strange and obviously symbolic is occurring here. But what? Surely, God had something in mind upon assisting the Israelites entering the promise land from the east. Perhaps it was because the entrance to the Garden of Eden was also on its eastern side. It is certainly no coincidence that entering from the east is also the direction from which one had to enter the wilderness tabernacle.”

The entrance to Eden was on the east. The Israelites entered the promise land from the east and, ironically, the tabernacle was entered from the east.

“If we were to enter the tabernacle’s outer court and then pass into the holy sanctuary, we would still be facing westward just as Moses commanded the children of Israel at Shechem. To our right you would see the showbread table. But straightaway the altar of incense would block our way to the Holy of Holies. Had we been able to continue westward to the gold curtain, which separated the two compartments you would have seen the Ark of the Covenant. You would have noticed that the two cherubim on top of the Ark would have been situated one toward our left, the south, and the other to the north.”

Remember the mountains, the mount of blessing, and the mountain of curse. The mount of blessing was to the south, the mount of the curse was to the north. Additionally, the way God intended for man to observe the Ark was facing west with the south on one side and the north on the other side.

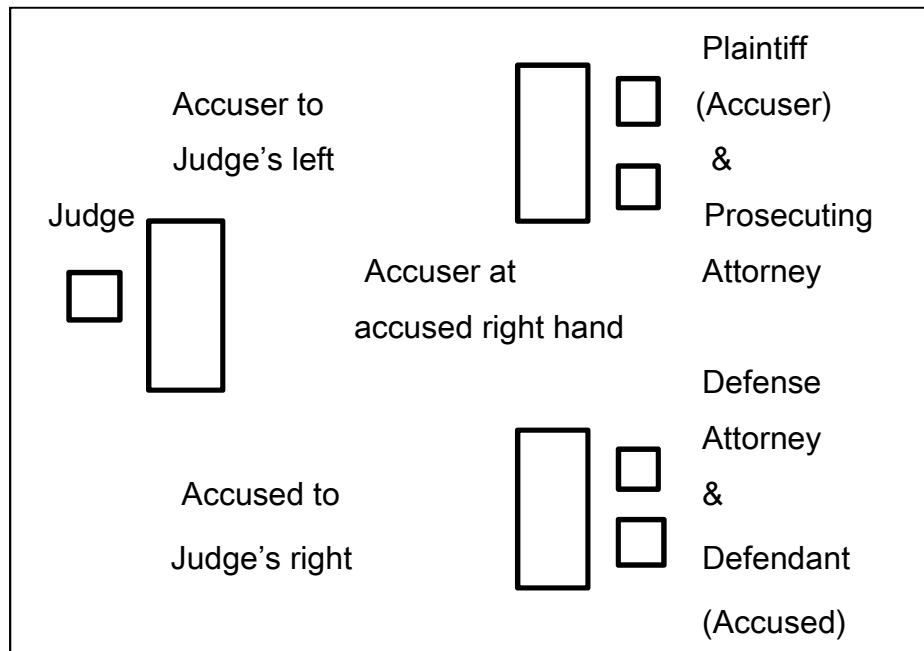
“We know that the wilderness tabernacle of Israel is a miniature replica of the sanctuary in heaven. By the same token, the Ark appears to be an even smaller replica of the heavenly sanctuary. In other words, we have discovered four scales of the real temple. The larger scale is a genuine heavenly temple. Next largest is the geological configuration of Shechem flanked by two mountains. The third largest is the tabernacle tent and the smallest was the Ark of the Covenant itself.”

So here are four examples of what God had prepared as an example for the children of Israel to follow:

- 1) The heavenly sanctuary,
- 2) The geological configuration of Shechem flanked by two mountains; one mountain a curse and one mountain a blessing. One to the north and one to the south,
- 3) The largest was the tabernacle tent as you would come from the east facing west,
- 4) The smallest is the Ark of the Covenant itself.

“Scale one, the heavenly temple. The Book of Revelation makes many references to the temple or sanctuary in heaven. The Apostle Paul tells that when Christ ascended to His Father, he became our high priest. This means that while in heaven Jesus intercedes as a buffer between mankind and God. [He is our mediator.] In Hebrews 9:11, ‘But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.’

In heaven, God the Father does not reside in a separate palace, as did the kings of Israel. God resides in a heavenly temple. Therefore, the throne of God is in the temple, whereas in Israel, the king's throne was never in the temple. The heavenly temple contains altars, thrones, cherubim, and several other originals of the earthly temple duplications. As we will soon see, the heavenly temple, as well as the other smaller scales of it, is all configured as a courtroom. For all these centuries scholars realized the sanctuary in heaven was similar to a court, (Daniel 7:9-10) but failed to grasp how the Ark of the Covenant was itself a courtroom model. Why a courtroom model? Atop the Ark was a mercy seat representing God's throne of judgment. On occasion God himself would take position over the mercy seat. The Hebrews called that presence the Shekinah glory. The solemn Day of Atonement depicted a guilty people coming into judgment before Yahweh their judge. Here the high priest mediated for the people and by ceremony removed the people's guilt. Because scripture says that Jesus sits at the Father's right, I for many years envisioned Christ sitting side by side at the Father's side. But there appears to be another configuration of grand significance. Consider this description from Hebrews 8:1, 'Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.' Our American and English courts provide a perfect picture of this scripture. Have you ever noticed how in our 12 courtrooms the accuser and prosecutor are always positioned at the judge's left hand, while the accused and defender are at the judge's right hand? This gives a whole new meaning to the expression that Christ sits at the right hand of the Father.'



Here you have an example of a courtroom setting. Jesus, acting as our defense attorney, sits at the right hand of the Father, the judge. Christ sits at God's right hand in defense of us, the accused ones. On the other hand, the plaintiff, the accuser, Satan, is not only the accuser, but he is also the prosecuting attorney. The accuser or the plaintiff always sits at the left hand of the judge just as God looks at him in heaven, from the left. Whereas Jesus, our mediator, our defense attorney, defending us, the accused ones, sits at the right hand of the Father in His throne.

“Jesus acting as our defense attorney is always positioned to the judge’s right hand. By this we can conversely prove that today’s court configuration has been copied from the high court of heaven. Now notice the same arrangement is described by Zechariah in a slightly different manner. In Zechariah 3:1, ‘And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.’ Exactly like in modern courts, the accuser sits across the room at the right hand of the accused. [From Satan’s perspective] From the perspective of the judge, the prosecutor sits at his left [who is Satan] and the defender sits at his right. [Jesus being our defender] Heaven’s court configuration is thereby proved. Christ to God’s right [the way God sees it] and Satan the accuser to His left. [As God sees it] Notice that Zechariah reports Satan standing to Joshua’s right. This alone proves that Satan is in the position of the accuser.”

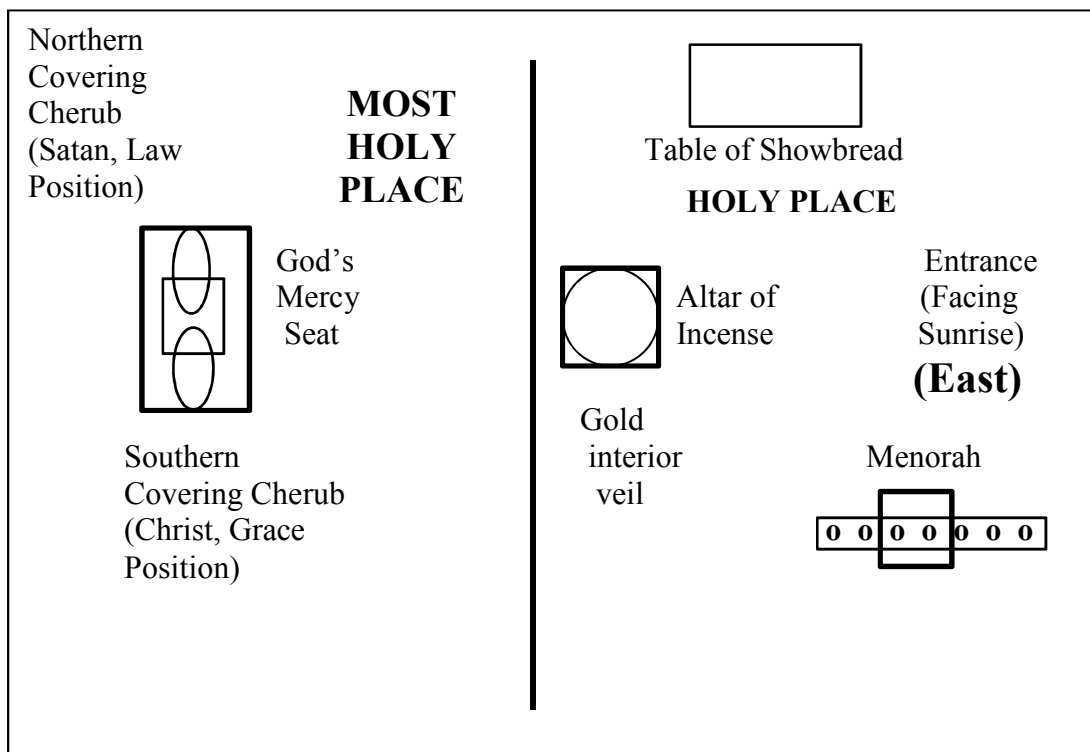
As the prosecuting attorney and the defense attorney views God, Satan would be on the right and Jesus would be on the left. But, as God sees them, it is just the opposite and that was what Zechariah was describing.

“Notice that Zechariah reports Satan standing to Joshua’s right. This alone proves that Plaintiff Accuser to (Accuser) Judge’s left & Judge Prosecuting Accuser at Attorney Accused right hand Defense Attorney Accused to & Judge’s right Defendant (Accused) Satan is in the position of the accuser. This is further confirmed in Revelation 12:10, ‘And the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.’

All these statements taken together strongly suggest that we are dealing with a heavenly trial in a heavenly courtroom setup.

Having now established that Satan the accuser is situated at God’s left hand [the way God sees him], we can clearly see that the artist’s configuration is a courtroom setup. But if you still have doubts, consider this triple proof. If the popular assumption is correct that the oracle to the king of Tyre is a representation of Satan, then our shocking conclusion is that Satan was represented on the Ark of the Covenant. He is one of those two covering cherubim [You may wonder how that could be? Stay with me and I will explain it.] then our shocking conclusion is that Satan was represented on the Ark of the Covenant. He is one of those two covering cherubim. King of Tyre equals Satan, and the king of Tyre’s covering equals covering cherubim, therefore Satan equals covering cherubim. If Satan is represented as one of those two cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant, and it appears that he really is, then a whole new theological world is opened. The strange thought here is that Satan’s official job in God’s heavenly court is acting capacity as plaintiff or prosecuting attorney. This concept contains truly awesome ramifications.

Can Satan still be in heaven today? In our current model, Satan is the prosecuting attorney, but technically the accuser is not the prosecutor. Perhaps Satan acts as both prosecutor and plaintiff. After all, Jesus has acted as both defendant and defense attorney. If Satan also performs a dual role, we need to understand how he might be a plaintiff.”



In comparison, here is a diagram of the Tabernacle with north at the top of the diagram and south at the bottom. After entering the Tabernacle from the east, a person passes through the Holy of Holies in a westward direction. The entrance of the Holy Place faces sunrise, which is east. The Holy Place contains the Menorah, the Table of Showbread, and the Altar of Incense. The entrance to the Most Holy Place is next to the Altar of Incense, but not everyone can enter the Most Holy Place. Once inside the Most Holy Place, God's Mercy Seat is there along with the Ark of the Covenant, and the covering cherubs, represented by the ovals in the diagram. It is here that the northern covering cherub represents Satan and the law, but the law is dead because Christ has fulfilled it. The southern covering cherub represents Christ and grace, although Christ is not a cherubim, but that will be explained shortly.

“In our current model, Satan is the prosecuting attorney but technically the accuser is not the prosecutor. Perhaps Satan acts as both prosecutor and plaintiff. After all, Jesus has acted as both defendant and defense attorney. If Satan also performs a dual role, we need to understand how he might be a plaintiff. Legally the accuser is the plaintiff. The one accusing is the defendant. As the plaintiff, Satan allows a railing accusation against the saints. Why would he do that? Could it be that he is the one claiming to be the victim; the one who was wronged?”

I think our investigation of this complaint will shake the foundations of Christianity but perhaps it is something we suspected all along. Remember when Moses pointed across the Jordan on his right, the north, stood Mount Ebal, the mount of curse, and to his left Mount Gezirim, the mount of blessing. As Moses continued his instructions to the tribes of Israel, he commanded that also a sacrifice be constructed on cursed Mount Ebal. He then instructed a steel of law be constructed. If you were to guess which mount the pillar of law was to be placed

upon, where would you put it? The Lord instructed that the pillar of law also be placed on the mount of curse. Why? Both the law and the sacrifice were assigned to the mount of curse on the north because Satan was represented on the Ark's northern side and the law was also on the cursed northern side. We detect that God's own law is entrusted to Satan's care. To have God's law assigned to Satan sounds heretical but the Apostle Paul confirms it by saying in Galatians, 'For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Yes, the curse and the law are placed to the north to God's left hand and yes, they were placed under the dominion of Satan, the prosecutor of that law."

All Satan has to charge against us is the law, which is dead. Christ fulfilled the law in order to remove the only thing with which Satan had to accuse us. To us the law is only a curse because we could never fulfill the law. Nobody could and one reason God gave us the law was to demonstrate how far we will fall short of living up to God's expectations. That is why we needed a mediator, Jesus Christ to come back to spill His blood to fulfill the law, to be that curse, to remove that curse from us, to die on that tree so we could have everlasting life and no longer be accused by the accuser any longer with the dead law. The only thing Satan could have accused us by was taken away. The ammunition that Satan had was gone, once and for all. Satan might sit in that courtroom today, but he sits empty handed because he has no law to accuse us with any longer.

"Now we see why the sacrifice was also placed to the north under Satan's dominion. The law demanded death to the transgressor. Jesus became the substitute sacrifice and the substitute curse for human kind. Christ fulfills the law. Finally, there was made available a real blessing, not just a negative blessing of not being cursed. Those who accept Christ circumvent the law and its curse. Perhaps this answers why no artifacts were placed on the Mount of Blessing. At the time of Moses, Christ had not yet sacrificed himself to fulfill the law demands; therefore, no artifacts could be on that mount. This circumventing of Satan's authority has made him furious. He pleads that God's law has been abused and that he has been unlawfully deprived of his kill."

This is why you need to know about Satan. He is going about as a roaring lion waiting to devour, he is furious, he is steaming mad. Satan still wants to hold the law over our heads, but God took away the only thing he could accuse us with.

In the Tabernacle, *"If Satan was represented as a covering cherub to the north, who did the southern cherub represent? The covering cherub on the right of God's Mercy Seat is symbolic of Christ our defender. [Symbolically only] On the Ark, the two cherubim face off as do attorneys in a courtroom of law. The defense attorney pleads that he has the keys of mercy and pardon because he paid the law and paid the law's penalty. The prosecutor maintains that the saints continue to sin even after Jesus paid the penalty. Therefore, the saints are still under his jurisdiction. These conclusions are more than shocking. They are revolutionary. The northern side of the Ark was the law the southern side is grace. The northern cherub presented punishment, blood sacrifice where the southern cherub presented Christ's mercy. God the judge, sitting between the cherubim preferred mercy, which is why He called his throne the Mercy Seat. The two cherubim face one another*

as the facing off of opponents. Just as the Israelites entered Canaan from the east so was the High Priest to come before the Ark.

As Moses led the Israelites to Mount Sinai, God knew that the children of Israel needed law. They had been under pagan culture and bondage for generations and they were literally like children. Our children today, whether literal or spiritual, need to be taught the law. They need to know the parameters of human conduct [Even though that human conduct does not take you to heaven.] By understanding the law, both natural and moral, will prevent the inevitable harmful consequences of breaking the law. Once the law is understood these children graduate. This graduation has several spiritual examples. The Hebrews as well as the most ancient cultures have the rights of passage from adolescence into adulthood. Children are given the security of law where they do not have to make decisions of behavior. When they become adults they become free, free to choose their own behavior. Another example of this changeover is contained in the very structure of the Holy Book. The Old Testament is a representation of the law with its rules and regulations. The New Testament represents the changeover to adulthood. Just as one cannot understand the New Testament without first knowing the Old Testament, so also the adults need the training and discipline in childhood to become a responsible adult. This changeover is also manifested in the spirit world where there is a change from the old covenant to the new covenant. Jesus gave an example of this changeover on a personal level.

This brings us back full circle to the heavenly court where Jesus argues that there is another level, a graduation. Scripture identifies the changeover as being like a metamorphous from law to grace; from a state where everything is rigid and preplanned, to that higher level, the state of thinking, variety and freedom. Many of the Christians prefer not to be free. [That is where 99% of most Christians live.] They prefer the security of the law where they are not bothered by the shades of gray encountered in daily life. The law views our world as contrasts of black and white where thinking is not necessary. The Apostle Paul made this distinction among Christians when he said some remain on the milk of God's Word while others go on the diet of the meat of the Word.

The outcome of this heavenly trial will determine if the saints can make this changeover and step over to a higher level, the level of grace. At this higher level, the saints need the responsibility of keeping the law up to Christ. [Because He was the only one that could fulfill it, and the only one that did fulfill it.]

To put it simply, they let Christ do their good works for them. They simply quit trying to be good. They let Christ do the gooding for them while they simply loved and valued the Redeemer. This changeover is the most wonderful act of freedom ever awarded the human race. The law was bad news, while grace is the good news. That is why grace is synonymous with the word Gospel, itself meaning Good News. Most Christians have been completely unaware of this courtroom setup and the upcoming trial that this setup implies.

This is why church traditions exist today. Many churches believe that although we live under grace we still have to remember the law. Yes, the law is good. It gives good moral standards like loving your neighbor, not cheating on your spouse, or not committing murder and that is just what is within the first Ten Commandments. There are other additional aspects of the law, but most importantly, we do not live under the law any more. We now live under grace.

Spiritual warfare cannot be understood until you understand the message of grace. This includes being empowered and strengthened for the battle, which is the *endunamoo*, the Lord's strength. You cannot have the powerful force, *kratos*, or the might, *ischus*, unless you understand the power and force that raised Christ from the dead. This understanding allows you to put on that armor and use that armor the way God wants you to use it.

In II Timothy 2:1, Paul writing to Timothy instructs, "***Thou therefore, my son, be strong [endunamoo, be strengthen and empowered] in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.***" I want to make clear that grace is the first step which takes us back into that courtroom. Because of that grace, we can stand before our Father with Jesus as our defense attorney defending us saying, "I have paid the price. I have spilled my blood. The accuser to my right, and, oh God, to your left, can no longer hold the law because the law is dead once and for all." Once we understand the law is dead, once we understand we are under God's grace, only then we will begin to understand and apply how to be spiritually fit for the battle. We are strengthened by the power, being able to have in our life the powerful force and might that raised Christ from the dead, to go on the offensive, no longer the defensive, but the offensive, through the blood of Christ against our enemy. Only through Christ's grace can we begin understanding that without it we are nothing. Without Christ's grace, do not fight against this vicious enemy Satan.

Not only do you need to understand how God sees these beings, the cherubim, seraphim, and nephilim, but you also need to understand what God sees us through Jesus and how Satan no longer holds anything over us. Fighting the spiritual war daily includes understanding that Satan has no power over us if we stay connected to Christ. It was all through the blood of Jesus Christ that we received this wonderful grace and now the opportunity of "***denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following Him***" to do the will of the Father in our march towards eternity and eternal existence with Him forever and ever.

You need to become aware of what we have available as we fight against our enemy. This is our intelligence session, God's Word. I bring this to you in a precise and correct way, the way God intended it so you understand His Word, whether you believe all the descriptions I gave you on what a cherubim is or not. What I wanted to think about what a powerful enemy we have. It is important to understand we cannot go against him except through the same grace and strength God gave Jesus when He raised Him from the dead. In the later verses of Ephesians 6 about the spiritual weapons, most preachers want to make you think that they are all for defensive purposes. I am going to show you in future chapters how to go on the offense with them.

Seducing Spirits, another Gospel, another Jesus

Ephesians 6:10 powerfully begins, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”*** Verse 11 continues, ***“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*** In the Greek, ‘wiles’ is *methodeia*, which is where we get our English word ‘method,’ so this verse could be read, ***“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the methodeia [or the methods] of the devil”***; the tricks, the schemes, and the craftiness of the devil. Most people read verse 11 in Ephesians 6 and think the devil uses temptations and such with his demonic army against them. It is true that he uses those things against us, but the devil goes after the preacher, prophets, and teachers of faith first because of their importance to the church. If their message can be distorted then most of the devil’s victory is already won. In my opinion, not enough attention is given to this verse in Ephesians or to teaching about spiritual warfare.

If I had a choice of who to have on my side in a spiritual battle, someone that has been taught thoroughly on spiritual warfare or someone that has been taught traditional Christianity (abundant life, the purpose driven life, the Christ-centered life) give me someone who has been taught on spiritual warfare. This is because as a sinner, as soon as you become a Christian saved by grace, the devil immediately goes on attack against you. Unfortunately, too many Christians never go through ‘spiritual boot camp,’ that prepares them how to fight against their enemy the devil. Preachers and churches want to immediately take you in a different direction that does not prepare you for the spiritual battle that lies ahead. That is unfortunate. We need people who know how to fight the spiritual war. Once you know how to fight the spiritual war and Christ becomes the center of your life, Christ will mold you into the spiritual warrior He wants you to be in His image. There was no greater spiritual warrior than Christ Himself. The gospels tell us Christ came here not to bring peace, but to bring a sword. Christ came here to do battle with Satan, to take the keys from death and hell away from him and to give us hope and salvation and He wants us to learn how to fight the good fight of faith and become spiritual warriors. As a spiritual warrior, you will grow in Christ, I guarantee it, but I also guarantee that you might convince yourself you can grow in Christ without fighting the good fight of faith, but you are just fooling yourself. You must learn how to fight the good fight of faith.

With that introduction, II Corinthians 11:3 tells us, ***“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”*** In the Greek, ‘subtlety’ means ‘craftiness, cunningness,’ so a better translation would be ***“. . . the cunning and crafty ways the devil penetrates and corrupts your mind from the simplicity or the faithfulness that is in Christ.”*** Verse 4 continues, ***“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.”***

To help understand this verse, I refer to Dr. J. Vernon McGee, who I think has the best work ever done on this particular subject. This is what Dr. McGee says about II Corinthians 11:3.

“I cannot overemphasize the need of more simplicity in getting out the Word of God. So many of our young preachers are the products of seminaries which are trying to train intellectuals. I

was listening to one of these men the other day, and I couldn't tell what he was talking about. After about fifteen minutes, I was convinced that he didn't know what he was talking about. They try to be so intellectual that they end up saying nothing. What he needed to do was give out the Word of God. Oh, the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus!

Paul is still making an appeal to that minority group [in the Corinthian church] which had stirred up trouble against him and was trying to discredit his ministry. He has already explained the reason he didn't come to spend more time with them. He had not been called to be a pastor. He was an 'evangelist'- literally a missionary who did not want to build on another man's foundation. He traveled onward and he moved out to the frontier. That was his service, his ministry."

Paul traveled throughout Asia Minor establishing the foundation so churches could be built in those areas. In some places, he stayed longer than others, and yet I disagree with J. Vernon McGee a bit here. Paul did stay long enough in some cases to be a pastor in those particular places where he built and established churches. However, Paul's mission was to spread the Word of God as far as possible to the then known world, hoping the Word would continue spreading even further after his departure.

I can also sympathize with Paul. As McGee states, the minority in the Corinthian church was *"...trying to discredit his ministry,"* just as there are people doing that to me and this ministry every day. I would much rather preach Christ than respond to the silly attacks I must address on occasion against this ministry.

McGee continues:

"Now he wants them to know that he is an accredited apostle. He writes, 'I am jealous over you with godly jealousy.' Why was Paul willing to actually make himself a fool, as it were, for them? Although he would rather speak to them about Christ than to spend the time defending himself. . . [from speaking foolishly].

He mentions this several times in this chapter. 'Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me,' in verse 1. 'I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet a fool; yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little,' in verse 16. He is saying it is going to be necessary for him to defend himself, to speak foolishly. The Greek word which is translated 'foolish' or 'fool' can mean stupid or ignorant or egotistic. Literally it would be 'mindlessness,' with no purpose. Paul is saying that spending time in his defense is mindless because it is not getting out the gospel. It doesn't serve the purpose of his ministry, and yet he feels he must do it because of the opposition of this critical group in Corinth. This is why he asked them to bear with his folly, to suffer him to be foolish so that he can defend his apostleship.

We see the working of Satan in all this. At the very beginning of the early church the Devil used the method of persecution, but he found that he wasn't stopping the spread of Christianity. The fact of the matter is that the church has never grown as it did those first one hundred years after Christ lived. It swept across the Roman Empire, and by A.D. 315 it had gone into every nook and corner of the Roman Empire."

I agree with Dr. McGee on this issue, during that period of persecution Christianity spread more quickly than at any other time. Even though there are many more people hearing the gospel now, most are not hearing under persecution with only a few exceptions. Yes, there are pockets of persecution, for example in Pakistan, but at that time, the whole Roman Empire was persecuting Christians across its vast empire, but it did not stop the spread of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As Dr. McGee said, Christianity went into every nook and cranny declaring the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Christianity spread like a wildfire while under persecution.

“When the Devil saw that persecution would not stop the church, he changed to a different tactic. He joined the church. He began to hurt the church from the inside. He still does that today.”

And here is where you must begin understanding the primary methods, or wiles, the devil uses today. As soon as you become a Christian, he tries to place you where the Word of God is not taught correctly.

“He attacks the validity of the Word of God, and he tries to discredit the gospel. If that doesn’t work, he tries to discredit the man who preaches the gospel. So he tried to discredit Paul. Paul makes it very clear that he would rather be preaching the gospel than be spending the time defending himself. He takes the time to defend himself because he is jealous over the Corinthians.

The same thing happens to me. On occasion, I need to stop and defend myself. Not because I would rather do that, I would rather preach the Gospel. But if I do not defend myself, pockets of bad seeds will spread and corrupt the minds of some listening to those who criticize this ministry. Some minds are weaker than others are. That is just a fact and that is what Paul was dealing with in the Corinthian church.

“He loves them. He is afraid they will be beguiled by Satan just as Eve was beguiled by [the devil and his methods.] Paul knows that Satan works ‘so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted . . .’ [2 Cor. 11:3-4]”

In verse 4, I want you to notice three important phrases, “. . . ***another Jesus . . . another spirit . . . another gospel . . .***” Using Dr. McGee and the Bible, I will be explaining these phrases, which are all methods and wiles of the devil.

The first one is, ***“he that cometh preacheth another Jesus”*** meaning someone preaching another Jesus. I am not just talking about another person. I am referring to anything that becomes a primary focus in your life is “another Jesus.” It could be a person, another religion, money, possessions, distractions, or philosophy. Anything that becomes first in your life. It could be even family. What Paul was trying to say here is that in addition to those other things that become first in your life, someone is preaching another Jesus. False prophets preach a message that sounds related to Jesus, but He never said those things; Christ’s message becomes made up

by the individuals declaring what Jesus said. That is what Paul was suggesting here; some will come to you preaching another Jesus, but their message is manmade designed to follow man and his traditions. Paul addresses three areas attacking the church. If the attacks are successful, the devil and his followers have won. However, they are going down the wrong path and into a ditch together without any hope of salvation.

“We still face the problem today of preaching another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel. Some time ago there was a musical production called ‘Jesus Christ, Super Star,’ [but these people that preach another Jesus, another gospel] deny that He was raised from the dead bodily. They deny that He is the one who died for the sins of the world. Yet . . . He is very God of very God and very man of very man. If that is denied, then a different Jesus is being presented.”

There are false prophets preaching another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel. Run from them as far and as fast as you can because they are from Satan himself sent to beguile you and to twist you into believing a lie and become damned. II Peter 2:1 addresses those who preach another Jesus, what this other spirit is, and what this other gospel is that leads us astray. It reads, ***“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”***

This is what Dr. McGee has to say about that:

“‘But there were false prophets also among the people.’ Peter is writing to Jewish Christians, and ‘the people’ he is talking about is Israel. There were false prophets among the people of Israel, Peter says, ‘even as there shall be false teachers among you,’ that is, among believers, the church. There were false prophets in the Old Testament, but there are false teachers today. My friend, we do not need to be aware of false prophets at all- that is not our problem. Any man who attempts to prophesy today will soon be proven a liar- there is no question about that.”

Meaning, what is prophesied will either happen or not. Anybody that prophesizes anything that is not in the Bible, is a false prophet. To that, I would also like to add, we do not need another new word from our Lord. We already have all we need. All that should be stated and preached is already in the Bible.

“During World War II, there was here in Pasadena, California, a man who predicted that the end of the world would come (if I remember correctly) on September 15, 1943. When that day came, newspaper reporters filled his yard and waited. Eventually he had to come out and say that he misfigured it. He said that instead it would be September 15, 1944. The ministers of Pasadena who were meeting together in a prayer fellowship at that time were concerned about this man’s prophesies and wanted to get a statement into the newspaper. I said to them, ‘Forget it. As far as I am concerned, on September 15, 1944, the man will be proven a liar.’ You know, the world didn’t come to an end the next year either. What happened was that the newspaper reporters laughed at and ridiculed that man. Of course, it hurts the cause of Christ when anyone does that sort of thing. The man disappeared from this area and I do not know where he is today. We do not need to pay any attention to false prophets but let me say this to

you, you need to check false teachers. You need to check all teachers to make sure they are declaring the Word of God. I am amazed today how easily people are deceived by all kinds of teaching. People will fall for anything, and if you do not believe that, you ought to see the elaborate operations and headquarters of some of the cults which are located here in Southern California. [Dr. J. Vernon McGee was a preacher in Southern California.] You would be amazed, for it reveals that there are a great many people who have not heeded Peter's warning that false teachers are abroad. Instead they listen to them and give them financial backing. 'Even as there shall be false teachers among you.' Dr. Marvin R. Vincent, in his very fine Word Studies in the New Testament, says the Greek word for 'false teachers,' is pseudo-didaskalos, occurs only here in the New Testament. As we have said before, false teachers are the danger for the church today, and believe me, they are dangerous. What is a false teacher? A false teacher is one who knows the truth but deliberately lies for some purpose. It is either for some selfish reason, or he wants to please people, or he does it for money. There are many teachers like that today. They preach and say what people want them to say, although they know what the truth is- that is a false teacher. There are other men who teach error ignorantly. Some of the great reformers of the past and some of the great post-apostolic church fathers believed and taught some things which we do not hold to today. We believe they were entirely in error on certain things. Those men were not false teachers. They believed they were teaching the truth, and that does not put them in a category of a false teacher. A false teacher knows what he is doing, and he does it deliberately. I think we have in this verse a good definition of false teachers: 'Who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring unto themselves swift destruction.'

Damnable heresies actually means destructive heresies. That which identifies these false teachers is that they deny Christ's work of redemption for them. They will appear in the church as members of the church, they will claim to be Christians and they will work secretly undercover of hypocrisy.

Now false teachers have some true doctrine. There is not a cult that I know of which does not have some truth in it. That is the one thing that makes them very dangerous, ten thousand times more dangerous than if they were 100 percent in error. These teachers generally believe some things that are true. Our Lord said, 'Beware of the false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves' (Matt. 7:15). Paul warned the church at Ephesus, 'For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock' (Acts 20:29). These wolves in sheep's clothing will absolutely destroy the flock and scatter them.

Our Lord made this clear when He gave us a picture of the condition of the kingdom after His rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection. He would not establish His kingdom on earth at the time, but He said that the kingdom of heaven would be like the sower sowing seed, like a mustard tree, and like leaven. Leaven has gotten into the bread today. The bread is the Word of God, and there is a lot of false teaching that goes out under the guise of being the Word of God.

'And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of [2 Peter 2:2].

'And many shall follow their pernicious ways.' False followers will go after false teachers. I do not believe that God's elect can be permanently deceived. I believe that God permits a lot of the cults of 'isms' in order to draw away from the true church that which is false, because

those who are phony will go after this sort of thing. This is exactly what Paul said would take place: 'For there must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved would be made manifest among you' (I Cor. 11:19). In other words, the genuine child of God will not go in that direction. The Lord Jesus said, 'My sheep hear My voice, and they will not follow a false shepherd' (John 10:27). When you see people take off after one of these false teachers, they are either ignorantly deceived or they are deliberately deceived because that is what they believe and what they wanted to hear all the time.

'And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not' [2 Pet. 2:3]. 'Feigned words'- the Greek word for 'feigned' is plastos. Dr. Joseph H. Thayer, in his lexicon of the New Testament, says that plastos means 'moulded, formed, as from clay, wax, or stone.' Plastos - does that sound like another word you've heard? We have a new word, a word that wasn't even in existence in Peter's day, yet in a way it was. Plastic - that is the word Peter uses here. Plastic. I love that because today you can buy a plastic pitcher, you can buy a plastic bucket, you can buy a plastic dish, you can buy a plastic toy. You can buy almost anything in plastic because plastic can be molded into every possible shape. When you read in 2 Peter 2:3, 'And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.'"

In Greek, 'feigned' is '*plastos*,' so verse 3 is saying, "They will mold you through their covetousness to make merchandise of you."

J. Vernon McGee continues,

"May I say this, and I do not want to say it kindly. There are also plastic preachers who can be molded and shaped by the people that they serve. They say what their congregations want to hear. They use plastic words. This is the reason that neo-orthodoxy when it first appeared deceived so many people. Peter tells us false teachers will speak with vain words, plastic words, words that are just molded words. They will fit their words to the people to whom they are speaking. They speak one thing to one crowd, and they talk differently to another crowd. I know a man who can bring a fundamental message if he is in a fundamental group, but when he gets with a liberal group, he is just about as liberal as they are. He is a plastic preacher- you can pour him into any mold, and he will accommodate himself to it. What is this motivation for these false teachers? I will tell you, Simon Peter puts it right out in the open here: 'And through covetousness.' They do it because they are covetous. Covetousness is actually a form of idolatry. Sometimes it may be that they are covetous for a reason, or a position, or a name, or for popularity. Many of them are covetous for money. I am not talking through my hat, my friend. I could give you example after example of the fact that there are many false teachers abroad today, but I will give you just one. I read a report in a very fine Christian publication which tells about a service held by a well-known evangelist. They reported that the preacher introduced the evangelist, saying, 'He is a man after my heart because he loves money just like I love it.' As the evangelist spoke, he was forceful, he was dynamic, and he put on quite a show. For forty-five minutes he did not read one Scripture verse, not even his text. He partially quoted only three or four verses. He used the personal pronoun 'I' 175 times. He referred to Jesus Christ only eleven times. There was laughter every two minutes during his message- he was quite a comedian. When the invitation was given, some twenty young people responded to the urgings of the evangelist and went forward. For

what? They had not heard the gospel! This is something that is so prevalent in our country today. The average church member does not recognize the gospel when he hears it and does not recognize when he doesn't hear it. This is the tragedy of the hour in which we live. There are many false teachers abroad today."

I remember, back in the late 1970's or early '80's, I was working under Gene Scott's ministry. There was preacher in New Orleans; I believe he called himself 'The preacher of Bourbon Street.' He was well known at the time and he had the same type of approach as the evangelist McGee referred to. Just about every sentence out of his mouth was some type of funny story. He kept you entertained no doubt. It was very amusing, but there was no gospel, there was no Word of God in his message. Once he visited California and came on to Dr. Scott's program called The Festival on a Saturday night or Sunday afternoon. At that time, Dr. Scott's program was on the local channel 30 here in Los Angeles. We were going to hold a service on a Sunday evening with him being the primary speaker at that service. In the sanctuary in Glendale, Dr. Scott's teaching on the Book of Hebrews could not fill that sanctuary. Some people felt the drive to Glendale was too long or whatever excuse they had, so half the building was empty most of the time. Only the serious students showed up regularly, but when this preacher visited, the church was full of people because of his reputation. But his reputation was only based upon his entertainment value. He could make you feel good and make you laugh. He preached the things he knew that you wanted to hear, but there was no Word of God or Gospel of Jesus Christ in his preaching.

That fact saddened me. I was very young and it saddened me that this man could fill the building, but Dr. Scott could not even get more than half the congregation to show up on a Sunday evening to hear the serious and complete study of the Book of Hebrews. Those people had 'itching ears.' They heard only what they wanted to hear to make them feel good. I can understand what Dr. McGee was relaying here in this story.

Dr. McGee continues:

"And through covetousness shall they with vain words make merchandise of you.' In other words, these false teachers are doing it for money. I personally resent all forms of promotion today. When I return from a trip and sort through my accumulated mail, I will sometimes pitch letters into my wastebasket without even opening them. The name of the organization is on the envelope, so I know who they came from. I've been getting their letters for years, although I've never contributed to any of these organizations, I don't know why they keep sending out all the propaganda, but I do know this: they want to make merchandise of me. It is my conviction that an organization ought to appeal only to the folks who are interested in their certain work. There are many fine mission organizations, and there are many fine Christian radio programs, but there are some that are nothing in the world but promotion. One of the marks of a false teacher is that he is a promoter. He is not interested in giving you the Word of God; he is not attempting to help you. He is attempting to get something from you, to make merchandise of you. You are sort of a food trading stamp for him or a luxury car for him."

The above text is Dr. McGee's basic introduction. Now I want to explain more fully the three different areas that are the focus of this chapter.

Let us first look at the term ‘seducing spirits’ and what Dr. McGee has to say about them.

I Timothy 4:1 says, ***“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”***

“‘Now’ would be better translated ‘but.’ This would set in sharp contrast that early doctrinal creed given the final verses of the preceding chapter and the apostasy within the church that Paul is now going to discuss.

‘That in the latter times.’ Elsewhere my writings on 1 Timothy, I say that this expression refers to the last days of the church on the earth, but I want to change my mind on that. I now feel that this refers to the days of the church beginning immediately after the life of Paul. The apostasy of the church had begun even at that time. You remember that when Paul was in Ephesus he warned them that there would come wolves in sheep’s clothing who would deceive the believers. John said, “Already there are many antichrists”- already error had entered the church. The first great church was a Coptic church in Africa; it was way ahead of others. North Africa produced some of the greatest saints in the early church, including Augustine, Tertullian, and Athanasius, but that church went off into heresy and departed from the faith. When Paul says here, “In the latter times,” he does not have the second coming of Christ in view at all. However, in 2 Timothy 3:1 where he says, ‘This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come,’ he is using a technical expression that always refers to the last days of the church on the earth before the Lord Jesus takes it out. The ‘latter times’ mentioned here refers to our times today- Paul was speaking of what lay just ahead for the church in his day.

‘Some shall depart from the faith.’ Paul was warning that there would be heretical teachers who will mislead a great company of people. There would be a departure from the faith. Paul warned also in 2 Thessalonians 2 of the apostasy to come. Actually this matter of apostasy has been in the church a long time, and it will not be new at the end of the age by any means.

‘Depart’ . . . in the Greek means ‘to stand away from.’ A departure suggests not only that you have a point to which you are going, but also a point from which you have come. Those who apostatize are ones who have professed at one time to hold the faith, but now have departed from it. There cannot be an apostasy in paganism because they have never professed the faith. They never professed to trust Christ as Savior. They have never heard about Him, and there can be no apostasy among them. The apostasy comes within the organized church among those who profess to the faith and depart from it.”

II Corinthians 11:4 talks about ‘another spirit,’ which is not the Holy Spirit, and it is in I Timothy that Paul goes into what kind of ‘spirit’ this is explaining that it is a ‘seducing spirit,’ which he addresses in the following:

“‘Giving heed to seducing spirits.’ Now when they depart from the faith, what is responsible for it? What has caused them to depart? Is it because they become better educated, more intellectual? Is it because of scientific developments and increased knowledge which reveals that the faith can no longer be held? No, Paul says, ‘Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits.’

‘Seducing’ actually means wandering, roving and it comes with the word vagabond or deceiver or seducer. In fact, Satan is all those things. They shall give heed to satanic spirits.’

I would say “to evil spirits.” These evil or satanic spirits would use them as a vessel. They are controlled by them in order to mislead you to be the false teachers and the false prophets.

“Doctrines of devils [demons].’ People will give heed to the doctrines of demons. It is alarming to a great many people that even in our very militaristic age there is a return to the things of the spirit world and great emphasis upon it.

Christians are told to ‘. . .try the spirits whether they are from God. . .,’ because there have gone out into the world these seducing spirits (1 John 4:1). The test that we should apply is the creed that was given in 1 Timothy 3:16: ‘...God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit. . . .’ The only way of salvation is through the death of Christ, and it is by this truth we can test the doctrine of demons today.’

Paul was referring to these seducing spirits, the doctrines of devils or demons who twist and corrupt your mind. That is what II Corinthians 11:4 is saying, what Paul was saying to the Corinthian church, and what he told Timothy; beware of these seducing spirits that try constantly to corrupt your mind. The important part is these seducing spirits come from inside the church, and not from all the little temptations of life. Yes, temptations you must deal with on a daily basis, but those are minor compared to what the seducing spirits are doing in the church today. Paul warns us to beware of these doctrines of the devil, because the devil is the ultimate deceiver and seducer controlling these evil spirits working from inside the church. However, if the church declares there are seducing spirits working inside the church, the devil knows his victory is won, because the implication is that you are now going against the church. I am telling you, there are many churches influenced by these seducing spirits that are preaching the doctrines of these devils and demons. You need to beware of them and not fall for the trap.

How can you tell if a church has these seducing spirits working within it? You can tell because just as I tell you all the time, in just about every message I preach, I take you throughout this Word of God. The message preached must be verifiable. I cannot rightly divide the Word of God unless I can give you demonstration after demonstration from the Bible, not just opinions or stories. The message preached is about what God’s Word has to say through verifiable demonstrations from front to back in this Book. If I do not preach from the Book, I guarantee I will be subject to seducing spirits and will give in to it. What I say has to be verifiable. That is why I say, “Do not listen to me or listen to anything I say if I do not continually bring it and verify it with you chapter and verse.” God just does not say something once and then forget about it. God’s Word can be verified over and over and over. Most of the messages I preach take you into many different books of this Word to declare the same message and to give you the different illustrations of how God does that declaring through His Word.

Do not fall for the seducing spirits that Satan and his demons use that include another gospel and another Jesus. Individuals are not doing this, it happens in the church world, by established preachers that have been seduced by these evil spirits. Working within the church is the most successful method the devil has ever thought of to deceive Christians. As Dr. McGee said, when

persecution could not destroy the church, Satan went to Plan B and started seducing preachers with seducing spirits who were more concerned about pleasing men than pleasing God.

Dr. McGee also commented on the subject of “another gospel” from verse six of Paul’s letter in Galatians 1. Paul writes, ***“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.”*** You can see it is not only in II Corinthians chapter 11 that Paul writes of this subject. Paul writes of it in other letters to churches or individuals as well, so we can see this subject is verifiable and you can understand it more clearly as we go other sources and different books and letters in the Bible.

Dr. McGee writes:

“Paul now states his subject. He goes from cold to hot. In fact, he is hot under the collar. Why? Because there are those who are mutilating the Gospel. Paul would give his life for the Gospel.

‘I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel’ [Gal. 1:6].

There are two aspects of the gospel, and it can be used in two senses: (1) the facts of the gospel, and (2) the interpretation of the facts. The facts of the gospel are the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Christ. Paul said to the Corinthians, ‘For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received [Paul didn’t originate this gospel; he received it], how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures’ (1 Cor. 15:3-4). These are the historical facts of the gospel which cannot be changed. You have never preached the gospel unless you have stated these facts. The second aspect of the gospel is the interpretation of the facts. They are to be received by faith plus nothing. Now the subject of Paul’s letter to the Galatian believers concerns the interpretation of the facts of the gospel. The Judaizers had followed Paul into the Galatian country. They did not challenge the facts of the gospel. After all, five hundred people at once saw the Lord Jesus after His resurrection. When you have that many people around as witnesses, you don’t run around denying the facts of the gospel. The heresy they were promoting concerned the interpretation of those facts. They were very sly and subtle and said something like this, [“They” were the seducing spirits.] ‘Did Brother Paul come here among you?’ The folk would say, ‘Yes, he came and preached the gospel and we accepted it. We are converted. We know Christ is our Savior, and we are in the body of believers.’ The Judaizers would respond, ‘Oh, that is wonderful. Brother Paul is accurate as far as he goes, but he doesn’t go far enough. Did he tell you that you should keep the Mosaic Law? Oh, he didn’t? Well, he should have told you that. Yes, you are to trust Christ, but you must also follow the Mosaic Law or you won’t be saved.’

This is one of the oldest heresies known, and it is still with us today. It is adding something to the gospel of grace; it is doing something rather than simply believing something. It is faith plus something rather than faith plus nothing. Every cult of ‘ism’ has something for you to do in order to be saved. It is interesting that Paul said to the Philippian jailer, ‘. . . Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. . .’ (Acts 16:31). Simon Peter said to the Sanhedrin, ‘Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved’ (Acts 4:12). Christ told the apostles to preach the gospel of salvation by grace. They were not to do anything to gain their salvation,

but they were to trust what Christ already had done for them. The gospel shuts out all works. Now Paul is writing to Galatian believers and saying, 'I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.'"

Here Paul was referring to the church returning to the law and believing the Judaizers, who said, "Yes, Christ is wonderful. Yes, Christ saves you, but to stay saved let me take it one-step further. To stay saved you have to apply the law in your life." So, it is Christ plus the law, these "dos and don'ts" to stay saved. Those Judaizers were perverts because they were bringing another gospel. But you do not have to live under the law, and you will see in verse 8 that Paul says the result of this is to be cursed by God.

"... There will be some that trouble you, and will pervert the gospel of Christ' [Gal. 1:7]. The word pervert in the Greek is the word metastrephai. It is a strong word . . . used by Dr. Luke in speaking of the sun turned to darkness (see Acts 2:20), and by James, speaking of laughter turning to mourning (see James 4:9). To attempt to change the gospel has the effect of making it the very opposite of what it really is. This is important to see.

'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed [Gal. 1:8].'

This verse is as strong as anything could possibly be. Paul says that if an angel dare to declare any other message than the gospel, he would be dismissed with a strong invective.

If any angel should appear to me right now and say, 'You are right as far as you go, but you are also to do something to be saved'; or if an angel should appear to you as you and say, '[McGee] is correct as far as he goes, but you have to do something else,' both you and I should say, 'Get out of here; I'm not listening to you and although you are an angel from heaven.'

My friend, in our day we hear many speakers who are trying to give us another 'gospel.' They may look like angels to you- after all, Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, and his ministers are transformed as ministers of righteousness (see 2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Now hear Paul- 'As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed [Gal. 1: 9]. In strong language Paul says, ' . . . let him be accursed,' which literally means let him be damned.

Friend, I cannot make that statement any stronger.

The gospel shuts out all works. Romans 4:5 says, 'But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.' I find a great many folk who think they have to become good enough to be saved. The other day a man said to me, 'McGee I want to become a Christian. I am going to try to be a little better, and if I improve, I am going to become a Christian.' I said to him, 'If you improve, you will never become a Christian. The only class that God is saving is the ungodly. The Lord Jesus said He didn't come to call the righteous; He came to call sinners. The reason He said that was because there is none righteous, no not one. Even the righteousness of man is as filthy rags in God's sight. Law condemns us, and it must make us speechless before grace can save us.'

Romans 3:19 tells us that, 'Now we know that what things so ever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Judaizers did not deny the facts of the gospel- that Jesus died and rose again. What they denied was that this was adequate. They insisted that you have to keep the law plus trust in

Christ. Paul is saying that whoever tries to mingle the law and grace- let him be damned! Why? Because they pervert the gospel. They do not deny the facts of the gospel, but they misinterpret those facts.”

They pervert the gospel, because we do not live under the law anymore. There are too many preachers and too many churches trying to get you to do a list of things so you can remain in the salvation of Jesus Christ and the hope of eternal life. But Dr. McGee and I am saying Christ died for you, because we are all sinners. None of us are righteous, not a single one of us. We are sinners saved by grace, understanding that through the spilling of Christ’s blood, we were given a second chance to now be reconciled back to the Father. It is only through that blood that we have that opportunity. It is not by works, not by some Mosaic Law, not by a list of things you do to be saved, or someone you follow. It is by grace. It has always been about grace.

It is the false preachers who want you to do something to add to your salvation, but what they are doing is taking away from your salvation without you even realizing it. If your church asks you to do something, fine, do it and do it hilariously and with a good attitude. You should want to help your church. You should want to help the ministry you are following whether it is financial or some other way. There is nothing wrong in that. Just do not believe that because you are doing those good works you are saved. That is another gospel. It is what McGee and Paul were saying. That is another gospel. That is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you stay focused on what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about, you will not be seduced by the spirits controlling preachers in pulpits today. They only convince you that you must add something to your salvation to stay saved. No, you do not. You only need the blood of Jesus Christ to cover you, so you can be reconciled back to the Father on a daily basis. I thank God for what He did. Even though it is horrific to think about what Christ experienced and suffered for me on that cross. I thank Him daily for what He did for me and what He did for you. Without it there would be no hope and no salvation. There would just be seducing spirits and another gospel.

Let us continue with what Paul and Dr. McGee have to say about those who preach another Jesus. Paul writes in Colossians 2:4, ***“And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.”***

About this, McGee states:

“He is going to deal with the matter of philosophy and enticing words. [in verse 8] Philosophy and psychology have been substituted for the Bible, and this is the thing that is enticing to so many young preachers in our seminaries today. I am amazed to find that some of these men with a Ph.D. degree from a seminary know so little about the Bible!”

In the years I worked in Gene Scott’s ministry, I knew he had a Ph.D. from Stanford University in Philosophy of Education and he studied under some great minds of his day. On occasion, an intern in the ministry would want to enter Bible school not realizing they could learn more by being under that ministry than anything they could learn in Bible school. Dr. Scott’s response was always, “Why? I have a Ph.D. in Philosophy of Education. Not one of those professors taught me anything about God’s Word.” Schooling did not teach him one thing about God’s Word. Dr. Scott taught in such a unique and instructive way that brought out new truths that

people did not see before. My personal opinion is that he was one of the greatest theological minds of our time. I am just thankful and grateful that I had the opportunity to study under him over the 30 years I was associated with that ministry, especially the first ten years. Am I against education? Of course not. If you have the opportunity, go to a secular institution not a Bible school. Bible schools will just confuse you, because those spirits I mentioned earlier have seduced most Bible schools. You will study all the different possible ways of looking at the gospel, but it is all heresy designed to confuse you. Do not waste your time. I know some will be insulted by this because they think Bible schools are good for people. You would do better to be part of a ministry that can teach you the Word of God, the precise and correct knowledge of the Word of God. Paul used the Greek word *epignosis*, which is ***the precise and correct knowledge of Jesus Christ***. The Word of God is not about all the possibilities something might be interpreted as. There is only one way to interpret Word of God, but there are various ways of presenting it with each individual's different style, but there is only one Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In my opinion, there is only one way of teaching the Old Testament and there is only one way of teaching the New Testament. That would be the way it was declared by Jesus and the apostles, because they were the ones truly inspired by God himself to have their letters put in what we know today as the Bible. They are there to inspire us and to instruct us on the ways of the Lord. There are no variable interpretations of how this Word should be preached. There is only one way it should be preached, that is the precise and correct way by verifying the Word. You rightly have to divide the Word of God by verifying it in the Bible. That is what I learned from Gene Scott; God is about "repeatables." God repeats what He is trying to get across in His Word from Genesis to Revelation over and over and over, but not with some new interpretation.

Repeating important ideas is also what Paul is doing in the New Testament. Paul mentions only once in II Corinthians 11:3-4, "another gospel, another Jesus, another seducing spirit," but he gives further explanation of what he means in different letters that he wrote to the Corinthian church. In the original text, there were no chapters and verses. Paul just wrote a letter like the other letters he wrote, and in the other letters, he verifies what he was saying in II Corinthians 11:4. This confirms that you are hearing the Word of God when something is repeated and explained not differently, but rather just a little more thoroughly. That is what I am trying to get across.

Let us return to McGee once again:

"He is going to deal with the matter of philosophy and enticing words. Philosophy and psychology have been substituted for the Bible, and this is the thing that is enticing to so many young preachers in our seminaries today. I am amazed to find that some of these men with a Ph.D. degree from a seminary know so little about the Bible! They know about Bultmann and Kant and Plato, but they don't seem to know very much about the Word of God. That is the great problem of our day.

There was that same danger in the Colosse and also in [other churches]. I think that is actually what killed the church in Colosse, and it made the church in Laodicea the weakest of the seven churches in Asia Minor. It was in the worst spiritual condition, and yet the people thought that they were well off. These cities were wealthy. They boasted of their wealth and affluence and also their knowledge, but they were blind to their true spiritual condition. Paul

says, 'Don't let any man beguile you with enticing words.' Beguile means 'to victimize.' Enticing words are a lot of oratory or sweet-talk. I heard of a theologian who uses big words and tries to be very deep in his thinking. He was talking to a group of men for about a half an hour. Another man walked up to that group and asked one of the men on the outside of the circle, 'What's he talking about?' The fellow answered, 'He hasn't said yet.' That is the problem- he never would say. All he did was talk with enticing words. I know a dear lady who attends a certain church because, as she says, 'I just love to go there because the preacher uses such flowery language and he makes me feel so good all over.' That is the danger today. A great many people love this pretense towards intellectuality among preachers rather than the simple Word of God.

I started preaching before I went to college, and then in college I was exposed to 14 liberalism because I went to a liberal college. That was all I knew at the time; I was not grounded in the Word of God at all, even though I had had a wonderful pastor. I thought I wanted to be an intellectual preacher- I thought that would be great. I thank God that that was knocked out of me in my second year of college. I became concerned with the teaching of the Word of God. Paul warns us to beware that they will beguile us with enticing words and will victimize us. 'Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ [Col. 2:8].'

'Beware'- Look out! Stop, look, and listen!

'Lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.' If you were to follow the history of philosophy beginning with Plato, including many of the church fathers, and coming down to more recent times (including Kant, Locke and Bultmann, who seems to be the craze with some theologians right now), you would find that none of them have a high view of the inspiration of the Word of God. They are looking for answers to the problems of life, but they will not be found in philosophy.

A true philosopher is a seeker after truth, but truth is not found in human wisdom. Christ is the answer, the answer to philosophy."

That is what Gene Scott would say. He had a doctorate degree in the Philosophy of Education from Stanford University and he said he did not learn anything while at Stanford about the Word of God. His Ph.D. taught him nothing about the Word of God. Gene Scott had to look outside those realms to learn what the Word of God had to say. Too many people today use education to teach them what others think about what the Word of God says instead of going to the Bible. Learning about the Bible has to start with the Bible, with the Word of God. You can go to outside sources, but if they change what the Word of God says, they are nothing more than another Jesus, another philosophy, another way to deceive you.

"A true philosopher is a seeker after truth, but truth is not found in human wisdom. Christ is the answer, the answer to philosophy. Paul wrote, 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom. . .' (1 Cor. 1:30). But false philosophy is like a blind man looking in a dark room for a black cat that isn't there- there is no hope for its search for truth. Paul warns the Colossians to beware of this.

'After the tradition of men.' You may remember that the Lord Jesus condemned the religious rulers in His day because they taught the tradition of man rather than the Word of God. Very frankly, this is one of the reasons I have turned to the teaching of the total Word of God. It is so easy to lift out some peculiar interpretation of some particular passage and then ride that

like a hobby horse. I believe in prophesy, but there is more in the Word of God than just prophesy. Some preachers dwell on the Christian life. That certainly is in the Bible, but there is more than just that. This is why I think it is so important for us to study the total Word of God.

‘After the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.’ The Greek word for ‘rudiments’ is stoicheion, which means ‘that which is basic,’ the ABC’s. Some people try to build their Christian living on some worldly system that seems so simple. Our base is not philosophy or a worldly system; our base is Christ. [Anything else is what Paul called, “another Jesus.”]

“‘Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross’ [Col. 2:14] Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. This old flesh of ours has been condemned. When Christ died, He died for you and me; He paid the penalty for our sin.

When the Lord Jesus died, Pilot wrote a title and put in on the cross: ‘This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews’ (see John 19:19). He was being publicly executed on the grounds that He had led in a rebellion. This was, of course, not true, but that was the charge against Him. When the people standing there read that sign they understood that He had been disloyal to Caesar in that He had made Himself to be a king. To them that was the reason He was dying on the cross.

But when God looked upon that cross, He saw an altar on which the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world was offered. God saw another inscription there high above the inscription that man had written. ‘Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.’ What did God write on that cross? He wrote the ordinances . . . He wrote a law which I cannot keep, ordinances which I am guilty of breaking. When Christ died there, He died not die because He broke them; He was sinless. But it was because I broke them, because I am a sinner, and because you are. ‘For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’

Therefore, my friend, if God has saved you and raised you from the dead and joined you to a living Christ, why should you go back to a law that you couldn’t keep in the first place? You can’t even keep the law today in your own power and in your own strength. You see, the law was given to discipline the old nature. But now the believer is given a new nature, and the law has been removed as a way of life.”

These perverts of the gospel, the individuals that administrate and try to bring on another gospel, another Jesus, through seducing spirits have had their way long enough. Like Paul, I plan to declare and expose them for what they are. They are doing exactly what Paul described in II Corinthians 11:4, preaching another Jesus. You can substitute Christ with another Jesus, as Paul said in the Colossian letter, such as philosophy, psychology, and vain babble, that has nothing of the gospel in it, and these spirits could seduced you. I am saying this to the preachers, because they are the ones doing the seducing. They are the ones going about corrupting the mind and changing the simple message of Jesus Christ and what He has done for us, and bringing back the law with some other conditions we must live by in order to be saved.

At the same time, there are attributes that will show themselves once you come under the control of Christ and are abiding in Him. These are called the Fruit of the Spirit, and that is the key, you must abide in Christ for these attributes to be seen. You can do nothing to obtain these attributes; Christ governs and distributes them Himself. Only He knows what you need when you need it,

even though you may think you have a better plan or know which of these fruits you need that are listed in Galatians 5:22. Christ knows better what we need, that is why we have to be in constant communication with Him. That is why we have to live in the Spirit, not another spirit controlled by seducing spirits through men or false teaching, but through the Spirit of God through faith. That is how we become “righteousified.” That is how we get our righteousness. God deals with us through Jesus Christ, because now we are righteous and reconciled back to Him through the blood of Jesus Christ. Do not be seduced by these evil spirits that remove the Holy Spirit in your life. Do not be misled. Do not be corrupted in your mind. Do not let another gospel take the place of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Do not let another Jesus take the place of the Jesus that died on that cross. The devil’s primary attack is not through persecution any more, even though that still happens today in some places. In the world today he attacks from inside the church world and preachers. These teachers become false when they are seduced by these spirits to preach message other than Christ, which in turn corrupts your mind. Do not allow this to happen. Stay in Christ.

Anybody who comes preaching another gospel perverts your mind and the gospel. They are damned and full of heresies with one goal and one goal only, to corrupt your mind. If you allow anyone to change Christ’s message, you have lost the battle and you are not fighting the true spiritual fight, the good fight of faith. That is what Paul said. You are to test the spirits, the prophets, and preachers of the God’s word. Just because something has the title ‘religious’ does not mean it is religious. Just because something has the title of ‘Christian’ does not mean it is Christian. Just because it has the title of ‘Jesus’ does not mean it is from Jesus. This is not a judgmental testing. This is a testing to establish whether the message is verifiable in the Word of God by how it is preached. Too many preachers go outside the Word of God, preaching opinions and stories that keep you entertained. I am not interested in doing that.

Are you more interested in men and their opinion or God? In Galatians 1:10 Paul says, ***“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”*** I truly want to be a servant or bondsman of Jesus Christ. I wrote a book Faith Pleases God, and that is what I am concerned about, pleasing God. I will not tolerate any longer what these false preachers and teachers are doing to the body of Christ, which is corrupting their minds with damnable heresies. I do not plan to persuade men, I plan to keep pleasing God and my hope is you want the same in your life. Do not lose your grip. It is a tough road and you will never understand the devil’s methods unless you understand the first most potent method he uses. The devil attacks the church and tries to destroy it from the inside out. In that area, he is most effective in destroying the message of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, by corrupting the church from the inside out with false teachers, false preachers, and false prophets. This is the primary method the devil does not want exposed.

Of course, not all churches or ministries are bad. Nor do they all declare a false message. If you believe you are the only ministry preaching the truth, then you have developed a Messiah complex. I do not think I am the only ministry preaching the Word of God correctly, but I know one thing; there are not that many others preaching and exposing these false preachers for what they are. That is why it is important to keep this Ministry alive. Teaching Faith Ministry declares what is truthful and what is false to a gullible Christian world that does not see the devil’s attacks.

Do not ever forget, the devil's primary mode of attack is through the church. If he can destroy the church, he knows he has the Christians, and as the church goes, so go the Christians. Identify yourself with preachers that rightly divide the Word of God, the *epignosis, the precise and correct knowledge of Jesus Christ*, as Paul said. Associate yourself with the type of people who truly follow Christ and are concerned with following Christ the precise and correct way outlined in the Bible. It is not difficult, but it is hard. Spiritual warfare is not easy, because it is a fight between eternal death and eternal life. That is why it is so important that you know how to fight the good fight of faith, otherwise you are only convincing yourself that the path you are on is the Christian way when it is actually just the "acceptable" way taught by preachers who add a list of works to Christ's true message. Doing those things do not get you to heaven. It is faith in Jesus Christ that gets you to heaven. It is the true message of the gospel that gets you to heaven. It is God's Word and faith in it.

To be continued...

The Perverting of the Church

In Ephesians 6:10 Paul writes, “*Finally, my brethren, be strong* [or ‘be strengthened,’ endunamoo, in Greek] *in the Lord, and in the power*” [or ‘the force,’ which in Greek is kratos] *of his might.*”

Verse 11 continues, “*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” Devil in the Greek is *diabolos*, the accuser, the slanderer.

The focus of the last chapter was the word ‘wiles’ from verse 11, which in Greek is *methodeia*. This is where the English word ‘methods’ comes from so I taught about some of the methods that the devil uses. When Paul writes in verse 11, “*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the methodeia* [the wiles] *of the devil,*” he means the schemes or the strategies of the devil.

What follows here is a list of various words with their definitions, all which come from the Greek word *methodeia*.

- 1) **Craftiness** – adept in the use of subtlety and cunning. No place in scripture reveals Satan’s schemes better than in Genesis 3, which records Satan’s initial contact with man.
- 2) **Cunning** – characterized by wiliness and trickery. It describes the faculty of executing well what one has devised.
- 3) **Scheming** – given to making plots; shrewdly devious and intriguing. Synonyms include artful, calculating, conniving, cunning, deceitful, designing, foxy, slippery, sly, tricky, underhand, and wily.
- 4) **Strategies** – careful plans of methods. Strategy can also refer to the art or science of the planning and conduct of a war. The Columbia Encyclopedia notes that strategy and tactics, in warfare are related terms referring, respectively, to large scale and small scale planning to achieve military success. Strategy may be defined as the general scheme of the conduct of a war, and tactics as the planning of means to achieve strategic objectives. Synonyms for strategy include: blueprint, design, game plan, project, scheme.
- 5) **Stratagems** – an artifice or trick in war for deceiving and outwitting the enemy. A cleverly contrived trick or scheme for gaining an end. Stratagem implies a ruse used to entrap, outwit, circumvent, or surprise an opponent or enemy.
- 6) **Tactics** – The use of the word tactic is very interesting and gives us some insight into the meaning of the devil’s methods. The word “tactics” is from the Greek word *taktikos*, which means, “of order, of tactics, fit for arranging” and which in turn is derived from “*tassein*,” which means “to arrange or place in battle formation.” Tactics is defined then as the science and art of

disposing and maneuvering forces in combat. It refers to the art or skill of employing available means to accomplish an end. In short, the tactics of the devil are calculated plans specifically designed to bring the downfall of God's people and His kingdom.

7) **Trickery** – the practice of crafty underhanded ingenuity to deceive or cheat. It implies ingenious acts intended to dupe or cheat.

8) **Wiles** – tricks or strategy carried out with the intent to entice, ensnare, or deceive. Wiles suggest an attempt to entrap or deceive with false allurements.

Finally, Kenneth Wuest writes, *“Methodeia was used to describe a wild animal who cunningly stalked and unexpectedly pounced on its prey, a vivid depiction of the Adversary’s ‘methods’ against believers. . . Methodeia is a Greek word that denotes a path or roadway that is traveled over. This is because the devil continuously attempts to secure a foothold so that he may begin construction of a roadway to your mind.”*

The point of all this is to remember to keep your spiritual armor on because the devil is a crafty foe looking for your weak spot. Most preachers that preach on spiritual warfare use Ephesians 6:11 as their focus regarding the methods or wiles the devil uses as concerns the individual person. However, that is just one area of the devil's wiles. There are two other categories in addition, and it is unfortunate more preachers and teachers do not spend time teaching those methods as well. To explain this further, the three levels of attacks or methods the devil uses are:

First, the devil attacks through the false teacher, the false preacher, and the false prophet by preaching another gospel, another Jesus using seducing spirits. The devil uses the false preachers, false teachers, and false prophets to deceive individuals and to lead the church astray.

The second method, in my opinion, is one of the most effective methods the devil has. The devil deceives the very elect. With this method, the church members are attacked because of their affiliation with a particular preacher or ministry, again with the goal of misguiding and leading church members astray.

The third method would be the devil attacking church members individually by attacking their personal lives.

Most preachers focus on how the devil attacks individual members of the church, but you will rarely hear any preacher focus on the devil's attacks to the church or how he misleads through false preaching, false teaching, and false prophets. You will rarely hear how he subtly leads the church in a different direction instead of the direction that God wants the church to go. If the devil can successfully lead the church astray through false teaching, the people who follow that particular ministry or going to that particular church, do not stand a chance. For the few remaining church members that have not been led astray, the devil then attacks them individually using every strategy he has.

However, before showing how the devil attacks us individually, I am going to continue showing how he uses false churches. This happens when the devil is able to enter into a church when the

church is more concerned about pleasing its members and what the members think of the church, instead of being revolutionary and spreading the Word of God to the world. Church members must know if what is preached is the *epignosis*, the precise and correct knowledge of the Word of God. In relation to that, I have previously preached a message from Ezekiel 34 called “Woe to the Shepherds.” It is unfortunate that there are too many shepherds more concerned about what church members think instead of what God thinks. I am convinced the devil attacks the very structure of how God wanted the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ be spread, declared, and proclaimed. With that, I will read from E.M. Bounds to show what he has to say about spiritual warfare in his chapter called ‘The Perverting of the Church.’ Interestingly, this was written over 100 years ago, so just amplify these words a hundred times more to understand what is happening in today’s church world.

“The Devil is a hydra-headed monster who is multifaceted in his plans and wisdom as well in atrocities. His supreme effort is to gain control of the church, not to destroy its organization, but to pervert its divine purpose. He does this in the most insidious way, so that there is no startling change and nothing to shock or alarm those whom he is trying to undermine. Sometimes the revolutionary and destructive change is introduced under the disguise of a greater zeal for Christ’s glory. It is often introduced by someone who is held in high esteem by the local church, but who was totally ignorant of the fact that the measure he is advocating is subversive.

One of Satan’s most perverse schemes [or methods and wiles] is to establish a wrong estimate of church strength. If he can create false assessments of local church power; if he can press the material things to the forefront; if he can make these forces powerful in commands and influence, he has accomplished his purpose.

Under the Law of Moses, the subversion of God’s purposes and the substitution of material forces were guarded against. The kings of Israel were warned against accumulation of and a reliance on material forces. King David was in violation of this law when he yielded to the temptation of Satan to number the people of Israel. The third temptation of our Lord was intended to subvert the purposes of His kingdom. Satan planned to do this by substituting material elements of strength for spiritual ones.

This is one of the Devil’s most insidious and successful methods to deceive, divert, and deprave. He parades the most attractive material results. He praises the power of human planning before church leaders until they are dazzled and ensnared. Then the church becomes thoroughly worldly while boasting of her spirituality. No deceiver is so artful in the diabolical trade of deception as Satan. As an ‘angel of light’ (2 Corinthians 11:14), he leads souls to death. To mistake the true power of the church’s strength is to mistake the true character of the church. When its character is changed, then all its efforts and aims are also changed. The strength of the church lies in its devotion to God. All else is incidental and is not the source of its strength. But in worldly, popular language, a local church is called strong when its membership is large, and when it has social position and financial resources.”

We often marvel at the super mega-churches today with the thousands upon thousands, and in some cases, tens of thousands of members gathered together, and because of their large membership, many think that church must be following God correctly. E.M. Bounds is saying though, do not look on the size of your church and do not look on the popularity of your church, because that is not how you judge a church. Numbers do not mean anything. Not all the super

mega-churches are going the wrong way, but you will be able to tell as you dive into God's Word and listen to what they are preaching. If their only goal is making you feel good, then there must be a problem with that church. Matthew 16 gives us descriptions of what the church focus should be, which is denying yourself, taking up your cross and following Him.

E.M. Bounds continues,

“But in worldly popular language a local church is called strong when its membership is large. A church is thought to be powerful when ability, learning, and eloquence fill the pulpit, and when the pews are filled by fashion, intelligence, money, and influence. An assumption of this kind is worldly to the fullest extent.”

Ability, learning, and eloquence behind the pulpit are not wrong in itself. It is how those things are used of God to fulfill the purpose of getting the gospel to the world and used to instruct believers to have the mind of Christ. Then where does the source of the true power come from?

Of this, E.M. Bounds says,

“The local church that defines its strength in this way is the highway of apostasy. The strength of that church does not consist of any or all of these things. The faith . . . and zeal of the church are the elements of its power. The church strength does not consist of its numbers and its money, but in the holiness of its members. [Here, I would rather say, ‘the faithfulness of its members,’ which is one of the Fruits of the Spirit.] Church strength is not found in these worldly attachments or endowments, but in the endowment of the Holy Ghost on its members. Another scheme [or method] of Satan is to reduce the church to a mere human institution, popular, natural, fleshly and pleasing. Satan has no scheme that can more thoroughly thwart God’s high and holy purposes than transforming His church into a human institution according to man’s views.”

Most churches are quite aware that their congregation will attend another church if the church does not fill the emotional need of the congregation. There are probably ten churches within a square mile of this location, so if a church does not provide what the congregation thinks it needs, they will go somewhere else to fulfill that emotional need giving the appearance of following God.

“God’s right arm is thereby paralyzed, the body of Christ becomes the body of Satan, and light is turned into darkness and life into death. Men who have religious leadership positions are often blinded by a false attachment to what they think is truth and what they consider honors Christ. They are found trying to eliminate from the teaching of Christ those painful, offensive, unpopular, and self-denying features to which the Gospel owes all its saving beauty and power, and which stamp it as divine.”

That is what E.M. Bounds had to say over 100 years ago about how Satan enters into the church perverting it by putting preachers and pastors in charge who are more interested in developing a human institution, a human social gathering, to fulfill the emotional needs of its congregants. They are more interested in pleasing church members instead of worshipping, praising, praying,

and learning how to increase their knowledge in faith in His Word. But the church is not here to serve you; you are to serve the church. I have used the Greek word many times, *ergon*, which is used several different ways depending on the context where it is placed in scripture. Most of the time, if translated correctly, this word means *the employment of the Word of God* in the capacity that you are able. It is what the church needs from you and what you should do for the church. It is how you employ the Word of God through whatever church association you have and the needs of that church, including financial needs.

By now, you are probably wondering what this has to do with the methods and wiles of the devil. The church became the target of Satan's attacks in Matthew 16. The devil may have had some idea what was going to come from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is why he fought hard to see that Christ would never lay His life down for us. That is why the devil spent time on the mountain working to convert Christ into worshipping him rather than going to that cross. Once the devil knew Christ would get to that cross, he knew his time was limited and the victory forever would be won by the spilling of Christ's blood on the cross. The devil knew he was doomed and the only way he could continue to rule and reign on earth was to attack the church. God gave the devil rule over the earth. The devil is the prince of the power of the air, and he knew that his only chance was to thwart Christ from going to that cross and spilling His blood for us. Although the devil will eventually be cast into the lake of fire, there would still be two thousand years for him to work his dastardly deeds against God by using man to fulfill his purposes. But the time would come when he no longer would have the ability, the space, or the individuals to work those evil deeds.

In Matthew 16:13 attacking the church became a method or wile of Satan when it was announced that the church would be born after Christ's resurrection. After the Day of Pentecost, there would be a group of people that would follow Christ, possibly even be put to death. No matter what the cost, the church would be reborn and death and hell would be taken away from Satan when Christ died on that cross and was resurrected three days later. Satan would have no more control of human destiny for those under the blood of Jesus Christ. Because of that, Satan went to war with the church and he has been at war with the church ever since.

Christ makes this very clear in Matthew 16:13. ***“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?”***

Christ asks, “That is what they are saying, but who do you think I am?” He is asking that to His disciples in verse 15, and of course, Peter was always the first one to speak up in verse 16, ***“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou.”***

The Greek word for ‘blessed’ in this verse is *makarios*. Most often translators translate this word as ‘happy,’ but I do not think that is a good translation. I have told you there are only two possible translations for this particular word, either *‘fully satisfied’* or *‘bathed in the blood of Jesus.’* When the King James translators first translated the Bible, the Old English version translated this word correctly, especially in Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Blessed is either

'bathed in the blood of Jesus' which applies here also, or *'fully satisfied.'* Christ is saying to Peter, "Fully satisfied art thou."

Verse 17 continues, "***Blessed [Fully satisfied] art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.***" *Ekklesia* is the Greek word for Church, which means, "a gathering of people called out into assembly." In this case, the gathering would be of Christians called out into assembly, or the called out ones.

Christ recognized that no other disciple spoke up to declare He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Peter was in line with the mind of Christ at this moment and was told, "Thou art Peter because of your revelation of who I am." Peter's eyes did not reveal what he could see in Jesus in the flesh. Christ declares Peter received it from "***my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church [ekklesia, on the ones that are called out to follow Jesus] and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.***"

This is where the devil's attacks on the church all began. As soon as the devil and his demonic army of evil spirits heard Christ's proclamation, the strategies, the planning, the wiles, the methods, the stratagems, everything the devil had in his arsenal, went to work to destroy Christ's very statement in verse 18, "***That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.***"

That is why when you are speaking of the wiles or methods of the devil, too much focus is usually directed at the devil's methods towards us as individuals. Pastors and teachers forget the important point that the devil's first target is to turn and twist the minds of preachers and teachers so they become false teachers and false preachers. The second target he has is the church. If the devil can pervert the church and the leadership in the church, then conquering the individuals in the church is much easier to accomplish. If the devil has you following a false teacher, if he has you following a false religion, or a false church, his job becomes much easier. However, not enough focus is given to the fact that the devil works to destroy the church from the inside out through false teaching and false preaching. With this as a goal, the devil went to work immediately as soon as Jesus declared in verse 18, "***That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.***"

You will never understand anything about spiritual warfare if you do not understand that the devil attacks the preacher and he attacks the church before he even gets to the individual. Instead of declaring the Word of God, there is a constant attack on churches and preachers around the world working to twist the message so churches become institutionalized babysitters for you and your kids.

Christ continues in Matthew 16:19 by saying, "***And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven [which is the ability to explain the gospel]: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed,***

and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”

Notice, it did not take very long for Peter to fall right out of that mind of Christ and back into the flesh. Many have tried to soften this scripture by explaining that Peter was “kindly” rebuking Christ, out of concern for his wellbeing. Actually, Peter was nothing more than an agent of Satan attempting to keep Christ from the cross. Just the same, today too many churches across this land are doing this also; attempting to keep the cross out of the picture, because the cross requires the denial of self.

Verse 23 tells us Jesus’ response to this, ***“But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”*** Now Christ is not calling Peter Satan. He is calling Satan, Satan, and Peter was just the instrument and mouthpiece of Satan. Like Peter, today’s church world is not savoring the things that are from God, but those that are of men, the things that cater to your flesh. If a pastor preaches the cross, the congregation will dwindle, the crowds will diminish, and the ministry will probably die, because who wants to be led to or carry their own cross? You know you are attending a church and listening to a preacher or pastor that is doing what Christ says if they preach the things of God as in verse 23.

Christ continues in verse 24 by saying, ***“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”*** “Follow me” is not a very exciting or uplifting message if you do not have the mind of Christ, but if you do have the mind of Christ, His words will sink in and register that to be Christ’s disciple you must ***“deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus.”*** Following Jesus is on a personal level; in the church, you follow whoever gives you the Word of God helping you grow in the mind of Christ. The church you are part of is either “of men” or “of God,” because for the last two thousand years the devil has created more churches belonging to those things of men. As soon as Jesus declared in verse 18 that He would build his church upon the out called ones that are gathered to follow Him, take up their cross, and deny themselves, the devil went to work to destroy the church.

The question now is what you should do if you do not have your social gatherings or a church that caters to you. How do you know you are following a church as described by Christ in Matthew 16? Paul makes that very clear; do not judge a church because of how many social activities it has or by how it keeps you entertained, or if it is saying the things you like to hear and caters to your flesh. There are only two criteria used to evaluate the church you are part of, and they are found in Ephesians 4:11 where Paul writes, ***“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting [or completion] of the saints, for the work [ergon, the employment of the Word] of the ministry.”*** That means your primary role in the church is for the employment of the Word. It is your responsibility to help that ministry or church with what it asks you to do. Whatever ministry you follow, whatever pastor you are under, will probably ask on occasion for assistance in various areas of the church, and you are to gladly participate in that. I hope that you are not sitting under some church leadership that abuses that power, because there is balance in everything in the Word of God. You employ the Word of God through the assistance of what that church needs from you in addition to the financial support to employ the Word of God. Those are the criteria;

not how many meetings you attend, or how many bake sales you have. Your participation is for the employment of the Word of God in those particular categories, “. . . **for the edifying of the body of Christ,**” which is how Paul ends verse 12. You employ the Word of God to **“the edifying of the body of Christ”** for the purpose stated in verse 13, **“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect [or completed] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”**

To repeat, the purpose for the church is to employ the Word of God, whether as a minister or church member, in the capacity that we are called, “. . . **till we all come in the unity of the faith** [not anything else] **and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a completed man [or woman], unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.**” That is why the church exists and why Satan uses every method to destroy the church. He begins with placing false teachers in churches that preach another gospel, and another Jesus, influenced by seducing spirits. If the devil can destroy the leadership of the congregation, then the church will be destroyed, and not used to edify the Body of Christ in the unity of the faith. It is that simple. Do not make it complicated.

Satan declared war as soon as he heard Jesus make the statement, **“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.”** Many preachers will say that Peter was the rock. No, he was not. He was anything but a rock at this point. Christ began by saying, **“Thou art Peter,”** but with His next statement, **“and upon this rock”** Jesus was talking about Himself. Christ proclaimed that He would lay the foundation of the out called ones that will assemble, proclaim, and employ the Word of God to the world. These same out called ones would come to recognize that if they are going to follow Christ, that would require denying themselves and taking up their own cross, the cross that they have to bear. Christ bore His, but we have to bear ours and follow Him. The wonderful thing about bearing our cross is that He is there with us to help us bear it. He is holding our hand as He held Peter’s when he was sinking, to uplift us into realizing that without Him we cannot deny ourselves; without Him we cannot carry our cross; without Him we will never accomplish anything unless He is there with us.

In Matthew 16:25 Christ tells us, **“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it.”** Often all we hear is how we can prosper and live a pain or struggle free life. This is taken to mean that if you have struggles, everything is going to be fine because somehow Jesus will see you through. That attitude is more about the principle of positive thinking than it is about faith. There are going to be struggles, and I do not need somebody to tell me, “Rah, rah you are going to make it.” When there is a struggle, I go to God’s Word and see all the different examples, and all the different statements that Jesus made in the New Testament, what we are supposed to rely upon to see us through. I do not need to hear some motivational speaker. If I want to be motivated, I will listen to someone who can lift me up, but those things are just temporary. While in a struggle, I want something that will give me a solid foundation. That way, the next time my struggles come, the next time I am fighting the good fight of faith, the next time I am in a battle with one of Satan’s methods, I know I have a solid, unmovable foundation. I know Christ is there with me and He has gone through it before me. He has paved the way, and through Him, I am more than a conqueror in my struggles. I do not need positive principle messages. I need faith building messages that will give the spiritual tools and weaponry needed to fight against my foe and his forces.

Remember, in verse 25, Christ said, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” Those churches that Christ labeled in verse 23 the ‘be of men churches’ are the ones that saving their own lives, but will ultimately lose their lives. But those churches that are losing their lives for Jesus’ sake shall in the end find their lives; those are the ‘ones that be of God.’

In which camp do you want to be? The ones that are of God or the ones that be of men? There are only two sides; the ones that be of God are involved with churches and following pastoring teachers who are employing the Word of God and involved in what that requires. That is the purpose of the church. The church is not here to cater to you. You are there to serve it, and if you are assisting under proper guidance and proper leadership, you will know you are employing the Word of God. But the devil works to destroy the church through the teaching of every other possible doctrine he can use to mislead us. Fortunately, Christ made us the promise in verse 18 that ***“the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,”*** meaning the ones that are called out and gathered to take up the cross, deny themselves, and follow Jesus.

Christ concludes in verse 26 by saying, ***“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works [or passion].”***

Where is your passion? This is not referring to any of your own works or what you can do in the flesh, but rather your passion in the Spirit, the Spirit that is controlling you, the Holy Spirit. Find a revival in your soul and start employing the Word of God. Do not let Satan confuse or mislead you into believing that your works are what serves the church and God. Your works are your passion in correctly employing the Word of God in the capacity you can, under proper leadership. Do not let the devil misuse this passion as a method, just as tries through the false teachers and through the churches, and he will not give up. We know in the end there will be victorious, out called ones who will be taken away before that terrible wrath that is still to come. I plan to be with the ones that will be taken away because we employed the Word of God correctly. Hopefully, you plan to be in that camp also.

To be continued...

God of this World

This chapter will begin with Ephesians 6:10, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*** If you remember from previous chapters, *methodeia* is the Greek word for “wiles,” and where we get our English word “methods.” As I have shown, the devil concentrates his methods first with the church. He attacks using every method available to him to bring down the church. After that, he concentrates his attacks on the leadership of the church, ministers who represent him. If the devil can bring down these first two, by the time he gets to the third area of his attacks, that is you as an individual, it is much easier to influence your mind and redirect your focus from the mind of Christ. So the devil attacks the church, he attacks the leadership of the church, and when he has those under his control, he then attacks the individual person with all the methods, all the strategies, all the tricks, and all deceitfulness to knock you off course in your Christian growth toward having the mind of Christ through His Word.

However, in this chapter, I will be focusing on one particular name of the devil, “the god of this world” or as some call it, “god of this age,” which is also one of the devil’s characteristics. Just as we learn from His Word all the names of God and Jesus Christ, we need to understand and learn all the names given to the devil in the Bible. In addition, to illustrate how the very name demonstrates his characteristics and the methods he attacks you with, I will be describing the methods or the wiles the devil uses when he attacks the church and the leadership of the church.

Let us begin in II Corinthians 4:1, ***“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.”*** In place of faint we could also say, ***“we will not lose courage,”*** meaning we will not become distracted and lose our focus. Just as I have a job to do in this ministry, you have your job to support the ministry in getting the Word of God out to the world. We both have a commission in this walk of faith. ***“Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.”*** We will not lose courage. No matter what, we will not give up.

Verse 2 continues, ***“. . . But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.”*** The Greek word for hid in this verse is very illustrated. If you could picture in your mind tree bark surrounding the inner core of the tree. Only the bark is seen on the outside and what is inside that tree is hidden from the outside because the bark is covering it completely. This is the image portrayed in this verse, ***“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.”*** And here is what most preachers either forget to mention or do not recognize, they think this verse is just talking to lost souls that do not recognize what Christ has done for them. However, Paul was talking not only to those individuals, but also to the ones who are professing Christians. There are two categories of ***“the lost”***: ones that profess to be Christians, and ones that do anything they can to not be Christian, because they do not believe that Christ died, resurrected, sailed into the blue, and will someday return where there will be eternal life with Him forever. Those are the two categories.

Verse 4 tells us, ***“In whom the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds. . .”*** At times, I am convinced that some of you who are part of this ministry are blinded to your responsibility and what the spiritual fight for this ministry is all about. Some of you are stuck in a routine, but I want you to be ready in season and out of season to do battle, especially if I make an announcement that a special event is going to take place. Yes, I expect you to be there, but more importantly, God is looking on to see how you are going to react to the battles this ministry goes through.

It is in this verse, ***“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not,”*** that many preachers make an important mistake. They assume that Paul was only talking to the ones who are not believers. Yes, he is talking to non-believers, but he is also talking to Christians. What does the “god of this world” do? He blinds the minds ***“of them which believe not.”*** The phrase, “believe not” is a bad translation. The Greek is *apistos*, and there are two definitions to apply to this verse. First, the verse can be read this way, ***“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which are faithless,”*** meaning the ones that do not believe and will never believe that Christ died to be the one slain for our benefit on that cross. That Christ spilled His blood for our benefit, for our sins once and for all. Nothing we could have done could have saved us or allowed us into the heavenlies to be with Him forever except the blood of Jesus Christ. Many will never understand or accept that message and only think it is just a bunch of religious fanaticism by a bunch of crazy Christians.

Paul was saying, the god of this world, Satan, the devil himself ***“hath blinded the minds of them which are faithless.”*** That is true, but you also have to understand what Paul is saying with this Greek word, *apistos*. Again, he is speaking of two different groups of people, so “the faithless” could also be translated, ***“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which are unfaithful.”*** The opposite of faith is *apistos*. Yes, Paul is talking to the faithless ones who will never believe anything about Christianity, but he is also talking to the ones who are unfaithful. The god of this world will keep the unbelieving ones who never believe anything about Christianity, but the god of this world will also blind the ones who profess to be Christians but are unfaithful. This is not only one of the devil’s methods, but one of the names of the devil that reveals his nature. It is a characteristic of his name to create unfaithfulness in your mind by blinding you to the truth of what your responsibility is as a Christian following Christ Jesus.

With this understanding, II Corinthians 4:4 can be read, ***“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which are unfaithful or faithless, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”*** For myself, I plan to keep shining the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God unto you. The gospel of Christ is glorious to Him and you must recognize it as glorious also or you are one of those blinded by the god of this world.

Most preachers use the Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14 to illustrate how God calls many, in this case to a party, and how men reject or refuse the invitation to salvation. As a result, Christ sets them aside and calls others to attend the party willingly and gladly and they are thankful for the invitation. However, I will use this parable in a different way that you can apply to spiritual warfare. Mainly, the god of this world wants to blind you into making excuses why

you should not be responsible and as a result become unfaithful. In this chapter of Spiritual Warfare, I am speaking to the Christians.

The Parable of the Great Banquet begins in Luke 14:15, ***“And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, [the previous parable that Jesus just taught] he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade[or invited] many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse.”*** “Began to make an excuse” is not a bad translation. The guests began to make excuses to refuse the invitation. Excuses lead to unfaithfulness and that is how the god of this world, the god of this age, will blind you so you begin to justify all your actions with excuses.

Verse 18 contains the first excuse, ***“The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.”*** A better translation for this would be, *“I beg of thee that you excuse me.”* This guest is telling the servant to go back to the one who is having the great supper and excuse him from attending. In his mind, he had a good excuse and he justified it to himself. However, in the traditions of this day when this parable was written, someone would not be invited to a banquet unless a first notice was given that the event was coming. The guest would have already known what day the banquet was. Then a second notice was sent that the supper was ready so people could arrive. This guest was aware of this great supper. This supper was not a surprise to him so there was no reason he could not attend. As I already said, according to the traditions of that day, guests were given notice prior to the great supper, and then they were sent the second notice by the servant that the supper was ready and now they could come and enjoy the feast. There was no excuse not to attend. If they did not want to attend, they should have said so the first time the notice was received. At the point, it was assumed this guest would attend the supper, but now this guest is making excuses. The god of this world is the god of excuses. Christ called you to fulfill your destiny with Him and there is no excuse why you should not be responsible and become either faithless or unfaithful to the responsibility that was given you in the commission.

Let me give you a second scenario here. Jesus was telling this parable to the Jews. Do you think a Jew would actually buy a piece of ground, or as some translators have put it, a farm, without seeing it first? I do not think so. I am not putting down the Jewish people. That is just one of their characteristics, and I am not saying it is a bad characteristic. I am just saying that is their nature. But do you really think that this was a good excuse? Do you really think a Jew at this time would buy a piece of land without inspecting it first? Verse 18 says he not only bought it, but he has never seen it and now he has to go check it out. Verse 16 gives you a clue. It says, ***“Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time. . .”*** It was supper time when the servant came to the guest. Do you think a person could actually see well at that time of day? Believe me they did not have the lighting systems that we have now to illuminate in the dark. When it was dark, it was dark and a candle would not do much when inspecting a piece of land in the evening hours. Verse 18 tells us, ***“And they all with one consent began to make excuse . . . I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it.”*** Do you go to go check out your land at suppertime, in the evening? I

do not think so. Not only is his excuse a poor excuse, it is a bad excuse. It is an excuse based upon material things.

The parable continues with the second excuse in verse 19, ***“And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.”*** This verse is saying that he is going to go and test whether his purchase was a good purchase or not. Once again, these are Jewish people. He has bought five yoke of oxen. Do you think that these oxen did not come tested or proven? I can see buying one and not proving it, if you somehow want to justify this excuse, but five oxen! Once again, material things stand in the way of obtaining the great supper. Once again, this supper is only going to be in the evening hours. Are you actually going to go out and test in the field somewhere to see if the purchase that you made of these five yoke of oxen was any good? This is a poor excuse, more justifying, more excuse making.

A third excuse is in verse 20, ***“And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.”*** Well if you live in today’s day and age, I probably could understand that excuse, because there are too many wives who are in charge of a marriage. Unfortunately, these women marry husbands that cannot live up to their responsibilities in both taking care of and raising their family. Even though, it is still a poor excuse. Do you think the person throwing this great supper, this feast, did not realize this person got married? I am willing to bet that this invitation was extended to his wife also. This husband should be saying, “You know what, this is a great opportunity for my wife to enjoy something so wonderful also,” especially in the traditions of that day. Instead, we see a lousy testimony for a man to blame his wife as the reason for not attending. What a miserable example of a husband and a man. I know I sound harsh but this parable is harsh because it is dealing with nothing more than a bunch of excuse makers. Believe me, this is just a small example of excuses listed here. When it comes to the things of God, there are thousands of excuses that people make every day.

When the servant returns to his master in verse 21, we see what happens. ***“So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is [still] room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”***

These guests do not realize that they had been blinded by the god of this world into justifying their actions and convincing themselves that they had good reasons why they should not do something, especially when it comes to the things of God. Verse 24 tells me what their outcome is going to be, ***“For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”***

Think of the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19. The ones that keep making excuses, the ones that cannot commit themselves to anything, will not see that wonderful day in the future because of their excuse making. Whatever excuses you can come up with, I guarantee you more than likely it is coming from the god that has blinded this world, the god of this day, the god of this world, the god of this age, the devil himself and his demonic army under his control to do his

bidding for him. From the very beginning, I have been telling you to be concerned about the will of God. Christ said in the Gospels to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. I guarantee that if you incorporate these three elements in your life, you are in the will of God. Deny yourself, take up your cross, and following Jesus.

After this parable, Christ continues in verse 25, “***And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come [man is in italics and was added by the translators. This verse says ‘any’ whether man or woman] to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.***” Christ is saying here that you cannot learn from Him, because a disciple is nothing more than a learner. This sounds so harsh. Does Jesus expect us to hate our fathers, mothers, wives, children, brethren, sisters, and our own lives? Only if they come in the way of following Him. He does not want you to hate your mother and father, but if you hate them, it is because you put them ahead of Christ; so the choice is up to you. It is not up to your father, it is not up to your mother, it is not up to your wife, it is not up to your children. Whether you put them first, or Christ first, the choice is yours to make. Do not blame someone else; the choice is yours. Christ is not asking you, and God is not asking you to hate any of these individuals, but He is saying, “Do not put them first, because if you do, your focus is on them and not on me.” You must prioritize yourself.

Christ does not expect you to abandon all your belongings, but He does want you to put them in the right priority. He does not expect you to abandon all your relationships, but He wants them in the right priority without excuse making. He expects you to put all family and material things second and Him first. It is as simple as that. Verse 27 even makes it clearer: “***And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.***” Christ is giving the same message over and over again, all in different areas of the Gospels. “***Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.***” And God help you, if you are going to make excuses, you will not be part of that marriage supper of the Lamb.

In verse 28 Christ says, “***For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?***” In other words, why did you become a Christian? I understand today’s church message is, “Come to Christ and everything is going to be okay. Come to Christ and everything is going to be fine.” I hate that. Yes, it will be joyous, but there is also going to be much persecution as well. There is going to be much trying of your very faith to see if it is more precious than gold, to see what it is made of, and if you put your trust in His Word or in the things of this world. As I have said many times, there are too many professing Christians instead of those hearing and living the faith. Many professing Christians claim to trust in the Word of God, but as soon as it comes time for the testing, they vanish. They are like water on a hot day on hot cement. They evaporate and become one of those under the control of the god of this world. They believe a lie and are damned because the devil blinds them.

Christ tells us in verse 29, “***Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him.***” We have a world today that mocks the nonsense preached in many churches, especially the prosperity doctrine that is preached as what God has promised. Yes, He has promised prosperity and I know I will definitely have that in heaven,

because that is where my treasures are laid. If He should grant prosperity in this life, let it so be, but that is not what His Word says. God's word has been craftily twisted to make it sound as though he promises prosperity in this life. But why did you start this Christian walk if could not take the times of testing? The world is waiting for you to make a mistake and fail, just so they can mock you. That is what this verse is saying here. I am telling you, they are mocking more than you. They are mocking the very thing that you confess, profess, and follow; and that is Christ Jesus. When you are unfaithful, you just give them another excuse to be faithless as II Corinthians 4:4 describes. Because of your unfaithfulness, you are just another instrument of the devil himself to be mocked by the faithless world.

The entire verse in Luke 14:29 reads, ***“Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”*** You give the mockers opportunity to believe that you were only going through another fad. You became a Christian, but look what it has done for you. They can now believe that you have realized Christianity is nothing more than religious rituals and belief in an archaic system. If anybody with any common sense would look at it, they would realize Christ never died or rose from the dead, because that could never possibly happen. It is too good to be true that people watched Him sail into the blue and yet He is coming back for us some day, and if we are alive, we will not experience death and are raptured and taken up in the twinkling of an eye into the heavenlies. Those mockers believe Christianity is religious fanaticism and nonsense. They are waiting with baited breath to mock you and bring down what you profess to believe in, saying, ***“This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”***

Christ gives another example in verse 31, ***“Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.”*** In other words, if you are going to go to war with somebody or another king, and if you are a responsible king and are concerned for your people, you are not going to go to war unless you know you have a chance of winning that war. You are in charge of and responsible for the lives that go to battle with you, so you are going to count the cost. You are going to find out what your enemy has as resources to fight with. At the time this parable was given, the king would find out what the enemy had in people and weaponry at his disposal to fight. Just the same, that is why we must be equipped with His Word and with His armor because they give us the fighting chance against our enemy that has legions upon legions upon legions of demons alone, not to count evil spirits and the rest of the descriptions of evil beings in Ephesians 6:12. Alone, we cannot win that war, so thank God we can through Christ Jesus. He has already won the battle for us. Satan has already lost the ultimate battle of eternity and salvation of mankind. The only thing he can do to us now is to blind us from the truth because he knows if he is successful we will slip away, we will lose our focus, we will take our mind off Christ, and we will begin justifying and making excuses. Even though we do not realize it, we have then come under his control and out of control of the Holy Spirit and Christ. The Comforter will slip away and you will not even recognize it because you are too busy justifying your excuse making why you did not live up to your responsibility and commission that you were called in to follow Him and to make sure His Word keeps employing out to the world. You must realize we are not in a game.

Let me continue on to Luke 14:32, ***“Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”*** Once again, Christ is saying, “He cannot learn from me and he cannot continue learning from me.” The Greek is very clear on the phrase “forsaketh not.” This phrase does not refer to the abandonment of your belongings, it does not refer to the abandonment of individuals you are responsible for or you are in association with, rather it is a proper prioritization of them. You have to arrange your life properly so that Christ has preeminence. That is what it is saying here in verse 33. Christ must be the one in control of your life, looking out after you.

Christ’s examples continue in Verse 34, ***“Salt is good: but if the salt hath lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?”*** In other words, salt is tasteful, but if it loses its flavor what good is it if it is tasteless? In this verse, Christ is describing what a Christian should not become. If you lose your savor as a Christian, what good are you? If salt loses its taste, what good is salt? It is tasteless. What purpose does salt have as a seasoning? That is what this scripture is focusing on. ***“Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?”*** Likewise, what good is a Christian if he loses his focus and reason for being, which is taking up his cross, denying himself, and following Christ. Verses 15 to 35 are asking what good is a Christian if he no longer follows Christ or if everything else in life has priority over Christ and excuse making puts Christ second. What good is a Christian if he has lost his savor or lost his focus so Christ is no longer first? That person is worthless to Christ. Christ came to die to give you a chance of salvation. If He has called you and chosen you out and you lose your pursuit of Him because of distractions, you are worthless in the commission that God has called you and the destiny that He wants you to fulfill.

Verse 35 is referring to both the Christian and the salt, ***“It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill.”*** If you really stop and analyze this verse, it is harsh and right to the point. The Greek word for dung or manure is *kopria*. Jesus is saying here in verse 34, ***“Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?”*** The salt becomes tasteless and worthless. ***“It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the pile of manure.”*** It is the same for a Christian. If you, as a Christian, have lost your focus and put other things before Christ as a priority, then Christ is saying that you are not fit for any of the purposes He has called you out to fulfill. Whatever those purposes are, you are ***“neither fit for the land, nor yet for a pile of manure.”*** Christ knows how to make the point. You are so worthless that you are not even worth a pile of manure. These are harsh words, but they are not coming from me. These are God’s words from Jesus’ own lips. He is the one that is saying it, not Joseph Cortes, but Jesus Christ. Christ is saying, “Quit making your excuses and making other things more important, instead let me be in control of your life. Everything else takes a second position in your life, whether it is father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, or anything else in your life. Those things take second place, because I am the one that knows the direction of your life. I know the plan that I have set before you and in the direction you should go. If you are not willing to follow me and put me first in your life, then you have become neither fit for the commission of why I put you here, and furthermore you are worthless and neither fit to be associating with a pile dung or manure.

Christianity is not a game. True Christianity is a way of life. Jesus Christ has said the three important things that you need to focus on are denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Him in the path that He has chosen for your life. Quit making excuses like those guests who did not attend the great supper. Otherwise, your condition will be as verse 24 in Luke 14, ***“That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”*** I plan to be at the marriage supper of the Lamb and I want to proclaim this Word to as many as I can. The vision of this ministry is to see how many people we can correctly give this Word so they can stay on the true path that Christ laid out for us without any distractions or excuse making. Any of the distractions and excuses have only been influenced by the god of this age to blind you so you lose focus and lose sight of what your priorities are. Do not forget, one of the methods of the god of this world, the god of this age, is to distract you enough to blind you, but God has asked you to follow Him without excuses.

To be continued. . .

Damnably Prosperity Doctrine

Ephesians 6:10 and 11 tells us, *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* As you know by now, the word ‘wiles’ in the Greek is *methodeia*, and where we get our English word ‘method.’ In the last chapter of this series, I also gave you one name, **the god of this world**, which refers to the devil in verse 11, and at the end of this chapter, I will be showing you another name of the devil, **angel of light**.

Along with the names of the devil and the wiles, or methods, he uses when attacking, remember the three different areas where he focuses his attacks. First, his primary scheme is to attack and defeat the church. Second, the devil wants to defeat the leadership of the church, that would be the pastors, preachers, and people who proclaim the Word of God. To bring down or defeat the church, the devil attacks the church and the people who proclaim the Word of God, replacing God’s word with false prophets and false teachers. Paul warned of false apostles in places of leadership that change the New Testament message of God’s grace and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The devil has been successful in doing this. Then lastly, he attacks you as an individual. If the devil can attack the church, the leadership of the church, and change Christ’s message, defeating you will not be that hard. The devil goes to the source of inspiration in your life, which is the establishment of the church and the leadership positions that teach you the Word of God. If the devil has you listening to false teachers, the battle is won, and Satan has victory. You must remember that.

Again, the devil uses his methods to categorize his attacks:

- 1) His priority is attacking the church,
- 2) Next, the leadership in the church, and
- 3) Eventually you.

Most preachers concentrate on how the devil attacks the individual, but in this chapter, I am still preaching on how he attacks the church and its leadership. Interestingly, I picked up a copy of the magazine Christianity Today. This is a popular Christian magazine and on the front it says, *“Health and Wealth in Africa - how the prosperity gospel is taking the continent by storm.”* Here in the United States of America, you cannot turn on religious television without two-thirds of it dominated by the prosperity gospel, which is something straight out of hell, maybe reputable in your eyes, but not in God’s eyes. Famous preachers have taught this prosperity gospel, which as I said, is straight out of hell. This chapter will be an all-out assault attack against the devil, his ways, and the message he is convincing people worldwide comes from the Bible. But it does not. It is man-made; inspired by Satan and all the evil forces under his control meant to convince church leadership it is something that has always been in God’s book, however, it never has. It is a false doctrine and another gospel that does not preach Jesus or the way Jesus taught to give. It is one of man’s devices, not God’s. I thought it very appropriate to use this article as a launching point to come against the message that is changing Christianity around the world for the worst and began in this country. However, I do not think it is ironic that I am preaching this now. We have the largest audience outside of the United States of America located in Nigeria, followed by

Ghana, then Tanzania, South Africa, and Zambia. As for this article, I will just read portions and will not read you the full names of these pastors.

Again, this article is titled, "Gospel Riches." It is from Christianity Today, and subtitled, "*Health and Wealth in Africa - how the prosperity gospel is taking a continent by storm. Africa's rapid embrace of prosperity Pentecostalism provokes concern - and hope.*"

The article begins,

"Pastor Michael rises from his gold-coated throne before 4,000 onlookers in Lagos, Nigeria. 'Hallelujah!' bellows the self-proclaimed 'father of father, pastor of pastors,' wearing a glittery green gown. The crowd stands and roars.

A 62-year-old former banker and graduate of the Morris Cerullo School of Ministry in San Diego, California, [Pastor Michael] touts a seminar called 'Financial Intelligence'; if you've missed it, he encourages you to buy the tapes. [Pastor Michael] describes the 'intelligence' he preaches in his book *Controlling Wealth God's Way: '[M]any are ignorant of the fact that God has already made provision for his children to be wealthy here on earth. When I say wealthy, I mean very, very rich. ... Break loose! It is not a sin to desire to be wealthy.'*

Bishop of the Redeemed Evangelical Mission since 1988, [Pastor Michael] presides over the annual Kingdom Life World Conference of 150 prosperity-oriented churches. But tonight he yields the podium to the Rev. Felix, who urges the crowd to dream big. 'There are so many dream killers around,' he says. 'Don't let them kill your dream.'

[Rev. Felix] prophesies: 'Your tomorrow will be better than today. In 2007 you will take your place.' The crowd is thrilled. [Rev. Felix] promises that women will find husbands, audience members will buy new cars, and the barren will birth twins. [Which is all part of the prosperity gospel.] To open themselves to this blessing, [Rev. Felix] encourages the crowd to give N25,000 (about \$200). Local schoolteachers earn only \$150 per month, so the amount is significant. Yet more than 300 people swarm [Rev. Felix], who rubs oil from a bowl on their palms. Within minutes, the church nets a tax-free \$60,000.'

I am not against someone inspired by the Word of God giving all if they decide to do so, but giving should be for the right reasons. Giving is not for you to find a husband if you do not have one, not for you to buy new cars, and not for twins if you are barren. Those are all for the wrong reasons, which is giving to get, which is not in the New Testament.

"To open themselves to this blessing, [Rev. Felix] encourages the crowd to give N25,000. Local schoolteachers earn only \$150 per month, so the amount is significant. Yet more than 300 people swarm [Rev. Felix], who rubs oil from a bowl on their palms. Within minutes, the church nets a tax-free \$60,000.

Similar scenes unfold every day in countless venues throughout sub-Saharan Africa, where prosperity-tinged Pentecostalism is growing faster not just in other strands of Christianity, but than all religious groups, including Islam. Of Africa's 890 million people, 147 million are now

'renewalists' (a term that includes both Pentecostals and charismatics), according to a 2006 Pew Forum on Religion and Public life study. They make up more than a fourth of Nigeria's population, more than a third of South Africa's, and a whopping 56 percent of Kenya's.

Cars in many African cities display bumper stickers like 'Unstoppable Achiever,' 'With Jesus I Will Always Win,' and 'Your Success Is Determined by Your Faith,' says University of London Professor Paul Gifford in his 2004 book New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy. Gifford notes how these renewalists move beyond traditional Pentecostal practices of speaking in tongues, prophesying, and healing to the belief that God will provide money, cars, houses, and even spouses in response to believers' faith - if not immediately, then soon.

In its 2006 survey, Pew asked participants if God would 'grant material prosperity to all believers who have enough faith.' Eighty-five percent of Kenyan Pentecostals, 90 percent of South African Pentecostals, and 95 percent of Nigerian Pentecostals said yes. Similarly, when Pew asked if religious faith was 'very important to economic success,' about 9 out of 10 Kenyan, Nigerian, and South African renewalists said it was."

Look at the damage the prosperity doctrine is doing to what real faith is. Ninety percent of Africans believe faith is related to economic prosperity. That is what this country, the United States of America, and the ministries controlled by Satan to preach this prosperity gospel are producing, not only in this country, but also around the world. Ninety percent of people believe that material things prove your faith. In contrast, I could show many Biblical people who appear as failures, but are heroes of faith because of how they relate to God and trust in His Word. Trusting His Word is what made them successful in what God called them to do for His purposes. People are always going to be attracted to what serves them, and what they can get out of something. Faith and religion are no exception. "Infomercials" on TV in this country are so successful, because they give you something that can improve you, make you feel better, make you look better, or make you think better. It is no different in the Christian world. These mega churches are growing because these mega churches are offering and promising people, in Africa as well as in this country, something that God's Word never said. I am not saying that God will never make you wealthy, but if He does make you wealthy, He will do it His way, not through the manmade prosperity gospel.

Let me continue with the article:

"I preach prosperity and the message of salvation, too," says, [Pastor Joe], a former cessationist Baptist who now pastors a 6,500-person Bread of Life Church in Lusaka, Zambia. The church has sprouted 53 branches around the country, as well as church plants in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Malawi, and Tanzania. Like many successful megachurch pastors in Africa, [Pastor Joe] headlines his own local television show.

But he scoffs at the 'prosperity preacher' label sometimes given him. 'Our churches are growing,' he says, referring to his critics, 'theirs are shrinking.'

Allan H. Anderson, professor of the Global Pentecostal Studies at the University of Birmingham, says African renewalists are, indeed, eclipsing denominationally based churches and missions. 'The older churches,' he says, 'are struggling to keep up with the jet-setting entrepreneurs who head up these new organizations.'

'If you're not willing to play that [prosperity] game,' says Vince Bacote, associate professor of theology at Wheaton College, 'get ready to get steamrolled.'"

The same thing is happening in this country if you are not prospering. By the way, I heard some religious idiot on a late night program recently say that you will become prosperous if you give up one month's mortgage, or one month's rent, and give it to his ministry so he can proclaim the Word of God. Now if you want to give up one month's rent or give up one month's mortgage payment, do it for the right reasons, but not so his pocket can be filled with riches based on a false promise. In the New Testament God never said if you give, you are going to get.

Often Malachi 3:10 from the Old Testament is used to justify the prosperity doctrine. It says, ***"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."*** That is not what it says in the original language. In fact, in most cases, if you are reading from the King James as I am, ***"there shall not be room to receive it"*** is in italics meaning it is added by the translators. This verse should read, ***"and pour you out a blessing, that will be enough."*** God knows what He wants you to have. He knows what you are ready to receive. Sometimes you will think you are ready for more than He will give you, but it would only become a distraction if He did because your mind and your heart will be focusing on those material things instead of Him. He knows how much you need and what is enough for you. Most preachers want to focus on, ***"there shall not be room enough to receive it,"*** but that is not what it says. It should read ***"and pour you out a blessing, that be will enough"*** for you and your present state that God sees you in.

Let us go back to this article:

"The worst brand of African prosperity teaching is, perhaps unsurprisingly, an American export. Experts cite various reasons for the spread of this kind of renewalism, better known as health-and-wealth, including:

- * American lifestyles have led African believers to equate Christian faith with wealth.***
- * Traditional African values often link material success and spiritual success.***
- * The African 'Big Man' ideal honors rich, powerful leaders such as prosperity preachers.***

And then there is television. As Pentecostal-charismatic programming has flooded Africa, renewal numbers have risen from 17 million in 1970 to 147 million in 2005. The continent's largest religious broadcaster is Santa Ana, California-based Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), followed by Europe's GOD TV.

As TV sets grow common in African cities, these broadcasters are gaining huge audiences. People who lack a TV often watch with neighbors, and viewing options are limited. In Zambia,

only three stations click on: MUVI TZ, which airs reruns of U.S. shows and old movies; ZNBC, the Zambian National Broadcasting Company; and TBN. Television is becoming the continent's religious classroom.

'People turn it on and assume that TBN is American Christianity and Americans know everything, so why not listen to it? ... [W]e have Zambians looking to the West for direction, and they associate TBN with the West. And it's killing our churches.'

Back in the U.S., TBN broadcasts mainstream Pentecostal and charismatic teachers like Joyce Meyer and mega church pastor John Hagee alongside health-and-wealth preachers like Kenneth Copeland and Kenneth Hagin Jr. But Dolan says the network doesn't bother with mainstream preachers in Africa. Instead, TBN Africa airs wall-to-wall peddlers of plenty."

I know some will not like to hear this, but I am more concerned about what God's Word says and how it should be preached, rather than identifying myself with other ministries who are preaching a diluted message that comes from some source other than God's Word. That is why we are in a spiritual war; to keep the original message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed around the world.

"Prominent African health-and-wealthers, such as [Pastor Matthew] of Kingsway International Christian Centre in London, also buy time on TBN and GOD TV.

While Christians of all types and times have relied on God's material provision, the kind of blessings that such preachers often promise - such as divine expectation of abundant wealth, runaway professional success, and unassailable physical and emotional healthspring from a relatively recent, American brand of religious thought.

The earliest proponents of positive thinking were spiritual innovators like Phineas P. Quimby and Mary Baker Eddy, founders of the New Thought movement and Christian Science, respectively. By the turn of the 20th century, Essek William Kenyon, a pastor and founder of Bethel Bible Institute, had incorporated similar ideas into his preaching on the finished work of Christ. Kenyon wrote that Christians could make a 'positive confession' to bring emotional and physical desires into being. 'What I confess,' he is purported to have said, 'I possess.'

In the 1930s, Ken Hagin added Kenyon's teachings to his Pentecostal beliefs to create what would become the Word-Faith movement. An Assemblies of God pastor, Hagin taught Christians that they could get rich by mustering enough faith."

In other words, you could become wealthy if you had enough faith to become wealthy. And obviously, if you did not become wealthy, you did not have enough faith. Therefore, you have less faith than the father who claims what he still has not received, but is going to receive.

"Say it, do it, receive it, tell it,' he said. He touted a 'Rhema doctrine,' which held that words spoken in faith must be fulfilled, spawning slogans like 'name it and claim it.' In the 1960s, a young associate of Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copeland, began teaching that faith is a 'force'

which, when confessed out loud, brings material results. Within a couple decades, Word-Faith had grown into a sizeable offshoot of charismatic faith.

About 15 years ago, Hagin, his son Kenneth Hagin Jr., and Kenneth Copeland visited AICs in Nigeria. ‘They did teaching missions all over Nigeria, teaching the prosperity gospel,’ says Vinson Synan, Regent University emeritus professor of theology. ‘Churches exploded after that into millions of members.’

Once relegated to the periphery of American religious thought, the gospel of wealth now pierces the heart of Africa’s dynamic, growing church.

‘[The prosperity gospel] is the most sweeping movement within the continent of Africa,’ says Dolan. ‘The African people at large in the church have bought into it hook, line, and sinker. It offers tremendous promise to an economically deprived people.’

In this climate, teaching about the Cross and suffering can be unappealing.”

That is the same in the United States, the world’s wealthiest country as well. The cross and suffering is not appealing at all. Throughout our lives beginning in our educational system, we are programmed to succeed. We are taught that if we do not succeed, we are a failure, and the same happens in the Christian world. The idea is if you do not have enough faith, there must be something wrong with you because you are not achieving what God has planned for you.

“Preachers who focus on such topics [like the cross and suffering] often lack eye-catching accoutrements. Some [those who preach the cross and suffering] walk city streets hawking pencils [which is so embarrassing to read] to raise funds, says Dolan, leaving locals unimpressed. Their cultural history tells them to put stock in the ‘Big Men.’”

The locals are unimpressed because the preachers are making tents and preaching, as Paul did, rather than prospering through preaching the prosperity gospel to fill their pockets. Those who have filled their pockets must be proclaiming the correct message, because they are succeeding.

“Africa has its share of indigenous critics of the health-and-wealth message. [Thank God] Bishop Joseph Ojo, national secretary of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria and pastor of Calvary Kingdom Church, says certain pastors have ‘invaded the pulpit but do not have the calling. Their god is their belly.’

Ojo does not believe Christians should meekly accept poverty. [And neither do I.] ‘I have labeled poverty my life’s enemy,’ he says, ‘and I fight it with the same ferocity as I would fight the plague. Poverty stinks - it kills, demeans, and destroys.’ On the other hand, he says, ‘If you say, “God has called me to preach prosperity,” there is something wrong with you.’

David, senior pastor of the 10,000-member Nairobi Pentecostal Church, believes he could triple his membership by promising wealth. ‘But if that is all I am teaching, then I have lost the message,’ he says. ‘The kingdom of God is built on the Cross, not on bread and butter.’

[Pastor David] *sometimes counsels Christians burned by health-and-wealth preachers. One student ‘planted’ his school money as a seed offering, then was thrown out of college for not paying tuition. ‘I gave my money to God, but it has not come back,’ the student said. [Pastor David] replied, gently, ‘You did not give your money to God.’*

[He] *warns that unethical preachers turn God’s provision into ‘a sweepstakes,’ ‘distorting a good thing.’”*

The article goes on from here, and if you are interested go ahead and read it. It illustrates what is peddled, not just in Africa, but here in the United States and other places around the world. It is a false doctrine, it is another gospel, and it is not the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The cross is no longer appealing. The message of denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus is no longer appealing. It requires too much possible suffering. It requires too much commitment. Success does not come the way other Christians succeed, so doubt creeps in allowing Satan and his evil method (the *methodeia*) of confusion to enter the mind that you are doing something wrong not following God the way the New Testament says. But do not believe it, that is wrong. That is another gospel full of the devil. It is not of God, it is not of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 16, after Jesus tells Peter there will be a gathering of Christians called out into assembly, the book goes on in verse 24 to read, ***“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”*** What Christ said there is not a popular message today. In fact, it is anything but popular, however, it is a lost message, because people place themselves first and if Christianity is a way of getting their wants accomplished, it is accepted. But if not, they will not accept it. People want wealth, social activities, programs to take care of their kids, programs to take care of their seniors, and programs to take care of themselves. Many Christians want to be entertained by the church, and they want the church to preach messages that will give them hope that they can be wealthy and prosperous.

An example of this is seen in the article promising that if you live the prosperity gospel, you can find husbands and wives, or if you are barren, you can have twins. As if it is not good enough to have one child, you will have twins. That is a false message, preached by false prophets and teachers. The lost message in the New Testament is take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow Him. The Greek word for ‘deny’ is *‘aparneomai,’* which means ***‘to lose sight of oneself, to lose sight of yourself and your interests.’*** In relation to Christianity, it means you are to let Christ be in control, putting yourself second. Putting your self-interests second, putting Christ first, then taking up your cross, but that is not preached as part of the prosperity doctrine. Also, know you are not taking up Christ’s cross, but your cross, which is whatever you are going to face in the future and might even include suffering. In most cases, crosses are for suffering. I have never seen a cross that was not for suffering, but that is our promise. Even though it does not sound like much of a promise, that is what Christ is saying here, “Put yourself second, lose yourself in me, and follow me.”

Even though the prosperity doctrine is all about saving your life, what is best for your life and what is good for you, verse 25 reads, ***“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and***

whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” ‘Shall lose’ and ‘will lose’ in verse 25 are the same Greek word, ‘*apollumi*,’ and means ‘*to kill or destroy.*’ This verse is saying that whoever will save his life is really killing and destroying himself in the end. **“For whosoever will save his life is destroying and killing themselves,”** slowly in most cases, but that is what you are doing. You are destroying yourself not only here, but also in eternity; you will not have eternal life. “. . . *and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*” This is the only time ever in the Bible when being a loser is important. I am not saying that to be funny. “Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” Losing your life, putting yourself into Christ and His work, is the only way being a loser is good because you are ultimately finding everlasting life. Unfortunately, that is not what these false prophets, false teachers, or people in leadership who are selling this doctrine of prosperity preach. They are wrong to preach how this life can cater to you and make you a success, making claims about what faith is.

Matthew 7:15 warns us to, **“Beware of false prophets** [A better translation is ‘*beware of the religious imposters*’], **which come to you in sheep’s clothing. . .**” Meaning they look good on the outside, they say the right things to get your interest, but they do not teach the Gospel. In other words, they are wolves in sheep’s clothing.

“Beware of these religious imposters, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening [or raving] **wolves.**” They are not just wolves but raving wolves, killing and destroying. They take your eyes off Christ and convince you not to lose your life, but to find yourself, through faith in the prosperity gospel. They are completely wrong; there is no nice way of saying it. Whether it is a preacher in the United States, United Kingdom, Africa, Australia, Europe, or wherever, they are wrong. Satan and his evil army have captured those preachers so they preach a false gospel. That is why Satan makes every attempt possible to enter the church and influence its leadership. Do not forget, that is his primary method of destroying Christianity around the world today. If he can change the message through the leadership in the church, getting to you and twisting your mind is easy, especially if you are listening to one of these false prophets.

Matthew 7:16 tells us, **“Ye shall know them by their fruits,”** or their fleshly fruits through the spirit of God, not the fruit produced by the fruit of the spirit. In Galatians 5:22, the fruit of the spirit is given to you by Jesus Christ Himself. John 15 says, you must abide in the vine, being Christ, and He must dwell in you. You cannot produce these fruits, and if you try, it produces the fruits of the flesh, which is what these religious imposters are producing, fruits of the flesh. Remember, **“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good** [*agathos*, ‘good’ in the Greek] **tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.**” This verse is saying that Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit produces ‘good fruit.’ Any other fruit is fruit of the flesh, produced by man through the flesh. Likewise, fruit produced by the flesh will always bring out evil and that evil fruit will be evident to the people who have eyes to see and dwell in His Word. It will be evident what kind of fruit these raving wolves produce. You just need eyes to see, keep your ears open, and study under someone who will keep you focused on being more like Christ.

Matthew 7:18 continues, **“A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast**

into the fire,” which is where these religious imposters will end up along with the people who follow them; cast in the fire.

Christ repeats in verse 20, ***“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?”*** If you ever listen to some of these prosperity gospels, they do say good things about Jesus and enough about God’s Word to convince you that what they are preaching is from God’s Word. They preach it long enough to convince listeners then slip in this prosperity gospel in order to fill their pockets. The ‘name it and claim it’ preachers convict you by laying guilt on you that if you do not prosper, it is because you do not have enough faith. However, the false preachers are the faithless ones and they have no business convicting you of being faithless ever. Unless they can put themselves in the place of Christ and see what is in your heart and mind, they should keep their mouths shut, keep their prosperity gospel, and preach it only to themselves. It is sad to see some ministries that begin well, and then become trapped in this prosperity gospel, thinking because they started receiving more blessings that somehow God has blessed them because they adopted this prosperity gospel. No, the only thing they have adopted is gullible Christians to fill their pockets by believing what they are preaching could also happen to them. No, God tells them in verse 22, ***“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them [Jesus will tell them], I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*** You false religious imposters are nothing but workers of iniquity.

Luke 6:43 also has something to say about these very same scriptures. ***“For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”***

These verses tell us that these same people are not preaching what the treasures of your heart should be. If your heart is here on earth, then the things of this earth is where your heart is going to be. However if your heart is in heaven, that is where your treasure is going to be. You are storing your treasures up for that day when you will be rewarded by Him for your employment of the Word of God as you were called. But evil fools will preach out of the abundance of their heart, and their mouth will speak it. They want prosperity. Because they believe their prosperity is judged by mankind, their words are coming from their flesh, their mouth, their heart, and their own desires; not from the Word of God. Their words have never been, nor will they ever be, in the Word of God. Read Matthew 6:19 to 21 for yourselves. The treasures of your heart should be in heaven, not here on earth.

In I Timothy 6:3-6, Paul again writes about where your heart should be. Beginning with verse 3, he writes, ***“If any man teach otherwise, and consent [or draw near, in Greek] not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to***

godliness . . .” Here, godliness actually refers to the loyalty and devotion of the message of Jesus Christ.

Verse 4, **“He is proud,** [or puffed up with pride, full of himself] **knowing nothing, but doting** [really, sick of the mind, meaning this person is so full of himself, he is puffed up with pride and sick of mind.] **about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings,** [slander is a better translation] **evil surmisings ,”**

Verse 5, **“Perverse disputing of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.”** In other words, Paul’s statement, **‘supposing that gain’** some interpret to mean is showing your loyalty and devotion to Christ. No, it is actually showing your loyalty in your devotion to Christ along with what Paul adds in verse 6, **“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”** Paul is saying your devotion and loyalty (godliness) to Christ is with contentment knowing the **‘great gain’** is our eternal reward. It is something you want to do because you know where your gain is going to be in the end, which is in heaven, not here on earth.

Where did Paul get the phrase **‘is great gain’**? In I Timothy, Paul is echoing Christ’s words from Matthew 6:19 thru 21, **“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”** The word ‘heart’ in the Greek is *kardia*, the center and seat of spiritual life, which is where your treasure will be. The center point of your life will be focusing on heaven, if you lay your treasures up there, but if your focus is on material gain on earth, then your heart will be here on things of this world.

It is from Jesus Himself in Matthew 6:31-33 that Paul’s writing refers to in I Timothy 6:3-6. Beginning in Matthew 6:31, Christ says, **“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”** [Do not worry about those things.] **“. . . for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”** God knows what we need and He will take care of us. We do not need the prosperity gospel, rather rely on Jesus Christ and trust in His word to see us through day by day. In verse 33, Christ gives the condition for receiving God’s care of food, clothing and shelter, **“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”** God does not want us to live in poverty; He wants us to trust in Him so He can take care of us. That is Paul’s point in I Timothy 6:6, **“. . .but loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ with contentment is great gain.”** It is great gain because a day will never go by that Jesus will not take care of you if you put Him first. That is true prosperity, not what is preached in the world today.

Paul continues to write in I Timothy 6:7, **“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.”** In other words, you will never see a hearse towing a moving van. Your earthly belongings will do you no good on earth or in heaven buried alongside your coffin. They are just material things that come and go. Paul learned how to abase and to abound, but material things never controlled his life, so let us be content and remember Matthew 6:31-33, which tells us to put Christ and His kingdom first and let Him take care of us on a daily basis. That is why Christ said, **“Take therefore no thought for the morrow.”** Tomorrow’s problem is for tomorrow and is Christ’s

problem. Roll your problems onto Him and put Him first. He promised to take care of us today. That is the true prosperity gospel.

Paul goes on to say in I Timothy 6:10, ***“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith [pistis], and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*** Let us really look at this verse. If the love of money is the root of all evil, then why are prosperity preachers preaching if you do not have enough money, you do not have enough faith? The idea of faith in their eyes has become money, and without money, you have no faith, when actually, without God’s Word, you have no faith. Remember Romans 10:17, ***“faith cometh by hearing and hearing the word of God.”*** The prosperity doctrine has erred from faithfulness with their money. I do not want that to happen to me.

Verse 17 tells us, ***“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, [or, not proud] nor trust [the Greek is clearer, ‘do not expect or hope’] in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy”*** Paul is saying that our hope is in the living God, not material things here in this world. God knows what He wants us to have, so when He gives them, He expects us to enjoy those things. However, He also expects us to be faithful with our use of the things He gives as we employ the Word of God. God is not a killjoy, and does not want to spoil our fun.

In verse 18 Paul writes, ***“That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate”*** The phrase ***“That they do good,”*** is the Greek word, *agathoergeo*, and used only once in the New Testament here in I Timothy 6:18. *Agathoergeo*, means to ‘work good for someone else’s advantage.’ In other words, Paul is instructing us to do good for someone else’s advantage, so we may be rich ***“in good works.”*** Many times, I have told you the Greek word for ‘works’ is *ergon*, which is the employment of the Word of God. So, if you want to do something for someone else, then get involved in employing of the Word of God to help someone else. That is what Paul is saying here. Along with that, the Greek word for ‘distribute’ is *koinonikos*, meaning to ‘make others share in one’s possessions, liberally free in giving.’ With that translation, this verse could be read, ***“That they do good, that they be rich in the employment of the word of God, ready to distribute what you have to share with others [material possessions and giving to the storehouses of those who preach the Word of God.] willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation [as in Matthew 6] against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”***

That is God’s prosperity, not the manmade prosperity gospel full of nothing but the devil’s message for this day and age. Do not to fall for the devil’s methods sold by the church and its leadership calling you faithless and filling you with guilt. Do not fall for the devil’s message that you do not have faith because you are not prosperous; that you are not wealthy because you do not have material things and success. That is a damnable message. To the material world, Jesus appears a failure, but in God’s eyes and in ours He is our Redeemer.

I am making this point about the prosperity doctrine because the devil uses the church and church leadership to change the message of how to give to God correctly. The devil wants to ruin that precious act of worth-ship and worship because when done correctly, giving becomes pleasing to God in the way described in the fourth chapter of the Philippian letter. The devil

wants that message destroyed and now more than ever he is accomplishing that. The devil does not want you to understand what is wrong with the prosperity gospel, so he will work to make sure that some do prosper and succeed from the prosperity doctrine just to give some evidence that it is true, but it is not. Just because some who preach the prosperity doctrine are successful does not mean it is right, and just because the message sounds good does not mean it is the right thing to do. It is not the way to follow God and His Word. False prophets and false teachers will continue to gain popularity, but I believe there will be effects when people understand this is a false message. For one, unfortunately, on lookers will see Christianity as something to be mocked, which is a shame if you understand God's Word and see this happening in these last days.

Go back to I Timothy 6:3, ***“If any man teach otherwise, and consent [or draw near] not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine [that is what Jesus said and is recorded in the Bible] which is according to godliness [no, actually, according to the devotion you have in His Word]. He is proud, [puffed up with pride] knowing nothing, but doting [or sick in the mind].”*** He is diseased by Satan through destroying the wonderful act of worship by convincing you to give to God in the wrong manner, and he is doing this throughout the church world at an alarming rate. The devil is not concerned that you lay up treasures in heaven. He wants you to lay your treasures up in hell, but God wants you to lay them up in heaven. Paul tells us in verse 19, ***“Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation,”*** so not only your heart is in heaven, but your treasures also for a good foundation against the time to come. There is an afterlife to this life on earth where we continue to live in a different realm, so the foundation is being laid down correctly if you are rightly giving the way God teaches us to give so that we may hold onto eternal life.

II Corinthians 11:13 also speaks of false preachers. In the entire chapter Paul is vindicating himself and says in verse 13, ***“For such are false apostles, [or false proclaimers] deceitful workers...”*** That is what I am saying about these prosperity preachers; they are deceitful, deceiving you to think that if you are not a success, then you are not full of faith. That is not what scripture is all about. Those false preachers are ***“deceitful workers, transforming [‘a change of disguise’ in the Greek] themselves into apostles of Christ,”*** but they are not apostles of Christ, they are false Christ's and false apostles.

Paul goes on in verse 14 to say, ***“And no marvel [or surprise]; for Satan [or the accuser] is transformed [or a change of disguise] into an angel of light.”*** Put another way, Paul is saying, “The accuser himself is a change of disguise into an angel of light.” In chapter 6 of this series, I taught you a name of Satan, the god of this world. This verse 14 introduces a second name of Satan, an angel of light. However, ‘An angel’ is a bad translation; really ‘the messenger of light’ is a better way to say this. These verses continue to say, Satan ***“himself is disguised as a messenger of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers [not God's or Christ's ministers, but the devil's ministers] also be transformed [or disguised] as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”*** *Ergon*, is the same Greek word there, but this time it is applied according to their works by the gospel they preach which is not of God, it is of the messenger of light, the devil. These verses are saying that the prosperity gospel looks good on the outside, but it is killing and destroying you on the inside, because it is

the furthest thing from the truth, designed to prevent you from denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Him.

When I was part of another ministry, my mentor had a Bible verse painted on the entrance of the Cathedral where he preached, ***“For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven”*** [Ps. 119:89]. What I want on the masthead of this ministry is, “If you want to be a Christian, then be one,” which means, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. That message is true, even though it is not appealing, and it is a message from the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ, not from the messenger of light, Satan. God’s message employs the good works of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Know that if you give to this ministry, you must give with the right heart and mind because you want to see the sheep fed correctly. This ministry does not put guilt or condemnation on you because to the world you may seem a failure because you did not have enough faith in God. That is not a message from God; it is from Satan himself! Not only does II Corinthians 11:14 ask, “Why do you marvel?” It goes on in verse 15 to say, ***“Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers [Satan’s ministers] also be transformed [really, changed or disguised] as the ministers of righteousness.”*** Satan’s ministers will say enough good things to disguise themselves as someone preaching and proclaiming Christ, but that is just to confuse you and lure you in, to then expose and convince you with the message Satan wants you to hear. Right now, the message the devil most wants proclaimed is this prosperity gospel.

I hope that this chapter captured enough from the Bible to give you an idea of what to avoid, what bad fruit to be aware of, which always stems from the flesh, never from the Spirit of God. Bad fruit is worked into you as something that you think is good for you and is to be used often because it pleases your flesh. However, spirit controlled fruit is the better fruit to have because God knows what is best for us and what we need to keep growing in the mind of Christ. Beware of these false apostles, these false preachers, these false teachers. Beware of how Satan uses them to deceive the very elect. Keep your eyes open for the bad fruit that wants to poison your mind with the gospel that is not from the Bible, because it is really another gospel.

Remember, our redemption draweth nigh; the evidence is all around us, so I plan to keep proclaiming the Word of God correctly.

Wheat and Tares, Part 1

Beginning in Ephesians 6:10, God's Word says, "***Finally, my brethren, be strong*** [really strengthened, *endunamoo*] ***in the Lord, and in the power*** [or force, *kratos*] ***of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*** [or the *methodeia*]." As you should know, methodeia, are the methods of the devil, the schemes, tactics, and strategies that he forms against us, the church, and against the leadership of the church. Along with the names of the devil I have already given you, in this chapter you will learn more names so you are aware of his tactics. Once you understand some of the devil's names, you will understand his tactics, but I am still concentrating on the wiles or the methods of the devil.

I have also already told you that you can classify the devil's methods in three different categories in this order:

- 1) He attacks the church.
- 2) He attacks the leadership of the church, more specifically the pastors of the church or ministry.
- 3) The individual, you personally.

The devil's attacks begin with the church. As soon as Jesus revealed His plan to get His Word out through the church, the devil went to work to destroy it. This chapter will continue to show you how the devil attacks the church and church leadership with all his methods through false doctrines, false teachers, and false prophets. I will begin this chapter by sharing with you what several other authors have said about how the devil attacks the church, and will begin with the oldest author first. Of course, I will conclude this chapter with God's Word.

E.M. Bounds is the first author. He wrote this book approximately 100 years ago and this is what he had to say about the modern church, although it sounds so similar to what is happening today.

"The modern church with its kitchen and parlor, with its club and gymnasium, and with its ministries to the flesh and to the world is both indicative and alarming. What a contrast there is between the principles that the early church originated and fostered [and died for, by the way] and those of the modern and progressive church presents as substitutes."

'Substitutes' are the things that make you feel good to keep you entertained, to keep you interested. But all the church has done is adopt the world's ways to keep your attendance in the church by entertaining you.

"The original churches were faithfully spiritual. Their only purpose was to strengthen and cultivate all the elements that combine to make a deep and clear experience of God. [That is what Ephesians 4:11-12 is saying; church leadership is to equip you for the edifying of the saints.] They were training schools for spiritual life. They never lingered in the regions of the moral, the aesthetic, and the mental . . . The early church took it for granted that all who came to them really desired to 'flee from the wrath to come' (Matthew 3:7) and were sincerely yearning after full redemption. They considered their obligation to furnish these seekers with

the most sacred and exacting assistance. It never occurred to them that entertainment and social gatherings were channels through which God's grace would flow and foster spiritual growth.

These social and fleshly forces are regarded in many denominations as the perfection of spiritual things. These events are arrayed as mature fruit of spiritual piety, flavored and perfected by its culture and progress. They are ordained as the handmaidens of the prayer and testimony meeting. I object most seriously of the union of the worldly and the spiritual. What have they in common? 'Can two walk together, except they be agreed?' (Amos 3:3).

What elements . . . are fostered by entertainment and social gatherings? What phases of spiritual life do they promote? What feature of the gymnasium produces faith? Where do you find any elements that are aids to [their faith]? How do social parties produce a more prayerful and holy life? How do they bring a soul nearer to God? How do they form or strengthen the ties of Christian fellowship? Are social clubs not frivolous and worldly? Do parties not cater to and suit the tastes of the carnal and the worldly? What unity of purpose and spirit is there between worldly entertainment and witnessing for Christ? The one is intensely spiritual; the other has in it no evidence of spiritual benefit. We might as well add to the list of heavenly helpers the skating rink, calisthenics, and the gymnasium. If young people [or any one] desire to join a club, enjoy a social gathering, or play parlor games, let them do so...."

I agree with that; you can enjoy the things that the world provides, as far as entertainment goes, but do not try to bring that into the Christian world. It belongs among the worldly things that you do. Remember, you are in the world, but not of the world. You can participate in some of these things, but do not attach any spiritual aspects to them. One is entirely spiritual and one is entirely entertainment meant to cater to your flesh. Now some of these things are not wrong. I do not take the hard stance that E.M. Bounds does, so I am not reading to you those particular areas. You do not have to lock yourself in a room and never enjoy anything. Paul says in I Corinthians 6:12 that all things are lawful, but not everything is expedient or beneficial when it comes to our spiritual being and why we exist. Do not try to spiritualize worldly events just because they are part of a church function making you think you are doing something for God. No, you are doing something for yourself. If you want to do something for yourself, the world does it better than the church world does it anyway, although the church world has begun entertaining with its weekly functions. But do not forget they are just copying what the world does to entertain you to keep you captured so you do not drift away to another church. However, there is only one way to know what God is all about and that is through His Word and the continued teaching of it without the interruption of silly nonsense. If you want to be entertained, if you want to go to the movies, if you want to go to a social club and dance your heart away, then go to it. If you want to have a party, then have a party, but do not label it church activity. Separate the two.

Bounds continues to say:

"If young people desire to join a club, enjoy a social gathering or play parlor games, let them do so. But do not deceive them and degrade holiness by calling these things holy institutions that feed the spiritual life.

Disguise it as we may; reason about it as we will; apologize for it as we do; the truth is, we have lost the intensity of our personal spiritual experiences. We have lost a deep conviction about eternal things that is an evident feature of all great spiritual movements.

Many preachers and others have fallen so low in their spiritual experience that they do not cherish these distinct and strongly spiritual methods. Instead, they are devising plans and organizations to gratify their non-spiritual desires, which are midway between Christ and the world. While these desires are not essentially wrong, they do not possess one grain of spiritual power and can never be channels of heavenly communication. Let the revolution begin with the preacher.”

I say the same thing E.M. Bounds said over 100 years ago: ***“Let the revolution begin with the preacher,”*** because the preacher is who the devil, Satan, our adversary, goes for first. If he can get the leadership of the church, he can bring down the church, then getting to you is a lot easier. His job becomes a lot easier once he has broken down those other two institutions of the church.

“Let him wrestle with God until his ordination vow becomes revitalized so that everyone can feel the pressure of his goal, the intensity of his zeal, the singleness of his purpose, and the holiness of his life. Let the people catch the fire in the purpose of his heart until all press on to the regions of perfect love, panting for all fullness of God.”

I do not need people to see my holiness, but I do need people to see my faithfulness to His Word through the preaching of it. I do not want anybody to examine how holy I am, rather examine whether I am preaching God’s Word or not. That is why I stay very close and do not drift off into too much storytelling as too many preachers do today. I listened to some person the other day. The entire program was a half hour, but after one verse, he began telling some story for 20 minutes. Believe me, I could tell you a lot a life experiences and stories. I have had plenty of them from my life before and after I became a Christian, but I would rather stay close to the Word of God, throughout the Old and New Testament to show what God’s Word has to say and how it applies to my life and your life also.

That is what E.M. Bounds wrote about the modern church over 100 years ago, but let us read from an author a little closer to our time. Beyond Conformity by Walter Curry Mavis is one of the very first books I bought when I was 17 years old as an intern minister under the tutelage of Gene Scott. Gene Scott told a few interns to read this book to instill in our minds what Mavis was saying. Although this book was written in 1958, the truths still apply today, just as the book by Bound written over 100 years ago applies today also.

Mavis writes:

“A view of the affairs of everyday life shows vividly that religion and worldly culture have united; a little religion is a good thing in all kinds of activities. Contemporary Christianity has accepted the standards of the world, so generally the average church differs little from other social and humanitarian institutions. Many foreign visitors see religion that is represented in our churches as an expression of the American way of life. They view our churches as social organizations with a religious tinge, only slightly unlike many of the numerous service clubs and fraternal organizations that flourish on the American scene. In many cases, churches are more timid in challenging social evils than secular institutions. Moreover, multitudes of church members in their personal lives represent a way of life that cannot be distinguished from the life of a non-member. The church is little more to these people than a cult of

respectability. They have added a little Christian sentiment to a secular way of life. They embellish their personal selfishness with a thin veneer of religion. Religion in America is fast becoming a cultural Christianity. The standards of society are accepted as the practical norms of the church.

In the western world, much of the life of society has been conditioned by the church, but has not been transformed by the power of the gospel. The church accepts the larger part of this half-Christian and half-pagan culture. What it cannot accept, it tolerates with minimal protest. In doing this, the church represents a secularized version of the kingdom of God. Prevailing culture accepts the church like it accepts other institutions as an important part of the social structure. Much of the present interest in religion is rooted in sentiment. It is the expression of a man's appreciation of the good and the beautiful. This appreciation leads people to identify themselves with the church without a sense of self-surrender to Christ. This generation, like the rich young ruler expresses an enthusiasm for following Christ, but it does not wish to surrender its all to Him."

This reminds me of the Parable of the Sower, where Christ said there are four different types of soils: hard soil, stony soil, soil full of weeds, and good soil. The good soil represents 25 percent of those who heard and responded to the Word of God. The other 75 percent are those who did not respond to God's Word. I saw a statistic recently that 77 percent of all Americans in the United States say they are Christians, just as Jesus said in His parable 2000 years ago. However, throughout the world I do not even think there are really 25 percent now that are true followers of Jesus Christ. The professing Christians are not Christians that deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Jesus. I thought it was ironic that 75 percent of the soil in the parable went by the wayside, and here we have 77 percent according to this statistic saying they are Christians. How many of that 77 percent are true Christians; not by any of their works, not by any of their good deeds, but true Christians that want to pursue God and live in His will by denying themselves, taking up their cross, and following Him.

Continuing with Mavis, he writes:

"This generation, like the rich young ruler, expresses an enthusiasm for following Christ, but does not wish to surrender its all to Him. [They will profess it, but they will not live it.] The present revival of interest in religion is rooted too largely in the desire for personal aggrandizement. It has become a type of applied psychology. Prayer is considered a means to obtain personal poise. Faith is used to enable one to live confidently and to think positively. So many people have inverted the religious impulse in today's revival of religion. Instead of seeking to glorify God, they seek to have God glorify them. They are interested in what religion will do for them, rather than what they can do for God and thousands are now trying to get God to serve them."

This book was written in 1958 and now it is not thousands any longer; it is millions on top of millions seeking how God can serve them instead of them serving God.

"There are preachers who are promoting this type of thing because it appeals to the popular demand. 'Some of the current types of preaching,' says Paul Hutchison, 'come perilously close to blasphemy, promising success in the marketplace or an easy solution of life's crisis as

a reward for calling on God.’ [Similar to the prosperity doctrine] Culture Christianity is being confirmed in America by the large number of unconverted people who are joining churches. In religious situations, such as the present, church membership is one of the things that goes along with well-ordered living like good plumbing and late model cars. Already more than three out of four adults of our society are church members. This number includes the most of those who are in the upper classes, but people with social status who are not already members are joining churches rapidly because it is the decent thing to do. It is now possible to join the average church with little knowledge of or concern for the Christian religion. One needs to know little about the great Christian affirmations and is not necessary that he believe them. The new inherent is not usually expected to follow the teachings of Jesus.”

Of course not! All they have to do is fill a pew and keep the membership alive and growing pretending they are Christians without the cross. Remember, Mavis wrote these words fifty years ago. So, let us read a short paragraph about the secular church from James Montgomery Boice in his book on the Gospel of Matthew. Although Boice has already been promoted and is with his Lord, this book was written recently and what he wrote about the secular church is still true today.

“The Secular Church: We are to be aware of the church becoming secular, that is, of becoming like the world around it. The secular church is a church that is conformed to the world, as much of the contemporary church is. It is characterized by the world’s wisdom, the world’s theology, the world’s agenda, and the world’s methods. When the evangelical church becomes worldly, it may still be trying to do God’s work but it will be trying to do it in the world’s way.

What has hit me like a thunderbolt in recent years is the discovery that what I had been saying about the liberal churches at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s now needs to be said about evangelicals too. A few years ago, Martin Marty, always a shrewd observer of the American church scene, said in an interview that in his judgment by the end of the century, evangelicals would be the most worldly people in America. He was on target when he said that. How does that happen? Like the liberals before us, evangelicals use the Bible words but give them new meaning, pouring bad secular content into spiritual terminology.”

Just turn on religious television today. All they have done is adopt the world’s ways and methods and attached the label of Christian religion and belief to it. They are infomercials for Jesus without any Word of God in their programs or services. They twisted God’s Word to create a false doctrine to appeal to the masses resulting in large followings.

A more contemporary author is Chip Ingram. Here are his comments about how Satan attacks the church.

“Satan is a master counterfeiter. His attacks against the work that God does in this world are often indirect. He crafts attractive alternatives to the gospel and the church, many of them containing a lot of truth- but with just enough error to poison the whole system.”

It is so true what he is saying here. There is a small bit of truth in what is preached that captures you into believing they are preaching the Word of God correctly, but that is all that is required

for the devil to plant the twisted Word of God in your mind as these false proclaimers preach it. As Ingram says, it is “just enough error to poison the whole system,” including the church and its followers.

“If he can get non-Christians to sincerely believe in a seemingly noble cause-a false belief system or a charitable work- he can convince them that they don’t need the gospel at all. If he can get Christians to mix some of his deceptions into their faith, he can fool us into living according to the world even while we are convinced we are living according to the gospel. The subtleties of his schemes produce a huge selection of counterfeits to the real thing. The New Testament spells out some of these attacks for us. Colossians 2:8 informs us that Satan takes people captive through false philosophies. In I Corinthians 10:20, he is exposed as the mastermind behind false religions. He inspires many people within his domain to pose as ministers. These false servants then lead people astray as they mix and mingle with true servants of God (II Cor. 11:14-15). Satan also is the source of false doctrine through the teachings of many antichrists (I John 2:18) . . . According to the Bible, the source of all falsehood, all misguided worldviews, all counterfeit religions and philosophies, and all teachers of any belief other than faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ are instigated, inspired, and influenced by the father of lies.”

That is true. There are many ministers instigated, inspired, and influenced by Satan himself and his evil army. I want to point out with these authors the three areas that Satan attacks. First, he attacks the church, then he attacks the leadership in the church, and last he attacks the individual. If he can bring down the church and the leadership in the church with false preachers and false prophets acting as mouthpieces of the devil, most of the battle is won. To influence individuals with the twisted Word of God will be accomplished much easier through the establishment and false prophets, false teachers, and false doctrines that are peddled upon the person. The devil is smarter than you and me. He is cunning. He has many strategies that he can use and implement in the church and upon the leadership of the church.

With that, go to Matthew 13:24, which is the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. By the way, not all parables are supposed to be understood by everyone. Those who have sight to see light and those who can hear the Word of God with understanding will be enlightened by the truth of these parables. And their truths still apply today, if not more so, even though they were written 2000 years ago. Our enemy, the devil, has had 2000 years to practice his strategies against today’s modern church.

In verse 24, Jesus begins the parable. ***“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.”*** The man referred to here is Jesus Christ, who came down in a tent of human flesh, as my mentor used to say, to sow the good seed, the gospel of Jesus Christ. With Him, Jesus brought the kingdom of heaven, the good seed, the Gospel, that He left behind to sow the field. Seed in this verse is ***sperma*** in the Greek, defined as, *“from which a plant germinates. It is the grain or kernel, which contains within itself the germ of the future plants.”* This verse is telling us that Christ brought us the gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, to be planted to germinate itself into future plants, or future generations, until He comes back for His church and His believing ones; His who are faithful to Him, have faith in Him, and trust His Word.

Reading verse 24 again, we know, ***“The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man [Jesus] which sowed good seed in his field [the world].”*** We learn the field refers to the world in verse 37 when Christ’s disciples wanted to know more about the parable of the tares of the field. Verse 37 says, ***“He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man [Jesus]; the field is the world [as is described in verse 24]; the good seed are the children [no, in the Greek, it says “sons”] of the kingdom; but the tares are the children [again, “sons”] of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.”***

Verses 37 to 39 gives the explanation, but return to verse 24, ***“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man [Jesus] which sowed good seed [the Gospel brought down from the heavens] in his field [the world].”*** That gospel seed is intended to germinate itself for future generations for the benefit of the ones that trust in His Word.

Verse 25 must be understood, so I will take it apart to explain. The entire verse reads, ***“But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.”***

The verse begins, ***“But while men slept. . .”*** ‘Men’ here are the ***‘sons of the kingdom’*** as described in verse 38. Christ is not talking to everyone here. More than half of the commentators and theologians think Christ is talking to everyone. You can apply it to yourself, but Jesus is talking about the ones appointed to declare and proclaim His Word, His gospel. He is talking about the church and particularly the leadership of the church.

Return to verse 25, ***“But while men [or preachers] slept. . .”*** meaning they became lazy, comfortable, doers of men instead of doers of God. They catered to their flesh instead of wanting to please God, showing how man can please God through faith and faith in His Word.

Continuing on in verse 25, ***“But while men [or preachers] slept [became lazy and sluggish in their pursuit of proclaiming the Word of God correctly], his enemy. . .”*** Verse 39 tells us who the enemy is, ***“The enemy that sowed them is the devil.”*** In the Greek, that is *diablos*, the ***false accuser or slanderer of God, Jesus, and the gospel of Jesus Christ.***

Verse 25 concludes, ***“But while men [preachers] slept [became lazy] his enemy [the devil] came and sowed tares among the wheat [the wheat is the choicest of grain] and went his way.”*** Christ is saying here that while these lazy, sluggish preachers proclaim a false doctrine, the devil has come in and sowed with his ways tares among the wheat.

Moving on to verse 26, Christ says, ***“But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.”*** The word tares in the Greek it is *zizanion*. *Vine’s Dictionary on Old and New Testament Words* states, ***“zizanion: is a kind of darnel, the commonest of the four species, being the bearded, growing in the grain fields, as tall as the wheat and barley and resembling wheat in appearance. [Remember that; they are similar in size and looks.] It was credited among the Jews with being degenerate wheat. The rabbis called it ‘bastard’ wheat. The seeds are poisonous to men and [animals], producing sleepiness,***

nausea, convulsions and even death (they are harmless to poultry). The plants can be separated out, but the custom, as in the parable, is to leave the cleaning out till near the time of the harvest. The Lord describes the tares as ‘the sons of the evil one’; false teachings are in dissociable from their propagandists. For the Lord’s reference to the kingdom see kingdom.” Vine’s Dictionary tells us the tares are a kind of species similar to wheat and barley not only in size but also in looks. The rabbis called it a bastard species. They are the ones who would be labeled as bastard species because they are used by Satan. That is, the false preachers and the false prophets in the church. This bastard species is not under the kingdom of heaven, it is under the kingdom of the wicked one, controlled by him to say what he wants to say, and do what he wants to see done, which is destroy the church and its people.

To understand these fully, return to verse 25, **“But while men slept, his enemy [who, in the Greek, is also hateful, bitter, and hostile] came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.”**

Verse 26, **“But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.”**

Verse 27, **“So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?”** In other words, “Did we not plant the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world? Why are there tares?” which is the false preachers and these false proclaimers teaching another gospel.

Verse 28, **“He said unto them, An enemy [the devil] hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?”**

Verse 29, **“But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.”** The Greek word for gather in both verse 28 and 29 is different. The Greek word for ‘gather them up’ is a little harsher than the ‘gathering up’ of the ones that are part of the good seed. It is a kinder Greek word.

Verse 30, **“Let both grow together until the harvest [the end of time]: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers [the angels, from verse 39], Gather [this is the harsher word for gather] ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn [the ones proclaiming the Word of God correctly].”** Verse 40 describes how the tares will be burned, **“As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.”** And verse 42 adds to this, **“And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”**

There is a warning in this parable to the ones that preach and proclaim the Word. False prophets and false teachers will outnumber the sons of God who correctly preach the Good News of Jesus Christ. These false prophets and teachers have become tares in the field, or the world, to mislead, misguide, and misdirect individuals and Christ allows that to happen until the end of days. These false prophets will continue to be controlled by the spirit of antichrist and live under the delusion that they are religious, that they have faith in the true Christ. These evil individuals that have become the children of the tares, of the wicked one, as described in verse 38. This parable is a

warning. This is why I have spent the time preaching on spiritual warfare, the devil's methods, and the devil's main concern to first attack the church and the leadership of the church to destroy it. If the devil has you trapped in an institution that looks religious or holy on the outside with wonderful prayer meetings and gatherings, it may be full of dead men's bones on the inside because it is part of the wicked one, the sons of the tares, instead of the sons of the kingdom of God. Their outcome is very graphic. They will be burned in a fiery furnace for eternity because of their iniquity and wickedness. Whether they mislead intentionally or unintentionally it does not matter.

I have told you many times over, there are a lot of good intentioned ministries and good intentioned churches that will say in the end of time, "Lord, Lord." Remember the warning in Matthew 7:21, "***Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will*** ['the will' being thelema, in the Greek] ***of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I [Jesus] profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.***" Christ will say, "Yes, you prophesied, but you did not prophesy to the kingdom of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You prophesied to the wicked one who used you. You are the son of the wicked one, prophesying in my name, but you never were part of me. I never knew you because you are a son of the tares instead of son of the kingdom."

Matthew 13:41 tells us, "***The Son of man [Jesus] shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.***" The rabbis identified them for what they were and are today, bastard religions, bastard religious beliefs, and bastard individuals who prophesy in His name, but the Lord never knew you because you are children of the tares, of the wicked one.

Verse 43 gives us something to look forward to, "***Then shall the righteous [through faith] shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.***" Hopefully, you have ears to understand the methods and wiles the devil uses to attack the church and destroy that establishment by putting false prophets, false teachers, and false pastors and proclaimers of the Word of God into that institution. There is no greater way for him to accomplish what he wants to accomplish than to fool the Christian world, convincing them they are following Christ when they are actually following the devil and all his bastardly ways. That may sound harsh to you, but I am not as harsh as Jesus will be when He casts them all into the lake of fire or a fiery furnace, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth throughout eternity. It is harsh, but that is what they deserve. The lake of fire or the fiery furnace is going to burn a lot hotter for those false proclaimers not preaching the Word of God correctly. We, however, will be gathered kindly into His barn, into His kingdom, as it says in verse 30.

Keep in mind what Paul said in I John 4:1 about testing the spirits whether they are from God or from the devil. That testing is through drawing close to God and asking Him for guidance. He will guide you by putting in your life someone like me or another pastor to give the proper guidance through correct teaching. When that happens, you will know what you are hearing is truly the Word of God. That is why I stay close to God's Word. Rather than telling you my experiences to apply God's Word in your life, I am interested in what God's Word says that got

me through those experiences. That is what I am concerned about. I could tell you stories. I could read you other people's stories. There are books and books and books on Christian bookstore shelves that tell life experiences and what got them through this or got them through that, but never even mention God's Word once or what they supposedly leaned on to get them through. They have been brainwashed by the sons of tares, the sons of the wicked one and there are more and more of those being produced and implemented along with the good wheat.

The tares are among the wheat. They look the same and they sound the same. The biggest difference is in their message. For example, is the prosperity message used to attract and entrap you? That is the most common message preached today, not only in this country but also around the world. They preach, "Come to Jesus; give to Jesus." But that is not the correct way to give with the spirit of giving, part of the fruit of the spirit. Once you understand the correct reasons to give, you cannot wait to give, not for any gain you may obtain, but because your giving sends the message around the world, or supports the church that you go to so it can continue to proclaim God's Word correctly.

I know I sound redundant but I am trying to get the point across. You will know if that shepherd, preacher, or pastor is staying close to the Word of God. You will know if you keep asking and seeking, concentrating more on what He wants from you and less on what you can get from Him. That is the real message. When you seek God's will, you will be led to ministries or churches that proclaim it correctly; that will guide and teach you by faith what God has put forth in His book. But when you seek Him for yourself, you will only find sons of tares. That is my opinion; I have not read it anywhere else in any commentary because they do not want to talk about it. They are bastardly sons controlled by the wicked one that seeks to appease you, to please you, and to cater to you instead of proclaiming a message that will touch your heart week in and week out to remind you what God is seeking from you. God is seeking trust, faith, and growth in your spiritual walk with Him. Too many have become stale from listening to a stale message instead of growing like the wheat, the choicest of crops. Stop being a tare and become like wheat.

God will help you, but this is the condition: when you are seeking Him first, when you are more concerned about what He wants from you instead of what you can get from Him, I guarantee, God will lead you in the right direction wherever that direction takes you. Take your focus off yourself. Once we freely receive the message of salvation and grace, once we start living in faith and trust in His Word, it is not about us any longer. It becomes about what we can do for Him, which is what you should live for until we get there. If there is anything that I would accomplish through this ministry while God has me preaching, I hope you will take your eyes off yourself and put them back on Jesus where the real focus should be. I know it is not an easy message but it is the same message that Jesus preached; deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him. That is the true meaning of the cross.

The sons of tares have twisted that message and put the focus back on you instead of the focus on what He wants you to do. That first criteria is denying yourself by putting Him as your only focus. That does not mean you cannot concentrate on your family. You are supposed to be responsible for your family. It does not mean you can never have fun; you can never entertain yourself, but those things are a secondary concern, just happenings in life that you experience on occasion. Your focus is supposed to be on Him. He wants you to put Him as your first priority.

That is what Luke 14 is all about. If anything interferes, then you are to eliminate it. I am saying you could put Christ as a priority and He will give you those pleasures. He will allow you to experience them. God is not a cosmic killjoy, and when you do experience them, you will probably have a lot more enjoyment from them when they come into your life.

Keep God in focus. Keep God the center of your spiritual growth, and keep faithing and trusting His Word. Do not become as a tare, especially preachers who this parable is intended for. Do not be false proclaimers, the sons of the wicked one. Refocus your life back on Christ because there is still hope for some of you. For those of you who will not turn and put your focus back on Christ, the outcome is sad because God will not allow iniquity to last forever. That is what His promises are all about. Our redemption is drawing nigh. Refocus your life back on Him and off the distractions that the devil has placed in the church world. The fleshly entertainment and twisting of the message is more comfortable for you to practice, but it is nothing more than the end times that Christ declares here in this parable. It is the way the devil has entered the church world and the leadership to take you off course. The devil has his false proclaimers in place and they are side-by-side with the few teaching correctly. They might look the same, but they are not. One will receive eternal life; the other will receive eternal damnation in the fiery furnace. I want to be one of those receiving eternal life. God help me, if I ever twist His Word, I hope He puts me back in line with my focus back on Him. As an individual, you need to find an establishment or ministry that follows closely to the Word of God. One that proclaims what you can do for God instead of what God can do for you. God will do plenty for you, He already has. If He never did another thing, He gave you the hope of eternal salvation if we stay close to Him. If He never did another thing, He has done enough by coming here and dying for our sins as that sacrificial lamb. If He never did any other thing besides that, it is more than enough and more than we could ever hope for.

If you are going to stay close to His Word, beware and be aware of these sons of tares that would destroy your faith and diminished God in your life so you eventually fall away. You must become aware of what is out there and do not fall into its snare. Get close to ones that are teaching correctly and stay close to His Word, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ the way it should be.

Whether preachers know it or not, many have been used as a tool and an agent of Satan. God help them. This is probably the most important subject matter that you can learn in your lifetime.

To be continued...

Wheat and Tares Part 2

Ephesians 6:10 continues to be the launching point in this series. It reads, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”*** By now we know you could also read this verse as, ***“. . . be strengthened in the Lord, and in the power [or force] of his might.”*** Verse 11 goes on to say, ***“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*** The devil is *diablos*, the accuser, the slanderer. Also, the word ‘wiles’ in the Greek is *methodeia*, the methods, the strategies, and the schemes the devil and his evil army plot against the church and us. This chapter will continue to focus on the devil’s wiles, the *methodeia*.

Now, I have told you there are three different groups that he attacks:

- 1) He attacks the church.
- 2) He attacks the leadership in the church.
- 3) He attacks the individual.

So far, in this series, I have been focusing on the attacks on the church and the leadership of the church, including all the methods the devil uses to change God’s Word by either adding to it or subtracting from it to misguide pastors, evangelists, preachers, or anyone in church leadership who proclaims God’s Word. Jesus and Paul both warn of this repeatedly.

This chapter will continue with the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, adding to the teaching in the last chapter. In Matthew 13:24, Jesus begins this parable, ***“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.”*** Jesus was the first one to sow the good seed. He brought the gospel message with Him and left it here with His disciples to proclaim. They were to proclaim not only everything that He taught prior to His crucifixion, but also everything afterwards, which is the resurrection and ascension into the heavens, the gospel message. That also includes what Christ did for us then and that someday He is coming back for us if we are still alive, and if we live in the last days. I believe we are now living in the last days. If we are still alive when Christ returns, we will never see that first death, instead we will be raptured, taken up with Him. But just in case He does not come while we live, we still have hope and live by faith in everything He said while He was here on earth, and through His disciples that we are going to be there with Him someday ruling and reigning wherever He places us for that particular purpose.

Jesus was the first goer and He is the one that sowed the seed, and the field He sowed was the world. In verse 38, Christ explains what He said in verses 24, 25 and 26. ***“The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; [that He sowed to] but the tares are the children of the wicked one.”*** In the Greek it reads, ***“the sons of the wicked one.”***

Now that we understand verse 24, in verse 25 Christ continues, ***“But while men slept, his enemy [In the Greek it is very clear: the hateful, bitter, hostile enemy, the devil.] came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.”***

As I said in the last chapter, most authors who have written about this particular subject explain that the wheat is the Christian community and the tares are the ones in the Christian community pretending to be Christians, but they are not Christians, and they mislead Christians into doing the things of the world. In researching this, I have found that few have completely understood what Christ is saying here and as I researched deeper into this subject matter, Jesus is not talking to everyone in this verse. In fact, because His disciples were somewhat confused, He makes it a point and verse 36 of the same chapter tells us, ***“Then Jesus sent the multitude away”*** Yes, Christ said this to the multitude, but it was not meant for the multitude. The only part of the parable meant for the multitude was to watch out who these tares are, but the tares are not the everyday Christian community. The tares are the false prophets, the false teachers, the false proclaimers, evangelists, and pastors behind pulpits who twist the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ. They either add to it or subtract from it. That is why in verse 36, Jesus goes on to explain to the disciples the meaning of this parable.

Return to verse 24 where Christ says, ***“The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.”*** Who does the sowing? Jesus did the first sowing. Here, Christ is talking to His disciples that would be the proclaimers of His message to spread it throughout the then-known kingdom, to the house of Israel, and to the Gentiles through Paul. Jesus was the first sower. If you go to the beginning of chapter 13, verse 1 is the Parable of the Sower. There has to be a sower of the seed. Whoever that sower is, the seed is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The seed is the Good News of Jesus Christ. Jesus is telling a parable here, not for all the Christian community, but for those in church leadership. He is telling this to the shepherds responsible for other people’s lives, teaching the Word of God so they comprehend the Word of God. Maybe this is why preachers do not want to accept that interpretation because the responsibility for their teaching comes back to them. Preachers will be held accountable because lives depend upon what they say and preach.

In this parable, Jesus is talking to the ones who will be doing the sowing. This ministry began based on Romans 10:13 and 14, which says, ***“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed [or more correctly, faithed]? and how shall they believe [again, faith] in him [Jesus Christ] of whom they have not heard?”*** In other words, you cannot faith or believe in something if you do not know what or who the person is talking about. The end of the verse explains how they will hear, ***“and how shall they hear without a preacher?”*** this would be the sower, the one that sows the seed. The prosperity doctrine tries to capitalize on this sowing of seed by applying it to giving. Yes, it has some application to giving, but not the way they are teaching it through false teaching and false doctrine; I guarantee you that.

Verse 15 goes on, ***“And how shall they preach, except they be sent?”*** Sowers are sent by Christ Himself, because He has chosen you. Too many preachers learn from Bible schools the basics of preaching through a lesson plan without having one iota of inspiration given to them by God. They are only learned doctrine and lesson plans. A preacher’s school, for lack of better words, must be anointed and appointed by God, not man. Romans 10:15 tells us that preachers must be sent. ***“And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! [The Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ] But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias [Isaiah]***

saith, Lord, who hath believed [or faithed] our report? So then faith (cometh) by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Through the inspiration of this chapter is how this ministry received its name, *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* In the Greek this says, the hearing and the hearing and the hearing. It is not just a one-time hearing; it is a continual hearing of faith by a preacher that declares the “glad tidings of good things” of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These are the sowers that Jesus is talking about.

With that, return to Matthew 13:25. To repeat, Jesus is talking to the sowers, not everyone, even though everyone needs to understand so they do not start following a tare that is among the wheat. *“But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.”* The enemy is not going to sow good seed, or preachers who preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the salvation message, the faith message, and the spiritual warfare messages to expose the devil and his army for who and what they are. No, they will sow tares. The devil will sow his own inspired individuals with messages that sound good, sound religious, sound like Christianity, and sound like the Gospel, but it is not. In our modern day, Jesus is talking to preachers, evangelists, pastors, or pastoring teachers who should be sowing correctly, but are declaring the message of the enemy instead of the message of Jesus Christ.

Before moving on, I want to once again give you the definition of a tare. Easton’s Bible Dictionary says it is, *“the bearded darnel, mentioned only in Matt. 13:25-30. It is the Lolium temulentum, [in Latin] a species of rye-grass, the seeds of which are a strong soporific poison. It bears the closest resemblance to wheat till the ear appears, and only then the difference is discovered. It grows plentifully in Syria and in Palestine [which I found very interesting].”* As Christ said, the wheat comes up with the tares and you cannot distinguish the two. They look the same, or they sound the same, but when it is at its most ripened point, the true message is nothing more than an imitation. In this case, the sower sowing the seed produces nothing but bad seed that tries to choke and overcome the wheat. In the church, this is a false prophet or preacher declaring a false doctrine.

What does *“soporific poison”* mean? The American Heritage Dictionary defines a soporific poison as *“1. Inducing or tending to induce sleep. 2. Drowsy. A drug or other substance that induces sleep; a hypnotic.”*

What are these tares doing? The enemy is sowing his seed, producing tares, the ones proclaiming a false message to hypnotically convince you what they are saying is the truth, when it is anything but the truth. It is definitely not Gospel. I found that very interesting, so I dug a little deeper, and found that another way to define a tare is *‘a cheat.’* There are many definitions of this word that will be discussed here, however, most understand the common definition is to defraud someone. For instance, some may cheat on a test by looking for the answers on another’s paper. That is cheating because you did not know the answer yourself. Most have been guilty of it, including myself. However, there is another definition for ‘cheat.’ A cheat is also defined as, *“Weedy annual grass that often occurs in grain fields [or wheat fields] and other cultivated land; Seeds sometimes considered poisonous, such as the bearded darnel, the Lolium temulentum, tare.”* The King James translators really got it right and truly explained what Jesus was telling His disciples to expect in the future, and what others who understand this parable

should expect in the future as well. In another dictionary, a cheat is a, ***“weedy annual native to Europe, but widely distributed as a weed especially in wheat.”*** From these definitions, we know tares are nothing more than cheaters.

Using the definition most people associate with cheaters, it would be someone who cheats or ***“deceives by trickery or plunder; to deprive by defrauding, to mislead, to fool, escape.”*** All those definitions sounds like false preachers with their false doctrines.

Looking further into another definition of a cheat, it is ***“someone who leads you to believe something that is not true.”*** That is what Jesus said. Tares grow the same as the wheat, they look as wheat while they are growing, but it is not until they reach maturity that they are seen as different, making you believe something that is not true. They disguise their true identify for what they are, hoping that they will defraud you with their message. And that is what Jesus was saying in His Parable of the Wheat and Tares.

Another definition is ***“a person who tries to bluff other people, a person who swindles you by means of deception or fraud.”*** I will add to that by saying whether they are doing this willingly or unwillingly, they are still a tool of the enemy, sowing the tare seed instead of the good seed that produces wheat. There is plenty of that on religious television today.

Another definition is ***“a beguiler who leads someone into danger.”*** And that danger will eventually be the everlasting fire described in Matthew 13:40, ***“As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.”*** Verse 42 goes on to say, ***“And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”*** Yes, these beguilers will lead you into danger, but as long as I have breath in my lungs and there is life in me, I plan to expose them for what they are, who they are, and who is controlling them.

Other definitions are ***“a shifty, deceptive person, a person who says one thing and does another, someone who falsifies.”*** In other words, a cheat is someone who declares the enemy’s message, the false doctrine, or preaching another gospel, rather than the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This definition is ***“a deceiver who uses crafty misleading methods.”*** We know that in the Greek, ***methodeia*** is one of the methods Satan uses to deceive individuals. To accomplish this, his main focus is through the church institution using false leadership, instead of true leadership controlled by Christ. The devil knows he cannot gain any ground when there is leadership controlled by Christ, proclaiming Christ’s word instead of what the enemy wants. The devil needs to find false leadership that will do his bidding and I believe most preachers do not even know how willing of an instrument they are. They have accepted everything that they were taught in Bible schools as the correct way; the epignosis in the Greek, the correct and precise knowledge of Jesus Christ. I could read you story after story of how most of the great men in the last 100 years have come against institutions incorrectly teaching the Word of God to potential preachers and pastors.

A cheat is also ***“a person who professes beliefs and opinions that he does not hold; someone who falsely assumes the appearance of another.”*** This definition applies to God’s Word where Jesus said in Matthew 13:26, ***“But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.”*** When the plants were still seeds the tares could not be distinguished,

but as the plant matured, its true identity was revealed. Today, Satan is roaming this land seeking those he could devour and control to proclaim his message disguised as Christianity. This would be someone who looks religious, sounds religious, looks like a Christian, sounds like a Christian, but does not proclaim 'deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him.' I heard a preacher recently say that 'taking up your cross,' refers to your own burdens. No, it does not. Taking up your cross is for the cause of Christ. Dealing with your own burdens and sufferings and sorrows has other scriptures to apply, but the cross has nothing to do with your own burdens; it has everything to do with the cause of Christ. With everything that Paul and the disciples suffered, they were not complaining about their own sorrows and sufferings. No, they suffered those things because of what they were doing, which was spreading the Gospel to those God assigned with the Holy Spirit leading them. They were suffering for the cause of Christ, not because of any of their own personal attacks by the devil. Their cross was for the cause of Christ, not their own personal problems, tragedies, or sorrows. Other parts of scripture tell how God gives you faith to deal with them.

When you take up your cross, it is for the purpose of denying yourself and serving Him to do what He wants you to do in the capacity He has called you. Once you understand and apply that, Satan arrives to make sure that cross gets very heavy on your shoulders so you give up the good fight of faith and the cause you were called for. You were chosen by Christ and God, which gives you hope, but now you are called to proclaim the Good News to someone else whether it is to support a ministry, or become a minister yourself. Satan hates however you proclaim God's Word if you are doing it God's way. The devil goes to work immediately to destroy you. Unfortunately, many Christians fall back to their old ways and disguise the cross as something else so in their own eyes it becomes a lighter cross to carry. They somehow convince themselves that there will not be a price to pay for the cause of Christ. In truth, any time you do anything for Christ, there is a price to pay. If you do not like that, then stop following Jesus. Before you even get up to take up your cross, the first thing He said is "deny yourself." There is a great price in that alone, but once you deny yourself and put God in focus, your whole mindset changes because you know what you are now living for. Everything else is just getting you there, but you know what you are living for now, which is for His cause, and you are going to follow His cause because you are going to follow Him.

Another definition of a cheat is, ***"a person who has lied or who lies repeatedly."*** Satan is the father of lies and he will convince his servants to be just like him spreading more lies about the Gospel, saying things that are not even in the Gospel, but saying it in such a convincing way that people believe. Even though they might not see it anywhere, that person sounds so good he must be telling the truth when it is anything but the truth. It is nothing but a bunch of lies from the father of lies, Satan himself.

A cheat is also ***"someone who leads someone astray. A flamboyant deceiver. One who attracts customers with tricks or jokes. [There is plenty of that these days in the Christian world.] A person who is deliberately vague. Someone who deceives you about his true nature or intent in order to take advantage of you. Someone who deceives a lover or a spouse by carrying on a sexual relationship with someone else."***

Most people think of cheating as cheating on an exam or cheating on relationship partners, missing all the other important parts of the definition of the word cheat. Christ knew what He was saying when He used the word tares and He knew whom He was saying it to. He was talking to the sowers who sow the good seed because He knew Satan was going to sow his seed also, the bad seed, the one that would produce tares. However, the seeds that produce wheat are the ones proclaiming the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ the correct way, the way the Bible says from its inception, inspired by men who wrote these books and wrote the life story of Jesus Christ and what He said. The wheat are the ones proclaiming God's Word correctly. The tares are the false prophets and false preachers. Jesus was warning those who would eventually sow seed that they should beware and sow seed that produces good wheat and not its imitation, tares. When you are sowing the good seed, or the sperma, the good seed being the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you are producing more wheat that will do more sowing to produce more wheat to keep proclaiming the Word. Satan has the advantage though, because there are many itching ears that would rather listen to him than follow God, but it does not change who Jesus was talking to in this parable and more Christians, preachers, and pastors need to realize that.

In the last chapter, I read to you that a tare is *zizanium* in the Greek. One characteristic of this plant is that it can produce a ***“strong soporific poison that induces sleep or hypnotic drowsiness, or a type of sleep.”*** That is what these false preachers want to do, lull you into believing a lie so you become lazy in your Christian faith walk with the attitude to do just enough to “get in” or whatever other excuses that could be used. The devil's goal is to hypnotically control your mind into believing you are not a tare but are wheat. But, Jewish tradition identifies that particular plant, the tare, as nothing more than a bastard species. They could not be more correct. These false preachers, these false proclaimers of God's Word are nothing more than bastards of the Word controlled by the enemy that hypnotically puts you to sleep and makes you complacent about how you should follow Christ.

However, there is more to this definition of *zizanium* to share with you. This information states, ***“There can be little doubt that the zizania of the parable in Matthew 13:25 denotes the weed called “darnel” (Lolium temulentum) ... The grains of the Lolium temulentum, if eaten, produce convulsions, and even possible death. [So know if you keep listening to those tares I guarantee you, it will produce everlasting death.] A very interesting note I found on Botanical.com concerning darnel was this:***

‘The admixture of the grain with those of the nutritious cereals amongst which is often found growing should be guarded against, as its properties are generally regarded as deleterious.’ Meaning it will bring injury to you. Stay away from it, because all this type of grain will produce is an unhealthy life. Now this explanation is talking about the physical. It is even more important to understand what it can do for you spiritually. Yes, the darnel might destroy your body here, but Jesus said we should not worry about what man can do to our physical body, worry about what they can do to our spiritual body that goes on after death.

This website does not name an author for this article, but goes on to say, ***“Gerard tells us: “the new bread wherein Darnel is eaten hot causeth drunkenness.” When Darnel has been given medicinally in a harmful quantity, it is recorded to have produced all the symptoms of drunkenness: a general trembling, followed by inability to walk, hindered speech and vomiting. ... the word Darnel is itself of French origin and testifies to its intoxicating qualities,***

being derived from an old French word Darne, signifying stupefied. The ancients supposed it to cause blindness, [Just as Jesus said, the tares will cause blindness.] hence with the Romans ... to live on Darnel, was a phrase applied to a dim-sighted person.

The alleged poisonous properties of Darnel are now generally believed to be due to a fungus.'

*“Interesting also is the fact that farmers in the modern wheat belt of America have to take measures to control the effects of tares (in this case, *lolium rigidum*) on their cattle due to bacteria. In a 30-year study, 250,000 sheep and 600 cattle died because of ARG, [Annual Ryegrass Toxicity] not to mention the effects of intoxication on a score of others.*

Recapping the symptoms [This is what these tares produce.] in the various definitions above concerning darnel and/or its fungus, they are:

- 1) Sleepiness, drowsiness*
- 2) Hypnotic episodes*
- 3) Convulsions*
- 4) Drunkenness, intoxication*
- 5) Trembling*
- 6) Inability to walk*
- 7) Hindered speech*
- 8) Vomiting*
- 9) Stupification*
- 10) Dim-sightedness*

Other sites I visited include giddiness, apathy and various abnormal sensations as effects of darnel.

In the early days of ‘the move of God,’ we saw all of these things and they are still happening today. Not only is there darnel in the Church, the darnel has apparently been affected by fungus. Not only that, but one must wonder how many cases of spiritual blindness and death have occurred. [by the hands of the tares controlled by Satan who has sowed his bad seed.]

There is time to distinguish between darnel and wheat. The fruit of the darnel is smaller than the fruit produced by true wheat. They say the difference is very distinguishable and obvious, and the difference in the sizes of the seeds makes separating them an easy task. There are those who have convulsed, been made drunk, trembled uncontrollably, stammered in their speech, were stupefied, turned giddy, etc., who have tried to tell us that that was wheat. There are also those who have not fallen into such things, but have brought confusion into the Church with darnel such as a non-trinitarian doctrine, a watered-down gospel, and agendas that lead the Church off into corporate efforts God never sanctioned. Are these things wheat or darnel? Some are obviously darnel, while with others, it takes time to make the distinction. This I know for sure: the One who planted the good seed which bears fruit will come back to harvest His wheat, and not one grain of darnel will be found in the barn.”

I think the point has been made on the subject of the wheat and the tares. Now, if you are following somebody that is part of the wheat and not a tare, our promise is in Matthew 13:30.

“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, [being the angels as explained in verse 39] Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” That would be Jesus Christ’s barn as it says in verse 43, *“Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* Unfortunately, not enough ears are listening and that is a shame.

Since I am on the subject matter of tares, we will see how closely related this is to the information above. Matthew chapter 16 is about understanding the times and the influence of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and Christ warns us what to beware of. I want you to pay close attention. Chapter 16:1 begins, ***“The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting [which is from Satan] desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.”*** These Pharisees and Sadducees were looking for a sign. They were tempting Jesus. Even today, there are always Christians looking for a sign or prophet to declare some new truth. They need to hear something new that they have not read. To that, I say if you need some new truth that is not in the Bible, then you do not understand anything in this Book. Throughout the Bible, there are many prophetic events yet to happen that you should be looking for to understand the times. Some today claim to receive a prophecy from the Lord for you this day given to them especially by Jesus Christ just for you. However, any Word of the Lord should come from the Bible. The Bible is the tool He has used to declare His message to the harvest in the end; He needs no other means. The testament is the same. The Pharisees and Sadducees already saw signs and miracles here on earth. For example, here are several signs performed by Jesus:

- 1) Healing the sick. There is example after example of this throughout the Gospels. Prior to chapter 16, there was plenty of healing going on. The Pharisees and Sadducees heard the stories, saw the people, and heard the testimony of the people healed.
- 2) Casting out demons. If healing the sick is not a sign for you, try being in the presence of a demon possessed person. Thank God, most of you will never experience that, but I have. It is not pleasant to be around. It is scary. It is something that jolts your nerves, something so vile you cannot wait to leave its presence, but Jesus went about healing the sick and casting out demons. Again, the Pharisees and Sadducees heard about His reputation, they saw the testimonies, and I am sure they were questioning people who may have witnessed these things.
- 3) Calming the storm. Now maybe there were not too many witnesses to the calming of the storm, but it was another miracle prior to chapter 16.
- 4) Feeding the hungry. How in the world did He feed 4,000 people in one circumstance and 5,000 at another time? There was barely enough to feed one person, let alone 4,000 or 5,000 people on two different occasions.
- 5) Raising the dead. What more of a sign do you need that this is someone special? That should make you want to take a second look at what Christ was saying about himself. What greater miracle or sign do you need after hearing about or seeing this?

So, Christ healed the sick, cast out demons, calmed the storms, fed the hungry, and raised the dead, but that was not enough signs for the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Let us continue with verse 2, ***“He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?”*** Christ is telling them, “You are great weathermen. You can

foresee what the weather is going to be like, but you cannot even see what is in front of you.” Jesus had told them the signs Himself, and there was the testimony from other people, but they still did not believe or see the signs.

Jesus goes on in verse 4, ***“A wicked [evil] and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it. . . .”*** This is why I do not listen to people who declare new prophesies or words from the Lord. I am not interested in that. I am only interested in one word from the Lord and that is from the Bible with the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which includes the Old and New Testament. The New Testament is the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Old Testament is for us to see how God’s Word declares itself true throughout the ages with its fulfilled promises. Anything else is for gullible Christians who need quick fixes. The only fix I need is declared in the Word of God and I plan to be true to that.

Why are so many of today’s Christians always looking for something special to happen that has not already been declared in God’s Word? Jesus said in verse 4, ***“there shall no sign be given. . . [except] the sign of the prophet Jonah.”*** In other words, Christ said, “I will die on that cross, I will be buried in a tomb for three days, and I will rise. You will see a resurrected Christ. Just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the whale, so I will be three days in that tomb, but I will rise. God will empower me to rise and I will fulfill the promise given by my Father back in Genesis. You shall have everlasting life if you deny yourself, take up the cross that has been given to you, and follow me.” That is why I know that Jesus’ resurrection is the only sign we need. It was for our benefit. Verse 4 concludes, ***“And he left them, and departed.”***

Verse 5 is interesting. ***“And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.”*** Here is a group of men, at least twelve individuals because it says “disciples.” The disciples were not security or mob control. They were at Jesus’ feet listening to the same parables, sermons, and messages Jesus was declaring to the multitudes. It is obvious they were there to assist Jesus, but they were also there to be trained by Jesus to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel and how God’s salvation and mercy is available to everyone that seeketh after Him. All the disciples had to do was remember to bring food along with them. Now I can understand one or two of them would remind each other to bring provisions, there might not be anything when they got to the other side, but none of the twelve did. Obviously, no one was paying attention to what they were supposed to be doing. No one was taking on that responsibility of bringing food along. It is almost as if they became complacent Christians and took things for granted assuming someone else would do this. But they should have been looking after each other, making sure everything was taken care of. Think about it. Their Lord and Master was just confronted by tempting, no good religious individuals appearing holy on the outside, but full of dead men’s bones on the inside. There is nothing worse than dealing with religious individuals who want to put you on trial. There is nothing worse. You can never satisfy them with any answers, you can never satisfy them with any truth. They are always the naysayers and doubters, or they are the ones tempting you because they are convinced you should follow their ‘do’s and don’ts’, the things you should and should not do. Jesus was probably just sick, tired, and disgusted that this wicked and adulterer generation could not see a sign. The last thing He needed to worry about was to make sure there were provisions when they got to the other side.

As a result, in verse 6, ***“Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware [be on guard] of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”*** The disciples knew exactly what Jesus was talking about. When Satan enters in and he blinds you, or as one definition of daniel states, “makes you dim-sighted,” white becomes black, black becomes white, you cannot see the truth if it was there in front of you. These disciples were close to Jesus. However, Satan, through Pharisees and Sadducees, and the devil’s negative spirit brought forth nothing more than dim-sightedness and an attitude that you must follow certain rules as a condition of begin Christian. That is what makes you dim-sighted.

Jesus said, ***“Take heed and beware of the leaven . . .”*** Vine’s Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words says in the Greek, *zume* is ***“leaven, sour dough, in a high state of fermentation,’ was used in general in making bread. It required time to fulfill the process. Hence, when food was required at short notice, unleavened cakes were used. The Israelites were forbidden to use ‘leaven’ for seven days at the time of Passover, that they might be reminded that the Lord brought them out of Egypt ‘in haste,’ Deut. 16:3, with Exod. 12:11; the unleavened bread, insipid in taste, reminding them, too, of their afflictions, and of the need of self-judgment, is called ‘the bread of affliction.’ ‘Leaven’ was forbidden in all offerings to the Lord by fire, Lev.2:11;6:17. Being bred of corruption and spreading through the mass of that in which it is mixed, and therefore symbolizing the pervasive character of evil, ‘leaven’ was utterly inconsistent in offerings which typified the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. In the OT ‘leaven’ is not used in a metaphorical sense. In the NT it is used (a) metaphorically (1) of corrupt doctrine The history of Christendom confirms the fact that the pure meal of the doctrine of Christ has been adulterated with error; (2) of corrup[tion] . . . where the implied applications are to corrupt doctrine [or false doctrine] respectively.”***

So when Jesus says in verse 6, ***“take heed and beware...”*** He is saying, “Put yourself on guard to the corrupt and false doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

Verse 6 continues, ***“And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.”*** These disciples were stupefied, which is what the tares and the enemy do, they hypnotically convince you something that you think you are hearing is something else. ***“And they reasoned among themselves,”*** not just some of them. I imagine all twelve of them wondered, “Is Jesus mad at us because we forgot to bring the bread?”

Then we read in verse 8, ***“Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?”*** Jesus was not mad at them for forgetting the bread. He was on their side. He could not wait to get away from those Pharisees and Sadducees who were tempting them with their hypocritical ways. The Pharisees and Sadducees were trying to bring them down by being wicked, looking for a sign to put them in a position to see if Christ would perform, to prove if He was a god, the Son of God, or neither. Christ reminded them that He turned seven loaves into 4000 and made baskets with so much there was still some left over. Christ was sure He could feed the twelve disciples.

In verse 11 Jesus continues to remind them, ***“How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven [the false and corrupt doctrine] of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, [the bread with yeast] but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees,”*** which is the corrupt false doctrine that exists even more so today.

Just so you understand, let me give you generalities of these doctrines. The literal name, Pharisee, means separated. They practiced strict observance to the law and its traditions. They were very religious in looks, sounds, and actions. They were very legalistic to the law, and according to the people of that time, were the most spiritual people. Anybody that would say, “I am here to fulfill the law, the promises that were made to you by the prophets of old,” was unheard of. They could not accept it. They were dim-sighted and stupefied. Through their religious institutions, they were hypnotically possessed by the enemy to believe that Jesus was not who he was.

Just as the very religious and spiritual Pharisees practiced legalistic law, the Sadducees were just the opposite. They were the modernists of the day. They did not believe in miracles. The messiah that they were watching and waiting for was more like an effective political leader. They were not looking for a messiah to deliver them from their spiritual condition. They thought they were okay. They were looking for a political leader who would give them victory over their enemies, so they would not be in bondage in the physical sense. They were not as much legalistic, as they were more modernists.

Even today, we have Pharisees, and one thing you must understand is why Jesus warned His disciples to keep on the lookout for them. The disciples were to be concerned, cautious, and on guard because of how the Pharisees, then and today, take the message of the Good News add to the Gospel with their legalism. On the other hand, the Sadducees or the modernists subtract from it.

What the legalists add to the Gospel is good works and good deeds that keep you in the state of grace, which is everything that you can do to put you in that state. In our day, anything that adds to God’s Word comes from a pharisaical legalistic point of view by adding to the Gospel. The Pharisees of Jesus’ day were strict observers of the law, saying if you are going to represent any type of religious institution, you must practice the law and our traditions. Today, legalists are constantly adding to the Gospel by declaring that good works and good deeds will put you in the state of grace. In other words, you can work to achieve your salvation. Legalists of our day have stripped away what the blood of the cross was all about, whether knowingly or unknowingly, and that is the message of the enemy, Satan.

Now modernists on the other hand reject anything that is too demanding on your life such as denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus. All they are concerned with is what this present world has to offer. I am going to repeat it so it sinks in: all they are concerned with is what this world has to offer, including what the prince of the power of the air and this world, Satan, has to offer. They want God to be their bellhop serving them with the attitude that they will do something for God with the expectation God will do something for them. That is what the prosperity gospel is all about, giving to get. In reality, God may keep you poor or God may make

you very wealthy. That is God's business, and between you and God. You must not give to get. You give because you know it helps ministries and churches correctly proclaiming the Word to the world, or their congregations so others can have the opportunity of eternal life. That is what Jesus emphasized to Peter in John 21 when He said, "**Feed my sheep.**" Christ told Peter that if he has come to the point where he loved Christ the way he should, with the *agapao* love instead of the *phileo* love, then Peter would fall in love watching others falling in love with Christ.

How many of you have really fallen in love? I believe you fell in love with Christ, but have you really fallen in love with doing what you can to get the message to others? The love of Christ is the willingness to die for others. If that is not somehow incorporated into your system by the Holy Spirit, then you need to sit down and have a conversation with God. Tell the Lord, "Lord, I did not realize what you were seeking from me prior to now, but I want to have that same mind of Christ and that same love of Christ in my spirit, my being, and my soul, that you can impute into my life by your Holy Spirit. I want to fall in love with seeing what you fell in love with, and that is eternal life for others." Or else, you could be concerned for yourself, like the modernists or the Sadducees, and only care about what God can do for you here and now making God your personal bellhop serving you, instead of you serving Him. That is why Jesus warned the disciples about the Pharisees and the Sadducees. He did not want these disciples to become tares. He was producing them to become good wheat, to be proclaimers of the good seed that produces more wheat. Christ was talking to the disciples, but also to preachers, pastors, and evangelists that proclaim even unto this day.

Be forewarned if you have been called to preach. It is a high calling with great responsibility because you are responsible for what others hear and learn through the Word of God. You have a choice to be wheat or a tare, to be a Pharisee, a Sadducee, or one called by God to spread the Word correctly. The choice is yours. If you are part of a ministry correctly proclaiming God's Word, thank God you are following someone that is concerned about your learning and warning you about temptations. If you spend some time watching religious broadcasts, I guarantee you will be able to separate the wheat from the tares, because I am nothing like them. They do not want association with me because I expose them for what they are: greedy, stupefied, dim-sighted tares, and, as Jewish tradition called it, bastards.

You must identify yourself, if not with this ministry, then one that warns you about these Pharisees and Sadducees. One that is more concerned about your soul than the praise and glory they receive here on earth. I do not care for any praise or glory except to hear when I stand in front of Jesus, "**Well done, good and faithful servant.**" That should be your goal too.

To be Continued . . .

Do not be Complacent

As with the other chapters, this chapter will begin in Ephesians 6:10 where Paul states, “***Finally, my brethren, be strong [endunamoo in the Greek, be strengthened] in the Lord, and in the power [or force, kratos] of his might.***” Verse 11 says to, “***Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.***” In the Greek, the devil is diabolos, the accuser, the slanderer. Now, I have told you in past chapters that the word ‘wiles’ is *methodeia* in the Greek, which is where we get our English word methods; the schemes and tactics the devil plans against us to prepare for our undoing.

In addition, by now, you know there are three different categories or areas the devil attacks and there is a priority to his attacks on the Christian, the believer, the father. Remember, Christ declared to Peter in the Gospels that the church would be established and even though the gates of hell would come against it, the church would stand solid as a rock, because Jesus is that rock. The devil begins his attacks against the church institution using every method, scheme, or tactic that he has available to him and his evil army to bring the church down, and lately he has been quite successful. With his attacks on the church, the devil also attacks the church leadership through false teachers that continually teach false doctrines, and in some cases, false miracles also lead people astray. Then the third area the devil attacks with his methods or wiles is the individual. To restate this, the devil:

- 1) First, attacks the church institution,
- 2) Then, he attacks the leadership in those church institutions, and
- 3) Last, he attacks the individual.

If the devil can bring down the first two, then getting to the individual is a lot easier because the devil knows the institution and the leadership teach the individual. If the devil can influence that leadership to teach incorrectly then he has to do very little to misguide, because his agents are doing it for him.

This chapter will focus on how the devil attacks the individual. There are many different areas the devil attacks, but he has you in his grip if he can bring you to the point where you become satisfied and comfortable, which leads you into the state of complacency. I do not even say ‘father’ here, because once the devil has used his method of complacency and he knows that you are content in your Christian growth, he has won. The devil has you in his grip and he will keep on squeezing convincing you that how you are following Christ is correct and what Christ wants for you. The devil disguises this method with his deceitful ways and trickery through church institutions and the messages the leadership preaches creating ‘cruise ships for Jesus,’ where everything is done to entertain, please, and cater to your lifestyle. However, that message is straight from the devil because he knows this will bring you to the point of being satisfied and comfortable without too much inconvenience; but that attitude creates complacency. You should know, this method of creating the feeling of satisfaction, comfort, and complacency in your growth in Christ is one of the most dangerous methods the devil uses against you as an individual.

In the Old Testament, Proverbs 29:18 states, ***“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”*** Although this is from the Old Testament, this verse does apply to us today, but we must understand what this verse is saying. The verse begins with ***“Where there is no vision . . .”*** We know this visionless state exists when you become satisfied and comfortable in your pursuit of God. In addition, a better translation of the phrase, ***“Where there is no vision, the people perish,”*** is ***“Where there is no vision, the people let go”*** because the word ‘perish’ in Hebrew is ***‘para’***, which is ‘to loosen or let go.’ The people ‘let go’ when they are comfortable, believing they have ***‘vision’*** because they attend church, go to choir practice, or take part in other church functions. Some magazines have entire pages with pastors’ resources dedicated to drama worship services. Those things are nowhere in the New Testament, because they cater to man and are disguised by Satan as ***‘vision.’*** They are in no way related to God’s vision about why we exist and these entertaining ‘cruise ships for Jesus’ are really the devil’s definition of ***‘vision.’***

“Where there is no vision, the people perish,” or the people let go, gives the sense that something slips through the fingers and is lost by ignoring an opportunity because of a lack of discipline. If you become satisfied, comfortable, and content with your growth in Christ, I guarantee, you will develop an undisciplined pursuit of God. You have no reason to think otherwise because you are content where you are. You are no longer pressing towards the mark or looking for the finish line of eternity. You are no longer pressing towards the vision that God has for your life or the vision of spreading His Word. You are losing out on the opportunity God has given you to serve in the capacity He has called you because you are letting go. The travesty that happens in the Christian world today is the belief that attendance at certain church functions is following Christ. This is the way the devil uses his methods against the church in the institution through the false prophets who preach his message. Really, you are letting go, keeping yourself entertained and busy in the name of Christ, but Christ was never in those things.

The Hebrew is very clear in this verse. These complacent Christians lose the opportunity to serve God. Verse 18 ends, ***“but he that keepeth [shamar in Hebrew, meaning guardeth] the law, happy is he.”*** The Hebrew word for ‘law’ here is ***Torah***, but we do not live in the Old Testament, we live under the new covenant, the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ. So this verse can be read, ***“but he that keepeth [or guardeth] the law [the new covenant] happy is he [the ones living under the new covenant].”*** People guard things that are precious to them, things they do not want to lose because they realize what a wonderful opportunity they have; in this case, the message of Christ. The vision that Proverbs is talking about in verse 18 is how we apply the message of the New Testament to our lives, which is the ultimate way of showing love through giving yourself up for another for the cause of Christ. However, if you do not have the opportunity to give yourself up, another way of showing your love for your fellow man is by doing whatever you can so they hear the Word of God that has affected and changed your life. That is a deep love, the ***agapao*** type of love, an unconditional devotion to Christ and His cause. Instead, the kind of love most people have fallen in love with is what entertains, satisfies, and fits into their lifestyles. But it is evil heresy to become satisfied, comfortable, complacent, and content in your walk with Christ. The devil uses institutions constructed by Satan himself. If you follow the type of program that caters to you, you are falling under his domain, his trap, his snare that he has set for you. I am telling you it is damnable heresy, which leads you astray. That is why I do not fit in with the traditional Christian community; most of the Christian community is

preaching how God is there to cater to you as a bellhop instead of you serving Him with all your love, devotion, and vision.

“He that keepeth the law” should really be read as, ***“He that guardeth the new covenant.”*** Usually people guard something important. Have you truly fallen in love, the love that Jesus called for as a commandment in the New Testament, which was to love one another? And, if you have fallen in that kind of love, it is shown by doing what you can in the position He has called you to get the message out to others? That is one of the foundational statements of this ministry, to get the Word of God out to others.

Verse 18 ends, ***“happy is he,”*** but that is a bad translation. Because in Hebrew, ‘happy’ is ***blessed***, the King James translators of the New Testament again wrote this correctly. The most important scriptural definition in Old English of the word blessed is, ***bathed in the blood***, meaning the blood of Jesus Christ. So the best translation of ***“happy is he,”*** would be ***“fully satisfied is he [or she] who is bathed in the blood of the new covenant,”*** that new covenant being Jesus Christ and the Good News and what He did for us on the cross.

Christianity around the world must become aware and return to its first love. I cannot do it for you. You have to do it for yourself with God’s help. Put God first in your life. Stop chasing worldly dreams and start chasing the vision that Christ had when He first came down here to earth, which was to die and reconcile us back to His Father so we could all be saved through His blood. Too many Christians are satisfied and comfortable, rather than pursuing with a passion, because they have become content believers instead of pursuing faithers doing what they can to get the message to the world. When Jesus commanded us to love one another, we demonstrate God’s love most clearly, when we become devoted to what Christ came here to do for all. The tragedy is that throughout the Old and New Testament there is a record of people who became satisfied, comfortable, complacent, and content where they were and stopped growing in the Lord.

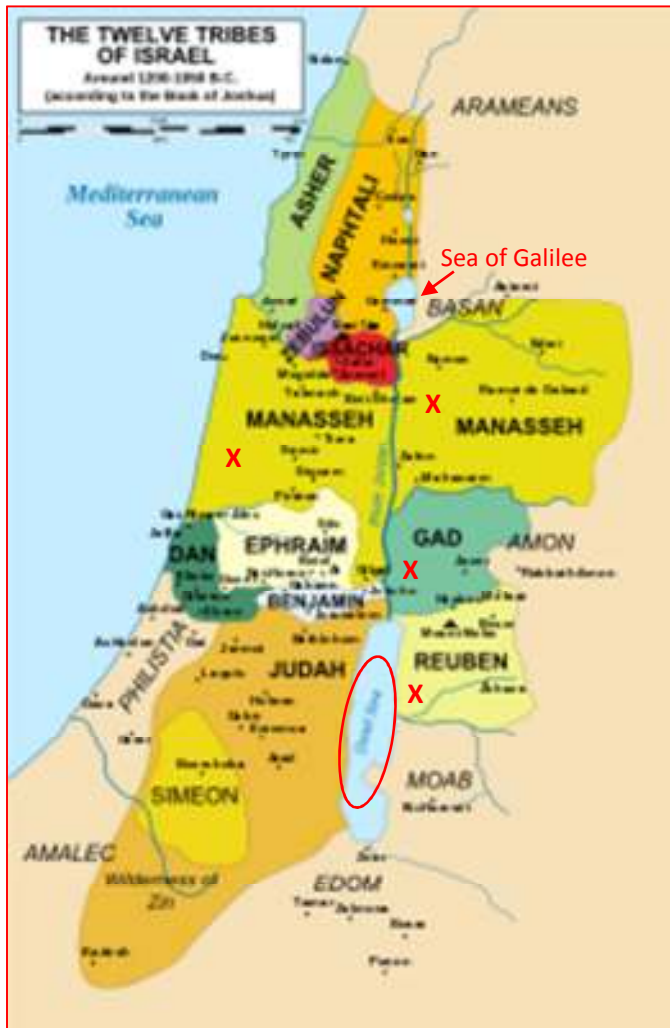
For an illustration of this read Numbers 32:1, ***“Now the children of Reuben [Jacob’s first born] and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle.”*** Prior to this, the Israelites had been in some skirmishes before crossing Jordan, but God had cleared the way through the battles to make it a safe haven while they were waiting to cross Jordan into the promise land.

Verse 2 continues, ***“The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses, [the tribe of Gad came and spoke on their behalf] and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying, Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon, [this is a list of cities] Even the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle. Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace [really, favor] in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan.”*** In these verses, they want to convince Moses, the priest, and the princes, that if they have found favor in them, then ***“let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan.”*** Interestingly, they are not asking if they have found favor in the sight of the Lord.

In other words, the children of Reuben and Gad are saying, “We have had enough. All this here is available to us, even though we are the children of promise and are to cross Jordan into the Promise Land that God declared would be ours more than 400 years earlier.” All they had left to do was cross the river, but instead they ask Moses, the congregation, and the priest, that if they had found favor in their sight, not God’s sight, let them not cross over Jordan and just possess the place where they were. These people became satisfied, comfortable, complacent, and content go no further in their journey according to God’s purposes. They did not want to fight any longer. They did not want to keep on moving any longer. They convinced themselves this vast area would be suitable for their cattle and livestock, and they could have the land. They knew God did not promise them this place, but they were content there. They had marched long enough and spent forty years in the wilderness after being in bondage about 400 years prior to that. Enough was enough. This is as far as they would go. The children of Reuben and Gad became tools and agents of the enemy without realizing it.

This happened long before Paul wrote in Ephesians 6 how the devil uses this method of making us satisfied, comfortable, and complacent in our Christian walk. Whoever tells you something different, run from that individual because he is the messenger of Satan, not the messenger of God. There is no place in the Christian walk that brings you to the point of being satisfied, comfortable, and content. Yes, I know Hebrews says we will enter that rest, but it is not here. Some day we will be there, but not now. In addition, when you become content with your growth in Christ, the devil uses that to discourage others who want a deeper relationship with God. In these verses in Proverbs, the devil is using the children, or tribe of Gad and Reuben who do not want to pursue God’s purposes any longer, who are satisfied where they are, who do not want to cross Jordan, or continue **fighting, as a source of discouragement to the other tribes of Israel. That is why it says in verse 6, “And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren [the rest of the tribes] go to war and shall ye sit here? [in your comfortable situation] And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them? Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadeshbarnea to see the land.”** Moses sees them as another reason to set back God’s purposes.

This map shows the general area we are speaking of:



The Dead Sea is circled in red and the Sea of Galilee is noted near the top of the map. Jerusalem is above to the west of the Dead Sea, underlined in red. Bethlehem is located below and west of Jerusalem, although it is not on this map. The red x's show the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and East and West Manasseh. The tribe of Manasseh split because the eastern tribe went along with this complacent attitude.

East of the Dead Sea is mostly where Reuben settled. Just north of that all the way to the southern border of the Sea of Galilee is where the tribe of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh settled.

Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh did not cross over Jordan to fulfill God's promises. Those promises were for all the tribes, but that is what they were requesting. As you can see, this is not a large area, only a few miles, rather than hundreds and hundreds of miles. That is how close they were, but they became comfortable, satisfied, and content in the state they were in and their pursuit of God's promises was no longer important in their lives. Sure, they professed God and pretended to follow the Torah and God, but professing was all they were doing. They were not living that pursuit, so Moses did not let them get away with it.

As we continue reading verse 7, Moses tells them, ***“And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?”*** Moses will not allow them to be a source of discouragement and he reminds them what happened four decades earlier with their ancestors. In verse 8 to 14, Moses reminds them that the reason their ancestors did not have an opportunity to cross over Jordan then was because of disobedience, rebelling, and murmuring.

He tells them, ***“Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the LORD had given them. And the LORD’S anger was kindled the same time, and he swore, saying, Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me: Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun; for they have wholly followed the LORD. [Only Caleb and Joshua from that old group made it in.] And the LORD’S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed. And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers’ stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the LORD toward Israel. For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.”***

In other words, Moses just gave the children of Israel a brief history. They knew what happened four decades earlier was because of the disobedience, rebellion, and murmuring of their fathers, who all died in the wilderness not obtaining the promise, and here Moses is warning them not to become one of them, not to increase the Lord’s anger, not just towards them, but all of Israel. Moses is asking them if they are willing to risk all because now that they do not want to fight any longer, even though they can see the promise land from where they are, they were willing to settle and be content. If that were their decision, they would be the ones responsible, not God. Moses was putting the entire responsibility of success or failure on these two-and-a-half tribes. There was no question what the outcome would be if they were the source of discouragement. Some commentaries say that maybe God just destroyed only those two-and-a-half tribes. No, God had already shown four decades earlier what He would do to all of Israel because of the rebellion of some. I do not believe God would act differently four decades later if some decided to slip away or in this case, as verse 15 says, turn away from God. Between verses 15 and 16, I am sure God was watching very closely to see how they would react to Moses’ words. Just the same, some think I am some radical lunatic demanding too much on your lives. I am not demanding it, God is and God is still listening closely today as well.

Numbers 13:31 records the event Moses was referring to. It was four decades earlier when Moses sent spies to explore the land of Canaan and the spies came back with this evil report, ***“But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report [bringing discouragement leading to rebellion] of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof;”*** What a description. They were probably wondering why God lead them to a land that would devour. Just imagine the rumors that were going about the camp predicting their doom and wondering if God cared for them, doubting if this was the land of honey, the Promised Land. Just the same, preachers today do not want troubles, trials, tribulations, and sufferings. They want the milk and honey constantly. However, God did bring them into this land eventually, the land He promised, the land of milk and honey because there are blessings along with the trials and tribulations. But that is not what these spies said. Their description in Numbers 13:32-33 was, ***“a land that eateth up the inhabitants and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature [giants]. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and***

we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.” The spies were reporting that God had brought them to a land that would devour them because they were nothing more than little grasshoppers compared to the giants and they did not stand a chance. They felt God had miscalculated and demanded too much, there was no way they could accomplish His purpose. Yes, in fleshly terms, it might seem impossible, but scripture says, **“with God all things are possible,”** not just some things, all things. Just imagine the sorrow that was going through that camp as a result of the spies’ evil report. Moses was warning these tribes, Reuben, Gad and East Manasseh, that they would bring the same discouragement and the outcome would be the same; they would turn away from following God and He would destroy all of the children of Israel because they had become content and comfortable. I cannot say this enough; there is no part of a Christian life, or Christian walk, where you become comfortable and content. God’s Word confirms this and anyone that says differently twists and combines God’s Word to their own interpretation.

Because of the evil, discouraging report from the spies, chapter 14:1 continues, **“And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron** [God was listening closely here, just as he was listening in Numbers 32 between verses 15 and 16 to see what their reaction would be.]: **and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.”** They were a faithless group, who with few exceptions would not fix their attitude toward God. As I said, God was listening closely here and in Numbers 32 between verses 15 and 16. Because of what happened four decades prior, these tribes realized they better not complain about God or His leadership and not turn away from His plan for their tribes. There would be severe consequences for them and all the tribes if they were a source of discouragement.

You can see in Numbers 32:16 they were not complaining, but approached Moses very carefully saying, **“We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones: But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land.”** These tribes told Moses they would not be part of the fulfillment of God’s promises because they were content where they were east of the Jordan River, although God’s promises lie to the west of the Jordan River. In those days only the men went to war, the children and wives stayed behind, but the warriors of the tribes would go.

They continue in verse 18 to say, **“We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance. For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward.”** This is what they decided would be their inheritance, but it was their plan, not God’s plan. Too many Christians are like these tribes, thinking they are on the inside, but really they are on the outside looking in. Because they are too comfortable, satisfied, and content, they have developed an attitude of complacency in their pursuit of God and His purposes.

They told Moses in verse 19, ***“For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward. . . .”*** and in verse 20, ***“And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war, And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.”*** Remember, Reuben was the first-born and one of the first tribes to lead the tribes of Israel into war. It was important that the tribes kept the structure that God planned for them to achieve His purposes and to obtain this promise, this land of milk and honey. Moses gave this condition so these tribes would not be guilty in the eyes of God. Just the same, today many Christians should be doing more for the Lord in the capacity that God has called them, whether it is in a pulpit or as part of a ministry assisting to spread the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You know what you can do, and if you do not do it, you know you cannot live guiltless. Otherwise, you are just fooling yourself because your sin is exposed for what it is, if not in man’s eyes, definitely in the Lord’s.

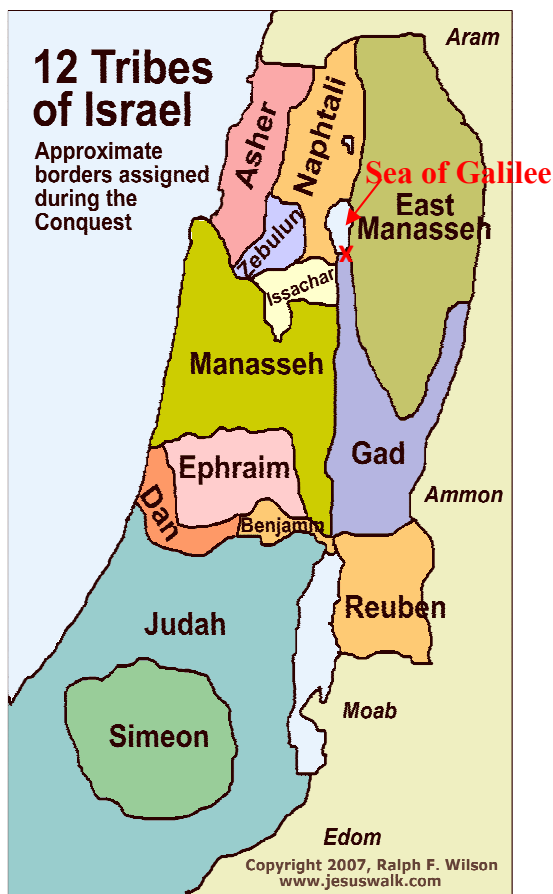
Moses was honest with them in verse 23, ***“But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.”*** Moses was telling them they had better do what they promised and not be a source of discouragement even though they were falling short of God’s promises for them, their tribes, their children, and their future. Moses told Reuben to go before the Lord, be in front, carry the banner, and go forth to war to conquer what God has promised and what He will deliver in order to have the land, although not the land God had promised. God knew they were losing out and falling short of the opportunity to go a few extra miles further and cross the Jordan with all their family and all the tribes. However, to remain guiltless and not kindle God’s anger as their ancestors and their fathers did before, they promised to cross the Jordan as men of war.

When the land was taken and the promise fulfilled, it must have been painful for God to see those tribes cross back over to dwell on the wrong side of the Jordan River in the areas that God did not promise them four hundred years prior. It must have pained God. It must have hurt Him knowing that they came so close and yet so far from reaching the vision He had for them. They stopped pursuing, let go, and lost the opportunity to be on the west side of Jordan, in the Promised Land. In Joshua 1:10-18, after Moses’ death, Joshua takes over leadership and reminds the tribe of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh of their promise to Moses. God tells Joshua to be strong and of good courage, and these tribes did fulfill their promise to be men of war and cross Jordan to help the rest of the tribes conquer the areas they were to possess. Eventually, though, their decision to stay east of the Jordan River would hurt them because it produced an area of non-believers; people who would deny the Lord Jesus Christ completely. Some may think all of Israel did that, but there were many followers of Christ, just not many disciples. At Christ’s ascension, there were only 500 witnesses, but there were still believers who put their faith in Christ and would eventually die for the cause of Christ. Those who followed Him happened to be on the right side of the river, the west side. I know that because of the record in Mark 5:1.

The Sea of Galilee is about eight miles wide at its widest point. In Mark chapter 4, the disciples were crossing the sea when Jesus calms the storm. Mark 4:39 records, ***“And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still.”*** In verse 40, Christ admonishes the

disciples saying, *“Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?”* The reason why this storm happened was because that the last thing the demons described in chapter 5 wanted to see was Jesus safely crossing the sea to the side where they were. The demons who were possessing an individual on the other side of the sea knew Jesus was the Son of God, even though men did not recognize Him. Too many people overlook the reason for the storm when preaching on this part of chapter 4.

When they finally reach the opposite shore, Mark 5:1 tells us, *“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.”* If you remember, from the Old Testament the Gadarenes are one of the tribes who settled on the wrong side of the Jordan. However, there is a message of hope here, even for the ones who did not fulfill the promise that God had for them. These verses in Mark show that God was giving them a second chance and using a person possessed with demons to do it. When Jesus and the disciples had reached the other side of the sea, they encounter a man in verse nine possessed by a legion of demons, a legion being 4500 to 6000 individuals. Matthew records this event with two individuals, but in any case, thousands of demons are present. This is why the demons did not want Jesus to cross the sea safely. The devil does not want to be exposed nor does he want his army to be exposed. The devil would rather do his damage in secret, hidden behind closed doors, behind the veil of secrecy. Below is a map of the area where this event took place.



Again, the Sea of Galilee is noted near the top of the map and the red ‘x’ shows the approximate area where they reached the opposite shore. The map also shows where the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh settled. The entire area where these particular tribes settled is only 40 to 50 miles north to south and 20 to 30 miles east to west. This is not a large area and somewhere in here is where Jesus made it to shore after He calmed the sea.

Now you can see the area where Jesus and the disciples landed, and Mark 5:1 says, ***“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.”*** This happened after fighting the storm, after Jesus told the storm in Mark 4:39, ***“Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm”*** brought upon that area. The demons were not successful at keeping Jesus away, and I believe Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. He was the Son of God. There was a purpose for Him going to the opposite shore and it relates to the Old Testament.

Mark 5:2 continues, ***“And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, [although Matthew said there were two men] Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains. Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.”*** This individual possessed by demons lives in a cemetery, a place that only signifies death. What a gloomy, awful existence, but imagine the strength he had. Chain yourself up and see if you can escape in your own power. You cannot. I am not talking about what a magician does. I am talking about sheer brute force applied against what was keeping him bound. This uncontrollable man tore the chains to pieces and only dwelled with the dead in the tombs.

Verse 5 goes on to say, ***“And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him. [He worshipped Him because he knew Jesus was the Son of God.] And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. [The demons possessing this man did not want to be sent to the abyss] For he [Jesus] said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.”***

About this, some commentaries will say that the reason why these demons used the Roman title or name of ‘Legion’ is because they wanted to intimidate Jesus by making Jesus believe that He was outnumbered 6000 to one. That makes no sense; these demons had just declared that Jesus was the Son of the Most High God. These demons knew they could not lie to Jesus saying they were ‘legions’ when they were not. Jesus knew what they were all about and how many of them there were. They were not trying to intimidate Jesus by lying; they knew Jesus could see through their lies. There were many thousands of demons possessing this individual, probably 6000, because 6000 is what a Roman legion consisted of. In addition, keep in mind the sea was uncontrollable. This legion did not want Jesus to cross over the sea because they knew Jesus would deliver the individual they were possessing. These demons were hoping that Jesus would not send them away where they could not continue their dastardly deeds.

That is why Mark 5:10 tells us, ***“And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine [pigs] feeding. And all the devils besought him [All the devils besought him. Imagine what was bombarding Jesus in that verse alone, 6000 evil beings.] saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. [Instead of casting them into the abyss] And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently***

down a steep place [a cliff] into the sea, (they were about two thousand) [swine] and were choked [drown] in the sea.”

Many commentators believe there were only a few demons, but if there were only a few demons, how did they possess 2000 pigs? I believe there were 6000 demons, and it is not by coincidence that a legion consists of 6000 soldiers. There were 6000 demons in these two men. Here in Mark it only mentions one man, but Matthew mentions two men and these 6000 demons possessed the 2000 pigs, but the pigs would not have any part of them; they ran over the cliff and drown by choking themselves in the sea.

After this verse 14 records, ***“And they that fed the swine fled [Those who took care of these 2000 swine], and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.”*** One of these previously possessed individuals stayed with Jesus. Just imagine how thankful he must have been that finally, someone did not come with chains or fetters, but brought His Word and set him free. By the way, I believe this man was most likely a Gadarene. The record of this story in Luke states this man went around naked amongst the tombs and in the mountains, but now he was sitting calmly, clothed, no longer possessed. The ones afraid came from the city and the country. They were afraid because they obviously could not control these individuals with chains or fetters. They could not be tamed. Why were they afraid? If anything, they should have been joyful and happy, and it only cost them 2000 pigs to save lives destroyed by possession.

In contrast, Luke 8:37 records ***“the whole multitude”*** came to see him where Mark 5:14 that states the Gadarenes from the city and the country came, and the story in Matthew 8:34 says, ***“the whole city came out to meet Jesus.”*** My point is a large gathering that should have been praising God, yet they were so afraid. These verses really show that when you do not have God in your life, you are exposed for what you are, and you will be fearful of the Word of the Lord just as they were fearful of Jesus and what He just did for the individuals possessed with demons. This event was a tragedy because when you are on the wrong side of the river it only causes you problems in the future. Remember, these tribes on the east side of the Jordan became comfortable and complacent. All their generations were content in not fulfilling God’s promises for 1,400 years and finally they reject Christ’s actions to relieve them of these possessed individuals.

Verse 16 goes on, ***“And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.”*** So instead of being thankful or rejoicing that someone claiming to be the Son of God had arrived, they rejected him even after they saw what He had done for them. and when they got to see Jesus in action themselves they rejected Him.

We are told in verse 18, ***“And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.”*** He wanted to follow Jesus. This individual knew what he experienced, what his life was like before Jesus, what he was delivered from, and all he wanted to do was follow Christ.

However in verse 19 we see, ***“Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”*** Jesus said, “You will not come with me. Yes, you will follow me, but you are not going to come with me.” Who better to proclaim Christ’s grace and what Jesus can do for someone than someone delivered from evil possession? This man had firsthand experience of evil and what the Son of the Most High God can do against these evil powers with just the command of His Word.

With that, verse 20 continues, ***“And he departed, and began to publish [preach] in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.”*** In my opinion, this is the first preacher besides the disciples who proclaimed the compassion of Jesus. Jesus knew very well what this man had been through and he did not need any more convincing. I believe that eventually he became a preacher of the Gospel, although I do not have any record of that, but that seems the only sensible outcome. Nevertheless, this was the first preacher telling of Jesus’ compassion and God’s deliverance.

In addition, this verse tells us that this man preached in ***‘Decapolis,’*** but a better translation for that is ‘ten cities,’ which is shown on the map below. As you can see, this area includes Southern Manasseh, the tribe of Gad, and parts of Reuben, when compared to the previous maps.



The first place this man went to preach was the ten cities in Decapolis and they were astonished, or as Mark 5:20 states, he told of the great things Jesus had done for him and ***“all did marvel.”***

This was before Christ even went to the cross. This man, who was demon possessed and saved by Christ, was already proclaiming the compassion and grace of Christ, however the twelve disciples with Jesus were still not convinced He was truly the Son of God. This man did not need to follow Jesus any longer or need any further convincing. In contrast, the disciples needed more training before they believed Christ was the Son of God, but this individual believed immediately because he was delivered. I believe why Jesus crossed the sea and delivered this person was because Christ knew what he experienced and that this person would then have the passion to tell others in the ten cities in Decapolis what Jesus did for him. And this all happened in the area of the Gadarenes.

When someone is on the wrong side of the river from the Promise Land, they will always develop an attitude of total rejection for the pursuit of God and Christ. We can see this in verse 17 when the people in the area prayed Christ would leave because he was upsetting their way of life. They had become comfortable with letting the possessed man roam the tombstones and mountainside. The people in that area would rather live with the man possessed with 6,000 demons than have deliverance by a Savior that would give eternal life. Because of the sins of their fathers, they did not want any part of Jesus. Even though they kept their vow by fighting with the other tribes to obtain the Promise Land, they were still on the wrong side of the river. For them to have the opportunity to hear about Christ, a possessed man from their own land and their own tribal area of the Gadarenes had to be saved. Other than John the Baptist, he was the first preacher in the New Testament. Jesus knew he did not need to come with Him because he was already at the point where he understood what he was delivered from and that Christ was the Son of God.

In contrast, that man could have decided not to share his experience, to just except and enjoy his deliverance. But that is not what that previously possessed person did. Instead, he went on to preach and proclaim throughout the whole area of Decapolis, the ten cities and, in my opinion, I do not believe he stopped with just the ten cities. Fortunately, we now know more than that man did who was possessed by this legion of demons. He was proclaiming what Christ did for him prior to the cross, but we have the knowledge of what Christ did after the cross; just imagine the passion this man had after Christ went to the cross, knowing what He did for him before the cross, and now knowing what the cross did for all mankind. I would tend to believe that this person went on proclaiming and only time will tell throughout eternity what his rewards will be. In addition, what compassion Christ had even though these tribes were on the wrong side of the river. Jesus sent as the first preacher to tell of His compassion one from the tribe who did not understand what it meant to fulfill God's promises by crossing Jordan.

We cannot become comfortable, satisfied, or content in the state that we are in, because it will only develop complacency, which is the most evil method the devil attacks us with as individuals on a daily basis. It is used to bring us to the point where we do just enough to get by; making us think what we are doing is really something for God because we attend a certain service, choir practice, or Christian dinner engagement in a church. That is not living a life for Christ. That is just entertainment. An impact is not made for the cause of Christ in those ways.

I would rather be with people who were under the bondage and control of Satan who now understand what true deliverance through Christ is all about. Those are the ones who will be on

fire for God, rather than adopt the ways of the world, which is what most Christians have done today. I am not saying you cannot have any enjoyment, but it should not be the first priority. Getting the message of Christ out is the first priority. For example, there are times when I feel ill, but I thankfully resist the temptation to stay home. As a result, I believe someone, by hearing the Word of God presented, will change their life and begin pursuing God with a passion, fulfilling the vision and the promise God has for their life related to the cause of Christ. They will stop being satisfied with their life, cross Jordan like the tribes of Israel all the way to Canaan, and eventually all the way to eternal life. Do not become too wrapped up in your daily life and forget what the pursuit of God is all about as A.W. Tozer said.

This chapter began in Proverbs 29:18, “**Where there is no vision, the people perish** [or let go]:” they lose the opportunity to cross the River Jordan to the right side of the river. I do not know what your Jordan is but do not be caught on the wrong side of it. “. . .**but he that keepeth** [guardeth] **the law**, [or the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the new covenant], **happy** [blessed] **is he.**” In the New Testament at the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said we are bathed in the blood of Jesus because we are fully satisfied by the blood of Jesus and that is the reason why you will be happy and guarding that possession, the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You are guarding it, keeping it, and pursuing it, giving others the chance to hear it with passion because you are not willing to lose that opportunity. You are not letting go, making sure you fulfill all of God’s promises, for not only your life, but also the ministry you are a part of.

Verse 25 will conclude this chapter. It says, “**The fear of man bringeth a snare** [or the quaking, trembling, and terror that will always lead to a snare controlled by Satan, because you do not let God have control.] **but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.**” The Hebrew word for ‘**shall be safe**’ is *sagab* and it is a beautiful picture, which means to set up on a high place, to be strong. So trust God’s ways, not your ways that the devil has deceitfully convinced you are God’s ways, instead put your total trust in the Lord and His Word that is preached correctly. When your trust is in the Lord and when you have faith in His Word, God will set you up on high and you will be strong against the invisible enemy, Satan and his evil army that is out to destroy and deceive you with every method he has. That is His promise.

The method this chapter illustrated is how we are comfortable, satisfied, content, and complacent in our pursuit of God. Do not be caught by that method on the wrong side of Jordan, but put your trust in Him, knowing that if you cross Jordan, figuratively speaking, He will be there with you because you put your trust in Him and His Word. And by doing that, He will set us up on high and we will be strong. When you are in that state of mind pursuing God, I guarantee, you will be victorious through His strength, not ours. Ephesians 6:10 tells us to be strong, or strengthened, in the Lord, and in the force of his might.

Get the passion of pursuing God back in your life or increased in the capacity that you were called to send a message to the devil that lets him know you are not going to stay on the wrong side of the Jordan. You will fulfill all the promises of God in your life, including the most important promise, the commandment Christ gave to love one another. That love cannot be demonstrated more clearly in our day and age unless you are giving your life up for someone else. What that means for us is to allow someone else, through what you can do, to hear the Word of God so their lives can be affected and changed by it.

Get the passion back. Do not be caught on the wrong side of Jordan.

To be continued. . .

Misusing and Misapplying Scriptures

As with the other chapters in the Spiritual Warfare series, this chapter will begin in Ephesians 6, verses 10 and 11. Verse 10 begins, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong [endunamoo, be strengthened] in the Lord, and in the power [or force, kratos] of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil,”*** who in the Greek is *diabolos*, the accuser or slanderer.

In this series, I have been focusing on the word ‘wiles,’ which in the Greek is *methodeia*, the wiles, the methods, the schemes, the stratagems, the cunning, crafty ways of the devil and his demonic army. Primarily, the devil not only attacks, but also uses everything he has available to bring down the church and the leadership of the church. The devil classifies his attacks on the Body of Christ in three areas:

- 1) He attacks the church institution,
- 2) He attacks the church leadership, and then eventually
- 3) He attacks the individual.

If he can bring down the church and its leadership, getting to you will be a lot easier. Now when I say, “bring down,” I mean the devil negatively influences with false doctrines the ones who should be preaching the correct and precise knowledge of the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ. I have already spent several chapters explaining how he attacks the church and the leadership of the church. I have also spent time teaching about the attacks on the individual, and I will be focusing on that method in this chapter as well.

To begin, the devil fiercely attacks the individual on a daily basis. There is hardly a day that goes by where, if you are doing something meaningful for the cause of Christ, the devil will attack you with his evil methods that develop an attitude of complacency. As I have said, you should never be satisfied in your walk with Christ. If we are to have the mind of Christ, we are constantly striving to be more like Him, even though we cannot obtain that here on earth. Nonetheless, we are to strive for it, we are to run the race, we are to press towards the mark by the renovation of our minds to be more like the mind of Christ and less like the mind of ourselves. Do not become satisfied, do not become comfortable, do not become content because they will lead to complacency and bring you to a stale, stagnant point in your walk in Christ and you stop growing. Do not allow that to happen, even though the devil will use every method he has available to bring you to the point where you are comfortable with your walk with Him. Do not let that happen, but if you see it happening, pray that God straightens you out quickly through His Word.

The misuse and misapplication of scripture by those who profess to follow God is the focus of this chapter. These pastors take scripture out of context to serve their purposes. It is seen very often on religious television in addition to preachers in the pulpit who ‘scripture pick’ to justify their point of view. The prosperity doctrine is an example of this, where pastors pick or choose one or several scriptures then develop some catchy phrase. For instance, if Psalms 66:10 is chosen, then you are to give \$66.10 this month. That ‘scripture picking’ misuses and misapplies scriptures. It is straight from the devil’s own mind to take scripture and use it for your own

purpose and gain, but the devil has always twisted scripture to teach error and lies rather than teach God's ways. Just about all of my Christian life, I have heard the know-it-alls of God's Word tell me what is written in scripture. In truth, they are taking scripture completely out of context to serve their own purposes, which is usually to point out what is wrong with you and why you should practice the works they are practicing instead of living in the Holy Spirit. I am flesh and blood that my Potter is molding. The Holy Spirit does the changing and the renovation in this body, not 'scripture pickers' telling me what is written in the Bible. As my mentor used to say, "Preach Christ and live your own convictions," meaning live a life of faith and trust in His Word. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit and let His Holy Spirit transform you into the being that He wants you to be. These self-made know-it-alls of God's Word are nothing more than Satan's mouthpieces telling everyone what is written in the Bible and how you should behave. Tell them to go to hell because that is where they are going for their judgmental attitude. I am adamant about this particular subject matter because I have seen it all my Christian life, including in the place where the pastor preached against it. Unfortunately, there is no escaping these people or clergy, who would transform you through good works instead of through the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 4:5 to 7 is another example in which the devil misuses and misapplies scriptures. In these verses the devil is tempting Jesus. The first temptation is in verse 3 with the devil tempting Christ to turn stones into bread. Verse 5 then continues, "***Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down: for it is written, [using scripture] He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.***" In other words, the devil is saying, "Doesn't God's Word say that He will keep you because the angels have charge over you to make sure that even your feet will not be damaged against the stone? Isn't God looking out for you, Jesus? Doesn't God's Word say that?" Jesus' response is recorded in verse 7, "***Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.***" I love what Jesus did there and only Jesus could do this. He used God's Word correctly against Satan's misapplication and misuse of God's Word for his own purposes. You probably will not hear many preachers preaching this kind of message because it may offend their congregation. The people who are a part of that ministry may warn them to be careful how they apply God's Word. God's Word should never be used to serve your own purposes, but instead to serve His purposes.

II Peter 3:15 also addresses this subject. It states, "***And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you: As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.***"

I want you to understand this verse, so I will be reading it again to you from Holman's translation of the Bible. I do not do this very often, in fact, I do not think I ever used this particular translation, but you may understand this verse better said a different way. Holman's translation of II Peter 3:15 states: "***Also, regard the patience of our Lord as an opportunity for salvation, just as our dear brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him. He speaks about these things in all of his letters in which there are some matters that are***

hard to understand. The untaught and the unstable twist them to their own destruction, as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures.”

Peter is saying here to beware of how the untaught and unstable twist scriptures to their own destruction, and not only the scriptures that Paul has written to you, but all of the scriptures in general. God help the individuals, pastors, preachers, or evangelists who twist scripture because they are untaught and unstable. As I view Christian television today, I have been speaking against the prosperity doctrine quite a bit. I am the only voice that I see doing this and it is a shame. There should be more who speak against and attack heresy taught as the Word of God. Recently, there was some ministry on television late at night peddling how to be a millionaire for Jesus and claiming how many millionaires they have in their church. Another ministry wants to give you “free miracle water,” and another wants to send you a “green miracle handkerchief.” Yet another one wants you to give one month’s mortgage or rent for the year claiming God will bless you if you do. These are all schemes devised by the devil himself to confuse, twist, and cause the Christian community to become unstable. I speak against this and I will continue to speak against it, especially the way the scripture is continuously misused and misapplied.

With that, the subject matter of this chapter is giving. Not just giving of money, but also giving of service, giving your body as a living sacrifice. Over all, I am very disappointed how most preachers, commentators, authors, and theologians, do not really address the subject of giving, but instead apply a different meaning other than what God’s Word declares and then ignore what should be the focus of these verses. You may wonder what makes me an authority on this subject. First, finish reading this chapter, then judge for yourself whether I have shown you God’s Word. Let your spirit be the witness if this is the truth and the precise and correct knowledge of God’s Word, or *epignosis* in the Greek.

Let us begin in Romans 12:1. ***“I beseech you [beg you, in the Greek] therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”*** You could read that verse through in many different translations, whether it is the Revised Standard, the King James, the Amplified, the Living Bible, or some other translation, and miss the point completely of what Paul was saying here. Translators miss the point, because unless you apply this scripture and reference it to other epistles Paul wrote in the New Testament, you will never understand what he is saying.

Let us return to the verse and look at each part carefully. It begins, ***“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God. . .”*** You may think here that Paul is begging the brethren, but ***“by the compassions of God”*** is a better translation. And, who are the brethren? Jesus asked who is my mother, who is my father? To know who my brethren are, I stand on the words of Jesus who said those who do the will of the Father are my brethren, understanding God’s will begins with denying yourself and taking up your cross for the cause of Christ, and the cause of Christ is the cross that you bear. There are plenty of other scriptures about your own sufferings, your own trials and persecutions, but that is not your cross. Your cross is what you do for Christ. You deny yourself, carry the cross for Christ’s sake, and follow Jesus Christ. My brethren are the ones that do the will of the Father. All other pretenders, are not in that category. In fact, I come against them, which is not causing contention among the brethren because they are not my brethren to start with. They are the brethren of the devil and all his evil forces who are mouthpieces for his

cause, not for Christ's cause. I do not bring contention among the brethren, I bring the truth of God's Word to the brethren. Those who have ears to hear, let him hear, and those who will not, will be like the stony, hard ground in the parable of the sower.

Returning to verse one in Romans it says, ***"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassion of God, that ye present your bodies [my body and your body] a living sacrifice holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*** To understand this verse, you must understand the Old Testament and the meaning of those sacrifices. The living sacrifice is you and I. We are alive. We are not being presented as in the Old Testament as a dead sacrifice, whether for the remission of sins or as a sweet savor offering. You need to go to the Old Testament to understand what Paul is saying here, specifically when it comes to sacrifice.

The Greek word for sacrifice is ***thusia***, and consists of three different meanings:

- 1) for religious service,
- 2) praises to God, and
- 3) aid to preachers of the Gospel

In the Old Testament, the priests used this word for religious service. However, in the New Testament, definitions for this particular scripture in Romans 12:1-2, refer to religious service, praises to God, and also how you worship in supporting the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ in whatever ministry you are a part of. I want you to understand the Old Testament sacrifices were the way to God in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Christ stood in for us as our sacrifice, as He was our unblemished perfect offering. Not only was He a sweet savor offering to God, but He was also our sin offering, because there is nothing we can do for our own salvation. Christ did it for us and reconciled us back to the Father. To understand what Paul is saying here about sacrifices, remember in the Old Testament there were five different sacrifices:

- The burnt offering was symbolized by an animal without blemish. Although Jesus Christ was no animal, He was a deity who came down in human flesh to be our perfect, unblemished sacrificial lamb.
- The meal or meat offering was always represented by the fruit of our toil.
- The peace offering acknowledges that we have been reconciled back to the Father by the blood of Jesus Christ.
- The sin offering was Christ. He paid the penalty for all our sin, because there was nothing we could do.
- The trespass offering covers all our trespasses.

The way to God in the Old Testament was through the sacrifice of animals. The way to God in the New Testament is through Jesus Christ and the blood He spilled. Again, sacrifice in the Old Testament meant the burnt, meal, peace, sin, and trespass offerings. Three of them, the burnt offering, the meal offering and the peace offering, were sweet savor offerings. The sin offerings

were both the sin offering and the trespass offering. In the New Testament we are a living sacrifice, defined as religious service, praises to God, and our service and support of a ministry by employing the Word of God with ministries who are teaching correctly. Sacrifice, *thusia*

. Paul also speaks of sacrifice, *thusia*, in Philippians 4:18, where he was brought a gift from the Philippian church. The church was in such an excited and joyous spirit, they were anxious this offering got to Paul to help him get the Word to others. In verse 18 Paul says, ***“But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things [possessions and money] which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice [thusia] acceptable, well-pleasing to God.”*** Paul compared their offering to “sweet smell.” The sweet smell offerings in the Old Testament were the ones that really pleased God. That is why they call it a well pleasing offering in the New Testament and in the Old. The sin or trespass offerings did not really please God in the same way. Paul is also talking about money in this verse and saying we are a living sacrifice in religious service, in praises to God, and to the aid to the preachers of the Gospel.

Hebrews 13:15 tells us about social and religious duties. ***“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice [thusia] of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.”*** Through religious services and the sacrifice of praise [*thusia*], we praise God and aid the preachers of the Gospel. But Paul continues in verse 16, ***“But to do good and to communicate [or koinonia, sharing your possessions] forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”*** Here, Paul is making sacrificial praise to God, the sacrifices of praise, the *thusia* of praise, equal to what was done in the Old Testament through the sweet savor offerings, which were the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering. Sacrificial praise is part of the sweet savor offering in the Old Testament and in the New. In addition, the meal offering was always the offering that represented the fruit of your toil, the things that you earned and possessed. Here, Paul in the New Testament in verse 16 is saying, ***“But to do good and to koinonia,”*** share with your possessions because they are part of the sweet savor offering from the Philippians. It is the sweet savor offerings in the Old Testament and it is for all the sweet savor offerings in the New. These offerings are not to be cheapened by preachers who want to twist, misuse, and misapply scripture for their own gain. Except for the salvation message, how to give properly to God is one subject the devil twists, because once you know how, you know how well pleased God is with you. To repeat, you are a living sacrifice for three purposes: religious service, praises to God, and aid to the preachers of the Gospel with your possessions, *koinonia*.

Returning to verse one in Romans 12, Paul states, ***“I beseech you [beg you] therefore, brethren, by the mercies [compassions] of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice [for religious service, praises to God, and aid to preachers], holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”***

The next word in this verse is ***“holy.”*** In the Greek, it is *hagios*, meaning you are to present your bodies because you are a saint set apart as a living sacrifice. And, as Hebrews 13:15 states, we are to do this continually, not only when we feel like it.

After the word ‘holy’ in this verse, comes the word ***“acceptable,”*** or *euairetos* in the Greek, but it does not mean ‘acceptable.’ It means ‘well pleasing’ in the Greek. In other words, this verse,

Romans 12:1 is telling us that we are a living sacrifice to praise God, to serve God in religious duty, and to share our possessions, as it is well pleasing because we are a saint set apart which is well pleasing unto God. This word, *euarestos*, is also used in Philippians 4:18, ***“But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice [thusia] acceptable, well-pleasing to God.”*** The King James translators were correct to write ‘well pleasing.’ The offering sent by Epaphroditus to Paul was a sweet smell offering that was well pleasing to God, and this is what Paul was saying in Romans chapter 12. Your religious service makes your body a living sacrifice, in how you serve Him, how you aid the preacher of the Gospel of the Good News, and how you are set apart as a saint to praise Him. It is not difficult, but it is beyond me why so many have ignored this when explaining what the Word of God is saying through Paul.

Ephesians 5:9 and 10 are another example where ‘*euarestos*’ is used in regards to the fruit of the Spirit. Paul writes in verse 9, ***“(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness [actually, agathosune, generous giving] and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable [euarestos, well pleasing] unto the Lord.”*** The righteousness Paul speaks of in these verses is not through our own works, but through faith and truth alone. Unfortunately, religious television teaches that we give to get, but that is misleading and is not part of God’s Word; it never has been and never will be. In addition, Paul mentions three attributes of the Spirit. One of them happens to be generous giving that is well pleasing unto the Lord. He also tells us that only the Holy Spirit can give these attributes, not our own doing.

Hebrews 13:21 is yet another example where Paul uses the word well pleasing in reference to Jesus, the Great Shepherd. The entire verse reads, ***“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*** But, let us look at each part of the verse. First, Paul states ***“Make you perfect*** [a better translation is ***‘make you complete’***] ***in every good work [ergon,*** employment of the word of God] ***to do his will. . . .”*** With that, this should read, ***“Make you complete in every good employment of the word of God to do his will. . . .”*** The work we do is the employment of the Word of God to get the message of the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ out to whoever wants to hear it. Furthermore, His will is that others are saved and begin following Him by denying themselves and taking up the cause of Christ. As I have said, once you become a Christian it is not a ‘cruise ship for Jesus.’ Christ told us to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him so others will have the opportunity to hear the Word of God. This is the case whether you are behind the pulpit, or whether you are supporting the man behind the pulpit or ministry.

Continuing through this verse, Paul states, ***“Make you complete in every good employment of the word of God to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing [euarestos] in his sight,*** [that is God’s sight] ***through Jesus Christ;*** [not anyone else] ***to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*** Paul is saying our employment of the Word of God in the capacity we were called, whether through preaching or support of the preacher or ministry is a well pleasing thing to God in His sight through the eyes of Jesus Christ. We need to take our calling to feeding the sheep seriously. Just because you do not preach, does not mean you are excused from the responsibility of feeding the sheep. We were called and chosen to be part of getting the message

out that will call and choose others. That is where this Greek word, *euarestos*, well pleasing, is used once again.

Once again, return to Romans 12:1 and re-read it with the understanding of what the verse means. ***“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, [through praise, service, and giving] holy, [set apart as a saint] well pleasing [a sweet smell, offering yourself] unto God, which is your reasonable service.”*** The Greek word for ‘service’ is *latreia*, and simply means ‘worship,’ so this part of the verse should read, ***“well pleasing unto God which is your spiritual worship.”***

This word, service, *latreia*, or worship is only used in five different places in the New Testament, and we will look at a few of them. The first is Hebrews 9:1. This chapter is about the New Covenant, which leads up to the blood of Christ. Verse one begins, ***“Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, [latreia, worship] and a worldly sanctuary [that being the tabernacle].”*** Verse 6 gets to the point, ***“Now when these things were thus ordained, [referring to the tabernacle] the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service, [latreia, the worship] of God.”*** Now, we are all priests simply serving in a different capacity. To make a comparison with people today, the high priests are the preachers, pastors, evangelists. The ones who take their worship of God further to present the Holy of Holies, God’s Word. What we do is a worshipping act. Paul is saying in Romans 12 that we are a living sacrifice, *thusia*, holy, well pleasing unto God, which is our spiritual worship, understanding we are to be a living sacrifice through service, praise, and giving, and this is a part of our spiritual worship. It is that simple. I want you to understand completely what Paul meant in context, not twisted to justify some other incorrect understanding for private gain.

With the understanding of what Paul meant when he wrote, ***“a living sacrifice that is well pleasing to God for your spiritual worship,”*** he continued with verse two. ***“And be not conformed [in Greek this is *syschematizo*, fashioned] to this world [or age]: but be ye transformed [metamorphoo, in the Greek, changed by the Holy Spirit] by the renewing of your mind, [not renewing, but *renovation* in the Greek. God is remodeling your mind to be more like the mind of Christ.] that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, [that is, well pleasing] and perfect, [complete] will [thelema] of God.”*** Paul wrote this 2000 years ago and it still applies today, probably even more so. Do not be fashioned by this world, because this world will only lead you astray. Do not be fashioned by it, it will lead to no good and to your own destruction. This world is fashioned by greed, by fame, by power, by money. Paul is saying not to be fashioned by those things, but be changed, *metamorphoo*, by the Holy Spirit. After Jesus left, the Holy Spirit was sent to be the changer of our opinions to what the Holy Spirit wants. If you are faithing, living a life of faith, and receiving the righteousness of God, the Holy Spirit will dwell in you, change you, and renovate your mind. He does this, as verse two says, ***“that ye may prove,”*** not to the preacher behind the pulpit, not to the church member sitting next to you, we prove to God, because He sees the heart, where we only see the external. Yes, some of those changes will be external by how we act upon the Word of God, but no man is to judge it. That is up to God. We are renovated in our mind that we may prove what is good and well pleasing. Once you understand what pleases God, it is simple. What pleases God is the service of praise to Him, the service of religious duty in His work, and the service of aiding the preachers to send the

Gospel with your possessions, or *koinonia*, so he can feed his sheep throughout the world. It has never been complicated.

Verse 3 goes on, **“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly,** [a better translation from the Greek is *think with a sound mind*] **according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.**” The Greek word for faith here is *pistis*, meaning faithfulness and fidelity, not *pisteuo*. Here Paul is referring to service again. God will put you in the position He wants you and give you the measure of faithfulness you require if you are faithful. Your part is to keep your mind on Christ and let Christ worry about others; it is not for you to compare yourself, or think more highly than you ought to, as Paul writes.

Verse 4 tells us, **“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:** [not everybody has been called to do the same thing] **So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts** [*charisma* in the Greek, a gift of grace, an undeserved benefit or unmerited favor given by God] **differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophesy,** [actually, it is about the proclamation of the Gospel and of things to come] **let us prophesy according to the proportion** [or right relationship] **of faith;** [really, faithfulness, in the Greek]. . .” In other words, you are proclaiming the right relationship, where you should be in serving Him, and your faithfulness toward that duty.

Verse 7 goes on, **“Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth,** [a better translation is *he who is on one’s side to aid* the one proclaiming the Good News] **on exhortation:** [on helping]...” This word, exhort, is different from how we define the word today. Paul saying either you are preaching or helping the preacher. Paul then continues in verse 8 to write, “. . . **he that giveth,** [I will add, with *pistis*, being faithful] **let him do it with simplicity;** [the Greek word used here is *haplotes*, giving with *the openness of heart manifesting itself by generosity*, or with plentitude] **he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.**” Paul is telling us, our living sacrifice service to God has three different areas of application in the New Testament and also today. That is, the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of service of religious duty, and aiding one who has called you through service and generous giving. This is where your time, talent, and treasure is used. Many also forget the last and most important is obedience. Unless you are obedient to the faith, you are not going to have the Fruit of the Spirit working through you. You will not have the Holy Spirit in your life and you will not be concerned how your time, your talent, or your treasure is given back to God for His use. You are just not going to be concerned with it no matter how you try to convince yourself. You must follow God’s will, which is deny yourself, take up your cross for the cause of Christ, and follow Him. You then become a living sacrifice, which is a saint set apart that is well pleasing unto God. It is your spiritual worship, not fashioned by this world, but transformed, changed, by the Holy Spirit through the renovation of your mind to be more like the mind of Christ. Once you understand that, you understand where you are in the Body of Christ, what your position is. You may be behind the pulpit or aiding and standing at the side of the proclaimer of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ giving, giving with an open generous heart and servicing the cause of Christ. That is what Paul says, but that is not what is preached. Most Christian television teaches giving to get, and it just does not stop with possessions. Fall in

love with His Word, how it changed your life, and how you are excited now to be part of a living sacrifice to be used of God. Be excited because you know you are an instrument used by God according to His Word. You are now a sweet smell offering that is well pleasing to Him through the living sacrifice of yourself.

Return to Hebrews 13:15. ***“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice [the thusia] of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate [koinonia, share with your possessions] forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Obey them that have the rule over you, [those who proclaim God’s Word] and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”*** Anybody who preaches and does not have a concern for your everlasting soul is nothing more than a tool of the devil. Unfortunately, most preachers would rather have compliments and the benefits they receive. Very few are concerned about your souls. If they were concerned, they would search God’s Word and find the riches, rather than the simple bible classroom principles that are not the correct knowledge of the Word of God. Find and support a ministry that preaches God’s Word in its completion to equip and complete you. God help the ministries that do not watch for your souls; someday they will be held accountable for it.

This ministry does not ask for much from you, but I have asked you to support God’s work, and do it as a sweet smell offering which is well pleasing to God. Get excited about feeding the sheep. Do not give to me because I teach you. Give to this ministry because you want to be a living sacrifice to God that is well pleasing to Him, so you too could be changed and renovated. The Fruit of the Spirit and the Holy Spirit could energize your life to be a tool and an agent that God can use to get the message to the world. Someday someone will walk up to you in glory and say, “You know what? I think you had something to do with me being here because without your support of that ministry, I might never have heard the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” Give to God with no conditions attached. You do not give to me; you give to this ministry, because you know that I am feeding the sheep. More importantly, go beyond even that and give to God with the right attitude that comes from knowing what God’s Word says about giving. It is well pleasing to Him to know that you made yourself available as a living sacrifice to do it His way.

Look back at Hebrews 13:6. As I said earlier, this chapter is about social and religious duties. ***“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”*** Paul is saying that you know you are following someone truly teaching the Word of God if you are taught about giving, religious service, praises to Him, and the understanding that you are a living sacrifice to spiritually worship Him. If this is the case, look unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith, but also take heed to what is taught and follow the conversation, which is what is taught, to the end so you understand how you should follow God. Because, as verse 8 says, ***“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.”*** Put another way; know that He is our helper. Do not fear what man should do to you, because you know what the man of God that you follow has taught about His Word. Jesus Christ is the same today and forever, so follow Him until the end.

This chapter began in II Peter 3:16, about unstable people do not understand and twist scripture for their own benefit, which leads to their own destruction. This chapter will conclude in verse 17, where Peter gives another warning. ***“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.”*** This warning is for us about the wicked ones who lead themselves to their own destruction by twisting, misapplying, and misusing scripture. So be forewarned that it does not happen to you as well. Satan controls those wicked ones to achieve his purposes. Do not fall into the trap ***“being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.”*** Stop scripture picking and applying scripture to your own world. Instead, look at God’s Word in its full context about a particular subject. That is why I use the Old and New Testaments in most of my messages. I also focused on the Greek words that Paul used in Romans 12:1 and 2 so you can see how he applies those words in other epistles that he wrote as well as to the book of Romans as a whole.

‘Scripture picking’ will only lead to your own destruction. You will fall and have no steadfastness. Do not follow those who ‘scripture pick’ because their ways are in error and wicked. They are controlled by the wicked one. Do not misuse and misapply scripture or be tricked by the devil’s methods meant to confuse what God’s Word says. Remember the three different ways Paul describes in Romans 12. We are a living sacrifice through praise, through religious duty of service in helping and aiding someone, and through generous giving. Be a living sacrifice for God the right way. Resist the devil’s method of ‘scripture twisting.’ Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. His Word has never changed and until we get to glory, stay in the faith.

No Condemnation

Beginning with Ephesians 6:10 and 11, these verses read, “***Finally, my brethren, be strong [endunamoo, to be strengthened or empowered] in the Lord, and in the power [the force, kratos] of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.***” In other words, Paul is telling us to be strengthened, be empowered in the Lord continually on a daily basis. If we abide in Him, we understand it is His force that gives us the might to get through the spiritual wickedness we fight daily. Unfortunately many Christians are worthless when a strong wind comes by and knocks them down. They have forgotten that we cannot stand against such evil in our own power. We need to stay connected to the vine that gives us the strength and the armour we need to come against such a wicked enemy that are always planning an attack against God’s chosen. Remember, the Greek word for ‘wiles’ is *methodeia*, the many methods the devil and his demonic army uses to attack us.

Let us look into another method the devil uses, condemnation. Some Christians have never attended a church different from the one they have always attended, and some have grown up in the traditional Christian church. Some of you who are a part of this ministry have been fortunate to be part of a ministry that taught faith and grace. Sadly, the Christian world brings the most condemnation onto their own. Now, most of that condemnation comes from manmade traditions of things you should and should not do, including the way you should act and what things to avoid. In some places, not too long ago, it was a sin to go to a movie. In some places around this world today, it is still wrong for a woman to wear pants. Those are traditional manmade rules that bring nothing but judgment and condemnation upon you as an individual. Some preachers want to bring you back to a condemned state, rather than lifting you up and showing how you can grow in Christ without the condemnation. In addition, there are church busybodies who sit in the congregation acting as self-made experts on what a Christian should be like. They are nothing more than the voice of the devil. I know this sounds harsh, but this is spiritual warfare. You must be aware of what it takes to be in constant war with the devil and his troops. We are in a war. We are in a fight for eternal life or eternal death. Yes, I do sound harsh, especially to the ones who should understand that the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ is about Jesus Christ, who came to redeem us, gave us the wonderful gift of grace, forgiveness, and reconciliation back to the Father. These Christian know-it-alls spend too much time condemning you, backbiting, and secretly talking about you. They are more interested in finding your faults instead of encouraging you to have faith. There is a song about the ‘Sister Sals,’ who bring destruction in the church world, being an agent and tool of the devil and they do not even realize it. It is nothing new. This has been going on since the beginning of time.

With that, in this chapter I will read from J. Vernon McGee’s book, which discusses the old familiar story of Job. Job was in a spiritual war and he could not comprehend why God allowed Satan to test him, but he finally came through in the last chapter. As the book begins, we learn Job was wealthy, he had health, he had a large family, he had much in material possessions, and yet he remained faithful to God. That is unique. Most of us, as we start gaining material possessions, make that our focus, rather than who gave us those possessions. We begin holding back when it comes to giving to ministries to further the Gospel.

However, before reading from McGee, we will begin the story of Job to understand what was happening to him. Chapter one begins, ***“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect [really, not wanting in any respect is what it should say] and upright, [to God] and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. [A better way of translating this is, fearing God departed from evil.] And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.”***

Then we get to verse seven, ***“And the LORD said unto Satan [at this time all of God’s creations, the angelic beings He created, reported to Him] Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect [complete] and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth [stays away from] evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made a hedge [or shield] about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.”*** [Let me penetrate this shield to see if he will turn on you.]

I am telling you, a conversation like this is still happening today, but through the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we have a mediator in that heavenly courtroom representing us. That mediator said, “I have paid the price with my blood, so anything that comes out of Satan’s mouth is nothing but lies and accusations. Even if there was any truth to it, it does not matter. I have paid the price. I have covered the penalty and I am standing in for everyone that he tries to accuse.” Job did not have that at this time. We are so much more fortunate, so we take it for granted and become comfortable and content, but Job did not have this.

We can see in these verses that Satan wants his chance to get to Job, so God removes the shield and Job is tested. God allows the testing to happen to see what Job would do. This is why ‘he was perfect’ is a bad translation. Job was not perfect; he was complete, not wanting in any respect. He had family, wealth, health, and all the things that he could have here on earth. But once that shield was lifted, one after another taken away, all his livestock, his sons and daughters killed, and eventually his health attacked. Job 2:9 records his wife’s opinion, ***“Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.”*** The only one left in his family was his wife, and she told him to curse God and die. After losing everything that he had; family, wealth, livestock, in Job 2:7 Satan then, ***“smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown [the head].”*** It was so bad, verse 8 tells us Job was trying to scrape these boils and sores with broken pieces of pottery and just sat there waiting to die.

Now before you criticize Job, put yourself in his shoes. He was a wealthy man and he lost all his material possessions, everything taken including close family members, sons and daughters. What would you do if you lost all your sons and daughters? How would you feel? How would you react? Then to add insult to injury, Job’s body is covered in one open sore. I cannot even imagine the pain that he was feeling. I mean, I whine and cry when I get a blister. He was an open sore from the top of his head to the bottom of his heel. He was in so much pain that he was

trying to scrape the boils off to try to diminish the pain. This is a man in desperate need, who did nothing wrong. This man was upright and feared God, and Satan could not wait to get his hands on Job to destroy him for one purpose and one purpose only, so he would curse God and then die; and Satan used Job's wife as his mouthpiece for that purpose. Satan wanted to bring Job to the point where he would curse God and die. So, before you sit in judgment of Job, imagine yourselves in this scenario and ask yourself truthfully, how would you act. What would you do? What would you say?

Even after all that had happened to Job, verse 22 in chapter one records, ***“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”*** Now Satan was probably sitting there wondering what he had to do to bring Job to the point of cursing God. If Job did that, then the devil would win the battle and tell God, “I told you so.” Those kinds of people cannot wait to see you fail so they can prove their point about you all along. They are the ones who condemn you because they do not approve of what you do, what you say, and how you live. They especially get angry if you say you are a Christian and yet they do not approve of the way you act. They are always on the lookout for you to stumble in their eyes so they can condemn you, while sitting in spiritual pride saying, “I told you so.” I have no useful purpose for those types of professing Christians. They are only mouthpieces, tools, and agents of the devil used to bring you down in spirit.

Next the story, Job 2:11 introduces Job's three friends. ***“Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place. . . . And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; [Because of the boils, his close friends could not recognize him.] and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.”*** They were mourning. It does not say in scripture, but they possibly knew that Job's death was near. They were in mourning for what happened to him, but they started the mourning process knowing that he was probably going to pass away because no man could survive the heartache and the physical attack Job was experiencing, but they should have not said anything. By their actions, they became another tool and agent of Satan urging Job to the point of cursing God and dying. God's Word is very clear on this. When Satan could not destroy Job by taking everything away from him including his health, his family and his wealth, the devil brings these spiritual know-it-alls to condemn Job.

Now we come to chapter four where I will read J. Vernon McGee's interpretation of what Job's friends were trying to accomplish. I have my own insight as well, but follow along with me as we now look into how Satan, when he cannot bring you down personally through the loss of your wealth, through the loss of your family, through the loss of your health, still has backup plans. The devil still does this today. He has a spiritual army available to him, but let me tell you right now, he also has a physical human army who act as his agents. We give too much credence to them. We should not listen to them or give them an ear; rather we should tell them, “Get behind me, Satan!”

McGee begins his insight on Job 4:1-2 that states,

“Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?”

“Eliphaz is the first [friend] to speak. His is the voice of experience. He is a remarkable man and he relates a strange and mysterious experience. . . Everything he has to say rests on that. He is the voice of experience. He has a remarkable vision and has heard secrets that nobody else has ever heard. He begins in a diplomatic sort of way, but one gets the feeling he has his tongue in his cheek. This is a sort of false politeness. He says to Job, ‘Do you mind if I say something?’ Then he adds, ‘Regardless of whether or not you mind my saying something, I am going to say it.’ And he does.”

I have had occasion to have this type of person around me. These people know better than I do because they have been around longer, so therefore I should listen to them because they have so much experience. Yes, they do. I will not take that away from them, but their experience comes from their own earthly achievements, their own fleshly reactions and responses. I am only interested in the experience given through the Spirit of God, and that is a big difference. I remember my mentor and pastor, over 30 years he had someone around him, and as he was speaking, this person would always interrupt and ask, “Can I say something; can I say something?” Then when you listened to what he had to say, you would scratch your head and think, “What was profound about that! You were better off to keep your mouth shut and maybe listen and learn something that you have never heard or experienced before in life.”

Job 4:3-5, “Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.”

To this, J. Vernon McGee says:

“He is saying to Job, ‘In the old days when you were in prosperity and plenty and in good health, you were a tower of strength to everybody else. You could speak to them and tell them what to do. You knew how to help those who were in trouble. But now something has happened to you, and you have folded up. You’re just a paper doll; you’re just a paper tiger. You were never real at all. The advice you gave to others- can’t you follow it yourself?’”

What a presumptuous, judgmental jerk to criticize Job telling him, “You had everything going for you. You were a pillar of strength but look at you now, you pathetic individual. You have tossed in the towel because of your circumstances.” I am not as nice as J. Vernon McGee in interpreting these verses. I wish I would have been there then I would have said, “Shut your mouth. Have you gone through what Job went through and is still experiencing? Shut your mouth.” Likewise, in the flesh, if I were Job, I would have marched to his camp and said, “You know what, you are right. Let me see how you would react to these things. Let me take everything that you have, including your sons and daughters. They are no longer yours either. Here you are telling me that I am not putting my words into action and criticizing me when you have not experienced anything, and probably will never experience what I am going through. I

do not know why this is happening because I thought I was living in faith, and fearing God, and trying to keep from evil.”

Remember, Job, in my opinion, was written sometime between the times of Abraham but before the Mosaic Law was given. This was a different time where they did not have all the available Word of God that we have today. Job could not figure out what was wrong. If he could figure it out, if he knew why Satan was attacking him, I guarantee he probably would have understood. But God in His wonderful grace towards us, and all the generations prior and the people who will come after us if Jesus tarries, will have the wonderful insight how God used Job to show us several things. Probably the most important thing is how the devil will never let up until he achieves the destruction of your life.

The wonderfully beautiful thing about this story is Job eventually does understand, and eventually God stops all these know-it-alls, intervenes, and puts Job back to where he was. God returned everything he lost and more because Job says in chapter 13, verse 15, ***“Though he slay me, yet will I still trust in him . . .”*** Throughout the book of Job, there are glimpses of hope that he would continue trusting God and His ways. The devil did everything possible to take Job’s focus off God and onto the situation. In the first chapter, Job worried about his sons and daughters, so he gave God a burnt offering to cover any possible sin that might have happened in their lives. They were not always focusing on God the way they should have been. Satan was using these individuals and that is what he will do in your life today. Yes, God might allow you to lose your possessions, and yes, He might put you in situations that seem horrible but when those things cannot break you. I guarantee Satan will send individuals into your life to try to finish the job just like Job.

McGee continues to write:

“The advice you gave others- can’t you follow it yourself?’ I would say that that is the problem a great many of us have today. Isn’t it interesting that we can always tell the other person what he should do when troubles come to him? [We see this in Eliphaz’s encouragement to Job, which was no encouragement at all.] It is like the cartoon of two psychiatrists meeting one day. One looked at the other and said, ‘You are fine. How am I?’ We are always analyzing the other fellow, telling him how he is. Eliphaz accuses Job of being an expert at that. In a very sarcastic manner he says, ‘Now it has happened to you, and what have you done? You folded up. Isn’t your own advice good enough for you? It helped others; now it ought to help you.’ Now Eliphaz makes an insinuation to Job. But he does it in a polite way. We will find that Job’s other two friends are more blunt and crude, especially Zophar.”

Job 4:6-7, “Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways? Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?”

This reminds me of someone who tells you what is wrong with you, and what you should do and not do in Christ’s name. There are always Christians who come to you politely saying they are a mouthpiece for the Lord to help you and then finish by saying ‘in Christ’s name.’ They do not

come in Christ's name and Christ does not inspire their words at all, their opinion inspires their words.

J. Vernon McGee says of Eliphaz:

“He accuses Job of having a chink in his armor, of having an Achilles’ heel. He says this would not have happened to Job if there hadn’t been something radically wrong in his life, something that he is keeping secret. This is the argument. He is making an insinuation, and it’s not true of Job. [Remember, at the beginning of the book God gave us the scene in heaven so that we might know Job and understand his character.] These friends will be miserable comforters because they do not understand God, they do not understand Job, and they do not understand themselves. There are too many people who try to deal with spiritual matters who are not qualified to do so.”

Job 4:8, ***“Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.”***

“Eliphaz is speaking from a very high pulpit and is looking down at Job when he says this. He insists there is something hidden in his life which he has not revealed. He is saying that Job is reaping what he has sowed.”

I agree; there are too many Christians claiming you need to confess your sins. I grew up as a Catholic and went to confession every Thursday or Friday as part of attending Catholic school up until the fifth grade. I still remember St. Michael's Catholic School, which is associated with St. Michael's Catholic Church in Union, New Jersey. As a young boy, I tried to figure out why I was going to confession because I really did not understand what I did wrong. I would make up sins to be ready once I got to the confession booth and knelt down. The screen door opened and I said, "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been one week since my last confession." Just before that, the entire class would go into this area in the church next to the school to wait for our turn. While I was waiting, I would sit there and think about what sins I was going to make up. Of course, I did not want to come up with the same sins as the week before, it seemed too repetitive in my mind at least, so I would come up with different sins. Something like: I hated my mother, I cursed my father, I kicked my sister, or I said bad names to my neighbor friend who was the same age as I was and went to the same school. Whatever the sin was, I would try to come up with a new sin each week and confess it to this priest. And after my confession, the priest would tell me the same thing week after week. Once done with the confession we were to go to the altar in the church, kneel down, and say so many 'Our Fathers' and 'Hail Marys' to complete the remission of our sins. As a boy, I began to play a game with this, whether right or wrong, keeping track of the sins seeing how many 'Our Fathers' and 'Hail Marys' each sin cost me. I had not told anyone this up to this point in my life, and I became convinced there was no set pattern. There were always more 'Hail Mary's,' by the way, but it was just guess work. Eventually, I would repeat the same sin about the third or fourth visit because you just run out of sins, so I would repeat the same ones. For instance, being bad to your parent was a very common one, or you had hatred toward somebody, which was also common. Sometimes it required one 'Our Father' and three 'Hail Mary's,' but the same sin three or four weeks later, now required five 'Hail Mary's' or only one 'Hail Mary' but two 'Our Fathers.' Soon, it did not take me very

long to see that something was not right. It was another six or seven years when we move from the east coast to the west coast to, thank God, become taught the Word of God and about the true remission of sins. This man taught that it comes from nothing we can say or do in our own being, but was given to us as a gift by God.

To return to the point J. Vernon McGee was making, there are always judgmental jerks that tell you there has to be something wrong in your life or else these bad things would not happen to you, so why not just confess them. These friends were not interested in Job confessing his sins to God, they wanted to hear the confession themselves, so they could sit in their spiritual superiority and say, "I told you something was wrong with you. Now don't you feel better? Aren't you glad that you got that off your chest? Oh, by the way, God heard you also so everything is okay. Now move on with your life." Stay away from people like that. They are nothing more than hypocrites and condemners always putting condemnation on you. The whole point of this message is there is no condemnation.

McGee says:

"Eliphaz is speaking from a very high pulpit and is looking down at Job when he says this. He insists there is something hidden in his life which he has not revealed. He is saying that Job is reaping what he has sowed."

Job 4:9, "By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed."

"This man is wrong. God disciplines His children, but He never destroys them. Eliphaz is like so many of us who give advice. We can tell someone else how he ought to do things, in a nice way, phrase it in very attractive language, but what we say may not be accurate."

Job 4:10-11, "The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken. The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad."

"He is saying that those who sow evil seed are going to reap the harvest of evil, and they are going to perish like the young lions that have broken teeth and like the old lions that can no longer stalk their prey. Now Eliphaz will say that this was impressed on him because he had a vision. He really tries to make your hair stand on end while he tells of this dream."

So many times in my lifetime, especially in the early years of my Christian walk, there have been people with dreams and visions, and I find especially amusing the ones who have visions and dreams about things that concern me. Instead of dreams, though, I need verifiable facts from throughout His Word, not just scripture picking. I want to know what He says on any subject from beginning to the end in His book. That way I can truly know what God means. That is taking His Word seriously. If any of you have any visions or dreams for me, pray to God that He sends the message directly to me. I could fall asleep, I could dream, I could go into a trance if it is a spiritual trance given to me by God, but I do not think God does that any more. I am not saying it cannot happen, but He has never worked that way through my life and I hope He never

does. I would rather have His Word because I know it is verifiable. Some Christians are looking for spiritual mysterious ways or a shortcut to understanding what God wants from you, instead of studying and coming to the knowledge of the truth that is presented to you through this ministry, or any ministry you follow that teaches the Word of God.

Job 4:12, ***“Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof.”***

To this, McGee says,

“Draw closer now. Cup your ear and don’t miss a thing of what is happening.”

Job, verses 13-14, ***“In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.”***

“Doesn’t this sound mysterious? Isn’t it bloodcurdling? The vision takes place at night, in the dark.”

Verses 15 and 16, ***“Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying,”***

I will tell you right now, this was not the Spirit of God. I am not saying the Spirit of God will appear in this way, but I am saying this is not the Spirit of God. In just about every other occurrence in the Bible, all the angelic beings and messengers of God were described very well. Yet here, Eliphaz is saying, ***“Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof. . . .”*** As an example, look at Ezekiel’s dream or what Gideon experienced. Those beings had form. Even the burning bush that God spoke through was not formless. Evil spirits do not want to be identified because if their true nature is seen, you definitely know they are not from God. It seems at this point, all that Eliphaz is missing is music building to a loud crescendo. These aids are not needed to deliver the Word of God. If what you are saying does not make the point, then what good is the music, or any other prop going to be? Eliphaz was using nothing more than stage theatrics.

I agree with McGee,

“My how Eliphaz builds this up! It sounds so scary. It sounds so frightening. This is going to be something nobody’s ever heard before. This is something nobody ever knew before, because this man has had a vision. He has seen things. He has had a dream. It was dark and a spirit passed before him. What did it say?”

Verse 17, ***“Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?”***

“Now I don’t know about you, but I must say I am disappointed. I thought that if a man had had such an experience he was really going to come up with something profound. . . This is

nothing new. I think he really exercised himself a little bit too much to come up with so little. It is like the old saying about the mountain that conceived and travailed and brought forth the mouse! I think that is what Eliphaz did. He's in great travail here, and you expect him to give birth to a great statement, a profound truth. He comes up with this: 'Shall mortal man be more just than God?' Of course not. Any of us know that, and we didn't need a dream or frightening nightmare to learn it. I don't think it was worth missing a night's sleep to come up with something so trite, so evident. There is really nothing profound here at all. Yet this is the voice of experience, and there are a lot of folks with the voices of experience today. . . . The point is that they are just not helping Job. [Nothing Eliphaz said was a help to Job. If anything, it brought him more misery than before.]"

Job 5:17, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."

"I have heard this verse quoted again and again. Of course, it is true, but Eliphaz was using it as a personal dig against Job. Chastening is not always the reason that God's people suffer, as we have seen. Sometimes one can use this verse as a little dagger to put into the heart of a friend. It is a nice way of saying, 'You are having trouble because you've done wrong and God is correcting you.' Well, that could be, but it may not be. Who are you to make such a judgment? Do you have a telephone into heaven? Has the Lord revealed some secret to you? There are people who like to speak ex cathedra, and they are not even the Pope! Some people think they have the last word on everything. Listen, friend, you cannot always speak to the problem of someone else, and someone else cannot always speak to your problem either. Although the statement of Eliphaz is true, it does not apply to Job."

It is so common for these Christian mental midgets to say you must have done something wrong, so therefore trouble surrounds you. However, because we have the knowledge of what Job chapter 1 says, we know Job did not do anything wrong. Sometimes you will be in a position where you think you have done something wrong, but do not condemn yourself, because there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Do not condemn yourself. Satan wants you to bring yourself to a point where you are beating yourself down continually because you think you have done something wrong. Whether you have or not is not the point. The point is there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Even though this is true, Eliphaz is convinced that Job has sinned, because he sees himself as finally spiritually superior to Job and he has probably wanted this for a long time. Job was the greatest of all the men of the east, but Eliphaz saw the opportunity to put himself in the position of knowing more than Job. He is nothing more than a voice of the devil.

In Job chapter 8, the second friend, Bildad, arrives and McGee states,

"The next man who makes his attack upon Job is Bildad. He is what we call a traditionalist... Notice that Bildad puts the knife into Job. . . ."

Job 8:1-2, "Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, How long wilt thou speak these things? And how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind?"

“He says, ‘Job listening to you is just like listening to the wind blowing. You’re a windy individual.’”

Job 8:3, “Doth God pervert judgment? Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?”

“He is really saying, ‘Job you’re getting exactly what you had coming to you. You try to defend yourself, but it means that there is some great sin in your life and you are getting exactly what you deserve.’”

These friends still believe that Job did something wrong, he was hiding something, or he was keeping something secret. That Job had some sin in his life for which God was punishing him.

Job 8:4, “If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression;”

“He is suggesting that the reason Job’s children were destroyed was because they were sinners. I can’t think of anything anyone could say that would hurt more than that. Bildad had no right to say that. We know (because God lets us in on it from the beginning of the book) that his children were not destroyed for that reason.”

Job 8:5-6, “If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty; If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.”

How could anyone be pure? Unless we are in Christ Jesus, none of us can be any good. Not one of us who live in this human flesh is of any good outside of Jesus. This is another example of professing pure and upright Christians condemning individuals today.

“Job if you were lily white, as you have given the impression, [Job never gave that impression] God would hear your prayer and heal and restore you. But as it is, there must be something radically wrong.”

Job 8:13, “So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite’s hope shall perish.”

“Now he is accusing Job of being a hypocrite! ... He says to Job, ‘You’ve been a hypocrite, just putting up a front.’”

Job 8:20, “Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers.”

“Now wait a minute- is that exactly true? God has certainly helped me although I have been an evildoer. He saved me, my friend. Will God ‘cast away a perfect man’? No, He won’t. But where is the perfect man? There is none. The Scripture is clear on that score: ‘... There is none righteous, no, not one.’ (Romans 3:10). Although what Bildad says is true, it is not true when you pour it into the test tube of life and pour the acid of experience upon it.”

Job 8:21-22, *“Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing. They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame; and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought.”*

“He is telling Job that he has come to nothing because he is a great sinner. That is not very helpful for a man who is in the position of Job! You see, Bildad does not know God. He does not know Job. Neither does he really know himself. He is a traditionalist. He thinks that by scientific examination he can tell you how the world began. He is a smart boy, but he doesn’t know. He cannot put himself in the place of God. In the following chapter we will see that Job answers Bildad, and he does it very well, although he is getting awful weary of these rounds of conversation... [In Job chapter 11] Now we meet the last of Job’s friends. His name is Zophar, and he is the legalist. He assumed . . . that God works according to measure, according to law. He pretends to know what God would do in a given circumstance.”

Job 11:1-2, *“Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified?”*

“He is saying that Job is covering his sin with words. Job has tried to make it clear that a man in his condition- suffering as he is- is not apt to put up a front. Zophar simply ignores that and says that Job is trying to talk his way out of his situation. It is true that there are men who are able to talk their way out of a situation and who are clever at manipulation by words. That is the way some lawyers win cases in court. It is really not a matter of justice being done but rather the cleverness of the lawyer and his manipulation. This is not true of Job. [We know that because we have insight about why Job is in this situation.]”

Verse 3, *“Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?”*

“Zophar goes a step further and actually accuses Job of lying. ‘Should thy lies make men hold their peace?’ He has accused him of being a hypocrite, and now he accuses him of lying.”

Boy, these spiritual jerks sound clever. With friends like this, who needs enemies? In fact, my enemy is probably more of a friend in this kind of situation than my friends probably would be, especially my Christian friends because they will analyze everything that I am doing wrong and the reason why God is dealing with me. That is the message here.

“He has accused him of being a hypocrite, and now he is accusing him of lying. That is even more crude than Bildad had been. Bildad had said that Job was a hypocrite but never called him a liar. Zophar is now going to assume the pious position of being on the inside with God. He thinks he knows what God will do under a certain circumstance. Of course, while he is on the inside with God, Job is on the outside, unable to know what God is doing. So Zophar feels that Job ought to listen to him because he has the final word and that his word is, in fact, the Word of God.”

There are many Christians that I have met in my lifetime who think that everything that comes from their mouth is the final Word of God. They are know-it-alls for Jesus who have never spent any amount of serious time digging into God's Word to learn what He says about any subject.

Job 11:4-5, "For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee."

"Since God wasn't speaking, Zophar speaks for Him. I received a rather crude letter the other day. It was from a man who was rebuking me for the position that I held, which to him indicated that I was not only a very ignorant and dogmatic man, but that I had no spiritual discernment whatsoever. Then he proceeded to give me his interpretation. When he finished, he said, 'Now I am going to see whether you will listen to the Holy Spirit or not.' Isn't that interesting? That man claimed to be the voice of the Holy Spirit. If I didn't listen to him, it meant I wasn't listening to God. As I read his letter, I felt confident that he was totally unaware of the fact that he was doing the very thing he accused me of doing! Supposing the man did have some inside information that I do not have access to, he certainly was not proceeding in a way that was helpful to me. In fact, his letter was not at all helpful to me. It ended up in the 'round file,' which is the wastebasket. I put it there because it had no message for me. I don't think Zophar had a message for Job."

This presumptuous person thinks they are a mouthpiece for God, but I am telling you, if God chooses you to be His mouthpiece, in most cases you will be teaching behind a pulpit. I am not talking about raising your children. That is your responsibility and you are to bring them up in the ways of the Lord. I am not talking about those responsibilities. I am talking about self-made preachers who do not have the courage to teach correctly. They want to be a preacher without the responsibility that goes along with delivering the Word of God. They would rather be preachers with their own opinions about what the Word of God says putting guilt on you if you are not practicing what they believe.

McGee's commentary continues,

Job 11:6, "And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth."

"He tells Job that he is not even getting half of what he really has coming to him. Now that is a pretty hard statement. He says the fact that Job is suffering as much as he is shows that Job is a lot worse than his friends ever dreamed he was. Zophar is not very helpful to a man in Job's condition! We must remember that all this time Job is a sick man and is in desperate pain. He actually thinks he may expire at any moment and at times he hopes that he will die."

Just think about what Job has been through and his friend tells him that he deserves a lot worse, but we all do. We all deserve death. At this point Job did not do anything against God, and yet God allowed this testing to see if his faith would come through, to see if his faith was more precious than gold tried by the fire. These are Job's know-it-all friends following their own self-made bondage to the law instead of realizing there is no condemnation for the ones in Christ

Jesus. If you meet people like this in your life, tell those judgmental jerks to show you which chapter and verse puts you under condemnation when Christ Jesus said there is no condemnation in those who abide in Him.

We just read about Job's friends who were really the voices of the devil, condemning Job because of his situation. Eliphaz was the voice of experience, Bildad was the voice of manmade traditions, and Zophar was the voice of legalism. So let us now see what Paul's letter to the Romans says about this. One of the most successful methods, schemes, and strategies the devil uses is to bring condemnation to the ones who are in Christ Jesus because we fall short and still have a sinful nature, even though Romans 7 releases us from the law. In verse 14 through to chapter 8, Paul states that the sin nature remains in us as we do battle against the flesh. Still, we are to walk in the Spirit while we are battling the flesh. This is our state until either we are raptured or death takes us home. That is just a fact. Do not let anybody convince you differently. If you think you do not sin any longer, then you are a lying hypocrite. You believe yourself better than Paul, Peter, John, Matthew, Luke, and all the great men who came after them. They still sinned and I sin daily, but I am a sinner saved by grace. From Romans 7:14 through the eighth chapter, Paul writes that we are still sinful beings. We still have a sinful nature that remains against which we battle. Satan knows this and uses it as a weapon to bring condemnation to us, convincing us that because we fall short, we have done something wrong. As a result, we believe we must try to figure out how to fix the wrong that we have done. Hogwash! That is what the voices of experience, tradition, and legalism want you to believe, but it is not what God's Word says. Romans 7:24 and 25 is where Paul tells us, ***"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."*** Christ is the only one who can, and did, deliver us from the body of this death; no one can live the law.

We will now look closely Romans 8:1 where Paul continues to say, ***"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. . ."*** However, the words *'There is'* are not in the original text, so this verse should be read as, ***"Therefore* [a bold statement, to get your attention] ***now no*** [as in none, not any, not even a little bit; there is none whatsoever] ***condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."*** Paul did not say less condemnation, he said, ***"Therefore now NO condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"*** period. This is where that verse ends. The rest of the verse one, ***"who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"*** is repeated in verse 4 of the same chapter, but was not in the original translation as part of verse one. To verify this, I want to read to you from Guzik's Commentary so you are convinced that there is nothing in the original texts about ***"who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*** Yes, the statement itself is true, but at this point in verse one, there should be nothing added to the statement "Therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."**

Guzik writes about these words at the end of Romans 8:1, ***"Who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit"*** (NKJV).

"These words are not found in the earliest ancient manuscripts of the Book of Romans and they do not agree with the flow of Paul's context here. [They] were probably added by a copyist who either made a mistake or thought he could 'help' Paul by bringing these words from Romans 8:4. While it is true that those who are in Christ should not . . . consistently walk

according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, this is not a condition for their status of no condemnation. Their position in Jesus is the reason for the standing of no condemnation. [Spurgeon has said,] ‘The most learned men assured us that it is not part of the original text. I cannot just now go into the reasons for this conclusion, but they are very good and solid. The oldest copies are without it, the versions do not sustain it, and the fathers who quoted abundance of Scripture do not quote this sentence.’ We receive this glorious declaration from God’s court: ‘no condemnation.’ We don’t receive it because we don’t deserve condemnation; we certainly do deserve condemnation. We receive it because Jesus bore the condemnation we deserved, and our identity is now found in Him. As He is condemned no more, and neither are we.”

So remember this in case you have friends, relatives, or a ministry who constantly want to bring condemnation upon your life, instead of encouraging you to be more faithful and to trust and faith in His Word. If this is so, then get far from them. That is as clear as I can say it. Get as far away from these condemners as you can. Do not forget, **“Therefore, now NO condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,”** period. Think about it. Why would the Father condemn Jesus after being obedient and faithful to what God called Him to do and Christ volunteered to do. God is not condemning Jesus, so He cannot condemn those who are in Jesus. If God would condemn those who are in Jesus, even though they may fall temporarily, then He is also condemning Christ. There will always be ebbs and flows in your faith walk. There are going to be down times and there are going to be up times. There are going to be times when you have more faith and times you have less faith, because we are still fighting that sinful nature that remains in us. We are still fighting against unseen, invisible forces, whose whole aim is to destroy us with all their schemes and strategies. Yet, if the Father was going to condemn us, He would have to condemn Jesus again; and He is not going to do that. His Son fulfilled the law and He paid the price and penalty for sin and death. If you noticed, the Greek word for ‘condemnation’ in this verse is *katakrima*, which is judgment and separation. So this verse is telling us, **“Therefore now no condemnation,”** no judgment, no separation, and no division between God and us, because Christ Jesus is our mediator. God cannot condemn us, otherwise He would be condemning Christ, and if we walk in the Spirit, we are in Christ, which is part of verse 4. Tell those judgmental, condemning Christians, “Get behind me Satan. If God is not condemning me, you have no business to condemn me. You are speaking as an agent of the devil, not of God, because you cannot show me in God’s Word that you have been elevated to be my condemner.”

Reading on to Romans 8:2, **“For the law of the Spirit of life [not the Law of Moses] in Christ Jesus hath made me free [‘redeemed’ is a better translation] from the law of sin and death.** [The Law of Moses only brought sin and death.] **For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in His likeness of sinful flesh:** [even though He had no sin] **and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. . .**” Now the law could do a lot of things. It could teach you, give you morals, set a standard, and detect sin. This is important; the law could only detect sin, it never did defeat it. Only a sinless one, Christ Jesus, could defeat it. Christ lived it, fulfilled it, and defeated it. That is why nobody could ever keep the law and that is why Jesus so adamantly spoke against the Pharisees and Sadducees, the religious hypocrites of His time. Today we can only receive righteousness through Christ, and we are imputed righteousness through faith. That is the message of Romans 4. We become righteous, or as my mentor used to say ‘righteousified’

through faith. Christ fulfilled all the necessary requirements for our reconciliation back to God by successfully living the law, being sinless, and offered as a sacrifice of a sweet smell savor unto God for our sins, not for His sins. Christ died for our sins, but He was sinless and through that we can have righteousness through Him if we faith in His blood. This is where Romans 8:4 correctly states, ***“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*** There are too many Christians trying to walk by the Spirit in their own power, but it cannot happen in your own power. You must stay attached to the vine of Christ Jesus, then He will use you, mold you, and develop you into the creature that He wants you to be. That is the message of Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. Christ will do these things when you begin walking in the spirit, not after the flesh, and keeping your connection to Christ by faith; and faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God, so keep digging into His Word. This is my answer to all those who would condemn you or me.

Skip down to Romans 8:14. ***“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”*** A better translation of this is *‘the offspring’s of God.’* Tell those condemning you they are also condemning Christ who died for you. They are telling you that you are none of His when His Word says if the Spirit of God leads me, I am His offspring.

Read Romans 8:31, ***“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”*** Some who teach the prosperity doctrine take this verse out of context, but the original Greek says, ***“. . . how shall he not with him also generously pardon us in all things?”*** This is referring to the law, not material things, and tells us we are generously pardoned in ALL things, because there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. If we are believers in Christ by faith, then we are pardoned, otherwise put this Book back on the shelf and start living your own life, because God’s Word is a lie. But God’s Word is not a lie. He has generously pardoned us in all things so verse 33 makes sense. It says, ***“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?”*** I am a part of God’s elect, and believers who are in Christ by faith, are also are called His elect.

Verse 34 asks, ***“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,”*** not Eliphaz, not Bildad, not Zophar, or any of these condemners twisting God’s Word. God will not condemn me, because then He must condemn Christ also, which He will not do. Christ paid the price. Remember the courtroom illustration from a previous chapter. Christ is our defense lawyer and if Job’s story is real, and I believe it is, Satan is looking for any opportunity he can to persuade God to destroy us and turn against us, but Christ is there to say, “No, I have paid the price and here is the defense - my blood.” He intercedes for us.

When reading verse 35, remember *katakrima*; there is no separation, judgment, or division. It says, ***“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, [‘without clothing’ in the original] or peril, or sword?”*** Meaning anything that looks on the outward form, saying we must be doing something wrong because of all the problems we are facing. Too often Christianity presents a life of love, joy, happiness, and prosperity. Yes, it is those things; God is not a cosmic killjoy. However, if you are going through tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, without clothing, peril, or sword,

Christ is there, and there is no condemnation, separation, or division. Do not let these condemners take your circumstances saying you are doing something wrong for God.

Paul concludes in verse 38 and 39, ***“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***

Looking back at verse 37, I will conclude with, ***“Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors through him that love us.”*** Do not let anyone condemn you or make you feel guilty. We are not to be separated from Christ Jesus our Lord because of any individual or circumstance. We are to be ***“more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”*** Believers are in Christ by faith and Christ is in believers by His Spirit. Do not let any judgmental individuals find fault with you to explain why you are experiencing troubles. It is not because you have done something sinful, something you are keeping a secret, or you are not walking in the way of the Lord so now God’s judgment is upon you. God’s judgment cannot be upon us if we abide in Christ. That is what God’s Word says. If He is going to condemn me, He is going to condemn Christ, and He is not going to condemn Christ because Christ fulfilled all that God asked Him to do. We have that wonderful promise that ***“we are more than conquerors.”*** Do not sit guilt stricken, because of some know-it-all sitting in their spiritual pride condemning us. These know-it-alls for Jesus have no concept of what Christ did for us or what His blood meant. He intercedes for both you 16 and me because of His blood without any condemnation.

Remember Romans 8:1, there is no condemnation for the ones that are in Christ Jesus. Do not forget the devil’s methods wanting to bring you under some type of bondage that you must do this or that to remain in Christ. Tell them, “Get behind me Satan. That is where you belong and that is where I want you to stay.” You need faith and trust in His Word so His Spirit is imputed into you, His righteousness will come out, and He will mold you into who He wants you to be. Over all, remain faithful to His Word and keep trusting in Him.

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Please email us at email@teachingfaith.com if this has Encouraged and Strengthened your Faith.

In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it reads, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” The Greek word for cheerful is Hilaros which means when someone is prompt to do something; they are ready in mind, with a

joyful heart. In the Septuagint, it also means to cause to shine. Today I am looking for Hilaros Givers who are ready and full of joy for the opportunity to cause others to shine by hearing, learning, and growing in God's Word. Join with us today and participate as a Hilaros Giver. If you wish to participate, use the following link <http://www.teachingfaith.com/giving>

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