

# SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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*"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall  
make you free" (Jn. 8:32)*

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# THE SPIRITUAL WAR

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Therefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:10-13).

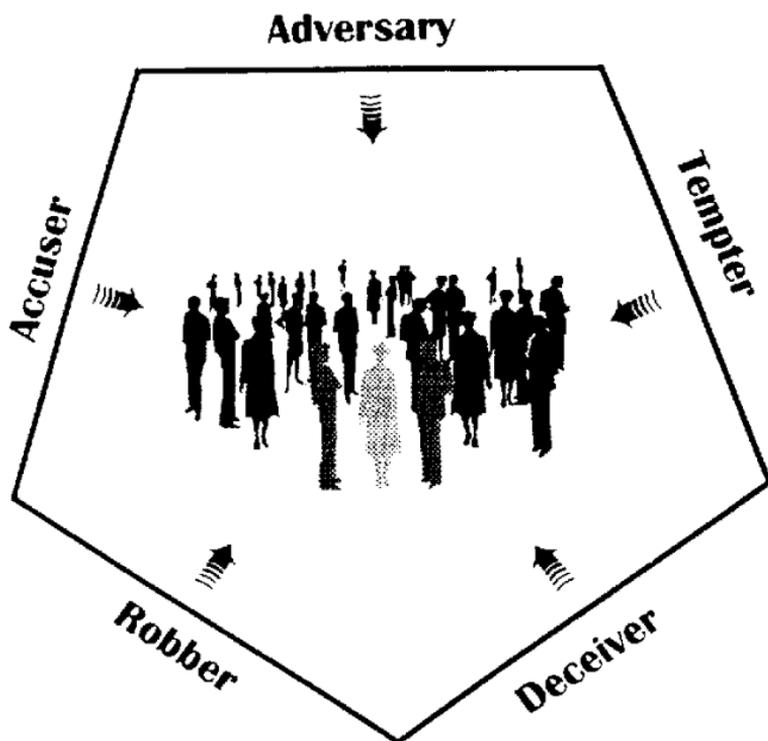
We have not only been endued with the power of the Holy Spirit to give us boldness, wisdom and courage to proclaim the gospel of salvation (Acts 1:8), but also to enable us to be victorious in the struggle against the enemy of our souls. Christians often neglect this aspect of their spiritual lives and are consequently weak, unprotected and even unarmed for the fierce battle in which all of us are involved.

In the spiritual battlefield there are five major fronts from which demonic powers launch their attacks on men. The Bible clearly identifies the devil with these five fronts as well as the different strategies associated with them:

## 1. Adversary

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: resist him, steadfast in the faith” (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

As adversary the devil will try to destroy your life, your health, your marriage, your Christian ministry and all other interests that you have. The intensity of his opposition to believers knows no bounds as he is a murderer from the beginning (Jn. 8:44). Wars, disasters, accidents, incitement to suicide, and various other means are employed by him to give expression to his aggression and murderousness. He doesn't have unlimited powers over people, but as far as he is allowed to move he obstinately pursues his objectives.



Apart from sudden, heavy blows, he also uses slow methods to achieve his purpose. Many people's lives are ruined over a long period by enslaving them to liquor, tobacco and various other drugs.

Countless problems, obstacles, disappointments and irritations are caused by him to discourage Christians and induce them to quit their efforts for the Lord. Never acknowledge defeat, but resist the Evil One through a steadfast faith in the Lord Jesus.

“Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (Heb. 12:3).

## 2. Tempter

The devil tempts people to commit moral sins by enticing them through their carnal nature and fleshly lusts. Due to the fallen nature of man, which was caused by the devil, “the heart is deceitful above all things” (Jer. 17:9) and is inclined towards sinning. The following are examples of the sins which are aimed at reviving the corrupt and evil works of the ‘old man’:

narcissism,	evil desires,
pride,	gluttony,
love of money,	covetousness,
stealing,	adultery,
bribery,	slandering,
fornication,	anger,
lying,	wrath,
unfaithfulness,	filthy language.

A prayerful and holy life surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ is needed to overcome temptations:

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak” (Mt. 26:41).

“If any *man* will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Lk. 9:23).

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14).

“...that ye put off concerning the former [conduct] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which is created after God in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24).

Don't yield to temptations, but submit yourselves to the Lord and resist the devil. The Lord Jesus will understand your problem, and is also able to help you. He experienced and overcame temptations:

“For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to [rescue] those who are tempted... For we do not have a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but who was in all points tempted like *we are, yet* without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 2:18; 4:15-16).

It is tragic that so many Christians have backslidden because they became victims of the Tempter. In a survey among fallen pastors in the USA, the sins of pride (self-esteem), love of money, and adultery proved to be the most common ones committed. These sins have also wreaked havoc among other professing Christians who live carnal lives that are not crucified to sin (Lk. 9:23; Gal. 6:14). They do not heed the command to holiness in 1 Thessalonians 4: 1-8 and Galatians 5:16.

### **3. Deceiver**

As deceiver the main thrust of the devil is to distort the truth about God and His Word, and to spread all sorts of lies about religion. During the end-time in which we live, deception will more than ever before be prevalent in the world:

“Take heed that no one deceives you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall deceive many... And many false prophets shall rise up and deceive many... There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24).

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

The knowledge about God and His Word of truth will protect you against deception. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32). The Bible is the sword of the Spirit which nullifies and destroys the deceiver’s vain arguments and theories (Eph. 6:17).

Ignorance is the breeding-ground for spiritual deception. Many people do not have adequate knowledge about the truth of God’s Word, and are consequently easily deceived by false prophets:

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who [secretly] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them... And many shall follow their pernicious ways. And through covetousness shall they with [deceptive] words [exploit] you” (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

False prophets abound in these last days. Most of them have a very large following because their heresies are acceptable due to the already distorted convictions of millions of deceived believers. They will utterly reject the sound doctrine of the Bible and openly cling to their lies and deceit:

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

In this area of spiritual warfare, millions of *believers* are falling to the wiles of Satan and are being spiritually deceived and ruined. They naively expose themselves to heresies propagated by deluded pastors:

“For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15).

Many preachers distort the gospel message, undermine the doctrine of salvation and introduce deceiving spirits to their naive audiences. In so doing they are used of the devil to wage his spiritual war against Jesus Christ who is the Truth, against the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Truth, and also against the living and true Word of God. The rapid expansion of deceptive teachings such as the Toronto phenomenon is proof of the fact that very few church-goers test the spirits:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1).

Satan often tries to justify his deception from the Bible. Scripture verses are twisted, quoted out of context and applied wrongly in order to support a misleading statement, interpretation, or dogma. He followed this method when trying to tempt Jesus in the wilderness, but was defeated by the correct quotation and application of Scriptural truths.

#### **4. Robber**

Christians who backslide are being spiritually robbed by the devil and will appear empty-handed before the Lord. Even though they may still cling to their basic faith in Christ as their Saviour, they will still suffer great losses. Jesus says:

“Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev. 3:11).

“Look to yourselves, that we do not lose the things which we [worked for], but that we receive a full reward” (2 Jn. v. 8).

A Christian can also be robbed of his time and material goods which he needs to serve the Lord. Be vigilant because the devil is indeed a thief who intends to rob you in any possible way: “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill and to destroy” (Jn. 10:10). Don’t render yourself an easy target to the thief who is intent on depriving you of as many blessings and possessions as he can.

## 5. Accuser

In the final instance, the devil also attacks the Christians by actively accusing them in various ways and at various places. He will keep on accusing them at the throne of God until the middle of the tribulation period:

“...the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night... Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev. 12:10, 12).

However, we have an Advocate with the Father at His throne in heaven, Jesus Christ, who pleads on our behalf (1 Jn. 2:1). But we must always walk in the light, have fellowship with the Lord in prayer, observe the command not to sin, and experience the continuous cleansing by His blood (1 Jn. 1:7; 2:1).

The devil also accuses Christians at worldly authorities to bring about the rejection and persecution of evangelical believers. Jesus said:

“If the world hates you, ye know that it hated Me before *it hated* you... The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (Jn. 15:8, 20).

Pray for your government and engage in spiritual warfare to break down evil strongholds and secure the right of freedom of religion, religious education, religious broadcasts, etc. Don't become complacent and take these privileges and rights for granted. They have often in history been denied to the Christians in many countries. All that is needed for evil to triumph, as that good men do nothing. Don't neglect your calling to be the light of a dark world.

A special area of focus in Satan's campaign of slander is the brethren themselves. He is ever busy sowing seeds of discord and disunity among them by accusing the one at the other. In this way he hopes to drive in a wedge among believers, thereby harming the work of the Lord.

Don't react to grievances and condemnatory thoughts emanating from the unfounded or exaggerated accusations of the Evil One. Resist all incitements of this nature and guard the peace and unity among the true brethren in Christ, "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13).

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

It is tragic to behold how quick the brothers are to condemn one another because of slight differences of opinion on marginal issues. Be tolerant and patient with the evangelical brothers, and only uncompromising with the false prophets and the doctrinal deception which they propagate.

Lastly, the devil will also accuse you personally and try to instil a guilt consciousness in you. He will tell you how bad you are, how unpardonable your sins are, how irrevocably you have sinned against the Holy Spirit, and how miserably you failed in the service of the Lord. In this way he intends to burden you with guilt, destroy your faith and render you completely depressed, disheartened and inactive. Always remember that you have a sure place of refuge against the accuser of the brethren:

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7).

"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. 18:10).

Stand on the promises of God, put your trust in Him, and shield yourself against the fiery darts of the Wicked One. In this area of spiritual warfare one should pray for divine wisdom and a spirit of discernment. You must learn how to distinguish between Satan's false accusations that must be resisted and rejected, and the conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit.

# THE BATTLE FOR THE MIND

From the preceding description of the spiritual war it is quite obvious that the attacks of the enemy are comprehensive. The effects of this battle often extend into the physical realm where they manifest as adverse circumstances in our daily lives. These circumstances are always aimed at discouraging us and weakening us spiritually. The victory must, therefore, be gained in the spiritual realm if we are not to be taken captive by the enemy and surrendered to the bondage of sin. This is essentially a battle for the spiritual control of the mind and body. Paul says:

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war [according] to the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

From this description of the spiritual war it is obvious that the strongholds of the enemy in our lives are based on vain reasoning and carnal exaltation that arise from evil, misguided thoughts. If the strongholds of sin are to be pulled down or averted, every thought must be taken into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Should this not be done, the enemy of our souls will gain a clear measure of control over us by establishing wicked and uncontrolled thoughts and desires in our hearts.

Due to man's fallen nature, his contact with the world, and his inability to determine the origin of all ideas, there are various ways in which he can be tempted to sin:

- ☞ Wrong ideas and evil intentions may emerge from your own carnal nature and subconscious mind. “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Jas. 1:14-15; see also Mk. 7:21-23). Remember that the

*old man* (your old, sinful nature) is completely corrupted by deceitful lusts (Eph. 4:22; Rom. 6:6). It cannot be reformed and needs to be crucified.

- ☞ Many of the things that you see are pleasing to carnal desires and also lead to sin: “For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 Jn. 1:16; see also Mt. 5:28).
- ☞ Sinful thoughts are often stimulated by pornographic TV shows, videos and magazines, or the conducting of immoral discussions. Don’t expose yourself to these evils: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33).
- ☞ Bad thoughts and sinful desires are supported and strengthened by spiritual agents from the kingdom of darkness. They have the ability to aim fiery darts at you (Eph. 6:16), thus defiling your mind. They can also cause your thoughts to wander and render them uncontrollable when you want to pray or listen to a sermon.

Have you given the enemy the opportunity to make inroads into your mind and establish strongholds of sin in your life? Please appreciate the fact that these sins started with a single thought or evil suggestion that was not resisted or subjected to the authority of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

From the roof of his palace King David saw a beautiful woman who was bathing, and coveted her. He devised an evil plan on how to get rid of her husband in order to appropriate the woman. He acted on the spur of the moment and didn’t subject his thoughts to the authority of the clear precepts in the Word of God. In the process he transgressed the following commandments:

“You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery... you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife” (Ex. 20:13-14, 17).

Instead of observing these statutes, David entered into all sorts of carnal arguments and evil schemes in order to gratify his lusts. In doing so, he allowed the enemy to erect a stronghold of murder and adultery in his life. On realising his defeat and awful sin, David was a broken man under strong conviction of sin. He unconditionally put his trust in the Lord to forgive him his sins and restore him to a Spirit-filled life of dedication and obedience:

“Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a [steadfast] spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation” (Ps. 51: 7-12).

The strongholds of sin were immediately pulled down in his heart, and the fear of the Lord restored.

Always reassert the authority of God over your mind and all the thoughts and desires of your heart. Test the thoughts and ideas before accepting them. If they are not in full agreement with the Word of God, reject them:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24).

Sinful thoughts must be dealt with immediately, and not given any chance to establish themselves in your heart or mind. The fiery darts of the enemy, as well as vain arguments that exalt themselves against the truth of the Word, can be quenched by the shield of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 6:16).

If you do not shield yourself against evil thoughts, they will take root in you and eventually get their way with you. They will actively resist and slowly begin to subdue the good thoughts. In the process they will defile your mind and undermine your motivation to serve the Lord by inducing you to say and do wrong things. Are the thoughts of your heart under control and well pleasing to the Lord?

## SATAN'S ANGELS

It is quite obvious that in his war against the saints Satan has a very active department of religious affairs. He and his accomplices (demons as well as deceived human beings who act as false prophets), pretend to be angels of light who come from God with special powers and a message of peace and goodwill. They cleverly disguise themselves as prophets and Christian leaders who came to bring to the world spiritual renewal through signs and wonders:

“For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Deception of this nature has occurred since the very beginning of the church age. According to the Bible it will vastly increase during the end-time. Special efforts are now made to deceive all people by way of signs and wonders, as well as a message of world-wide peace and unity, into accepting the coming universal Messiah of all faiths. He will be the Antichrist who will unite all religions. Jesus earnestly warned against this satanic deception:

“Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many... For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Mt. 24:4-5, 24).

Spiritual deception in the name of Jesus Christ is rapidly on the increase in the world. In the light of this very common strategy of the devil we are admonished not to accept any person and his message on face value. Investigate the matter thoroughly in order to expose its roots. Jesus says: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mt. 7:15).

Outwardly they pretend to be true prophets who serve the church in the name of the Lord Jesus, but inwardly they are completely unsaved and false. Money and fame are their gods, and they don't have true Christian principles.

Jesus describes the final exposure and eternal doom of these deceived hypocrites on judgement day. Although they even cast out devils as practising *ministers of religion*, they are agents of the kingdom of darkness with the assignment to mislead and confuse people:

“Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out devils? And in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt. 7:22-23).

The deception of false prophets amounts to a complete misrepresentation and falsification of Jesus. His name is used but another doctrine is attached to it under the direct influence of deceiving spirits from Satan. The result is a great falling away from the true faith:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy” (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

How are people who hold traditional Christian views being deceived into believing false doctrines? Paul clearly answers this question and indicates that Satan's deception is the motivating force behind the distortion of the Bible:

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his [craftiness], so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not

received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*” (2 Cor. 11:2-4).

The following are examples of the false Jesuses that are proclaimed these days, as well as the false gospels associated with them:

<p><b>J</b> A Jesus without the cross. He is only a good spiritual leader and a moral example that we should always follow.</p>	<p> A gospel in which the atonement for sins on the cross is not emphasised. Rebirth is substituted by baptism and good works.</p>
<p><b>J</b> A Jesus who only delivers people from political oppression, social injustice, and economic suffering by means of human reforms and even revolutions.</p>	<p> A liberation theology (contextual theology, social gospel, or revolutionary theology) in which political liberation and social justice are the main objectives.</p>
<p><b>J</b> A Jesus who is a sinner. He does not call people to repentance and can't save them from their sins. This falsification of Jesus is evident in film shows such as <i>Jesus Christ Superstar</i>, <i>The Last Temptation of Jesus</i>, and <i>Jesus of Montreal</i>.</p>	<p> A humanistic gospel in which sin is explained as human freedom of expression, and not as something inherently evil. Repentance is unnecessary. Jesus is not God and is humanistically depicted on the same level as sinful and mortal man.</p>
<p><b>J</b> A Jesus whose main mission is to heal people and to make them rich and prosperous to live a trouble-free life on earth.</p>	<p> A prosperity gospel and kingdom now theology in which believers become like little gods who manipulate cosmic powers.</p>
<p><b>J</b> The universal Jesus, or cosmic Christ of all faiths. He will unite Christianity with Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and all the other religions by claiming their messianic titles.</p>	<p> A gospel of universalism which teaches that all religions worship the same Creator God. They also await the same cosmic messiah who will unite humanity on a spiritual level.</p>

The above-mentioned false Jesuses and false gospels are quite clearly not promoted by the Holy Spirit but by deceiving spirits from Satan's kingdom. They disguise themselves cleverly and imitate the work of the Holy Spirit. Their strategy is that people should not recognise them and remain under the false impression that the power of the Holy Spirit is manifesting among them. The deceiving spirits work through false prophets who outwardly seem to be godly men who can also preach very well (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

These spirits and their human agents frequently use the name of Jesus, but they disregard the cross and do not convict people of their sin. They will rather make them laugh and do all sorts of funny things. Jesus is depicted as the one who can do mighty works for them and also give His healing and reigning power to them. Different kinds of spiritual gifts are indiscriminately offered to entire audiences.

Apart from the fact that the deceiving messages are proclaimed by false prophets who were never Christians (Mt. 7:23), the Bible also indicates that certain Christian ministers will depart from the faith that they previously confessed, and that for the sake of popularity and special spiritual gifts they will give heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1).

Peter refers to these fallen pastors who will bring in damnable heresies, thereby "denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

The shocking fact is that the false teachers are not rejected because of their heresies, but they will enjoy considerable public support. Because of their popularity and 'success' they will become puffed-up and arrogant, and ridicule the evangelical preachers who do not support the new movement because they still uphold the sound doctrine of the way of the cross. The false teachers of our time even go as far as to say that those who oppose them are resisting the Holy Spirit and are provoking the anger of God.

There are a number of reasons why the false teachers enjoy large public support. Many of them do spectacular signs and wonders, thereby leaving the impression that they have been specially anointed by God for their ministry in these crucial last days. They promise the most tremendous powers and gifts to all people, and draw large crowds with their sensational statements and promises.

Another reason why people like the false teachers is because they all have sub-Christian standards for salvation. It is not made difficult for members of the public to become Christians and enjoy the blessings of God. In most cases they don't even have to confess their sins. These lies and Christian fables suit most of the people. They quickly adapt to the distorted views and lowered standards, and strongly support the popular false apostles who comfort and entertain their audiences without disturbing them about their sins.

Paul exhorted Timothy to keep on proclaiming the true gospel, and endure the afflictions and tribulations that will be imposed upon him by the false teachers who are deceiving the people with their many lies and false doctrines:

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Tim. 4:2-5).

A person who stands firm on his Christian convictions and engages in spiritual warfare will endure afflictions and persecution because of the truth. Confrontation with the forces of darkness is inevitable if you do the work of the Lord. Paul says: “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). Take up the sword of the Word and the shield of faith, and keep on resisting the devil and all the plots and lies that have been devised to undermine the kingdom of God.

# DIVISIONS IN SATAN'S ARMY

In the preceding discussion, attention was focused on the different strategies that the devil follows in attacking people. It should also be mentioned that in Satan's army there appears to be six specialised divisions assigned with the task of planning operations and establishing his kingdom:

## **J Division for personal attacks**

People are targeted as individuals to deceive, oppose, accuse, tempt, rob, possess, or kill them. These attacks are not always successful, but Satan's army never gives up.

## **J Division for the control of interest groups**

All interest groups in society are targeted by this division to induce them to accept perverted, humanistic ideologies and principles, and therefore to pursue antichristian objectives. These man-oriented ideologies are doctrines of demons and include humanism, socialism, communism, relativism, secularism, pragmatism, evolutionism, and various other philosophies. Many governments, political parties, educational systems and other interest groups are based on deceitful, worldly thought systems of this nature, in which the knowledge of God is not recognised. It is part of our duty as Christians to resist and expose ideological deception:

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8).

## **J Division to infiltrate and deceive the Christian church**

Satan's biggest resistance comes from the body of Spirit-filled Christians that constitutes the true Church of Christ. He profoundly hates them and applies every possible strategy to confuse and deceive them. It suits him perfectly if they lose their spiritual power and become carnal believers who criticise and oppose one another (1 Cor. 3:1-3). It is sad that so many Christians cannot even discern a spirit of deception among themselves, and naively accept anything:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets have gone out into the world... Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 Jn. 4:1, 4).

### **J The division to promote non-Christian religions**

In the non-Christian religions, many false gods and spirits are worshipped. They are all demons in disguise. The sad fact is that those who practise these religions do not know that they are paying homage to devils:

“What say I then? That the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I *say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils” (1 Cor. 10:19-20).

### **J The division for occult practices**

All occult practices are gateways to a mystical supernatural sphere which is the abode of Satan and his deceiving spirits. People who open themselves to such things are not opposing the Evil One, but have already been taken captive by him. Examples of such practices are astrology, fortune-telling, Transcendental Meditation, astral projection, clairvoyance, holistic health, sorcery, and magic. The entire New Age Movement is occult in nature and comes from Satan.

### **J The division to promote Satan’s personal worship**

The most naked form of Satan’s spiritual deception is where he reveals himself to people who are so blinded that they are prepared to worship him as Lucifer and Satan. They sacrifice animals and even human beings to Satan, drink blood and participate in the most horrible orgies in honour of the Prince of Darkness. These people become demon-possessed and need special assistance and knowledge of spiritual warfare to be liberated from their evil bondage. Do not expose yourself to the filthy details of Satanism and thereby descend into the defiling depths of Satan (Rev. 2:24).

# SPIRITUAL WEAPONS

We are commanded to make use of the weapons that God has provided to us for the battle against Satan and all his evil devices. It is not necessary to be spiritually deprived or forced into retreat:

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds...” (1 Cor. 10:4).

The following weapons are mentioned in the Bible and should be actively used to resist the devil:

## 1. Faith

We are involved in a battle of faith. We must have an unshakeable faith in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, and also in the conquering power of His Holy Spirit. Our faith must continuously be strengthened as we grow up to spiritual maturity. The victory belongs to the Lord, and we must put our trust in Him to deliver us:

“Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith” (1 Jn. 5:4).

“Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12).

Faith in the victory of the Lord Jesus on the cross will make you more than a conqueror.

## 2. The Blood of the Lamb

“And they overcame him (the Antichrist) by the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 12:11).

Base your victory and protection on the shed blood of the Lamb! On the cross He has broken the power of sin and set you free:

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

Through His death Jesus conquered Satan (Heb. 2:14).

### 3. Christian Testimony

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Rev. 12:11).

The bold and fearless testimony of a believer not only confirms his faith in the Lord Jesus, but also ensures the retreat of the enemy:

“...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10).

Another form of confessing your faith with your mouth is by praising the Lord. To sing His praises and exalt His wonderful and conquering Name scares the enemy away and releases power within you, “for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh. 8:10).

### 4. Prayer

A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian. Intercession according to the will of God, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, can really change things. It moves the mighty arm of God and brings many blessings to people:

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jas. 5:16).

Always guard against inactivity in your prayer life, as well as other areas of your service to the Lord. Idleness is the parent of vice, and the enemy will certainly exploit situations like this.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. The victory belongs to Him!

## 5. The Word

The Word of God is a mighty weapon in the battle against temptation, deception, unbelief, and other attacks that the enemy may launch on us:

“Take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

The Word of God must govern your heart, renew your mind, and instil its divine nature and principles in your life (Ps. 119:11). In the light of God’s Word the true nature of your thoughts and intentions will be revealed:

“For the Word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing [apart] of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

When the devil tempted the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, He refuted all the deceptive and distorted statements of Satan from the Scriptures: In the correct application of the Word He replied by saying, “It is written...”

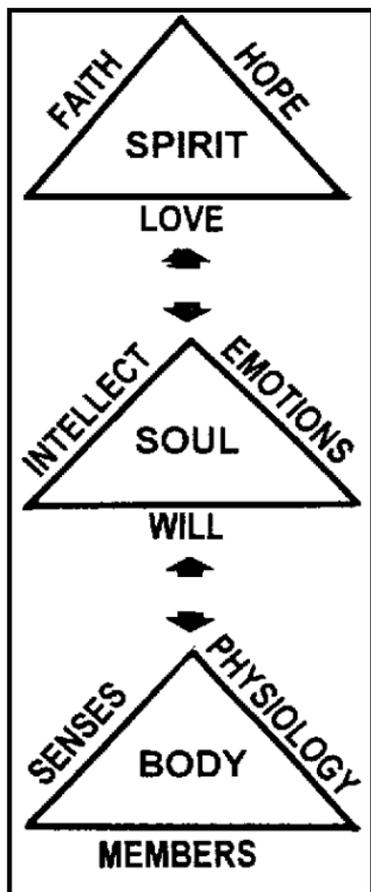
The quotation of biblical truths settles a matter beyond any doubt or further arguments. The Word of God has an authority that no one can challenge. Do you know the Bible and do you apply the promises and commandments of God to all your circumstances and needs?

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35-39).

“But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations” (Rev. 2:25-26).

# COMPLETE SANCTIFICATION

From the preceding discussion it is obvious that only a sanctified, Spirit-filled person is well prepared for the battle against the forces of darkness that continually exploit the carnal nature of man. Paul mentions all three aspects of human life as relevant to the process of sanctification and strengthening against the attacks levelled at him:



“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you who also will do *it*” (1 Thes. 5:23-24).

## THE SPIRIT

The spiritual life of a Christian is characterised by faith, hope and love. From God’s perspective, all unsaved persons are spiritually dead. They do have a spirit but it is distorted, wrongly inclined and, if not made alive by God, it leads to eternal death and damnation.

## Faith

The child of God is spiritually alive because there is a bond of faith between him and the

Lord. Note that a living faith is much more than the mental acceptance of the principles and foundations of the Christian faith. You must confess all the sins of which the

Holy Spirit convicts you and embrace the Lord Jesus as Saviour. Then you will be made spiritually alive by being born again to live the life of a believer.

As with the other gifts of the Spirit, faith is dynamic in its nature. You can have more or less of it. It is precisely here that the challenge lies to become spiritually mature:

“...till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness *of* Christ: that we henceforth be no longer children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:13-14).

Satan will attack your faith in God with full force. He will try to destroy or weaken it by introducing doubt, fear, and other negative thoughts. Things may happen to you that cause you to wonder whether the Lord is still with you and whether He really loves you and cares for you. It is a terrible sin to doubt the nearness and love of the Lord during trials and afflictions. In so doing you are conceding victory to the enemy (cf. Ex. 17:7). When we allow Satan to sow bitterness and doubt in our hearts we will grieve the Holy Spirit and become discontent and even bitter against God. In this state of mind we will adversely affect others around us and pull them down spiritually (Heb. 12:14-15).

A doubter doesn't have a meaningful spiritual life. Least of all is the effectiveness of his prayer life:

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man *is* unstable in all his ways” (Jas. 1:6-8).

“Without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).

We should resolutely press on in the battle of faith:

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6:12).

## Hope

Paul exhorts us that:

“...we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Heb. 6:18-19).

Is the flame of hope still burning high in your heart? Are you looking forward to the coming again of Jesus and eternal life that is awaiting you? Is this hope the anchor for your soul in the stormy and troubled waters through which you have to find your way? Cling tightly to the hope ahead. It is a blessed and purifying hope that will motivate you to trust in the Lord always and stay on course in your spiritual life:

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a [special] people, zealous of good works” (Tit. 2:11-14).

“And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 Jn. 3:3).

Satan will persistently try to weaken or obliterate your expectation of the Second Coming in order to reduce your spiritual motivation and endurance. He doesn't want you to pursue holiness and effective service while waiting for the appearance of the heavenly Bridegroom. He will do everything possible to deceive you into believing the amillennialist school of prophecy in which prophecies on the Second Coming are spiritualised and applied to a vague future.

When hope in the Second Coming has been effectively weakened, the devil replaces it with secular objectives, e.g. the promotion of the humanistic peace programmes of the new world order, as well as the unholy unification of an alliance of world religions. In this way a man-made Utopia is construed which excludes the only real solution for this sinful and sick world, namely, the coming of the Prince of Peace and the physical manifestation of His Kingdom on earth.

Hope is a very important aspect of a Christian's spiritual life. Apart from the long-term expectation of the coming of the Kingdom, you should put your trust in the Lord for the needs of your everyday life, also in humanly-speaking impossible situations (2 Cor. 1:8-10; Rom. 5:5, 13).

## Love

As saved people, we are rooted and grounded in the love of Jesus Christ. Of these three – faith, hope, and love – it is undoubtedly love that is the greatest. I am referring to God's divine *agape* love that reaches out to the world in its desperate need. Human love is totally distorted and self-directed because it always wants what others have. You desire your neighbour's house, his car, his job, his money, and in many cases even his wife.

In the revelation of God's love He took the first step by reaching out to us in our sinful condition. Jesus paid the death-penalty imposed upon all sinners in order that we may be forgiven and set free from the bondage of sin. The Holy Spirit convicts people of their sinfulness and lost state. He makes them aware of Jesus Christ's love for them and of His saving grace. He offers them the choice of either accepting or rejecting Christ, and gives them the faith that is needed to accept Him as their Saviour.

Faith is, therefore, only the means to an end, namely, to become connected to the love and mercy of God in order that it can be imputed to you. Love is still the greatest issue involved. It is the basic reason why God saves you and gives you the gift of faith so that you can accept His love.

The love of God must become the foundation of your whole life. You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This *agape* love must reach out to others and be the essence of your relationship with your fellow man.

The love of God will also enable you to defend yourself against all the feelings and acts of hate that the enemy can muster against you. The power of true love can't be conquered: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). To share in the victory of love you must have a heart filled with it:

"...the love of God [has been poured out] in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5).

## THE SOUL

The human soul is the terrain of hectic battles against the enemy. The following three aspects are considered here:

### Intellect

The human mind is an important faculty through which we gain knowledge of truths as well as lies which penetrate to the depths of our souls. Through the mind and the senses of sight and hearing we receive the gospel of Christ and come to faith in Him:

"So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

A large quantity of lies and evil teachings also enter man's mind from outside. Satan uses it to create confusion and to establish lies in the hearts of men. Is your mind under the control of the Holy Spirit, or is it a storage for lies, vile thoughts, materialism and deceptive teachings? God's Spirit will enlighten the eyes of your understanding (Eph. 1: 18). The god of this age (the devil) has blinded the minds of the unbelievers and he keeps on deceiving them by way of lies, evil suggestions, and false doctrines.

The plans and strategies whereby the enemy attempts

to deceive us intellectually and spiritually, must be unmasked, and every thought taken into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Otherwise, the devil and his lying cronies will slip in unawares and sow confusion in our minds and souls, thereby blinding us to the truth.

## **Will**

Although the human will is neutral and allows us to make moral choices, it only reacts to the evil and worldly desires of the fallen nature of man if it is not exposed to the truth. For this reason the Bible admonishes us to gain knowledge about the will of God, and to commit ourselves to do it:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

Pray and ask God to reveal the deeper aspects of His will to you and to work in you “to will and to do according to His good pleasure” (Eph. 1:9; Phil. 2:13). Pray also that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will (Col. 1:9), that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Col. 4:12).

Are you making progress in this regard, or is the devil constantly succeeding in driving you to doing the will of the flesh and to gratify the cravings of your sinful nature? Ask God to free you from the snare of the devil if he has taken you captive to do his will (2 Tim. 2:26).

## **Emotions**

In the spiritual battle, many a soul has been paralysed and defeated on the emotional level. Under conditions of tension and disappointment emotional depression is permitted to develop, resulting in negative thoughts such as discouragement, apathy, and even a total loss of interest in life itself. There are also active negative attitudes that are used by the devil to attack people. These include hate, aggression, jealousy and an unforgiving spirit.

Human emotions must come under the control of the

Holy Spirit; otherwise our carnal temperaments, stirred by the enemy, will reign supreme. In a surrendered life you will discover that the joy of the Lord replaces and overcomes all negative experiences, observations and feelings. Paul, even under the most appalling and depressing prison conditions, could say with conviction: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).

Are you filled with the joy, gentleness, meekness and temperance of the Holy Spirit? Or do you still have an untamed temper that can easily flare up if you are provoked by the enemy?

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32).

It is a well established fact that highly emotional reactions do not lead to sound and lasting decisions. Many people who are emotionally charged, do things on the spur of the moment that they later regret. Even if the decisions were good, people find it difficult to uphold them after their emotional feelings have subsided.

Emotions are good and functional, but they must never be allowed to reign supreme and to overrule intellectual reasoning and the quiet conviction of the Holy Spirit in the decision-making process.

## **THE BODY**

The human body is likewise the territory where enemy attacks occur in the battle against the forces of darkness. Without a body, the spirit and mind of a person would not be able to express themselves. Any malfunctioning in this sphere would obviously also suit the devil's plans. The following three aspects of the body can be seen as targets:

### **Senses**

The five senses of the body are gateways through which a great variety of influences can affect you:

- ◆ Hearing is the door of information which admits both

truths and lies into the mind. The cognitive processing of information, as well as the decisions taken in the light of the facts that were gathered, are of the utmost importance to determine the ultimate position taken by a person. A wide range of good and evil dispositions can emerge from this process.

- ◆ The eye-gate is of equal importance in the assimilation of information in visual form. Just think of all the deceptive, pornographic, and propagandistic publications, as well as television and videos, that are being used by the devil to defile the minds of people – and also to adulterate the minds and lives of many Christians who wilfully and carelessly expose themselves to these evil influences (cf. 1 Jn. 2:15-16).
- ◆ An undisciplined sense of taste can lead to gluttony and overindulgence in food and drink. Much harm can be done if this sense is not properly controlled.
- ◆ The devil is perverting the sense of feeling through the use of alcohol, drugs and sexual perversion. Many people become addicted and are the slaves of the sensation of feeling. They are unable to control its craving.
- ◆ The sense of smell also plays a role, as it can awaken a dormant appetite to entice people to indulge in the wrong use of food or drink.

## Physiology

The healthy functioning of the body is an important asset and a blessing from God. To remain healthy and derive the fullest potential of the body is indeed a privilege. Protect your body against all adverse influences.

Disease has always been a major threat to the health of people. Although there is a scientific explanation for the causes of most diseases, it is also believed that the devil can impose a spirit of disease upon a person. Even if this fact can't be established beyond any doubt, disease is still a detrimental phenomenon that must be prevented by all

means. One of the means is prayer. It is obvious that the devil will continue to attack the bodies of people in various ways, and he must be resisted in faith.

## Members

The members of your body have the ability to perform certain functions – good or bad. You can work, write, speak, think, and do various other things with your body. To be completely sanctified demands that the *old man* (the old, sinful nature) be crucified in order that you may be set free from the bondage of sin to serve the Lord in a new life of dedication and service:

“Knowing this, that your old man is crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6).

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom. 6:12-13).

The devil will entice you to sin with your body, but you must resist him because your body now belongs to God and should be dedicated to His service:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which* is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

Defeat the devil at each level of the battle in your spirit, soul and body. Consecrate your entire being to God for the sanctified, victorious life you have been called to live.

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Rom. 13:12).