

# LIBERATE PEOPLE FROM THE POWER OF SATAN<sup>1</sup>

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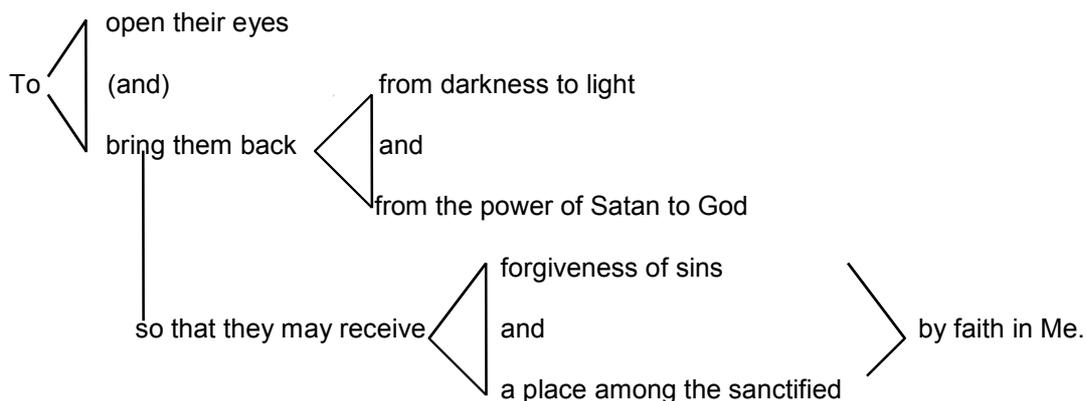
Now let us consider the words of the Lord Jesus that we find in Acts 26:18. Words of Jesus in Acts 26? Yes, for Paul is recounting, years afterward, the encounter he had with Him on the road to Damascus. Here is his story:

- 13 At midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me.  
14 And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads."  
15 So I said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.  
16 But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.  
17 I will deliver you from the people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you,  
18 to open their eyes and to bring them back, from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

Of specific interest to us here is the missionary commission that Paul (he was still Saul) received. I think it is worth mentioning that this commission was given somewhat after the others that have already been discussed. Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15 and Acts 1:8 took place between the resurrection and the ascension, but to commission Paul Jesus returned from Heaven! One other detail deserves special notice—the responsibility that Paul received was primarily concerned with the nations ("Gentiles" is a translation of the same word that in Matthew 28:19 is rendered "nations", and should be understood as 'ethnic nations'). For these reasons it seems to me that this missionary commission takes on a special importance for us, and the more so for whoever is going to do transcultural work. So let us consider this commission in more detail.

## Paul's Missionary Commission

Paul is sent to the nations (defined ethnically), "to open their eyes and bring them back, from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." Let us visualize the structure of the verse so as to understand more clearly the effect of this command:



I rendered the second verb as "bring back" rather than "turn" or "convert" because I take that to be the nuance of the correct Text (there are several variants). It gives the impression that someone is in the wrong place or situation and needs to be returned to the correct one. And now for the main point: the purpose clause introduced by the conjunction "so that" is subordinated to the verbal phrase dominated by the verb "bring back".<sup>2</sup> In other words, before someone can receive forgiveness of sins, even, he must be

<sup>1</sup> This is a chapter taken from a book on the missionary strategies of Christ. It was first written and published in Portuguese; the translation into English is only now being published.

<sup>2</sup> The structure I propose is not transparent in the Greek text, but emerges upon careful consideration.

freed from the power of Satan! Were you aware of that? Well, there it is. Before a person can be saved someone must do something about Satan's influence upon him.

The Lord Jesus had already said the same thing in different words during His earthly ministry. We find it in Mark 3:27. "No one can plunder the strong man's goods, invading his house, unless he first binds the strong man; then he may plunder his house." I have used the definite article with the first occurrence of 'strong man' because the Greek text has it, the point being that this particular strong man has already been introduced in the immediate context. "The strong man" here is Satan. (The Jewish leaders tried to explain Jesus' authority over the demons by saying that He expelled them by the power of Beelzebub, prince of the demons. In His retort Jesus doesn't waste time with that name but uses the enemy's proper name, Satan.)

So then, the Lord Jesus declares that it is impossible to steal Satan's goods unless we bind him first. (From His use of "no one" it seems clear that the Lord is enunciating a general principle or truth.) And what might the nature of those "goods" be? In the context (see Matthew 12:22-24) Jesus had delivered someone from a demon that caused blindness and dumbness, and in their comments the scribes and Pharisees include other instances where Jesus had expelled demons—it seems clear that the "goods" are people who are subject to Satan's power, in one way or another. Thus we have the same essential truth as that declared in Acts 26:18—we have to do something about Satan's power over a person so that he or she can be saved!<sup>1</sup> But what does Satan do to people that makes it necessary to 'bind' him?

We find the answer in 2 Corinthians 4:4. Let us begin with verse 3. "So where our Gospel has actually been concealed, it has been hidden from those who are being wasted, among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn on them." The Text clearly states that Satan, "the god of this world", is in the business of blinding the minds of unbelievers when they hear the Gospel, so they will not understand, so they will not be convicted, so they will not repent and convert. This is a terrible truth, the most terrible truth in the world, at least as I see it. The enemy has access to our minds, access in the sense that he

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a) *ανοιξαι* and *επιστρεψαι* are both transitive verbs such that their Direct Object has the semantic role of Patient, the referent being *εθνων*—the Subject of both verbs is Paul and has the semantic role of Agent.

b) The ellipsis of the Direct Object with the second infinitive argues for a parallel structure; the sense also suggests a parallel structure—which is why most English versions translate it as such.

c) *λαβειν* is superficially a transitive verb, but the Subject is more Beneficiary than Agent, and the Direct Object is not Patient; in any case, the Direct Object of the first two infinitives, *εθνων*, now becomes the Subject; so it seems clear that *λαβειν* is subordinate to *υποστρεψαι*, which is the essential point in my argument.

d) It may be that *επιστρεψαι* is in some sense subsequent to *ανοιξαι*, which would be sufficient reason for avoiding the unmarked parallel structure (i.e. using *και* instead of the article).

<sup>1</sup> I have been asked why Paul himself is not recorded to have done this; and if this is so important why were not the other Apostles told as well. I would say that the other Apostles were indeed told, and three of the Gospels mention it (Matthew 12:29, Mark 3:27, Luke 11:21-2). As for Paul, he did not merely preach and teach, he gave visible demonstrations of God's power (1 Thessalonians 1:5). The first recorded example of his procedure is in Acts 13:6-12. Elymas was presumably demonized, but in any case was being used by Satan to keep Sergius Paulus from the truth. Paul discerned what was involved and took appropriate action, with the result that the proconsul believed, "when he **saw** what had been done". That this was not an isolated case may be seen from Acts 14:3, 16:18, 19:11-20, 2 Corinthians 12:12 and especially Romans 15:18-19. Paul declares that he made the Gentiles obedient "by word and **deed**", "by mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God", and on that basis he claimed to have "fully preached the Gospel of Christ". Which leads to the question of how the other Apostles understood their commission.

Paul did not share with them the advantage of observing the three years of Jesus' ministry at close range. Christ's preaching was inextricably mixed with His healing the sick and expelling demons. He knew exactly what was involved (cf. Luke 13:16). When He sent them out two by two His orders were explicit: "As you go, preach, . . . heal the sick, cleanse lepers, expel demons" (Matthew 10:7-8; cf. Mark 6:7-13 and Luke 9:1-6). In Mark 16:15-18 healing and expelling are expressly included in the Great Commission (I am prepared to demonstrate that verses 9-20 are of necessity the original ending of Mark, and therefore Scripture), and verse 20 affirms that the Lord confirmed their preaching "through the accompanying signs". Hebrews 2:4 repeats that their ministry was characterized by "signs, wonders and various miracles". The Apostles demonstrated the truth of John 14:12, where Jesus affirmed: "he who believes into me, the works that I do he will do also". The Gospel as preached by Jesus and His Apostles was with word and **deed**, miraculous deed, supernatural deed. How about the Gospel we preach?

I wonder sometimes if we evangelicals do not regard the Apostles, especially Paul, as virtually divine. Scripture makes clear that the OT writers did not understand the full implications of what they wrote. They were kept from error while writing, but not when interpreting to themselves what they had written. I see no reason for supposing that the NT writers were treated differently. The Sacred Text itself records some of their failures. Why should we assume that Paul and the others had a full grasp of the complete range of options for spiritual warfare? Certainly no detailed procedure or technique is spelled out in the Bible. Why not? I suggest the following. This area of truth is so powerful that if an infallible procedure had been spelled out in an unmistakable way, Satan and his angels would have been wiped out long since. But that would have frustrated the purpose of God in allowing them to continue in operation even though defeated and with their final destination defined. Also, it seems to be God's purpose that our walk with Him not be easy or automatic—He is a rewarder of those who "**diligently** seek" Him (Hebrews 11:6). Further, to wield the power of God is a demanding privilege; it requires clean hands and a pure heart (James 4:8), it demands humility (James 4:6). God does not give up His secrets to the lazy and uncommitted (Proverbs 25:2).

has the power or ability to invade them, whether by introducing thoughts or by jamming our reasoning. The Lord Jesus had already declared this truth previously, when He explained the parable of the sower. "These are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown; but, as soon as they hear it Satan comes and takes away the word that was planted in their hearts" (Mark 4:15). In the parallel passage in Luke 8:12 Jesus adds the following words: "lest they believe and be saved". Note that the Word is already in the mind or heart of the person, but then Satan comes, invades the mind and "takes away" that word. I am not sure just how this intrusion by the enemy works, perhaps he causes a mental block of some sort, but the practical effect is that the Word becomes ineffective, as if the person had not even heard it.

### *The Strategic Effect*

It seems obvious to me that whoever does not take this truth into account will be condemning himself to produce little effect in the spiritual realm, to work hard and achieve little. And is that not exactly what we see? We preach, we evangelize, we speak and do so much, and yet the results are usually sparse, especially the lasting ones. So much so that we easily become discouraged and think of quitting. Is that not so? But my friend, before preaching or talking did you take the trouble to forbid the enemy's interference in the thoughts of your hearer? If not, what do you expect? It was Jesus Himself, God the Son here in this world, who made it clear that we must bind Satan in order to be able to remove people from his 'house'. We must bind Satan so as to avoid his interference in the minds of those who are being evangelized, as also those who are being taught. (I will explain how to bind Satan later when I discuss the weapons that are at our disposal.) Now then, this 'coin' has two sides: our efficiency and our success depend upon our binding the enemy; but if we **do not** bind him we become his accomplices, because by permitting his interference without doing anything about it we cooperate with him! Can you imagine that? Actually, I suspect that few have in fact so imagined since these truths receive little or no mention in our churches, institutes and seminaries, at least so far. But really, people, the time has come, don't you think?

I went to the Amazon jungle in 1963 in order to begin our ministry among the Apurinã people (along the Purus River in the state of Amazonas, Brazil). So far as I know I was the first one to challenge Satan's dominion over that people, a total domination down through the centuries. My basic purpose in being there was to see if I could remove that people from Satan's house and take them to Jesus' house, if I could transfer them from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. But unfortunately, in spite of a Master of Theology degree and having read the Bible through several times, I was not aware of these truths. I got clobbered! I got it without mercy, until I had had enough. Satan wiped the floor with me. He did not think that my idea was the least bit funny, and I did not know how to defend myself—actually, I did not really understand what was happening. You see, I was skeptical about the activity of the demons. Oh yes, I knew that Satan and the demons exist, because the Bible is clear and emphatic on that score, but I knew very little about how they operate and virtually nothing about the use of our weapons, whether for defense or offense. My theological background, both formal and informal, was strictly 'traditional'—casting out demons and things of that sort was 'pentecostal'. My professors transmitted the idea that a servant of Christ was untouchable or exempt from demonic attack; that sort of thing would not be a problem for us.

Anyhow, I got clobbered. First, my wife and I were attacked—in the mind, in the body. Second, being skeptical on the subject I was not able to hide my skepticism. Such peoples have to deal with demons; that relationship is central to their culture. Since they know that the demons both exist and attack them in various ways, as in fact they do indeed exist and attack, my skepticism disqualified me. I was there proposing to teach them about spiritual truth, about supernatural things, but was obviously ignorant about the central reality of their existence. I lost my credibility. Third, in consequence (of my skepticism and ignorance) I was unable to help or liberate them, giving proofs of Christ's power and therefore of the value of the Gospel, while I was still learning the language and culture (which takes several years).

Fourth, when you finally control the language and culture to the point where you can explain about Jesus—what He is like, what He did, what He taught—then, sooner or later, you will say that He expelled demons and cured the effects of their activity. At last you said something that the people really want to know. (As I have already explained, they 'worship' the demons out of necessity, not because they enjoy it, because they do not know of any benevolent power great enough to free them.) Now you have their attention and can expect this query: "Jesus has power over the demons?!" At this point you have a choice: are you going to say that Jesus **has** power, or that He **had** it? What are you going to affirm? I imagine that you would say, "Yes, He has!" Right? Only at that point a demon will challenge you to your face, attacking someone in the village. So now what do you do? You do not know how to cast out demons, you are skeptical about such things, and yet you affirm that Jesus **has** power over them. If you do not know how to impose the victory and power of Christ in that hour, if you cannot **prove** that Jesus is

greater, then you were just beating your gums. You will be demoralized. You lied! Worse yet, Jesus is demoralized too! Of course—you are His only spokesman in that place and if you cannot demonstrate His power the people will certainly conclude that He does not have such power. Any doubt about that? Well, I got clobbered. I weep when I think on the little that I achieved among the Apurinã people, on behalf of Christ's kingdom, compared with what I could and should have achieved had I understood this missionary strategy of Christ: free the peoples from the power of Satan.

And that is not all. The great majority of the missionaries actually working (and that have already worked) among the animistic peoples of the world are skeptical about these things, like I was. Sadly, our missionary organizations have not concerned themselves about this matter, as a rule. The missionaries are out there suffering, as I did, producing much less effect than they could produce. What a tragedy! What a waste, in every sense of the term! The strategic importance of this matter is tremendous. If one day we reach the point of sending out workers who are adequately prepared in this area and of having churches full of people who know how to conduct spiritual warfare, then we will finish reaching the world. (Even the Islamic world, which I believe to be the most difficult challenge that we face, should be reachable in this way, because they too are troubled by demons.) There is another consequence that is even worse: **evangelical syncretism**.

As evangelicals we do not mind commenting on the syncretism that often follows the Roman Catholic Church, but no one says anything about the syncretism that follows our missionaries. Well, it exists. In June of 1992 I learned of the situation in an indigenous group in the state of Rondônia, Brazil. Missionaries had been there for over 35 years and there had been believers and a church for at least 25. However, to that day, when the villagers performed their ceremonies to pacify the demons the believers also participated (all of them). Since the missionaries did not offer a solution for demonization the believers found themselves obliged to resort to the ancient rites—evangelical syncretism. That is not an isolated case; it is routine!

In April of 1991 I listened to Mark Bubek, author of *The Adversary* and several sequels. He had just returned from Africa where he had addressed a conference of African pastors. The topic had been spiritual warfare. He related that after the standard greetings he started out more or less like this: "My brothers, I am here to ask your forgiveness. In the name of all the American missionaries who came here and preached a Gospel that did not give you a solution to the demons, and so you felt obliged to resort to syncretism, I am here to ask your forgiveness." As one man the 300 African pastors stood up and applauded, for several minutes. Pastor Bubek wept as he spoke, and I wept as I listened. Africa, Asia, Latin America, indeed the world, are full of **evangelical syncretism**.

We have yet to comment upon the last phrase of Paul's commission, "a place among those who are sanctified". I would say that the primary reference of this phrase is to final sanctification, our position in Christ. It happens, however, that it could easily refer to our experience as well, because what Satan and the demons do has a definite influence on our spiritual life and on the effectiveness of our ministry, as well as on our life in general. My how the enemy messes up our lives, spoils our homes, dilutes our efficiency in the work! If we would convince ourselves about the extent of this activity and learn how to handle the spiritual weapons that Christ gives us we could simply transform our lives, our homes and our ministries. The majority of the people that God calls to transcultural mission are defeated by Satan right here—they never get to the field. Of the few, relatively speaking, who do get to the mission field half are removed from the running within four years—they return defeated to their home countries, and never venture out again. Such have been the statistics of modern missions, but I sincerely believe that we can improve the picture dramatically. All we have to do is get serious about this missionary strategy of Christ: liberate people from the power of Satan. It is absolutely necessary that we recognize that **we are at war**.

### *The Spiritual War*

We are in a war whose sphere is universal and which provides the context from which everything we do derives its deepest importance. In Luke 11:23 Sovereign Jesus said: "Whoever is not for me is against me; and whoever does not gather with me scatters". Jesus does not allow neutrality—you are either for or against, one or the other. Either we are gathering or else we are scattering and therefore there is no neutral ground. We may grant that a given object is presumably neutral in itself, but the **use** that we make of it will not be neutral. At the deepest level we either do things with a view to God's kingdom and glory or we do them for some other reason, and be that other reason what it may, it will serve the interests of the enemy. "Whoever does not gather with me, scatters." It follows that everything we do is invested with

importance. Even the ordinary things that we usually do without thinking have consequences in the spiritual realm. We are at war, whether we know it or not and whether we like it or not.

We can state the problem more precisely. Not only are we at war, we are on the front line. That is to say, there is lead flying around on all sides. To walk around on a field of battle without taking due precaution is simply stupid, too stupid; it is to guarantee that you will be hit. The more so when we are precisely the ones who are in the enemy's sights because we belong to Jesus.

One of the principal passages on the spiritual war is Ephesians 6:10-19.

- 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.  
 11 Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.  
 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of the darkness of this age, against wicked spirits in the heavenlies.  
 13 Therefore put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand firm in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.  
 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,  
 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;  
 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.  
 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;  
 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints;  
 19 and for me, . . .

It states plainly that our fight is not against people ("flesh and blood") but against evil spirit beings that are organized in a hierarchy, a veritable army. It speaks of "the wiles of **the devil**"; it speaks of "the fiery darts of **the wicked one**". But I wish to call attention to a crucial detail in verse 12. "Wrestle" is actually a noun in the Greek text, "our wrestling match"—now as you know, wrestling is a very physical, direct, even violent sport. The whole idea is to pin your opponent to the mat! So if you find yourself in a match and do not know how to fight you will certainly be thrown, inescapably. As often as you try to get up you will be thrown down, until you learn. Now then, the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, writing to believers and including himself ("our"), declares that we are in a wrestling match with evil spirits. We, believers. This means that we are attacked by demons every day, attacked and hit—unless you know how to protect yourself. So, do you know how? Most Christians do not, and are constantly defeated—they have never received adequate orientation on the subject. It is urgent that we know the enemy, but first I want to mention another factor.

### *The Guarantee of the Strategy*

In Hebrews 2:14 we find the truth that renders this strategy viable. "Since, then, the children partake of flesh and blood, he also himself [Jehovah the Son] likewise shared in the same things so that through his death he might destroy the one who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Why did Jesus die? To destroy Satan! Did you know that? Well it is true, and He succeeded! Hallelujah! Colossians 2:15, Ephesians 1:20-22 and John 16:11 speak of the defeat suffered by Satan and his angels, the demons. That is why we read that he "had" the power of death (Hebrews was written after Christ's victory). In Revelation 1:18 the glorified Jesus declares: "I have the keys of Death and Hades". Jesus won! It is Christ's victory that guarantees this strategy and makes it viable. We can, yes we can, liberate people from the power of Satan! Shall we go for it? On the way we will be well advised to know the enemy and understand how he operates.

### **Who Is the Enemy?**

It is of interest to any military commander to know as much as possible about the enemy, including about the opposing commander. **The** enemy is Satan. In 1 Peter 5:8 he is expressly stated to be our adversary. "Be sober, be vigilant, because the devil, your adversary, goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." Please note that this word is addressed to believers—we must keep vigilant at all times because Satan is prowling around us just waiting for any carelessness on our part.

As a matter of fact the Bible says a great deal about our enemy. Satan "deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9), he presents himself as "an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14), he is "the tempter" (1 Thessalonians 3:5), "the accuser" (Revelation 12:10), "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4), "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31, 16:11). 1 John 5:19 informs us that "the whole world lies in the wicked one", as though the world is in Satan's arms or on his lap, a graphic figure that speaks of the massive control or influence that he exercises over this world.

The Bible says so much about Satan and the demons, and the Lord Jesus was so clear in His teaching about them, that I cannot understand those Christians, including pastors and theology professors, who affirm that they do not believe in the existence of such beings. If someone wishes to present himself as a follower of Jesus, and all the more so if it be as His **representative**, he should receive what He taught. Otherwise he should be consistent and present himself as a humanist, a marxist or whatever. A warning needs to be sounded at this point: God's people need to be on their guard against the wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15) that infiltrate our churches, beginning with our theological seminaries. This strategy must be dear to the enemy's heart for it has certainly paid off handsomely. "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

### *His Origin*

But who is this Satan? Where did he come from? What is his nature or essence? I believe there are two passages that answer these questions, Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-17. The word in Isaiah is directed against "the king of Babylon" while the word in Ezekiel is against "the king of Tyre". But it happens that the language in both passages becomes such that it cannot be referring to a mere man, no matter what kingdom he ruled. The tenth chapter of Daniel makes perfectly clear that angelic beings are presented as kings and princes of kingdoms and peoples of this world. "The prince of the kingdom of Persia" (Daniel 10:13) has to be a high ranking demon because a mere man would not even know that there was an angel nearby and certainly would not be able to hinder him. (That particular demon was of such high rank that it took the archangel Michael to overcome him so that the first angel could get through to Daniel. Since Persia was the most important empire in the world at that time, it seems logical to me to assume that Satan would entrust his interests in that kingdom to one of his most important lieutenants, say a four star general.) Verse 13 also refers to "the kings of Persia". In verse 20 the angel states that besides the "prince of Persia" he will also have to fight the "prince of Greece". In verse 21 Michael is presented as "your prince"—that is to say, of the people of Israel.

Now let us look at Ezekiel 28. The lament concerning the "king of Tyre" takes up verses 11-19, but it is verses 12-17 that are of special interest for our present purpose:

- 12 Son of man, take up a lament upon the king of Tyre and say unto him: Thus says the Lord GOD: You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
- 13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: sardius, topaz and diamond, beryl, onyx and jasper, sapphire, emerald and carbuncle, and gold; the workmanship of your settings and mountings was prepared in you on the day that you were created.
- 14 You were the anointed cherub that covers, for so I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked among the stones of fire.
- 15 You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created till iniquity was found in you.
- 16 Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I will cast you out of the mountain of God as profane, and I will expel you, O covering cherub, from among the stones of fire.
- 17 Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you have corrupted your wisdom on account of your splendor; I cast you to the earth, I made a spectacle of you before kings.

It is clear that such statements cannot refer to the man who was sitting on the throne of Tyre when Ezekiel penned these words. The personage described was "in Eden"; he had his beauty and perfection "from the day that he was created"; he was the "anointed cherub" and had a very high position and function in Heaven. His position was so high that one day he decided that it was not enough; he became filled with pride and resolved to supplant the very Creator. The account is in Isaiah 14.

The prophecy against "the king of Babylon" occupies verses 4-23, but let us confine our attention to verses 12-15 for the moment:

- 12 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! How you have been cast down to the earth, you who weakened the nations!
- 13 For you said in your heart: "I will ascend to heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the utmost heights of the north;
- 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High."
- 15 But you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Abyss.

The personage we are discussing was called "morning star" (in Hebrew). (That name was translated into Latin as "Lucifer" and came down to us in that form. But "Lucifer" is a has-been. That name refers to what the enemy used to be before his fall. God's people should no longer refer to him by that name—now he is "the devil", or else, Satan.) His crime was that he determined to become "like the Most High". Obviously he did not succeed. How could a created being ever overpower his own creator? He will be "brought down to hell". We are informed in Matthew 25:41 that the Lake of Fire has been prepared precisely for Satan and his angels.

### *His Fall*

Judging from the language of both passages, Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, it appears that the being we now know as Satan was created as the first in the hierarchy of the angelic hosts. He was the most intelligent, the most powerful and probably the most beautiful. His was the highest office among created beings, sort of like God's prime minister. The only One greater than he was the Creator Himself. One day he resolved to usurp the place of the Creator. (There are those who have wondered if it was not the creation of the human being, who is essentially superior to the angelic being, that filled Lucifer with jealousy and spite and lead him to rebel.) He evidently convinced about a third of the original angels (Revelation 12:4) to join his cause. It is hard to understand how such an intelligent being could attempt something so stupid, but he did, and he lost. Lucifer became Satan, the enemy, the leader of the opposition to God (an opposition completely underhanded and perverse). The angels that followed him became the demons, evil spirits who are now active on this earth. We do not know how many there are, but since the number of angels that remained faithful to the Creator is greater than one hundred million (Revelation 5:11) the demons must number **at least** fifty million. What a calamity!

And so what? Well, I would have imagined that when he was defeated and deposed from his functions in Heaven—he still has access before the Throne of God (Job 2:1, Revelation 12:10)—Satan would have been demoted, have lost his rank; he would no longer be the first in the hierarchy of angelic beings. Unfortunately such imaginings are unfounded. Consider verse 9 of Jude (Jude is one of five books that have only one chapter). "Even Michael, the archangel, when he was contending with the devil about Moses' corpse, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said: The Lord rebuke you!" What a strange account! I confess that to this day I have not found a satisfactory explanation for this scene: the two highest ranking angels of the original creation quarreling over a corpse, even if it was **Moses'** corpse! It is truly a perplexing picture. I conclude that Michael, who took over the office once held by Lucifer and now leads God's faithful angels (Revelation 12:7), must have been second in the original angelic hierarchy and remained faithful to the Creator when Lucifer rebelled. However that may be, there are Satan and Michael contending over a corpse. As already stated, I would have thought that Michael would now be greater than Satan, that he could easily overpower him, but no! Instead of ordering Satan off the premises; instead of saying something like—"Get lost, you rascal, I don't even want to see your ugly face!"—he had to be content with saying, "The Lord rebuke you!" Michael was not in a position to impose his will on Satan; he could not say, "I rebuke you". (Now then, what Michael could not do, we can—I will tell that story in a bit.) In other words, Lucifer was created greater than Michael and **continues** to be greater, even though he is now Satan. I am obliged to conclude that Satan did **not** lose his rank. And neither did the other fallen angels—he who was a general, still is; he who was a colonel, still is; he who was a major, still is, and so on. That is why Ephesians 6:12 speaks of "principalities, powers and rulers" and Ephesians 1:21 speaks of "principality, authority, power and dominion"—it is the hierarchy of the officers in the army of the fallen angels. Apparently the fallen angels lost none of their original capabilities, aside from exchanging a predisposition toward good for one toward evil. Because now they are malevolent, perverse, terrible.

### *Consequences for Us*

So what? What does all this have to do with transcultural missions? It has everything to do with it. Please recall what has already been said about Paul's commission, about Acts 1:8, Mark 3:27, 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Mark 4:15. When you try to snatch a people, or a person, from the power of Satan all you have to

face is the most powerful, the most intelligent and now the most malevolent created being in the universe! That is all. Whoever confronts a wild animal without recognizing and respecting the danger that it represents, without knowing how to proceed so as to overpower it, will certainly get the worst of the encounter (as I did!).

I believe this is the place to examine a question that is frequently raised. Why does not God protect His servants? For example, why did He permit that I should be clobbered so much? Well, we have to understand the rules of the game. When He created a type of being capable of making choices, God had to accept the consequences of the choices they would make, as also to oblige them to take those consequences. (Unfortunately we must suffer the consequences not only of our own choices but of those made by others as well. Our life is spent victimizing and being victimized.) God cannot and will not perform a continuous miracle so as to protect me from the consequences of my own ignorance, the more so since it is culpable. The Bible furnishes the basic information that we need to know about the spiritual war. If I close my eyes, if I do not pay attention to the Sacred Text, if I attach more value to my religious culture than to the Word of God, then I must suffer. I deserve it! Why would or should God protect me? In order to encourage my blindness, my stupidity, my idolatry? Not much! As a matter of fact, I understand that God permitted my defeat precisely to get my attention, to make me open my eyes and research the subject. What you are reading is the result, what I have learned so far.

Another question comes to the fore. What about Christ's victory? Was Satan not defeated? Yes he was, completely (Colossians 2:15). So, how come he is still such a threat to us? For His own sovereign reasons (which He has not explained) God permits that Satan and the demons continue their activity in this world, even though they have been defeated and their final destination defined. They are bluffing, pretending that nothing happened. ('Bluffing' is not really satisfactory because the enemy still has his power; perhaps 'impostor' or 'usurper' would come closer. Satan is now a false pretender to the throne of this world.) It is up to us to call their bluff. It is up to us to oblige them to respect Christ's victory. As long as no one calls his bluff the enemy keeps on 'winning'.

It is time to wake up, folks. It is time to take appropriate action, people. It is time to stop suffering unnecessarily! To that end we need an adequate understanding of how the enemy operates.

### **How do Satan and the Demons Operate?**

Let us go directly to the Sacred Text. We will begin with Luke 9:18-22:

- 18 It came to pass that as He was alone praying His disciples came to Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the multitudes say that I am?"  
 19 Answering they said, "John the Baptist; others say, Elijah; still others say that one of the ancient prophets has resurrected."  
 20 He said to them, "But you, who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."  
 21 Warning them He ordered them not to tell anyone, saying,  
 22 "It is necessary that the Son of man should suffer many things, that he be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes, that he be killed and that he rise from the dead on the third day."

I wish to call attention to the grammatical structure of this passage. Note the present participles: 'answering', 'warning' and 'saying'. The effect of this structure is to signal continuous action. Verses 18-22 contain a single conversation. Having registered this fact let us move to the parallel passage in Matthew 16:13-23, which gives us some more detail. Rather than transcribe the whole thing I will just comment on the added details. In verse 16 Peter answers, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God", to which He responds, "You are blessed, Simon, son of Jonah, because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father who is in Heaven" (verse 17). Skipping to verse 21 we have Jesus' declaration that He must suffer and die. With that Peter began to rebuke Him: "Far be it from you, Lord; this shall never happen to you!" (verse 22). To which initiative Jesus answered, "Get behind me, Satan! . . ." (verse 23).

Well, that scares me; that sends shivers up my spine. Within three minutes, or five at the most (we saw in Luke that this was a single conversation), Peter spoke two times. The first time it was God who put the words in Peter's mouth. It was Jesus Christ, God the Son on earth, who explained the true nature of the transaction—Peter did not speak on his own but moved by the Father. So far so good; that God can do something like that comes as no surprise. It is the second time that is bothersome because this time it was Satan who put the words in Peter's mouth! Again, it is Jesus Christ, God the Son on earth, who explains the true nature of the transaction. When He uses the enemy's proper name, Satan, His meaning

is inescapable. It really was Satan. Once again we are face to face with the most terrible truth that there is in this life, at least as I see it. The enemy has access to our minds, he can put words in our mouths. I wish in the worst way that it was not true, but my wishes do not change reality.

### *They Attack our Minds*

When I finally awakened to this truth I began to understand several things that used to happen to me. More than once I would be talking with someone, a serious conversation about the things of God, when all of a sudden words would come from my mouth that were simply unacceptable, words that destroyed the situation. As soon as I had spoken I knew it was bad, but it was too late; the other person would turn his back and leave. I was left dismayed and perplexed. How could I say something like that? Note well, it was not something I had been thinking about, that had been in my mind; no, I became aware of it only after I had spoken. For years I never found an answer, I could not figure out what happened to me, but now I know. Some demon put those words in my mouth, and since I did not realize such a thing was possible I fell into the trap. Now that no longer happens to me. Now I know how to defend myself.

I know. You do not like this idea, you do not want to accept it. Let us go slowly. Maybe you yourself never experienced anything like I just described but perhaps you have observed the following. It is routine, you can virtually count on it; in any meeting where the progress of the work is being handled (be it of the deacons, elders or trustees; of the board of a mission or a school; of a presbytery, synod or conference; in short, be it a small or large gathering) you can observe the following. Everything is going well, the blessed communion of the saints seems to be functioning, when all of a sudden someone says something he shouldn't, gratuitously, to no good purpose. The climate of the meeting is ruined; you may as well go home for all the constructive progress that will now be made. Have you never seen that happen? I bet you have; it is routine. You can even call that person aside, after the meeting, and ask: "Tell me, please, why did you ever say that?" And if he is sincere, as he often is, he may answer something like this: "To be perfectly frank with you, I don't know!" And it will be the truth, for he was simply an instrument in the hand of the enemy—a demon put those words in his mouth, and that was it!

Some 30 years ago a certain young pastor was taking a linguistics and missiology course in Brazil (I was the academic director). About the second week I observed that he was walking with his head down, apparently very discouraged. So I asked if anything was wrong and if I could help. His answer went something like this: "Oh Dr. Wilbur, you know that I am a university student, that I have always enjoyed studying, have always gotten good grades. But since I came here it seems like my head is full of cotton—I can't retain anything; during a whole lecture I can't take a single note; if there is a pop quiz I hand in a blank piece of paper. It is no good, I've had it; I am going home." Whereat I said, "It seems to me that you are being demonized; you have a mental block caused by a demon. But we have 'medicine' for that sort of thing, so here goes!" Right there on the sidewalk I rebuked that demonic interference in the authority of Christ, also forbidding any recurrence. From then on he was able to study normally, caught up and finished with good grades. That sort of interference in our minds is very common. Have you ever wondered why your mind went blank while you were taking a test, or standing in the pulpit?

Nor should we forget the "sifting" that Peter suffered (Luke 22:31). As a direct result of that satanic invasion in his mind Peter reached the point of denying the Lord Jesus, in fact the first time was right in front of John (John 18:16-17)! (The difference between Peter and Judas was that Jesus prayed for Peter—Luke 22:32.)

### Against prayer

You still do not like it? You are still resisting the idea? Then let us think about prayer. Please tell me, when you set yourself to pray, to intercede, to really seek God's face (let us say when you plan to spend at least fifteen minutes), does everything go well? Are you able to concentrate your thoughts in prayer without problem? I bet not. Don't your thoughts wander? All of a sudden you think of a conversation you had, about an unfinished job, about something that happened six months ago—no? Let us analyze this together. Your thoughts were concentrated on God, right? You did not have idle thoughts that were free to go looking for those things. So where did they come from? Is it not obvious? It was demonic interference in your mind. Those extraneous thoughts do not have to be dirty or vile—if our thoughts are diverted away from prayer then the enemy has achieved his objective.

We need to understand something else about prayer. As soon as we start to pray we enter the spiritual sphere and with that the enemy gets busy. It is primarily in prayer that we wage spiritual war and the

enemy feels a direct threat. So he goes into immediate action to distract us. You can put this down: no one remains alone when he prays—the moment you begin to pray in a serious way you will be ‘covered’ or opposed by at least one demon (depending on how dangerous the enemy thinks you are). This opposition may take various forms. If it is not extraneous thoughts it is sleepiness. (When I was a boy we had a sure cure for insomnia. If I could not sleep my mother would say, "Just pray and you will go right to sleep". Sure enough! I would start praying and in a few minutes I was snoring. Counting sheep isn't in it.) If it is not sleepiness it is discouragement, or your mind goes blank or you feel fear. A homemaker finds a few moments and kneels to pray, and guess what happens. The telephone has not rung for a week but now it will not stop. She has not had any visitors for the longest time but at that exact moment the doorbell sounds. The children were playing quietly but all of a sudden a loud fight breaks out. If there are any dogs in the neighborhood they all start barking. Is that not so? Remarkable, don't you think? We are at war, friend, we are at war!

Nor should we forget the case of Daniel (Daniel 10:12-13). As a direct consequence of demonic interference the answer to his prayer was delayed for three weeks. The angels are also involved in the war and apparently it is not always easy going for them either.

### Against life

The access that the enemy has to our minds can have drastic consequences. Consider the case of Ananias in Acts 5. Let us review the context. "The multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. . . . Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need" (Acts 4:32-35). That was the situation that gave rise to the case of Ananias. Please stop here and read Acts 5:1-10.

As Peter explains, they did not have to bring anything; or they could bring half, if they wished, as long as they did not claim it was everything. Their problem was that they lied, wishing to receive credit as if they had brought the full amount. The Apostle Peter affirms that it was Satan (again the proper name is used) who placed the idea in Ananias' mind, or heart. What was the result for Ananias? Death. Right? This is really heavy, people! A little later in comes the wife: "Is that the way it was, Sapphira?" "That is right." Flop—she died on the spot! This access that the enemy has to our minds can result in physical death—recall that he "had the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14) and by bluffing (or usurping) he continues to do virtually as he pleases. I suspect that we might go into shock if we knew how many people have died as a direct result of demonic activity. But that is not the worst of it. Consider the case of Judas.

In John 13:2 we read: "Supper being ended, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him . . ." While in John 13:27 we read: "After the morsel Satan entered into him [Judas]. Then Jesus said to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.'" (Cf. Luke 22:3.) The idea of betraying Jesus was put in Judas' heart by the devil. But at the crucial moment Satan, by name, "entered" into him, took control of him to guarantee that he would execute it. What was the result for Judas? Physical death, because a little later, overtaken by remorse (not repentance, which is different), he hanged himself. What further result did he receive? Spiritual death, because while praying to His own Father Jesus said, "Those whom you gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12). Note also Matthew 26:24: "The Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." Judas was lost!

Too often we do not stop to really reflect upon what God caused to be written. We tend to look down on Judas, don't we? We only have bad things to say about him. But does he really deserve so much revulsion? That same night, there in the upper room, at a certain point Jesus became distressed in spirit and declared: "Most assuredly I say to you that one of you will betray me!" At that the disciples looked at each other, not knowing to whom He was referring, and in perplexity began to ask, one by one, "Lord, is it I?" "Lord, is it I?" Jesus answered, "It is one of the twelve who dips with me in the dish." Then Judas asked, "Rabbi, is it I?" To which Jesus responded, "You said it". Evidently the others were still confused because Peter signaled to John to ask who it was. So John leaned back on Jesus and asked, "Lord, who is it?" He answered, "It is the one to whom I will give the dipped morsel." Then, dipping the morsel He gave it to Judas. At that Satan entered him and Jesus said, "What you are going to do, do quickly". I must confess that what follows surprises me, because we read: "Now no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him; because Judas was the treasurer some of them supposed that Jesus had told him,

'Buy what we need for the feast', or that he should give something to the poor." (See Matthew 26:21-25, Mark 14:18-21 and John 13:21-30.)

Frankly, that account surprises me. Recall that during two years the twelve disciples had walked together, eaten together, slept in the same place. The point is, there was no way Judas could deceive the others as to his character and personality. In church, on Sunday, we can act very pious and deceive those who only see us in that context, but those who live with us or work with us know the truth. So then, I would have expected that as soon as Jesus said, "One of you will betray me", the others would look at Judas out of the corner of their eye and say, "I knew it!" Don't you think? If Judas had been different, not of the same spirit, the others would certainly have perceived it. But the Sacred Text is very clear: not one of the others even imagined that it could be Judas; so much so that even after Jesus had clearly declared **twice** that it was Judas, it did not register. It seems that they just could not believe that it would be Judas. I am obliged to conclude that until that day he had been an exemplary disciple, perhaps even better than some of the others. To be treasurer is a sign of confidence, isn't it? (John's editorial comment, given in 12:6, was presumably based on hindsight.) Judas was like the rest, until the day that Satan invaded him. Help!

The enemy's interference in people's minds not only can result in physical death, it can also result in spiritual death. Judas is not the only one. If it were just Judas, perhaps we could dismiss it—after all, Judas! Alas, no! We have already seen from 2 Corinthians 4:4 (also Mark 4:15 and Luke 8:12) that multitudes are going to hell as a result of Satan's interference in people's minds. (Since he is not omnipresent he works through a chain of command, using his angels, the demons.) This is a most serious matter—anything that results in the salvation of the soul, or the forfeiting of that salvation, is of maximum importance. To close our eyes to this issue is treason against our King.

#### Other evidences

I know, you still do not like it. Well, let us look at the Text some more. In 2 Corinthians 11:3 we are informed that "the serpent" (Satan) corrupts our minds; in the context it is the minds of **believers**. That is the interference in our thoughts. In James 3:2-12 we find a very interesting description with respect to our thesis.

- 02 In many things we all stumble. If anyone does not stumble in word the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.
- 03 Behold, we put bits in horses' mouths so that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.
- 04 Behold also the ships; though they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder, wherever the pilot wills.
- 05 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a matter a little fire kindles!
- 06 The tongue also is a fire, a world of iniquity; that is how the tongue is among our members, defiling the whole body and setting on fire the whole course of our existence, being itself set on fire by hell.
- 07 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and marine animal can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind;
- 08 but the **tongue** can no man tame, incorrigible evil that it is, full of deadly poison!
- 09 With it we bless God, even the Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God.
- 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.
- 11 Does a spring send forth from the same opening both sweet water and bitter?
- 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? Likewise no spring can give both salt water and fresh.

We know that in nature a spring never gives both sweet and bitter water, alternately; it is not possible. But let us imagine that one day we came across such a spring: one minute the water was sweet, the next it was bitter, and so on. How could we explain such a thing? There would have to be two sources or veins feeding the spring, and they would have to meet just under the surface, taking turns. This is just what God's Word affirms happens with our mouths: first blessing and then cursing proceed from them. How can this be? In fact, the language in verses 2, 6 and 8 could strike us as peculiar—not to offend in word is to be perfect; the tongue contaminates the body and inflames the course of life; the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, an incorrigible evil, a deadly poison! How can we explain such language? Whatever is going on? I believe that the answer may be found at the end of verse 6.

What are we to understand when the Text says that the tongue "is set on fire by hell"? At the very least it must mean that the tongue receives its capacity or ability to inflame from "hell", and therefore owes its

inflammatory activity to "hell". But who or what is "hell"? I believe this is an instance of metonymy (a figure of speech where a word is used in place of another which is intimately associated with it). With whom is hell most closely associated? With Satan, since it has been prepared precisely for him and his angels (Matthew 25:41). I take it that this passage attributes a large share of the damage that results from the wrong use of the tongue to the activity of Satan and the demons, influencing the thinking and speaking of human beings. To be sure, we can make wrong use of our tongues all by ourselves, no doubt about it, but the language of the Text demands a further explanation. There are two sources contributing to our speech, our own will and malignant interference. Be not deceived!

When you find yourself beside a stranger on a bus, train or plane, do you find it hard to converse with him? Say about the weather, fashions, politics or sports? Well, an introvert would presumably have difficulty, but most of us have little or no trouble. But if you shift the topic of conversation and start to talk about Jesus, then what happens? Do you speak as freely as you were? As a matter of fact, no. Correct? Don't you feel fear, get nervous, your mind goes blank, your palms get clammy? Why, do you suppose? Where does that fear come from? In 2 Timothy 1:7 we read: "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love and of self-control." It goes on to say, "therefore do not be ashamed of testifying to our Lord." The spirit of fear that attacks us when we want to witness about Christ does not come from God. The Text is clear. So where does it come from? Whose interest does it serve if we do not talk about Christ? Is it not obvious? When a believer finds it hard to talk about Jesus, instead of calling him a coward and loading him with guilt we should first rebuke the spirit of fear. Obviously we can be cowards without demonic assistance. Of course. Still, you may be sure that many times we are attacked by an evil spirit.

Then there are those terrible nightmares. Often the person feels that he is being suffocated. (Actually, 400 years ago the word 'nightmare' referred precisely to a demon that came and suffocated people while they slept.) If the demons can attack our minds while we are awake, how much more so while we are asleep and helpless (protection does exist—we must forbid any such interference before going to sleep; we can do this for others as well as for ourselves). Besides what happens in the mind, sometimes you can feel, or even see, an evil presence in the room.

Surrounded as we are by the practice of spiritism of every sort (the criminal practices of satanists are getting more and more attention in the news media; more and more movies deal with the occult; go to the library of your local high school and just see how many books on occult practices are available to the students; the growing 'New Age' movement has significant components of spiritism; converted spiritists/satanists declare that they have infiltrated our churches, our schools, the whole society to an alarming extent), it becomes hard to understand how there can be disciples of Jesus who still do not believe in the existence of the demons, and in their activity, including an interference in our minds. I would not be surprised if in a not too distant future almost the only people to remain skeptical about these things will be the members of certain protestant churches. What a tragedy!

### The charismatic gifts

Another area where the enemy takes advantage of the access which he has to our minds is falsifying the gifts of the Spirit. The damage that he does in this area is terrible! The Lord Jesus said in John 10:10, "the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy". Well, there is a thief in the 'sheepfold'. Alas for the wreckage! Now then, let us proceed calmly—I know that this is a controversial subject which tends to call forth more heat than light—let us proceed calmly, very calmly. I ask that the reader not jump to conclusions about my position, thereby closing his mind. Let us see if we can manage to humble ourselves before THE WORD OF GOD.

The use of the word 'falsify' necessarily implies that the genuine article exists—you cannot imitate a non-existent something. If Satan falsifies or imitates the gifts of the Spirit it is because they exist. Consider 1 Corinthians 13:8-12.

08 Love never fails; but as for prophecies, they will pass; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass;

09 for we know and prophesy only in part.

10 But when the perfect comes, then the "in part" will pass away.

11 (When I was a child I spoke like a child, I understood like a child, I thought like a child; but when I became a man I put away childish ways.)

12 For now we see in a [metal] mirror, dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully even as I am fully known.

The key to the proper interpretation of this passage is furnished by the temporal adverbs "when" and "then". To begin, we note that the reason given in verse 9 for the ceasing or passing of the gifts mentioned in verse 8 is that they are "in part". Those gifts are deficient in that they are partial, and therefore imperfect. Now let us look carefully at verse 10. **When** "the perfect" comes, **then** the "in part" will pass away. What we have to know is whether "the perfect" has already come—right?—because only then will the "in part" pass. To whom or to what might "the perfect" refer? It cannot be the completed Canon of the Bible because in that case the "in part" would refer to the Old Testament, which certainly has not "passed away" yet. Nor will it, for we read in Psalms 119:89: "Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." (If I wanted to be difficult I would suggest that the "in part" would also include the New Testament books written before 1 Corinthians, or even before Revelation!)<sup>1</sup>

The solution is in verse 12. (Verse 11 is parenthetical—in the Greek text the "when" of this verse is different from that of verse 10.) Can we say that the "now" of verse 12 has already passed? Would any of us venture to say that he no longer sees "dimly", that he has perfect understanding? Should he dare to do so he would be contradicted by the Text, for it continues, "**Then** face to face". What is the antecedent of "then"? It is the same as that of the "then" in verse 10, namely, "when the perfect comes". So, when will we see "face to face"? When will we know fully just as we are fully known? The answer is in 1 John 3:2. "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." It is when Jesus returns that we will see "face to face". Since He has not returned yet the gifts are still with us. Okay?<sup>2</sup>

The gifts of the Spirit exist, but to deal with them requires **discernment**. As already mentioned, God has allowed me to minister in all sorts of churches, including many that recognize the gifts. I have also visited many others. I have observed something disquieting: there is much lack of discernment in the use of the gifts. Satan's thing is to be like God (Isaiah 14:14). So then, if God gives prophecy, so does Satan; if God gives tongues, Satan does too; if God gives healing, Satan ditto. How many false prophecies there have been! How many lives have been ruined by them!

False prophecies are of two types: pre-arranged and demonic. The pre-arranged ones have nothing to do with a demon; they come from people who want to manipulate others, abusing their confidence and exploiting their lack of spiritual discernment. Such prophecies may cause some damage, but demonically inspired ones are much worse—they always harm their victims. Frequently they have to do with a person's private life—"Jack is to marry Jill" and things of the sort. (Many in Brazil know of the case of the leader of a certain spiritual renewal movement; he received a 'prophecy' saying that he should marry a certain sister of that church—only he was already married, as was she! They left their legitimate spouses and got married. And that was the end of a servant of Christ—he later committed suicide!) We cannot be too careful, friends. I would never accept a prophecy directed to me without checking with the Holy Spirit immediately, I myself, to know if it came from Him. Actually, I would normally expect God to tell me directly that which pertains to me. However, He might well make use of prophecy to confirm something He had already told me, or perhaps to jog me if I am not paying attention. I must say that I doubt the legitimacy of depending on a 'prophet' or 'prophetess' to receive direction for each day. Whoever has the Holy Spirit should be guided directly by Him—any believer may, and should, discern the will of God for his own life (provided he is a true disciple).

The gift of an unknown tongue (i.e. a language unknown to the one who receives it) also may be genuine or falsified. The falsified gift is of two types: feigned and demonic. In churches that teach that the gift of tongues is the **necessary** evidence of the 'baptism in the Spirit' the feigned gift is very frequent. The believers are placed under great pressure; until they speak in tongues they are second class citizens, if

<sup>1</sup> Now and again one hears the argument that the expression "that which is perfect" is neuter in gender (in the Greek text), which is true, and therefore does not refer to Christ, but rather to the Canon. However, it is also true that no vocabulary item normally used to refer to the Sacred Text (like 'word', 'scripture' or even 'canon') is neuter in gender either; they all are either masculine or feminine. So by the same reasoning "that which is perfect" cannot refer to the Canon either. It is necessary to note that the opposite expression, "that which is in part", is also neuter in gender, but it refers precisely to "prophecy", "tongues" and "knowledge"—each one of which is feminine in gender! What we have is a Greek idiom—expressions like "the perfect" or "the in part" are normally in the neuter no matter what the gender of the referents. In any case, "the perfect" could refer to the whole package represented by Messiah's return to reign over this earth.

<sup>2</sup> One often hears or reads the affirmation that the 'miraculous' gifts ceased with the Apostles, that they were a phenomenon limited to the first century. But that is a matter of historical record. We have documents written by the early Church Fathers: one or two from the first century, a dozen or so from the second, many more from the third, even more from the fourth, etc. I invite the interested reader to check out those documents with attention. He will discover that those early Christian authors attest the presence of the miraculous charismatic gifts in the second century, in the third, in the fourth (at that point the amount of material is so large that I stopped reading). Who in our time is competent to show that all those eyewitnesses were mistaken?

indeed they are citizens at all. They become distressed: "What does the Holy Spirit have against me that He won't baptize me? Why did He baptize the other person but not me? Can it be that I am not even saved, that God doesn't want me?" Many cannot stand such pressure and wind up pretending. I am a linguist; I know when someone is pretending—it is usually an endless repetition of a limited number of syllables, which almost always come from the person's mother tongue (such persons generally lack the linguistic sophistication to invent different syllables).<sup>3</sup>

To fake the gift solves the problem of being seen as inferior—since many others are also faking it, and since the leaders accept it, it works—but it does not solve the basic problem (the person knows that he is pretending and that the Spirit has done nothing). What is more, God never lies or accepts a lie; inevitably any lie brings spiritual harm to the liar. If this is true at the personal level, just imagine how much spiritual damage results when the whole church embraces a lie! But that doctrine (that tongues is the necessary sign of the baptism) has a more serious consequence. People become desperate and want a 'tongue' at any price, without worrying about the source (where the spiritual climate is such there seems to be little discernment, apparently, and they do not guard against the demonic 'gift'). Some people receive a real language—it has phonological and grammatical structure (and semantic too, for those who understand it)—only it is demonically inspired.

On several occasions I have witnessed the manifestation of a demonic tongue in a service—it usually comes at the climax of the message, or at some other point when God is really moving, and destroys the atmosphere—but I have yet to see the one who was directing the service rebuke that malignant interference. How can this be? (At times somebody present may have discernment, but the prevailing climate in the church is such that he lacks the courage to stand up and protest.) To deal with the gifts of the Holy Spirit demands **discernment**. Where it is lacking Satan has a picnic, he goes on a roll, and the resulting damage to the cause of Christ is incalculable.

The genuine gift also exists, without doubt, but God will never give the same gift to everybody. It seems to me that the Sacred Text is sufficiently clear on that score. The basic passage is in 1 Corinthians 12.

04 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

05 And there are different ministries, but the same Lord.

06 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who works all in all.

07 The manifestation of the Spirit is given to **each one** for profit.

08 For to one is given the word of wisdom, by the Spirit; to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit;

09 to another faith, by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing, by the same Spirit;

10 to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 It is one and the very same Spirit who works all these things, distributing as He wills to each one his gift.

Frankly, the Text is quite clear: the Spirit does not give the same gift to everyone. It would not make sense. Verses 4 and 5 may suggest some connection between gift and ministry, which seems logical enough. Since we have differing ministries our gifts should correspond to them. Beginning with verse 12 the apostle uses the figure of the diverse members of a body, with their distinct functions. Can you imagine a body made up only of tongue, a tremendous, monstrous tongue? Can you? The finishing touch is supplied in verses 29-30 (1 Corinthians 12), which we may be used to reading like this: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets?" etc. As it stands a negative response is evidently called for (are you an apostle?), but the Greek text is clear; a negative response is required. We may legitimately translate as follows: "Are all apostles? No. Are all prophets? No. . . . Do all speak in tongues? No." It is a clear declaration that all do not have the same gift.

Dear people, we could avoid the excesses of both sides if we would obey the commands in 1 Corinthians 14:39 (since the Author brings the main biblical treatment, three chapters' worth, of the charismatic gifts to a close in this way, this must be His intention). "Wherefore, brethren, earnestly desire prophecy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues." One side blatantly disobeys the second command, forbidding any manifestation of tongues and even denying the existence of the gift since the apostolic age; it also disobeys the first command, since far from "desiring" the gift of prophecy (to desire it "earnestly" is out of

<sup>3</sup> In answer to this some claim that the language is 'angelic' and therefore does not obey the rules of normal language. But does not that insult the angels? Surely they could do better than that pitiful sequence of sounds. And without mouths and tongues they evidently do not communicate using sound.

the question) it denies its existence too. But the other side also has difficulty with these commands. Far from "not forbidding" the gift of tongues, it reaches the point of **requiring** it. Instead of desiring prophecy, or "the best gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31), it emphasizes the least of the gifts elevating it above the others. (To say that one is being humble before God, and man, by asking for the least of the gifts will not work, because that would be disobedience to a divine order—that is not humility, it is rebellion.) Friends, our spurious polarization only helps the enemy. Let us return to the Sacred Text. Let us bow to the Word of God. The worship of our own ideas and traditions is a form of idolatry. Idolatry is idolatry!

A word about the "gift of healing". In 1 Corinthians 12:9 the Text does not say "the gift of healing" but "gifts of healings"; we might translate it "charismatic healings". I know a number of brethren through whose ministries miraculous healings occur (they really do), but I never heard tell of anyone who could heal **all**. If **the** gift of healing existed then whoever had it could heal everybody, indiscriminately. But that does not happen. (Sometimes a brother who sees miraculous cures occur through his ministry gets carried away and begins to think that all he has to do is lay on hands and pray—when nothing happens there can be various negative consequences, some quite far-reaching.) As the Sacred Text says, some people receive divine presents of healing, some more some fewer.

Since our underlying concern is missionary strategy, I do not want to pass up the command that we find in 1 Corinthians 12:31, "seek earnestly the best gifts". It is an **order** not an optional point. Do you suppose we are obeying this command? I have to say, "No". Otherwise there would not still be some 1,000 ethnic nations without a spokesman for Christ. The point is that the best gift of all is the gift of apostleship: "first, apostles; second, . . . third, . . ." (1 Corinthians 12:28). If everyone asked for the gift of apostleship then the ones that God chose would be sent to the unreached ethnic peoples of the earth. Pioneer missionary work is essentially an apostolic work. Whoever takes the Gospel to an ethnic group for the first time is the apostle of Jesus Christ to that nation. Verse 11 (1 Corinthians 12) makes clear that the Holy Spirit distributes the gifts according to His own sovereign will; we may ask (we are commanded to ask), but we will not necessarily receive it. Not everybody will be an apostle, nor should they be. However, if everyone asks, then God can make the best choices and every nation will be disciplined. Now if that prospect doesn't turn you on, what will!?

### *They Influence Physical Objects*

Returning to the subject of the enemy's activity, he not only attacks people's minds, he also attacks their bodies. Whoever reads the Bible with even a little attention will be aware of this truth. One thinks of Job. It was Satan, by name, who caused the boils all over Job's body (Job 2:7). He it was who sent Sabaeans, Chaldeans, fire and wind to make an end of Job's goods and children (Job 1:12-19). Paul called his physical problem "the messenger of Satan" (2 Corinthians 12:7).<sup>4</sup> One day Jesus cured a woman who had "a spirit of infirmity eighteen years" and said that it was Satan who had bound her (Luke 13:11-16).

Physical problems are repeatedly linked to demonic activity: Matthew 8:16, 10:1 and 12:22; Mark 1:26, 5:2-13 and 9:17-27; Luke 6:18, 7:21 and 8:2; Acts 5:16 and 8:7, among other passages. I have personal knowledge of many cases, including in my own family. Without question there is illness that is of organic origin; a case of malaria will not be cured by trying to expel a demon. It is equally true that a problem that is of demonic origin will not be solved with medicines. It is also possible to have a mixture of symptoms of both origins. One case had me going round and round for two and a half years. There was an organic problem that caused certain symptoms, but a demon complicated the issue introducing other symptoms. I would rebuke the demon but the relief was only partial; the person would take medicine and again the relief was only partial. It was necessary to move adequately on both fronts.

We really must understand that demons do indeed influence physical objects. We suffer a good deal, uselessly, when we do not pay attention to this fact. For example, it is common to have problems with the lighting or the public address system during large evangelistic meetings, which can be solved by rebuking the enemy's interference (only too often they **are not** solved because those involved do not understand what is happening). Any believer who was once a spiritist, the more so if he was a medium, can give emphatic testimony to the fact of demonic interference in objects: doors slam without wind, electric appliances work without being plugged in, objects move without visible cause, strange sound effects, etc.

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<sup>4</sup> I have been asked why Paul did not repel this satanic attack on his body. It is possible that he tried, but God was using this attack to keep Paul from getting puffed up because of the revelations he had received. He pleaded with God for relief three times, but God said no.

It is not superstition; it is plain fact. We have experienced demonic interference in a computer! (Just think about the implications of that for a minute.)

I heard the following account from a missionary who used to work with an indigenous tribe in Rondônia, Brazil. He and a colleague were in a hut less than a kilometer from the village. One afternoon a man came and said: "You had better get out of here, because tonight the shaman is going to tell the demons to make that huge tree fall on this house and kill you; run for your lives!" They thanked the man for his goodwill but decided to stay. They went to their knees and prayed all night, crying to God for protection. Near dawn there was a sudden wind storm that felled precisely that huge tree, only it fell to one side without touching the hut. The noise of the crash went reverberating through the jungle and presently the people came running to see the result. Imagine their surprise when they found the two men safe and sound! From that day onward that people began to take the Gospel seriously because they had seen proof that the power of God was greater than that of the evil spirits. Although God protected His servants, the demons did in fact fell that big tree. Since neither a warning nor specific prayer is always forthcoming we are frequently harmed. We are at war, whether we know it or like it or not. To wander on a battlefield without taking due precaution is really too stupid!

### *Temptation to Evil*

I make a distinction between the types of interference already discussed and temptation to do evil. Those hit us directly and effectively but without our perceiving or understanding it (many times). Temptation is something that is presented to our conscious mind, as an option. If the Lord Jesus was tempted by Satan (see Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13), we need not think that we will escape. I am sure there is no need to belabor this point since presumably everyone recognizes that he suffers temptation. Which makes 1 Corinthians 10:13 a precious promise. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." That is to say, the way out exists, but we do not always use it.

We need to pay attention to the truth stated in James 1:13. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God', for God cannot be tempted with evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone." The Text is very clear, God **never** tempts us to do evil. So then, when we are tempted we don't need to hesitate even one second—there is no need to roll it around on your tongue or wonder if maybe it comes from God—we should reject the idea immediately, knowing that it cannot be from God and therefore must be from the enemy. It is not smart to play with fire.

### *Implications*

If we would wake up, really and truly, to how much the demons interfere with our lives, we could simply transform them, provided we also learned how to use the weapons that the Lord Jesus puts at our disposal. However, two warnings are in order: first, not to see a demon behind every bush and under every stone; second, not to blame the enemy for everything bad that we do. Sometimes when a person wakes up to these truths he goes overboard and starts seeing demons in everything. That is not the case—there must be **discernment**. Others think they can avoid responsibility for their own sins. It will not work—we are sinners by choice and God will hold us accountable. I, all by myself, without help from anyone, am capable of thinking or doing all sorts of evil. I was born with a tendency to sin. Even in the things that we do under malignant influence we have a share of the blame and must give an accounting to God.

Still and all, having made those allowances I again insist that we are attacked in a wide variety of ways, we believers. Recall that Ephesians 6:12 says that **we** are in a wrestling match against wicked spirits. (Have you ever watched a wrestling match? Kind of physical, isn't it?) What happens out there in the world probably exceeds our wildest imaginings. The extent of demonic involvement in the suicides, the violence, the crime, the immorality, the drug scene, the homosexual scene, the rock, the pornography, etc. that characterize our society has never been told.

One other thing: we may be attacked indirectly. The enemy moves someone to write a letter, send an email or to phone and the message distresses us. We are put in a turmoil through another person and do not discern the true source of the attack. Another thing that the enemy likes to do is attack a child to get at the parents, and it works very well. If my son comes down with a strange illness this will obviously distract

and preoccupy me, and my ministry will suffer; to say nothing of the time and money that are spent without result. Watch out for indirect attacks.

I have spent all this time talking about the enemy **not** in order to build him up, and much less to worship him, but so that God's people will wake up and realize the extent of the danger that we face. If you take on a tiger without respecting the danger that he represents, without knowing how it is done, you will lose. I do not know about you, but personally I am tired of 'losing'. Enough! We are indeed faced with a terrible enemy, but our Master, Jesus, has placed at our disposal weapons that are perfectly adequate, not only to defend ourselves but to impose defeat on the enemy. However, before we discuss the weapons themselves I think we will be well advised to take up a preliminary question: Why is there so much ignorance about these things in evangelical circles?

### **Why So Much Ignorance?**

As soon as we begin to realize the implications of this subject, a question comes naturally to mind. How is it that these truths are not taught in our churches and theological schools (with a few exceptions)? Is it not strange? Thinking in terms of practical, daily effect this area of truth is virtually without equal in its direct impact on our lives. It should occupy an important place on our church menus, but instead it can scarcely be found. Why? I believe there are several factors that contribute to this situation.

#### *The Surrounding Culture*

We are influenced by our culture, which is very materialistic, skeptical of and uncomfortable with the supernatural. We have already noted that Satan exerts a strong influence on the cultures of men (1 John 5:19). I take it that materialism is one of the "sophistries" (2 Corinthians 10:5) that Satan has cooked up to keep people from coming to an adequate knowledge of the true God. (Besides Materialism there is Islam, Marxism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Animism, Humanism, Confucianism, and so on—world views all that separate men from God.) It seems clear to me that a disbelief in the very existence of the enemy is what will help him most (especially when it is on the part of those who say they are Christians). If someone does not even believe that Satan and the demons exist then they can do just as they please since the skeptic will never understand what is really happening. The enemy has a field day without opposition.

Things have taken a very serious turn in recent years. Materialistic researchers in the social 'sciences' have been studying evidences of demonic activity while rejecting the existence of anything supernatural. Since demons do indeed produce observable phenomena, such researchers ascribe the phenomena to hidden or latent powers of the human mind, subconscious, soul or whatever. In the name of 'science' they then open themselves up to demonic influence. The wedding of Spiritism with 'science' poses a most serious threat to our society.

It is nothing less than a tragedy that 'Christian' people allow themselves to be influenced by the surrounding culture to the point that they reject the clear teaching of the Word of God. In Europe and North America materialistic humanism has become virtually the state religion. It dominates the educational system at all levels. It predominates in the media—television, cinema, theater, advertising, newspapers, magazines, whatever. So I guess it is not surprising that the fundamentals of this worldview are invading and influencing our churches, though it is certainly sad. Dear people, we must open our eyes! We must wake up to the terrible danger that surrounds us. Humanism, Materialism and even Marxism are infiltrating and penetrating our churches more and more—yes, and even Spiritism in the guise of 'positive thinking', 'possibility thinking', 'visualization' and things of the sort. They are satanic sophistries that only bring harm. They may offer certain features that imitate features that belong to God's Kingdom, thereby deceiving the undiscerning and doing more damage in the end.

#### *A False Notion of Blame*

In some circles there seems to be a false notion of blame that inhibits them from talking about this. That is, they understand that demons exist and do attack people but they seem to have the idea that it is a shameful thing to be so attacked—presumably because the individual invited or facilitated the attack. The subject thus becomes impolite or embarrassing and is consequently avoided. Such a situation also favors the enemy. The victims receive no help. On the contrary, a feeling of guilt is added to the other consequences. People are not instructed. Our defensive weapons are not explained. In short, the enemy has things his way almost as much as when there is unbelief.

In the numerous Gospel accounts it is never intimated that the victims of demonic attack were to blame. They were simply assaulted, victims of acts of violence. If you are walking down the street and suddenly a total stranger assaults you, would you feel shame as if it were your fault? There is no reason to. Even if the nature of the attack causes shame, silence favors the criminal and encourages other attacks. To be sure, it is certainly possible to invite attack. If you get involved with ouija boards, with horoscopes, with seances, with rock, with things that belong to Satan, brace yourself! You will be opening yourself up to attack. However, I believe that the great majority of the attacks that we suffer come because we belong to Jesus and have an enemy that hates us. However that may be, my purpose here is to argue against silence. We must reject the taboo. We must discuss the problem openly. We must warn and prepare people against the danger. We must unmask the enemy and teach people how to defend themselves.

### *Our Versions of the Bible Mislead Us!*

Strange as it may seem, our versions of the Bible mislead us on this subject. The noun 'demon' is simply a transliteration of the Greek *δαιμονιον* or *δαιμων*. I wish they had done the same thing with the corresponding verb, *δαιμονιζω*. In that event we would have the verb 'demonize'. But no, the translators put 'possessed' of a demon. As a result we have tended to think of demon activity only in terms of possession. Well, so what is the problem? I suggest the following.

By 'possession' the translators presumably intended to connote 'control', but the more common meaning denotes 'ownership', and most people seem to take the second meaning. This has serious consequences. First, the concept is wrong, since demons do not and cannot 'own' human beings (although a demon will often claim that its victim "belongs" to it).<sup>5</sup> Second, it has fostered a misunderstanding about Christians and demon 'possession'—since a believer belongs to God it is presumably impossible that a demon should own him as well. We need to stop using the word 'possessed' in this connection altogether and replace it with the more precise term 'controlled'.

Demon control certainly exists, but it represents only a small part of the enemy's activity against mankind, precisely the most extreme cases. (Although organic insanity does exist it would not surprise me to verify that most cases of insanity involve at least some demonizing.) The vast majority of the demons' attacks should not be characterized as control. There are less severe forms that are sometimes called oppression or obsession. They also cause physical problems. But I believe that the most frequent attacks interfere with our minds in less obvious ways; so much so that most of the time we are not even aware of it. I suggest that we use the term 'demonization' to refer to any and all direct interference, whether in the mind or the body. The following continuum will help us to visualize the concept:

minds | bodies | obsession | oppression | control

Note that I have not included temptation to evil in this continuum. What **is** included in the concept of demonization, however, encompasses a world of suffering.

Let us now consider some consequences of the translation "possessed". I am not sure how far that rendering is at fault, but 'traditional' churches and schools scarcely touch the subject; perhaps because they think only in terms of ownership and conclude that believers are exempt. Whatever the explanation, you could attend certain churches during 20 years and never hear any teaching on Satan and the demons. On the other hand, 'pentecostal' or 'charismatic' churches and schools do at least deal with the subject, even if only partially. During deliverance sessions they tend to deal mainly with cases of control—is that not so? When does the leader of the service expel a demon? Only when it manifests itself—right? Someone begins to scream, foam at the mouth, roll on the ground or give some other evidence of foreign control, at which the leader confronts the demon and commands it to leave. But if the demon keeps still, what happens? Nothing, usually—nobody bothers it; its presence is not discerned. I know that some order the demons to show themselves, but do all obey? How do we know? Or if the manifestation is not of a type that we recognize as 'possession', who will identify and repel it? It seems clear to me that even in the churches where there is expulsion of demons the greater part of the enemy's activity against us goes unrecognized. They are focusing only on control.

<sup>5</sup> Within Satanism there are 'robots', people who have turned themselves over to the complete control of a demon. For practical purposes a 'robot' is owned by his demon.

I see another consequence that can be rather serious. When we conceive of demonic activity only in terms of ownership, and when a church teaches that a believer cannot be 'possessed', the following occurs. A believer is demonized. In terms of the continuum I am suggesting it is not a case of control, yet the person knows he is being attacked. But the only terminology he knows for talking about demonic attack is 'possession' and the church teaches that a believer cannot be 'possessed'. So the person is plunged into anguish—he knows he is saved but a believer cannot be 'possessed'; yet he is being attacked and knows it. What is the explanation and how can he escape? He cannot say anything to the church because if he admits that he is being 'possessed' then they will no longer accept him as a believer. He does not dare talk and so he cannot receive help. Even if he did talk, he would not receive adequate help because the leaders think only in terms of ownership. As a result of all that, the poor believer may even reach the point of doubting his salvation! The worst of it all is that such suffering is simply unnecessary. We must learn to speak in terms of demonization, understand that believers certainly are demonized, and explain the use of the spiritual weapons that are at our disposal.

### *The Idea that We Are 'Untouchable'*

In many evangelical circles there exists the catastrophic notion that we are, so to speak, exempt or untouchable—i.e. that a demon may not touch a believer. Indeed, there is a verse that seems to say just that, 1 John 5:18. "We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him." There you have it, "the wicked one does not touch him"—could anything be clearer? Well, let us slow down a bit. What might the semantic content of "touch" be here? It cannot refer to temptation to evil, because the Lord Jesus was tempted (Matthew 4:1-11) and if He could be, then obviously we can too. It cannot refer to an attack against the physical body, because the Apostle Paul was thus attacked (2 Corinthians 12:7), and if he could be, then clearly we can also. It cannot refer to interference in the mind, because the Apostle Peter suffered such interference (Matthew 16:22-23), and if he could be victimized in that way, why should we imagine that we will escape? If our verb 'touch' does not include those three things, then what is left? However, the real solution here is different.

What is the antecedent of the pronoun "him"? Just who is it that the wicked one cannot touch? The context is clear—it is "whoever is born of God". Right? Now then, are you born of God? Who among us will say that he is born of God? I will. And if you have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, you may too. But when did it happen, when your mother gave birth to you? No. Only Jesus was born that way; He was literally begotten by God in the virgin Mary. But what about us? We are born of God the moment we are regenerated. Yet we do not lose our identity; everyone who knew us before we were born again still knows us afterwards. So then, just what is it in me that is "born of God"? It cannot include anything that I, Wilbur, was before the new birth. What then? I take it to be the new nature or 'new man' that the Holy Spirit begets in me. We cannot equate the 'new man' with the Holy Spirit, exactly, but there is a close connection between the two. So much so that in Galatians 5:17 it is "the Spirit" that fights against the flesh. That which in me is born of God is the new man, and this it is, aided by the Holy Spirit in me, that the wicked one cannot touch. It happens that I, Wilbur, am now (after conversion) a mixture of two natures and as a whole being am most certainly 'touchable'. The enemy probably attempts to attack me every day.

Our principal versions render 1 John 5:18 rather differently, offering two serious discrepancies. Where NKJV has "does not sin", NIV has "does not continue to sin". Here it is not a problem of textual variants; they are both rendering the same Greek phrase. The verb 'to sin' is a simple present indicative, but negated—the natural, normal meaning is "does not sin". So where did NIV get the verb "continue"? From their theological presuppositions. (In all fairness, they would give a different answer. They would probably tell us that the present tense in Greek has 'linear' force. Well, sometimes, up to a point; sort of like English. If I ask, "Do you drink coffee?" and you answer, "Yes I do"—what should I understand, that you continually drink coffee? Probably not; just now and again, perhaps every morning for breakfast. But if you say, "No I don't"—now what is the meaning? That you do not continually drink? No, you do not drink at all, period. Even if the present tense has linear force when affirmative, it does not have it when negated—negation changes the rules.) The point is, "does not touch" at the end of the verse has precisely the same grammatical form; it is a simple present indicative, negated. So NIV should have rendered "does not continue to touch", to be consistent, but of course they did not. They (and all) render, correctly, "does not touch". NKJV has it right: "does not sin" and "does not touch".

The second discrepancy does involve a textual variant, the difference of one letter—with the extra letter the relative pronoun is reflexive, without it, it is not. Thus, NKJV, following over 95% of the Greek

manuscripts, reads “he who has been born of God keeps himself” while NIV, following a small minority of manuscripts, reads “the one who was born of God keeps him safe.” In the NIV the one being kept and the one doing the keeping are two different entities. I give it as my considered opinion that the reflexive form is original (for the theory see my book, *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV*). Are we really capable of “keeping ourselves”? Is the Holy Spirit? How about the new nature, with the Holy Spirit is help?

However all that may be, Ephesians 6:12 is crystal clear. In verse 10 Paul makes very clear that he is writing to believers and in verse 12 he includes himself. “**We** wrestle . . . against . . . wicked spirits . . .” Have you ever watched a wrestling match? Pretty physical, pretty direct, isn’t it? If someone is trying to wrestle you down and pin you to the floor and you do not struggle, you do not defend yourself, what happens? You get knocked down. How many times? As often as you try to stand up! Stop and think of the implications for a minute. We have an enemy that hates us and is going for our throat. He prowls around us like a lion (1 Peter 5:8). If we are not vigilant, if we do not defend ourselves, what will happen? We will be “devoured”—we, **believers**.

In short, we are vulnerable to demonic attack—be not deceived! To the extent that I suppose that I understand the subject, and I recognize that it may not be very much, I believe that while my thoughts are **consciously** subject to the Holy Spirit my mind should be free from malignant interference, but as soon as that submission ceases to be conscious, and worse yet if it simply ceases, then my mind is vulnerable. Even when the mind is free the body continues to be vulnerable. At least Paul suffered from a physical problem that was satanic in origin during a considerable space of time and I would not venture to suggest that he was not subject to the Spirit all that time.

I imagine that many readers are struggling with these suggestions. I know they contradict certain ideas that have enjoyed wide dissemination and acceptance in evangelical circles. But what can I do? I have a commitment to the Word of God and feel obliged to do sound exegesis. Let us analyze the question a bit more. If you were Satan, where would you concentrate your fire? Sometimes, when I am lecturing at a theological seminary, I scandalize the class by asking what place in the city they think has the heaviest concentration of demons. They usually mention the prison, a brothel, an important spiritist center, etc. “Not at all”, I answer, “it is right here”. “What? You can’t mean that, professor!” “Why of course! What place in this city represents the greatest danger to the enemy? This is a ‘factory’ producing soldiers for Christ’s army—it is certainly here that Satan will concentrate his fire. There is nothing else in the city that threatens him more.” Can there be any doubt? Is it not obvious? That drunk in the gutter, a prostitute or a drug addict, they are already ‘in the bag’. The demons do not have to spend more effort on them. You may be sure, my brother, that the more useful you become in God’s hand, the more stature you gain in the Kingdom, so much more you will be attacked. Whatever else he may be, Satan is not a fool.

Well, I guess I cannot put it off any longer—we must deal with the ‘chestnut’. After all, can a believer be ‘possessed’, or not? (I have already stated that demon ‘ownership’ is a false issue; not even an unbeliever can be owned [with the possible exception of ‘robots’]. So the real question is: Can a demon ‘control’ a believer or must its attacks stop short of control?) Please try to keep your cool! Let us go slowly. Is God not omniscient and omnipresent? Well then, wherever Satan is God is too—it has to be so if God is omnipresent. Job 2:1 makes clear that Satan appears before the very Throne of God! Revelation 12:10 seems to indicate that he still has access there and evidently spends a lot of time there since he accuses us “day and night”. The point is this: it is common to argue that if God is in my life then Satan cannot enter at the same time. But how does that follow? If the enemy can enter the very Sanctuary in Heaven, to enter my life is ‘small potatoes’—it should not be any problem at all. Let us think of our life as if it were a house. Anyone who is genuinely converted has the Holy Spirit in his life, or ‘house’. Unfortunately, however, many believers keep Him in the parlor. He is in the house (which is of maximum importance) but He does not control the house—there are closets locked with seven locks! There are areas of the life that have never been opened up and turned over to Him. So then, if the Spirit is confined to the parlor, if He does not have access to the whole house, Satan can easily install himself in the kitchen. Easy. With reference to the specific problem under discussion here, the basic question is not whether I have the Holy Spirit but whether He has me! It is not the Spirit’s presence but His **control**. We must turn over all the keys to our ‘house’.

I know, you still are not satisfied. Then let us think a little more. If I sin knowingly in some area I am rebelling against God in that area. Correct? But if I rebel against God I am joining hands with Satan, because rebelling against God is his thing. In other words, I am handing that area of my life to him on a silver platter. And if I rebel in a second area; there go two areas on the silver platter. And a third, or a fourth? Very frankly, my friend, if you turn three or four areas of your life over to Satan he can mess it up

to such an extent that I do not much care what name you choose to give to your condition; I am concerned about the reality.

Let us look again at the continuum suggested above. The division and distinctions are arbitrary. Who told me to draw the lines where I did? How do we know that the line between 'control' and 'oppression' should not be more to one side or the other? Since such distinctions are arbitrary, things that come from people's heads and not the Sacred Text, I judge that we should not attempt to base doctrine upon such distinctions. They may be useful for discussing specific cases, but as soon as we start talking about doctrine we should leave them aside, returning to the Text. The Text speaks of demonization which, for the various reasons I have given, I believe to include everything from mere interference in the thoughts to control of the person. I know of cases where a believer really became controlled; to try to deny that such a person was saved will not work; there are cases where I would say, "If he isn't a believer, neither am I". To elevate our preconceived ideas above reality is a form of idolatry.

Here I want to make an appeal: even if you still feel that you must reject the idea that a believer may be 'controlled', please do not reject the concept of demonization as well. Actually, if God's people will learn to recognize and repel the lesser forms of demonic activity the problem of control (for believers) should not arise. I felt that this discussion would be incomplete if I did not take up the question of 'possession', but I repeat and insist that it is to the lesser forms of demonization that we must pay special attention.

To conclude, we must walk full of the Spirit, consciously controlled by Him. Someone who lives like this will never be controlled by a demon. But, if you give the enemy an opening he will not lose it. We, Christ's soldiers, are certainly the preferred target. We are at war, a war without quarter or cease-fire. As we have already observed, God will not work a continuous miracle to free us from the consequences of our culpable ignorance. We have to pay for our negligence.

### *The Intimidated*

Some (many?) preachers and teachers seem to be **afraid** to touch on the subject. It is not a problem of unbelief or ignorance; they know that Satan and the demons exist and are active, but they are cowed. One day the young pastor preached a dandy message against the enemy, he really lowered the boom, but the counter-attack did not delay! Since the preacher did not know how to defend himself he got the worst of it, and now he is intimidated. Never again has he spoken about the enemy, and as a result of his silence his hearers remain in ignorance. Now then, 2 Timothy 1:7 makes it clear that God does not give us a spirit of cowardice. It seems clear that any cowardice on our part will only help the enemy. But no matter how afraid someone may be of Satan, should he not be more 'afraid' of God? (Well, but we tend to take God for granted, do we not? When I lived among a jungle tribe in the Amazon, I noted that although they believed that good spirits exist, since those good spirits did not bother them they did not spend time on them; they gave their attention to the evil ones, in the effort to appease them.)

In Psalms 78:9 we find a sad commentary. "The men of Ephraem, though armed with bows, turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep God's covenant . . ." What a shame! From God's point of view they betrayed the Covenant; God was not pleased. Remember that at that time the bow was a superior weapon (firearms did not exist yet) and so their cowardice became even greater. Jeremiah 48:10 has a yet stronger word. "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord negligently; cursed is he who keeps back his sword from bloodshed!" **Cursed! Cursed!** That is how God feels about the person who refuses to fight, being armed. **Cursed!** To be a pacifist in the spiritual war is treason against our King. **CURSED!** It is high time that we learn about our weapons and how to use them. First, defensive weapons.

### **Defensive Weapons**

Jesus would not send us against Satan without adequate defense, nor does He. We are facing a terrible enemy, but we also have the best weapons. But what good is it to have such weapons if we do not use them? I may have the best shield in the world but if I leave it in the closet when I go out, what good does it do? Even if I have it on my arm when I go out I must keep alert, so as to stop any arrows with the shield and not my body. Let us begin with the armor described in Ephesians 6.

### *The Armor in Ephesians 6*

It seems to me that the pieces of armor described here serve mainly for defense. Further, there is nothing to protect the back—if you turn your back to the enemy you have had it. We must face the enemy, and beyond that we must keep alert. (That is one aspect of the business that makes me mad! We can never rest. You doze just a little and "Wham!" We get tired but the spirits, since they do not have bodies, do not have that problem.) Since the passage was given in full at the beginning of the chapter I will now merely discuss the armor.

First the belt and the breastplate (verse 14): it seems evident that any lack of truth or justice in one's life gives an opening to the enemy (and he does not miss any chances). Then the boots (verse 15): I would say that lack of preparation is like going out barefoot; any sharp stone or shard of glass will cut you and then you will limp (for a soldier that can have serious consequences).

The shield deserves special mention (verse 16). What a tremendous weapon, able to quench "all the fiery darts of the wicked one"! But what might the precise nature of this weapon be? It is not the mere fact of having faith, for everyone has it. In fact, nothing is done in this life without faith. Have you ever paused to consider that? While seated I am trusting in the chair, that it will not collapse under me—there have been chairs that did not deserve that trust. While standing I am trusting in my legs to hold me up—they have betrayed me on occasion. To drink your coffee today was an act of faith—there have been those who drank coffee seasoned with arsenic! In short, nothing is done without faith. The question is, in what or in whom is my faith deposited? I believe that our shield must be faith in God, but faith in Him as being **The Greatest**—it is this certainty that enables us to face the enemy and ward off all his darts.

Then we have the helmet and the sword (verse 17). It seems clear that without salvation we will not even be in Christ's army, but since it is precisely the head that a helmet protects it may be conviction or certainty of salvation that is in view. Without such a certainty our inner man is not prepared to take on the enemy. As for the sword, the Lord Jesus illustrated the defensive use of the Word of God when He repelled Satan's temptings (Matthew 4:1-11). We will doubtless use the Word in offensive action against the enemy as well.

It is in prayer that we enter the spiritual realm and it is primarily in this realm that the war is waged, since it is essentially a spiritual war. Let us look again at verse 18. It speaks of "supplication" and "always"; it speaks of "watching" and "perseverance". Evidently it is to be an activity that we take seriously, that takes time and in which we persist. It is not a matter of praying just once and then forgetting or stopping. We are to pray for "all saints", which means it must be very important, since everyone needs it. But Paul continues, "and for **me**"—well now, if Paul needed prayer imagine the rest of us! It is my habit to say to any missionary candidate that he should not leave for the field until he has a good number of people who have promised to pray for him. Since the use of our spiritual weapons is almost always expressed through prayer, I will still be talking about prayer as I discuss those weapons. That being the case, let us move on to the other weapons.

### *The Greatest Defensive Weapon<sup>6</sup>*

In James 4:7 we find the greatest and best defensive weapon, at least in my opinion. "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." This verse contains two verbs in the imperative mood, two commands. The first one is "submit"—it is absolutely necessary that we be effectively subject to God before we take action against the enemy (nothing better than to be a radical disciple of Jesus). Do not even think of taking on Satan in your own strength; you will be crushed—do not forget that he is simply the most powerful, intelligent and malevolent created being in the universe! In order to use God's power and impose Christ's victory upon the enemy it is essential that we be in submission to God. But as soon as we fulfill the first command we face the second, "resist". It is an order, not an option. Whenever a servant of Christ suspects that the enemy is at work in a given situation he has the duty, the obligation to resist him. It is a command.

Let us think a bit about this verb "resist". First, it refers to a conscious attitude. Next, it refers to a negative reaction. Finally, one must be aware of whatever is inspiring the reaction (or else you will not react). I believe that is exactly what is involved in "resisting" the devil: we must consciously react against his

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<sup>6</sup> I first wrote this some thirty years ago, and I have learned a few things since then. I would now say that Luke 10:19 offers us a still better weapon than James 4:7, but I will leave this discussion as it is, with the promise that I will take up Luke 10 in a bit.

attacks. We must reject or repel them. When I left the Amazon jungle in 1972 I wanted an answer. I was tired of getting clobbered; how could such a thing happen to a servant of Christ, especially one with as much theological training as I had? I finally concluded that I was in the dark about some important truth. So I set myself to find out. I read, listened to and observed those who claimed to have understanding and experience in this area. I never accept anyone's experience as being normative; I listen respectfully but then I go straight to the Sacred Text to see if it follows, if the idea has biblical support. Indeed, it is worth saying in passing that doctrine should never be based on experience; doctrine must be based on the Word of God. Experiences may serve to illustrate a truth or doctrine, but they must be evaluated—experiences may be deceiving because Satan is a veritable factory of experiences (if you want 'experiences' he will cheerfully give you a bundle!). But to return to my search.

I was informed that the "resisting" in James 4:7 consists in recognizing the enemy's activity in a given case and rebuking him in the name of the Lord Jesus. This agrees with the semantic content of the term. I tested it in my own experience in this way. I was working on a doctorate at the University of Toronto, Canada. At the time we were driving a long station wagon. We would collapse the rear seat and put down a foam slab for the children to play (and sleep) on, we would pile the baggage behind the front seat to serve as a bit of buffer between us and the kids (if you have children you will understand). One day we went to visit my wife's parents, an eight-hour drive. Our two daughters, who at the time were ten and six, were in the back, I was at the wheel and my wife at my side. It was a beautiful day, not much traffic, a limited access highway, a powerful car—I was probably doing about 70 mph. The point is that at that speed the car is noisy. So then, I was driving serenely, the girls were playing nicely and quietly, when all of a sudden a noisy fight broke out. I mean to say it was sudden, with no advance warning. It is normal for children who have been cooped up for a while to begin to become irritable, but in that event things follow a normal course and you can cut it off. Not this time; I was taken completely by surprise. It took me several seconds to react and before I spoke I received a clear impression, a word from God: "That is not natural". I had been researching James 4:7 and so was ready. I said: "Satan, it is you. I rebuke you in the name of Jesus!"

Now then, let us review the situation: the car was noisy and the kids were yelling; although I spoke out loud I did not raise my voice, and I was facing forward driving the car. The point is, there was no way the girls could hear what I said, and in fact they did not. So then, as soon as I spoke, immediately, the two girls stopped fighting; the fight stopped abruptly and they went back to their quiet play. Praise be to God!

That taught me two things. First, resisting the devil works in just that way: I recognized an attack of the enemy and repelled it in the name of Jesus. In passing I should say that I certainly do not imagine that it was Satan himself that attacked my children, he presumably has more important things to do. It was some pip-squeak demon. I used the enemy's proper name because that was the orientation I had received; and it worked. But how could it work if it was not really Satan? Well, I suppose that when I rebuked the boss I rebuked by extension the subordinate that was the operative in my case—since it is God who forces the enemy to obey He takes advantage of our intention. Second, the enemy has no shame. To attack two children in that way was a low-down, dirty, cowardly trick. The dirtier and more cowardly something is the better the demons like it. I have become convinced that their preferred targets are the weak and helpless, especially small children and the mentally handicapped. Note that my daughters were attacked in their **minds**, provoking that fight.

I believe that we must associate this resisting with the concept of demonization. It is incumbent upon us to repel **any and every** attack of the enemy against us, and not merely cases of control. In the example I just gave it was an interference in the thoughts. As I see it, to expel a demon is the same as to 'resist' him, only the term is usually reserved for cases of control. When will someone expel a demon? When it manifests itself—right? In other words, the demonic activity is recognized as such and is thereupon rebuked. It is to **resist**.

Returning to our Text, we find a promise: "he will flee from you". The first time I explained these truths to my family, my older daughter—she was fifteen at the time—listened carefully. She is the enthusiastic, bouncy type but when she came home from school the next day she was almost jumping up and down. "Daddy, Daddy, it worked!" "What do you mean, 'It worked'?" "Daddy, I resisted the devil and he left!" I wept with joy that afternoon; the enemy had to flee from a 15-year-old girl! Hallelujah! But I must register one detail—that daughter was already a true disciple of Jesus and so was in shape to confront the enemy. It needs to be emphasized again: it is really necessary to be effectively subject to God before you take action against Satan, directly or indirectly.

As we have already said, Satan prefers to keep people in unbelief or ignorance in this area. However, when a person, or a church, decides to wake up and begin to act, then he really bestirs himself. He wants to keep the damage he incurs to a minimum. So he tries to confuse people, to take them to abuses and extremes, to mystify and create erroneous ideas about the subject. In this way he achieves two ends. First, he undermines the efficiency of those who are awake, thereby diminishing the damage he must suffer. Second, those who are skeptical see the abuses and are confirmed in their unbelief. The result is two opposing camps that become increasingly radical in their positions, moving farther and farther away from the truth, which is left alone in the middle. And Satan laughs at us!

My dear friends, I wish to affirm that I do not consider myself an expert on this subject. I know that many were working in this area long before I woke up. I cheerfully acknowledge that I may be mistaken. However, I do believe that God has allowed me to learn and understand a few things and that He wants me to share them. That being the case, I will now evaluate various notions where it seems to me that the enemy has succeeded in peddling ideas that diminish our efficiency in spiritual warfare.

### *Some Misconceptions*

#### **Not a gift but an order**

Certain evangelical circles seem to have the idea that casting out demons is a gift, or something to be done only by the pastors. I have searched all the lists of the spiritual gifts and it is not there. The expelling of demons is not a gift, it is a **command**. We are commanded to "resist" not only in James 4:7 but also in 1 Peter 5:9. It is clear that it is in Satan's interest to peddle the idea that it is a gift. If expelling demons is a gift, then the enemy's loss will be limited by the time and disposition of the few gifted ones; when they tire, forget or sleep the enemy is left alone. But what if **every believer** was resisting the activity of Satan and the demons, what a tremendous loss we would inflict on the enemy! Can you imagine it? Well that is exactly what Satan wants to avoid at all cost—it must be his worst nightmare. A gift is only for the gifted, but a command is for **all**.

There is another misconception that is similar. When someone begins to wake up to these things, he sometimes lacks the courage to confront Satan directly. So, when he recognizes an attack he asks God to resist it. One hears prayers like this: "Oh God, please rebuke the demon that is troubling 'Jack's' life." Only He often does not do it. And why not? He does not do it because it is our job, He has ordered us to do it. With the order He also gave us the power, the wherewithal so as to be able to obey. To ask God to do the resisting is not an expression of spiritual humility, it is disobedience to a divine command. He commands that **we** resist the devil.

Here I wish to elaborate a point mentioned earlier, that we can do what Michael could not (Jude 9). In essence the human being is superior to the angelic being. In Genesis 1:26 we learn that we were created in God's image and likeness, which presumably is not true of the angels. According to Romans 8:17 we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, a privilege the angels do not have. 1 Corinthians 6:3 tells us that we will judge the angels, which implies that they are inferior to us. Hebrews 1:14 says that they are our ministers, they are to serve us. The AV misleads us in Hebrews 2:7 with the rendering, "a little lower than the angels"; it should be "for a little" or for a little while, which is presumably the correct interpretation of Psalms 8:5 as well. While we are limited by these physical bodies here on earth our superiority does not appear.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Ephesians 1:20-21 and 2:6 permit us to understand that in Christ we are seated at the Father's right hand, a privilege that Michael does not have. So then, because of our position, of our authority, of everything that we have in Christ, it is our responsibility to resist the enemy. God will demand an accounting of that command.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> And with reference to those that Satan succeeds in taking to the Lake with him, that superiority will never appear. Which is at least partly why Satan does all that he can to take as many as he can with him.

<sup>8</sup> It is true that "rebuke" in Jude 9 and "resist" in James 4:7 come from different Greek verbs. The "rebuke" of Jude 9 also occurs in Matthew 17:18, Mark 1:25 and 9:25, Luke 4:35, 4:41 and 9:42 (among other places) and in each case describes how Jesus expelled demons. (In Matthew 10:8 the disciples were commanded to expel demons.) In Mark 8:33 Jesus "rebuked" (same word) Satan, who was speaking through Peter. Since in John 14:12 the Lord Jesus said we would do what He did, if we believe, I submit that He is expecting **us** to rebuke Satan and the demons. The verb "resist" of James 4:7 can be quite strong, as illustrated by Acts 13:8, Galatians 2:11, 2 Timothy 3:8 and 4:15 (rendered "withstand" in the AV), but I cannot prove that it is to be taken as synonymous to "rebuke", with reference to the enemy. I give it as my considered opinion that it is.

## Do not ask permission

Strange as it may seem, I have encountered the idea that one must ask permission before expelling a demon. Can you imagine a soldier on a battlefield calling out, "Hey mister enemy, is it all right if I shoot you?" He would have to be crazy! Before he finished he would himself be shot at; his voice would guide the enemy. War is war! When you see an enemy, shoot! Even if you do ask permission it is obvious that the demon will not agree. No, we do not have to ask permission. Furthermore, we do not even have to be physically present.

Some years ago I took part in an international conference in Dallas, Texas. Upon arriving I went to visit some friends who live there. During the meal I shared some things that I was learning about spiritual warfare. At that the lady of the house told me the following. Three days before she had gone to visit some good friends of theirs. When she entered the house she found the couple in distress. One of their four children is a daughter who was 16 years old at that time and she had just run off with a well-known criminal of the area. The man was about 30 years old, had been in and out of prison several times for a variety of crimes and was known for what he was. And yet the girl had run off with him, a girl brought up in the church and in an evangelical home. Well, you can imagine the parents' anguish: "How could it happen? What did we do wrong?" etc. As I heard the story I found it strange. That the girl should have an affair with a schoolmate would be regrettable but not particularly unusual in our society; but to take off with a known criminal twice her age—I became suspicious. So I said to my friends: "I suspect that there was demonic interference in this case and in that event there is something we can do; shall we give it a try?" "Yes, by all means." So right there in the kitchen I briefly explained the ground rules and then rebuked any and all demonic activity in the girl's life, commanding it to cease and forbidding any recurrence. While I was about it I did the same thing for the man in the case. I also rebuked the spirit of depression that was attacking the parents. Then I took my leave of my friends and went to the conference. Ten days later, at the end of the conference, I went to say good-bye to my friends before I left town. When the lady of the house opened the door and saw me she exclaimed: "Wilbur, do you know what happened?" "No, what is it?" "Do you remember your prayer the other Sunday?" "Yes." "Well three days later the phone rang over there and the mother heard her daughter's voice: 'Mom, I want to come home, is it all right with you?' 'Of course, come as soon as you can.' She arrived that same night." She was a changed person. Before, for some time she had been rebellious, agitated and difficult; now she was calm. The next day she went to the principal of her school to see what she had to do to catch up. In short, she set about putting her life in order.

Now then, nobody asked permission. We did not know where the girl was; we did not even know if she was still alive. We said nothing to the parents. We are talking about spiritual warfare which is waged in the spiritual realm. In the spirit world there are no barriers of space or matter. This gives rise to a tremendous truth which has a very great strategic value: in the spiritual realm we can wage war around the world! My body may be in Brazil but in spirit, in prayer I can bind Satan in China, in Nigeria, in Iran or wherever. Can you imagine it? How often one hears an elderly brother complain because he cannot get out of the house, he cannot do anything in the church anymore, etc. Such a brother could become a great warrior in the spiritual war. Precisely because he can no longer get out of the house he has a lot of time. He could wage war around the world, producing a great effect. Or a homemaker, with a number of small children, who complains because she can no longer go out with the evangelism teams, or whatever. In the first place, to be a mother is one of the most important roles in our society, but she can also be an effective warrior. I myself have washed tons of dishes (really and truly) and I know how it is—your hands work almost by themselves, leaving your mind essentially free; you can wage spiritual war while you wash. I have swept miles of floor (really and truly) and I know how it is—again, your hands can do it virtually by themselves; you can wage war. Our range or radius of action can be virtually limitless.

## Prayer and fasting

I am concerned to demythologize our subject. We should treat it in a lucid, objective and serious way. I cannot believe that God would place us in a battlefield such as we are in without explaining the ground rules in a way both recognizable and explainable; He would not leave us groping in the dark, at the mercy of our imaginations, each one holding a different opinion without any way of settling the question. 1 Corinthians 14:33 declares that God is not a God of confusion.

So I have asked God to help me recognize and isolate basic principles to guide our conduct in spiritual warfare. I believe that the fundamental fact is the victory of Christ. Colossians 2:15, Ephesians 1:20-22 and John 16:11, among other texts, show that that victory was complete. James 4:7 affirms that the devil

will flee when I resist him, but why does he flee? What is the active ingredient? Is he afraid of me? I doubt it. It is the power of God, liberated by Christ's victory (of course I have to know how to unleash that power, and be prepared to do so, which would give Satan cause to fear me). That must be why Ephesians 6:10 says, "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might". Further, expressions like "in the name of Jesus" or "the blood of Christ" presumably do not produce a magical effect; the mere pronouncing of that sequence of sounds will not work. We must consciously claim the reality of Christ's victory. If that is what we are doing as we use such expressions, that is fine. And now for fasting.

In Mark 9:29 Jesus said that a certain kind or rank of demon would only leave through prayer and fasting. Before considering the effect of fasting as such, we are obliged to take up a different problem. Most modern versions omit the words "and fasting". And why do they do that? Because four Greek manuscripts omit those two words, four against over 1,700 that have them! How come? During the past 130 years it has been the fashion in the scholarly world to ascribe an exaggerated value to two of those manuscripts (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus), since they are the most ancient that contain most of the New Testament. Many scholars have declared that they are also the best, but I disagree emphatically. Those two manuscripts are full of errors; they disagree **between themselves** over 3,000 times just in the four Gospels, etc. (For more on this subject the reader may consult my book, *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV*, 2014.) The reader may rest assured that the words "and fasting" belong to the Original Text. Most modern versions omit Matthew 17:21, the whole verse, for the same reason (now there are six manuscripts, still against over 1,700, but if it were not for the two the verse would be uncontested). The reader may accept the verse with full confidence. Since Jesus did in fact say "prayer and fasting", what is the interpretation?

Starting from the basic premise that it is the victory of Christ that is operative, that makes the devil run, I then ask: does my fasting add anything to Christ's victory? Can I say that Christ's victory was incomplete? If we were to countenance the hypothesis, on what basis could we argue that we are competent to perfect that victory? As far as I can see the Text is clear: Jesus won a complete victory; Satan suffered a total defeat. If the very chief of the demons was defeated how can we argue that any rank below him escaped? Is not the point of Ephesians 1:21 that Jesus is now over their whole hierarchy?

I know that many experienced brethren will disagree with the interpretation that follows, and I offer it with humility, but I ask the reader to evaluate it carefully. What Jesus said in Mark 9:29 was said before His death and resurrection, before the victory was won, therefore. In other words, the rules of the game were different. When Jesus began to cast out demons it caused a tremendous sensation. Later He, God the Son on earth, gave the same authority to the twelve and to the seventy (Luke 9 and 10), but it must have been on the basis of the sovereignty of God since Satan was still on his feet as the god of this world (in John 12:31 the Lord Jesus said, "now the ruler of this world will be deposed", shortly before the crucifixion).

Given that in Christ we are seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven, and consequently "far above every principality, and power, and might and dominion" (Ephesians 2:6 and 1:20-21), I believe that God expects us to impose upon Satan and the demons, all of them, the defeat they have already suffered. To that end it should not be necessary to fast, if we are effectively subject to God. Now then, in saying that, I am not trying to make light of fasting; I believe it to be of value. It adds nothing to Christ's authority but it may well increase my courage in making use of God's power. Fasting increases my sensitivity to the spirit world. That is why many shamans and other professional spiritist mediums are thin—they fast a lot. Why? To increase their sensitivity to the demons. We fast to increase our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. As far as I can see fasting has this value, but it adds nothing to the victory of Christ.

There are other practices that can be evaluated in the same way. There are those who like to yell when they expel a demon. I wonder; a demon may cause deafness but is not itself deaf, at least to my knowledge. Does a yell add anything to Christ's victory? At times I have wondered if the person was not insecure and was yelling to bolster his own courage. At other times it seemed to me that the person was trying to be sensational. Which leads me to make an appeal—let us avoid sensationalism! The simple demonstration of God's power, healing or liberating, is in itself a wonderful thing that will produce an impact on the people; it is not necessary to embellish it. To be more precise, it is not wise! The miracle by itself draws attention to God and glorifies Him; any effort at embellishment, at sensationalism draws attention to the person, and that is dangerous. First, God is jealous and will not share His glory with anyone (Isaiah 42:8). Second, it is easy for the person to become proud and fall into the snare of the devil. The more proud a person becomes the farther he departs from God and the more surely his ministry will wind up in the swamp. In fact, there is one very sure way to turn God against you; it is to

become proud. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5). Therefore, let us avoid sensationalism.

To conclude, I would say that to lay on hands or to burn objects likewise adds nothing to the victory of Christ. I see no need to touch, it is enough to speak. To burn or destroy an object associated with a demon can be an important way of rejecting that association on the part of one who is being freed, but it should not be necessary in order to expel the demon. I understand what is recorded in Acts 19:19 as being in the nature of a public break with the past. The importance given in the Old Testament to the destruction of places and objects associated with idolatry—the idols represented demons—seems to me to derive from different ground rules; Christ's victory was still future. I believe we have enough authority to isolate objects or houses; simply order the spirits to leave, forbidding any further use of them—our problem is not with the object, which is not at fault, but with the demon (however, perhaps certain objects, such as ouija boards and rock recordings, should be destroyed on general principles, assuming that there is no way they can be used for God's glory). Actually, there are already those who are closing down spiritist centers. They simply declare the area off limits to all demons, forbidding any further manifestations there; with that it closes, since nothing more happens.

### Demons are con men

Demons will do anything to deceive, confuse or demoralize us. If you resist a spirit, he leaves, but another may immediately take the place of the first and produce the same effect, making you think that nothing happened, so that you feel demoralized. If you resist but do not forbid a return, he leaves but may come back, in an hour, a day or a week. If I have to rebuke the enemy I now rebuke not only the spirit actually at work but any and all others that might wish to attack the person in the same way. I also forbid any repetition of the attack. Actually, nowadays I send them to the Abyss (Luke 8:31), a procedure that will receive attention presently.

One tactic they frequently use to deceive us is to strike up a conversation. There are those who make a point of chatting with the enemy. I confess that I do not get it. Can you imagine on a battlefield: "Hey mister enemy! Come here, let's have a little chat, drink some coffee together; then I'll kill you. Okay?" What do you think? I know that some think they need to know the name of a demon in order to expel it, and therefore they can only expel one at a time. Sometimes a demon imposes some requirement. Some really absurd things have happened. I heard of a case where a man tried to cast out a demon. The demon said he would only leave if the man went home and put on a tie. So the man ran home for the tie. But when he returned the demon laughed in his face: "You just obeyed me, so how do you think you can cast me out? Go jump in the lake!"

One night after I had lectured on this subject several people came to me and gave me the following account. In a certain city in the interior of Brazil a certain pastor had this experience. He was called on to handle the case of a severely demonized woman. He took a few others with him and tried to cast out the demon. It did not leave. After several tries and some effort the demon said, "I won't leave because she has something of mine". Finally it divulged that the 'thing' was a mattress that had belonged to an old spiritist medium and had come to her when he died. At that the pastor jumped in his car and took off toward the woman's house. On the way a motorcycle came out of a side street and ran into his car. Nervous and in a hurry the pastor said he would take care of everything (it was the cyclist's fault but the pastor wanted to get clear so he could finish off the mattress) and went on. He entered the house, found the mattress, took it out to the yard and burned it! He then returned to the house where the demonized woman was and the demon left. Was it a victory for Jesus? Maybe, but let us hear the rest of the story. It happens that the woman had a husband and he figured that he had some right to that mattress. In short, the pastor wound up paying for the mattress and the motorcycle (besides the damage to his car). He was considerably out of pocket, not to mention the wear and tear. Was all that song and dance necessary? I think not. Certainly Jesus would not have believed the demon and gotten involved in such a situation.

In the Gospels we find several occasions where the demons tried to strike up a conversation with Jesus, but none where He took the initiative. Only once did He ask their name, in the case of the Legion (Mark 5:9). Why do you suppose He asked, because He did not know? Of course He knew! I understand that Jesus did it so that the fact of demon infestation would be recorded for our instruction. Observe that He did not expel them one by one, He cast out all thousand at once. You do not need to know the name of an enemy soldier to kill him; just send an accurate bullet. Demons are liars by nature. Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). Sure, a demon may speak a truth now and again, but how do you recognize a truth among a hundred lies? There is a denomination in Brazil that began in the liberty of the Spirit but then

moved into a strict legalism. A pastor that was involved in that movement told me that some of the rules came about in the following manner: when dealing with a demon controlled person they would ask the demon whether such and such a thing was not of the devil; when the demon answered that it was then the church made a rule against it! Satan must be laughing yet.

Demons love to peddle 'experiences'. I have heard that there are churches where demons are vomited; every Sunday there is a puddle of vomit in front of the pulpit (at least the janitor earns his wages). Really, folks, don't you think Satan is making God's people look ridiculous? Isn't he making fun of Christ's victory? And many times it is the same people being 'liberated' every Sunday, and from the same problem. What is this? Did Jesus win or not? We must keep alert, folks! We cannot be too careful; demons are con men.

### *Suggestions for Research*

I wish to state that there is a great deal that I do not yet understand. There are things that leave me perplexed. I am still researching them and asking God to elucidate them. I will now outline some of these problem areas in the hope that others will be able to help me. Someone else may already have the answer to some of these things. Please share your insights with me. If we work together at researching these things perhaps the solutions will become clear to us more quickly.

I will begin with a question to which I think I already have the answer but would like to hear from others. It often happens that a sermon is reaching its climax when suddenly a baby begins to cry violently. I am reasonably sure it is a demonic attack but I do not want to rebuke it openly (it might offend the parents and cause perplexity among others; in other words, it might cause more distraction than the crying). So I rebuke the attack silently but nothing happens. Why not? Perhaps my hypothesis was wrong and it was not a demon at all. But if I was right, then I suggest the following answer: since the challenge was public the rebuke must be also. If I succeed in stopping the crying just with my thoughts no one else will understand what happened, they will think it was a natural crying and that the child just decided to stop. For the enemy's defeat to be public he must be rebuked openly (what is in view here is only the response to a public challenge; we may still wage war around the world in our thoughts, in prayer).

There are those who say that all rebuking of demons must be done audibly, on the assumption that demons cannot read our thoughts. So far as I know, the Bible says nothing about this question. However, the reading of thoughts should not be equated with omniscience. To be omniscient is to know everything in the universe simultaneously. To read my thoughts a demon must be where I am and therefore cannot be anywhere else observing anything else at the same time. Since spirit beings are not hindered by matter, what is there to stop a demon from tracing the electrical impulses in my brain?<sup>9</sup> Further, since it is God who makes the demons obey us, presumably, and since the Text does affirm that **He** reads thoughts (Revelation 2:23, etc.), I see no basis for the idea that all rebuking of demons should be audible.

Another thing that eludes me is the question of duration. Can I free a person or isolate a place for a lifetime? Are there limits? Only for a month or a year? I confess that I am in doubt. I would really like to hear from others on this subject. (I have observed a number of instances that point to a week as being a relevant time frame, but I recognize that they could have been orchestrated by the enemy precisely to lead me to accept a fiction.) Just to be sure, I try to remember to protect my family every morning when I wake up and every night when I go to bed.

The problem that abuses me the most is the matter of recalcitrant demons. I imagine that everyone has heard of cases where someone struggled for hours (or days) trying to expel a demon; it finally left, but the person was exhausted, really wrung out. In 1987 I learned of a case where a whole church struggled for weeks trying to liberate a teenage girl who was seriously demonized (the pastor insisted that she was converted at the time). They fasted, plenty; they prayed, a great deal; experienced workers from other churches came to help—and nothing happened! Well, there it is, folks, what are we to think when faced with such a situation? Did Jesus win or not?

First, we must never forget that our God is the Sovereign of the Universe. **He** is the one in command, and if He permits some demon to disobey me, He is presumably trying to get my attention; there is something that I need to learn or understand. At times there is some specific difficulty: unconfessed sin in my life, a

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<sup>9</sup> Modern technology now realizes that thoughts can be read outside the cranium by a computer; if a computer can do it, why not a demon?

pact exists between Satan and the person I am trying to help, some fetish, curse or other form of witchcraft, etc.<sup>10</sup> It may be that God is testing my faith or my humility. Returning to the case of the teenage girl, as he was relating the case to me the pastor said that he had told the girl's parents that if **he** did not succeed in liberating the girl he would resign from the ministry. So I said, "Brother, if I am not mistaken, that is where you goofed. You introduced your own person into the equation as if it was your name, your honor, your victory that was at stake." I suggested that he turn the case over to God from the pulpit, telling the people to stop praying and fasting about that case. Some months later he told me that he followed my advice and the girl was freed. God was testing his humility.

In various places and from different people I have heard a proposed solution for a recalcitrant demon: it is to call down fire from heaven to burn it. Those people told me that the demon takes off screaming! I must confess that when I first heard that story I smiled. I figured it was some more sensationalism, but, as is my custom, I went to the Sacred Text to see if by any chance the idea might have some backing. Imagine my surprise at finding that perhaps it does. In the presence of God the Son here on earth the demons repeatedly expressed a certain concern: "Have you come to destroy us?" (Mark 1:24), "Have you come here to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29). They know only too well that they are destined for hell (Matthew 25:41), they just do not want to arrive early! It might be that by threatening a demon with fire from heaven it is made to think of the Lake of Fire and gets scared; it might be. But if it is fear of the Lake that is functioning, why not appeal directly to it?

A colleague had a set to with one of the recalcitrant ones and at a certain point called for fire from heaven—the demon yelled but said, "Even so I won't leave". Could it be that some of them flee (seemingly) at the threat of fire to distract us and keep us from discovering a devastating resource (like a mother bird that pretends to be crippled to lead danger away from her nest)?

With all due respect to contrary opinions, I will not converse with a demon; I will not implore it to leave nor will I struggle with it hours on end. The more you do things like that the more advertising you give the enemy and the more doubt is cast on Christ's victory and power. I obey all the instructions that God has given us for such situations, to the extent of my understanding. Then, if the demon does not obey I turn the case over to God—that is right, if I have done everything that was within my range of responsibility and even so the enemy will not obey then the appropriate course of action is to turn the problem over to God. After all, it is not my name, it is not my honor that is at stake; it is of the victory and authority of Christ that the demon is making light. (This is what I suggested to the pastor in the case of the teenage girl just mentioned—he tried it and told me later that it worked.) However, there is one more thing that we may do, precisely the devastating resource I just alluded to.

In Luke 8:31 we read that the demons begged Jesus "not to order them to go into the Abyss" ("the Abyss" is the same phrase that the AV renders as "the bottomless pit" in Revelation 20:1). That means that He could have—I conclude that He refrained from doing so because He had not yet won the victory, at that time. But now it is different. In John 14:12 the Lord Jesus said to His disciples: "Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes into me, the works that I do he will do also; even greater works than these he will do, because I go to my Father." What does "because I go to my Father" imply? I conclude that it must be His victory—could He have returned if He had failed, if He had not succeeded in destroying the devil (Hebrews 2:14)? That is why we are supposed to be doing "**greater**" works—like ordering demons into the Abyss, for instance.

C. Fred Dickason, who had personally ministered to over 400 demonized believers (by 1987), says that his experience indicates that once a demon is ordered into the Abyss it does not come back (*Demon Possession & the Christian*, Moody Press, 1987). Paul E. Billheimer says much the same in *Destined to Overcome* (Bethany House Publishers, 1982, p. 46). Can you imagine if God's people really got a hold on this? We could continuously **reduce** the number of demons opposing us! Hallelujah! So then, why not order all recalcitrant demons into the Abyss? In fact, why not do the same for any and all that intrude upon our notice?<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Recently the question of hereditary curses has become a 'hot potato'. I do not have the slightest doubt about the reality of such curses. In fact, something very similar may be found right in the Ten Commandments. "I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation . . ." (Exodus 20:5). But the real question is if that can happen to a believer. It is argued that Jesus bore our curse on the cross. To be sure, but He also bore our sins and our sicknesses. So, do we no longer sin? Do we no longer get sick? The solution for those problems is available, but is not automatic. 1 John 1:9 makes clear that forgiveness exists, but we must confess. Healing exists, but we must claim it. It is not automatic. Curses also need to be treated specifically. Just as we go through life suffering the consequences of other people's sins, we can also suffer from their curses. Really and truly—we believers.

<sup>11</sup> I assume that God Himself will not allow us to decimate the enemy's forces to the point where prophesied events cannot occur.

Once again I wish to emphasize humility. God is Sovereign and will not give His glory to another. It seems to me perfectly possible that God might allow a demon to be recalcitrant precisely to teach us something, even to reprimand us for some reason (in fact, at times the demon itself will do the job—if there is some sin in the life of the would be expeller the demon may declare it for all to hear, in order to humiliate the person and make him withdraw). It is easy to get puffed up, to get carried away when you verify that you can make demons run. It is easy to start intruding yourself into the picture, thinking that **you** are doing something. At that God takes offense and sooner or later you will fall on your face. I know of someone who became impressed with himself because he could "bind" demons (the demonized person would become stiff), but was he really solving the problem? Demons are con men, you cannot be too careful. I believe it is most important, in fact necessary, that we maintain an attitude of humility before God, that we not intrude our selves, because then we may reasonably hope that He will take us by the hand and teach us what we need to know. Oh Lord, please illumine us!

I am aware of evidence that points to two further factors that may be involved, praise and forgiveness. It may be that praising God could make a difference in some recalcitrant case—it is a good way of reaffirming our confidence in Him even when faced with perplexing circumstances. A lack of forgiveness may well hinder God's working. If He conditions His forgiving on ours (Matthew 6:12 and 14-15), it must be a most important factor (cf. Job 42:10).

### *Some cautions*

If you liberate someone it is not wise to leave a vacuum; Matthew 12:43-45 explains why. Even though it is perfectly possible to expel a demon from an unbeliever without explaining or even being present, I believe we should explain what is going on and try to lead the person to commit himself to Jesus. That way he acquires the possibility of defending himself. But I believe it is possible to do even more. Consider Matthew 18:18. "Assuredly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven." For many years I could not understand this verse. I just could not see how I could say of something I did that it had already been done in heaven, first. But now I think I understand it—it has to do with spiritual warfare. When we bind Satan down here we are doing something that has already been done in Heaven. If the first half of the verse refers to repelling a negative influence then the second half should refer to the opposite, to introducing a positive influence. Does not Hebrews 1:14 say that the angels are sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? Well, I believe that the "loosing" in Matthew 18:18 has in view our claiming positive and active effects of Christ's victory, like calling on the angels to work in the life of someone who has just been liberated, predisposing him to embrace the Gospel.<sup>12</sup> (The person's will is not violated, he must still choose.)

Now let us look at verse 19 (Matthew 18): "Again assuredly I say to you that if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father who is in Heaven." The "again assuredly" seems to me to link this verse closely to the previous one, which begins with "assuredly". In that event this verse should also have to do with spiritual warfare. I do not really see how the fact of two people agreeing will add anything to the victory of Christ such that they can claim something that one cannot. But I do not have to understand; if God's Word says something then it is so. So then, I wish to suggest a research procedure. Let us see if each one can find at least one other person who will agree to meet at least once a week in order to engage in warfare, in specific terms. It may make a difference and we may receive some added light. But watch out for the counter-attack; you may be assured before the fact that the enemy will not take it lying down. It should not cause surprise, but I have seen people taken unawares—apparently they imagined that the enemy would be passive. War is war! Cowardice is not a valid option. So let us go into battle, but prepared and alert.

At this point I must issue a warning. Virtually the whole exposition up to here has been about demonic activity, demonization, attacks leveled against the human being without his knowledge (most of the time). I have not mentioned voluntary relationships with demons. It should be clear that a spirit medium (witch or warlock) who deliberately relates to evil spirits may well have a variety of different experiences, that I have not covered. I do not wish to take up that area here, I am just alerting you.

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<sup>12</sup> We must not pray to angels; they are our servants (Hebrews 1:14). According to the rules they may not interfere with human beings unless properly authorized to do so (the demons do not obey the rules). I understand that in Christ we have the authority to authorize them to intervene in specific cases—when dealing with an unbeliever I habitually "loose" the spirits of truth, faith and obedience to work in the person's mind to help him to understand and believe. However, neither we nor the angels can oblige anyone to believe; each one must make his own decision—we can help, but only up to a certain point.

And then there is satanism! The satanists have been boasting for several years that they have in place a network of thousands of human 'robots' (in the U.S.). These are people who voluntarily turned themselves over to the complete control of a demon. I confess that I am not sure just what the consequences of this new twist will be; we must research the matter. Remembering that the human being is essentially superior to the angelic, if a human being joins his abilities and qualities to those of a demon the result will probably be more dangerous than either one of them alone. At the moment all I can do is warn you of the danger—it is going to get worse before it gets better. We need to take care, but not despair. The Lord Jesus has already won the final victory. Still and all, we urgently need some orientation from God to know how to destroy this new threat.

*Luke 10:19—Defense that shades into offense*

Luke 10:19—"Take note, I am giving<sup>13</sup> you the authority to trample on snakes and scorpions,<sup>14</sup> and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing at all may harm you." In Matthew 28:18 Sovereign Jesus affirms that He holds "all authority in heaven and on earth", so He is clearly competent to delegate some of that authority to us—note that He has given us the authority, the Greek Text has the definite article. We may have any number of enemies, but the enemy is Satan. The phrase, "all the power", presumably includes his works, followed by their consequences. Now then, just how does "authority over all the power of the enemy" work, in practice? Authority controls power, so can we command Satan to do things? Perhaps, but I would not recommend it (Satan is so much smarter than we are that he could easily trip us up, get us to do wrong things). More important, we have access to a power that is far greater; consider Ephesians 3:20.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is working in us,<sup>15</sup> 21 to Him be the glory in the Church in Christ Jesus, to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 1:19 spoke of "the exceeding greatness of His power **into** us who are believing"—note that the verb is in the present tense; having believed yesterday will not hack it, we must believe today. This tremendous power that God pours into us, as we believe, exceeds our powers of imagination. Well now, my personal horizon is limited and defined by my ability to imagine. Anything that I cannot imagine lies outside my horizon, and so obviously I will not ask for it. But for all that we can imagine we should use Christ's limitless power, not Satan's.

Since He goes on to say, "nothing at all may harm you", I suppose that we are to forbid Satan (and his servants) from using his power against us. This I am doing. We can protect ourselves, our families, our ministries—anything within Christ's Kingdom. I do this every day, so as not to forget and not to get careless. A defense that stops attacks from reaching us is obviously a great defense! But why stop at defending ourselves? Why not forbid the use of Satan's power in other ways? How about forbidding any use of Satan's power in our government, in our schools, in our hospitals, in the media? And why limit our activity to our country? How about forbidding any use of Satan's power in Iraq, in Iran, in North Korea, in Kenya, etc.? Well, well, well, am I getting carried away? Perhaps, but have I given you food for thought?

<sup>13</sup> Instead of 'am giving', perhaps 2.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'have given' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.)—a serious error. Jesus said this perhaps five months before His death and resurrection, addressing the seventy (not just the twelve). The Lord is talking about the future, not the past; a future that includes us!

<sup>14</sup> The Lord gives us the authority to "trample snakes and scorpions". Well now, to smash the literal insect, a scorpion, you do not need power from on High, just a slipper. To trample a snake I prefer a boot, but we can kill literal snakes without supernatural help. It becomes obvious that Jesus was referring to something other than reptiles and insects. I understand Mark 16:18 to be referring to the same reality—Jesus declares that certain signs will accompany the believers (the turn of phrase virtually has the effect of commands): they will expel demons, they will speak strange languages, they will remove 'snakes', they will place hands on the sick. ("If they drink . . ." is not a command; it refers to an eventuality.) But what did the Lord Jesus mean by 'snakes'?

In a list of distinct activities Jesus has already referred to demons, so the 'snakes' must be something else. In Matthew 12:34 Jesus called the Pharisees a 'brood of vipers', and in 23:33, 'snakes, brood of vipers'. In John 8:44, after they claimed God as their father, Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil". And 1 John 3:10 makes clear that Satan has many other 'sons'. In Revelation 20:2 we read: "He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is a slanderer, even Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years." If Satan is a snake, then his children are also snakes. So then, I take it that our 'snakes' are human beings who chose to serve Satan, who sold themselves to evil. I conclude that the 'snakes' in Luke 10:19 are the same as those in Mark 16:18, but what of the 'scorpions'? Since they also are of the enemy, they may be demons, in which case the term may well include their offspring, the humanoids [see the essay, "In the Days of Noah"]. I am still working on the question of just how the removal is done.

<sup>15</sup> I sadly confess that I have not yet arrived at a spiritual level where I can unleash this power—I have yet to make the truth in this verse work for me. But I understand that the truth affirmed here is literal, and I only hope that others will get there before I do (so I can learn from them), if I keep on delaying. The whole point of the exercise (verse 21) is for God to get glory [not for me to have a good time, although if I ever get there I will certainly have a great good time!], and to the extent that we do not put His power in us to work we are depriving Him of glory that He could and should have.

<sup>16</sup> The glory that God gets from the Church will go on forever.

Seriously, there may be a significant difference between defense and offense. For defense we have the Lord's promise, so we can bank on that. As to offense, some other factors probably enter in.

- 1) The consequences of sin: we should not try to protect people from such consequences. This includes the religion and the government that people choose.
- 2) God sovereignly allows Satan and the demons to continue operating in this world, and presumably He will not allow us to frustrate His purpose in so doing.
- 3) A word of caution occurs to me: we are at war, and the more we expand our radius of operation, the more effort the enemy will expend to hinder us (be prepared).

We will be well advised to maintain a conscious submission to the Holy Spirit. More precisely, we need to try to follow the example of Sovereign Jesus. In John 5:19 He said: "Most assuredly I say to you, the Son is not able to do anything from Himself, except something He sees the Father doing; because whatever things *He* does, precisely these the Son also does." I find this statement to be amazing, revealing and challenging. Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing; so how about us? I would say that my main 'ministry' problem is that I often do not know what the Father is doing, and so I waste a lot of time and effort. But with reference to taking the fight to the enemy, we most certainly need the Father's backing.

### *Conclusion*

In sum, our defensive weapons are the best and perfectly adequate (once you know how to use them) but it is not wise to remain only on the defensive, always waiting for the next blow, always leaving the initiative to the enemy. Let us go on the offensive, let us attack, let us dictate the direction of the battle!

Unfortunately the idea is defended in certain circles that we should be passive. There are some who speak of 'power encounters', referring to situations on the mission field where a missionary is challenged by the enemy in some way and is thereupon obliged to demonstrate that God's power is greater. But the way the idea is presented it is the enemy that provokes the encounter; the missionary should not go looking for trouble but content himself with defensive action. It is a siege mentality. But the commands of Christ do not permit a siege mentality. If we are going to take the Gospel throughout the world, preaching to every person, making disciples in each ethnic group, we need a different mentality, a mentality of conquest. Of necessity we must take the offensive. 2 Corinthians 10:4 affirms that our weapons "are not carnal but mighty through God for **demolishing strongholds**". That implies offensive action, taking the battle to the enemy. We have already noted Psalms 78:9 and Jeremiah 48:10. In the second passage, when it says "cursed is he who holds back his sword from bloodshed!", it seems clear that God is demanding an active stance. We must take our swords in search of the enemy's blood (to follow the figure). So let us consider how to take the offensive.

### **Taking the Offensive**

Before anything else we must have complete certainty about the victory that our Commander has already won and about the power, the authority that is available to us.

#### *Our Position and Authority*

Our position and authority are described in Ephesians 1:19-22 where the apostle is praying for us that we may know several things, including:

- 19 what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power
- 20 which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,
- 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come;
- 22 and he has placed everything under his feet, . . .

When we read that Jesus is now above all principality, power, might, etc. (see also 1 Peter 3:22) the terminology makes us think of the similar list in Ephesians 6:12 which refers to the hierarchy of the demons, headed up by Satan. The point is that Jesus did in fact win. He achieved the purpose of the incarnation as stated in Hebrews 2:14. "Since the children partake of flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared in the same, so that by his death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Jesus came to destroy the devil and succeeded. Hallelujah! Consider also Colossians 2:15:

"Stripping the principalities and powers he exposed them to public humiliation, triumphing over them by the cross." Satan and his hosts suffered a complete defeat. In John 16:11 the Lord Jesus said that "the ruler of this world has been judged". (It was still a few hours before His death, but Jesus was speaking of what the Comforter would do when He came, see verse 8, and by the day of Pentecost Satan had indeed been condemned.) That is why 1 John 4:4 affirms that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world.

Returning to Ephesians let us look at 2:6, "and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus". There it is. If you are in Christ where are you now seated? In the "heavenly places"! Right? But comparing this verse with 1:20, if we are in Christ precisely where is it that we are seated? Well, where is Christ? At the Father's right hand! God be praised, what a marvelous truth! And if we are at the Father's right hand that means that we also are **above** all principality, power, might, etc. There you have our position and our authority. We are face to face with a tremendous truth, a greater than that terrible truth of an enemy that has access to our minds. In Christ we are greater than the enemy! It makes you feel like kicking up your heels, doesn't it?

The enemy was defeated, was deposed, was expelled from his position as "ruler of this world" (John 12:31). However, for His own sovereign reasons (which He has not revealed to us), God allows the enemy to keep on operating on the basis of bluff (or as an impostor or usurper), as if nothing had happened. It is up to us to call his bluff, to call his hand, to force him to acknowledge his defeat. When we resist him we are doing this, in part, but we may take the offensive, and for that there are other weapons.

### *Bind the Enemy*

Our starting point here is Mark 3:27. "No one can plunder the strong man's goods, invading his house, unless he first bind the strong man; then he may plunder his house." This verse already received some comment at the beginning of the chapter. The Lord Jesus declares that we must "bind the strong man". Although the verb 'to bind' is not in the imperative, it winds up having the effect of an order. If He commands us to evangelize and make disciples, and if to achieve that end we must bind the enemy, as already explained, then the binding is equivalent to a command. So how does one 'bind', wherein does it consist?

In my understanding and experience the binding consists of taking your position in Christ, claiming His victory and authority, and in so many words forbidding any satanic or demonic interference or activity with reference to a given person, place or occasion. It appears that we must be specific. I have already tried to bind Satan once for all to the end of the world, but it did not work. Why not? Well, I do not know, but I suppose it was God Himself who would not allow it, because if He did I would have frustrated His purpose for leaving Satan loose—for the world to end in the way that the Bible foretells the activity of Satan and the demons is still required. We must be specific, and then it works.

The New Testament in the Mundurucu language (an indigenous group of Brazil) was 'in press' in our print shop for three years. It seemed like everything that could go wrong did: machinery broke, people got sick, the computer disobeyed the program, brand new plates came out of the sealed package already oxidized—it was really something! Finally the plates were ready to put on the machine to print the book. I was about to leave on a three-week trip. I went to the man in charge of the shop and explained that I wanted to bind the enemy so that nothing further would happen to delay the printing of that New Testament. He agreed and gathered his crew. I explained the ground rules and we proceeded to forbid any further interference in that project. When I returned from my trip three weeks later I looked up the print shop foreman: "How did it go?" "Like a charm, the New Testament is printed." Praise the Lord!

As I explained a bit ago, I consider that Matthew 18:18 also refers to this 'weapon'. Satan has already been bound in Heaven and it is up to us to bind him down here.<sup>17</sup> I am aware that the immediately prior context (verses 15-17) deals with discipline in the church, but I ask: Whose interests are best served when a brother falls into sin, is it not the enemy's? Notice too that the Text foresees the possibility that the person will persist in his sin. Should we not see Satan at work in such a situation? In fact, when faced with two such cases the procedure that the Apostle Paul used was to give the impenitents over to Satan

<sup>17</sup> I am not aware of any Scripture that says in so many words that Satan is now 'bound' (he will be, literally, during the Millennium, but we are not there yet). However, Colossians 2:15 says he has been "stripped", Hebrews 2:14 that he has been "destroyed", John 12:31 that he has been "deposed", Ephesians 1:22 that he is "under Christ's feet", and Romans 16:20 promised the believers that he would shortly be "crushed" under their feet. Within the context of my exposition I consider that it is perfectly reasonable to say that from God's perspective, "in heaven", Satan is bound.

(1 Corinthians 5:5 and 1 Timothy 1:20). I am also aware that in some churches this passage is used to impose some practice upon the faithful. A leader gets up and says that he is 'binding' sleeve length—from then on everyone must wear long-sleeved shirts. I do not see how such a use of our text can be correct, because if one person can 'bind' something like that then someone else can 'loose' it, and we are back to zero. It sometimes happens that two churches take opposite views on a certain practice and each one insists that it has 'bound' that practice. Of course it is fun to impose our ideas on others, but do you really suppose we can impose our ideas on God? We know that God is not "the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33); we cannot impute to Him confusions that are of our own making. As I have already said, the only viable interpretation of Matthew 18:18 that I have seen is to link it to spiritual warfare.

On February 28, 1986 the Brazil government decreed zero inflation (down from over 200%). Retail prices of consumer goods were frozen but the paper money supply continued to increase at some 18% a month!<sup>18</sup> The poor masses loved it, but soon food and merchandise became increasingly scarce—the producers were losing money. By July it was obvious that adjustments had to be made, but important nation-wide elections were coming up in November and the government wanted to cash in on the popularity of the 'zero inflation' program. The price freeze was maintained until the election; the government party won a smashing victory at the polls; a week later they lifted the freeze and made other changes in economic policy. The public outrage was general; the people felt betrayed; there was unprecedented rioting in Brasília, the nation's capital. A few days later the leading labor unions decreed a nation-wide strike to close down the country for one day, December 12, 1986. Given the explosive social climate at that time I feared that the enemy would take advantage of the situation and instigate violence and destruction around the country.

I suggested to a home Bible study group that we pray specifically forbidding any malignant interference of any kind throughout the whole country on that day, with special reference to violence and destruction. We prayed, binding Satan and the demons in those terms. Those who were in Brazil on that day will recall that it was an unusually tranquil day, even less crime than usual. Now then, I know that I cannot prove cause and effect in this instance. I know also that other brethren were in prayer on that day calling on God to preserve the nation. However, I believe that the 'binding' of the enemy works precisely in this way, and I would like to suggest that we try to use this weapon toward the solution of the problems that trouble our country.

In the first instance "bind the strong man" in Mark 3:27 certainly refers to Satan, but I believe the concept can be applied locally. We have already verified from Daniel 10 that high-ranking demons take charge of important or strategic nations on this earth. It seems obvious to me that this is how Satan controls the world. He is not omniscient or omnipresent. So then, each country, each state, each city and town has a resident demon in charge of that area—the rank of the demon presumably corresponds to the relative importance of the place. In lecturing on this subject I have suggested that any missionary, upon arriving in an area where he plans to work, should bind the 'strong man' of that place, thereby avoiding much unnecessary suffering and difficulty. Some students of a certain Bible Institute in Brazil's Northeast put this suggestion into practice and reported back to me that it works. They formed teams and set out to start evangelical congregations in towns and villages of the interior, a region both arid and difficult. They always encountered heavy opposition—the local vicar would give orders that no one should rent to them or have any dealings whatever with them—in short, a tough situation. Then some of them decided to bind the strong man of the place before they arrived. They told me the situation changed dramatically—the people were more open, they found cooperation, people responded to the Gospel sooner and in greater numbers. In short, it worked! Thank you, Jesus!

Now just consider what a difference this procedure would make if we applied it around the world! Up to now, speaking generally, we have sent missionaries to the peoples of the world without paying attention to this truth—the missionaries have not, the missions have not and the churches have not, with the following result. When the missionary arrives at the place where he intends to work, there is the enemy—set, ready and waiting to smash him. Since the missionary does not know how to defend himself he usually takes a beating, sometimes a severe one, and in any case will achieve less than he could. We must change that scene. Before a missionary even gets near the field the churches and individuals that are backing him should send heavy artillery fire to flatten the enemy. The missionary himself needs to bind the strong man of the area before arriving, and to be alert to resist him at every step. If he does this he will certainly encounter less difficulty and enjoy greater success. Things will go even better if the churches remain alert and fight the war along with the missionary, binding the enemy from a distance.

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<sup>18</sup> We did not find out about that until later.

### *Destroy Sophistries*

Now let us consider another offensive procedure or weapon; we find it in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

03 though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,  
 04 for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but mighty through God for destroying strongholds,  
 05 destroying sophistries and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

The apostle affirms that we have these great weapons, but does not say what they are nor how they operate. I really wish we had a full explanation, but since we do not we must learn by trying. But first, I understand that all our weapons are based on the victory and the power of Christ. Next, the Holy Spirit should be willing to give us orientation. The Text explains that the weapons are good for destroying strongholds—presumably of the enemy, since nobody would destroy their own. Well, I take it that verse 5 offers some light—it is made up of two participial clauses that are subordinate to the last phrase of verse 4.

The entire content of verse 5 enlarges upon "destroying strongholds", but I wish to call attention to the "sophistries" because the strongholds that we must destroy are mainly based upon the sophistries that Satan has fostered in this world (1 John 5:19). I take it that any worldview or philosophy of life that opposes the worldview of the Bible is one such sophistry. We may define 'sophistry' as a fallacious argument prepared with the intent of inducing someone else to err. For our purposes a sophistry is precisely any system of thought that sets itself up "against the knowledge of God".

And what are some of those sophistries? They are Islam, Marxism, Hinduism, Humanism, Spiritism, Buddhism, Materialism, Animism, Xintoism, Confucianism, among others. I wonder if we should not take a careful look at certain other '-isms' also—Protestantism, Catholicism, Denominationalism, etc.—to see if they do not distract or mislead people with reference to a true "knowledge of God".

The apostle affirms that "we do not war according to the flesh". Well, at least we shouldn't, right? But how often our 'fighting' is in fact fleshly! Is it not so? That is why we achieve so little; that is why half the world continues to perish without any knowledge of Christ. The use of fleshly weapons in the spiritual war can only produce negative results; it helps the enemy. Our God demands that both the end and the means be worthy of Him. The doctrine that the end justifies the means is diabolic. The weapons of our warfare must be spiritual, for that is the only way they can be powerful, and even so they must be "in God" (the enemy also uses spiritual weapons). Now then, the weapons that God gives us are designed for destroying "strongholds", and I believe we can understand the nature of those strongholds by studying verse 5. Anything that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God is a 'stronghold', or at least forms a part of such a stronghold. The end result of the destruction of the strongholds should be that every thought become obedient to Christ.

But how does this destroying of strongholds work? I confess that I do not know, for sure. I am still studying the question. However, I will offer a few ideas. Let us consider the 'sophistry' that presents the greatest challenge in Brazil, Spiritism. How can we dismantle that sophistry and free that country from it? Well, when dealing with an individual we must take account of what he believes. For instance, an informed and convinced voodooist: he knowingly deals with demons because of the demonstrations of power that they give. To make fun of him, to call his rituals mere superstition, will not reach him; he is dealing with demon power and knows that it exists (as in fact it does). What is required is a power confrontation. We must prove to the voodooist that we have power greater than that of the demons, that we can overpower them, that we can free people from their power. Without such proof we will just be talking through our hats.

We can liberate people one at a time and in this way produce some effect, no doubt. But, our time is short, Jesus is coming! So I suggest the following: let us organize a campaign to close down all the spiritist centers in the country (for starters), in a systematic way. I have stated that there are already those who have closed such centers. This is done by literally sealing off the area where the sessions are held; that is to say, by forbidding in Christ's authority any further demonic manifestation in that place from that moment on. When the manifestations cease the center will close down, since there will be no more reason to gather there. At this point we need to anticipate a protest. By sealing off such centers we will not violate anyone's religious freedom; they are entirely free to call on the demons all day and all night, if

they wish. By all means. Our action is against the evil spirits, not the people; our concern is to demonstrate that Jesus is the greatest; that is all.

Now let us consider the case of a spiritist who believes he is dealing with 'white' magic and 'angels of light'. To accuse him of dealing with demons will not work because he will repel that statement and despise our 'ignorance' into the bargain; in other words, we place ourselves at a disadvantage. So how do we convince him of the truth? Again, I believe that the best procedure is to go after the spirits, sealing off the centers. When every manifestation of the spirits ceases at a given center it will lose its attraction. At that the participants will want to know what happened. Then we can explain that we sealed off the area in Christ's authority, and the fact that the manifestations ceased is presumptive proof that the 'angels' were not exactly of 'light'; in any case we proved that the power of Jesus is greater. The result of such a campaign will be the destruction of that sophistry; the power of the system will be undone.

In Hinduism and Animism the people are also dealing with evil spirits and the most efficient approach we can take is to give indisputable evidence that Christ's power is greater. I understand that the Muslim also has trouble with the demons, and his religion gives him no solution. So, instead of arguing about Jesus versus Mohammed or the Bible versus the Koran, perhaps a better way would be to sidle up to a Muslim and ask: "How are the demons doing today?" The point is, we need to find an area of life where we can give a clear and immediate demonstration that Jesus solves the problem but Mohammed and Allah do not (for a well written discussion to the effect that Allah is not the God of the Bible see *The Unholy War* by Marius Baar [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980, pp. 58-70]). To handle case by case will produce some effect, but how can we dismantle the sophistry, the system? I confess that I do not know, but I would like us to think some more about the implications of our text. When it speaks of destroying every "pretension" that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and of "taking captive every thought" to make it obedient to Christ, what are we to understand?

Since it all is part of the destroying of strongholds these procedures have to do with offense. It follows that the 'thoughts' in view here must belong to persons who oppose the Gospel. (Our own thoughts must already be subject to Christ before we attempt to wage war like this.) We are obliged to conclude that it is possible to influence the thoughts of such persons, altering them to the point of being able to say that now they are obeying Christ! Did you ever think of that? Really? Oh praise be to our God! What a tremendous weapon! If we only knew how to wield this weapon we could take the world by storm! No one would be able to stop the Church! But alas, euphoria aside, can it be that we do know how to use it? Since I never heard anyone speak of it, and since I never saw anyone else do it, I suppose that we do not. I myself am barely crawling in this area, trying to learn how to walk. But let us turn our imaginations loose a bit.

The first problems that a missionary encounters when he tries to enter some foreign country relate to the government. He must have a visa, he must explain his intentions, he has to go through customs, sometimes restrictions are placed on his movements, etc. And why so many problems? It is because of the mentality that pervades the government for religious, ideological or political reasons, or else because of the personal background and mind-set of the particular official that is handling the case. And what about Christ's spokesman, must he bow to the 'inevitable'? Must he lower his head and return in defeat? I say, "No!" They are 'pretensions' that we must destroy; they are thoughts that must change, and it is up to us to impose that change in the authority of Christ. But how does it work? I suggest the following: we must take our place in Christ at the Father's right hand and claim all the power and authority that that position represents or confers; then, in the name of Jesus and in so many words we should require a change in the thinking of the official or the government such that the barriers will be removed. I believe we can do this at any level. I ask the reader to let me know what you learn in this area.

The concept of destroying strongholds can be applied in a variety of ways—for instance, in personal evangelism. There are 'strongholds' of the enemy in the minds/hearts of individuals that hinder them from being saved—it could be an 'addiction' to alcohol, rock or whatever; it could be a philosophical bias, a cultural value, a private 'hang-up' of some sort.<sup>19</sup> Christian parents with rebellious teen-age children should take a careful look at this possibility. It just could be that Christ's followers also fall prey to such strongholds—like theological bias, arrogance, selfishness; in short, anything that keeps us from hearing and obeying the voice of the Holy Spirit. (The 'world' and the 'flesh' are Satan's natural allies.) A whole

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<sup>19</sup> I believe there are three forces or wills that are involved and interact—God's, Satan's and man's. In a certain sense we can cast the deciding vote. Until a person is freed from satanic interference in his thoughts he can be virtually powerless to respond to the Gospel. But we can give him every chance by repelling the evil interference and introducing a positive influence. However, the person must choose and can still refuse. At times it seems like an unequal struggle—although our power is greater, by and large we haven't used it; in the mean time the enemy plays dirty while the angels are obliged to play by the rules.

culture may have a value or feature that seems to be designed to make it difficult for them to receive God's Word. For instance, the Jamamadi people of the Purus River in Brazil have a taboo against an exact repetition of any statement. This made language learning very difficult, because every request for a repetition was answered with a synonymous utterance. Worse still, the taboo was extended to written statements—so it is unacceptable to read the Bible aloud, for example, or to quote it in a sermon! I believe it should be possible to claim the destruction of all such strongholds in the authority of the Lord Jesus. In fact, this was done to the taboo in question and it is losing its hold on that people. Praise the Lord!

Returning to governments, why not do something for ours? We can and should make use of our weapons on behalf of the peace and well-being of our people. Indeed, is that not the thrust of 1 Timothy 2:1-4? We are exhorted to intercede for those in authority so that we may lead a peaceable life; verse 3 says this is good and acceptable to God, while verse 4 links all this to God's desire that all men be saved! The social and economic problems we are facing undermine our capacity for exporting the Gospel. We must do something about that! I believe we can forbid any and all interference by the enemy in the thinking of the President and his advisers, in the Congress, etc. But we should not content ourselves with that; we can introduce a benevolent influence in the thinking of those people, as I explain in the next section.

### *Impose the Authority of Christ*

Here I invite the reader's attention to two passages that have already received comment, Matthew 18:18 and 2 Corinthians 10:5. The first speaks of binding and loosing things that are already so in Heaven. It is the 'loosing' that invites further comment now. I have already suggested that the loosing should be the opposite of the binding, but both procedures depend on or result from the victory of Christ. If the binding refers to repelling malignant activity then the loosing should refer to the introduction of benevolent or positive activity, from God's point of view of course. I believe that in certain circumstances we can impose the authority of Christ on other people, on animals, on nature.

While I was studying in Toronto I learned of the following case. A certain lady, a sister in Christ, was on foot and had to walk under the 401 to get home; I believe she used the Bayview underpass. I think the 401 has some 14 lanes at that point, so it was not a very inviting place even though there is a sidewalk and some lighting. About half way through the underpass she was accosted by two men with criminal intent. She said: "I take authority over you in the name of Jesus." At that they were immobilized and she went by and kept on walking. Presently they cried out: "Have mercy, don't leave us here like this!" (they could not move). So she turned back, explained the facts and freed them. I cannot recall whether the men were converted on the spot, but in any case they no longer constituted a threat.

I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that it should not be necessary for us to fear assault, a fierce dog or anything else that wishes to attack us; or does Luke 10:19 mean something else? Except with reference to the difficulties that God Himself prepares for our exercise and growth, we should be able to use the authority of Christ—but always on behalf of the Kingdom of God, not our own selfish interests. Let me reinforce this proviso: the power of God and the authority of Christ are **not** to be used for ego trips or personal agendas, but only under the sovereign direction of the Creator to reach His objectives.

Returning to the example given above, the Lord Jesus did something similar; it is in Luke 4:28-30. On a certain Sabbath He was teaching in the synagogue of Nazareth; He was not very diplomatic and the hearers became enraged. They forced Him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built "in order to throw him down over the cliff". But then, Jesus "passing through the midst of them" went His way. Now then, tell me please, how did that work? Jesus was surrounded by a furious mob with some of them holding on to Him. So how did he escape? The Text does not say, but obviously Jesus did something to the people—either they were blinded or paralyzed or something. He made use of supernatural power to free Himself from a suffering, or perhaps a death, that was not of God. In John 8:59 it appears that Jesus became invisible to avoid a stoning. In John 10:39 He escaped again, presumably by supernatural means. (Let us not forget that Jesus said that we who believe into Him **will** do what He did—John 14:12.)

Now let us look at 2 Corinthians 10:5 again. Let us think some more about "taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ". When I spoke of that nation-wide strike in Brazil and said that we bound the enemy, forbidding any of his interference, I did not mention something else that we did. Since people are capable of thinking violent thoughts without any demonic 'help', we also took authority, in Christ, over the thinking of all the inhabitants of the country, forbidding thoughts of violence and calling for thoughts of peace, respect and tranquility. That is the way it was. Again, I cannot prove cause and effect, but I believe

we are looking at a 'weapon' that has tremendous potential. I believe it is the sort of thing that we can, and should, do on behalf of our government as also of the countries where we send missionaries. And why not do something about the violence in Lebanon, for example, or the hate in South Africa, etc., etc.? I believe that with a bit of 'sanctified imagination' we may be guided by the Holy Spirit to take the initiative on various fronts around the world.

### *Undo the Works of the Devil*

The last 'weapon' to be discussed is in 1 John 3:8. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might undo the works of the devil." What should we understand by 'undo' the works of the devil? It seems to me that it must include altering the **consequences** of those works. We are looking at another tremendous weapon, one that is able to undo the results or consequences of attacks already perpetrated upon us. I tested this in my own experience in the following way.

In November, 1984 I was in Teresina, Piaui (a state capital in Brazil) lecturing on the missionary strategies of Christ. One night, after speaking about spiritual warfare, I was about to go to bed when I gave my cheek a bad bite—I almost took a piece off, the blood began to run. It happened that for several months prior to that night I had been having a strange experience. Whether speaking, chewing, or for no apparent reason my lower jaw would go out of control and I would bite my cheek or tongue. Once a sore started it seemed like I kept hitting it, so it was slow in healing. It seems like a minor matter but for someone who was doing a lot of public speaking it was bothersome. So then, by the time I got to Teresina I had about decided that I was being demonized. And I had been meditating on 1 John 3:8. So when I gave my cheek that bite I got angry—"Enough!" I resisted the demonizing, but it was too late; I was already bleeding. What to do? Then I remembered about undoing the works of the enemy. No sooner said than done, I proceeded to claim in the name of Jesus that the consequences of that attack upon my body should be undone. For the glory of God I wish to state that immediately the blood stopped and the pain passed. I slept. By the light of the new day I looked in the mirror to check the place of the bite—it was smooth. Thank you, Lord!

Jesus did something similar; the account is in Mark 4:37-39 (see also Matthew 8:24-26 and Luke 8:23-24). They were crossing the Sea of Galilee. After a day of teaching and dealing with the multitude Jesus was tired and fell asleep in the stern. Then a violent windstorm came up and the waves beat into the boat so that it was nearly swamped. At that point, fearing death, the disciples woke Him up. Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the sea: "Shut up! Be muzzled!" And there was complete calm. Personally I do not doubt that that storm was prepared by Satan. Being professional fishers the disciples had seen no end of storms on that lake; to really scare them required something unusual. However that may be, Jesus worked a double miracle. First, He stopped the wind. But, if that was all He did, the water would still be agitated for some time. When He produced an immediate calm He **undid the consequences** of the windstorm. There you have it.

You do not have to be a prophet to see that this weapon permits us to catch sight of marvelous effects. Here too I am barely crawling. There is much land yet to be occupied, but the potential that this weapon offers justifies almost any effort to learn how to really use it. If we can reverse tragedies that have already been perpetrated—it should be possible to cure emotional and psychological traumas in this way—how many transformed lives and healed homes shall we not see! Again, I ask the reader to share with me what you may learn in this area.

### *"Greater Works than These"*

Perhaps some reader is feeling a little bit stunned by the audacity of my suggestions. Okay, I recognize that I have proposed things that in fact we have not been doing. But then, just what interpretation do you give to the words of the Lord Jesus recorded in John 14:12? "Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes into me, the works that I do he will do also; even greater works than these he will do, because I go to my Father." To be frank, I have always found it hard to think of **equaling** Jesus' works; to excel them was simply out of the question. But there is His declaration: He did not say "perhaps do", He said "**will** do"; He did not say "a few privileged or gifted ones", or "if the doctrine of your church will allow it", He said "**he who believes**". So now what do we say? Are we going to believe, or not? Are we going to do, or not? I understand that it is precisely the victory of Christ that makes possible our doing 'greater' things. In some sense Jesus had to restrain or limit Himself until He actually defeated Satan by His death and resurrection, and until He took up His place at the Father's right hand. Now the rules of the game are different; there is the victory of Christ waiting to be claimed and applied down here.

Although in this day and age we have television, computers, satellites, etc. that allow us to do things that were unknown in Jesus' time, I do not see how we can point to such things as the interpretation of our text—Jesus said, "because I go to my Father" (what does modern technology owe to Christ's ascension?); Jesus said, "he who believes into me" (there is nothing there about waiting until the invention of television). Even if someone were to persist in such a position it is still incumbent upon us to **do the works that He did**, namely raise the dead, cure the sick and free the demonized, for starters! Actually, it seems to me to be perfectly clear that Jesus was thinking of the unleashing of God's power, not modern technology, when He said "greater works than these". Past generations did not have the technology but the Text was written for them as well.

And what might some of those "greater works" be? Well, would precluding violence in an entire country [Brazil] during the 24 hours of a national strike be a reasonable candidate? Dismantling spiritism in Brazil would be another. I believe Luke 8:31 give us basis for consigning demons to the Abyss, thereby reducing the number of the enemy's forces (against us). And how about destroying sophistries, taking thoughts captive and punishing disobedience (2 Corinthians 10:5-6)? If we will ask the Holy Spirit, really placing ourselves at His command, surely He will show us further procedures. Just look at Ephesians 3:20—"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, . . ." Wow! The Holy Spirit, using the apostle, affirms that God Himself is waiting to do **much** more than we can even imagine. In other words, the procedures I have suggested above are 'small potatoes'. "The power that works [present tense] in us" is just waiting for us to turn it loose, for us to act with courage and a holy imagination, for us to be audacious in the use of that power.

As I have already stated, I do not pretend to have a corner on the truth. There is a great deal that I do not understand. I hope to learn from others. All said and done it is to **Jesus** that we will have to give an accounting for all the abilities and resources that He has placed in our hands. So I make this plea: let us humble ourselves before God and His Word and in all sincerity ask the Holy Spirit to orient us with respect to the things presented in this essay. Oh God, may Your will be done, may Your name be glorified, may Your kingdom come in us and through us in this world!

## Strategic Implications

To conclude and sum up the exposition of this strategy, let us review a few implications. The real world is the spiritual one (see Hebrews 9:8-9 and 22-24, 2 Corinthians 4:18, 1 Corinthians 9:11, Romans 15:27, Galatians 6:6)—this physical world that so fills our vision is nothing more than a 'shadow', a 'figure of the true'. That is why the real war is fought in the spiritual realm. We need to increase our sensitivity to the spiritual; our churches are full of wounded 'soldiers' who do not even know it.

We have a terrible enemy who hates us and is always after us. The servants of Christ are his favorite target; the more useful you become in God's hand the more you will be harassed. Too often Satan manages to use us as his instruments to knock down some colleague and then trample him to make sure he cannot get back up. One thinks of cases where a brother suffers violent and virulent attacks, beyond restraint, beyond measure, beyond reason, all out of proportion to the error he may have committed, attacks leveled by other believers. How can this be? Sometimes a spirit of hate is evident; the others do all they can to destroy the person so that he may never be restored. It is a work of Satan and we must open our eyes to this fact. And then there are the bitter fights over doctrinal minutiae, things that make no real difference; and yet they split churches and cause permanent estrangement between believers, as well as other types of damage. This too is a work of Satan. We must get wise, people!

Yet we have adequate weapons, in fact tremendous ones, both for defense and offense. We must instruct God's people about these things. We must become skilled in the use of our weapons. We need workers who know how to wage spiritual warfare, who know how to impose Christ's victory over Satan and the demons. If we manage to fill the world with that kind of worker we can finish reaching the world, fulfilling Christ's great commission, within a few years, relatively speaking. Yes, because that kind of worker will produce a great deal more than the others that do not know how.

We need churches full of disciples who also know how to wage war. We need sharpshooters, people who can hit a specific target. Up to now the prayers of God's people have usually been general, like shooting in the general direction of the enemy; it may make him duck down for a bit but does not cause many casualties. We will see much better results when we send accurate shots at the heads of the enemy.

We need to really believe what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 16:18—" . . . I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not withstand her." The verb rendered as "prevail" usually implies that its Subject has the initiative, and accordingly most English versions give the impression that Hades is attacking the Church. If this is the correct interpretation, we have the important promise that Hades will not win. However, that verb may also imply a defensive posture, and since "gates" do not attack but rather are the last line of defense of a city, I suggest that the correct interpretation is that the Church is attacking Hades—"the gates of Hades will not be able to withstand it". This gives us the even more exciting promise that the Church will indeed batter down the enemy's gates. Either way, we should take courage and fight with confidence!

I have left till last a truth that abuses me, that really makes me angry. It is this: with reference to 1,000 ethnic groups we are the ones who are bound; for those groups the victory of Christ is still worth very little! How can we bear such a thing?! For them the Gospel does not exist, there is no witness for Christ, and as a result there is little point in binding Satan with reference to them. Yes, we can bind him, but what good will it do? I suppose we could alleviate the physical suffering of such a people but we cannot solve the fundamental problem of their spiritual destiny and well-being until the Gospel is effectively within their grasp. It is altogether necessary that Christ have a spokesman for every ethnic group! **"Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest."**

Of all the missionary strategies of Christ that are discussed in this book the one treated in this essay seems to me to be the most important. To be sure, if God's people would really obey any one of them we would finish reaching the world in our generation. But if every believer learned to wage spiritual warfare in the terms herein presented we would mow Satan down. We would transform our lives, our families, our churches, our society and maybe even the world! What do you say? Shall we give it a try? Let us have at it! Let us go for it! May God help us!

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