

## **Faith is the Victory**

(God's Plan for Victory)

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

### **Victors – Not Victims**

The believer in Christ can claim and experience victory over worldly sins, temptations, the flesh, and the devil (Romans 8:37 – “we are more than conquerors”; Eph. 6:10 – “Be strong in the Lord”; 1 Cor. 10:13 – “God is faithful”; 2 Pet. 2:9 – “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations”; 2 Tim. 4:18, “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work”; Luke 1:37 - “For with God nothing shall be impossible”; John 8:32 - “free indeed”; Rom. 6:13, “yield yourselves to God” and 1 John 5:18 – “keepeth himself”). When Jesus died upon the cross He won a great victory over Satan, sin, and the world system (Col. 2:15; John 12:31-32; 16:11, 33; Matt. 12:25-29; Rom. 6:6) and so did the believer (1 John 2:14; 3:8; 5:4; Gal. 1:4; Col. 1:13; Rom. 6:6) because he died with Christ (Gal. 2:20 – “I am crucified with Christ” and Rom. 6:1-6 – “planted together in the likeness of his death”). Victory is assured to the believer on the basis of the victory that Christ provided through His work upon cross.

Where does the resurrection of Christ fit into the picture? When Jesus rose again from the grave He secured this victory proving that it was sealed and final and could never be undone (1 Cor. 15:3-4 – “he rose again the third day”). Without the resurrection of Christ there is no victory over sin, death, or the devil (1 Cor. 15:57). Prior to the resurrection of Christ Satan had the authority and legal claim to demand judgment for the sinner and keep the saints from Heaven and God's presence in the inner chamber of the earth. But when Jesus came He died and rose again from the grave to secure the freedom of the captives under Satan's demands and legal authority. Prior to the finished work of the cross and the resurrection Satan had the legal authority to demand that sinners should remain separated from God and be judged for their sins. Let us remember one thing. Victory is *supplied* through the death of Christ but it is *secured*

through the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection was the guarantee of the Father's acceptance of all Christ's saving and victorious work, which He had gained upon the cross (Rom. 5:10 – "we shall be saved by his life"). The resurrection is God's triumphant note of victory. The resurrection can be viewed as *God's receipt* proving that the sin debt on Calvary was paid in full and that complete victory over sin, death, and the devil was won through His Son's sacrificial death. The Lord Jesus Christ defeated Satan at Calvary. *Proof of this is the open tomb!* The empty tomb provides irrefutable evidence that Jesus defeated the devil by His death. Christ defeated Satan by stealing the previous authority Satan had to keep men in the realm of death (Heb. 2:14) and demonstrated His victory by rescuing those saints in the center of the earth and taking them into His presence in Heaven (Eph. 4:8).

In addition, Christ's resurrection guarantees the believing sinner today full and final acceptance in God's presence (Heb. 7:25). The devil's accusations no longer have any weight in God's presence. Christ's resurrection guarantees that our victory over the devil's power is secured (1 John 2:13-14). We can overcome the devil today because the Lord Jesus overcame death and the devil completely and forever. Today we live with God's resurrection power working on the inside of us to guarantee victory over the Evil One (Rom. 6:4-5). Christ arose triumphantly demonstrating the victory that He had won over Satan when He died upon the cross. Without Christ's resurrection the faith that we place in Christ for salvation and victory, which He gained upon the cross, would be an empty and worthless faith that has no meaning or content (1 Cor. 15:17 – "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain").

Christ's resurrection proved to Satan and the entire spirit world that Jesus was both Lord and King and now had the power (dominion and authority) over the realm of death (Rev. 1:18) which the Evil One had previously held over man since the Genesis Fall (Heb. 2:14). Christ's resurrection was living proof that Jesus had broken Satan's authority to keep mankind in the realm of death or separation from God's presence, prior to the cross (Eph. 4:8), and even after the cross, as Satan keeps mankind bound to sin and spiritual death (Eph. 2:1-2). However, through Christ's resurrection believers now have their salvation secured (Rom. 4:25; Heb. 9:24) and a direct route to

Heaven (Eph. 4:8; John 14:1-6) when they die which means that they are immediately ushered into God's presence (Acts 7:55-56). Because of Christ's resurrection the believer's death, which was previously separation from God in the center of the earth, has now become a friend that takes them to God. No longer does death keep God's saints from His presence (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23). Jesus secured the believer's victory over Satan and robbed him of his legal jurisdiction or authority over the realm of death when He rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:57).

“Up from the grave He arose,  
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes  
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,  
And He lives forever with His saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose.”

Essentially, the resurrection of Christ permitted Christ to apply the victories or accomplishments of the cross to the believer and established the believer with a legal residency in Heaven (Eph. 1:3; Phil. 3:20). Without the resurrection of Christ, the believer would have no legal residency in Heaven, no hope of entering Heaven after death, and any basis or foundation for our victory over Satan. So the resurrection serves as an integral part of our victory by securing the believer's victory over the devil's power, authority, and legal claim over their lives. However, it's the death of Jesus Christ that provided the ground of our victory over Satan (Col. 2:15). It's liberating to know that God's people have actually shared in Christ's victory over Satan, sin, and the world system, which He obtained on the cross (“his cross” - Col. 2:15) or through His death (“through death he might destroy” – Heb. 2:14). In view of the believer's union with Christ's death (“the likeness of his death” – Rom. 6:5) we have participated in His victory over sin (Rom. 6:1-6) and the devil (Heb. 2:14). The conquest of Calvary should forever be upon the mind and heart of the believer. Jesus keep me near the cross!

“Near the cross! O Lamb of God,  
Bring its scenes before me;  
Help me walk from day to day,  
With its shadows o'er me.”

Something else needs to be reemphasized in connection with the resurrection. Because of the resurrection believers presently have God's dynamic power residing within them through the application of Christ's risen life and victory to their lives ("we shall also live with him" – Rom. 6:8 and "Christ liveth in me" – Gal. 2:20). The believer's union with the resurrected Christ guarantees them a moment-by-moment supply of resurrection power ("the power of his resurrection" – Phil. 3:10) so that they might live victoriously for God. Nevertheless, the foundation of victory lies in the cross and since the believer has shared in Christ's victory upon the cross he is already an overcomer ("this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" – 1 John 5:4). 1 John 2:14 also declares, "... ye have overcome the wicked one." This is because Jesus Christ has already overcome the world and defeated Satan's system that is against God when He died upon the cross (Col. 2:15 - " And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.").

Though Christ's death the devil's plan to keep people in the realm of spiritual death (Heb. 2:14 – "subject to death") and under the power of sin (Heb. 2:15 – bondage") was thwarted. Jesus broke this devilish plan and provided the way of victory over the devil to them that put their faith in Him (1 John 5:4). Because of this we can now live free from the devil's fear and power through "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe" (Eph. 1:19). The word "power" suggests that you possess a spiritual dynamic living force for everyday living. Instead of the devil's authority and power controlling your life you can now allow Christ to control your life.

When Jesus died upon the cross he marched in triumph over Satan and his forces and won a great victory over the powers of darkness. Their plan and power to keep men in death and the power of sin was thwarted. Jesus defeated Satan in every way when He died upon the cross – in the realm of His authority, power, and personal claims over our lives. Satan apparently secured his legal authority over man when Adam turned against God in the garden (Gen. 3). Satan had devised a plan for man to sin and when Adam sinned Satan took control over the lives of men (Rom. 5:12) making them slaves to sin (Eph. 2:1-3) and to himself (Heb. 2:15; Col. 1:13). And then, as the accuser (Rev. 12:10), Satan demanded that men be judged for their sins and remain

separated from God's presence forever in the realm of death. In this way he had "power of death" over mankind (Heb. 2:14). It seemed hopeless. Man had no case before God. **But then Jesus came!** "But we see Jesus..." (Heb. 2:9). When Jesus came and "tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2:9) this resulted in "bringing many sons unto glory" which contextually means to bring many people back to their original spiritual destiny, which was lost in the Garden of Eden. It was a destiny to possess spiritual life, live for God, and rule the world in a regenerate state as God first intended man to do (Heb. 2:7). The latter (man's rule) will be actualized in the kingdom ("the world to come – Heb. 2:5) but the former (spiritual life and destiny) is ours to claim right now! Jesus is the "captain" (Heb. 2:10) or pathfinder! He is the pioneer who has come to set mankind free from Satan's authority and power and restore man's lost spiritual destiny, or as Acts 26:18 states: "To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Jesus is the "captain" or Pathfinder or Way Maker and one day He made a way for me to be set free from Satan's tyranny, rule of terror, and power. It was the day He died on Calvary's Cross.

"Rouse then, soldiers! rally round the banner!  
Ready, steady, pass the word along;  
Onward, forward shout aloud, Hosanna!  
Christ is the Captain of the mighty throng."

When Jesus died upon the cross He defeated Satan *strategically* in his attempt to keep man under the realm of his legal authority (Heb. 2:14), *spiritually* in that a large portion of people would be delivered from the power of his kingdom of spiritual wickedness and darkness (Col. 1:13; Heb. 2:15) and *eternally* since the devil's doom is sealed in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10; Matt. 25:41). The lightening related to Satan's fall has already occurred (Luke 10:18) which means the thunder is next! The next time the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his future! Nevertheless, when Jesus died upon the cross Satan was robbed of His legal jurisdiction over the lives of God's saints. His *accusations* designed to condemn us forever no longer hold any weight in God's presence (Rev. 12:10; Col. 2:14; Heb. 7:25). His *plan* to keep us in death and separate us from God's

presence forever has been overruled (Heb. 2:14) and His *desire* to keep people in bondage to sin and his evil clutches has been thwarted (Heb. 2:15; 1 John 3:8). As a result, the believer must no longer fear death (“fear of death” – Heb. 2:15) since Jesus Christ bore the penalty of judgment (hell) that was associated with death (Gal. 3:10) and since death now takes the believer into the presence of God. For those who do not accept Christ as their substitute, Satan’s original charge against them stands. But those of us who trust in Christ as Savior have been delivered from all of the devil’s charges and his kingdom of darkness. Dear friend, we have been delivered from the devil’s jurisdiction over our lives and been granted complete freedom. And it’s all because of Calvary’s cross. Hallelujah for the cross!

“Twas here the debt was paid,  
Hallelujah! hallelujah!  
Our sins on Jesus laid,  
Hallelujah! hallelujah!  
So round the cross we sing,  
Of Christ our offering,  
Of Christ our living King,  
Hallelujah for the cross!”

God made no secret of His Son’s success over Satan in that an open spectacle was made out of Satan’s defeat in the spirit world (Col. 2:15 – “made a show of them openly”). On the cross Jesus made a public spectacle or display of Satan and his demons - as a victor displaying the spoils of war. In Luke 11:22 Jesus predicted His victory over Satan and likens this victory to dividing the enemies spoils before all which would signify utter defeat: “But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.”

1 Peter 3:18-19 says, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” Even prior to the resurrection Jesus was seen preaching His victorious message of the cross to the wicked spirits that were bound in the inner compartment of the earth (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) because of some dastardly act they did prior to

the Genesis Flood (1 Pet. 3:20; Gen. 6:1-2, 5). It's here that Jesus proclaimed or announced His victory and the doom of demons. The point of this victory march and message is this. Satan is a defeated foe and every demon knows it (Matt. 8:29). Satan was rendered powerless at the cross of Christ. His authority, power, and jurisdiction over our lives have been canceled out and his doom is sealed. Jesus spoke about the victorious event of the cross as He looked forward to His death - "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

“Fainting soldier of the Lord,  
Hear His sweet, inspiring word;  
I have conquered all thy foes,  
I have suffered all thy woes.  
Struggling soldier, trust in Me.  
I have overcome for thee!”

Jesus has overcome the world! And Christ's victory now becomes our victory. We share in Christ's victory as an overcomer, since we were united or joined with Him in His victorious death upon the cross over sin and Satan. We are already victors! **We don't have to pray for victory or beg for victory.** When going to prayer we must thank God for the victory we already possess and pray for discernment and strength to overcome sin and our enemy - the devil. Through aggressive prayer we must by faith claim our victory that we already have in Christ, plead the promises and truths of God's word (Matt. 4:1-11; Eph. 6:17-18; Ps. 119:76), and rely upon His power and inner work of grace that He wants to do in our hearts and lives (Phil. 2:13). Defeatism becomes a mockery of the victory of Christ. Our privilege and assignment as God's people is to stand in the victory (Eph. 6:13 – “having done all, to stand”) that Jesus gives and keep our eyes fixed upon Him (Heb. 12:2 – “Looking unto Jesus”).

We are not to ask God's children, “Do you have victory?” This is the wrong question. We are to ask them, “Are you standing in the victory you already have in Christ?” Some Christians who have certain plaguing sins say that they are “born this way” or “It's in my genes” or “I'm a helpless victim.” These are words of doubt, disbelief and defeatism. No Christian is a helpless pawn to sin and Satan. The most persistent sin can be dislodged. **We are already victors in Christ** (1 John 5:4). **We are victors – not victims!** Dr. Alan Redpath

has often said, "Let's keep our chins up and our knees down - we're on the victory side!"

### **Faith is the Victory**

The actual victory over Satan and sin is provided by Christ's death (John 12:31; Col. 2:15; Rom. 6:6) and this victory is then communicated to our daily lives in a practical way through *faith* in Christ's victorious provision upon the cross (Rom. 6:3, 5-7, 11a) and the application of Christ's resurrection power to our lives (Rom. 6:4-5, 8, 9-12; Gal. 2:20). Today the believer must know that he is raised with Christ and shares His resurrection power to overcome sin. Christ's victory is worked out in our lives in a practical way through faith. We must accept by faith that we are already victors in Christ (1 John 5:4) and claim our victorious position, ground and inheritance in Christ (Romans 6:1-14; Eph. 1:3, 19-23; 2:5). Faith is the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4 - "even our faith" and Eph. 6:16 - "Above all, taking the shield of faith").

Satan wants to attack and weaken our faith (1 Thess. 3:5) since faith is the way we successfully overcome the Evil One ("the shield of faith" – Eph. 6:16). 1 John 5:4 says, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Since the human spirit ("whatsoever") in the believer's life has overcome the world system that is against God, through the new birth and subsequent implantation of God's life and nature, each believer can experience a life of victory and spiritual blessing. The Bible is teaching that the believer's overcoming victory is assured through the new birth even though the conflict is still raging.

What does it mean to overcome? It means to subdue, conquer or prevail. In the context of the Christian life, it means to have victory! To overcome means to have victory! A believer is already an overcomer ("the victory that overcometh" – aorist tense – an action that has actually taken place or occurred). The believer is already a world-conqueror by means of his initial faith in Christ. But this verse suggests that such faith, which brought the believer into this position of overcoming victory, at the time of salvation ("even our faith"), is the secret of continuing victory. Our overcoming victory, which happened



at the time of regeneration, has lasting victorious results, which are applied to our lives when we continue to express daily faith in Christ's victorious person and work. It was faith that brought us into this place or position of victory and faith that will keep us living victoriously throughout our Christian life.

Faith is the underlying basis for all victory in the Christian life. We must accept *where* we are in Christ (the heavenlies - Eph. 1:3), *what* we have in Christ ("all spiritual blessings"), and *who* we are in Christ (a victor), and then by faith apply Christ's victory to our daily lives. We must also possess faith in God's Son for daily power and victory (Gal. 2:20 – "I live by the faith of the Son of God"). Faith is a simple thing. It is a childlike thing (Matt. 18:3-4). For the Christian, *to trust is to triumph*. Someone has called victorious faith "*the power of positive believing*." **You can't live beyond what you believe!** It's not what you feel but what you believe that counts. When Satan came upon the scene in Eden his subtle plan was to undermine a person's simple faith in God. This is still his plan today.

Dr. Wendell Heller used to say:

"God wants us to remain simple in faith and singular in focus."

How very true this is! God wants us to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). The child of God must believe what God says is true (Rom. 6:11- "reckon") and by faith claim his victorious inheritance in Christ – the defeat of sin through Christ's death, the resurrection power of Christ, and authority over the enemy (Josh. 1:3 - "that have I given unto you"). We should exercise faith and patience and claim these promises for ourselves! Like Caleb and Joshua, we must believe God's promise for victory and want to go in and claim the land! Numbers 13:30, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

Faith is the victory. But this victory can only be experienced and maintained in our everyday living when we put our faith into action. Faith cannot remain passive, dormant or inactive. It must be a constant and conscious dependency upon Christ's indwelling power through the Spirit's ministry of revealing Christ to the believer ("...to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" – Eph. 3:16-17). Through a diligent

exercise of faith, we must claim Christ's victory over sin (Rom. 6) and Satan (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14) as our own victory. Our faith must continue to rely upon the power of the resurrected Christ (Phil. 3:10) and meditate upon the promises of God's Word (2 Pet. 1:4). By faith we must apply the liberating and sanctifying truth of God's Word to our lives (John 17:17; Eph. 6:14; Ps. 119:9-11; Matt. 4:1-11; Joshua 1:8; Phil. 4:8, 2 Pet. 1:4; James 1:25).

In summary, victory is maintained by possessing faith in God's indwelling power (Eph. 6:10; 2 Pet. 1:3; Phil. 2:13; 2 Cor. 12:9) through the ministry of the Holy Spirit who is God and reveals God's power to our lives (Rom. 15:9 – “the power of the Spirit of God”; “Now the Lord is that Spirit” – 2 Cor. 3:17; Acts 1:8). Then too, victory is maintained by expressing faith in the provision of God's armor (Eph. 6:10-18), relying on the blood-bought way of freedom (Rev. 12:11- “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”), and the new grace way of victory and freedom for our lives. The New Testament features of grace include the believer's union with Christ (Rom. 6:1-14 – “under grace”), the sanctifying feature of the death of Christ (Titus 2:11-12 – grace “teaching us”), and the operation of the Spirit of Christ, which is mentioned in the same context of grace (Rom. 8:2; Phil. 1:19 – “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”). It's the Spirit who makes the indwelling life of Christ, or God's life (“the Spirit of him” – Rom. 8:11), a new supernatural force of daily deliverance (Phil. 2:13), power (Eph. 1:9) and fruit (Gal. 5:22-23). Lastly, this victory is also experienced and appropriated to our lives by continuing in the ministry of believing prayer (1 Pet. 4:7; Col. 4:2; Luke 22:40; Matt. 26:41- “Watch and pray”).

Of course, all of these channels that lead to victory involve the operation of faith – faith in the truth, faith in God's power and the ministry of the Spirit, faith in God's armor, faith in the victorious message of the blood, faith in the working of grace, and the ministry of prayer, through which we find strength and dependency upon God (1 Cor. 7:5; Heb. 2:7; 4:16). It's not enough to know that we have victory in Christ. We must seek to apply this victory to our lives by actively engaging our faith in God's riches and resources. The *principle of appropriation* is important if we are going to actually experience victory over sin and the devil. And faith is the way we appropriate victory to our lives. Faith is the victory.

“Encamped along the hills of light,  
Ye Christian soldiers, rise,  
And press the battle ere the night  
Shall veil the glowing skies.

Against the foe in vales below  
Let all our strength be hurled;  
Faith is the victory, we know,  
That overcomes the world.

Faith is the victory!  
Faith is the victory!  
O glorious victory  
That overcomes the world.”

### **Grace and Victory**

Grace promises deliverance from the enemy’s powerful temptations. Victory is experienced in our own personal lives through the manifestation of God’s inward grace, which is at work in our lives. Philippians 2:13 states in clear fashion: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.” Grace delivers us from sin and transforms our lives (sanctification). The doctrine of grace, as it relates to the death of Christ (Titus 2:11-12), and as it relates to the believer’s union with Christ (Rom. 6:1-2, 14-15), does not encourage believers to sin. This is also true in connection with the new inward working feature of God’s grace operating in the hearts and lives of people (1 Cor. 15:10; 16:23; 2 Cor. 1:2; 12:9; 13:14; Col. 1:11; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 3:7; 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:2; 3:18).

“Tho’ sorrows befall us, and Satan oppose,  
God leads His dear children along;  
Through grace we can conquer, defeat all our foes,  
God leads His dear children along.”

***The working of grace is linked to the presence of God’s life and power operating in the life of the believer.*** 2 Corinthians 9:8 says, “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good

work.” Ephesians 3:20, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” Dear friend, did you miss what was just said in these two verses? God is able! You are not able but God is able to give you complete victory.

“He’s able, He’s able, I know He’s able,  
I know my Lord is able to carry me thru.  
He healed the broken-hearted and set the captive free,  
He made the lame to walk again and caused the blind to see.  
He’s able, He’s able,  
I know He’s able,  
I know my Lord is able to carry me thru.”

New Testament grace, when understood in the framework of Scriptural contexts, speaks of several things. First, it points to the believer being identified with the death and resurrection power of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:1-14 – “under grace,” 18, 22). We must “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18) which obviously means to experience in our daily living this link and life that we have with Christ. Second, New Testament grace is understood as the working of the Spirit in the believer’s life since the reality of the believer’s union with Christ (Rom. 6:14) is actualized through this new grace feature of the ministry of the Spirit (Rom. 7:6; 8:2), which is mentioned in the same context of grace teaching (Romans 6:14), and is the distinguishing feature and hallmark of the grace dispensation (2 Cor. 3:3, 18; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 5:18).

Third, New Testament grace, as it relates to the death of Christ, also motivates us to live godly because it teaches us to hate sin, even as God hated sin, when nailing our sins to Christ upon the cross (Titus 2:11-12 – “Teaching us”). Fourth, the new working of grace also involves experiencing God’s life-changing and liberating power that works from the inside of a believer’s heart and life. Grace is seen as an inward feature (“the exceeding grace of God in you” - 2 Cor. 9:14; “according to the power that worketh in us” - Eph. 3:20). *New Testament Christianity is an inside outside work* (“for if these things be in you” - 2 Pet. 1:8; “God which worketh in you” – Phil. 2:13; “... he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ” – Phil. 1:6; “Christ in you” - Col. 1:27; “That Christ may

dwell in your hearts by faith” - Eph. 3:17; “working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight” – Heb. 13:21; “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” – Rom. 8:2). ***God’s inward grace, applied to our lives through the Spirit’s dynamic ministry (Rom. 8:2), is the transforming wonder and liberating power in the present dispensation*** (Col. 1:11 - “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power”).

“Down in the human heart,  
Crushed by the tempter,  
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;  
Touched by a loving heart,  
Wakened by kindness,  
Chords that were broken  
Will vibrate once more.”

Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." God’s liberating and empowering work of grace is experienced through prayer. 1 Cor. 10:13 promises, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man (common trials): but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able (controlled pressures); but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (conquering grace)." Did you catch that? God is faithful! Grace always makes a way of escape. God will make a way!

“Oh! Thou, God of all,  
Hear us when we call,  
Help us, one and all,  
By Thy grace;  
When the battle’s done,  
And the vict’ry won,  
May we wear the crown  
Before Thy face.”

The operation of grace in the lives of God's people spells victory - not defeat. John 1:16 says, “And of his fullness (abundance) have all we received, and grace for grace.” The Christian life is a constant repetition and reception of one evidence of God’s strengthening and

sustaining grace replacing another, much like the waves breaking on the seashore. The believer is filled with the abundance of God's presence and power!

“Filled to overflowing,  
Hearts a-glow and showing  
Christ to those who do not know Him;  
Sanctified and holy, Yielded to Him only,  
Vessels for the Master's Use.”

2 Peter 3:18 speaks of the need to “grow in grace.” In Peter's epistle the meaning of New Testament grace once again points to the quality of new life which Christ gives to the believer through His abiding presence and life (2 Pet 1:2-4). Growing in grace is linked with the “knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18) and the “knowledge of God” (2 Pet. 1:2) which is best explained as an experiential growing knowledge of Christ's personal life, nature, and power being communicated to our lives so that we “shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:8). As the believer grows in grace he will experience greater victories and become more like Christ. Romans 6:14 concludes, “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” There is victory through grace!

“Not to the strong is the battle,  
Not to the swift is the race,  
Yet to the true and the faithful  
Victory is promised through grace.”

### **The Spirit's Ministry and Victory**

The Holy Spirit carries out the new work of grace in our hearts and lives by uniting us with Jesus Christ or God's very own life (1 Cor. 12:13). Through this link with Christ the Spirit introduces the believer to the power of Jesus Christ so that we receive what is called “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19). The Spirit works “in us” (Rom. 8:4) and gives the actual assistance and power to carry out the new way of life in Christ (Gal. 5:17-18, 25). The Spirit reveals Christ to our lives and brings the truth of God's Word to our

remembrance (John 14:26; 16:12-14). Thus, the Spirit's ministry is the key feature of the grace dispensation (Rom. 7:6 – “newness of spirit”). In other words, the Spirit applies all the New Testament grace features to our lives and makes them effectively work in our daily living. The Spirit's unique indwelling ministry (Rom. 8:9) helps us to experience our daily union with Christ (Rom. 6:1-14; John 1:16-17), and apply the gracious death of Christ upon the cross (Titus 2:11-12) to our lives (Rom. 5:5). The Spirit also reveals the life of God to us inwardly (Eph. 2:22) so that His life becomes an inworking grace feature (2 Cor. 9:14). So all the new working features linked to God's grace in the present economy are actualized through the working of the Holy Spirit which is the dominant theme of the working of grace in the new dispensation of grace. And it's this new dynamic liberating truth about grace that becomes the hallmark of New Testament Christianity and the underlying structure behind all victory.

Zechariah 4:6 reminds us of the Spirit's power when saying, “... Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” We repeat. It cannot be overlooked that the Spirit's empowering (Acts 1:8), filling (Eph. 5:18), revealing (16:12-14), teaching (John 14:26) and leading ministries (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18) are the key factors for New Testament Christian living and victory (Rom. 7:6 - “newness of spirit” and 8:4 “walk ... after the Spirit”). The new ministry of the Spirit involves His permanent inward residency within the believer's life ("shall be in you" - John 14:17) in this present order (dispensation).

“Lo, the great King of kings, with healing in His wings,  
To ev'ry captive soul a full deliv'rance brings;  
And through the vacant cells the song of triumph rings;  
The Comforter has come!

The Comforter has come  
The Comforter has come!  
The Holy Ghost from Heav'n,  
The Father's promise given;  
O spread the tidings' round,  
Wherever man is found,  
The Comforter has come!”

The constant abiding presence of the Spirit provides continual power to serve God and allows the believer to experience liberty from sin's power in his life. This ministry is called the filling or fullness of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that we receive the Spirit after we are saved in a "post-conversion" traumatic experience. This is because we receive His abiding presence at the moment of salvation (Gal. 4:6; Eph. 2:22; Acts 15:8). Rather, the filling of fullness of the Spirit means that we must allow the Spirit's residency in our lives to control us and empower us (Eph. 5:18; Luke 4:1). *The believer cannot get more of the Spirit but the Spirit can get more of the believer.* We must walk in the power and provision of the Spirit for daily victory. The Spirit's inward residency is also designed to produce Christlikeness within the believer's life (2 Cor. 3:18 – "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"). This occurs in our lives as the Holy Spirit frees us from sin's power and allows Christ's holy and righteous life to manifest itself within the believer.

When the believer places faith in Christ's victorious provision, the promises of the Word, and activates the ministry of aggressive prayer (Eph. 6:18), the Spirit then applies the victory of Christ (Rom. 8:2; Phil. 1:19) and the witness about the blood of Christ to our lives (1 John 5:4-6), which frees us from sin's power (1 John 5:6; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:22-23). The Holy Spirit also applies the word of Christ (Col. 3:16) or the Bible to our lives, through His constant word-directed ministry (Eph. 6:17; 1 Pet. 1:22; John 14:17; 16:13). Victory is maintained by walking in the Spirit's power and provision for our lives (Gal. 5:25 - "walk in the Spirit" and Eph. 5:18 - "Be filled with the Spirit") instead of grieving (Eph. 4:30) and quenching His ministry in our lives (1 Thess. 5:19). Dear friend, don't put out the fire! We need the active ministry of the Spirit in our lives in order to have daily victory. Isaiah 59:19 echoes the victorious truth, "... When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him."

It's the internal ministry of the Spirit ("in us" – Rom. 8:4) that must be relied upon for victory in the present order. The Holy Spirit is seeking to change us from the inside to the outside ("I will put my spirit within you" – Ezek. 36:27). *The ministry of grace changes the heart!* Ephesians 3:16 says, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." God's entire plan of victory comes to fruition because of



the Spirit's inward residency and work. The Spirit writes the new nature or sensitivity of God upon our hearts (Ezek. 36:26 - "a new spirit"; 2 Cor. 3:3 – written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ... in the fleshly tables of the heart; Heb. 10:16 - "I will put my laws into their hearts") and then provides us with the actual power to obey the new drives, determinations, and dictates of the new nature (Ezek. 36:27 – "cause you to walk in my statutes"). The Spirit is the Divine applicator of victory that produces "the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5) in the lives of God's people (righteousness, holiness, spiritual fruit).

The marvel of God's new dispensational work of the Spirit's victorious rule and operation in the lives of His people is spelled out in Romans 8:1-4 which reads: "**There is therefore now no condemnation** (no adverse judicial sentence - *contextually* - the believer during his present lifetime is no longer in an unregenerate state where he is judicially sentenced to a life of servitude to sin and mastery by the old disposition and way of life "when we were in the flesh" - Rom. 7:5. Instead, the believer is now "dead to sin" - Rom. 6:1 - and "freed from sin" - Rom. 6:7, 18) **to them which are in Christ Jesus** (the place of our spiritual union with Christ, where we share in the victory of His death – "planted together in the likeness of his death" – Rom. 6:5; "dead with Christ" – Rom. 6:8, and where we share in the victory of His resurrection – "we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" – Rom. 6:5), **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit** (who in their daily Christian walk apply the Spirit's inward sanctifying ministry to their lives instead of walking after the power and control of the old disposition/nature and way of life). **For the law** (a new spiritual principle, standard to live by, or rule of life) **of the Spirit of life** (the Spirit that brings God's regenerating life into our own life - a life of infinite power which is able to control the sin nature and produce newness of life – Rom. 7:6) **in Christ Jesus** (the place, position, and union the believer has with Christ's own life through the Spirit's baptizing work – 1 Cor. 2:13 – a shared life with Christ that liberates from sin's power and control – Rom. 6:1-10) **hath made me free** ("set me free" - past tense – at the time of regeneration (Rom. 8:9) - from the old sinful disposition, which, like gravity, is still at work as a force, and which wants to control and dominate our lives as believers) **from the law** (another spiritual rule or standard of life which is a reference to the old sinful disposition – Rom. 7:23) **of sin**

**and death** (“sin” – is what the old master or sinful disposition wants to control our lives with and “death” – is the final fruit or outcome of our bodies still plagued by sin – Rom. 7:24). **For what the law** (Mosaic Law) **could not do** (free the believer from the controlling power of sin and produce sanctification or holiness), **in that it was weak through the flesh** (man’s inability and the way of legalistic self-effort – Rom. 7:14-15 – Paul’s experience of trying to use the Law as a way of sanctification), **God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh** (there was no sin in Christ), **and for sin** (as an offering or sacrifice for sin), **condemned sin in the flesh** (Calvary’s execution of sin and victory over sin – Rom. 6:6 - The Mosaic Law could bring the sentence of judgment upon sin but it could not enter a person and execute actual judgment upon sin in the sense of nullifying its power over the lives of people – but Jesus “bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness ...” – 1 Pet. 2:24). **That the righteousness of the law** (righteous or holy character of God’s moral law - Lev. 11:44-45 – not the entirety of the law) **might be fulfilled in us** (not by us but “in us” - grace emphasizes the inward – not the outward and answers to the inward work and power of the Spirit operating in our lives which in an experiential and appropriating way nullifies, cancels out, and abolishes sin’s power in our lives), **who walk** (moment-by-moment) **not after the flesh** (the old disposition and self-way of humanity or life), **but after the Spirit**” (the person, power, and provision of the Spirit which works from the inside instead of from the outside like the Law).

The internalized ministry of the Spirit’s daily power provides victory for the New Testament believer (“demonstration of the Spirit and power” – 1 Cor. 2:4). The Holy Spirit’s residency in the life of the believer reveals the victorious life of Christ to us “in Christ Jesus” and this ministry becomes the assurance of victory for every believer. The victorious promise of 1 John 4:4 is placed in the context of wicked spirits, which are behind false prophets. God promises victory for the believer as they counteract these wicked spirits through the Spirit’s teaching, sanctifying, and victorious ministry in their lives. The promise is still true today: “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.”

“Breathe On me, Breath of God,  
Fill me with life anew,  
That I may love what Thou dost love,  
And do what Thou wouldst do”

### **Victory Through God’s Life and Nature**

2 Peter 1:4 states: “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” To become partakers or co-sharers of the godlike nature means that the believer actually becomes a sharer or partaker of a disposition like that of God – one that is an expression of the holy nature of God. The Bible teaches that believers have God’s life and nature (Phil. 2:13; 1 John 3:9 – “his seed”) residing in their spirits so that they can live a victorious life in this present world. They have become “partakers of the divine nature” at the moment of regeneration and because of this glorious transaction of God’s life and nature being communicated to us, at the time of salvation, God has provided complete victory for His people so that it can be said they have presently escaped the moral decay or pollution of this world (“having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”). This is something that is already accomplished and is presently ours to claim in view of the reception of God’s life and nature in to the believer’s own life. Think if this dearly beloved. We have escaped! We are no longer in the prison house of sin living under the slave master of sin. We have escaped the power and mastery of sin over our lives through the implantation and operation of God’s life and nature in our own lives. Oh what a salvation this!

1 John 3:8 verifies that Jesus came in order to “destroy the works of the devil” (sinful works connected with our lives). And this is accomplished through the infusion of God’s “seed” (vs. 9) or His divine life and nature, which operates within us. 1 John 3:9 goes on to explain how this victory is applied to our lives when saying: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin (as a pattern of life); for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin (when yielding to God’s life and nature), because he is born of God.” *John is saying that God’s regenerate life, which exists inside the believer, is essentially and fundamentally a sinless life, and when the believer*

*yields to this life he cannot sin.* Therefore, when the believer yields to the inward life and nature of God (“seed”) he will not sin and “cannot sin” as the devil tempts him and tries to lead him astray “because he is born of God.” In other words, the believer does not have to “commit sin” as a pattern of living (vss. 6, 7, 9, 10) since he has God’s perfect life indwelling him to provide victory and when he yields to the seed within he “cannot sin” since he is under the control and influence of the new nature.

This verse is not teaching sinless perfection (1 John 1:8-10; 2:1) but it’s teaching the reality of victory through the implantation of God’s perfect seed or life and nature. It’s not that the believer won’t ever sin in his life or come to the place of perfection (Phil. 3:12) but as he yields to the new perfect life of God within him “he cannot sin” or be overcome by sin and Satan. Instead he can yield to God’s indwelling life and purify himself “even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). And since God’s life is pure this purity can be reflected and transferred into the believer’s life as he yields to the perfect and pure life of God from within. And this happens “from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18) as we are changed into the likeness of Christ through the Spirit’s ministry. Thus, the believer does not have to sin and “cannot sin” when yielding to the new life from within (see 1 John 5:18 – “sinneth not” – when God’s life is in control). Because of God’s new life and nature residing in the believer it’s equally true that each child of God will not habitually practice sin as a way of life. This also seems to be stressed in 1 John 3:6-9 with John’s use of the present tense. He differentiates in this section between the saved and the unsaved by a difference in their pattern of living and concludes by saying “whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God” (vs. 10). However, the true believer who is born again has God’s life and nature and does not practice sin as a way of life like the unregenerate (“he that doeth righteous is righteous, even as he is righteous” – vs. 7).

In other words, the man who does right lives according to the norms of God, sinners live according to the norms of the devil, God’s adversary. Is there any reason for the believer to live in defeat? The believer no longer must live in defeat since he has God’s life and nature indwelling him. He does not have to practice sin as a way of life nor must he sin when being tempted by the devil.

“A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark never failing;

Our helper He, amid the flood  
Of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe  
Doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and pow’r are great,  
And, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.”

1 John 5:18 also speaks about our victory over Satan and connects this victory to God’s life and nature: “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” Because of the believer’s new birth and the distribution of God’s life and nature within his spirit he can keep himself from sinning (“sinneth not”) which means that he does not have to be overcome with sin and live like an unregenerate person. The believer can also “keep” or guard himself from Satan (“that wicked one toucheth him not”).

When God’s nature and life are on the throne of a believer’s life he will not sin and be defeated by Satan. Because of God’s perfect life and nature indwelling the believer’s own life he no longer must allow sin to overcome him through Satan’s powerful temptations. In a very practical day-to-day sense, each believer can remain pure and holy in living (“purifieth himself” – 1 John 3:3) as he relies upon the new life and nature of God communicated to him, which comes from the living and risen life of the Lord Jesus within (2 Pet. 1:2-4). And because of the new life and nature of God within us, Satan cannot overcome us! Believers can claim their victory through God’s empowering life, stand their ground, and keep themselves from being touched, or more literally, from being attached, fastened or adhered to by Satan (“wicked one”). Because of God’s victorious life and nature dwelling in the believer we no longer must allow Satan to touch our lives in a personal, intimate, and defeating manner. This is because we are now born again, possessing the very sinless life of God within us, which when relied upon brings victory into our personal lives. This means we can have victory over the devil’s temptations as we yield to this new life and nature within. **The devil’s touch is lost upon our**

**lives!** Take this glorious promise and victorious truth with you this week! You are a victor and not a victim!

### **Victory and the Promises of God**

2 Peter 1:3-4 again reads, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these (the application of God’s promises to our lives) ye might be partakers of the divine nature (experientially in our Christian lives), having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (at the time of regeneration).

Peter says that believers have God’s divine life working on their behalf, a divine nature, and now precious promises. Together this dynamic trio brings the assurance of victory into our lives. That is why Peter says that we have “all things” or everything that we will ever need to live victoriously. Did you catch that? We have “all things” or everything! If you have everything you don’t need to add psychology and psychotherapy. How can you add something to everything! Stop here and meditate on what is being said. The believer has everything he will ever need to live godly and victoriously. God’s power, God’s nature, and God’s promises are a guarantee that we can live victoriously. We have everything!

God’s life provides power, God’s nature provides new motive, incentive and drive, and the inworking ministry of God’s nature and life (Phil. 1:6; 2:13) help us to apply God’s promises to our lives and live them out on a daily basis. In other words, we must learn to accept God’s promises by faith and then God’s life, power and nature work inside the believer so that each believer can in a practical manner apply, work out, and live by God’s promises in their day-to-day living. D.L. Moody often said, “Every Bible should be bound in shoe leather.” The promises Peter had previously written about related to the believer’s inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-5) and the return of Christ (1 Peter 1:9, 13). These are glorious promises that should directly affect how we live, act, and experience trials in our Christian lives. But there are many more promises related to the Christian life, such as victory over sin and Satan, which when applied to our lives should bring

assurance to our hearts that we can live a victorious Christian life. God's promises are precious or costly and we must realize the priceless value that they have for our Christian lives today. "For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1:20). Tarry at a promise and God will meet you there!

"Standing on the promises of Christ my King,  
Thro' eternal ages let His praises ring;  
Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,  
Standing on the promises of God.  
Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord,  
Bound to Him eternally by love's strong cord,  
Overcoming daily with the Spirit's sword,  
Standing on the promises of God."

## **Mortifying Sin and Victory**

### *The Position*

Because of the believer's position (placement) in Christ and his identification with Christ's victorious work the old man (old unregenerate person or being we used to be in Adam prior to conversion) under the rule, domination and mastery of sin has already been put to death (Rom. 6:6 - "old man is crucified" or literally – "has been crucified" [aorist indicative] and a "new man" has emerged. The "old man" is not my lower self (sin nature) but my former self – the man I used to be in my pre-conversion days (pre-conversion life). It's my unregenerate self and life without Christ. Colossians 3:10 says: "And have put on the new man..." In the same text we discover that the new man or self is presented as being "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." In other words, the new man or born again person that we are in Christ is patterned or created after God's likeness or according to His nature. Ephesians 4:24 adds "the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Here we are talking about simply being "like God" as man was created in the garden. The characteristics of the divine image are righteousness and holiness.

All of these corresponding texts emphasize that through the new birth we have received God's life and nature so that we are a new person no longer bound to sin. Instead of living in sin we can now live righteous and holy because of who we are in Christ. In short, because of the new birth transaction we have become a "new creation" – 2 Cor. 5:17. The "new creation" emphasis tells the never-ending story of our new birth in Christ. It refers to a positional truth that has transpired or occurred when we received the life and nature of God because of our placement in Christ. In other words, the character we possessed and the person we used to be, prior to accepting Christ and the Christian message, has been put to death and we are now a new person in Christ in view of the infusion of God's life and nature.

The same positional truth of the old man (unregenerate person) dying is seen in Colossians 3:9 ("seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds") and Ephesians 4:22 (the lesson or teaching is that "That ye [have] put off ... the old man") and Galatians 2:20 (literally - "I have been crucified with Christ" – aorist indicative) and Galatians 5:24 – ("And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh" – in the sense that we are no longer the person we used to be because of our new position). Because of our position of Christ, the old person we used to be has been put to death and we no longer must live under the power and dictates of sin.

While the believer's co-crucifixion with Christ took place potentially at the cross, it actually becomes effective for believers when they are converted or born again (not when they try to defeat sin in their lives). The construction and understanding of all these related texts are facts that believers should have learned (Eph. 4:20-21) and therefore should reckon as being true. *We must know who we are in Christ! We must act upon an accomplished victory and new life position in Christ.* We are no longer the old person we used to be under the domination of sin but a new person who has shared in Christ's victory over sin and who now has all the potential to live godly and victoriously over sin.

Every believer has already died to sin or the old pre-conversion way of living in a positional sense because of their union in Christ's death and His defeat of sin. We have already been given new life in Christ!



*This means the old person is forever dead and gone so that we no longer must die in order to create and possess victory. The believer's death to sin is already passed. The thought of continually trying to die to sin and defeat sin in our daily lives is foreign to the Romans chapter six context and ruins the concept of the believer's identification with Christ's death and the transaction which took place which involves receiving God's very own nature and life. Earl Radmacher said: "The old man is what we were in our depraved, unregenerate state without the life of God. That person is gone forever, crucified with Christ." The old person with their slave or master relationship to sin has already been crucified and put to death forever ("we, that are dead to sin" – not dying to sin – Rom. 6:2; "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin" – not dying to sin - Rom. 6:11; "he that is dead" – not dying to sin - vs. 7). *The death is a past event and a completed transaction.**

The hymn writer said: "Tis done, the great transaction's done. I am my Lord's and He is mine!" *Paul is not asking believers to practice dying to sin in order to produce the actual ground for victory. **The fact is this. We have already died!*** We are not in some kind of continual process of dying to sin so we can gain victory as various holiness teachings suggest. There are those who think they must walk up to the altar every week and die to sin in order to have victory and be right with God. Paul says that he was already dead to sin or that he had severed his slave relationship to sin that he once had in his lost estate (Rom. 6:2 – "are dead to sin"). This occurred in view of his death with Jesus Christ. We no longer must fight in order to free ourselves from sin's power. We have already died to sin in the sense that we have been made a new man and freed from sin's power. Let us claim our death to sin's power and go on in victory. **The death is already past.** *There can be no more dying to sin in order to provide the actual victory in the Christian life.* The dying has already been done by another One – Jesus Christ, and the victory has already been won!

In Romans chapter six it is Christ who has died to sin ("he died unto sin once" – Rom. 6:10) and the implication of the next verse (vs. 11) is that because of the believer's union in Christ's death he has only died to sin once ("ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin"). This means that because of our identification with Christ's death we

too have already died to sin's power and dominance. The believer does not die to sin today and gain victory through fighting, crying, or having an emotional experience. The believer does not die in his Christian experience in order to create victory or eliminate the old nature. Instead, the believer has already died and possesses victory over the sin nature. Therefore, there is no need for the sin nature to be eradicated as some deeper life teaching promotes. We already have victory over sin without the eradication of the old nature. Grace spells victory over sin while the sin principle still resides within the believer. This is the wonder of grace!

"Ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). *Let us always remember that we are dead to sin but sin is not dead to us because it still resides within us as the sinful disposition or old nature (Rom. 7:15-25).* Nevertheless, the victory is ours because the old person we used to be has died and as a result we (the person) has died to sin – sin's power, domination, and slavery. Sin no longer must control us and conquer our lives. Reginald Wallis said: "The triumphant Christian does not fight for victory; he celebrates a victory already won. The victorious life is Christ's business, not yours."

The student of Romans chapter six will verify that the repeated personal pronouns ("us" – vs. 3; "we" – vss. 2, 4-5, 8; "he" - vss. 7, 10 and "ye" – vs. 11) suggest that it is the person who dies and not the sin nature. These verses actually teach that the unregenerate person dies who at one time had the sin nature as his master. Because of the believer's co-crucifixion with Christ his old slave relationship to the sin nature has been terminated forever so that he no longer must be controlled by sin as he once was in his unregenerate state. *The old man has been mortified and a new regenerate man linked to Christ's life and power has emerged.* Dr. Renald Showers says: "When the unregenerate person trusts Christ as Saviour, he dies with Christ in the sense that he ceases to be an unregenerate person."

Only a person who has experienced this death with Christ can avoid continuing in sin (1 John 3:9). At the moment of salvation, we were taken out of our old position in Adam, where we were a slave to the sin nature, and were transferred into a new position in Christ, whereby we receive a new slave relationship with God through Jesus Christ ("married to another" – Rom. 7:4 – instead of Adam) that frees

us from sin's power. In other words, since we are married to Christ we share His life and receive of His victorious power for victory. *Our death with Christ ends our history as men and women in Adam.* In Christ we become a "new man" (Col. 3:9) and "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Let us not miss the significance of new things in the New Testament plan of salvation. This tells the never-ending story that we are no longer the old man or unregenerate person we used to be under the mastery of sin and Satan. The "old things" related to our unregenerate position and past ties with Adam have passed away (slavery and servitude to sin, hostility toward God, separation and enmity before God, etc.). And now we must "behold" something! We must see it, look at it, and stop everything for a few moments and just listen. Shhhhh! The text says, "all things are become new" which speaks of the believer's new regenerate position in Christ and the things that flow forth from this position - freedom from sin, friendship and reconciliation before God, new life, new nature, new power, new Master - Jesus). What more can we say but this: "And all things are of God" (2 Cor. 5:18). Glory hallelujah Christ has set me free! Glory hallelujah a new life now I see!

Yes, victory has already been provided for the believer in every way imaginable. This is because we have become a new person or creation in Christ (regenerated person) that now possesses the very life and nature of God, through union with Christ, and are no longer bound to our old sin master. The old unregenerate person we used to be in Adam under the mastery of sin has been crucified (Rom. 6:6). Our ties to Adam have been forever severed and we have been transferred into a new dynamic living relationship with Jesus Christ. A new relationship has emerged with Christ ("Christ liveth in me" – Gal. 2:20) whereby He becomes our new Master and delivers us from the power of sin ("being free is Christ's servant" – 1 Cor. 7:22). Jesus breaks the power of canceled sin and sets the prisoner free! What a new way of life this is!

"New life in Christ!  
Abundant and free!  
Want glorious shine,

What joys are mine,  
What wondrous blessings I see!

My past with its sin,  
The searching and strife,  
Forever gone -  
There's a bright new dawn!  
For in Christ I have found new life!"

### *The Practice*

A preacher once said to me, "What good is a position if we cannot use it in daily practice?" Who we are in Christ must translate into daily practice and living. Although believers have already died to sin's mastery and control, through Christ's defeat of sin, and possess new victorious life in Christ, this does not mean believers are completely passive and have no active part or role in God's victorious plan. When believers practice God's way for victory they will learn to exercise *self-control* (1 Cor. 9:25-27) and in a practical day-to-day manner *mortify* (put to death) sin in their lives (Col. 3:5 – "Mortify therefore your members"; Rom. 8:13 – "mortify the deeds of the body"). *You will notice that these texts do not talk about Christians dying to sin in order to obtain victory but putting to death the sinful deeds that seek to control their lives and bodies.* Only when the believer applies the truth about his co-crucifixion with Christ and his actual death to the old way of life, under the power and slavery to sin, can he win the war over plaguing lusts (1 Pet. 2:11) and sinful behavior (Rom. 6:11). However, each believer must learn in his practical day-to-day experience to "put off" sinful habits (Col. 3:8 - "ye also put off") and "put on" righteous habits (Col. 3:12 – "Put on therefore" and Col. 3:14 - "put on charity"). Mortifying sins that are committed through the vehicle of the body involves the practical application of our death and life position in Christ or who we are and what we have in Christ.

As we have seen, believers in their own strength cannot do the actual work of defeating sin and the old pattern of self and living. Trying to die to sin with the intent to actually overcome and defeat sin in our own power is impossible. This is because the believer has already

died to the power of sin in view of his co-crucifixion with Christ and the subsequent defeat and death of the old unregenerate person that once lived under the power of sin. In other words, the death to sin's power has already occurred in view of the believer's union with Christ. Nevertheless, in a *decisional* and *practical* sense, we must believe what Christ has done for us is true (the old person we used to be has been put to death), and then hate sin and mortify all sinful deeds seeking to gain power over our lives refusing to allow sin to control our life and physical body (2 Cor. 7:1 – "Cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" and Eph. 4:25 – "Wherefore, putting away..." and Rom. 6:12 – "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" and Rom. 6:13 – "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin"). God will not do something for you that you must do for yourself – hate sin and yield to the Lord for victory and power.

The death to sin's power and slavery occurred in the past when we died with Christ on the cross but we must say no to sin in our present experience and apply the victory we already have in Christ. *In other words, we can only mortify sin in the sense of refusing to yield to sin. Instead of yielding to sin we choose to yield to God and claim the victory that is already ours in view of our co-crucifixion and resurrection with Christ.* The child of God does not die to sin in order to obtain victory and overcome sin. Rather, he decides in his own heart to make a new commitment to change his pattern of living as he yields to the Lord's indwelling power (Rom. 6:13 – "yield yourselves unto God"). This is the practical side to the positional truth. This is where truth gets down to the shoe leather.

First, we believe what is already true. Christ defeated the old person we used to be under the power of sin. Second, we must now choose to hate sin (Rom. 12:9) and yield to God's power. When doing this we will no longer allow sin to gain power or dominance over our lives. *Perhaps the most straightforward and obvious meaning of the practical side of mortifying sin in the Christian life is this: stop doing it!* And we stop sinning when we start believing who we are in Christ – victors! When one puts his trust in Christ, he receives the actual benefits of identification with Christ, which involves breaking the power of cancelled sin and setting the prisoner free. But the Christian is to daily give outward expression of this inward settled experience

and in order to do this, he must personally hate sin and refuse to allow it to control his life, by constantly reckoning himself “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 6:11). When by faith we count this to be true and hate sin we will in a practical day-to-day manner “mortify” and conquer sin in our lives so that it does not reign in our mortal body (Rom. 6:12).

Today many believers think they need some kind of electrical and extraordinary experience or some kind of sign from heaven in order to obtain victory and stop sinning. But we must remember that the victory was already won (Rom. 6:6 - “old man is crucified”) and we now possess everything that we need for victory (Eph. 1:3 - “all spiritual blessings” and “all things that pertain unto life and godliness”). All we must do is yield or surrender our lives to God and claim the victory that is already ours in Christ (Rom. 12:1-2) and claim the riches we have in Christ. We must learn to live like a winner! Dear friend, we are on the winning side!

“Thro’ death into life everlasting,  
He passed, and we follow Him there;  
Over us sin no more hath dominion.  
For more than conqu’rors we are!  
Turn you eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face;  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim.  
In the light of His glory and grace.”

### **The Formula for Victory**

Always remember this. *The believer does not fight for victory but he fights from victory - the victory Christ has already provided.* The battle is already won (2 Chronicles 20:15 - “the battle is not yours, but God's”). Therefore, as we face sin and Satan we can “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10) and claim our victory through God's power. The believer must by faith claim the victory that he already possesses in Christ and through Christ. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4 - “even our faith”). How does a believer stop sinning? The answer is very simple. By faith the believer claims the victory he already has in Christ and stops sinning. The secret of victory is found in what some have called “**The**

**Roman's Road to Freedom."** We must learn to follow the know, reckon, yield, obey and serve pattern of Romans chapter six ("know" & "knowing" - vs. 6 & 9; "reckon" - vs. 11; "yield" - vs.13; "obey" - vs. 16 and "serve" - vss. 19-22).

In one sense, victory is a miracle, and a miracle must be worked out by God! God grants us victory through His plan and power. Our responsibility is not to work for our victory but accept it as being true. The formula for victory calls for intelligence, an informed faith and then a bold and determined faith. First, the Christian must know the good news of God's provision for victory. The secret of victory is to "know" (Rom. 6:3) that we are united with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, and because of this spiritual union with Christ we are freed from sin's dominion. In other words, we need to know what we have in Christ and then by an act of faith "reckon" (Rom. 6:11) or count this to be true. And it is true! The old person ("old man") we used to be under sin's power and influence has been put to death through the work of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3-10).

The believer shares in Christ's victory over sin in view of his spiritual participation or union in Christ's death and resurrection, which spelled the defeat of sin. *Sin no longer has the right to control or master our lives.* Christ defeated the power of sin over our lives through His death and resurrection and today He "liveth unto God" (Rom. 6:10). This means that we too share in this victory. We can also live unto God and be free from sin's power (Rom. 6:7, 18). We no longer must be a slave to sin (vs. 6b). Our union with Christ means the old person ("old man") we used to be is dead and nullified - put out of business (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22).

The Bible teaches that we are not to crucify ourselves (an impossibility) but reckon ourselves to be already crucified and dead to sin and now alive unto God (in a new Master relationship) through our victorious union with Jesus Christ. Once believing this, we must "yield" (Rom. 6:11-13, 19) ourselves to God (all the members of our body - eyes, ears, nose, hands, feet) and claim our victorious ground in Christ. When we yield ourselves to God we surrender our entire body to God who is our Master. This is done by placing our faith in Christ and His provision of victory over sin and as we experience His present-day resurrection power (Eph. 1:19-20) operating in our lives

(Rom. 6:4, 5, 8, 10; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10 – “the power of his resurrection”). Faith in Christ’s provision upon the cross and His indwelling resurrection power will result in obedience to God and service rendered toward God (Rom. 6:16-19). The believer does not yield in order to provide his own victory but yields (surrenders his body) as one who is already alive and victorious. If the believer does not yield he will not experience the benefit of Christ’s provision.

Three important words for victory and God's plan for victorious Christian living are the words "know," then "reckon," and finally to "yield." And yielding to God or presenting ourselves to God (Rom. 12:2) suggests a conscious, active, voluntary, and willing choice of obedience. It pictures a soldier that presents himself with all his weapons to his commander, prepared to do the commander's bidding. Sin is a defeated enemy but we must still wage our battle against sin from a position of victory. This is a life long struggle. Nevertheless because of the believer’s victorious position in Christ (Col. 3:1; Eph. 1:3, 19-23 – “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named”) and his living union with Christ (John 14:20 – “ye in me, and I in you”) he no longer must be controlled and overcome by sin. This is what Ruth Paxson calls “Life on the Highest Plane.” Sharing in Christ’s victory and relying upon His present life, power and authority over the enemy means that the believer is on the victory side. Jesus promised a new way of life that is abundant (John 10:10) and free (John 8:36 – “free indeed”).

### *The Roman’s Road to Freedom*

The old position (“old man” - 6:6a) = an unregenerate person without spiritual life (“dead” – vs. 13), whose body was controlled by sin (“body of sin”). The old position is described as being the time “that ye were the servants of sin” (vs. 17), “when ye were the servants of sin” (vs. 20), and when we were under “the wages of sin” (vs. 23).

The new position (“new man” - 6:11b; 13b) = a regenerate person who has been given spiritual life (“alive unto God” and “alive from the dead”) and who now has God as his Master (instead of sin). This position is described as begin made “free from sin” (vss. 18, 22) and becoming a servant or slave to God (“become servants to God” – vs.



22). Since Christ “liveth unto God” (vs. 10), in a new relationship with God as the risen One, we too have been made “alive unto God through Jesus Christ” (vs. 11). This means that we now have a new Master relationship with God and can now live for God through our continual union with Christ’s risen life and power. Our new Master relationship with God (instead of sin) is based upon our spiritual life which results from our risen union with Christ.

The completed procedure = the believer has died and risen with Christ to bring him into a new victorious union with Christ (Rom. 6:5 - “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection”; vs. 8 – “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him”). The transaction is complete.

The new power = a believer is now under the operating ruling factor of grace (6:14 – “under grace”), whereby the risen life of Jesus Christ is constantly available for daily power and victory (6:4-5 – “walk in newness of life”). The new power of grace operating in the life of the believer promises sanctification – not law. There is no power under law but there is abundant and unending power through grace.

The new purpose (6b “that”) = to be free from sin’s power and rule in your body and life (“body of sin might be destroyed”). Freedom from sin is the result of the new regenerate life we have in Christ.

The new plan = to believe (“reckon” or count to be true – vs. 11) what God says concerning our new victorious position and by faith “yield” (13, 19) “unto God” who is our new Master and do it “as those that are alive from the dead” (vs. 13) or as those who now possess spiritual life and dynamic power through their union with Christ’s risen life.

“On the victory side. On the victory side!  
No foe can daunt me,  
No fear can haunt me on the victory side.  
On the victory side, On the victory side!  
With Christ within,  
The fight we’ll win,  
On the victory side!”

## **Sobriety, Satan's Schemes, and Victory**

### *Sobriety*

Someone said: "The first step on the way to victory is to recognize the enemy." The devil is our adversary (1 Pet. 5:8) and we must remember that he is attempting to trap us in sin and keep us from doing God's will. Special attention must be given to the matter of spiritual sobriety or alertness in light of the devil's attempts to defeat our lives. Sobriety is a key point associated with victory. When our world is an easy place to live and we sit in the "ease of Zion" (Amos 6:1) we can forget that a spiritual war is going on. Satan always takes advantage of Christians who are lethargic and spiritually stagnate. Let us not forget our role in the battle of the ages.

When our life is filled with personal goals, entertainment, and activities we won't understand the spiritual warfare that is going on and Satan will get an advantage of our lives. The Evil One works when we are spiritually lethargic ("while men slept, his enemy came" – Matt. 13:25). The believer must seek to stay spiritually sober or alert at all times (1 Thess. 5:6, 8; Titus 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8) to Satan's techniques "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (scheming ideas and plans - 2 Cor. 2:11). Luke 22:45-46, "And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

### *Sobriety verses Fanaticism*

There is always the danger of becoming extreme or fanatical about Satan's workings and engage all of our time pursuing Satan's works, seeking out his dark side, and the underworld. There is an excessive and unhealthy fascination with demons and the underworld of darkness today. We must be careful that we do not draw too much attention to Satan. Knowing how the enemy operates is one thing but becoming obsessed with him is altogether different. The believer must guard against becoming preoccupied with fear because he is constantly meditating on Satan and his activities. We err when we fail

to know how Satan works. At the same time, we err when we see a demon behind every bush. However, we must remember that the bushes are there! Our problem is that we don't know how Satan works. We must learn how to resist him (James 4:7) – not ignore him. We can't afford to live in ignorance concerning his devices or scheming plans (2 Cor. 2:11).

At the same time, we must remember that believers are to keep their eyes on Jesus at all times (Heb. 12:2 – “Looking unto Jesus”). Jesus is to be the focus of the believer's attention (“For to me to live is Christ” - Phil. 1:21). Our life must revolve around the person of Christ and not the power of Satan (“That I may know him” – not Satan – Phil. 3:10). We don't want to be overly curious about the things of evil (“wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil” – Rom. 16:19). *Satan is never to be the focus of our attention. We must never see Satan without seeing God!* In other words, we must see that God is sovereign over Satan's workings and rest in this truth. We must also concentrate on drawing near to God (James 4:8) and worshipping Him (Ps. 42:1) without preoccupying ourselves with Satan all of the time. The ministry of the Holy Spirit will point us to Jesus Christ (John 16:12-14) and not to Satan. So when the Spirit's ministry is at work in our lives we will not be preoccupied with Satan all of the time. We will be Jesus-centered or God-centered in our living (Psalm 42:1).

Mark Bubeck said:

“We must remain God-centered and never become Satan-centered. That is always a danger. We must not become so conscious of Satan's power that we are always fighting the devil instead of serving the Lord.”

Believers must be aware of the enemy and understand how he attacks so they can combat him and help others but at the same time they shouldn't spend all of their time trying to investigate every evil working of Satan and seek to expose every wicked act of darkness that the devil tries to do. If we become a Satan hunter we are going to become preoccupied with the Evil One and his wicked works instead of Jesus and His works of grace and redemption (Ps. 26:7; 105:2; 107:8, 15; 111:4; 118:17; 119:27).

## *Satan's Schemes*

Satan's techniques and devices include **temptations** that lead to wrong actions and rebellion against God's ways (1 Chron. 21:1; 1 Tim. 5:15) and to lustful and prideful living (Gen. 3:5-6; Josh. 7:20-21; Eph. 6:11; 1 Tim. 3:6-7; Matt. 4:3 – "when the tempter came to him"; 1 Cor. 7:5). Satan keeps people in bondage to lust, which in itself is a road with no end. This is because lust never satisfies (Heb. 11:25 – "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" and James 4:2 - "ye lust, and have not"). When sinful lust begins to control your life it triggers the law of unintended consequences.

The old saying is still true: "Sin takes you farther than you want to go and keeps you longer than you want to stay." The enemy keeps luring God's people deeper into lustful sin trying to push them across new lines, which they would not previously cross. Lust never satisfies but it always promises more. Satan knows this and this is why he uses lust to trap people in horrible bondage. Satan's system has not changed. 1 John 2:16 talks about "the lust of the eyes" (sins of possessions - covetousness), "the lust of the flesh" (sins of passions – indulgence), and "the pride of life" (sins of position - status). Eve "saw that the tree was good for food ... and pleasant to the eyes" (lust of the eyes). The Bible then says it was "a tree to be desired" (lust of the flesh).

Finally, Satan said that eating the fruit was "to make one wise" and this would allow them "to be as gods" - (pride of life). When the devil tempted Jesus (Matt. 4) he wanted Jesus to "command that these stones be made bread" (lust of the flesh) and then the devil told the Son of God to "cast thyself down" from the pinnacle of the temple (pride of life). And once again "he sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world" (lust of the eyes) "and the glory of them" (pride of life). Satan's system has not changed. We should be aware of the serpent's tactics.

Satan's temptation of Jesus is vital in helping us to understand how the Evil One tempts us. We must understand that Jesus' temptation was in the predefined limits of God's will (Matt. 4:1 – "Jesus was led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil"). God is sovereign in what He allows Satan to do to our lives (Job 1-2; 23:10;

1 Cor. 10:13; Rev. 2:10). Furthermore, God's children must recognize that many times temptation comes on the heels of victory. Jesus had just had a great spiritual blessing at His baptism (Matt. 3:16-17). But now He was to be led into the wilderness to be tempted. It seems that as soon as we are built up Satan comes to tear us down. Charles Spurgeon said: "Let me be ever on my watchtower, and particularly during seasons of great enjoyment; for then is Satan most likely to assail me." When Elijah came down off the spiritual experience of Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:40-46) he had to face a Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-3). After the children of Israel possess the great victory of Jericho (Josh, 6) they were defeated at Ai (Josh. 7). This is the way the devil works and we had better come to realize this and stay alert.

Satan's temptation of Jesus was a very strategic plan. First, he tempted Jesus to **turn away from the will of God**. Satan attempted to do this through appealing to an area of His legitimate need in Christ's life (Matt. 4:3-4). Jesus had gone for 40 days and 40 nights without eating (Luke 4:2). He was at a point of great human frailty and need in terms of hunger. Satan tries to get to us in our times of physical exhaustion and human weakness. He knows our point of vulnerability. *The Evil One comes to devour our lives at times of physical weakness and exhaustion.*

E. M. Bounds said it this way:

"The devil goes out into the wilderness, finds us in a fainting, discouraged condition, the pulsations of faith weak, its sky cloudy and its vision misty. Then he shows us the world from the loftiest peak of observation, appareled in its most attractive form, and tries to ensnare us by its bewildering glories."

In this temptation Satan wanted Jesus to meet His physical need outside the plan and purpose of the Father. He wanted Jesus to live independently of the Father's timing and will to meet His physical hunger. Satan was not trying to get Jesus to doubt that He was God's Son. Since Jesus was the Son of God Satan was trying to get our Lord to solve His own problem and take His physical matter into His own hands. Satan wanted to get Jesus to think like this: "Since you are the Son of God you deserve better. You are very important. As God's Son you are too important and dignified to have such hardship and discomfort. In fact, you shouldn't be hungry at all. Make yourself

some bread and eat it.” Jesus quotes Deut. 8:3 as His defense against Satan. Jesus always knew the Father would meet His legitimate need according to His timetable and that as His Son He needed to follow the Father’s timetable (John 5:19; 8:28-29) and His will (John 4:34; 6:38).

Jesus submitted a legitimate, definite, and powerful need to God’s will and timing. We must do the same when Satan tries to tempt us to take matters into our own hands. We must remember that God has promised to meet our physical needs (Phil. 4:19) and that we must live in dependence upon the promises of God’s Word, as Jesus did. This was evidenced when He quoted Scripture. As God’s people we must reveal our legitimate needs to God’s will and timetable and like Jesus rely on the promises of His Word to sustain us in our time of need. When we take matters into our own hands we are acting outside God’s will and not walking by faith and trusting in the Father’s provision for our lives.

“Be not dismayed whate’er betide,  
God will take care of you;  
Beneath His wings of love abide,  
God will take care of you.  
Through days of toil when heart doth fail,  
God will take care of you.  
When dangers fierce your path assail,  
God will take care of you.

No matter what may be the test,  
God will take care of you;  
Lean, weary one, upon His breast,  
God will take care of you.  
God will take care of you,  
Through ev’ry day, O’er all the way;  
He will take care of you,  
God will take care of you.”

Let us also remember from this temptation that Satan wants us to live for the immediate and elevate the physical and temporal above the spiritual and eternal (Matt. 6:19-21, 33). Satanic thinking will say, “It’s more important to work hard and climb the economical ladder than to

take time out for your personal walk with God and your family's spiritual development. It's more important to invest your time and money in this life than to support the work of God and be faithful to church. Being happy is more important than being holy. *Your comfort is more important than your convictions.* Satan is always trying to push immediate personal gratification at the expense of the spiritual and eternal (Heb. 12:16).

Second, Satan tempted Jesus to **turn away from the Word of God.** The devil did this by misquoting and misapplying Scripture. The tempter wanted Jesus to actually tempt the Father by using a Bible promise in a wrong way. The devil wanted Jesus to jump off the pinnacle of the temple and test the Father's proposed promise, which was found in Psalm 91 (Matt. 4:5-6). In essence, Satan is saying to Jesus, "Okay, you say that you live by God's Word and trust in His care (vs. 4), let's prove it. If you are so committed to God's care then prove it. Let your jumping do the talking. If You really believe the Scriptures, then jump! Let's see if the Father cares for You! Jump, God will catch you!"

Then Satan misquotes Psalm 91:12 about the angels of God assisting the Messiah but in quoting the verse the devil conveniently left out the portion of Scripture which says "to keep thee in all thy ways." According to the psalmist, a person is protected only when he is following the Lord's will. This means that the Father would sustain, protect, and help the Messiah according to the Father's will and plan. Jumping off the pinnacle of the temple to display that He was the powerful Messiah and deliverer of Israel was not part of the Father's plan for Jesus.

The Father did not intend to use this method as a way to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. Beware! When the devil quotes the Bible he is up to something! He is twisting it, distorting it, and using it out of context. The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. The devil can get us to sin even while pointing to a verse in an open Bible. J. N. Darby once stated that "Satan is never more satanic than when he carries a Bible." We must also remember that *error rides on the back of truth* and the devil will many times come as close to the truth as possible in order to deceive us. He uses the Bible for his sinister

purposes. Many of his lies are perilously close to the truth. Satan and his demons will many times spout off good advice.

Actually, Satan not only *misquoted* the Bible to distract Jesus he *misapplied* the Bible to the present situation. The devil wanted Jesus to use a legitimate promise of God and exploit this promise by having Jesus do something outside the bounds of God's promise. This would tempt or test the Father to stick to His promise even when Jesus was trying to do something outside the parameters of the Father's promise as found in the Word of God. So the devil's tactic was not only misquotation but also misapplication of the Bible. Actually, in quoting the Bible the devil was trying to get Jesus away from the truth about the Word of God. He cheapens the truth and reworks the truth to fit his own agenda. The point is this. *The devil quotes the Scripture to actually lure Christ into sin!* He wanted to get Christ to ignore the truth of the Word of God. Getting Christ to act apart from the truth of Scripture is what the devil was really after.

In response to this temptation Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16 in Matt. 4:7 and applies a valuable lesson, to His own time of temptation, from the experience of Israel in the wilderness, when they ran out of water and began to grumble and tempt God (Ex. 17:2-7 – "Is the LORD among us, or not"). This was tempting God and His ability to meet their needs on His schedule and according to His plan. After all the miracles that God had already done for them they still did not believe that He would care for them and meet their need for water.

The Israelites gave ample proof that addiction to signs/miracles may only addict people to signs/miracles (John 2:18; 4:48) and not necessarily bring belief into their hearts (John 12:37; Matt. 12:38-39). Moses gave the new generation of Israelites, who were preparing to enter the Promised Land, the same warning that Jesus quoted to Satan in the time of temptation (Deut. 6:16). They were to remember that testing or tempting God to do something outside His prescribed will was to exploit His promise for provision. When the devil quoted a portion of Scripture he did so to take advantage of God's promise. He wanted Jesus to test God by doing something outside the Father's will, which was not related to His original promise. In a similar way the devil gets us to tempt God when we make wrong decisions and put



ourselves into circumstances that force Him to do something on our behalf.

This is why the believer must know Scripture today and apply Scripture to his life in an appropriate manner. We can prove almost anything by the Bible if we isolate texts from the contexts and turn them into pretexts. Satan loves to contradict the Bible by putting passages of Scripture *against* each other instead of *beside* each other. Jesus would not allow the devil to misquote and misapply Scripture (Psalm 91:12) so it would contradict another portion of Scripture (Deut. 6:16).

The Satanic method of Bible study will selectively look for verses and misapply them to certain wrong actions or choices to exploit other portions of Scripture that clearly condemn such actions and choices. *In doing this we tempt God to do something for us by misapplying truth and going outside the parameters of God's promises and truth.* This is why we need to know truth and the timeless Biblical principles of God's Word. If we do not apply them to our lives accurately we will follow the enemy's line of reasoning and give in to his temptations and deceptions.

Think about this. Satan can deceive us by using the Word of God! He does this by misrepresenting the truth and exploiting the truth in some way to meet a person's experience and confirmed choice. *One of Satan's most clever tricks is to try and get us to misuse the Word of God.* The Evil One wants us to misunderstand the Bible and misuse it in some way to lead us astray or paralyze our Christian effectiveness. This is why we need to know truth, interpret it correctly, and apply it to our lives (1 John 2:21 – “no lie is of the truth”). Some of the most effective human instruments Satan has are people who use the Bible incorrectly (2 Cor. 4:2).

The believer must know the Bible accurately to avoid deception (2 Tim. 2:15 – “rightly dividing the word of truth”). Wrong interpretation leads to wrong application and this in return leads to wrong living where we tempt God to do something that His Word actually condemns elsewhere. We misrepresent God's promise and move outside the parameters of God's promise. This approach to Bible study tries to put God in a trap. It tests or tempts God to act according

to His promise while you misapply His promise to your life. *Let us remember that God has not committed Himself to misapplied promises!* Beware, lest you fall into the trap of the devil where you selectively look for verses to use for predetermined opinions, choices, and actions that you want to take. If you go to the Scriptures with this mentality the devil will deceive you into thinking God has promised something, which He has not.

Many today claim the promise of healing based on a faulty misinterpretation and misapplication of certain Bible texts. Others claim that God wants them wealthy all the time and base their findings on faulty Scriptural interpretation. Others claim to have experiences of speaking in tongues and slayings in the Spirit, which are supposedly based upon God's promises. However, these so-called promises are based upon a faulty scheme of interpretation and misapplication of Biblical texts to the lives of God's people. Still others claim that they can ask God for anything and God will answer them. They base this conclusion on the promises of God but they are taking God's promises outside His intended parameters and are actually testing God. *Claiming a promise that God has not given is testing or tempting God to do something contrary to His will.* Beware! Satan knows how to use Scripture to accomplish his purposes. This should cause us to be diligent students of Scripture and know that the promises of God will never override any other portion of Scripture (2 Pet. 1:20). Jesus evidently advocates a cross-reference approach to the Bible in combating satanic assault.

“And though this world with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed,  
His truth to triumph through us;  
The Prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure, For lo his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.”

And what is that word which “shall fell” or cut down and defeat Satan?  
It is the word Christ!

Third, Satan tempted Jesus to **turn away from the cross of God.** Satan attempted to do this by offering Jesus all the kingdoms of the

world, bypassing the cross, if He would just for one moment worship him. He offered Jesus the highest place of position, prestige, and power – ruler of the world kingdoms. Satan usurped the dominion of the world from Adam after Adam fell in the garden (Luke 4:6). This is why Satan is called the prince of the world and the god of this age (John 12:31; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2). So this was a legitimate offer of the kingdoms of the world to Jesus. God is the owner of the world and all that is in it (Ps. 50:10; Rev. 5:1-7). God has the title deed to this world but He has delegated the leadership of the world to Satan. However, Jesus did not need Satan's offer. The Father had already promised Jesus the kingdom! He would inherit the kingdom in the Father's way and according to His timetable. "Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen (nations) for thine inheritance ... " (Ps. 2:8). Not until Jesus returns will the kingdoms of this world be drawn together into the kingdom of Jesus Christ during the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 11:15; Dan. 2:44).

Nevertheless, the devil wanted Jesus to bypass the cross and go right to the crown. He wanted Jesus to take a short cut and the path of least resistance. Why? It's because the cross was a real place of mental agony for the Savior knowing that He would be separated from the presence of the Father (John 12:27; Matt. 26:38-39; Heb. 5:7-9). Jesus felt a great heaviness of heart in anticipation of the cross. It was not the physical agony that He wanted to bypass but the mental anguish of being separated from the Father. Satan evidently sensed this and wanted to try and offer Jesus a great bargain so He could bypass the cross and not have to experience the deep trial that He had to pass through. But the real point of the temptation was that Jesus was offered a supposed bargain, a short cut to avoid His suffering and hardship, a path of least resistance to become the world ruler.

Satan kept tempting Jesus to bypass the cross all the way to the end even while He was hanging on the cross (Matt. 16:22-23; 27:40-43). Satan was behind the death of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:3). Not being omniscient, Satan was not aware that his defeat would come through the cross (1 Cor. 2:8). Perhaps Satan thought that getting rid of Christ would delay his defeat, which was prophesied in Genesis 3:15. Nevertheless Jesus was tempted by the devil to bypass the cross (way of difficulty) in order to demonstrate His kingly power as the

Messiah and ignore the Father's will and purpose for His life. Bypassing the cross would become a point of failure in His life and be ground for Satan to accuse Christ. One way or another Satan wanted to defeat Christ and save his own neck.

Many times Satan will tempt us in the same way he tempted our Lord. He offers us the easy road, the path of least resistance, the easier way to accomplish what seems to be God's will. But Jesus said that the easy way is not the cross way - the way of surrender and sacrifice (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23). *There are no bargains when it comes to doing what is right and staying on the narrow road of accurate living, hardship, and suffering.* Satan wants us to follow his own plan and bypass God's plan. He hands us a bargain but we should know by now that "If it's too good to be true, it's not true." Let us see through Satan's bargains. There are no short cuts to doing what is right. There is no easy path to doing what is right. And Jesus did not fall for Satan's offer. He quoted Deut. 6:13 and 10:20 claiming complete loyalty and worship to God. Only God has the exclusive right of worship and undivided allegiance since He is the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Ps. 103:19). Satan has always wanted worship, because Satan has always wanted to be God (Isa. 14:12-14). Worshiping the creature (humanism) instead of the Creator is Satan's lie that rules our world today (Rom. 1:24-25).

Please note that in every temptation Jesus effectively defeated the devil with the truth of Scripture (Ps. 119:11). After a quick "Be gone Satan" the Bible says, "Then the devil leaveth him" (Matt. 4:11). The same will be true for us as we effectively battle Satan with the Bible. More will be said about this later. The devil will leave us. But you can be sure that he will be back. You may be through with the devil, but the devil is never through with you.

Through Satan's temptations he ***keeps people in bondage*** sexually (Eph. 2:2-3; 2 Pet. 2:14, 19), mentally (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:21; 2 Pet. 1:9; Rev. 3:16-17), emotionally (Heb. 2:15 - "subject to fear" and Rom. 8:15), financially (1 Tim. 6:9-10), legalistically (1 Tim. 4:1-3; Col. 2:20-23; Gal. 2:4) or by the power and authority of some other perverted way (1 Cor. 6:12b) - eating disorders, syndromes, phobias. Bondage is always associated with Satan (Heb. 2:15). And the believer must understand that temptation is Satan's number one

underlying scheme that he uses to pervert mankind and God's truth. But the Evil One inspires many other actions through the avenue of temptation and these depraved actions must be seen as independent workings or schemes of Satan, which he uses to promote his evil agenda. These are the very devices and plans of Satan that the believer cannot afford to be ignorant about (2 Cor. 2:11).

There are many techniques, methods, and devices that Satan uses to trap people and which he uses to promote his kingdom of darkness. They include **promoting idolatry** (Deut. 32:17; 2 Chron. 11:15; Ps. 106:35-37; 1 Cor. 10:19-20; Rev. 9:20; Lev. 17:7), **getting people to worship himself** either directly or indirectly (Matt. 4:9; Rev. 13:4; 2:9), **inspiring murderous acts** (John 8:44; 1 John 3:12; Luke 22:3), including abortion (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; Jer. 7:31; Ex. 1:16 with Matt. 2:16-18) and child abuse which is linked with devilish practices (Deut. 18:9-10). Child abuse is the work of Satan (Matt. 18:6). The devil is also **thwarting and hindering** the Gospel and God's work (1 Thess. 2:18; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Luke 8:11-12). The devil is actively engaged in hindering missionary and evangelistic work. He also is busy **sifting God's saints** (Luke 22:31-34) or putting them through the sieve of mental, spiritual, and even physical affliction (Job 1-2; 2 Cor 12:7; 1 Cor. 5:5) at times to see how we stand up to real trouble and how faithful we really are to God.

Whenever I am down it's because Satan sifts us with thoughts of doubt, discouragement, despair, denial, defeat, and dismay. These are the "D" words from the devil. Satan is always seeking opportunities against us (Job 1:9-11; 2:4). But do not fear. *Our lives are not in Satan's hands, but in God's hands.* Satan cannot act apart from divine providence (Job 1:10; 1:12; 2:6). God draws the lines and says to Satan, "This far and no farther." Satan stays behind the bars that God has ordained. Martin Luther said: "The devil is God's devil." Both God and the devil are involved in our times of temptation (1 Sam. 16:14, 16, 23; 18:10; 19:9; Job 1:8; 2:3; Matt. 4:1; 2 Cor. 12:7; Rev. 2:10).

In the times of temptation, we can give thanks to God knowing that God is sovereign and in control. Since this is true we can know that God uses evil to accomplish His purposes and goals to train our lives,

discipline us, create greater faith in our hearts (James 1:3) and help us to grow in Christian character (2 Pet. 1:5-10; Job 23:10), discernment, and even gain future reward (James 1:12). In other words, Christ permits temptation to come into our lives to help us become stronger spiritually, but Satan lures us with temptation to destroy us (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan exists as God's instrument of justice for the disobedient (Eph. 2:2) and God's means of purification for the obedient. Satan wants to *pulverize* us but God wants to *purify* us in the time of temptation.

Also, remember that God tests us (Gen. 22:1) in relationship to our faithfulness and love for Him but the devil tempts us or solicits us to do evil (James 1:2, 12; Gen. 3:1). God never tempts a person to do evil (James 1:13). God tests us to draw us closer to Him whereas the devil tempts us to draw us away from God and then slander us before God. The devil is the sifter or the one who seeks to disrupt our spiritual lives. Beware of the sifting of Satan. The Evil One always waits for an opportunity to **torment God's saints** as he did Saul's life (1 Sam. 16:14). In this case, God permitted a demon to torment Saul because Saul wanted to follow his own way instead of God's. In this case God allowed a demon to terrorize Saul. Perhaps this is somewhat similar to the New Testament equivalent of turning a believer over to Satan (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20). In this case it was not deliverance from Satan that was practiced but deliverance to Satan to bring them back to the truth. Although Satan and demons cannot inhabit a true believer God can use them to discipline unrepentant Christians for their sin with a view to bring them back to the fold or else take them out of the world.

The devil is also busy **slandering the saints before God** by accusing them of wrongdoing (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; 1 Tim. 5:14; Zech. 3:1; Rev. 12:10). The Evil One accuses the saints before God day and night by representing himself in the presence of God (Job 1:6; 2:1). After sifting our lives and defeating us he then seeks to accuse us before God. But Satan not only slanders man before God (Rev. 12:10). He also **slanders God before man** (Gen. 3:1; 4-5). The believer must be constantly aware of how Satan slanders God before man. Satan *slandered God's goodness* (character) and God's Word (truth) before Eve in order to deceive her ("Ye shall not eat of every

tree of the garden?” - Gen. 3:1 and “Ye shall not surely die” - Gen. 3:4).

“God is so good  
God is so good  
God is so good  
He’s so good to me.”

Satan wants us to doubt God’s goodness and tries to make us believe that God is restricting us from receiving our true potential. He then lies to us about the truth. The Evil One tries to make us dissatisfied with God’s will. Satan then **creates false needs in our hearts** by getting us to think that we need something more than what God in His goodness has given to us and promised in His Word (Gen. 3:1-6). This will be addressed later. Satan’s primary aim is to get people to **focus on self** or their own lives and what they want or think they need to get out of life, which is outside the parameters of God’s will. This is what he did to Eve. We start a pity party for ourselves and center our attention on our own personal wants, problems, needs, and goals in life. Self-centeredness instead of God-centeredness is a primary work of the devil as is illustrated by history (Gen. 6:2, 5) and in these last days (2 Tim. 3:2 – “lovers of their own selves”). The devil was a self-seeking person full of selfish ambition (Isa. 14:13-14).

Then too, Satan is busy **sowing tares** (Matt. 13:25, 38-39; 1 John 2:18-19; 2 Cor. 11:13-15) to tear down the work of God. Satan is also busy promoting **syncretism** (Matt. 13:31-33) which involves ecumenically uniting different religious beliefs that will eventually emerge into the great whore or harlot church that rides the beast (Rev. 17:1-5). Satan is roosting in the tree of ecumenicalism today. He is behind the ecumenical movement of today since God says in the context of gathering with false religion these strong words, “And what concord hath Christ with Belial” (2 Cor. 6:15).

We learn from this passage two things. First, God forbids all religious associations with false religion and those churches or religious organizations that are promoting apostasy and which glorify Satan’s religious agenda - damming souls to hell. God forbids involvement of any kind with false religion because the devil is behind both the men and messages of false religion (1 Tim. 4:1). The devil is behind all false religion. When will we admit it and separate from it? This flies in

the face of ecumenical practices today where those who espouse true doctrine link together with those who do not. Second, God also forbids uniting together with unbelievers in those worldly settings (movie theaters, open bars, rock concerts) which are also clearly promoting and glorifying Satan's agenda and evil sinful workings in our society. What fellowship should a believer have with Belial's places and workings? Why would they want to grace their presence in these kinds of places other than to feed their flesh? Uniting together with false religion and unbelievers in religious-oriented settings, or pagan worldly places, plays into Belial's building plans, which involves corrupting the true church and creating a religious ecumenical monstrosity that will ultimately become totally leavened (Matt. 13:33) and against God's truth. Today the bread is in the leavening process and is gradually rising but there is coming a day when it will have reached its full potential (Rev. 17:1-5).

Along this same line, Satan is also busy **building religious organizations** and churches who deny salvation through the blood of Christ and the Book written by God (Rev. 2:9 – “synagogues of Satan” – see also Rev. 2:13; 3:9). Dr. Barnhouse once said: “When you get ready to look for the devil, don't forget to check behind the pulpit.” The Evil One also creates **false messages** in our minds (2 Cor. 11:3, 14). The believer must not leave his mind open to the mental suggestions of wicked spirits. The devil also creates within the minds and lives of people **false religious/mystical experiences** which are deemed as spiritual, but in reality are satanic in origin (1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 11:3). He also is busy performing **miraculous experiences** (Exodus 7:10-12; 8:7; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 16:14 – “demons, working miracles” and Matt. 7:21-23).

Satan seeks to addict people to the realm of the miraculous where they expect miracles to be everyday occurrences in their lives (Ex. 17:7 with Deut. 6:16; Judges 6:13; Matt. 12:38) in order to find fulfillment and contentment (Phil. 4:11). This draws people away from the Christ life (Phil. 1:21). Lehman Strauss has said, “Can Satan heal? You better believe he can! He does perform miracles, including bodily healing. He can operate through present-day healing movement. His miracles add credence to his false teachings, which in truth gains followers.” Satan is actively amusing and controlling people with the miraculous. This includes things such as psychic



powers, soothsaying, telepathy, healings, and such like. Satan is **promoting the occult** phenomenon of today (Acts 8:9-11; 16:16; 19:19; Deut. 18:9-12).

The devil is also busy **spreading false doctrine** to confuse and damn people to hell (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 4:6; Matt. 24:24; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). The great seduction of Christianity today is the result of demonic deception. Someone said, "The devil gets ordained and speaks from Christian pulpits." The devil also **steals the word** from the hearts and lives of people who are hearing the Gospel message (Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:12). He also **attacks the preaching of the Word** (Acts 16:16-18) and **perverts God's Word** (Luke 4:9-12 with Ps. 91:11). Satan is not a Bible lover but he is a Bible perverter. Let us also remember that Satan **uses God's Word** or certain Biblical portions of Scripture (Matt. 4:6) to his own end by attempting to mislead the believer and justify his errant lifestyle or course of action through misusing the Bible (2 Pet. 3:16; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2).

These verses speak about huckstering Scripture or using the Bible deceitfully to support practices such as CMM, ecumenicalism, pragmatism, and money raising gimmicks). Also, as we think about Satan manipulating the Word of God let us also remember that sincere words can come from God or Satan (Matt. 16:22-23). Peter was sincere but his sincerity was not according to truth. It was used by Satan to promote a wrong cause! Satan also attempts to get believers to **fellowship with demons** (1 Cor. 10:20) by getting them to cooperate with those worldly and religious settings of compromise that promote and glorify His personal agenda of false religion (Rev. 2:9, 13; 3:9). He also **incites persecution** against God's people (Rev. 2:10; Acts 16:16-24; 19:18-30). Satan is also busy trying to **ensnare people** in his baited traps (1 Tim. 3:7; 6:9; 2 Tim. 2:26), **energizes people** to sin (Eph. 2:1-3) and when allowed by God (Job 1) **inflicts people with disease** (Luke 13:11-13; Acts 5:16).

Satan also wants to **attack church leadership** through inexperienced leaders (1 Tim. 3:6-7). Spiritual preparation or apprenticeship is necessary for church office and leadership. If this does not occur we open our ministries up to the work of the devil. It could be said that Satan is an official board member in many churches today as he seeks to raise havoc through the lives of

people who serve on a church boards. Satan can work through inexperienced leadership within the church (1 Tim. 3:6) when leadership manifests prideful actions. But Satan can also work in the lives of officers or leaders outside the church when they manifest a bad testimony (1 Tim. 3:7). When a church officer has a questionable reputation in the world, both he and the church are open to easy attack by the enemy. Satan also wants to disturb the unity of the church by **sowing discord and division** among the brethren which is opposite of the Spirit's work (Eph. 4:3).

The devil works against the Spirit to sow discord. One of the most successful operations of the Evil One is to disturb the unity of the church by creating discord and division. Satan wants to divide, dilute, and destroy God's people. The unity of the church is continually under attack. The devil works by playing on the personal prejudices, ambitions, and jealousies of church members. He creates parties and factions within churches to fragment them and neutralize their witness. Oswald Sanders said this when speaking about the devil's attempts to sow discord: "Few attitudes play more into his hands in this area than a critical spirit." A critical spirit gives the devil a tremendous advantage in the ministry. The devil gets people to sit, soak, and sour within a church ministry and this always breeds trouble – gossip, dissatisfaction, divisive actions, attempts to rise above leadership.

It's also true that when Satan knows he cannot deceive God's people with error He will cause them to be so ardent in defense of the truth that Christian love and courtesy are forgotten, which eventually gives place to intolerance, suspicion, and criticism of people (Prov. 6:19). *Satan loves to shift the battleground from doctrine to personalities (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4).* The devil can do much with personal prejudices, ambitions, jealousies, and a critical spirit (see James 3:14-16 – note "devilish" or demonic wisdom). The devil brings disruption into the church by getting the church to run on what James terms as demonic wisdom (James 3:15; Mark 3:25). There is a wisdom that is generated in the mind of people that is purely devilish in its origin and we must face up to it and identify it for what it really is. *Satan can gain an effective foothold in the church and begin to erode it from within through his own generated wisdom.* Beware of the devil's attempts to place thoughts in our minds that will cause division or strife and

generate jealousy among the saints. Satan also gets the saints to gossip or slander and become just like the devil (1 Tim. 3:11).

The Evil One uses gossip to destroy church ministries (1 Tim. 5:13-15). Satan loves to destroy church ministries through gossip. We know this is also true from the passage of James 4:7-11 where gossip or “evil speaking” (vs. 11) is mentioned in the same context as resisting the devil (vs. 7). God’s people must resist the devil’s temptation by refusing to speak evil of other saints so as to harm their character or reputation. Men wanting a church office were not to be “slanderers” as recorded in 1 Timothy 3:11. This word is “diabalos” which is the same Greek word used for the devil.

The devil is a slanderer in that he accuses the saints and talks about God’s people behind their backs (Rev. 12:10). When we gossip about others by giving harmful reports about them behind their backs we are being just like the devil and are obviously influenced by the devil – the slanderer. Verbal slander is of the devil. The deadly poison of verbal slander and gossip has its source in the Serpent (James 3:6). The devil can also get God’s people to lie (Acts 5:1-4) and possess pride about their achievements so that they might promote themselves and their own agenda instead of working together in unity (1 Tim. 3:6-7). He wants the saints to become dictators over the lives of others knowing that this will only discourage and divide God’s people (3 John 9-10). These saints will wreck church ministries.

One writer said: “Whenever a church member wants position and power, he or she will usually attack the pastor either privately or openly. Usually they start a ‘whispering campaign’ and try to undermine the pastor’s character and ministry. Like Absalom in the OT, they ‘hint’ that the present leadership is not efficient (see 2 Sam. 15:1–6), and that they could handle things better.” Satan will use anger, bitterness (feelings of resentment), or unloving and unforgiving spirits to manifest themselves and create division (2 Cor. 2:8-11; Eph. 4:26, 31-32). What a blessing it is when Satan is evicted from church!

The Evil One also **deceives the nations** (1 Kings 22:6-7; Rev. 16:14; 20:7-8) and world governments (Ex. 12:12; Dan. 10:12-13, 20; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16). Dr. Lehman Strauss has said: “The entire political environment, apart from God and His Word, is full of

demonism.” There is an unseen global conspiracy involving demons (1 John 5:19). Satan also **deceives the minds of lost people** (2 Cor. 4:3-4; Rev. 12:9; John 8:44). Satan also wants to **deceive God’s people** (2 Cor. 11:3, 14-15; Matt. 16:22-23; 1 Tim. 2:14; Eph. 4:14) and **devour God’s people** (1 Pet. 5:8) with thoughts and actions that are contrary to truth and righteousness such as lying (Acts 5:3; John 8:44), disobedience, denial, and betrayal (1 Chron. 21:1; Matt. 16:22-23; John 13:2), jealousy, division (James 3:14-15), gossip (James 3:6-7; 1 Tim. 6:11; Eph. 4:31), pride (1 Tim. 3:6-7), greed or love of money (1 Tim. 6:9), anger, wrath, unforgiveness, bitterness (resentful spirit), swearing (Eph. 4:26-31), and such like.

*Bitterness and resentment* toward other people is one area where Satan gains much ground or territory (2 Cor. 2:10-11). He keeps God’s people under the bondage of unforgiveness. Forgiveness is very critical to our freedom and we must remember that the message of the cross stands for forgiveness. We are commanded to forgive others as Christ forgave us (Eph. 4:31-32). We must remember that God didn’t give us what we deserved (hell) but what we needed (salvation). Face the cross and it will make forgiveness much easier. Since God has forgiven you and them, you can to. You don’t have to tolerate their sin. Tolerating sin makes a mockery out of forgiveness. Take a stand against sin but forgive the sinner who has sinned and offended you.

Forgiveness is a choice, a crisis of the will! God has told us to never take revenge (Rom. 12:9). *If you don’t let your offenders off the hook you become hooked to them and the past* (Phil. 3:13 – “forgetting those things which are behind”). Forgetting in the Bible sense does not mean that we can perform mental gymnastics whereby we forget the past. It means we no longer allow the past and people’s offenses to haunt our lives and destroy us in the present. So when we forgive others we will be able to forget in the Bible sense of the word. Forgiveness is costly in that we pay the price of the evil we forgive. *Many times we must learn to live with the consequences.* Don’t expect the one you forgave to come to you and say that they are sorry. This is wishful thinking. The point is that you can either live with the consequences of the past with the bitterness of unforgiveness or the freedom that comes through forgiveness. Freeing yourself from the past is critical.

The characteristic of “that old serpent” (Rev. 12:9; Rev. 3:1) is one of craftiness, subtleness, and deceitfulness. Satan, as the “tempter” (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), has a large quiver of “fiery darts” (inflamed suggestions - Eph. 6:16) that he shoots into our minds, and if these thoughts are not effectively dealt with, they will reach down into our hearts or the spiritual control center of our lives and defeat us. The mind is the battlefield for all spiritual warfare. The malfunction of the mind means sure defeat. When Satan gets into our thinking center or the office complex of our mind a *mental intoxication* occurs in relationship to spiritual thinking, truth, and actions. Therefore, spiritual alertness is vital so that we might detect devilish foul play and know his intruding thoughts.

Satan wants **to weaken our faith** in God’s plan and program of suffering and hardship for the Christian life (1 Thess. 3:1-8). 1 Thess. 3:5 says, “For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.” Paul’s great anxiety was that the devil might weaken their faith in God’s truth about suffering and cause them to swap loyalty to Christ for personal comfort, to by-pass the cross or the cost of discipleship, in pursuit of comfort and ease (Amos 6:1). Paul did not want them to stop walking by faith or trusting God in whatever circumstances that they faced in life – even persecution.

It’s important to see from this passage that Satan wants to weaken our faith in the truth of God’s Word. He is the tempter, and he seeks to ruin our faith. Note the emphasis on faith in this chapter (1 Thes. 3:5–7, 10). Each believer must have faith in God and His truth in order to overcome the Wicked One (Eph. 6:16 – “above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked”). When Satan tempted Eve, he began by weakening her faith in God - Gen. 3:1 - “Yea, hath God said?” We must never forget that Satan’s number one goal is to weaken our faith in the truth. When our faith is weakened we are vulnerable.

Satan is the enemy destroyer (John 10:10) who wants to **destroy our marriages** (1 Cor. 7:5), **homes** (Gen. 3:1-7; 4:1-10), **churches** (Rev. 2:13), and **personal commitment** or devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:4 – “simplicity that is in Christ”). The word simple refers to possessing a single aim or purpose in life, which is free from hypocrisy. In short,

God wants us to be fully devoted to His cause, will, and holy purpose for our lives. God wants us to remain simple! Keep it simple! The believer is to have a simple faith in the Lord, a simple love for the Lord, and a simple love for the Word of God and doing what is right.

The Christian life is simple! Just do what God says. *Satan wants to complicate things so we don't know what's going on from a spiritual perspective!* The Evil One wants to steer us away from our simple devotion to Christ. Satan wants to get us off course. If we are living the simple (devoted) life we will not mix truth with error, right with wrong, or holy living with unholy living. This will corrupt our simple devotion to Christ. Satan wants to deter God's people from simple living or their unmixed devotion or commitment to the local church, their acts of service for the Lord, and doing what is absolutely right (1 Tim. 5:15; 1 Chron. 21:1). We may say that 90 percent is good but what about the 10 percent that is bad? Satan wants to make our lives complex and confusing from a spiritual perspective by getting us off the intended spiritual course. He is a master at this trade. *God wants us to remain simple in faith and singular in focus.* But the devil wants to keep us from the simple way of living or the devoted way of living – doing what is absolutely right.

Someone has said: "Satan rocks the cradle when we sleep at our devotions." Here is a short letter from the devil: "When you're faced with a busy day, save precious time by skipping your devotions." Signed, Satan. It's true that the devil keeps the unsaved from hearing the truth about the Gospel. By way of application, we can accurately conclude that the devil also tries to keep God's people from hearing the truth (Mark 4:15). This is the way the devil works and is effectively done when he keeps God's people from church on a regular basis and from their own personal devotions with the Lord. He then adds the pressures and cares of this world to his destructive menu to bring us to the place of spiritual defeat (Mark 4:19). The worldly pressures we face on the job and dealing with life in general have a way of knocking us down if we are not careful. These are things the devil uses to bring gradual spiritual erosion into the believer's devotional life and commitment to the cause of Christ. And this eventually makes him spiritually powerless. Satan gets us away from the simple things and complicates things in our lives.

I'm especially amazed at how Satan keeps people from having personal devotions, special times with the Lord, attending prayer meeting, the fellowship of Gods saints, and from being an accountable part of a local church fellowship. Satan wants to isolate us from the spiritual leadership of the local church, which God has given to help provide stability for God's saints (Eph. 4:11-16). He gets us to make *perverted priorities* and eventually this breaks us down spiritually. We must be willing and ready to put first things first! Satan places thoughts in our minds (2 Cor. 11:3), which he wants us to think are developed by our own sanctified reasoning, but really they are from Satan. He says to us, "You don't need to go to church today. It's not that important to pray and read the Bible every day. You are too tired and incapable of attending church. Take five months off from church commitment. You deserve a break. Retire for a while. You can always come back later." These thoughts come from Satan and are designed to keep us from our devotion to Christ and God's work. We must confront these thoughts and demolish them with the truth (2 Cor. 10:4-5). God wants us to remain simple in faith and singular in focus.

### *The Beastly Ways of Satan*

Some Christians see a demon behind every bush and blame Satan for their headaches, flat tires, and high rent. The child of God must not try to interpret all of life's troubling experiences as Satanic attack upon their lives. This leads to faulty logic concerning how Satan attacks the believer. In a later section of our study we will see that we have no Biblical authority for casting out the so-called "demons of headache" or "demons of backache." One lady informed a pastor that Satan had caused her to shrink seven and a half inches. Dear friend, we must get our information about the devil from the Bible and not from our own interpretation of experiences. Satan is a formidable enemy and we must never joke about him, ignore him, or underestimate his ability. It's vital that the believer knows how to detect and defeat Satan.

In the Scripture Satan is represented as having animal characteristics. These animal characteristics represent the approaches that Satan uses when attacking or tempting the believer. Let's look at these beastly traits of Satan. Sometimes Satan takes on

the beastly appearance of a lion (1 Pet. 5:8). This lion points to Satan's strength or power in the time of temptation. Satan is like a roaring lion that is ready to "devour" us from a spiritual perspective. When a lion finally decides to attack its prey it is always a speedy and powerful attack. Sometimes Satan's temptations are like an attacking lion – they are strong, direct and quick. Satan can come to attack us and in a moment's time bring strong and heavy temptation before our lives. The believer must be aware of His lion-like attacks.

Another beastly appearance of Satan would be his appearance as a serpent (2 Cor. 11:3). The serpent of Eden points to deception. Satan tempts us in order to deceive us. Satan came in the form of a beautiful serpent to deceive the mind of Eve. Satan's serpent tactics in Gen. 3:1, 4–5 included *questioning* God's word ("Yea, hath God said?"), then he *denying* God's word ("Ye shall not surely die!"), and then he *substituting his own lie* ("Ye shall be as gods"). Satan has been using his deceptive serpent tricks every since Eden. He seeks to cloud our understanding and perception of the Word of God.

In this same chapter (2 Cor. 11:13-14) the deceptive form of Satan's temptations and messages are also described as messages of light. Satan is commonly pictured today as a horned, evil-looking red creature with a tail. However, the Bible paints a different picture of Satan. The Bible teaches that he is an angel or messenger of light who tries to deceive us. We do know that Satan's apostles and messengers (vss. 13, 15) masquerade themselves as religious ministers who are teaching righteousness. They take on the appearance of being a good messenger by the way they dress and the nice things they say. They may use the words God, Jesus, and Bible. They come to our doors with magazines, tapes, books, religious propaganda, and clever speeches. But behind their whitewashed presentation is error and deception.

Paul therefore reasons that no discerning Christian should really be surprised when Satan's apostles and ministers masquerade themselves before others as religious and righteous people. This is because Satan himself takes on the face of an "angel of light" (vs. 14) when he comes to tempt us and deceive us in our Christian life. This angelic face portrays Satan as a false messenger. He appears to be a messenger of light but in reality his message is false and deceptive.



Most of the messages that the devil brings before our minds (2 Cor. 11:3), through the process of temptation, seem to be good and right to us. They seem to be for our enjoyment and benefit and profit. Little do we realize that Satan is pulling the wool over our eyes and tricking us. He wants us to buy into his false and manipulative messages so he can lead us astray.

We must face the fact that Satan is a clever foe. If he does not succeed as the “devouring lion” (1 Peter 5:8), then he attacks again as the “deceiving serpent” or an “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:3, 13–14). When Satan comes to tempt us he often comes with a deceptive disguise. His messages and experiences that he might give to us seem sensationally spiritual and full of light but behind the masquerade there is deception, falsehood, error, and sin. Beware of the old angel of light routine. Satan makes sin look spiritual to us and the right thing for us to do. Satan gets us to think that we are doing right when in reality we are sinning and doing wrong. Satan has not changed his angel face.

Satan along with his emissaries also takes on the beastly appearance of birds that are roosting in the ecumenical tree of false religion (Matt. 13:4, 19 with 31-32). His birdlike characteristic allows him to move among all false religions and promote the end-time ecumenical tree of corruption and apostasy. Satan is busy building the ecumenical movement today. However, his birdlike qualities are not seen by many Christians today, who have decided to intermingle with the ecumenical movement. The birds in the branches of ecumenicalism are not seen as imposters. Instead, many unwise and undiscerning Christians are willing to roost with the fowls of Christendom today and be part of Satan’s plan to build the one world church of the end times (Rev. 17:1-3).

Satan might also be viewed as the wolf of John 10:12 who is seen trying to scatter and destroy God’s people. Jesus is portrayed as the shepherd in this chapter and His sheep are His own people (John 10:27). Thus, by contrast, Satan becomes a likely candidate to fulfill the wolf imagery in this chapter who comes to destroy God’s sheep. In a similar way, Satan is seen as the beastly dragon who sought to destroy God’s Son and who will also attempt to destroy God’s people during the coming Tribulation Period (Rev. 12:3-16). The beastly

ways of Satan cannot be overlooked for they tell us much how he tempts and seeks to manipulate and destroy God's people both physically and spiritually (John 10:10).

### *Satan's Snares*

It could be said that all these devices or schemes mentioned above are "after the working of Satan" (2 Thess. 2:9). Can we say that we are not ignorant of his devices? Believers do fall prey to Satan's "wiles" (tricks or crafty techniques – Eph. 6:11), the devil's "devices" (scheming thoughts and plans to conquer our lives - 2 Cor. 2:11). We also can become caught in Satan's "snare" (trap or strategies designed to capture our lives - 1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Tim. 2:26) and succumb to his temptations (Gen. 3:1-6).

There are many snares that he can use to trap our lives and keep us from doing God's will. There is the snare of worry, fear, money, laziness, lust, work (workaholics), false ideas, depression, wrong emotions, anger, fear, anxiety, worry, and many other satanic snares that can keep us from following God's will and living victoriously. When we become down and out or discouraged with God's work and at life in general we can be sure that Satan is at work in our lives (1 Kings 19:4-5; Psalm 73:1-5). But beware! Do not confuse God's conviction (Psalm 32:3-5; Acts 2:37) and chastening (Jonah 4:1-4; Heb. 12:7-8) with the devil's discouragement. Sometimes God is trying to bring us to repentance and change our way of thinking and living by His inner conviction and chastening hand. David experienced this and Jonah needed to understand God's chastening hand upon his life.

Nevertheless, let us remember that it's the devil who is constantly seeking to defeat our lives through various emotional mood swings, such as fear, worry, and discouragement (Rom. 8:15). I once read that the devil was having a yard sale, and all of his tools were marked with different prices. They were a fiendish lot. There was hatred, jealousy, deceit, lying, pride--all at expensive prices. But over to the side of the yard on display was a tool more obviously worn than any of the other tools. It was also the costliest. The tool was labeled, DISCOURAGEMENT. When questioned, the Devil said, "It's more useful to me than any other tool. When I can't bring down my victims

with any of the rest of these tools, I use discouragement, because so few people realize that it belongs to me." Satan is always trying to *take advantage of God's people (2 Cor. 2:11)*, which means that he is constantly trying to gain greater amounts of territory in our lives and possess greater control over our Christian lives. Satan wants to possess a greater portion of our lives through his deceptive traps and snares that he places before us.

### *Giving Ground to Satan*

Ephesians 4:27 states, "Neither give place (territory or space) to the devil." 2 Corinthians 2:11 states it this way, "Lest Satan should get an advantage (a greater part, portion, or share of our life) of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." The Evil One tries to get an "advantage" (greater part or portion of our lives) when we "give place" or any marked portion or ground of territory to him. Giving place to the devil in our lives means to give him ground, territory, a foothold, or a beachhead to work. The same concept is mentioned in Rom. 13:14 – "make not provision for the flesh"). We make provision for the flesh when we buy things that are associated with temptation, when we do go places or do things that make it easy for ourselves to sin, when we give a higher priority to the physical than to the spiritual. We should not indulge the flesh even a little. We should give. As someone has said, we should "give no chances to the flesh to have its fling." God's people must learn not to give up any territory in their hearts to the flesh or to the devil who inspires the flesh to rule our lives.

The concept of giving ground to the enemy is very critical. The soul can be viewed as a checkerboard with areas of jurisdiction (ground). Ground can be viewed as legal jurisdiction. When all areas of the board (soul) are under God's control we experience victory. However, if we surrender any of these areas of the soul to Satan, he takes charge of them and begins to rob us of our victory in Christ by slowly eating away at our spiritual living. When I give ground to the enemy I'm really giving legal jurisdiction and permission for him to attack me in a great way and control areas of my life. We give ground to the enemy by allowing wrong thoughts and sin to control or master our lives, such as the sin of unforgiveness (2 Cor. 2:7-10) or anger (Eph. 4:26-27). However, it's not necessarily one moment of anger that

gives Satan a strong foothold upon our lives but anger that is stored up, nurtured, and allowed to turn into bitterness and other horrible things (2 Cor. 10:4-5). Nevertheless, when we allow sin to control our lives we really are giving up areas that God is to control as our rightful Master (Rom. 6:22; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 2:16; Eph. 6:6). God has bought us and we are His lock, stock and barrel. As our Master, God alone has the right to rule and control our lives. He has the right to call the shots.

When we give ground to Satan we are also opening ourselves up for Satan to attack us in a greater way. We create a starting point (beachhead or foothold) for the devil to work in a greater way in our lives. When we allow Satan to take ground in our lives we allow him to capture us in his trap (2 Tim. 2:26). Satan has many “snares” or traps (2 Tim. 2:26) that he uses to find an *entry point* our lives such as the sensual woman (Prov. 7:10-23), flattery (Prov. 29:5), the fear of man (Prov. 29:25), evil times (Ecclesiastes 9:12), pride (1 Tim. 3:6), the desire to be rich (1 Tim. 6:9), occult paraphernalia (Acts 19:19) and opposing sound teaching (2 Tim. 2:25). When all areas of the checkerboard (soul) are under God’s control we experience victory. However, if we surrender any of these areas of the soul to Satan, he takes charge of them and begins to rob us of our victory in Christ by slowly eating away at our spiritual living. In time he can establish a strong foothold in our lives (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

### *When Do We Give Ground to Satan?*

Ephesians 4:26 give to us one example how we give spiritual ground to Satan. When the root sin of anger simmers unchecked in our soul it degenerates into bitter rage and this sin gives Satan an opening in to our lives, which somebody said is big enough to drive a truck through! There are other root sins also mentioned in Ephesians 4:28-31 such as theft, corrupt communication (filthy talking, swearing), bitterness (feelings of resentment), wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and unforgiveness (2 Cor. 2:8-11). All of these sins are what we might term as starting points that Satan can use to work in our lives in a greater way. When we give ground to Satan he begins to build strongholds in our lives (2 Cor. 10:4-5) in order to undercut our testimony and work for Christ as well as our relationship with

Christ. Giving ground to the devil allows him to get a firm foothold on our lives.

Many times believers surrender ground to Satan in three primary areas – bitterness (Heb. 12:15), greed/covetousness (1 Tim. 6:9-10), and immoral behavior (Gal. 5:19; 2 Tim. 2:22). However, there are many other areas that could be mentioned such as rock music, unholy alliances or relationships, wrong associations (1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14-17), wrong philosophies (Col. 2:8), and subjective experiences or feelings (1 Cor. 12:3). When a believer gives the enemy ground it becomes a launching point where the devil can bring destructive attacks against him and seek to control his life in a given area. It's not necessarily one moment of sin that leads to satanic strongholds but any sin (anger, bitterness, jealousy, unforgiveness, lust) that is stored up and nurtured in our minds and hearts. It's sin that goes unconfessed, and which is hiding in the deep recesses of our soul, that allows Satan to get a footing in our lives. We must learn to give God the run of the house. If we don't Satan begins to occupy various rooms in our heart or house that God has the right to occupy and control.

*We give ground to Satan when we embrace a false idea or some unbiblical position. We also give ground to the Evil One when we are openly disobedient, refuse to let go of our sin, confess it, and turn from it.* The believer can be sure that a satanic stronghold and stranglehold has been reached in their lives when sin becomes a habit stage. For this reason, believers must learn to possess sobriety or spiritual alertness to Satan's deceptive thoughts, which he places in our minds.

### *The Flesh or Satan?*

For all practical purposes and understanding the flesh is our sinful nature (old nature) or unredeemed humanness that seeks to control our lives. It's the sin factory that is still working inside of us seeking to produce sinful ideas in our mind. The flesh is the seat of all lust and sinful passions (Rom. 7:18; 1 Pet. 2:11; Gal. 5:16-21; 1 John 2:16). Even if Satan were not in this world sin would still exist for all sin finds its root in the flesh or man's fallen nature (Rom. 7:18; Gal. 5:17; Matt. 15:19). The flesh is the springboard for all sin. The flesh can stand on

its own two feet! But many times the devil works in connection with our flesh to get us to sin. He exploits and magnifies the fleshly cravings or inflamed desires that come from man's fallen nature. He fans the flame of the flesh. *You might say that the devil makes a bad situation worse.* The devil was a lustful individual in that he lusted for the highest position in the universe and wanted worship (John 8:44) and it's no amazement that he effectively works to get us to lust after those things that are forbidden by God (Gen. 3:1-6). Lust is generated from the flesh (1 John 2:16) and Satan gets us to lust as he works in connection with the flesh. Ephesians 2:2-3 also connects the lust of the flesh and the devil's work together ("... according to the prince of the power of the air ... in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind"). First Timothy 6:9 also speaks of the devil's temptation and snare and connects this snare with lustful living ("But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts ...").

There can be no question that the devil's number one desire is to get us to lust after evil. Nor can we question his masterful ability to get us to lust after wrong things as he works in connection with our flesh or fallen human nature. *The flesh is a pawn in the hands of Satan.* Someone has said: "The flesh is the worm on the devil's hook." The devil knows that once he tempts us and gets our flesh excited and in control of our lives he has won a victory. The flesh makes the devil's job easier and once he takes the ground in our lives the flesh can pretty much stand on its own two feet.

When we do surrender territory to the devil that is to be God's we leave more room for the devil to work. We give place or territory to the devil in which he can work when we harbor unconfessed sin in our hearts (1 John 1:9; Heb. 12:1, 15) or some specific sin that we tolerate in our lives. Satan knows that sin will harden our heart (Heb. 3:13 – "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" and "deceitful lusts" – Eph. 4:22) and cause us to become insensitive to certain wrong actions or thoughts. The Evil One knows that sin will cause us to become calloused to the truth and what is right. *Satan knows that a hardness creeps over our thoughts and emotions as we dabble in certain sins.* It's true that "familiarity breeds contempt" and when we become familiar with sin we will eventually become desensitized to its awful character and eventually tolerate more sin in our lives (1 Cor.

5:6). Let us never forget that Satan and his demons study our lives (Eph. 6:12) and seek to exploit our weak points or Achilles' heel. Satan studies us to find every possible point of attack and any territory we give to Satan becomes a base of operation ("place" – Eph. 4:27) for his activity and work to take place in our lives. This is why we must reclaim surrendered ground, which we have given over to the devil and take it back through aggressive prayer and by His power. The believer needs to recognize the supernatural nature of temptation and be prepared to face it.

### *Tearing Down Satan's Strongholds*

Eventually the ground we surrender to Satan can become a stronghold in our lives that we must tear down. 2 Cor. 10:4-5 states: (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds) "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God..."). 2 Corinthians 10:4 is inserted but verse five explains what a stronghold is. ***A stronghold is a false idea or unscriptural belief system from which we make wrong decisions and practice wrong actions.*** The stronghold begins in the area of our minds and carries over into wrong choices and actions. These strongholds are "against the knowledge of God" meaning that Satan tries to altar our thinking or conception about God's character and ways. He plants within our mind the satanic suggestions that God is not so good to us, God is not faithful, God does not care, God's way is not the best way, God is lenient, God won't care if I indulge a little, God will overlook certain sins. We begin to think, "Why would God allow this to happen to me? Does God really know what He is doing? Don't you think that you have a right to question God and be bitter against God?"

We must demolish these wrong patterns of thought that are against God and which become fleshly strongholds that seek to control our lives. In doing so we will reclaim the ground we have given to Satan. This is done through acknowledging the truth and changing our mind about our errant belief system and wrong behavior or actions (2 Tim. 2:25; Rev. 3:19; Ps 51:3-4; James 4:9). The strongholds of lies, which defy truth and timeless Biblical principles, must be cast out of our minds and a renewal process must take place (Rom. 12:2 – "renewing of the mind") whereby we replace wrong thinking with right

thinking in the area of our mind (Phil. 4:8) and everyday living (Phil. 1:11; Col. 3:8-14; Eph. 4:25-32). When strongholds are removed a replacement process occurs whereby we replace the bad with the good (error with truth, ungodly music with godly music, unrighteous living with righteous living). God's people must tear down the strongholds of Satan's deceptions and lies or those areas of false witness in their minds and the specific areas of defeat in their personal lives and reclaim surrendered ground that they have given to the enemy. God's people must reclaim this lost territory through absolute surrender (Rom. 12:1-2) and then claim their victory over Satan (Rom. 8:37). We must renounce the hidden things of darkness (1 Cor. 4:5) and begin to live life differently – a life of freedom and victory over the devil and sin. We must surrender our mind to Christ's rule (2 Cor. 10:5 – “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”) and also surrender our body (Rom. 6:13; 12:1 – “present your bodies”) to Jesus Christ and regain the ground that we have lost. So through repentance (surrender) and replacement (Scripture memory) we can regain ground that we have surrendered to the Evil One. Take back the territory!

Let's examine the replacement process that must occur in our minds if we are going to get rid of satanic strongholds in our lives. This tearing down process is done by bringing your thought patterns under the rule and authority of Jesus Christ (“and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” – 2 Cor. 10:5). In other words, how the believer thinks must drastically change. Your belief systems or thought patterns must be placed under Christ's control, rule, and authority instead of Satan's. You must bring your thoughts in line with what Christ says, desires, and is pleasing to Him. This is done through acknowledging Christ's teaching (John 8:32; 17:17) and changing the content of your thinking (Phil. 4:8; 2 Tim. 3:16). In short, Christ needs to capture your mind (“bringing into captivity”) with His absolute standard of truth so your thinking process can be submissive to His rule instead of Satan's rule (“to the obedience of Christ”). The intruding thoughts of Satan must be replaced with thoughts that are in accord with obeying Christ and His truth. A renewing or renovation of your mind must occur (Rom. 12:2). Out with the bad and in with the good.



This replacement process is accomplished when the believer prayerfully begins to pray through Bible verses that deal with the promises of victory (Col. 2:15; Rom. 6:6,13-14; 8:31, 37; 1 Cor.15:57; 2 Cor. 2:11,14; 1 Jn. 2:13; 5:4) and those specific areas that you need to address to change your faulty thinking patterns. This is why you need to learn the Word of God. You need to effectively and prayerfully apply those portions of the Bible to your life that will give you victory over many things. Below is a list of sins that we can be victorious over by hiding God's truth in our minds and hearts.

There is the sin of worry (Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:7; Isa. 26:3-4; 41:10, 13; 2 Cor. 12:9-10; Matt. 6:33-34), stress (1 Pet. 5:7; Phil. 4:7, 9; Isa. 26:3), jealousy (Prov. 14:30; James 1:14-15; 1 Cor. 13:4; Job 5:2; Prov. 3:31; 23:17), pride (Prov. 6:16-17; 16:18, 1 Pet. 5:5; 1 Jn. 2:16), anger (Eph. 4:26, 31-32; Col. 3:8; Jam. 1:19-20; Rom. 12:9; Ps. 4:4; Prov. 14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32; 20:22; Jonah 4:4, 9), lying (Ex. 20:16; Ps. 15:1-2; 34:14; Prov. 12:22; Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25; 1 John 2:21), loneliness (Duet. 31:6; Ps. 25:16; 65:5-6; 102:7-11; 142:1-4; Heb. 13:5), fear (Ps. 34:4; 1 Pet. 5:7; Josh. 1:9; Isa. 41:10, 13; 1 Jn. 4:18; Matt. 6:34), depression (Ps. 16:8; 34:18; 43:5; 46:1), grief (Ps. 23:4; 34:18; 116:15; 147:3; Rom. 8:38-39; Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:6-8; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Isa. 26:3; Isa. 41:10; Ps. 147:3; John 14:1), divorce (Matt. 19:6; 1 Cor. 7:39, 10-11; Mal. 2:15-16 Luke 16:18), abortion (Ex. 20:13; Ps. 139:13-16; Jer, 1:5; Prov. 14:12; 12:15; 16:2; Ps. 32:3-5; 40:1-3), alcohol (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 5:18' Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 13:13-14; 1 Pet. 4:1-3 Isa. 5:11-12, 22; Hab. 2:15-16) rock music (Ps. 40:3; 2 Tim. 4:4; Rom. 6:13; Phil. 4:8; 1 Pet. 2:11; 1 Cor. 6:19-20), eating disorders (1 Pet. 4:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 19-20; Prov. 23:2), covetousness (Luke 12:15; Rom. 13:9; 1 Tim. 6:9-10), contentment (1 Tim. 6:6-8; Phil. 4:11-12), gossip (Prov. 11:13; 18:8; 21:23; 26:20, 22; Ps. 141:3; James 1:26; 3:11; 1 Pet. 3:10;; Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6; 1 Tim. 5:13), past memories (Phil. 3:13-15; Luke 9:62; Epy. 4:22-23; 2 Cor. 5:17; 10:4-5; Phil. 4:8), guilt (1 John 8-10; Isa. 1:18; 43:25; Mic. 7:18-19; 103:12), syndromes (Ps. 91:1-16; Is. 43:1-2; 42:11), submission (Eph. 5:21-22; Col. 3:8; 1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Pet. 3:1,5-6; Heb. 13:17), church attendance (Heb. 11:25; Ps. 84:0; 122:1), television/movies (Ps. 101:3; Eph. 5:4; Rom. 8:5-6; Isa. 5:20; Col. 3:1; Phil. 4:8; Rom. 12:1-2); improper dress (1 Tim. 2:9-10; Prov. 11:22; 31:10; 1 Pet. 3:3-5), temptation (Jam. 1:14; 1 Cor. 10:13), sexual purity (Ex. 20:17; Rom. 13:14; James 1:21; 1 Thess. 4:3-6;

Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; Job 31:1; Matt. 5:28; Heb. 13:4; 1 Tim. 2:22; Col. 3:5-10), homosexuality (Rom. 1:24-27; Jude 1:7; Lev. 20:13; Rom. 8:5-6; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Ps. 141:4; 1 Pet. 4:1-3; Gal. 5:16); unforgiveness (Eph. 4:30-32; Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-22), occult (Eph. 5:11; 6:10-12; 1 Pet. 2:9; Deut. 18:10-12; Gal. 5:19-20; Isa. 8:19; 1 John 4:4), procrastination (Ps. 90:12; Eph. 5:15-18; 1 Cor. 15:58), laziness (Prov. 10:4, 12:24, 13:4, 20:4, 31:27; Ecc. 10:18; 1 Tim. 5:8-14; 2 Thess. 3:10-12; Heb. 6:12; Rom. 12:11; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9), lack of faith (Ps. 20:7; Isa. 26:4; Prov. 3:5-6) and trials (2 Cor. 1:3-4; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12-13; 2 Tim. 2:3; James 1:12; Rom. 8:28).

Many Christians create note cards and begin to pray through portions of Scripture when being tempted by the devil. It is the Holy Spirit that teaches you the Word of God (John 14:26) and guides you in all truth (John 16:13). It is the Holy Spirit who reminds you of what you have learned (John 14:26) and enables you to practice what He has taught you through the Scriptures. The “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17) is your defense in that the Holy Spirit brings important verses to your attention in the time of temptation. The Holy Spirit drives home the truth of the Bible to your heart and life so you can know the truth *experientially* and be set free (John 8:32). You simply need to prayerfully apply these verses to your life by faith and use them in the time of battle as Jesus used the Scriptures in the time of His battle with Satan (Matthew 4). Getting the truth into your mind and getting the lies out of your mind is essential for victory.

2 Corinthians 10:5 is a verse of action! You must submit your mind to the right Commander! You must allow your intellect to be submitted to Christ and no longer think thoughts that are disobedient to Christ’s truth and mastery over your life. Instead, you must bring your thoughts under “obedience” to Christ’s truth and mastery over your life. Satan wants to corrupt your mind from “the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Cor. 11:3). This means that Satan seeks to detour our thinking away from our devotion or commitment to Christ relationally (fellowship), devotionally (service), and doctrinally (truth). The strongholds of Satanic lies, which defy truth and timeless Biblical principles, must be cast out of your mind and a renewal process must take place (Rom. 12:2 – “renewing of the mind”) whereby you replace the wrong with the right or the bad with the good (Phil. 4:8). Changing these wrong patterns of thinking will naturally result in a change

within our everyday living (Phil. 1:11; Col. 3:8-14; Eph. 4:25-32). This is because we act how we think (Prov. 4:23; 23:7).

### *Satan's Thoughts*

The believer must always remember one thing. Your thoughts can come from God (Matt. 16:16-17), Satan (Matt. 16:22; James 3:14-15), or the old sin nature (Heb. 3:13; Rom. 7:18; Gal. 5:17; Matt. 15:19), or from yourself (Matt. 16:17 – “flesh and blood”; Isaiah 55:8; Luke 24:38; 1 Cor. 14:38). Thus, the believer is capable of experiencing self-deception, sin's deception, and Satan's deception. Many times Satan will work in connection with the old nature (Eph. 2:2-3; 1 Tim. 6:9). He likes to *fan the flame* that is already smoldering on the inside of you through the drives and evil incentives of the old nature. He works in connection with the old nature to deceive us mentally and then keep us in bondage. But let us remember that the way we think is really the beginning of victory or the start of our spiritual downfall and defeat. God does not want our thoughts to control us. Rather, God wants the Christian to control his thoughts by replacing the bad with the good, and the unscriptural with the scriptural. When doing this the believer brings his thought patterns under Christ's rule and in obedience to His truth. Our only hope to be free from deception is the Word of God (Psalm 110:105).

The human mind is really a spiritual entity tied to another world. Our minds function in the realm of the spirit world. Our thoughts can come from ourselves, God, or from evil entities. So we must question the origin of our thoughts. It's through our minds that Satan and demons (spirit beings) can have access to our lives. Satan influences our minds by suggesting thoughts, exciting the imagination, inflaming passion, stirring up appetites, rekindling the old fleshy fires in our soul or lighting new ones. Remember that Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) and he will seek to sell us many different lies in his approach to defeat our lives. Allow me to play the devils advocate for a moment. Satan's deceptive lies within the mind come across like this: “You have the right to be angry”; “You deserve a break today”; “It can't be wrong if it feels right”; “No one will know”; “God made me this way”; “A little bit is permissible”; “It won't hurt you”; “You can stretch the truth in a small way”; “A little contemporary music won't hurt you”;

Everybody is doing it.” Satan and unclean spirits (Mark 5:2) are spiritually impure evil entities that seek to transfer their evil thoughts into our own minds. The point is this. Satan tempts us by giving us ideas to think about. The Evil One plants suggestions in our mind. Satan and demons inject thoughts into our minds, which we might think are proper, but they are thoughts designed to lead us down a wrong path.

Someone has said: “Our adversary is a master strategist, forever fogging up our minds with smokescreens.” 2 Corinthians 11:3 is worth repeating: “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” *The mind is the devil’s workshop!* Believers must be aware of the intruding thoughts of the Evil One and how they can come racing into their minds as “a form of godliness” (2 Tim. 3:5) but which are really so-called sanctified ungodliness (Titus 2:12) trying to corrupt their thinking process and lead them away from God’s true will for their lives.

Remember that Satan comes to us as “an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Don’t forget the old angel of light routine! Satan can come to us as messenger that sends thoughts into our minds, which appear to be outwardly holy, right, good, and righteous. *These thoughts come in religious disguise!* But the very things he is suggesting to us are sinister thoughts that are not based upon truth or what is right to do. E. M. Bounds said this about the devil: “He has access to the minds of men from which he ought forever to be barred. But he has so much of diabolical trickery that he clothes the meanest act with fairest guise, and conceals a world of infamy with beautiful rainbow colourings.” Satan disguises the evil so it cannot be seen! How utterly diabolical and deceptive he is. This is why the believer must be on guard. As Peter warned, “gird up the loins of your mind, be sober ... ” (1 Pet. 1:13).

The devil can adversely influence our minds by veiling the blackness of sin as the colors of the rainbow. Many times the intruding thoughts of Satan that come into the minds of believers, especially those who have surrendered some ground to Satan, are considered to be God’s thoughts and leading. This is because many times Satan disguises these thoughts so well that he makes them appear religious, godly,

spiritually good, and right. The familiar expression “The Lord’s leading” is abused by Satan today. *Confusing the voice of God with the voice of Satan is a terrible blunder.* But I’m afraid it happens many times in the lives of God’s saints who have given ground over to Satan and who follow subjective feelings or additional subjective revelation outside the Bible. Let us never forget that the serpent of Eden communicated a revelation that was supposedly equal or even superior to the revelation of God (“Ye shall not surely die” and “ye shall be as gods”). And Eve accepted the mental suggestions of the Serpent.

Do you think that the horrible, vile, depressing, negative, and even blasphemous thoughts, which torment you, are actually your own thoughts? If so, you fail to realize that Satan and his workers fill your mind with all kinds of intruding thoughts (Eph. 6:16). Choosing the truth may be difficult if you have been living a lie. David lived a lie for a time in his life. When he finally found freedom he wrote, “Blessed is the man ... in whose spirit *there is no guile*” (Psalm 32:2). Remember that deception is the subtlest of all satanic strongholds (Gen. 3:1). Satan’s lies of deception are at the heart of addictive behavior.

*Once you believe Satan’s lies they become truth to you. And if what you believe isn’t true, then how you live won’t be right. People may not always live what they profess, but they always live what they believe (Prov. 4:23).* Satan brings sinful and wrong thoughts into your mind because he knows sin can deceive you (Heb. 3:13). Satan says, “It’s okay to indulge a little. You can’t help yourself. You were born this way. It’s not your fault (1 John 1:8). You should feel sorry for yourself. You don’t need to go to church today. It’s not important to pray and read the Bible every day. Some of the Christian Rock music isn’t so bad. You are stupid and will never amount to anything. It can’t be wrong if it works. You can watch a little bit and get away with it. Just a little drink won’t hurt you. You are a victim of circumstances. It’s not your fault.”

### *The Mental Game*

You must remember that the presence of a thought in your mind is not sin. You sin only when you keep the thought in your mind and accept it as being true or act upon it in lust (James 1:14-15). Just

because you think a thought does not mean you must accept it or obey it. The presence of a thought does not mean that it will happen. In other words, you do not create reality by your thought life or simply by what you think. You can declare war on your thoughts and old ways of thinking or any perverted way of thinking by demolishing every wrong, depressing, angry, evil, and wicked thought sent into your mind by the enemy. You don't have to be ruled by wrong thoughts. God has promised to give you "power" (2 Tim. 1:7) to do what is necessary and a "sound" (self-disciplined) mind, which results in a disciplined way of life (1 Tim. 4:7; 1 Cor. 9:27) that is victorious.

### *Devilish Deception*

It is said of some people that their minds are like concrete, all mixed up and permanently set. This can be the result of the Evil One. The devil is seen as a deceiver (Rev. 12:9). Mental deception by "seducing spirits" (1 Tim. 4:1) is very real. Satan wants to darken our minds to truth (Eph. 4:17-19). He wants to prevent us from understanding the truth (Mark 4:15). Satan tries to beguile, seduce, or deceive our minds (2 Cor. 11:3) with sin, blatant error, half-truths, false religion and false witnesses. Remember that a person who is deceived does not know it. I repeat. *If you believe a lie, it becomes the truth to you.* Much of our deception is willful ignorance (Gal. 6:3; 1 Cor. 14:38). We are deceived because we want to be deceived. We have the ability to rationalize our behavior to appease our conscience. We talk ourselves into believing what we want to believe. We have the uncanny ability to fool ourselves and others because of our own deceptive heart (Jer. 17:9). To say that you are following your heart is not a wise saying. Our capacity for deception is very real. Satan will play with our own willful ignorance and make us extremely vulnerable to deception through sin (Heb. 3:13).

The Serpent is still trying to sell his subjective and deceptive revelations to our own minds, which in some measure replace God's truth concerning how to live, act, and conduct ourselves as Christians. There are many thoughts that come racing into our minds which we can know are always from the devil. There are the thoughts of *rebellion* (1 Sam. 15:23). Rebellion is likened to witchcraft and we know who is behind witchcraft! To rebel against God ordained authority is to follow the prince of all rebels – the devil. The rebellion

of drugs, rock music, and rebellion against authority all originate from the devil. Then there are the thoughts of *anger* (Eph. 4:26-27). Anger is a starting point where the devil can begin to work in our lives. Anger destroys homes and marriages. Along with these thoughts are thoughts of *bitterness, wrath, and gossip* (Eph. 4:31) which are set in the same passage and context of giving place to the devil. Bitterness and gossip destroys people's lives and church ministries. The word rendered "slanderers" in 1 Timothy 3:11 is "diabalos" which is the same word used for the devil. The devil is a slanderer in that he accuses the saints and talks about God's people behind their backs (Rev. 12:10). When we gossip about others by giving harmful reports about them behind their backs we are being just like the devil and are obviously intellectually influenced by the devil. Verbal slander is of the devil. The deadly poison of verbal slander has its source in the Serpent (James 3:8-9).

Then there are the devilish thoughts of *murder* (1 John 3:12). This is why people get even with others by murdering them. Murder is from the devil since he was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). Even hating a brother is equivalent to murder in God's eyes (1 John 3:15). When we do not love a brother but choose to hate him we are acting like a child of the devil. Then there are the thoughts of *guilt*. We know that Satan accuses us before God (Rev. 12:10) but as our personal "adversary" (opponent or accuser - 1 Pet. 5:8) it's equally true that he opposes us by accusing us of being worthless and unusable in God's work. He accuses us of being too great a sinner for God to use and tries to drive a wedge between God and us.

The devil can quickly change from the tempter to the accuser. He tries to bring up our past to bog us down in the present and make us ineffective for the Lord. We must know where these accusations are coming from and dismiss them from our mind. Then too, there are the thoughts of *hopelessness* and *despair*. The man possessed by demons lives along among the tombs (Mark 5:3) and severed himself from social relationships. He became a loner full of hopelessness and despair. Hopelessness is one of Satan's most believable lies. Only the promises of God can rescue us from this debilitating condition. *Fear* is another way Satan works in our mind. Thoughts of fear race through our minds as we seek to witness and stand up for Christ (Luke 22:31-34). Satan has much to do with the fear of witnessing.

Then there are the exaggerated, haunting, paralyzing, and controlling fears that cause us to be paranoid and ineffective in God's service and work. Fear is a mark of Satan's work (Heb. 2:14-15) and fear paralyzes those who give themselves to it (1 John 4:18). Then there are *sexual thoughts* that race into our minds, which are designed to tear down our marriage and personal effectiveness for the Lord (1 Cor. 7:5). The power of spirits who seek to tempt us in a sensual way is very real.

We might add that Satan is a deceptive being, who many times tries to imitate God, since he wants to be like God (Isaiah 14:14). Satan has his own trinity (Rev. 16:13), his own churches (Rev. 2:9), his own ministers (2 Cor. 11:4-5, 13-15), his own theology (1 Tim. 4:1), his own system of sacrifice (1 Cor. 10:20), his own Gospel (Gal. 1:7-8; 2 Cor. 11:4), his own throne (Rev. 13:2, 4), and his own communion service (1 Cor. 10:20-21).

### *What About Feelings?*

Feelings are not the victory. Faith is the victory! *We must also beware of subjective feelings that override truth.* We must remember that our emotions are not always holy (Jer. 17:9). This is because they can be generated from an evil heart that is fleshly, deceptive and manipulative. Grooving to a satanic sound may stir our emotions but it does not mean that the emotions are holy! Many times emotions are elevated above Biblical truth and holiness or at least place along side of it. But emotions must be tested by truth (Rom. 4:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; John 17:17) and generated by that which is holy since we are called upon to be holy "in all conversation (manner) of living" – even the area of our emotional responses (1 Pet. 1:15). Psalm 45:1 says, "My heart is inditing (stirred up) a good matter..."

In other words, our feelings and emotions must be geared around what is right and what is holy. We must bring all of our feelings in obedience to Christ and His truth (2 Cor. 10:5). Often our feelings or physical senses run counter to what God requires. Therefore, we must walk by faith in God's truth and not by emotional feelings. Both truth and faith often run contrary to feelings. *The devil wants us to live in the realm of feeling, but God wants us to live in the realm of faith.* Our focus must be on truth that is settled in heaven (Ps. 119:89). We



don't always "feel" like obeying, praying, reading our Bible, or committing ourselves to God, but we must not give in to our feelings. Our fallen human nature seldom causes us to feel like obeying God and doing what is right! Even Christ, who possessed no fallen sin nature, did not *feel* like dying on the cross and being separated from the Father (Matt. 26:39). Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus was obedient to what the Father wanted Him to do and bypasses His human feelings.

Dear friend, we must obey God and fight off our feelings many times in life. *We do not have to be a victim of our feelings and circumstances. The Bible (truth) needs to become the center of our existence – not feelings and circumstances.* When we choose (not feel) to obey God and His Word our feelings will eventually fall in line with the truth. We must never allow our feelings to become the criteria for truth, spiritual maturity, or worship. We must also remember that love, forgiveness, and obedience to truth are not based upon feeling or emotion.

We can choose to love, forgive and obey and God will give us the grace to do so. Satan wanted Eve to come to the place where she realized that objective truth is too cold and too harsh and this is why Eve added to the truth when saying, "neither shall ye touch it" (Gen. 3:2). The Serpent wanted Eve to focus on subjective feelings and sensations. He wanted her to "Go with your heart" (feelings) instead of with the absolute standard. This is especially brought out in Genesis 3:6 as the serpent tempted Eve to the point where she longed to taste the fruit ("good for food") and saw how desirable the tree and fruit was to look upon ("pleasant to the eyes"). Beware! Satan says, "Feel don't think! It can't be wrong if it feels so right!" A bumper sticker capsulizes the mood of our culture, "If it feels good, do it!" This is Satan's lie. The sensations of feelings override truth and can become a blockade to seeing, knowing, and practicing truth.

"Feelings come and feelings go,  
And feelings are deceiving.  
My warrant is the Word of God,  
For nought is worth believing."

## *Towers of Truth*

We must remember that God does not want us to be controlled by thoughts and feelings. He wants us to control the thoughts we allow into our minds and the feelings that affect our lives (2 Cor. 10:5). How do we counteract the devil's detrimental intruding thoughts and his tricks to lead us astray emotionally? We do this by erecting towers of truth (Eph. 6:14 – "loins girt about with truth"). Truth is the way out of temptation and it's the only way we can keep our minds occupied with God's objective standard and do what is right instead of following Satan's advice and trickery. Satan enjoys having lively debates with us as he did with Eve in the garden. But we must silence these debates and his trickery with the spoken truth (Eph. 6:17 – "the word of God"). There is always a serious danger of trying to create an open and swept mind. This is illustrated by Jesus in a parable (Matt. 12:43-45). Trying to live in a spiritual vacuum is very dangerous. In fact, we open ourselves up as a target for Satan and demonic influence.

Believers effectively tear down Satan's strongholds in their lives through reprogramming their minds (Rom. 12:2) to truth and allowing their minds to dwell on those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Phil. 4:8). *Whenever we remove something we must replace it with something else.* This means we must refuse to cooperate with the adverse and unbiblical belief systems erected through sin, family, society, peers, education, television or music, which have shaped our minds. We must refuse sinful ways and those unrighteous thoughts, which dominate our way of thinking and philosophy of life.

As we have already seen, this refusal occurs by "Casting down imaginations" (demolishing the thoughts that are wrong and untrue – 2 Cor. 10:5) which are those thoughts that exalt themselves against the "knowledge of God" (2 Cor. 10:5). *Your thoughts are not authoritative. The presence of a thought in your mind does not mean you have to obey it. Neither does the presence of a thought mean that it will happen. We do not create reality by our thought life.* We can declare war on our old way of thinking or any perverted way of thinking and demolish every wrong, evil, and wicked thought sent into our minds by the enemy. We don't have to be ruled by wrong

thoughts. God has promised that He has given us “power” (2 Tim. 1:7) to do what is necessary and a “sound” (self-disciplined) mind which leads to a disciplined way of life (1 Tim. 4:7; 1 Cor. 9:27) and victorious living.

Believers must test their thoughts and determine their origin (1 John 4:1) and engage their minds to cooperate with the Spirit and with God’s objective truth (John 17:17; John 8:32). Satan is the liar (John 8:44) and he wants to corrupt our minds with his lies (2 Cor. 11:3). The devil tries to control our minds through lies. Whenever we believe a lie, Satan takes over. But the Holy Spirit controls our minds through the standard of truth (Eph. 6:17; 1 John 4:6; John 14:26; 16:13 - “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ...”).

“Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,  
Ever near the Christian’s side,  
Gently lead us by the hand,  
Pilgrims in a desert land.  
Weary souls fore’er rejoice,  
While they hear the sweetest voice,  
Whisp’ring softly, “Wanderer, come!  
Follow me, I’ll guide thee home.”

### *The Believer’s Critic*

Heb. 4:12 states, “For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Holy Spirit uses the Bible, which is the believer’s critic that tests and exposes his innermost thoughts. The way that the Bible pierces and penetrates our thought life as a sword is explained as “piercing even to the dividing sunder of soul and spirit” which is a very interesting expression that means the Bible sorts out the different motives within the heart (inner life control center) of a Christian. It “divides asunder” or distinguishes between the soulish and spiritual desires within man. This verse is indicating a division within man’s inner being or constitution. The soul and spirit work together but are still distinct as

the Word of God suggests here. The soul and spirit are the two invisible or immaterial parts of man's inner being or existence. The spiritual desires, motives, and ways of thinking come from the realm of the human spirit where the new nature manifests itself, whereas the fleshly or carnal way of thinking emanates from the soul of man, or the soulish part of man's existence, where the old nature still manifests itself. Our human spirit has been born again and has received God's life but the old nature still dominates the soul of man, which is not yet fully brought back to God.

So what does the Word of God accomplish on the inside of us? It "divides asunder" or distinguishes between the soulish and spiritual desires within man. The Bible can sort out the differences between those desires and patterns of belief (thoughts) which are of the soul or the old way of life and those which come from the realm of the human spirit where God's life and nature reside. This is a fascinating realization. The Bible is the sword that cuts down into our innermost being and sorts out *what kind* of thoughts we are thinking. When we allow the Word of God to impact our lives it will expose our hearts and tell the true story!

"Holy Bible! Book divine!  
Precious treasure! thou art mine:  
Mine to tell me whence I came;  
Mine to tell me what I am."

The soulish and spiritual desires are closely interwoven together in a strange mixture within us. An illustration of the human body is given to help us understand what really takes place on the inside of each one of us. It's the illustration of the joints and marrow – "dividing asunder of the soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow" (an illustration used in a metaphorical sense). In other words, the writer of Hebrews gives a physical illustration of the human body to help us understand what takes place on the inside of each one of us in connection with our thoughts. As the joints (the place where the bones connect) and marrow (soft tissue in the bone cavities or hollow space within the bones) are intertwined and interlocked together within the human body, so the soul and spirit are intertwined or interwoven together on the inside of us, where different desires, thoughts, and motives are in constant battle. It's the two-edged sword

of the Word of God that gets inside of us and exposes our hearts for what they really are by sorting out what belief system we really have and what our thoughts, desires, and motives really are.

The Bible is our critic. The Bible sets itself up as an inner critic (“discerner”) inside of our hearts or innermost being to sort out and expose both the good and evil desires and motives within our heart. The Bible becomes a critic of our hearts and lives for it exposes us for what we really are by sorting the soulish (fleshly) from the spiritual. The Bible is a critic of both the “thoughts” (what we are thinking about) and the “intents” (why we are thinking them) of our hearts. The Word of God evaluates both the objective and subjective process of our thoughts. The Bible is a critic and judge over our lives. **We don’t judge the Bible; the Bible judges us!** God uses the Word to enable us to expose sinful or corrupt thoughts and even the wrong motives in our own hearts. The Word exposes our hearts; and then, if we trust God, the Word enables our hearts to obey God and claim His promises. This is why each believer should be diligent to apply himself to hear and heed God’s Word (James 1:22-23). Today we need to be honest with God for the Word of God is honest with us.

“The Bible Stands like a rock undaunted  
‘Mid the raging storms of time;  
Its pages burn with the truth eternal,  
And they glow with a light sublime.

The Bible stands tho the hills may tumble,  
It will firmly stand when the earth shall crumble;  
I will plant my feet on its firm foundation,  
For the Bible stands.”

Once the evil thoughts are sorted out and exposed for what they really are it’s then that the believer must take quick action to refuse these wrong thoughts and not allow them to dominate his thinking process. He must cast them out of his mind (2 Cor. 10:5), submit to God and His truth by bringing his thoughts under the “captivity” or rule of Christ, and then resist the devil (James 4:7). The wrong thoughts must then be replaced by right thoughts.

## *The Above Things*

The believer in Christ is said to be “risen with Christ.” *This reminds us that the Christian life is a shared life.* The life of the all-victorious, risen, ascended Christ is shared with each believer in view of their spiritual union with His resurrection life. This means that what Christ is we can become in actual experience, as we allow His life to be lived out through us. With this in mind the Bible believer must learn to “seek those things which are above” (Col. 3:1-2). This means to experience in our own lives the very virtues of the heavenly and risen Christ, who lives in Heaven, and whose life we share. We are to strive to think and live as Christ would think and live.

Seeking heavenly things should be our consuming passion instead of seeking earthly things. This is because the earthly have no eternal value whereas the heavenly has eternal value (Matt. 6:19-24). The person raised with Christ should be living out the life of Christ (Phil. 1:21). He should literally “keep seeking” those things that are Christ-like. In order to do this, we must first set our minds on things above by reflecting on Christ’s person and His wonderful virtues as the God-man. The above like must be practiced daily or else the below life begins to override our lives and we lose perspective on living spiritually and fruitfully as a Christian (John 15:3). The below life can win out over the heavenly life and we can lose perspective on the heavenly life and no longer think or act as Christ who is now seated in the heaven.

“Setting your affection” deals more with the mind than with feelings. The Greek literally reads, “exercise your mind” or “have an understanding.” In short, we need to be mentally with it and be of the same mind as Christ who is seated in heaven – think as Christ would think (Phil. 2:5). When the Christian thinks like Christ he will act like Christ. *A person’s actions are the result of his thinking!* Therefore, the Christian must maintain a proper mental attitude on the heavenly Christ and His godly life or virtues which consist of such things as His love, holiness, mercy, purity, forgiveness, righteousness, peace, patience, and joy. We should “seek” or strive to think and live as Christ would. We should seek to cherish the same things Christ cherishes and possess an interest in the same things the heavenly Christ is interested with.

John Phillips once wrote:

“Psychology says, ‘Look within,’ the opportunist says to ‘Look around.’ The optimist says, ‘Look ahead.’ The pessimist says, ‘Look out!’ But God says, ‘Look up!’”

The point is this. We are to set our affection on things above – mainly Christ and His life. The earthly things that we tend to focus on through the old nature are listed in Colossians 3:5-11. When we think and act in the ways mentioned in these verses we can be sure that we are setting our affection or mind on earthly things and have been infected with the earthly virus. However, a Biblical catalog or list of things that Christ is interested with is then stated in Colossians 1:12-16. This list gives to us some examples of Christ’s heavenly thinking, interests, and actions. The list includes mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness, love, and both meditation on truth and teaching God’s truth.

Similar lists of earthly and then heavenly things occur in James 3:14-17. In these verses it talks about those things that are “earthly” (vs. 15) and which are generated from the old nature and demons and those things that are heavenly or which come “from above.” In other words, they are generated by God. According to James a wise person, who is practicing the above life, will possess a life of purity, a peaceful spirit, gentleness, be approachable – not harsh, merciful, demonstrate fruitful living, refrain from showing favoritism, and not practice hypocrisy.

These are heavenly things, which are “from above” (James 3:17) instead of the earthly, sensual, and devilish wisdom and practices that come from below (James 3:15). The above things that related to Christ and His character are the very things God wants us to think about and then practice in our daily lives. When we reflect upon the above life we will not live the life that is below and which is demonic! The believer lives in the heavenlies in union with Christ’s life (Eph. 1:3; 2:6) and as a result he should not practice the earthlies! The above life is to be preferred to the below life! How often we have been diagnosed with the earthlies instead of the heavenlies. We only think earthly thoughts instead of thinking heavenly thoughts or as Christ would have us to think. Instead of thinking and then acting as Christ would act, we think as the world thinks and act as the world

acts. As we have seen from James chapter three earthly thinking destroys church ministries and personal Christian living. Earthly thinking overrides heavenly thinking (thinking as Christ would think) and as a result carnality sets into our lives. We need to remember that our concentration and real concern must be on the eternal things that will last and not the temporal things that are passing away (1 John 2:17). What an important lesson this is for every child of God.

Philippians 4:8 also gives a catalog list or *mental menu* list that we need to meditate upon and put into practice within our daily minds and lives. These are things that are found in God's Word and God's character. Victory involves thinking right thoughts. This list consists of several important things. First, there are true things. These are things which conform to Biblical reality and God's standard. The opposite of true things are dishonest, unreliable, hidden, or concealed things. A false witness and fantasies are unreal and do not conform to Biblical reality. Life can never be right if our thinking is wrong. Second, there are honest things. These are noble things that are honorable and worthy of our reverence, respect, and worship. We should not think about flippant and careless thoughts.

Third, there are just things which point to right things or those things that are upright, holy, and which conform to God's standards of righteousness (Ps. 1:2). They refer to right actions which are to be directed toward both God and man. The opposite of right things are wrong things. Too often we think upon those things that are wrong and ungodly. Fourth, there are pure things which refer to uncontaminated, chaste, wholesome, pure, clean, and innocent things that are free from all moral impurity. These are things that will not contaminate our lives. Thinking on dirty things will corrupt our lives. We are to concentrate on that which separates from sin instead of that which leads to sin. Obeying this standard alone would eliminate about half of the problems with our thought lives. Fifth, there are lovely things. This word is a combination of one of the Greek words for "love" (phileo) and the preposition (pros) meaning "toward" and might literally be understood as "that which is toward love." Instead of thinking about strife, hostility, resentment, and bitterness (resentment), we are to think about love and friendship. This is speaking about those things that are ethically acceptable, pleasing, beautiful, and attractive in God's sight because they promote love,



concord, and peace among God's people instead of turmoil and unrest. The believer must concentrate on those things that promote love among God's people.

Lehman Strauss says, "Beauty of character is a worthy replacement for the ugly, the selfish, and the arrogant." Finally, there are reputable things or things of "good report" which is a beautiful term meaning things that are admirable, reputable, and well-spoken. It refers to things that are worthy to talk about. These things are the opposite of "filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting" (Eph. 5:4) – dirty talk and gutter talk. These things contain no immoral or sexually suggestive talk. These things are also the opposite of slander and gossip. Admirable things are "fair-sounding" things that relate to what is positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive. Instead of thinking about how to slander a person's reputation we should think about speaking well of people. To think about saying good things about people instead of criticizing them all the time is what this word is suggesting. One writer said: "No Christian can afford to waste mind power on thoughts that tear him down or that would tear others down if these thoughts were shared."

This list calls us to conform our thinking pattern to those things which will bring victory to our minds instead of thoughts of defeat. Remember that victory is one choice at a time! You heard the famous statement, "You are what you eat." The same is true in the spiritual realm. You are what you think! So "think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). If there is anything of lasting "virtue" (moral excellence and purity), and if there is anything of lasting praise (that which is commendable and praise-worthy) these six objects of thought are it. Roy Laurin said: "Many believers need a revised version of their thoughts." We are to meditate on these things mentioned in Philippians 4:8 with careful reflection, not casually and superficially, but constantly ("For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" - Prov 23:7).

"Sow a thought, reap an action.  
Sow an action, reap a habit.  
Sow a habit, reap a character.  
Sow a character, reap a destiny."

Right thinking is the result of daily meditation on the Word of God (compare the list of Phil. 4:8 with Psalm 19:7-9 which is a description of the Word of God). The Bible will keep us from sinful thinking and living (Ps. 119:11, 15, 59; Joshua 1:8).

“Thy Word is a lamp to my feet,  
A light to my path always,  
To guide and to save me from sin,  
And show me the heav’nly way.”

Noble thinking produces noble living; high thinking produces high living; and holy thinking produces holy living. It is easy to adopt a defeatist attitude saying, “We cannot help thinking this way” when our minds are filled with unwholesome thoughts. The fact of the matter is that we *can* help it. The secret lies in thinking right! It has been said that you cannot prevent a bird from flying over your head, but you can prevent it from building a nest in your hair. So it is with our thoughts. We cannot prevent the Tempter from placing them in our minds but we do not have to allow them to build up in our lives as a permanent fixture.

The believer must also think right about God. It’s interesting that Satan wants to manipulate our thinking process about God (“knowledge of God” – 2 Cor. 10:5). He tries to cause us to have a *distorted view* about God. Sinful thoughts challenge our thinking about our knowledge of God or who God is in relationship to His character of goodness, righteousness, justice and holiness (Gen. 3:1-5).

### *The Lie of Eden*

“Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). This was the lie of the ages. And it’s still Satan’s number one lie today. It’s also the lie behind reincarnation. Satan wants us to think that sin has no consequences when God has clearly said that sin always has consequences (Gen. 2:17 – “...thou shalt surely die” and Numb. 32:23 – “... be sure your sin will find you out”). The New Testament counterpart is Galatians 6:7 which says, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Satan wants us to believe what he brought Eve to believe; that God takes sin lightly and God

won't follow through on His Word. God won't judge sin, even if He said He would. This is a critical point in the strategy of Satan. Before he leads us into sin he wants to diminish or dismiss the consequences of sin in our lives. Satan denies one of the basic facts of life: God punishes sin! Satan wants to redefine God as a God who does not judge sin (Rom. 1:23, 25) and when he can effectively do this people will take his bait. Many today, even Christians, believe that God is only a God of love and because of this sin will not bring any real or lasting judgment in their lives. God is defined with only those attributes that make people feel comfortable.

One writer has said: "How often do you hear sermons about God's judgment these days? Instead, sermons just overflow with sentimental ideas about God's love. God has been recast as Santa Clause – an updated Santa Clause who never leaves coal in a naughty boy's stocking." We live in a "no-fault" and "guilt-free" society that has redefined God to make Him fit into their own mold of living. This is becoming increasingly true in the arena of the church. God is almost viewed as accommodating a life of sin and selfishness and as someone who understands that we all make mistakes in life. God knows that deep down we mean well. Furthermore, God exists to help us feel better and accepts us the way we are in spite of our shortcomings. Satan tries to play down the serious nature of sin by claiming that God understands about our sin and we need to accept ourselves as we are and understand about sin (not hate it).

Coupled with this lie is the redefining of sin and a new understanding about sin. The "struggle theologians" of today are saying that all Christians (our born-again buddies) struggle with sin. Therefore, we should not be too hard on sin. We need to look at sin as a part of the everyday struggle of life and realize that we all blow it in life. We don't want other Christians to think that we are better than others ("holier than thou") when we emphasize sin. Christians aren't perfect. We all have our weaknesses. Don't be so hard on yourself. If you sin, all you have to do is confess to God and everything will be all right again. Other people do things worse than you. God expects us to fail now and then. God wouldn't have given you such strong desires if He didn't expect you to fulfill them. You need to have some fun and excitement in your life. You're too hard on yourself! God does not expect us to live by rules. Lot's of Christians out there don't think that

it's wrong. Don't be so narrow-minded. You must relate to the real world and you can only do this when you get out there and experience what they experience. After all, you are free in Christ. Nothing in moderation is wrong. Just don't get caught doing it all the time. A few times won't hurt anybody.

These are rationalizing thoughts used by Satan to lead God's people into the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25). This mentality downplays the severity of sin and keeps Christians from seeing that sin always has a price tag attached to it (Heb. 12:5-6 – "And ye have forgotten the exhortation ... My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord ... For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"). Don't believe Satan's lie that sin does not have any consequences. Sin is no longer a disgusting transgression in God's sight (Ps. 51:1-5) but a disease caused by poor self-esteem, genetic deficiencies, and outside environmental influences. Sin is softened and downplayed today in every way. We are accountable to God for our sin and we can be that it will catch up with us (Numb. 32:23).

The Bible says that God's people do not prosper when they cover their sin (Prov. 28:13). Sin always has a certain amount of judgment and heartache attached to it (Ps. 32:10; Prov. 6:32-33; 1 Tim. 6:10; Heb. 12:16-17). Satan says, "Go ahead and do it" but the bill always comes later! God does not sweep sin under the carpet. We can be sure of this one thing. Sin does catch up with us! Don't let Satan deceive you into thinking that God allows sin to go unchecked and unpunished. This is why the world is increasingly plummeting into moral degradation and why God's people are dabbling in sinful and carnal practices today. Satan effectively sells the lie that sin does not have any consequences. He wants us to believe that we can cover our sin and prosper at the same time. This is the lie of Eden and is impossible from a spiritual perspective.

### *The Suspicion of Eden*

In the garden we see a detailed exposure of Satan's seductive schemes. The Evil One loves suspicion and doubt. This is especially true in relationship to God. Satan tries to redefine God. In the garden Satan questioned God's goodness (Gen. 3:1), word, wisdom (Gen.

3:3), and authority (Gen. 3:6) and he has been doing the same things every since. Let us never forget the suspicion of Eden. Satan wants us to become suspicious of God's goodness, truth, and wisdom. He begins to attack God's character and Word since his main ambition is to dethrone God and magnify himself (Matt. 4:9). ***Satan's kingdom is built on lies, doubt, suspicion, and speculation.***

Think of this. Satan wanted Eve to think that God was not good. Why didn't He allow us to eat from all the trees? Instead of focusing on all the trees God said she could eat from Eve began to focus on the one tree she could not eat from. Soon she began to believe that she *needed* something from that one tree which would help her to be wise, like a god, and fully advanced in life. So what was the suspicion erected by Satan in Eden? Satan wanted Eve to become suspicious of God's goodness to the point that she actually believed God was withholding something from her life that was actually good for her.

Then Satan wanted Eve to create a *false need* in her heart that God and His Word could not conceivably meet. Eve came to the place where she said, "I have a need (this fruit) that God does not intend to meet." Eve did not need the fruit but Satan got her to think she needed it. The serpent does the same thing to us today. The satanic conclusion was this. True satisfaction and enrichment in life is found outside the boundaries of God's will. *We can move outside the realm of God's will and find greater fulfillment in life and still be spiritual in doing it.* As a result of this thinking, Eve created a *false need* that was totally contrary to God's will.

*Let us never forget that Satan is the master of confusing wants and needs.* He is an expert at confusing God's people so that they cannot distinguish between their *greeds and needs* or between a *false need and true need*. Satan gets God's people to focus on themselves by saying, "God is really not that good. He's withholding something from you. God's Word is not true. God is not all wise." As a result of this satanic reasoning we become convinced that we *need* something more or something else that God has failed to provide or told us about in His spoken Word. We reason, "I *need* to taste of the fruit so I can excel and meet my full potential in life. I *need* something other than God's truth to get me to a different level in life. Since God is not altogether good and since His Word is not full of complete truth,

revelation, and wisdom, I *need* to discover truth on my own and find out what is right for me.”

With this satanic reasoning a *false need* is erected in our life that God and His Word cannot meet. As a result, something else must replace it – our own will and plan - which runs contrary to God’s goodness, provision, and truth. By doing this Satan effectively sows in our hearts and minds discontentment and dissatisfaction with the will of God. Satan effectively gets us to focus our attention on self and our self-needs instead of the authority of the Word of God. Satan wants to lure us to the place of ignorance and indifference to the Word of God.

Let us be aware how Satan craftily brings this suspicion and doubt into our minds. Satan doubts God’s truth (“Yea, hath God said”- Gen. 3:1). *The devil puts a question mark where God puts a period.* The devil also denies God’s truth (“Ye shall not surely die” – Gen. 3:4) and distorts God’s truth (“For God doeth know” – Gen. 3:5). Satan also wants us to *change our mind about God* (His goodness, justice and motive – “Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden” – Gen. 3:1). He wants us to *change our mind about sin* (it doesn’t cost, God won’t judge it – “ye shall not surely die” – Gen. 3:4, instead “your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods” – Gen. 3:5). Satan also wants us to *change our mind about self* (we are very important, focus on yourself, your moods, and feelings, rather than on God and others – “good for food, pleasant to the eyes, make one wise” – Gen. 3:6). Satan is the master of the immediate and wants us to sacrifice permanent blessings on the altar of immediate satisfaction.

### *False Needs*

Let’s develop this thought of false needs in a greater way. The suspicion of Eden, which says that I need something that God and His Word cannot provide, is the focal point of modern philosophies and movements. The present day Psychology Movement and its focus on self (self-love, self- esteem, self-enrichment) is playing right into the hands of Satan. With this psychological approach to living we begin to focus on ourselves rather than on God and the psychological needs that God and His Word cannot meet. This opens us up to Satan’s temptation in a greater way. If we are already focused on ourselves the devil does not have to go very far to get us to the next

phase – live for ourselves and the illusionary psychological needs that we have created in our own minds. Likewise, the Pragmatic Movement of today, which revolves around “need felt” preaching and “user friendly” churches, entertains people in “their own lusts” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). This also plays into the devil’s strategy. *Satan effectively lures the church to worship at the altar of felt needs.* Today much preaching focuses on what people think they need to be successful and comfortable in life.

Then too, we have the Faith Movement which is saying that Christians can “Name it and Claim it” or have what they want in life, or what they think they need in life, in order to be successful and prospering. It’s said that believers can claim their need for healing, financial success, and have faith in their faith so all of their proposed needs are met. One preacher even said he was going to take his life if a million dollars were not sent into his ministry. Was this a need from God? Like Eve, the old serpent gets us to the place where we worship our imaginary needs and feelings. We think that we need something that God has not provided through His simple Word and His own goodness. Our needs become more important than God’s truth and we overlook God’s goodness and His ability to meet all of our needs where we are at in life (Phil. 4:19).

How does this happen? Satan begins by sowing doubt in our minds concerning God and His ability to meet our needs. Many times this is blindfolded under a disguise such as this. “The pastor is not meeting my needs.” “This church is not meeting my needs.” “Traditional worship is no longer meeting my needs.” “My standard devotional life is not meeting my needs.” “I need something more.” “I need something else to help me reach my full potential.” When a person comes to this point they are really saying that God is not meeting their needs in life and that they are dissatisfied with God Himself and God’s way to meet their *real* needs through His Word and own goodness. As a result, discontentment and ungratefulness takes seed in their hearts. This causes the individual to become a smoking gun waiting to shoot the bullets of blame on others for not meeting their felt needs.

The false needs and discontentment eventually turns into a sour spirit which is evidenced by whining, grumbling, gossiping, and criticizing

church leadership (Ex. 15:24; 16:2; 17:3; Numb. 14:2), other people (Prov. 18:8; James 3:6; 4:11), and God Himself (Ex. 16:3; Ps. 106:24-25 – “they believed not his word. But murmured in their tents ...”; Matt. 20:11, “they murmured against the goodman of the house”). After this people then announce their felt needs and dissatisfaction by putting pressure on pastors and church leadership to change their preaching and ministry. After all, expository preaching does not meet their new felt-needs. God’s Word alone is not going to do the job. So special pragmatic programs and contemporary music is demanded so the alleged worship needs of the people can be met as they sacrifice themselves on the altar of their own felt needs.

Eventually more relational chitchat sermons, which are supposedly more relevant to people’s lives, replace sound exegesis and expository preaching. This results in weak pulpits where careful and in depth teaching of the Word of God is replaced by weak preaching that no longer honors Christ and His Word. It also results in pastors running around trying to meet everyone’s felt needs.

In addition, since God and His Word alone can no longer do the job of meeting the needs of people there arises the proposition to adopt artificial and manmade psychological solutions, techniques, and therapies to meet the psychological demands of people’s lives. New pragmatic, worldly, merchandising, and entertaining methods or schemes (rock music, plays, skits, drama, comedy productions) are needed in order to meet our needs as 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians. Therefore, a non-threatening environment which caters to the fallen appetites of people, uncomplicated teaching, and contemporary music are brought into the church trying to meet the false felt needs of people who have become dissatisfied and ungrateful, like Eve, with God’s simple Word, conventional worship, and His holy plan for living.

Meanwhile, Satan and his demons sit back and throw a party, watching the undiscerning church fall right into their trap. Satan loves when we buy into the suspicion of Eden, which says the Bible is no longer relevant to meet man’s needs and that man has needs, which can only be met through seeking his own personal agenda and worldly philosophies in life. ***The quest for relevancy in order to meet the false needs created by people through satanic temptation is as old as Eden!*** This is the lie of Satan, which caused



Eve to sin. Discontentment toward God's goodness and God's simple truth was sown in her heart. A false need arose in her heart which God and His Word could not meet. Satan convinced Eve that God's word was not reliable and sufficient to meet her needs in life. He shifted her attention to something else that would meet her self-created needs in life. Think of it this way. *Eve did not really need the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but Satan got her to think that she really needed the fruit hanging on this tree. Eventually she felt like she had to eat the fruit of this tree to meet her needs.* As a result, an ungrateful spirit developed which soon resulted in an independent spirit seeking to have her alleged needs met in her own way – biting into the fruit. Satan's methods have not changed. Let us not be ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11). *Once we start allowing Satan to tell us what our needs are we are headed for trouble!*

### *Slandering God*

The desire of Satan is to slander God. Satan comes to us and says, "Is God really that good since He will not let you eat of every tree in the garden?" (Gen. 3:1). This is part of the suspicion of Eden. God is holding out on you. He's keeping you from something that is for your own profit. You deserve better. You're not getting what you're really worth. You'll never reach your full potential ("be as gods" – Gen. 3:5) if you stay with the Divine limitations. There's no future for you in God's will." *Satan's strategy is to blur our vision of God and His authority over our lives.* He paints God as a mean, unloving, and uncaring God. God is a killjoy and what He says is really not true after all. He wants us to think that God is overbearing and overruling. "God never lets you do anything." And throughout this whole process Satan gets us to think about ourselves more than God! *He sows the seeds of discontentment and ungratefulness and begins moving us in a wrong direction.* He does this to draw us away from the blessings of God and His will.

Satan wants us to focus on the alleged hindrances, obstacles, and deficiencies of God. He wants us to think that God is not meeting some need in our life and that God does not intend to meet it. This is another aspect of the suspicion raised in Eden. Why does Satan do this? It's because if he can get us to be discontent and ungrateful, he will gain a great advantage in our lives. When Satan gets us to the

place where we believe that true enrichment and enjoyment of life cannot be reached within the will of God we will become vulnerable and defeated. The serpent's Edenic plan is also seen in Romans chapter one as we witness the degenerative slide of man away from God - Rom. 1:21-22 – “neither were thankful” (can't eat of every tree of the garden – Gen. 3:1); “became vain in their imaginations” (“ye shall be as gods” – Gen. 3:5); “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (“and a tree desired to make one wise” – Gen. 3:6).

The believer must never allow Satan to con him into thinking that God's way for him is not best. The devil wants us to believe that our obedience to God is best for Him, but not for our own personal lives and agenda. Satan always wants to challenge or reshape our thinking about God's character and His truth since the devil's wisdom is always “against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:5). Instead, the believer must be “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10) so he will not be fooled. When we are fooled about God we will become jealous, rebellious, disobedient, possess selfish ambition, and express discontentment.

These are Satanic qualities or devil-oriented characteristics which were placed in Eve's mind in the original temptation and they all stem from believing Satan's lies about God. Beware of demonic wisdom (James 3:15) operating in our minds, which skews our thinking about God and what is right and true. The strategy of Satan is to replace “the wisdom that is from above” (James 3:16) with the so-called wisdom that is “earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:15) or that which originates from demons. Satan's wisdom can be present and operating in our lives and we may not even know it if we are not saturating our minds in the truth of Scripture. For instance, if we possess what we falsely label as a sanctified unforgiving spirit, we must tear down this falsehood and forgive (Eph. 4:31-32) and learn to use the wisdom that is from above. Likewise, when we begin to think that God has shortchanged us in some way, or made a mistake in His plan for our lives, we can know that Satan is winning out in the realm of our thought life. Beware of the intruding thoughts of Satan and the demonic wisdom that is seeking to control our lives.

The believer must bring all his thoughts under Christ's rule and authority ("bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ") which involves thinking as Christ would think, desiring what He desires, dwelling upon what is pleasing to Him, and bringing our thoughts under His authority (2 Cor. 10:4-5). The believer needs to think as Christ thinks of to put it in another way "arm yourselves likewise with the same mind" (1 Pet. 4:1). *A deception occurs in our lives when our minds and emotions believe something that is not true about God or what God has said.* The Scripture talks about "vain imaginations" (Rom. 1:26) which is a malfunctioned imagination in relationship to who God is and what God says.

Satan places suggestions in our mind to stimulate the imaginations (perceptions and thoughts) of people ("Hath God said"; "Ye shall be as gods..."; "Ye shall not surely die"). The Bible talks about "wicked imaginations" (Prov. 6:16, 18) that can rule our thoughts. And when our thinking process is skewed we develop what the Bible calls an "evil" (Heb. 10:22), "defiled" (Titus 1:5) and even "seared" (1 Tim. 4:2) conscience. The ethical judgment of conscience can become defiled and malfunction because of impure thinking. From this point the "vile affections" and distorted feelings begin to master the lives of people (Rom. 1:26, 31; 2 Tim. 3:2-3).

Let us never forget that Satan is the master deceiver (2 Cor. 11:3; Matt. 16:22-23) and his number one aim is to control our mind. So we must confront deception (sinister suggestions and poisoned thinking) with truth, and then repent of every false way or thought and break down the stronghold that Satan may have erected in our lives, asking God to give back the ground we had yielded to Satan. Believers in Christ must declare their intent and renounce Satan's hold upon their lives and overcome him by "the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11).

Also, in daily living believers must come to the place where they immediately say, "I give no consent to this thought" and go on with their victorious living. This is how we bring our thoughts under Christ's "captivity" or rule and "every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). 2 Corinthians 10:5 is a verse of action. *The goal is to submit our minds to the right Commander!* The believer needs to think as Christ thinks or to put it in another way "arm yourselves

likewise with the same mind” (1 Pet. 4:1). When we give ground to Satan through an unforgiving spirit, lusts, anger, bitterness, rock music, haunting fears of the past, guilt, and such like, we give the Evil One room to work and eventually we become spiritually vulnerable in other areas of our lives.

### *Defeat by Satan*

2 Timothy 2:26 speaks about those believers who were caught in “the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” and still others who were “turned aside after Satan” (1 Tim. 5:15). Defeat is very real. Let us remember that Satan is our adversary (1 Pet. 5:8) who wants to defeat and “devour” (“to swallow or gulp down” – meaning to destroy) our lives from a spiritual perspective. When God’s people fall victim to one of Satan’s traps or temptations it’s because they have not remained spiritually alert. This is why sobriety is a key word that is associated with victory.

Satan will try to defeat our lives morally (luring us into sexual temptation – 1 Cor. 7:5), physically (inflicting disease upon our lives according to God’s sovereign will, as with Job and Paul – Job 1-2; 2 Cor. 12:7), intellectually (distracting our mind from truth – 2 Cor. 11:3) and emotionally (sowing doubt, fear, discouragement, discontentment, and despair – Gen. 3:1-6; Rom. 8:15). The snares or traps of the devil with his desired bait (2 Tim. 2:26) are many and to name some would include such things as the sensual woman (Prov. 7:10-23), flattery (Prov. 29:5), the fear of man (Prov. 29:25), evil times (Ecclesiastes 12:9), pride (1 Tim. 3:6), the desire to be rich (1 Tim. 6:9), and opposing sound teaching (2 Tim. 2:25). Each of these things can be a snare or trap that Satan uses to find an entry point into our lives. Each can be the starting point to eventually yield ground over to Satan and slide (Heb. 2:1) into bondage. Satan is out to destroy our spiritual lives.

“For still our ancient Foe,  
Doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great;  
And, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not His equal.”

## The Name of Jesus and Victory

The name of Jesus is associated with victory. The name of Jesus is another weapon in the hands of the Christian warrior. Believe it or not the name of Jesus sometimes goes unnoticed when talking about the subject of victory. A name in Bible times and eastern lands represented or stood for the whole person with all of his characteristics, capacities, powers, and resources. The name stands for the person. The believer in Christ can also use the name of Jesus, “which is above every name” (Phil. 2:9), in the time of battle. The apostles used the name of Jesus to accomplish their mission over the enemy (Acts 3:6; 16:16-18; Mark 16:17). We can do the same today in the time of spiritual battle. Our mission is not the same as the apostles (healing people, casting out demons, speaking in different languages) but the name of Jesus has not changed! *The name of Jesus speaks of complete authority over all demonic hordes and promises victory for every believer.* Charles Wesley wrote:

“Jesus! The name high over all,  
In hell, or earth, or sky,  
Angels and men before it fall,  
And devils fear and fly.”

God’s people can effectively use the name of Jesus in prayer and the time of spiritual battle to ward off Satan. We may come to the place where we say in our hearts, “I give no consent to this evil temptation and power in the authority of Jesus’ name. I claim the victory in Jesus’ name.” The believer can use the name of Jesus as a standard for the time of battle. The name of Jesus is a name of authority that can bring comfort and cheer to our hearts knowing that He is the Victor and the helper in the time of distress and battle. When we use Jesus’ name we acknowledge that we are not acting in our own name or authority or power. His name cannot be used as a magical charm or some kind of Jesus MasterCard to get what we want in life, as the Prosperity Movement teaches. The name of Jesus has power only when it used as the basis for our power and victory, as we give word or express dependency upon Jesus, who is our great Victor. The use of Jesus’ name is always to be accompanied by a living and dynamic faith in the One to whom it belongs. It can only be effectively used by

those believers who are surrendered to Christ and who know about the victory of Calvary. There's just something about that name!

“That beautiful Name,  
That beautiful Name  
From sin has pow'r to free us!  
That beautiful Name,  
That wonderful name,  
That matchless Name is Jesus!”

### **The Blood of Jesus and Victory**

The blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11 – “they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”) is an invincible weapon and an effective judicial weapon we have to do battle with Satan. The secret of victory over Satan does not lie in our inherent power but in our union with Christ and His victorious death over Satan (Co. 2:15). The blood of Jesus Christ shed on Calvary stands for that victory. Those five words (“the blood of the Lamb”) are connected with all the virtue and value of Christ's redemptive work. Because Jesus broke the power of sin and Satan by shedding His blood, we who are united to Him also share in His victory. *The blood stands for victory over sin and Satan.* And Satan has no counter weapon to the blood of the Lamb. Oswald Sanders adds this: “So then, when in prayer we plead the blood of the Lamb, we are really saying that our faith is resting for victory over Satan and sin upon all that Christ achieved for us by His vicarious death and victorious resurrection ...”

“Some thro' the water, some thro' the flood,  
Some thro' the fire, but all thro' the blood;  
Some thro' great sorrow, but God gives a song,  
In the night season and all the day long.”

Special attention must be given to the blood of Christ. The believer must learn to give testimony to the blood of Jesus (Christ's finished work) for help and deliverance. We must accept the sufficiency of the blood of Jesus in forgiving all our sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) and giving us a righteous standing and acceptance before God's presence (Rom. 5:9; Eph. 2:13). It is through the blood of Christ that we have been brought near to God and are accepted by God.

“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty art, my glorious dress;  
‘Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.”

*The blood of Christ has a powerful effect in defeating Satan.* In our key text, Revelation 12:11, a loud voice from heaven proclaims Satan’s defeat and the victory of the redeemed in these words, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” The believing saints living in the future Tribulation Period will overcome Satan (the accuser) the same we do today – by the blood of the Lamb. We silence his accusations by claiming our forgiveness on the ground of Christ’s blood. Satan can no longer effectively accuse those who have been acquitted by God (Rom. 5:9; 8:33-34). As the accuser Satan slanders us in Heaven before God but because of the intercessory work of Christ his accusations against us have no weight (Heb. 7:25). Satan also accuses us of personal sins we have done as he seeks to discourage us in the time of battle and defeat our lives. But we must look to the blood of Jesus, which has given us eternal acceptance in God’s presence and granted every child of God total forgiveness forever. The truth about the blood of Christ keeps Satan from overtaking our lives with guilt, threats of condemnation, and thoughts of worthlessness and regret because of our sins. Someone has expressed this in beautiful poetic language:

“I hear the accuser roar  
Of ills that I have done;  
I know them well, and thousands more,  
Jehovah findeth none.  
Though the restless foe accuses—  
Sins recounting like a flood,  
Ev’ry charge our God refuses;  
Christ has answered with His blood.”

The power of Christ’s blood still stands as a way to defeat the devil as he seeks to discourage us by our past failures and present pitfalls. Through the blood we have eternal acceptance in God’s sight and giving positive testimony (“the word of their testimony”) to this truth

brings a stinging blow to Satan's accusations that he hurls against us and before God. My father always used to say, "Never forget the blood." Let us take this advice and claim our victory through the blood of Jesus Christ.

The blood of Jesus also stands for Satan's defeat at Calvary. Therefore, we can effectively give testimony to the shedding of Christ's blood to help us overcome any kind of temptation and harassment that Satan throws at us. *The blood stands for Christ's victory and at the same time signifies Satan's defeat.* This is why we can use the message or testimony about the blood when doing battle with Satan. It stands for his utter defeat. There is power, power, wonder working power in the precious blood of the Lamb! Herbert Lockyer said: "In the hours of temptation, the blood ever avails as we plead its efficacy. Satan is a defeated foe, and such a defeat can be actualized in our lives as we seek the shelter of the blood."

"Though Satan should buffet,  
Though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed his own blood for my soul."

Satan cannot stand the blood of Christ or the positive testimony of a Christian concerning their blood-bought forgiveness, freedom from condemnation, and victory through the shedding of Christ's blood. We can reckon on the victory of Calvary and bear testimony to its conquering power over sin and Satan. Revelation 12:11 states that the remnant will overcome Satan "by the word of their testimony" concerning the truth about their blood-bought forgiveness and victory. We dare not use the phrase "the blood of the Lamb" as some kind of magical charm, ritual, or mystical words. But we can use the message and give testimony to the blood of the Lamb through a sincere exercise of faith in Christ's defeat over Satan. Oswald Sanders said this about giving testimony to the blood of the Lamb: "It is the expression of an intelligent, active, vital faith in Christ the Lamb of God, who, by the shedding of His blood, bruised Satan's head and utterly defeated him." This kind of testimony, which is linked to Christ's blood, silences Satan. The testimony concerning Christ's can bring confidence and victory in the time of battle.



E.M. Bounds wrote: "Satan cannot stand an exposition of the blood of Christ. He turns pale at every view of Calvary. The flowing wounds are the signals of his retreat. A heart sprinkled with the blood is holy ground, on which he not only dares not tread, but he dreads and trembles and cowers in the presence of the blood-besprinkled warrior." The blood of Jesus can be applied to our lives in a practical way in the time of temptation. We do this by giving testimony to its saving effectiveness over our lives, and by using it as our symbol of our forgiveness, acceptance, and victory in Christ. This defeats Satan. It reminds Satan that all of our sins are forgiven through Christ's blood (Rev. 1:5) and that Christ's blood maintains our standing in the presence of God (1 John 1:7). It also reminds Satan of his own defeat through Christ's death on the cross. In every way the blood of Christ stands for victory.

"The blood of Jesus flows from Cross  
Pleading my pardon though painful the cost;  
Pure Son of God, how loving Thou art.  
Merciful Savior, come into my heart."

The blood of Jesus reminds Satan that the debt of God's judgment and justice has been served. It was placed upon Christ and Jesus shed His precious blood and actually died as the perfect sacrifice to provide complete forgiveness and salvation from all judgment. Our salvation from judgment is complete. The debt of our judgment was placed upon Christ and the Father accepted the payment for our sin and salvation. It is finished! Salvation was paid in full by the blood of Christ!

"Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow."

Christ's death, through the shedding of His blood, can effectively shield us from satanic assaults and attacks. Therefore, we can prayerfully use the message about the blood of Christ to help us counteract the devil's attacks. Through the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of the blood of Christ we can reject every plan or scheme that Satan is seeking to use in order to conquer our lives.

The blood of Jesus Christ that was shed upon the cross grants us acceptance, freedom, forgiveness, safety, and complete victory over Satan since it points to Satan's total defeat at Calvary (Col. 2:15).  
**The blood will never lose it power!**

“Oh I thank God for Calvary,  
It's the blood that sets me free!  
He bore my shame  
Oh praise His name,  
I've never been the same  
Since I came to Calvary.”

### **Praise and Victory**

Praise is another key word associated with victory. In the time of battle we can also “sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously” (Exodus 15:1). When the believer by faith claims the victorious promises of Christ's victory and Satan's defeat he can sing songs of deliverance (Ps. 40:2-3) and shout the victory (“thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory” – 1 Cor. 15:58). I have found myself singing songs centered on the truth of God's Word to help me experience both spiritual stability and victory in my life. Truth directed praise (Col. 3:16) can be effective in the time of temptation and can cause the satanic barriers that are before us to come tumbling down as the walls did in the olden days of Jericho in response to the people's shout (“that the wall fell down flat” – Josh. 6:20).

As the old spiritual goes, “Joshua fit the battle of Jericho and the walls came tumbling down!” Praise can bring down the walls of the enemy, which he is seeking to erect against our lives. We can praise God for His victorious provision through Christ and sing and shout the victory! God's people should naturally praise God in their daily routine of life (Heb. 13:15) and be prepared to praise the Lord in the time of adversity and temptation. I have automatically found myself praising God in the times of adversity and this is true for most believers. The songs of praise should fill our hearts as we pass through temptation and aid us in the “evil day” (Eph. 6:13).

Paul had a terrible past (Acts 22:4). But whenever Paul remembered his past he was seen turning his past memories into times of praise and thanksgiving for how God had saved him and transformed his life (see 1 Cor. 15:9-10; Eph. 3:8, 1 Tim. 1:12-15). When Satan reminds us of our dark past we must go to the Lord in praise and thanksgiving for the grace that He has showered upon our lives (1 Cor. 15:10). Praise can turn painful memories into occasions of thanksgiving to God for His abundant grace and deliverance.

In Acts 16:25-26 we read, “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.” As we see these missionaries praying and praising God we must come to realize that these two things (prayer and praise) do produce victory over the Satan’s plots against our lives. There is a certain power that comes into our lives through prayer (Acts 4:23-37; 12:12-13). Prayer changes things! This saying has Biblical support! The time we give up prayer meeting or personal prayer time in our lives and don’t think prayer really makes a difference is the time we will become washed up and suffer defeat by the devil. If we want God to move in our midst and break down the barriers of the devil we must continue to pray fervently and mightily to God.

But there is also certain power that comes into our lives through praise (2 Chron. 20:15-24). Praise changes things. When the children of Ammon and Moab were coming to destroy God’s people they began to praise God. 2 Chronicles 20:21-22 reads, “And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy *endureth* for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.” The result of this praise attack upon the enemy was one of victory! 2 Chronicles 20:24 concluded the account by saying, “And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they *were* dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.” *Let me say that prayer not only changes things but*

*praise changes things.* Prayer and praise are twins that work together and they do work against the forces of evil and the enemy. So when I'm down and out and feel trapped in prison like Paul and Silas, I must learn the secret of prayer and praise! It will deliver my heart and life from Satan's power and his evil works against my life. Praise is one way to overcome the intruding thoughts of the enemy and his temptations. Praise is one way to overcome the spiritual blockades that he puts before us. *Praise can paralyze Satan.* It is praise that comes from the heart of those who know the victory that Jesus won on Calvary and who are fully surrendered to God. Psalm 7:17, "I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high."

"In heaven's eternal bliss  
The loveliest strain is this,  
May Jesus Christ be praised.  
The powers of darkness fear,  
When this sweet chant they hear,  
May Jesus Christ be praised."

### **Clear Conscience and Victory**

Conscience is another key word that is often overlooked in connection with victory. Conscience is that internal court where our actions are judged and where they are either approved or condemned (Rom. 2:14–15). Possessing a good conscience is another important element to living a life of victory, warring a good warfare, and possessing a fruitful ministry for Christ ("Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" - 1 Tim. 1:19-20). We should not allow our conscience to become shipwrecked on the island of callousness toward objective truth, any kind of sin, and insensitivity to what is right. Nor should we allow our conscience to be plagued with past sins, guilt, and fear.

Many times Satan will try to inflict us with a guilty conscience for some past sin or sins we have done by getting us to remember the awful things of our past. Then he says, "How can God use a person like you?" Because of this the importance of possessing a clear

conscience cannot be overemphasized if the believer is going to have victory. Paul said that a good conscience is essential for effective ministry (1 Tim. 1:5) and one cannot have effective ministry if he is defeated by a conscience that is burdened with guilt (“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and *toward* men” - Acts 24:16) or a conscience that is defiled and seared by sin and demonic activity (1 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:15). We need to possess a good conscience (1 Pet. 3:16) and pure conscience (2 Tim. 1:3) knowing that our lives are right before God, open to God, and only then will we be ready to experience His victory.

“Nothing between my soul and the Savior,  
Naught of this world’s delusive dream;  
I have renounced all sinful pleasure,  
Jesus is mine, there’s nothing between.”

The believer can clear their conscience by forgiving others (Eph. 4:31-32), confessing sins (1 John 1:9), and tearing down the satanic strongholds of any sin that has been plaguing his life. He also clears his conscience by not allowing the thoughts of a guilty past to destroy his present service and way of living (Phil. 3:13 – “forgetting those things which are behind”). Of course, no child of God can perform mental gymnastics and forget the past but they can have victory over the past by not allowing the guilt and shame of past sins to overcome their lives in the present. *God’s people must by God’s grace live in the present tense and not the past tense.* When we do not possess a clear conscience because of insensitivity to truth, because of sin in our lives, and because of the guilt and fear associated with the past, then Satan has a foothold in our lives. We have given ground over to Satan that must be reclaimed.

“Nothing between my soul and the Savior,  
So that His blessed face may be seen;  
Nothing preventing the least of His favor,  
Keep the way clear! let nothing between.”

## Obedience and Victory

Another key word that is associated with victory is obedience. If we fail to obey God and become openly rebellious to what He says, it's then that we will yield a tremendous amount of ground to Satan and give him a huge advantage (2 Cor. 2:11) over our lives ("Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft..." – 1 Sam. 15:22-23). Walking in disobedience or defiance to the Lord becomes a breeding ground for satanic activity to take place in our lives. Rebellion is compared to the sin of witchcraft because those who practice witchcraft open themselves up to satanic intrusion into their lives.

The practice of witchcraft brings people in direct contact with demons where they are openly vulnerable to the world of darkness. So rebellion from God's plan for the believer's life opens him up to much greater temptation and the intrusion of the devil into his life. The rebellious believer is that believer who openly defies God's plan for his life. A child of God may be disobedient in that he does not always obey God all the time and follow His prescribed will. *Rebellion is actually a step further than disobedience and involves a person openly defying God's authority and will over his life in a given area.* The believer who becomes rebellious against God's plan and desire allows the spiritual mafia of the underworld to undermine his Christian life in a greater way. That is why we need to practice righteous living and stay on target spiritually (Eph. 6:14). The desire of the psalmist should be ours: "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.

"All to Jesus I surrender,  
Humbly at His feet I bow;  
Worldly pleasures all forsaken,  
Take me, Jesus, take me now.  
I surrender all,  
I surrender all;  
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,  
I surrender all."

When we become rebellious to God's authority over our lives and how He wants us to live, it's then that we open ourselves up to greater temptation, influence, and control by the devil and his demonic cohorts (Eph. 4:27). Rebellion needs to be treated seriously. Rebellion to earthly established authority becomes rebellion against God's established authority (Rom. 13:1-4; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22; Heb. 13:7). This rebellion to earthly authority (Heb. 13:17) must be dealt with in the Christian life since it becomes actual rebellion against God's authority and established plan for the believer's life.

Every person must ask these questions: Who is going to be the final authority in my life? Am I willing to submit to God in every area of my life, to rank myself under His authority? One thing is for sure. Obedience opens the way of victory whereas rebellion opens the work of Satan in our lives. Let us not forget the words of Jesus about discipleship ("If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" - Luke 9:23). This is the cross of surrender and sacrifice that all of us are called to carry in life. We must surrender our selfish ambitions, plans, sins and then sacrifice our time, talents, treasures and entire lives for Him.

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,  
All to leave, and follow Thee;  
Destitute, despised, forsaken,  
Thou, from hence, my all shalt be:  
Perish ev'ry fond ambition,  
All I've sought, and hoped, and known;  
Yet how rich is my condition,  
God and heav'n are still my own!"

### **The Priestly Ministry of Christ and Victory**

The epistle of Hebrews repeatedly reminds us of the priestly ministry of Christ that is available to our lives as God's people. There are two ministries related to Christ's High Priestly work – one of salvation and restoration (Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1) and one of sympathy (Heb. 2:18; 4:15-16). It's the sympathy side of Christ's priestly ministry that I want to address for a few moments. Jesus can sympathize with us in the time of temptation and come to our aid or rescue since He Himself

passed through temptation. Hebrews 2:17-18 says, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

It's here that Christ's priestly ministry is seen as one of help in the time of temptation. The word "suffered" means to experience or undergo the effects and pain of temptation by the devil. Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Matt. 4) and He knows what temptation is all about. But we must add a word of qualification. *The Lord Jesus was tempted from without, but never from within.* This is because Jesus had no sin nature. The temptation in the wilderness shows Jesus being tempted from without. Satan appeared to Him and sought to appeal to Him by external stimuli. But the Lord could never be tempted to sin by evil lusts and passions stirring from within, for there was no sin in Him and nothing to respond to sin (no fallen or old nature). Dear friend, if Jesus could have sinned He could have never been God! And because Jesus did not sin proves that He was the eternal God (Heb. 7:25).

And yet another text says that "He suffered, being tempted" (Heb. 2:18). Dear friend, we pass through suffering when resisting temptation inwardly and refusing to allow sinful desires from within to control our lives. And when we are tempted to sin it pains us to think about breaking God's holy will and commands. But in the case of Jesus He was tempted outwardly and it pained ("suffered") Him to be tempted knowing that Satan wanted Him to be something other than God. To think that He was tempted to sin by turning aside from the Father's will and be something other than God brought great suffering or pain to His own heart. It was not the suffering of knowing that He might sin (He could not sin) but the suffering of being tempted to break the Father's will and be something other than God.

So, both Jesus and also you and me, have suffered through temptation, but in a different way. We suffer the fear of sinning and stepping outside of God's will whereas Jesus suffered the pain that Satan brought into his life by tempting Him to step outside of God's will and be something other than the infinitely holy and righteous God.



The genuine humanity of Jesus reminds us continually that Jesus knows what temptation feels like even though He could not commit sin. Jesus knows what it is to feel the onslaughts of temptation and experience Satan's approaches to tempt.

The old writer Faussett said:

"Not only as God He knows our trials, but also as man He knows them by experimental feeling."

Some argue that Jesus' temptation could not be meaningful if He could not sin. This is simply false. If you put pure gold to the test of the fire, the test is no less valid because the gold is pure. Similarly, it is wrong to argue that if Jesus could not sin, He was not perfectly human. Remember, sin is not an essential or original element in humanity; rather it is a foreign intruder. Before Adam sinned, he was human, and probably "more" human than after his fall; for that was not how God had originally created him as a human. One needs not sin to be human, nor does one even need to possess the potential to sin. The point is this. Jesus' temptations were very real and because of this He can sympathize with us in our own time of temptation.

The word "succor" (Heb. 2:18) means "to come to the aid of" or "to help" someone. This word was used of one running up to a crying child to give them aid. I remember when one of our children would fall on the driveway and start crying. Or when they would have a dream at night and start crying. As parents we would jump out of bed and come to their rescue! This is what Jesus does to us. He comes to succor us or aid and help us when we cry. This is not only true in the time of Satanic temptation but in the time of adversity and as we face the manifold trials of life. Why do Christians take tranquilizers and anti-depressants? Why do they think that they need the latest psychological fix? Let us remember that Jesus is our high priest. He is there to help us. He is all that we will ever need!

"I have found a hiding place in sore distress.  
Jesus Rose of Sharon sweet thou art!"

Hebrews 4:15 addresses this whole priestly ministry of Jesus in even a greater way. Let's look at it briefly.

1. Jesus is touched with our feelings (Heb. 4:15).

Be touched with the feeling of is one word in the Greek (sumpatheo) which means sympathy – to be affected with the same feeling as we are. Jesus can sympathize with us because He knows all about our feelings. He knows what we are feeling. No one can truly sympathize with someone else unless he has been through a similar experience himself. As Man our Lord has shared our experiences and can therefore understand the testing that we endure in life. This is why we sing:

“What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and grief’s to bear;  
What a privilege to carry,  
Everything to God in prayer.”

The word “infirmities” (weaknesses) speaks of the frailty of human existence, which includes everything from heartaches, frustrations, disappointments, and temptations. Jesus can sympathize with human weakness in general. Why? Because He went through what you went through. You may say, “Well Jesus never had a baby.” No. You may say, “Well Jesus never broke a bone in his body or had the flue?” No. But may I ask you something? **Did you ever hang on a cross with nails though your hands and feet and thorns on your head?** Jesus suffered pain, agony, and He experienced the heartache and frustration that goes along with life, as we all do, when facing deep trial and temptation. There is a common thread or denominator that runs through all suffering. And because of this He can sympathize with us. He knows what we are feeling and can help us through whatever we are facing in life. That’s why we sing:

“No one understands like Jesus,  
He’s a friend beyond compare;  
Meet Him at the throne of mercy,  
He is waiting for you there.

No one understands like Jesus,  
When the days are dark and grim;  
No one is so near, so dear as Jesus,  
Cast your every care on Him.”

It really is true. **No one understands like Jesus!** Jesus came to identify with us, to experience what we experience. He became our Sympathizer, a merciful and faithful high priest who meets all of our needs. As our High Priest, our Lord is able to give us grace to keep us from sinning when we are tempted (Heb. 2:18; 4:16). If we do sin, then He as our Advocate represents us before the throne of God and forgives us when we sincerely confess our sins to Him (1 John 1:5–2:2). Both of these ministries are involved in His present work of intercession. And Christ’s intercession is based upon the shedding of His blood and His sacrificial death on our behalf.

“Ask the Saviour to help you,  
Comfort, strengthen, and keep you:  
He is willing to aid you,  
He will carry you through.”

2. Jesus was tempted like we are (Heb. 4:15).

Jesus was tempted in all points like we are – physically, spiritually and emotionally and yet he did not sin because He could not sin. Jesus passed through the same kind of temptations that we pass through – the temptation to lust (even though He could not lust inwardly), the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are the ways that the devil tempted Jesus in Mathew chapter four even though Jesus could not sin because of His absolute purity.

Did you ever stop and contemplate this. Only a sinless (impeccable being) can properly estimate sin. Jesus Christ did not sin, could not sin, and had no capacity to sin. Yet His temptations were all the more real and terrible because He would not fall and He endured them to the *most extreme level* that Satan could ever bring before an individual. So actually His sinlessness increased His sensitivity to temptation. And because of this Jesus has a true understanding for sympathizing with us in every danger, in every trial, in every situation, and every temptation that comes our way because He has been through it all Himself (grief, sorrow, frustration, pain, distress, temptation, death). Jesus was the very Son of God, yet His divinity did not prevent Him from experiencing our feelings, our emotions, our

temptations, and our pain in order that He might be a sympathetic and understanding High Priest.

Dr. John Wilson often told the following story. Booth Tucker was conducting evangelistic meetings in the great Salvation Army Citadel in Chicago. One night, after he had preached on the sympathy of Jesus, a man came forward and asked Mr. Tucker how he could talk about a loving, understanding, sympathetic God. "If your wife had just died, like mine has," the man said, "and your babies were crying for their mother who would never come back, you wouldn't be saying what you're saying." A few days later Mr. Tucker's wife was killed in a train wreck. Her body was brought to Chicago and carried to the Citadel for the funeral. After the service the bereaved preacher looked down into the silent face of his wife and then turned to those who were attending. "The other day when I was here," he said, "a man told me that, if my wife had just died and my children were crying for their mother, I would not be able to say that Christ was understanding and sympathetic, or that He was sufficient for every need. If that man is here, I want to tell him that Christ *is* sufficient. My heart is broken, it is crushed, but it has a song, and Christ put it there. I want to tell that man that Jesus Christ speaks comfort to me today." The man was there, and he came and knelt beside the casket while Booth Tucker introduced him to Jesus Christ. We have a sympathetic High Priest.

### 3. Jesus meets us in our tests of life (Heb. 4:16).

As our High Priest, our Lord is able to give us grace (strengthening grace) to keep us from sinning when we are tempted by the devil. Jesus is faithful to us! He showers His mercy and grace into our lives so that we can have victory over the devil's temptations. He comes to our aid. He comes to our rescue. He gets us through life. He keeps us together in our times of trial. Jesus is the answer! There is nothing He cannot get us through because His is full of mercy and because He is faithful to us. And when I cry He comes running to our rescue as a mother would run to her child who has fallen. And He puts the bandages on our lives and heals our wounds. He strengthens us by His grace to go on and live for Him in the midst of dark days and trying times.

“I need Jesus, my need I now confess;  
No friend like Him in times of deep distress;  
I need Jesus, the need I gladly own;  
Tho some may bear their load alone,  
Yet I need Jesus.

I need Jesus; I need Him to the end;  
No one like Him, He is the sinner’s friend;  
I need Jesus, not other friend will do;  
So constant, kind, so strong and true,  
Yes, I need Jesus.

I need Jesus, I need Jesus,  
I need Jesus ever day;  
Need Him in the sunshine hour,  
Need Him when the storm-clouds low’r;  
Ev’ry day along my way,  
Yes, I need Jesus.”

### **The Armor of God and Victory**

The Christian must know what to wear to war. And wearing the Christian armor (“the whole armour of God” – Eph. 6:13) is the way God’s victory is channeled into our lives and how our victorious position “in the Lord” is actualized or made practical in day-to-day combat through the ministry or prayer. We dare not forget one piece of the armor to protect us.

“Leave no unguarded place,  
No weakness of the soul  
Take every virtue, every grace,  
And fortify the whole.”

The introductory verse that leads into the section of Scripture explaining the armor is Ephesians 6:10. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” This means two things. First, as we dress for war we must do so trusting in the Lord’s power and strength that is already available to us for victory. We dare not put on the armor in your own strength or ability. There can be no victory without complete dependence upon the Lord’s power. Second,

wearing the Christian armor (“the whole armour of God” – Eph. 6:11) is another way to experience God’s victorious power in your life (Eph. 6:10). In other words, God’s power is also channeled into our lives through wearing the proper armor. Be sure of this one thing. God’s power is needed so “ye may be able to withstand in the evil day” (the time of temptation) – Eph. 6:13. In other words, the only way we can be strong in the Lord and His power is to wear the armor that God has provided for us. So as we put on the armor we must do so trusting in God’s power and at the same time realize that we will also experience His protective and life-changing power in our own life as we practice wearing the spiritual armor. I must reiterate something. We cannot forget one piece of the armor, which is designed to protect us against Satan and his evil workers (“take unto you the whole armour of God” – Eph. 6:13). If one piece of the armor is not worn, we will become vulnerable to one of Satan’s fiery darts.

Nevertheless, the believer’s union with Christ is the underlying cause for spiritual victory for it is from this place of spiritual position in Christ that all of our victory lies. We draw from God’s power only as we realize our union with Christ. Ephesians 6:10 states, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord (the place of position and victory), and in the power of his might (the provision of victory). The power flows forth from this place of position in Christ and only through Christ’s power we can put on the whole armor of God and claim our victory over Satan. In fact, even before the Christian soldier places on the armor of God he must remember that divine strength for victory flows from the Lord and His might, which comes from the inside in view of the believer’s union with the indwelling Christ (Gal. 2:20). We possess no power in and of ourselves to defeat the enemy. So we must know beforehand where the power lies, and as we place on the armor, do so dependent upon God’s inner power (Phil. 2:13).

“That soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,  
I will not, I will not desert to his foes.  
That soul though all hell should endeavor to shake;  
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.”

We must use the armor relying on God’s supernatural strength. With the Lord’s strength on the inside the believer is ready to use His complete armor in the full strength and provision of God’s life.

“Stand, then, in His great might,  
With all His strength endued;  
And take, to arm you for the flight,  
The panoply of God.”

It's true that we already have this armor for in Christ we possess all the spiritual blessings we need for victory (Eph. 1:3). Nevertheless, it's our duty to experientially, mentally, and prayerfully place this spiritual armor on our lives - “Put on the whole armour of God” (vs. 11) and “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God” (vs. 13). In a similar way we are told to “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:14). Essentially, this is what it means to wear the armor. When we are putting on the armor we are putting on Christ. We must actively and mentally place this armor on our lives in order to experience victory. We must claim our victorious ground through Jesus Christ by taking an active role in using God's armor. This explained as putting on God's armor (Eph. 6:11) or experientially using it in our everyday life. If we don't do our part by staying on active duty, using the armor, we are likely to become a causality in the war. We must take an active part in this prepared strategy for victory.

We must then remember that there is a delicate balance between dependency upon God's power for victory (God's effort – 2 Pet. 1:3-4) and the believer's desire and determination to obey God and live holy (man's effort – 2 Pet. 1:5-7) in order to possess victory. When we are passive and take no initiative to change (Rom. 6:12; 13:14; 2 Cor. 7:1) then there will be no victory. Likewise, when we depend upon our own self-discipline this will not bring victory into our lives (Rom. 7:10-14; 2 Cor. 12:9). Being self-disciplined without proper reliance on God's power will not lead to victory in our lives. There is a proper balance to maintain in the battle. But we can be sure that God's strength coupled with the determination to renounce sin, avoid sin, and live for God by choosing to wear God's armor, prepares the believer to “stand” before the time or battle (Eph. 6:11), then “withstand in the evil day” or time of temptation or battle (vs. 13), and finally come out of the battle victorious (“and having done all, to stand” – vs. 13b). **“If God be for us, who can be against us” (Rom. 8:31).**

“Sound the battle cry!  
See, the foe is nigh;  
Raise the standard high  
For the Lord;

Gird your armor on,  
Stand firm ev’ry one,  
Rest your cause upon  
His holy word.”  
Belt of Truth

The Christian’s Magna Charta of protection is Ephesians 6:10-18. Special attention must be given to the spiritual armor that the believer must wear in order to maintain victory in his Christian life. In other words, the believer must mentally place these pieces of armor on and apply them to his life if he is ever going to experience victory. He must learn to dress for success! To begin with there is the belt of truth (“loins girt about with truth” – Eph. 6:14). *This concept speaks of the believer’s life being pulled together and surrounded by truth.* Truth is a strengthening factor in the life and experience of the Christian soldier. This piece of the Roman soldier’s armor was the thick leather belt the Roman soldier wore to hold his tunic in place. When the Roman soldier girded his loins he tucked his long outer robe under his belt so that it would not get in his way when running or fighting (1 Pet. 1:13). We are to prepare our minds and lives for action and get ready for spiritual combat. We are to get focused on the battle and be prepared by making *a total commitment to truth* and setting our mind on *following truth* at all costs. Truth is the great liberator. This piece of the Roman soldier’s armor would represent several things.

### *Truth of Our Identity in Christ*

First, believers must know the truth about their identity and the victorious inheritance that they possess in Christ (Eph. 6:10 – “in the Lord”). In Christ (a place of spiritual union) we share in His victory over Satan and in Christ we share His power (“the power of his might” – Eph. 6:10) which enables us to live victorious. We are to live in the power of our great Victor! This power is especially manifested in our lives when we apply God’s armor to our everyday living. As we apply the armor we depend upon God’s inner power operating in our lives.



“Soldiers of Christ, arise,  
And put your armor on,  
Strong in the strength which God supplies  
Through His eternal Son;  
Strong in the Lord of hosts,  
And in His mighty power,  
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts  
Is more than conqueror.”

Because we are in Christ (a place of spiritual position) we have already shared in His victory over sin (Rom. 6:5-7) and Satan (Eph. 1:19-23; Col. 2:15; 1 Cor. 3:21-23). Christ’s complete victory can be claimed as our own victory. Knowing the truth that we have a spiritual position with Christ and that we share His victory is very important. We must know the truth that we are co-crucified (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20), co-resurrected (Rom. 6:5, 8) and co-exalted (Eph. 1:3; 19-23) with Christ as Victors over sin and Satan. We must know that we are a victor or overcomer in Christ (1 John 5:4) so that we do not have to be overcome by sin and Satan. We must have our “loins girt about with truth” – even the truth about our spiritual identity and victory in Christ.

### *Truth of Scripture*

Second, God’s people must also know the truth of Scripture, which liberates them from sin (John 8:32; James 1:25). As a roaring lion, Satan stalks believers and we must learn to resist him “steadfast in the faith” (the truth of Scripture - 1 Peter 5:8–9). Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) and will seek to deceive us with his many lies (Gen. 3:2-3). Truth counteracts Satan’s lies. Truth is not flexible but revealed in the final authority of Scripture. Truth is not what feels right to me (relativism) but what is firmly anchored in the absolute standard - the Bible (John 17:17 – “thy word is truth”). Remember that Satan sold the lie of relativism to Eve in the Garden when he said that they could have an experiential knowledge of good and evil (“ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” – Gen. 3:5).

In other words, they could be as gods and be free to write their own rules and decide what is truth to them and right for them. Relativism

says, "What is true for me might not be true for you." Relativism thrives in our culture today and sets no objective standard of truth. Man becomes a law unto himself. This is why we need to maintain the old Book and the old Faith and not steer off the course. We must remember that the Bible is our final authority ("thy word is truth" – John 17:17). The Biblical truth that spells out our personal victory over sin and Satan (Col. 2:15; Rom. 6:6,13-14; 8:31, 37; 1 Cor.15:57; 2 Cor. 2:11,14; 1 Jn. 2:13; 5:4) and other Biblical texts of truth that we use to counteract Satan's lies becomes the key liberating force in our life. *Victory is a truth encounter.* We cannot out-muscle, out-shout or out-smart Satan. But we can out-truth Satan. We must have your "loins girt about with truth." Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Jesus said that you can be "free indeed" (John 8:36).

"Fierce may be the conflict,  
Strong may be the foe,  
But the King's own army,  
None can overthrow;  
Round His standard ranging,  
Vict'ry is secure,  
For His truth unchanging  
Makes the triumph sure."

### *Truthful Living (Integrity)*

Third, in relationship to our own lives we must also be an individual of truth (truthfulness, personal excellence). This would mean that we are a truthful and honest person that is full of integrity and free from guile and hypocrisy ("thou desirest truth in the inward parts" – Ps. 51:6). We must be earnest, sincere, and free from pretence. First, we must be honest with ourselves and with God and admit that we struggle with sin and need victory (1 John 1:8). We will need to confess our sin and learn to totally depend upon Christ for victory (1 John 1:9).

Second, our desire for victory must be sincere, real, and genuine (Joshua 24:14; 1 Cor. 5:8; Eph. 6:24). We must earnestly desire victory and have no seed thoughts or second thoughts in the back of our mind about sinning against God. In short, our desire for victory

must be real and genuine. A man of truth is a man who earnestly desires victory and has no second thoughts in the back of his mind about sinning against God. He is not a man who is trying to commit himself to God while holding back sinful pleasures in his heart that he still wants to enjoy. Don't become a person who is trying to commit himself to God while holding back sinful pleasures in your heart that you still want to enjoy. Don't try to put one hand in the world and have another hand upon Christ (James 4:4). This double standard always gives Satan a starting point and stepping-stone to work in our life (Eph. 4:27).

If we are a person of truthfulness (integrity) we will have a settled conviction and determination to possess victory. We will not possess a double standard or divided opinion in our heart. The man of truthfulness or integrity is not a "double-minded" man (James 1:6-8) nor is he a double-hearted man (Matt. 6:19-21) trying to live in two different worlds (the spiritual and earthly) and seeking to serve two masters (Mat. 6:24). We must learn to love God with all our heart (Matt. 22:37). We must be truthful, real, and genuine. God is looking for the real deal! He is looking for a person of integrity. We must have our "loins girt about with truth" or this truthfulness or integrity that is to be part of our everyday living.

Jesus said in Luke 12:35, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." The soldiers in Christ day had to pull up their tunic through the belt area to secure it around their waist. When doing this they could run and be ready for battle. So it is today in our Christian life. We must be ready at all times for battle (Matt. 13:25; 26:41; 1 Thess. 5:6; 1 Pet. 4:7; Eph. 6:18). We must be ready to counteract Satan's lies by using the truth about our identity in Christ (spiritual union and position of victory), the absolute truth of God's Word, and also become an individual of truth by living a life of personal integrity and excellence before God. In every way we must be ready for the battle as you learn to apply truth to your life. Stay alert and prepared. Tighten up your belt and be ready at all times to do battle and keep the lights burning.

## Breastplate of Righteousness

The breastplate was an important part of the Roman soldier's battle gear. It was a metal cast of a human torso that protected the upper part of the body, including the heart and lungs. It protected the body from swords, arrows, and spears of the enemy. The "breastplate of righteousness" (Eph. 6:14) speaks of the believer's life being surrounded by righteousness. This breastplate represents several things.

### *Positional Righteousness Before God*

The breastplate of righteousness can represent the perfect righteousness that we have been given before God's presence. The believer must always understand that he has a perfect righteous standing or position of acceptance before God's presence through Jesus Christ. In short, this means that God has forever accepted us in His presence. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ actually becomes our righteous standing before God's holy presence so that we are eternally accepted before God on the basis of Christ's perfect righteousness. Christ is "made unto us righteousness" before God (1 Cor. 1:30). The perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ has been imputed or imparted to our lives and God now sees us perfectly righteous before His presence through Jesus Christ. This is called positional righteousness before God's presence.

Christ's righteousness has been given to us or has been imputed or placed on our spiritual account before God (Rom. 4:3, 6-7). When God looks at His Children He looks through Jesus Christ and sees that we are forever clothed in the perfect righteousness of His Son. This is called positional righteousness before God's presence. This perfect and eternal righteousness before God becomes ours when we trust Christ as your Savior (Rom. 3:22 – "the righteousness of God which is by faith"). The righteousness of Jesus Christ has been put to our spiritual account (imputed or imparted) because we have trusted Him as our Savior (Rom. 3:19-24). Our spiritual status before God is now a person who has been acquitted of all guilt and we now have a position of acceptance before God on the basis or ground of Christ's righteousness – not our own way of living or how we feel (Phil. 3:9).

“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
‘Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.”

How does this righteousness standing before God protect the believer in the time of spiritual warfare or battle? The promise of Christ’s righteousness protects us from feelings of guilt and condemnation before God (Rom. 8:33-34). This is important because Satan will try to defeat our life by bringing personal accusations against us. Satan brings thoughts of deception into our mind attempting to convince us that God does not accept us when we sin or that God is finished with us. The Evil One makes us feel guilty and condemned before God when we sin against Him. When we fail the devil tries to bring the guilt trip upon our heart and life so that he can keep us in spiritual depression and defeat. He tries to feed us the lies that God no longer accepts us or that God has given up on us and that we will never amount to anything. He reminds us of both our present sins and then brings up our past sins, which we have committed, in order to make us think and feel that God has abandoned us and no longer loves or accepts us. In addition, the devil also accuses us or whispers in our ear words like this: “Admit it. You are a loser. You are no good. God will never forgive you for what you have done. You have lost God’s love and favor.”

Once we start to listen to Satan’s lies we become defenseless. But when we remember that we stand in the perfect righteousness of Christ Satan’s accusations against us cannot defeat our life. We can remember that God always loves and accepts us *unconditionally* in His holy presence because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God sees us through the righteousness of His Son and because of this God always accepts us and loves us as His own child no matter what we do or have done in the past. The righteousness of Jesus Christ assures you of this! God will always love us and accept us no matter how many times we fail Him since we stand in Christ’s perfect righteousness. So we must claim our righteous position in Christ. The Father sees us through the Son’s perfect righteousness (Jude 24). This provides God’s children with assurance of their eternal acceptance before the Father and His unending love for them (Rom. 8:37-39). We remember that we stand in the righteousness of Christ

(1 Cor. 1:30). Satan's accusations against us (Rev. 12:10) cannot be accepted by God since we stand in Christ's righteousness. So let us claim our righteous position in Christ.

### *Practical Righteousness in Daily Living*

The breastplate of righteousness can also represent our day-to-day righteous living. This too is an important part of our protection against satanic attack. 1 Tim. 6:11 says, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness ..." Revelation 22:11 reminds you of this same important truth when saying "... he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." When we fail to live a consistent righteous life, we will become much more vulnerable to Satan's attacks upon our personal life. As believers we must seek to live a righteous and holy life on a daily basis before God (1 John 2:29; 3:7) and never try to excuse our sin and overlook those things in our lives that are wrong (1 John 1:8). Satan always gets an advantage over our life when we harbor certain sins in our heart (2 Cor. 2:10-12) and fail to live a righteous life. Living a righteous life keeps us from developing "spiritual hardening of the arteries" which slowly kills our spiritual life and affects our day-to-day power and victory that we can experience.

Second Corinthians 7:1 reminds us that we must practice obedience or righteous living through cleansing yourself outwardly ("filthiness of the flesh" - body) and inwardly ("and spirit" - the inner life). Both outward righteous living and the inward purity of a righteous heart provide spiritual stability and a stable environment, which helps you as a Christian soldier to maintain victory when combating evil. The breastplate of righteousness will help the Christian soldier to maintain both an outward life and inner life that is tender, righteous, and pure in the spiritual realm. Psalm 24:4 puts it this way: "clean hands, and a pure heart" or a total life that is outwardly and inwardly operating efficiently for Christian living and service.

Remember that the soldier's breastplate protected the heart (vital physical organ) and as a Christian we need to protect our heart (the vital spiritual organ) on the inside of us from sinful thoughts. This is done by counteracting unrighteous patterns of thoughts with righteous thoughts that are true and pleasing to God (Phil. 4:8). In

wearing the breastplate of righteousness the Christian soldier will protect the heart (inner control center) of his life from being swept away into sinful fantasy, rebellion against God (Ps. 78:8), and wickedness (Ps. 141:4). This is because sin generates from a heart that is controlled by the sin nature (Jer. 17:9). Remember, our heart is the seat or control center of our entire life (Prov. 23:7). So we must keep our heart right before God or our inner spiritual life righteous and pure and then our outer life or how you live will be righteous (Prov. 4:23). Also, remember that it's possible to look clean and righteous on the outside but be unclean and unrighteous on the inside (Matt. 23:27).

Righteous living can only be experienced when we practice daily obedience to God's Word. We must accept and obey the truth, say no sin, and keep our life right before God. Cleansing ourselves means we must obey God's truth instead of our own will and the old nature. This will involve not going to those places that tempt us or watch and listen to those things that tempt us. It involves saying no to sin and yes to God on every level. *God will not do something for us that we can do for ourselves.* We must take the initiative to cleanse ourselves (2 Cor. 7:1) by becoming obedient to what God says, by not placing ourselves in those environments that tempt us, and by simply saying no sin. Satan always has a greater advantage in our life (2 Cor. 2:11) when we fail to practice righteous living. However, living a righteous life keeps us from developing "spiritual hardening of the arteries" which slowly kills our spiritual life and affects our day-to-day power and victory that we can experience.

### Gospel Shoes of Peace

The Gospel shoes of peace ("feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" – Eph. 6:15) presents the truth how the believer's victory is somehow connected with peace. The word "shod" means to bind feet with shoes and the word "preparation" means readiness. The entire thought seems to be this. There is a spiritual readiness or preparedness that comes through the "gospel of peace" which helps the believer in the time of temptation. If we want to be prepared for battle we must know about the Gospel of peace. The Gospel of peace, which we have and possess, prepares us for the spiritual battle with sin and Satan. Therefore, we need to be wearing the

gospel shoes of peace. We can't go barefoot in the time of battle! Satan will be sure that we stub our toe and suffer pain and defeat. Whoever heard of barefoot soldiers!

*Positional Peace*  
(Peace with God)

There is a positional peace that comes through the Gospel, which prepares every Christian for the battle. As a result of the work of the Gospel (death and resurrection of Christ) we are prepared or ready for the battle knowing that we have a *positional peace* or peaceful standing before God's presence (Rom. 5:1 – "we have peace with God"). The gospel of peace brings us into a place where we possess a positional peace before God's presence. Through the work of the Gospel (Christ's finished work) the believing sinner has had their sins forgiven (past, present, future) and been forever acquitted of their guilt before God's holy presence (Heb. 7:25). Because of this acquittal we are no longer God's enemy (Rom. 5:10). Instead, God is at peace with us and we have a peaceful standing of acceptance before Him. Knowing that we have a peaceful standing before God through Christ's finished work provides us with the reassurance that God has accepted us, loves us, that He is with us, working on our behalf, and that He will never leave us (Isa. 41:10) or let us down as His child (John 6:20).

Think of it. We were once the enemy of God (Col. 1:21) but are now at peace with God forever! God is not angry with our life. God is not our enemy. God is not against us. God will never condemn us or judge us. God will always unconditionally accept us as His own child. God will never disown us as His child. He will always take us back and make us feel at home with Him. We are His forever!

"Things that once were wild alarms  
Cannot now disturb my rest;  
Closed in everlasting arms,  
Pillowed on the loving breast.  
Oh, to lie forever here,  
Doubt, and care, and self resign,  
While He whispers in my ear—  
I am His and He is mine."



The fact that we are at peace with God will help us to keep our footing in the time of battle and remain stable and strong (Joshua 1:6-7). The positional truth that we are at peace before God prepares us (“preparation of the gospel of peace”) for the spiritual battle. Because we are at peace with God He has accepted us in His presence and will never leave us nor forsake us in the time of battle (Heb. 13:5). God is not against us. God loves us. God accepts us as His child and wants to come to our rescue (Ps. 46:1). *Always remember that it is Satan who is against us. God is not against us.* Furthermore, we are at peace with God but at war with Satan. Don’t allow Satan to steal this truth from your heart. Satan was banned from the presence of God (Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:16) but we are accepted in God’s presence forever (Rom. 5:1) and have God’s refuge and unending love (Rom. 8:38-39) to help us on to victory. The Gospel has brought the believer into a place of positional peace before God and this in return prepares us for the spiritual battle providing the assurance that God has accepted us and that we are at peace with God. This reminds us that God is our constant companion in life and that He will always help us, accept us, and love us, even when we fail.

*Practical Peace*  
(Peace of God)

There is a practical peace that comes through the Gospel, which also prepares the believer for the time of battle. This has been called the God prescribed tranquilizer for Christian living. Another result of the Gospel (death and resurrection of Christ) is that the believer is saved and then provided with a day-to-day *practical peace* for his life (Phil. 4:7 – “peace of God”). This is a peace that frees the believer from anxieties and fears, which come from the harassment that Satan brings into his life, through demonic pressures and temptations. Thank the Lord for the Gospel of peace or the practical peace that comes into our life when we receive the Gospel message. God’s peace is promised to us in the time of spiritual conflict with the enemy and prepares us (“preparation of the gospel of peace”) for the battle (Col. 3:15; John 14:27; Isa. 26:3).

What a refuge we have though the peace of God! I don’t have to fear that Satan will destroy me and make my life miserable, but can

possess God's peace through the time of battle, knowing that God is on my side and will not allow my heart to be disturbed from His perfect peace and rest. We must always remember that God's saints are the objects of His deep concern and care and the Lord provides peace for them in the time of battle. The Gospel has brought God's peace into our life and this in return prepares us for the spiritual battle.

“Like the sunshine after rain, like a rest that follows pain, like a hope returned again, is the peace that Jesus gives. Oh the peace that Jesus gives, never dies it always lives, like the music of a psalm, like a great eternal calm, is the peace that Jesus gives.”

*Pursuing Peace*  
(Sharing the Gospel of Peace)

There is also a pursuing (sharing) peace. This means that we should take the Gospel message, which tells how a person can have peace with God, and share it with other people who are lost in sin. This is evangelism. When we have your “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” it means that we are ready to share the Gospel message with others. We are prepared to be a witness for Christ and bring the message of peace to others – the message how they too can have peace before God.

But we might ask, “How does sharing the Gospel of peace with others help in our own personal battle with Satan?” To state it simply, being prepared or ready to witness for Christ, or staying active in the Lord's service, keeps us from idleness and spiritual lethargy. Our Lord said, “But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way” (Matt. 13:25). Readiness to witness and serve the Lord will keep us active in the work of the Lord instead of the devil's work. The Bible says you should be prepared or ready to *share the Gospel of peace* with others wherever you go. Romans 10:15 says, “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

Sharing the message of peace that others can have before God keeps a Christian actively engaged in the work of God. Activity in

God's work (evangelism) is one way to help ward off the attacks of the devil (1 Cor. 15:58). Laziness provides a wedge for the devil to work in our life. A lazy man is the devil's workshop. Someone said: "The train of failure usually runs on the track of laziness." Satan usually can get to us faster when we are idle and stay cooped up in our own little world of self-centeredness and do not serve the Lord (1 Tim. 5:13-15).

Sharing the Gospel of peace with others keeps us active in God's work and this in return keeps our mind engaged on spiritual things and others instead of ourselves (John 13:1-16). Starting to love and serve others will help us to overcome fear and many other sins because it gets our mind off ourselves and redirects our attention to the needs of others (1 John 4:18). *Self-pity and self-centeredness usually becomes a breeding ground for Satan to work.* We must deny ourselves of pity (Luke 9:23) and start sharing the Gospel of peace with others through email, letters, tracts, and witnessing. It will help keep us on the victorious road instead of the road of defeat.

So we can conclude that our positional, practical, and pursuing peace (evangelism/service for the Lord), which is related to the Gospel message, prepares us (makes you ready) for our spiritual battle with Satan. It provides us with strength, stability, and steadfast service for the Lord, as we face our number one spiritual enemy in the world, who is the devil.

### Shield of Faith

The shield of faith is an important part of the Christian armor (Eph. 6:16). The fact that the Paul says we are to "above all" take up the shield of faith stresses the importance of possessing faith for the battle. Faith is pictured as a soldier's shield designed to deflect and destroy the fiery darts that Satan sends our way. The Roman soldier had a body length shield placed in front of him at all times. It was covered in leather and soaked in water before the battle to extinguish fiery darts that were shot in his direction. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4). If we are ever going to be victorious we must demonstrate faith in the Lord's power and provision for our lives. *It's faith and not feelings that will bring victory into our lives.* This is because feelings unguided by truth cannot be

trusted. The “shield of faith” (Eph. 6:16) is said to extinguish the “fiery darts” of Satan or as we might say in today’s terminology “the blazing missiles” of Satan. This is because Satan shoots fiery suggestions into our minds to lust, or to look at something that we should not, to be angry, or to demonstrate pride. He also shoots fear, depression, doubt, worry, and self-pity into our minds. When we become afraid we lose our faith in the Lord’s ability to help us.

We need to keep the shield of faith in front of us at all times so Satan’s flaming or suggestive arrows do not take root in our hearts and minds. Faith or steadfast reliance on God and His truth can snuff out any accusations, temptations, deceptions, or tricks that the devil sends our way. Faith extinguishes the flames that threaten to ignite us into lust, anger, discouragement, doubt, lack of service for God, and many other sinful desires that can invade our soul. Behind the shield we can sometimes see the fiery darts coming in our direction but the shield of faith provides us with protection from the enemies assaults on our life. As we place our trust in God’s provision and promises the power of temptation can be destroyed over our lives. The shield requires our active faith for its effectiveness (“taking the shield of faith” – vs. 16). This means that we must go through the process of claiming our armor and believing what we have in Christ. We must make the effort and determination to walk and live by faith. We are in a battle and only persistent effort to apply God’s armor to our lives will bring victory.

The believer’s steadfast faith in God’s person and power (Eph. 6:10; Gen. 15:1), God’s providence (Rom. 8:28; Prov. 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 10:13), and God’s promises (Rom. 10:17; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:20) brings faith into our hearts. These things act as a pump to transport faith into our hearts, so that we can overcome the devil. The important thing is to quench the fiery dart immediately by acting in faith. Instantly look to Christ by faith, recall some promise of the Word, and believe it. If you don’t the fire will start to spread, and if you add fuel to the fire it will be beyond your control. Your feelings will get aroused and upset, and before long Satan will be in control. So faith is the victory – the shield of faith. *To trust is to experience triumph in Christ.* Faith is the victory that overcomes the world! Faith believes that God can provide the Christian with victory over any sin. Faith says, “No matter what happens God will give the victory.” We must have faith and believe

that nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). When we pray in doubt we do without (James 1:6-7). Faith is utter dependence on God's presence, power, and provision. Faith puts God between the believer and the enemy.

“Strong to meet the foe,  
Marching on we go,  
While our cause we know  
Must prevail;  
Shield and banner bright  
Gleaming in the light,  
Battling for the right,  
Me ne'er can fail.”

It's important to remember that Satan wants to weaken our faith in the truth of God's Word during the struggles and hardships of life (see 1 Thess. 3:1-7 - note the emphasis on faith in this chapter). When Satan tempted Eve, he began by weakening her faith in God - Gen. 3:1 - “Yea, hath God said?” We must never forget that Satan's number one goal is to weaken our faith in God, the truth of God's Word, and that we are victors in Christ. When our faith is weakened we are vulnerable to Satan's fiery darts. The shield of faith is an absolute necessity in the time of battle. We must keep it ever before us or we will be wounded by Satan's fiery suggestions. Hebrews 11:33-34 speaks about believers who possessed great faith in the time of the devil's persecution and suffering - “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”

One of the greatest temptations that we face in our Christian lives is to stop being dependent upon God and relying on our own intellect and resources. As long as we think we can live the Christian life by ourselves, we will fail miserably. The spiritual erosion occurs when our confidence of faith is shifted to our own resources and abilities instead of directing our faith toward God. It takes faith in the Lord to live the Christian life (Prov. 3:5-6). Someone created an acrostic of what true victorious faith stands for and what faith must claim during the Christian battle.

F – Forgiveness of sin  
A – Assurance of salvation  
I – Identification in God's family  
T – Triumph over Satan  
H – Hope of deliverance

### Helmet of Salvation

The Roman soldier would wear a helmet in order to protect his head or skull area from injury. Any vital blow to the head area would mean sure defeat and death. In the Christian experience the "helmet of salvation" (Eph. 6:17) refers to protection for the believer's mind. The salvation or deliverance being referred to is the practical salvation (present tense of salvation) in the believer's life. Satan's invasion of our thinking processes is the way he defeats our lives (2 Cor. 11:3). *This is Satan's chief strategy.* Satan's target is our mind. Satan wants to keep us ignorant of God's truth so that he can control our minds. When we begin to believe any of Satan's lies we develop a double mind and try to live with two minds (James 1:8). We can develop spiritual schizophrenia where the mind divides itself into two parts. One part believes truth and the other part believes Satan's lies. We should constantly pray for an undivided heart in all that we do (Psalm 86:11). We must be careful of the tendency to have faith in one area but not faith in another area, or be willing to be victorious in one area but not another. When we try to live like this we become divided in our thinking and are no longer loyal to our Master (1 Cor. 7:22).

We must understand that the physical mind of the human body is actually used by the unseen or immaterial human spirit (1 Cor. 2:11). The human spirit is a spiritual entity tied to the spiritual world of existence. God communicates to us through our human spirit (Job 32:8; Prov. 20:27), which relays truth to our physical mind in our bodily existence. Therefore, our thinking process is a spiritual matter and becomes the primary place of attack where Satan, who is a spirit being, can tempt us. He approaches us through the realm of our unseen spiritual existence. The mind is susceptible and vulnerable to Satan's lies, half-truths, errors, and other counterfeit ways that he has designed to manipulate and control our minds or inner being (Acts 8:5). Satan can attack the mind and heart of people relentlessly and

ruthlessly. He has the power to project thoughts into our mind so that we actually believe they are the thoughts that we think. In order to possess victory our minds, which are a spiritual entity, must be reprogrammed with the truth of God's Word (Rom. 12:1-2). We must change our thinking habits (Phil. 4:8). David found this to be true long ago (Psalm 119:11). If we are serious about protecting our mind from Satan's control, we must fill it with God's Word. Dear friend, just when we feel the most lost and forsaken, just when the enemy seems to be winning the day, just when the storm is heaviest, the helmet of deliverance comes to lead us back to safety.

Let us remember that thoughts that are wrong must be replaced with thoughts that are righteous and holy. Thoughts of defeat must be replaced with thoughts and promises of victory. Thoughts of discouragement, despair, and divisiveness must be replaced with truthful thoughts that rest upon the foundation of God's Word. Satan will bring thoughts into your mind like, "You can't do anything right. You will never amount to anything for God. There is no hope for you. Give up. You don't have to go to church today. Skip prayer meeting and devotions." These kinds of thoughts are not from our own thinking, as the devil would want us to believe, but from Satan's own book of thoughts. The believer must learn to take inventory of his thought life and possess a solid rock commitment to truth (John 8:32). After all, your faith is only as great as your knowledge of the object of your faith, which is truth. Little knowledge results in little faith. If you only believe what you feel you will be led through life by one emotional impulse after another and never have freedom through the absolute standard of truth – the Bible. Once we know truth our feelings can line up with truth. *We must walk by faith according to what we believe or know to be true.*

The counterfeit and deception must be exposed and demolished by the unbreakable standard of truth (2 Cor. 10:4-5). Choosing the truth may be difficult if you have been living a lie. Remember that deception is the subtlest of all satanic strongholds (John 8:44). *The helmet refers to the mind controlled by God, which provides daily spiritual deliverance (salvation) from Satan's thoughts.* Satan is a deceiver (2 Cor. 11:1-4; Rom. 12:9) and we must learn to think thoughts geared around the truth if we are going to be victorious. If Satan gets his thoughts into our mind we will be deceived by his wiles

(Eph. 6:11), possess a corrupted mind (2 Cor. 11:3) and play into his masquerade of deception (2 Cor. 11:14). The most powerful weapon in Satan's arsenal is the power of suggestion. Satanic suggestions will constantly keep us in defeat if we do not wear the helmet of deliverance (1 Tim. 4:1). When we reprogram our minds or thinking patterns God can control the mind and Satan cannot lead us astray. *Let us remember that intellectual deception and defiance is the reason we live in defeat.* Our minds can become a spiritual junkyard that needs to be emptied and replaced by new righteous and victorious thoughts (Eph. 4:23 – “renewed in the spirit of your mind”). The believer must learn to demolish the satanic thoughts and not allow them to control his mind (and keep guard over his mind (1 Pet. 1:13 – “gird up the loins of your mind”).

Although we cannot escape evil thoughts from racing into our thinking process, we can rid ourselves of evil thoughts and do not have to be overcome by them. If we entertain the conception or thought of lust too long, then rejecting our passion will become increasingly difficult. In fact, sin will be generated (see James 1:13-15). There is a short time span between the conception stage of sin (“lust hath conceived”) and the actual birth of sin (“bringeth forth sin”). The Bible says, “make not provision for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14). This word has the basic meaning of planning ahead or forethought. This means that we allow the flesh to control our lives when we think about sinful or wrong thoughts too long. We dwell upon wrong thoughts, plan them out in our minds, and eventually end up doing them. In short, when we plan to sin we will sin! Most sinful behavior results from wrong ideas and lustful desires that we allow to linger in our minds too long! Then too, we make provision for the flesh (make plans to sin) when we buy things that are associated with temptation, go places that are associated with temptation, watch things that tempt us sin, when we make it easy for ourselves to sin, and when we give a higher priority to the physical than to the spiritual. We should not indulge the flesh even a little. Rather, we should, as someone stated: “Give no chance for the flesh to have its fling.”

We are what we think (Prov. 23:7 – “as he thinks so is he”) so we ought to “think on these things” (Phil. 4:8) or those very things which are rooted in truth, purity, holiness, and righteousness. Satan shoots his “fiery darts” (satanic suggestions – Eph. 6:16) into our minds and



we need to deal with these thoughts or they will overcome our spiritual thinking processes. If we fail to program truth into our minds and hearts we will be victimized by Satan and ultimately become a victim of the world culture. Earl Radmacher said it best: “The truth of God establishes our vision, straightens our course, and resets our compass on the North Pole of accurate thought.” The way we think is really the beginning of victory or the start of our spiritual downfall and defeat. And we must remember that our victory does not lie in having our minds occupied with the enemy – the devil. Our victory lies in looking unto Jesus and keeping our eyes fixed upon Him (Heb. 12:2; Phil. 1:21; Eph. 6:10). Jesus is the Victor! Victorious Lord!

Victorious Lord! Jesus as Lord is the only One who “able to succour (aid) them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:18). Someone once remarked: “We must never see Satan without seeing God.” This means that Jesus is the only One who can rescue or deliver us in the time of temptation. Jesus is called salvation (Luke 2:30) and the “Lord is my light and my salvation (Psalm 27:1). Deliverance is always in the person of our blessed Lord. True deliverance requires Someone else to rescue us from a situation in which we are helpless. Jesus is that Someone.

Reference to the imagery of the Roman helmet is also called “the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). Let me pass on a practical note. You can believe that your situation is hopeless and become convinced that you are trapped in your bondage and there’s nothing you can do and there is no way out. When you believe the enemies lie and get to this point you must remember that there is hope – the hope of deliverance through Jesus Christ. The repeated Scriptural principle and practical truth is this. Jesus always delivers His people from adversity (2 Pet. 2:9). However, the “hope of salvation” in the context refers to the blessed hope and promise of Christ’s imminent return for His saints before the Tribulation Period.

Even the truth about Christ's imminent coming and the believer's pre-tribulational Rapture protects our minds from fear, worry, and anxiety knowing that God has promised to deliver His people from judgment. It reminds us that God is working for his people and is the great Deliverer. Satan would like to get the believer’s attention off of Christ’s imminent return since the any moment return of Christ, prior

to the Tribulation Period, is a strong motive and incentive for holy living (1 John 3:2), strength (James 5:8), and faithfulness (1 Cor. 15:51-58; Rev. 2:25; 3:3,11). The pretribulational Rapture of the Church, which will occur at Christ's imminent return, provides an incentive to live victoriously. If Satan can get our minds away from the great doctrinal truth of Christ's imminent return it will be a subtle victory for the enemy. Perhaps today!

### Sword of the Spirit

The way we keep wearing the "helmet of salvation" (deliverance) is by applying "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" to our minds and hearts. The Bible is comparable to a sword. The Roman sword was especially important in the battle for it was his major weapon. It was a short sword that was double-edged and ideal for close combat. It could be taken out for fighting in a moment's time. The soldier could cut with both sides of the sword making it a lethal weapon. What a wonderful picture of the power of God's Word. For the believer today our sword and weapon is the Word of God. We do battle with Satan by using the Scriptures.

The Bible (truth) needs to become the center of our existence – not feelings and circumstances. We do not have to be a victim of your feelings and circumstances. *Our moods cannot form the basis of our decisions. Truth must be the basis of all our decisions.* We can become a victor by following the truth of Scripture. God's Word is a divinely powerful weapon. If you don't use it on the battlefield you will quickly become disabled and defeated. When we lose our sword of protection to fight off the enemy we are going to suffer defeat. *Satan will try and test you and get you to doubt God's Word.* He will challenge your faith in God's truth.

Remember that Satan convinced Eve that God's Word was not reliable and this became her downfall. When we take our focus off of truth we are left defenseless. Satan will also try to manipulate the truth and give you a wrong understanding of the Bible. This is why we need to know "sound doctrine" today (Titus 1:9; 2:1) and not follow Satan's lies, which are "contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:10). If I didn't believe the word of God could produce victory and salvation in the lives of people, I would quit preaching and do something else. As

Christians we must *love truth and live truth* so wherever we walk we can stand on victory ground.

The “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17) is said to be the “word of God.” This means that the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16). It was given to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). Therefore, it is the Holy Spirit that teaches us the Word of God (John 14:26) and guides us in all truth (John 16:13). It is the Holy Spirit who reminds us of what we have learned and enables us to practice what He has taught us through the Bible. The “sword of the Spirit” first means that the Holy Spirit drives home the truth of the Bible to our own hearts and lives and makes it very practical and helpful in the time of temptation (Heb. 4:12). The Bible cuts into the deep recesses of our thoughts so that we can think right and possess an accurate understanding of truth. The Spirit takes the Scriptures and touches our hearts and minds with the truth. In doing so He enables us to do battle against Satan. The Spirit also applies the power of the “sword” against our foe in the time of battle as we use it. So the Spirit uses the sword to affect our own thinking so that we in return can do battle against Satan. The sword affects us first and then it affects our foe when we stick the devil with the truth.

Think of this way. The Holy Spirit wrote the Word and the Holy Spirit brings important verses to your attention in the time of temptation to produce sanctification and victory in our lives (John 15:3). You simply need to take these verses by faith and use them in the battle. The Bible is the book of the Spirit and it is to be used in conjunction with prayer as we do battle with Satan (Acts 6:4). There is nothing passive about spiritual warfare. We must use the Scriptures in the time of battle if we are going to be victorious. The Holy Spirit of God will enable you to use the Word of God in the battle against Satan. In fact, the Holy Spirit will show you when Satan is using the Bible to promote his own lies as He did with Christ in the wilderness (Matt. 4:6-7). Satan is busy twisting people’s perspective of the Word of God so that they in the end walk away from the truth. But it’s the Word of God that is our source and eternal fountain of victory. And let me say that there is no substitute for persistent, steady, consistent application of God’s Word against Satan. Using the Scriptures against the Evil One is the most urgently needed discipline of the Christian home and church.

We must remember that our words, which come forth from our lips, are not magic. *The Holy Spirit does not use our words but His inspired words revealed in the Bible.* The Holy Spirit is the One who empowers His Word when we pray through Bible verses dealing with the promises about victory. He is also the One who empowers us as we use His Word. The sword will be of no value to us if we forget about the power of the Author (Acts 1:8) and when we are grieving or quenching the Spirit's ministry in our lives (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). We cannot effectively use the Word of God in warfare unless the Holy Spirit is controlling us (Eph. 5:18). Using the Scripture without the strength of the Author will lead to defeat (Gal. 5:25 – “walk in the Spirit”). This means that we should not deify the Bible and make it into some kind of book of magic that we seek to use in our own power and strength. We must use the truth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I think the discipline of getting up every morning and reaching for your Bible is an important part of spiritual victory. Every morning we should present our body and mind to God for spiritual renewal (Rom. 12:1-2). It is a good thing to reaffirm the surrender of our body and will to the Lord through prayer. Then we need to meditate on the Word of God for it is the Word of God that renews the mind and transforms it (Rom. 12:2). Prayer and the Word of God go hand in hand. The Bible produces light but prayer taps into God's power and produces the heat and energy to live, as we should.

The important thing is that when we pray we yield ourselves fully to God's will and then we are ready to be directed in the will of God through reading the Scriptures. When we practice this system we will be totally surrendered to God (body, mind, and will) and ready to yield to the transforming truth of the Bible. The Holy Spirit can work in our lives when our body, mind, and will are yielded to God. Please note that these are the three areas that Satan wants to attack. Satan tempts you so that you will yield your *body* to sin by becoming impatient or calloused to God's will, as found in the Bible. He wants to attack your *mind* with lies to make you ignorant of God's will and Word. At the same time the devil wants to attack your own *will* with pride or self-sufficiency and make you independent of God's perfect will.

When we yield ourselves to God in body, mind, and will it's then we can start a new journey whereby the Holy Spirit will enable us to live godly and victoriously. The Holy Spirit is "the spirit of wisdom and understanding" and "the spirit of counsel" (Isa. 11:2; Eph. 1:17) who will teach us God's truth and bring it to our minds when Satan attacks us. As the "spirit of knowledge" He will give us discernment and skillful perception of the enemies plans and tricks. As the "spirit of counsel" (Isa. 11:2) he will give us advice on how to live and make proper decisions that line up with God's will. The Holy Spirit is also called the "Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29; Zech. 12:10) to strengthen us in the time of suffering and hardship. As the Holy Spirit of power (Luke 4:14; 1 Cor. 2:4; Zech. 12:10) and "spirit of might" (Isa. 11:2) He will empower us to say "No!" in the time of temptation. The Holy Spirit will work in us and through us to defeat the enemy. As "the spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:4) he will enable us to live a holy life.

The purpose of every believe should be to prayerfully meditate on God's Word and even speak forth the truth of God's Word so that the Spirit of God will enable our minds to be transformed through the Word of God. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 says, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." When we recognize afresh and anew that this is God's Word and absolute truth then we are ready to assimilate to our lives. So each believer needs to awake with a surrendered heart and mind (Rom. 12:1-2). They must surrender to God and His will as found in the Scripture as they reaffirm the truthfulness of Scripture and its authority over their lives.

Remember that the will of God is the most important thing in the believer's life (Ps. 40:8; Col. 1:9; 4:12; 1 Pet. 4:2; 1 John 2:17). *Satan's target and goal is to get to your will and control it.* He knows that living the Christian life is basically a matter of the will. So if he can get us to follow our own will we will bypass God's will for our lives. We are told to love the Lord God with all of our heart (emotions), soul (personality), mind (intellect) and strength (service) – Mark 12:30. This involves our entire will. We are to love God will our whole being. Consistent Christian living involves the believer giving His will to the Master (Rom. 6:12-13). When our will is guided by the

truth of God's Word then God's will become our basis in life and we have spiritual willpower to live wisely and victoriously. As the deceiver, Satan seeks to make you ignorant of God's will, impatient with God's will, and bypass God's will altogether. He seeks to control your mind or thinking so that you can act or live independently of God's will as found in the Bible. *If Satan can get you to act and think independent of God's will, which is found only in the bible, then he can then control your will and life.* One of the most important lessons the believer must learn is that he cannot live independent of God. He needs God's Word and power to sustain him spiritually.

The emphasis on the "word (rhema) of God" in Ephesians 6:17 means "utterances or sayings of the Scriptures." The emphasis is on the outspoken word. This would suggest that believers must learn the secret of quoting and claiming specific portions of the Bible that will help them in the specific battles which they are facing. *It's one thing to wear the belt of truth (Eph. 6:14), and know truth to counteract Satan's lies, but it's another thing to actually apply specific portions of Scripture by speaking forth and claiming truth in the time of battle.*

This outspoken word is very significant for it actually indicates the need to speak forth the Word of God in the time of battle and use those portions of Scripture that have immediate application to the situations we are facing ("Let the redeemed of the Lord say so - Ps. 107:2). Many believers still have their sword in the sheath. But we must remember that the enemy responds to God's sayings. *The old adage says: the best defense is a good offense.* A thorough knowledge and skillful use of the Word (spoken Word) is a most formidable weapon when doing battle with our spiritual enemy. The Bible says that the believer must resist the devil ("Whom resist steadfast in the faith" - 1 Pet. 5:9). This means we must know the truth of Scripture so that we can resist the devil's temptations and lies, which he brings before us, in order to ruin our lives. Since our primary weapon against the devil is the Word of God, we must learn to aggressively quote the Scriptures as Jesus did in the time of temptation. We may even want to use some of the very verses Jesus used (Luke 4:4; 4:8).

It is good that we have verses ready to combat the three major categories of temptation mentioned in 1 John 2:16 – "the lust of the

flesh” (1 Pet. 2:11; 1 Thess. 4:3), “the lust of the eyes” (Job 31:1; Ps. 101:3) and “the pride of life” (Prov. 16:18; 29:23; 1 Tim. 3:6; James 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:5). Other verses that you can bring to your attention when the devil tempts you, would be verses that strike at the very core of the devil’s defeat (Gen. 3:15; John 12:31; 16:11, 33; Rom. 8:37; 16:20; Colossians 1:13; 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 2:13; 3:8; 5:4; 5:18; Rev. 12:11; 20:10). In the time of temptation, you should also emphasize those verses that bring God’s promise for personal victory to your attention (Ps. 16:8; 91:1-6; Rom. 6:6,13-14; 8:37; 1 Cor.15:57; 2 Cor. 2:11, 14; Phil. 4:13; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; Heb. 13:20-21; Jude 24-25) and your authority over Satan in Christ (Eph. 1:19-22). As you prayerfully meditate before the Lord and speak to Him about the victory of the cross, God’s promises for personal victory, and your authority over Satan, through the use of Bible passages, Satan will flee your presence as a defeated coward (James 4:7). The Bible brought before your mind and heart will provide a means of escape from the devil’s old temptations and bag of tricks (see Psalms 119:11). There is no substitute for persistent, steady, consistent application of God’s Word against Satan. The devil was defeated by the Lord’s persistent use of the sword (Luke 4:1-13).

“O may I love Thy precious Word,  
May I explore the mine,  
May I its fragrant flowers glean,  
May light upon me shine!  
O may I find my armor there!  
Thy Word my trusty sword,  
I’ll learn to fight with every foe  
The battle of the Lord.”

*We must remember that doing battle with the devil is a truth encounter. Satan cannot be out-muscled or out-shouted, but he can be out-truthed! Truth is the liberating agent and way of victory! Satan wants you to doubt the plain things and the main things of the Bible. He wants to get you to suffocate these main truths of Scripture by replacing them with your own fleshly decision to live contrary to His Word and holiness (Luke 8:12; Gen. 3:1-5). Satan can try and make something, which is evil, appear to be spiritual to us. He is a master at this trade. But the better you know the Word of God, the easier it will be for you to detect Satan’s lies and reject his offers. This is why*

you need to learn the Word of God and effectively use even specific portions of the Bible that will give you victory over many plaguing sins.

Every believer must effectively and prayerfully apply those portions of the Bible to your life that will give you victory over such things as worry (Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:7; Isa. 26:3-4; 41:10, 13; 2 Cor. 12:9-10; Matt. 6:33-34), stress (1 Pet. 5:7; Phil. 4:7, 9; Isa. 26:3), jealousy (Prov. 14:30; James 1:14-15; 1 Cor. 13:4; Job 5:2; Prov. 3:31; 23:17), pride (Prov. 6:16-17; 16:18, 1 Pet. 5:5; 1 Jn. 2:16), anger (Eph. 4:26, 31-32; Col. 3:8; Jam. 1:19-20; Rom. 12:9; Ps. 4:4; Prov. 14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32; 20:22; Jonah 4:4, 9), lying (Ex. 20:16; Ps. 15:1-2; 34:14; Prov. 12:22; Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25; 1 John 2:21), loneliness (Duet. 31:6; Ps. 25:16; 65:5-6; 102:7-11; 142:1-4; Heb. 13:5), fear (Ps. 34:4; 1 Pet. 5:7; Josh. 1:9; Isa. 41:10, 13; 1 Jn. 4:18; Matt. 6:34), depression (Ps. 16:8; 34:18; 43:5; 46:1), discouragement (Ps. 42:5-6; 46:1; Isa. 41:10; 2 Cor. 4:8-9), grief (Ps. 23:4; 34:18; 116:15; 147:3; Rom. 8:38-39; Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:6-8; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Isa. 26:3; Isa. 41:10; Ps. 147:3; John 14:1), divorce (Matt. 19:6; 1 Cor. 7:39, 10-11; Mal. 2:15-16; Luke 16:18), abortion (Ex. 20:13; Ps. 139:13-16; Jer. 1:5; Prov. 14:12; 12:15; 16:2; Ps. 32:3-5; 40:1-3), alcohol (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 13:13-14; 1 Pet. 4:1-3; Isa. 5:11-12, 22; Hab. 2:15-16) rock music (Ps. 40:3; 2 Tim. 4:4; Rom. 6:13; Phil. 4:8; 1 Pet. 2:11; 1 Cor. 6:19-20), eating disorders (1 Pet. 4:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 19-20; Prov. 23:2), covetousness (Luke 12:15; Rom. 13:9; 1 Tim. 6:9-10), contentment (1 Tim. 6:6-8; Phil. 4:11-12), gossip (Prov. 11:13; 18:8; 21:23; 26:20, 22; Ps. 141:3; James 1:26; 3:11; 1 Pet. 3:10; Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6; 1 Tim. 5:13), past memories (Phil. 3:13-15; Luke 9:62; Eph. 4:22-23; 2 Cor. 5:17; 10:4-5; Phil. 4:8), guilt (1 John 8:10; Isa. 1:18; 43:25; Mic. 7:18-19; 103:12), syndromes (Ps. 91:1-16; Is. 43:1-2; 42:11), submission (Eph. 5:21-22; Col. 3:8; 1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Pet. 3:1,5-6; Heb. 13:17), church attendance (Heb. 11:25; Ps. 84:0; 122:1), television/movies (Ps. 101:3; Eph. 5:4; Rom. 8:5-6; Isa. 5:20; Col. 3:1; Phil. 4:8; Rom. 12:1-2), improper dress (1 Tim. 2:9-10; Prov. 11:22; 31:10; 1 Pet. 3:3-5), temptation (Jam. 1:14; 1 Cor. 10:13), sexual purity (Ex. 20:17; Rom. 13:14; James 1:21; 1 Thess. 4:3-6; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; Job 31:1; Matt. 5:28; Heb. 13:4; 1 Tim. 2:22; Col. 3:5-10), homosexuality (Rom. 1:24-27; Jude 1:7; Lev. 20:13; Rom. 8:5-6; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Ps. 141:4; 1 Pet. 4:1-3; Gal. 5:16); unforgiveness (Eph. 4:30-32; Matt. 6:14-15;



18:21-22), occult (Eph. 5:11; 6:10-12; 1 Pet. 2:9; Deut. 18:10-12; Gal. 5:19-20; Isa. 8:19; 1 John 4:4), procrastination (Ps. 90:12; Eph. 5:15-18; 1 Cor. 15:58), laziness (Prov. 10:4, 12:24, 13:4, 20:4, 31:27; Ecc. 10:18; 1 Tim. 5:8-14; 2 Thess. 3:10-12; Heb. 6:12; Rom. 12:11; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9), lack of faith or unbelief (Ps. 20:7; Isa. 26:4; Prov. 3:5-6; Jer. 17:7-8; Mk. 11:22) and trials (2 Cor. 1:3-4; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12-13; 2 Tim. 2:3; James 1:12; Rom. 8:28).

Whatever your area, or areas of weaknesses might be, you want to develop an arsenal of verses to deal with them and be ready for the evil day of temptation. This will help you to target specific temptations. Let us not forget: *Our inner most being must be directed by the objective truth of Scripture and not the subjective experiences, feelings, and moods that we like to feel.* We must accept God's Word as our final authority since the strongholds in our mind (2 Cor. 10:3-5) are reinforced by our own feelings, and the deceptive thoughts and lies of Satan. We can either cling to a wrong belief system and to wrong *subjective* feelings or believe God's *objective* written truth and claim His victory. Beware of trusting your own fleshly feelings.

“The arm of flesh will fail you,  
Ye dare not trust your own.”

### **Prayer and Victory**

Each piece of the armor must be put on with prayer. *This is how we make the armor of God work in our daily experience.* We must mentally pray on the armor. That's why in Ephesians 6:18 we are told to wear the armor “praying always.” This statement suggests the thoroughness and intensity of our praying. Prayer should be a habit and not an isolated act (1 Thess. 5:17). We are to always be ready to pray and commit ourselves to a consistent life of prayer. We are not to become lax in our praying. *The devil is never far away when we become too busy to pray.* A Christian must “pray always” because he is always subject to temptations and attacks of the devil. The text then says, “with all prayer and supplication” (with all kinds of prayers and requests). There are many kinds of prayers that we should make such as public and private prayers; deliberate and spontaneous prayers; supplication and intercession; confession and humiliation;

praise and thanksgiving. All of these different types of prayers are to keep their focus on the subject of victory, whether they are prayers of praise, prayers of intercession, or public and private prayers. The point of the writer is that a key subject in all of our praying needs to be victory. Thus, the additional words “and supplication” (vs. 18) stress the need to cry out for victory on behalf of the other saints. Furthermore, as we pray for the victory of others we will do so “in the Spirit” which simply means to pray under the guidance, power, and filling of the Holy Spirit (see Jude vs. 20). Our prayers must be inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit.

The text goes on to specifically speak about this victorious praying when saying: “watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Christians should fight shoulder-to-shoulder and knee-to-knee while being spiritually alert to Satan’s movements against them. The formula “Watch and pray” is the secret of victory over the world (Mark 13:33), the flesh (Mark 14:38), and the devil (Eph. 6:18).

Like reliable soldiers, we are to stay spiritually alert to Satan’s workings in our own lives and the lives of other believers (“watching thereunto”), and keep being persistent in the matter of prayer, as we pray for personal and corporate victory in the lives of God’s people. We must persistently keep on asking, seeking, and knocking (Luke 11:9). The word *perseverance* simply means “to stick to it and not quit.” The early believers prayed this way (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4); and we also should pray this way (Rom. 12:12 – “continuing instant in prayer”). Most of us quit praying just before God is about to give the victory! All of us can persevere in prayer far more than we do and staying spiritually alert to what Satan is doing will keep us persistent in our praying. Staying spiritually alert to Satan’s workings will keep us on our knees! You might say that spiritual alertness and persistence in prayer go hand in hand – the one (persistence) naturally flows out of the other (alertness).

Someone wrote: “God expects us to use our God-given senses, led by the Spirit, so that we detect Satan when he is beginning to work.” There is a watching and alertness that is connected with prayer. When Nehemiah was repairing the walls of Jerusalem, and the

enemy was trying to stop the work, Nehemiah defeated the enemy by watching and praying. “Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch” (Neh. 4:9). Praying for victory in the lives of God’s people is vital for a continuing ministry of fruitfulness and blessing. “And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends” (Job 42:10). Did you know that it’s a sin to not pray for others (1 Sam. 12:23)? Prayer changes things!

“My Soul be on thy guard,  
Ten Thousand foes arise;  
The hosts of sin are pressing hard  
To draw thee from the skies.  
Oh watch and fight and pray,  
The armour ne’er lay down;  
The fight of faith will not be o’er  
Till thou receive the crown.”

A good summary of this verse would be as follows: “watching” focuses on the manner or way we are to pray (Matt. 26:41; Mark 13:33); “all perseverance” focuses on the persistence of prayer (Luke 11:9; 18:7, 8); “all saints” focuses on the objects of our prayers (1 Sam. 12:23).

### Personal Prayer for Victory

The believer must remember to pray “in the Spirit” (vs. 18) in his time of personal battle with Satan. This does not mean to speak in some kind of gibberish or meaningless talk but to pray under the Spirit’s guidance, direction, and filling ministry. Our prayers need to be Spirit’s directed and empowered. Let us remember that victory comes to us as we prayerfully claim our inheritance in Christ. The believer can mentally pray on each piece of spiritual armor and then put each piece to work whenever the enemy attacks him. These defensive pieces of armor, which are provided by God, require no action on our part, except to put them on by faith and trust God to make them work. Through prayer we contact God, pour our hearts out to Him, and then trust Him for power and victory. As we pray we can actually pray on these pieces of armor, claiming what they will do for us, and then let

God make them work for us in the time of battle. When we practice this type of praying the enemy will be defeated.

Each one of us, as God's people, must learn the secret of relying on the Lord's daily power through the provision of His armor. *Believers must effectively use each piece of God's armor in the time of spiritual warfare through the ministry of prayer.* We must pray forth Scripture references of truth and center our minds on truth instead of lies. As we pray we must claim God's truth, our righteousness in Christ, the Gospel shoes of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the promises of the word – the sword of the Spirit. By praying in this manner we can express our complete faith in God for victory. We must mentally pray the armor on claiming the provisions that the armor gives to us (truth, righteousness, peace, faith, deliverance) as we effectively use it against the enemy. Some suggest that there is no need for the believer to mentally pray on the armor since he already possesses it. But this seems to miss Paul's main point when he says, "Put on the whole armour of God" (vs. 11) and "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God" (vs. 13). There is a responsibility for each believer to claim what he already has and mentally dress himself for success with the provision of God's spiritual armor. We must actively, mentally, and prayerfully place this armor on our lives in order to experience victory. We agree with the hymn writer who said:

"Put on the gospel armor,  
Each piece put on with prayer"

Then too, as we pray we will be demonstrating that we are depending upon God for help and strength in the time of battle. All of the armor and all of the fighting, without prayer, will only lead to defeat. The enemy will override you if you fail to pray, as you should, and depend upon God for spiritual strength in the time of battle. *There is a definite prayer battle that we must be engaged in today.* And remember that truth and prayer are linked together in the Bible. We should not lack either of these important details for victory. God's Word reveals the will of God for our lives (Ps. 40:8; 119:105) and prayer enables us to receive God's power to do His will in the time of temptation. Each believer must take time to pray and then maintain an attitude of prayer and dependency throughout the day (Col. 4:2 – "continue in

prayer”). Jesus said, “Watch and pray” (Mark 14:38). In short, we must keep the receiver off the hook! Maintain a habit and consistency about prayer. We must put on the armor with prayer and then realize that prayer is what makes all the armor work, as it should. The armor begins to work only as we pray. Prayer is the secret!

The beloved hymnwriter, William Cowper wrote:

“Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;  
Prayer keeps the Christian’s armor bright;  
And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon His knees.”

### *Corporate Prayer for Victory*

It’s also vitally important that believers remember to pray for each other in the time of battle (“Watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” – Eph. 6:18b). *We need to get in the habit of praying that God’s people would experience victory in their lives.* We need to pray for victory to be experienced in the lives of other saints. How often we forget this! We are quick to condemn the saints but forget to pray that they would be victorious over the world and the enemy. There is power in corporate praying (Acts 12:12-13; Col. 4:2-3; 2 Chron. 7:14). Intercession for the saints to live victoriously is vital, necessary, and commanded by God. Jesus prayed for Peter when He knew the devil was tempting him (Luke 22:31-32). Let us be alert to the needs of others and pray intercessory prayers for their victory over the Evil One (“Watch and pray” – Matt. 26:41). And when we do let us remember, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

“Principalities and powers  
Mustering their unseen array,  
Wait for thy unguarded hour;  
Watch and pray.”

## *Jesus' Prayer for Victory*

Jesus also prayed a prayer of victory that His people can claim in the time of battle. We cannot forget the importance of the intercessory prayer of Jesus Christ. It is a prayer He made that promises sure victory over the Evil One. Jesus said in John 17:15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" The definite article would indicate that Jesus is talking about the Evil One or Satan himself (Matt. 5:37; 1 John 5:19). Then in verse 20 He adds: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." This is a prayer for protection and preservation from the enemy's assaults and attacks (vs. 12). Sometimes Christians think that it would be easier if they would leave this world (Numb. 11:15; 1 Kings 19:4; Jonah 4:3, 8) and live in seclusion somewhere ("out of the world") but this is not true. Wherever we go, we take our own sinful self with us, and the powers of darkness will always follow us. Jesus did not pray for the isolation of his people but for the protection, security, and safety of His people from Satan's power and influence as they carry out God's work in enemy territory. This is a promise of victory for each child of God. *God's people can cling to the prayer promise of Jesus that we will be kept safe from Satan's overcoming power and influence.*

**Remember that the Father has already answered the prayer of Jesus!** The Father always answers the prayers of Jesus. Jesus was praying for victory in our lives in view of the coming cross and His defeat of Satan. Because of the prayer of Jesus, we have been given this victory over the devil and demons today. The prayer of Jesus has already been answered with the Father's amen and we can be sure the Father has heard Jesus and will give His people victory in the time of battle. *Satan cannot penetrate God's protection and victorious plan for the believer in Christ.* The Christian has been given spiritual insulation from the Evil One. The prayer promise of Jesus is ours to claim!

## **Union and Victory**

The Bible teaches that the believer possesses a spiritual and intimate union with Jesus Christ. Union speaks of two people who are joined together. They are two people who are living together in a loving and

intimate relationship, which can best be described as the union of a marriage relationship (“married to another – Rom. 7:4). The believer is actually pictured as being married to Jesus Christ and possessing a loving relationship with Him. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17) and we possess an intimate relationship with Him. A marriage speaks of the union of two people together who share one another’s life. It is an intimate, close, and sharing relationship where both enjoy each other’s presence. In a marriage union there is to be mutual interaction, communion, fellowship, help, and assistance. This is how the Bible pictures our union with Jesus Christ. What a beautiful picture and living reality this can be in our lives today! We have a marriage with Jesus Christ. We possess a spiritual and intimate union with the Lord that can never be severed. The believer’s victorious union, victory, and safety with Christ is expressed in these lovely words:

“Loved with everlasting love,  
Led by grace that love to know;  
Spirit, breathing from above,  
Thou hast taught me it is so!  
Oh, this full and perfect peace!  
Oh, this transport all divine!  
In a love which cannot cease,  
I am His, and He is mine.

Heav’n above is softer blue,  
Earth around is sweeter green!  
Something lives in ev’ry hue  
Christless eyes have never seen:  
Birds with gladder songs o’erflow,  
Doubt, and care, and self resign,  
While He whispers in my ear—  
I am His, and He is mine.

Things that once were wild alarms  
Cannot now disturb my rest;  
Closed in everlasting arms,  
Pillowed on the loving breast.  
Oh, to lie forever here,  
Doubt, and care, and self resign,

While He whispers in my ear—  
I am His and He is mine.

Ah, with what a rest of bliss,  
Christ can fill the loving heart!  
Heav'n and earth may fade and flee,  
First born light in gloom decline;  
But while God and I shall be,  
I am His, and He is mine.”

Jesus describes our union with Him in John 14:20 when He says “ye in me, and I in you.” This union is further described as being “in Christ” (1 Cor. 1:30) and “Christ in you” (Col. 1:27) or “I in you” (John 15:4). What a wonderful relationship this is with Christ! We share Christ’s life and have an intimate and personal awareness of His life in us and with us. This union, which exists between Christ and His people, allows Christ to become the believer’s source of life, strength, and victory. When you throw a sponge into the ocean the ocean goes into the sponge and the sponge goes into the ocean. This is one way to illustrate our union with Christ. As the Christian shares Christ’s life we receive everything that we need for salvation, service, and sanctification. *Every spiritual blessing that we have flows forth from our union with Christ.* Our union with Christ is the source or spring from which every spiritual blessing flows into our life. Here is a working definition of union. Union is an intimate and spiritual oneness (togetherness) between Christ and His people (the Church) which allows Christ to become their source of salvation, strength, victory, and fellowship.

The Bible speaks of the believer being in union with Christ in several ways – His death, burial, resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4), and ascension (Eph. 1:3). **Our union or relationship to Christ’s death (the ground of victory – Rom. 6:6) and our union with the resurrection of Christ (the power of victory – Rom. 6:4-5; Gal. 2:20) and our union with the ascension of Jesus Christ (the authority of victory – Eph. 1:19-23) brings each believer into a place of victory and authority over Satan.** *From the Divine Viewpoint God sees us as having participated in all of Christ’s victorious work over sin and the devil.* When applying these glorious truths to our lives we can effectively resist the devil and have daily



victory. Our spiritual union with Christ, this spiritual tie or relationship we have with Him, is the key to overcoming Satan and experiencing daily victory in our lives. Many believers fail to understand about their union with Jesus Christ and miss the key to living victoriously. Union is the key that unlocks the door to victory.

The primary word associated with this spiritual union with Christ is *identification*. We are identified with Christ's Person and His work of salvation and victory. The doctrine of identification with Christ becomes the basis for the doctrines of sanctification and eternal security. Union with Christ produces a moral and spiritual change in the believer that can be likened only to death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. True victory over sin in the daily life can come only from an understanding and appropriation of this truth. Identification with Christ is accomplished by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) and is termed as being baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). The Holy Spirit is the person who brings us into this vital and living union with Jesus Christ when we believe on Christ for salvation.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an *experience* but a *placement* in Jesus Christ. The Spirit's ministry and work at the time salvation unites each believer to Jesus Christ bringing them into a living, indissoluble, and saving union with Jesus Christ. This union can be understood as a *spiritual location* and *relationship* that each believer now possesses in Christ. **Where we are is the secret of victory!** We are in union with Christ and share in His victorious work and life. Being "in Christ" (a placement or location) speaks of our victorious union with Him. 2 Cor. 5:17, "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said:

"To be in Christ means to be a partaker of all that Christ has done, all that He is, and all that He will ever be."

Scripturally speaking, the believer's union with Christ is taught by the various Biblical expressions "Ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20), "together" (Eph. 2:6), "partaker" (1 Pet. 5:1), "joint-heirs" (Rom. 8:17), and being "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17). These Bible words and expressions describe the believer's spiritual union (togetherness) with

Christ, which comes about at the time of salvation (1 Cor. 12:13), and lasts throughout their entire Christian life (Rom. 8:38-39). Oh what a salvation this that Christ liveth in me! ***Our union with Christ is a place of position, privilege, power, perfection, protection, and personal fellowship.*** Since the believer possesses a union with Jesus Christ he is credited with Christ's righteousness and perfection (1 Cor. 1:30; Jude 1) and stands completely and forever accepted before God's holy presence in the beloved Son (Eph. 1:6). An old couplet reads:

“Nearer, nearer, nearer to God I cannot be;  
For in the person of His Son, I am as near as He.  
Dearer, dearer, dearer to God I cannot be;  
For in the person of His Son, I am as dear as He.”

All this is true and wonderful in regards to salvation but the emphasis of our study has to do with union and victory. The believer can now live by the resurrection power of Christ's life (Phil 3:10) on a daily basis (Gal. 2:20) since he is spiritually linked to Christ's life.

Colossians 2:11-13 goes on to explain how we came into this union with Christ when recording: “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh (body controlled by the sin nature) by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” The spiritual circumcision or operation that occurs at the time of our salvation is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) whereby we become united or spiritually tied to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is what saves us and then enables us to live a sanctified or holy life. “In whom” (Col. 2:11) or in Christ means that we have gone through a spiritual operation whereby the old person that we once were under the control of sin has been put to death. As a result, we have been given a new victory over sin through our union and identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

This spiritual “circumcision” or operation was “made without hands” (Col. 2:11) meaning it was not accomplished by the legalism of man’s doing. Rather, it was accomplished by the operation of God (Col. 2:12). God did it all! And God continues to do it all (“yet not I” – Gal. 2:20). This means you can’t possess salvation or victory through legalism, which is man’s personal effort to gain salvation (Acts 15:1) and sanctification (Rom. 7:11-25) through his own strength and means. Because the believer is “in Christ” he has everything that he needs for victory. This is because he has already passed through the spiritual operation that caused him to share in Christ’s victorious death, burial, and resurrection life.

The Spirit baptizes us or immerses us in the death, burial and resurrection life of Jesus Christ so that we have complete fullness in Him or have everything that we need for victory over sin and Satan. We have already shared in Christ’s victory and we can claim this truth by faith and walk in the daily power of the risen Christ. The result of our operation with Christ is expressed in the words of Colossians 2:13 which says we are “quicken together with him” or made alive because of our link or tie with the life of Jesus Christ. To be made alive speaks of the new birth. Someone expressed the new birth and our union with the living Christ in this way: “To be born again or regenerated means that the circuit breakers are repaired and we are put back into contact with God.”

This is the secret of living! Have you found the secret? We are made alive with Jesus Christ when we were raised with Him. We were given a new birth that consists of sharing Christ’s life and nature (Col. 2: 13 – “quicken together with him”). With Him I possess life and victory and out of Him I can only experience death and defeat. The new birth is in view in this verse. We have been given the very life of Jesus when we were connected together with Him by the Spirit’s baptism. I have His life. *Our risen life with Jesus Christ can be relied on and translated into everyday experience.* It is what I need in the rough and tough circumstances that I face. This means I don’t need psychology, psychoanalyses, psychotherapy, and all the other quack remedies for living. I have Christ what want I more! One man in our church received a paper prayer rug that was sent through the mail system. It was designed to fold out so that a person could kneel on this special prayer rug and sense God’s presence and receive God’s help. How

silly! How worthless! I have Christ! Nothing else works (Rom. 7:7-25) and nothing else matters but Christ (Phil. 1:21).

“By various maxims, forms, and rules,  
That pass for wisdom in the schools,  
I sought my passions to restrain;  
But all my efforts proved in vain.

But since my Saviour I have known  
My rules are all reduced to one,  
To keep my Lord by faith in view,  
This strength supplies and motive too.”

### *The Past Connection*

Our union with Christ has both a past and present reality attached to it. First, there is the believer's past connection or union with Christ. When the believer is united or joined to Jesus Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit he immediately is made to share in the history of Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Although Jesus Christ accomplished all these things in the past the believing sinner is seen to share in Christ's past work. *The believer is seen to take part in the history of Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.* To state it simply, God reckons this experience to be true for all believers who come to faith in Christ. When Christ died, was buried, rose again, and ascended back to the Father each believer participated or shared in these same historic events. When Christ died, I died. When Christ was buried, I was buried. When Christ arose, I arose. When Christ ascended back to the Father, I went back to the Father with Him. *The believer participated in what Christ did and therefore he can share in the benefits of Christ's past work.*

### *The Present Connection*

Second, there is the believer's present connection or union with Christ. Since the believer has shared in the resurrection of Christ he now possesses a living relationship with the risen Lord who is now seated at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:3; Col. 3:1). The believer is viewed as being spiritually seated with Christ in Heaven before God's

throne sharing Christ's very own life. This is a present reality that should have a profound affect on the believer's life today. Our heavenly association with Christ speaks of a *position* of victorious exaltation over the enemy (Eph. 1:20-22). Our union with Christ in Heaven gives us a place of *positional* authority and victory over the devil. Of course, this union or togetherness, which the believer shares with Jesus Christ, can also be experienced down here on earth as we live day-to-day for we can say with the apostle Paul, "Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). The position of victory that we have in Heaven over the enemy is experienced in our lives down here on earth, as we apply the power of Christ's life to our own life and claim His victory. So union with Christ not only guarantees us victory over the enemy but in a practical way supplies each believer with the power to put His position into practice as he yields to the life of the risen Christ who lives within Him (Rom. 6:4; Phil. 3:10).

Charles Baker summarizes:

"It thus appears from the Divine viewpoint that God saw every believer hanging upon Calvary's cross with Christ; that He saw every believer buried with Christ in Joseph's tomb; that He saw every believer being raised from the dead to live jointly with Christ in a new creation; that He looks upon every believe today as being seated with Christ as His own right hand; and that He will some day glorify every believer with Christ when He is manifested in glory."

Christ died and rose again. That's history. But when I put my faith in Jesus Christ I become part of that history. I die with Christ reckoning the defeat of the old man I used to be (Rom. 6:6) and I rise with Christ now open to a new way of life (Rom. 6:4-5). Life now takes on a whole new perspective. Christ's amazing love and saving work has captured me, delivered me from the miry clay, a horrible pit, and linked me to Christ. So we might come to this simple conclusion when trying to put the entire past and present union that each believer shares with Christ in perspective.

The Bible teaches that the believer is spiritually united with the crucifixion of Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20), the burial of Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), the resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:5; Col. 3:1) and the

ascension of Christ (Eph. 1:3; 2:5). The term “heavenlies” (Eph. 1:3; 2:5) refers not only to the place where the glorified Jesus resides but also that sphere of spiritual existence in Christ that believer’s share. The idea of “heavenlies” points to the spiritual union that believer’s share with Christ in Heaven (a new position of victory) but also to the unseen union that they share on a daily basis with Christ (a new power for daily victory). This heavenly or invisible relationship is naked to the physical eye but open or unveiled to the spiritual eye of faith. *We share a spiritual or invisible union with the risen Lord both in Heaven and in our daily experience. We live and operate in the heavenlies. First, we are victors over every force that lies under Heaven because we are seated with Christ as the great Victor. Second, we apply this victory to our lives as we share His risen life of power on a daily basis. Union with Christ is the key to victory.*

J. B. Stoney wrote:

“When I rest in the Lord Jesus,  
Then I begin to find all my joy and strength in Him,  
And I occupy myself with Him.

This is the first step, or foundation, to true devotedness.”

Here are some key verses that point to our union with Jesus Christ.

John 14:20

“At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

Romans 6:4-5

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection.”

Galatians 2:20

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Ephesians 2:6

And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

Ephesians 6:10

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

2 Corinthians 2:14

“Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.”

1 John 4:4

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.

As already stated above, our new spiritual union, relationship, and identification with Christ are often described as receiving a new position (placement or location) of being “in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:17) or “in the Lord” (Eph. 6:10). In other words, when we are placed in union with Christ we automatically receive a new position or standing before God in Christ whereby all the saving and victorious benefits of Christ’s work and life are transferred to our own personal lives. What Christ has done for us becomes our own experience since we share His life and receive a positional standing of righteousness in Jesus Christ before God’s presence (Rom. 3:25).

Each believer possesses a new perfect position in the sight of God because they share the life of Jesus Christ through spiritual union with Him (Rom. 5:2). Since the believer has this union with Jesus Christ he has received complete salvation and victory. Nothing has been left out! We have everything in Christ from A-Z or from salvation to sanctification. In fact, 1 Corinthians 1:30 speaks of the believer being “in Christ” (union) and how Christ becomes our “sanctification” (holiness). In ourselves we are a defeated foe but in Christ we share His life and are positionally sanctified or made holy in God’s sight. But at the same time we are transformed from one degree of sanctification to another as we share the power of His indwelling life through the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

Colossians 2:10 states, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." The word complete (pleroo) means "to make full, to fill up, to fill to the top, to render full," and "to have full measure." I can't add anything to this! I have all that I need in Jesus Christ to live victoriously since He is "the head of all principality and power." We are victors in the Victor! When the Bible says that we are "complete in him" (Col. 2:10) it means we are filled and overflowing with victory since we have received the full measure of victory in Christ. This is because we possess a spiritual union with Christ's victorious work over sin and Satan as stated in Colossians 2:11-14.

The chorus written by Alferd B. Smith spells out the wonder of our completeness or fullness in Jesus Christ.

"Filled to overflowing,  
Hearts a-glow and showing  
Christ to those who do not know Him;  
Sanctified and holy, Yielded to Him only,  
Vessels for the Master's use."

John 1:16 adds, "And of his fulness (pleroma – "that which fills") have all we received, and grace for grace." The word "fulness" speaks of *the abundance of Christ's resources for our lives*. The Christian life is a constant reception of one evidence of God's grace replenishing another - strengthening, empowering, sustaining grace. The fullness of God meets our needs as we experience our completeness in Christ. Our fullness of life comes from Christ's fullness because we are joined with Him in a newfound union. We partake of the divine nature and very life of God through Christ (2 Peter 1:4).

This, of course, does not mean believers become God or absorbed into deity but simply share His life in Glory and the victory and authority that He has over all other powers. Oh to grasp of the fullness of God! Oh to experience our complete victory and power in Him! Oh to know what we have in Christ! We are filled and overflowing with His victory and when we stand in the victory and power of the great Victor we have everything that we need for life and godliness. 2 Peter 1:3 says, "According as his divine power hath



given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

A man stopped me in the mall during the Christmas season and told me that he had something amazing to show me. It had something to do with creating better nails. Well, it wasn't what I was looking for at the Christmas season and it wasn't so amazing! But I have something amazing to share with you today. A hell-bound sinner has been forgiven of all his sins (Col. 2:13 – “forgiven you all trespasses”) and has been raised with Christ into the heavenlies (“raised together with him” – Col. 2:13) gaining full acceptance before God and victory over the devil. Now this is truly amazing! Yes, it's amazing grace!

The secret to living is simple. We have a union with Christ that gives us a newfound victorious position. The believer shares all the spiritual blessings and virtues of Jesus Christ since he has a spiritual union with Him in the heavenlies. We have a spiritual union with His own personal risen life and therefore should rely upon His resurrection life for victory and fruit bearing. Our response should be to seek those things which are above (Christ's virtues and way of living). What are you seeking these days? We need to seek the above life instead of the below life!

Colossians 3:1-2 says:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

The word “if” can be better understood as “since” because Paul is not doubting his union with Christ but stating a fact or confirming the reality of the condition. Let us remember that Christ calls us to things above because we have been put to death and raised from the dead to live with Him (Col. 3:1, 3). How glorious and wonderful! The heavenly life, or our union with the heavenly Christ, does not take us away from the earthly; rather, it takes the earthly out of us! When this begins to happen all of life looks different. ***The call to the heavenly life is not an escape, but an engagement to a new way of living.***

A.T. Pierson said:

“From the moment of faith in Christ, being thus bound to Him and identified with Him, there should be an *absolute cessation of all known sin* – nay, more, the level of earth should be left below and behind for a new level of an essentially heavenly life – lived in Christ.”

The secret to victory is our union with Jesus Christ (“where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” – Col. 3:1). Where is our victory? It’s “where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” We must know *where* we are if we want to experience victory! We must go to the throne room if we want victory! We must enter confidently and with assurance that we are there with Jesus Christ who is the great Victor and divine helper of our souls (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16). Each believer is seated with Christ in heaven. They stand as a victor in Christ’s victory and presently possess His daily power to overcome sin. Our mind must be fixed upon Jesus Christ and His victory, power, and person. It is in the throne room where we find daily help and assistance.

“O Lord, remove whate’er divides  
Our longing souls from Thee;  
‘Tis fit that where the Head resides  
The members’ hearts should be.”

Roy Laurin said:

“Everything has what we call a center of gravity, for gravity tends to draw all things to a common center. Owing to gravitation all bodies on the earth are drawn toward it center. In the spiritual realm of our position every Christian has a center of gravity. It is Jesus Christ. Since he is risen and seated with Christ, the spiritual center of gravity is ‘where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.’”

The words “set your affection” (phroneo) in Colossians 3:1 means, “to seek or strive for something earnestly.” It centers more on the mind than it does the feelings. A person’s actions are the result of his thinking (Phil. 4:8). Therefore, the believer is to engage in heavenly thinking by changing his earthly point of view. Change your point of view. What good advice! We are to think on those things that are above. We need an upward attraction!

“Rise my soul, behold ‘tis Jesus!  
Jesus fills thy wondering eyes:  
See him now in glory seated,  
Where thy sins no more can rise.”

Believers are to be fixing their attention decisively toward “things above” which specifically involves centering their lives on the ascended (Eph. 4:10), glorified (John 17:5; Phil. 2:9) Christ who is seated at the right hand of God (Ps. 110:1; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). Seeking things above means we must focus on Christ’s character or His life of joy, peace, holiness, and righteousness instead of our own earthly living. In seeking things above we learn to actively meditate on Christ’s virtues and victory instead of our own self and sins. We begin to bind ourselves to His ways and values.

Here are a few explanations of what it means to seek things above.

Curtis Vaughan said:

“To seek the things that are above is to desire, to strive for the things above. It is to see to it that our interest are centered in Christ, that our attitudes, our ambitions, and our whole outlook on life are molded by our relation to Him.”

Homer Kent has also stated it well:

“The apostle is referring to those thoughts which find their source and their direction in the new life which believers share with Christ above. These are the concepts which are wholesome and edifying because the regenerated life which Christ bestows has provided new goals, new insights, and a new mindset whose object is holiness.”

In Colossians 3:2 Paul also wrote, “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” In short, we should live for eternal things and not the temporary earthly things that are mentioned in Colossians 3:5-9. The believer’s response to their position in Christ and union with Him should be one of continually seeking the “above things” of Colossians 3:10-15 instead of the below things of this life (Matt. 6:19-21). *God wants us to live above the world. We are in the world but not of the world. Earthliness can become a detrimental problem. Someone said, “We are not only bogged down in it, but we help to*

create the swamp.” Therefore, we need to set our minds on things above. In other words, we should constantly possess a new way of thinking and continually be forming new goals that are in line with the character and life of Jesus Christ. Our affections, desires, longings, and wills should be directed toward Jesus Christ since we have a living union with Him in Heaven.

Why should the believer set his attention on heavenly things and no longer live for earthly things? It’s because the old person we used to be with its interests, affections and desires has been crucified with Christ (Col. 3:3). The concept that we have died with Christ (“For ye are dead”) refers to the believer’s identification with Christ’s death and the victory achieved over sin and Satan through His death on the cross (Rom. 6:6). We have died in Jesus Christ to all that we once were as children of Adam and now we have a new spiritual tie with the risen life of Jesus Christ in Heaven. I have often stood beside a person who was dead. All that was left was a corpse. I am aware that he or she is now dead to my voice or touch. I can have no more influence in that person’s life. The same is true about my old manner of life or the “old man” I used to be. The old man should no longer have any more influence or control over my life.

The Bible teaches that because of our death with Christ we have become dead to the appeal of the old and inadequate way and are now alive with Christ in Heaven possessing a new way and a new order for living. The old person under the power of sin no longer has to surface in my life since I have moved out of the sphere of the old ways into the new life with Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). The old life should no longer control us or appeal to us since we are raised with Christ and are seated with Him in the heavenlies. I now have a new set of values based upon an entirely new perspective. If we can put it in modern lingo, “The old things just don’t turn us on anymore.”

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.”

This will be true when we are experiencing our risen life with Christ! We have a new set of values and standards that comes from another

world, which is heaven, the place where we share our union with Jesus Christ. We are now one with Jesus Christ (“Christ, who is our life” – vs. 4) and share His life and nature in Glory. As a result, we should now live and act according to His person and experience His power in our lives. Never forget that the Christian life is a shared life! *Because of this we should think like Christ and live, as He wants us to live, since we are sharing His life.* The underlying thought of our heavenly union with Christ is this. We should allow His life to work itself out and express itself in every thought we think, deed we do, or decision we make (Phil. 2:12 – “work out your salvation”).

The things that are on earth such as material wealth, worldly honor, power, pleasures, personal sins, and selfish living must not overtake our heavenly thinking. When we set our mind on the heavenly Christ, His person, power, and program for our lives, it’s then that we will no longer live as if this world was all that mattered. Instead, we will see this world against the background of the larger world of eternity! Heavenly things should be the practical pursuit of the Christian life. We are to give the heavenly things a large place in our thinking. No, we do not withdraw ourselves from society and live in some kind of monastery. But the world no longer has the charm and delight it once had when we reflect upon the heavenly things related to Christ. We no longer live for the moment but begin to live the life of the heavenly Christ and look ahead toward the great eternal day.

Dear friend, our lives are many times too earthbound. Our lives need to become heavenly oriented as we think and act on Christ’s glorious power, victory, character, and ways. The old adage which says, “You are too heavenly minded to be any earthly good” is simply not true. The believer needs to be heavenly minded or he will become earth bound to the pressures of sin, self, and Satan. He will become swamped in taxes, turmoil, and tough times. He will become sidetracked by fortune, fame, and failure. Spurgeon said in his characteristically quaint way that this chapter begins in Heaven (vs. 1-4) and ends in the kitchen (vs. 5-25) or in the everyday norm of living. This is because our heavenly union with Christ is to have a positive earthly affect on our lives. It should lead us to put off the old person and put on the new person that we are in the risen Christ. By realizing our identification with Christ and acting upon it, our *condition*

should be made to agree with out *position*. Thus, holiness is the outcome.

Someone wrote these words concerning the believer experiencing daily victory in the risen Christ of Heaven.

“There is no glory halo  
Round his devoted head,  
No luster, marks of sacred path  
In which his footsteps tread.

But holiness is graven  
Upon his thoughtful brow,  
And all his steps are ordered  
In the light of heaven e’en now.

For he doth live in touch with heaven  
A life of faith and prayer;  
His hope, his purposes and his all,  
His life is centered there.”

The ideal that our life is “hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3) is truly thrilling. This statement implies supply, safety and secrecy. First, our union with Christ in God in Heaven supplies us with everything that we need for life and victory. H. C. G. Moule writes this concerning our hidden life with Jesus Christ in Heaven and states: “There it lies, and there it lives; and so if you would live it out, using this wonderful life-power for spiritual triumph and service here on earth, you must go evermore to find it there; you must ‘seek’ it; you must ‘with him continually dwell’, in steadfast recollection, simplest reliance, and ceaseless secret reception of the divine supply.”

Second, the fact that our life is “hid with Christ in God” means that we are safe and secure in Jesus Christ, who is the eternal God. We have a double safety and we have nothing to fear. Nothing! What security! What safety! Third, this statement suggests that there is also a secrecy about our life that we possess in Christ, which the unsaved cannot understand. The idea of concealment may be in the writer’s mind. Our life is hid and therefore unseen by man. Our life in Jesus Christ is hidden to the understanding of the unsaved. Some of the

outward effects can be seen but the understanding about the believer's union with Christ is lacking.

Those outside of Christ fail to understand the glories and blessings of living in a close relationship with Christ. They do not understand what a believer experiences with Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2:14). The world does not comprehend the believer's spiritual life. Men do not understand us. They think it is strange that we do not live like they do. They do not comprehend our thoughts, our motives, or our ways ("therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" – 1 John 3:1). The real separation from the world lies in the fact that the world does not understand, but rather misunderstands the believer. Today there is secrecy about the Christian life. But someday there will be a visible display of their true spiritual condition (vs. 4) when Jesus returns to earth in His Second Coming. It's then that believer's will be openly displayed to the world that they are Christ's children.

Each believer should keep their mind on the heavenly Christ for its through Christ we have a heavenly pattern for life, a heavenly power for life, a heavenly program for life, and a heavenly prospect for life. The point is this. I have everything going for me both now and throughout eternity! Psychology can't add anything to what Christ has done for me and is doing for me and is going to do for me!! I have everything!! Because of this I should concentrate on the eternal and not the temporal by focusing on the heavenly Christ and the victory, power, and virtues that flow forth from Him. As the living vine, Christ lives out His life through the branches, which are the lives of individual believers (John 15:1-5). Our link or union with Jesus Christ is likened to the analogy of a vine providing all the nourishment and provision that is needed for the branches to survive. As the vine (source of nourishment and blessing), Jesus Christ provides everything for the Christian life. The answer to it all is Christ! It's Christ not psychological solutions; it's life and completeness in the risen Christ - not cults.

John Phillips says:

"That is the supreme fact, the great liberating truth before the blazing light of which all cultic teaching dissolves like shadows before the rising sun."

A cult came to my door one day and was trying to offer me something! I told Him that I have everything that I need in Jesus Christ! What can you offer me that Jesus has not already given me!! He was somewhat puzzled by my response. Dear friend, we are complete in Him, we are filled up and overflowing! We have full measure, complete sufficiency, and total safety. I have been "quickenened together with him" (Col. 2:13) and share His life today. Out of this new union with the risen Lord I have joy, peace, victory, and eternal blessing beyond measure. I have everything! I have everything! And you can't add anything to everything! **Our union with Christ emphasizes where we are ("in heavenly places in Christ" – Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:3) and what we have ("all spiritual blessings" – Eph. 1:3) and who we are (a new creation in Christ – 2 Cor. 5:17).**

Recently while reading J. Sidlow Baxter, I came across this statement. "Far too many Christians live their life on the battery system." He went on to explain that as a boy he had ridden on battery driven street cars. When the battery was charged all was well; but when it went dead, so was the street car. Baxter goes on to make this comparison: There are Christian believers who seem to run their spiritual life and service on that system. They go to a convention on the deeper life and when they return they are altogether different, for three weeks. Or they read some powerful Christian biography and as they close the book they say, "Now my life will never be the same." Nor is it, for three weeks. Some Christians go from crisis to crisis, convention to convention, seminar to seminar, book to book, but have a lot of dead spots in between. They seem to rely on these experiences rather than on Christ.

*Our union with Christ means that God places us in a spiritual oneness with Christ's person and work. As a result, we receive a new position and power with the living Christ whereby the old bondage to Satan and the fear of Satan has been broken in our lives (Luke 11:21-22; Heb. 2:14-15). Satan wants us to think that we are defenseless in light of his awesome power. But we must know the Biblical basis for our invincible position that we have in Christ. We must claim our union in Christ. All of Christ's victory over sin and Satan has become ours in Christ. And since we are in Christ we can communicate with His life on a daily basis (Rom. 6:8), experience our*



living union with Him, and claim our position of victory in Him – the risen Christ.

“Tis done! The great transaction’s done.  
I am my Lord’s and He is mine!”

Miles Stanford has written:

“We take our position, not by attempting to get into it, but simply by seeing that we are already positioned in the Lord Jesus. We abide in Him by resting in the fact. We have been in this risen position ever since our new birth. As we come to realize this truth and to ‘stand in our standing’ in Him, we begin to experience the daily benefits of our life that is hid with Christ in God. Our attitude becomes, ‘I see my position in the Lord Jesus, and I abide there; I rest in Him, not only as my Savior, but as my life.’ Faith in our position will bring growth in our condition.”

Jesus said in John 17:23 – “I in them.” The believer is said to be in Christ and Christ in the believer. This speaks of close spiritual intimacy and vitality of life (John 15:5). With my spiritual union with Christ I can rely upon His daily power to help me (Rom. 8:1-2; 2 Cor. 2:14; 5:17; Gal. 2:20). Because we have a spiritual link with Christ and possess this new position in the Lord we can claim our victory. This is because we actually share His resurrection life and power which is called “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (Eph. 1:19). I repeat for emphasis. Satan wants us to think that we are defenseless in light of his awesome power. But we must know the Biblical basis for our invincible position that we have in Christ. We must claim the victorious inheritance we have (Joshua 1:2-3) through our union and position of victory with Christ in the heavenlies.

Jesus has been raised as the great Victor (Eph. 1:20-22) above every power in the created universe! Everything is under His feet even as we speak! He is the sovereign power and potentate and King of Kings and Lord of Lords and will someday return to demonstrate that He is Lord! The exalted position of Christ suggests that He is the great Victor over death, hell and the grave, and every force that tried to keep Him in hell. Everything is under His feet! And since we are in Christ (our position) and are tied to His life (union) we too can claim

His victory. In short, this means that in Christ we can also claim to be a victor over every wicked foe in the universe! If they are under His feet they are also under our feet since we have a position in Christ and are tied to Him up yonder in Glory!

In his great spiritual allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan paints a word picture of a man "who looked no way but downward." This poor creature was groveling on his knees in the dirt and filth, working constantly with a rake, trying to unearth some choice jewel that would enrich his life. All the while a bright diadem of great worth was in reach just above him. The tragedy of it all is summarized by Bunyan in these words, "There stood One over his head with a celestial crown in His hand, and proffered him that crown for his muck rake; but the man never looked up as he continued gathering to himself the straw, the small sticks, and the dust of the floor!" In a similar way Christians can look downward instead of looking upward and remembering where their victory lies. The victorious crown is ours in our great Victor Christ. We don't have to remain stuck in the mud of worldly defeat and despair.

In *Philippians 2:9-14* Christ is seen to be above all and His name stands for the highest authority figure in the entire universe. You can't get any higher than this!! Jesus Christ has complete authority over the hordes of hell and every evil force in the world. He has defeated every foe upon the cross and then rose again to prove that He was and always will be the Mighty Victor. Thus, the believer's spiritual union, position, or standing that they have with Jesus Christ in Heaven guarantees that they too have authority and victory over the devil and this evil world. Believers are not only told to look up but we must also learn to look down! ***We must not only keep looking up (Luke 21:28) but also keep looking down!***

An old tract called "The Seven Together" summarizes the completeness of our union with Christ. It says we are:

- (1) crucified together with Christ (*Gal. 2:20*);
- (2) dead together with Christ (*Col. 2:20*);
- (3) buried together with Christ (*Rom. 6:4*);
- (4) made alive together with Christ (*Eph. 2:5*);
- (5) raised together with Christ (*Col. 3:1*);

- (6) sufferers together with Christ (Rom. 8:17);
- (7) glorified together with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

Because of our spiritual union with Christ in His death and resurrection the believer shares in Christ's victory over sin (Rom. 6) and Satan (Col. 2:15). It must be restated for clarity. *To be in Christ means that we actually share in all of Christ's victory over sin and Satan.* Victory belongs to us through our spiritual tie with Christ in His death and resurrection. We can claim our participation with the death of Christ as the ground of our victory and stay close to the cross. The cross and the blood of Jesus Christ is a great threat to Satan and His kingdom (Rev. 12:11). Through our resurrection with Christ we can claim His daily power for present victory (Phil. 3:10 – "the power of his resurrection"). Thus, union with Christ speaks of our sharing in Christ's victory over Satan and also sharing His present day power so that we can live unto God. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Miles Stanford again writes:

"We must always remember the power that we have because we have a union with the Victor, Jesus Christ, who defeated Satan and how we now share in His powerful life on a daily and moment-by-moment basis (Gal. 2:20). We should not have an inadequate concept of our Biblical union with Christ and position in Christ. We must know that "we are in him" (1 John 5:20) and claim the victory we have through our union with Christ (Rom. 8:35-39 – "We are more than conquerors')."

Psalm 91:1-7 is a wonderful promise of victory through God's daily strength and assistance: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day; *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee."

## Authority and Victory

### *Authority in Christ*

There is another truth that focuses on our union with Christ, which emphasizes the authority each believer has over Satan. The importance of this truth cannot be overestimated and must be dealt with separately. Christ ascended back to the Father after He arose from the grave. Christ is seated above every wicked spirit as the mighty Victor and because of our union with the ascended Christ we share in His position of authority and victory in Heaven over Satan and all His demon forces – “far above all principality (rule), and power (authority), and might, and dominion, and every name that is named” (even Satan - Eph. 1:19-23). The believer is in the heavenlies with Christ! And it’s here in Christ that he takes his stand of authority over Satan and all his demonic hordes. One writer said: “Satan, along with all of his wicked spirits, all the hosts of darkness, are already – this very moment – under your feet!” What a victory!

“I’m in the heavenlies in Christ,  
I’m in the heavenlies in Christ,  
The place of power and prayer  
In Christ I’m seated there,  
I’m in the heavenlies in Christ.”

*The heavenlies is a place or residency where Christ dwells but it is also a spiritual position from where God’s people derive their spiritual authority over Satan. Our spiritual identity with Christ’s authority gives us, as children of God, the authority to repel the enemy’s attacks. God’s people are seated with Christ in the heavenly sphere and share in His present victory and authority over Satan (Eph. 1:3; 2:6; Col. 2:10). Because of our ascension with Christ Satan is a defeated foe under Christ’s feet and our feet as well since we are spiritually united with Christ (Eph. 1:22 – “And hath put all things under his feet”).*

Instead of looking up, we must actually remember to look down from the place of victory, which we possess with Christ in Glory. Therefore, we can deal with Satan and his demons on the basis of Christ’

delegated authority. 1 Peter 3:22 echoes the same truth when speaking about Christ: “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.” Did you catch that? All spiritual authorities (including Satan) are made subject to Christ. Christ has full authority over the entire spirit world and it is proven by His ascension into Heaven. But lest we forget we must remember that we are there with Christ sharing in His present victory and authority over the entire spirit world. This means that Satan has no power, no rights, and no authority over the believer in Christ! In the realm of our daily living Satan should no longer have authority over our lives as Christians.

We must stand firmly on the territory that Christ has already conquered (Eph. 6:14). Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension brought total defeat to Satan. *Satan and his cohorts have no choice but to retreat when we insist upon our rights as God’s children.* Our responsibility is to confess our sins (1 John 1:9) and keep our accounts current with God. We must stand on the promises of the Word (2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:20) and wear the armor of God (Eph. 6:13-20). Then we must boldly pray while exercising our victorious authority over the enemy. Michael the archangel realized the Lord’s authority over Satan when saying, “The Lord rebuke you” (Jude 9). It’s true that believers in Christ are “far above” all created beings (Eph. 1:21). This means we possess authority over the enemy.

Nevertheless, how we exercise this God-given authority is important. Like Michael the archangel we must remember that Satan is a powerful being that cannot be shoved around with some kind of magical words. We must remember that our authority is based upon our position in Christ and we can act boldly only as we are dependent upon Christ and pray in the authority of His name. In other words, we experience our victory and authority that we have in Christ by claiming Christ’s power and provision through prayer. Our authority over Satan is experienced in a daily and practical manner as we go about communicating with the Lord Jesus and claiming our victory in Christ through wearing the armor and through aggressive prayer.

“Satan cannot touch my heart  
While I’m living in the glory;  
This disarms each fiery dart,

Living in the glory of the Lord.

Yes, I'm living in the glory  
As He promised in His word;  
I am dwelling in the heavenlies,  
Living in the glory of the Lord."

### *Apostolic Authority*

We must understand that the authority which believers have over Satan today is not the same as the apostolic authority, which Jesus gave to His 70 disciples and then to the twelve while they were living on earth. First, we must remember that believers today are not given the same promise or immunity from death as Christ's earthly disciples (Luke 10:19). If you step on a scorpion today, you are on your own! The mission of the 12 disciples Jesus chose, who were sent north, and the 70 disciples, who were sent south, was very similar. They were originally to convince Israel that Jesus was the Messiah and prepare Israel to accept the Messiah when He came into their dwelling places (Matt. 10:6-8). The miracles they performed should have convinced the people that Jesus was the Messiah who gave them these powers. Please notice that they were to even "raise the dead" (Matt. 10:8). This is more irrefutable evidence that the ministry and office of the disciples of Jesus was only temporary. Who can heal everyone they come in contact with today and who can raise the dead? Are there any who would dare take the challenge?

Second, believers living today are not given the same earthly mandate to move about, cast out demons, and attempt to produce the physically miraculous in order to overcome Satan's kingdom as were the seventy and the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:1; Mark 16:20; Luke 10:1, 17; Acts 5:15-16). *In other words, there is no apostolic transferal of authority to Christians today.* To say that there is a transferal of this same apostolic authority over the enemy today is to turn a blind eye to the inability of modern faith-healers (so-called) to supernaturally heal all people of every disease and raise the dead. We must come to the Biblical and logical conclusion that the miraculous abilities of exorcism over the demonic powers of the enemy and healing people from satanically inflicted illnesses were

gifts given to the 70 disciples of Jesus and to His twelve chosen apostles and Paul the apostle (1 Cor. 15:8-9).

We must understand that the apostles and prophets (Eph. 4:11) mentioned in Scripture are referring to a select group of individuals that Jesus personally chose and gifted to launch the church. They initially established churches and elders to begin the New Testament Church era. They built a foundational Scriptural base for future church ministry and life (Eph. 2:20). The apostles and prophets were unique men who had a special supernatural ministry among people that was for a limited time (1 Cor. 13:10). Their miraculous powers were used as authenticating signs (sign gifts) to aid first century Christians in believing the message of the apostles, prior to the completion of Scripture (1 Cor. 13:10).

The apostles would eventually give out New Testament truth (Acts 2:42; Eph. 2:20) and they needed miraculous *sign gifts* to prove the authenticity of themselves and their messages (Mark 16:18 – “confirming the word with signs”). But who can claim the same protective gift as these men possessed? If you step on a rattlesnake or drink strychnine you are on your own today! These special protective promises given to these men along with their supernatural gifts of healing, raising the dead, and casting out demons came together in a package. If they possessed one of these abilities, they would certainly possess them all. The miraculous gifts they had and the miracles they performed proved that the apostles were God’s true messengers and that their messages were directly from God (see 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4).

William McRae said:

“As the Scriptures in the apostolic age (the Old Testament) required no miraculous confirmation, so the Scriptures in our day (the Old and New Testaments) do not require it.”

In other words, God is not using people as instruments as His appointed channels to accomplish the miraculous today such as healing other people, raising the dead, or defeating Satan’s kingdom by casting out demons. This is because God must no longer confirm His Word through the use of miraculous gifts.

Deliverance ministers and many others today claim that they have the same abilities that the apostles had over demons. But if this were true they also should be able to heal everybody as the apostles did and even raise the dead! Are there any takers? It's clear that these gifts are no longer in the church since there is no more need to authenticate any more revelatory truth (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19). Outside the original apostles commissioned by our Lord (Matt. 10:1), the close associates commissioned by the original apostles (Acts 6:8 - Stephen; 8:5-7 - Philip 14:1-3; 15:12 - Barnabas), and Paul (Acts 19:11-12), we never see any other people delegated by God to perform miracles to overcome Satan's kingdom of darkness. In other words, we never see these gifts being used by others in the churches or for special ministry that was designed to overcome Satan's kingdom as deliverance ministries claim today.

The "gifts of healing" and "the working of miracles" or more literally "powers" (1 Cor. 12:9-10) for the most part were overlapping gifts given to the apostles and their close associates during the infant days of church ministry. Many times healing accompanied exorcism or the casting out of demons since the people who were possessed by demons were inflicted with disease and sickness (Matt. 4:24; 8:16; Luke 8:36; Acts 5:16). Therefore, it was necessary for God's chosen apostles to have both these credential sign gifts - the gifts of healing and the working of miracles or powers (casting out demons). We must also remember that those apostles who cast out demons healed the sick of every kind of disease even with their passing shadow (Acts 5:15-16). Furthermore, they also raised the dead (Acts 9:40; 20:9-12). This should be convincing and irreversible evidence to us that these special gifts of healing and power (casting out demons), which exercised authority over the enemy, are no longer in the church today. *These miraculous gifts over Satan's kingdom were used for a special temporary arrangement to authenticate the early apostles and their messages prior to the finalization of Scripture.*

Paul clearly elaborates that the early sign gifts would no longer have any purpose in the future church after the completion of Scriptures (see 1 Cor. 13:8-12 - "that which is in part shall be done away" and "put away childish things"). Hebrew 2:3-4 indicates that the generation of Jewish believers, who were given the epistle of Hebrews, had already witnessed the apostolic sign gifts ("was



confirmed unto us by them”), which acted as a verification of truth before the Scriptures were canonized. In other words, these credential signs of miraculous abilities of healing and casting out demons were already seen as having historical fulfillment and were no longer prevalent during the later period of first century Christianity. These miraculous gifts used against Satan’s kingdom in the infant church period would vanish away and no longer be used in the future church. Both Biblical and visual evidence demands that these gifts have served their purpose and are no longer usable against the enemy.

Today deliverance experts say that we should “take authority in Jesus’ name” but this type of teaching is misleading since believers are not commanded to talk to demons, give them orders, cast them out of people’s lives, and evict them from territories. Deliverance ministers and many others today claim that they have the same powers and abilities that the apostles had over demons. However, only Christ and His apostles had the *special status of authority* given to perform miraculous feats against Satan’s kingdom. They were privileged with the supernatural ability to expel demons and diseases from people (Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1-2; 10:19) as they spoke on God’s behalf (2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4). No Christian today has this same delegated authority over demons and disease. *Taking authority over demonic spirits as Jesus and the apostles did is not a Biblical command for believers today.* Our method for dealing with Satan as set forth in the epistles is to resist him by standing firm in the faith (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

The Bible teaches we must endure hardships as soldiers of Christ (2 Tim. 2:3-4) which means we cannot always erase the Satanic hardships that brush our lives by voicing our authority over the realm of Satan. *We are victors in Christ but we are not eliminators of hardships and struggles that come through satanic attacks.* Believers cannot always ward off the attacks of Satan which come through people and circumstances (2 Cor. 11:24-26; Gal. 6:17; 1 Thess. 2:18). In 1 Tim. 1:18-19 we are simply told to “war a good warfare” (do battle with evil) by “holding faith” (upholding sound doctrine) and a “good conscience” (living a holy life free from sin). We are told to put on the armor of God and pray in order to defeat Satan’s temptations over our lives (Eph. 6:11-18).

Nowhere are we told to speak to, command, or cast out demons. Only the apostles and their close associates had the temporary gifts of healing and miracles were commissioned to do the miraculous. New Testament believers are told to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12) which speaks of a constant struggle to hold forth sound doctrine in the midst of satanic lies and the attacks of doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1). The concept that we can kick Satan around and claim complete deliverance and freedom from all of his evil attempts to bring hardships into our lives does not square with Scripture and even the lives of the apostles.

### *God’s Authority- Territorial Spirits?*

We must also remember that only God has unlimited authority over Satan. We must distinguish between our authority and God’s authority. This means that we cannot demand multitudes of demons to leave cities and claim cities free from demons. This is ludicrous. The so-called deliverance ministries of today claim that there are territorial spirits all over the world, which need to be evicted by Christians in order to restore peace and purity. They base this finding on Daniel 10:13 and 20 where Daniel spoke of the demonic “prince of Persia” and the evil “prince of Greece.” The Scripture also speaks about “the rulers of darkness” (Eph. 6:12) or demonic world rulers. This may convey the thought of demons being infiltrated within the political structures of the world and how they are influencing political decisions behind the scenes. The Old Testament speaks about the “gods of Egypt” (Ex. 12:12) or the idols of nations, which is a sign of the influence of demonism (Ps. 96:5; 1 Cor. 10:19-20). The demonic influence in the political scene cannot be argued. But the assumption that evil spirits are seated in all regions of the world and have certain geographical locations that they reside in order to tempt world rulers cannot be stated with certainty. Granted, it would seem that certain demons do influence the powers of world governments in some ways but this is all that we know. No detailed territorial plan is specifically revealed in the Scripture and we don’t want to assume things that are not clearly defined in Scripture.

One thing is for sure. The apostle Paul did not associate the powers of darkness with any specific country or geographic location or area

in his day (Eph. 6:12). Neither did he engage in the type of spiritual warfare embraced today by modern-day deliverance ministries. Nowhere do we find Paul the apostle or any other believer confronting and rebuking territorial spirits or geographical demons. Nowhere in God's Word does it tell Christians to that we are to move about commanding demons to give up any territory. *In fact, there is no approach given in the New Testament epistles, which are directed for church living, which entails directly confronting demons and exorcisms in order to live victoriously.* This is because living victorious is not a matter of technique but of living spiritually dependent upon God and exhibiting Christian character. God's victorious plan is to resist the devil (James 4:7) – not evict Satan from geographical areas. This type of emphasis today is folly – not faith.

God has not commanded the church to drive around the freeways and with hocus-pocus words to evict Satan from towns and cities before evangelizing and doing God's work. There are several reasons for this conclusion. First, we must remember that the Great Commission involves going into all the world "to preach the gospel" – not spy out territorial demons and try to evict them. God has not commissioned His church to invent strategies to speak to demons and learn techniques for exorcising demons. Where do you find such a command as this in the Great Commission or the epistles, which give direction for church life and ministry today? Where do we find that believers should attend spiritual warfare bootcamps to learn how to evict Satan and his demons from vast territories and the lives of people?

Second, God's people are not to be on the offensive approach when it comes to doing battle with Satan but the defensive approach (Eph. 6:11,13,14). We are told to stand against the devil (Eph. 6:11), resist the devil (Jam. 4:7), love not the world (1 John 2:15) and to not let sin reign in our mortal bodies (Rom. 6:12). These are all defensive actions that can bring decisive victory into our lives. The offensive approach is not encouraged in the Bible where people are called upon to bind the devil or demand that he and his demons do certain things.

The Scriptures never tell Christians to do this. Where in the New Testament epistles is this kind of offensive formula promoted for daily

victory? Furthermore, we must remember that there is no apostolic transferal of authority to the believer today, which involves commanding demons to leave people and performing miraculous feats over the lives of people. *You will not find in the New Testament epistles where Christians are commanded to have a fixation or complex with demonic powers whereby instructions are given to seek out, speak to, deride, and cast out demons.* One will look in vain in the epistles (church truth) to find such commands.

Thomas Ice wrote: "It appears that for a creature to go on the offensive against Satan is to usurp a divine prerogative reserved for God alone." Our posture should be one of trust and a defensive stand against the Evil One. The Bible does not tell us to attack Satan aggressively or search out demons to be cast out of people. *There is no assignment given in the Bible to go around and perform exorcisms of demons from geographical areas.* Not even the disciples had this assignment. They were simply promised authority over the enemy as they came in contact with him (Luke 10:17-19).

Today it's assumed that missionaries and God's people cannot have successful evangelism until evil spirits are evicted and driven out from geographical areas. But we must remind ourselves that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation and not the eviction of evil spirits (Rom. 1:16). Who ever heard of any disciple declaring the parts of the Roman Empire free of evil spirits? That would be like saying that Philadelphia or New York City is declared free of wicked spirits. This is a deceptive and false display of the believer's authority over Satan. The Scriptures never tell Christians to do this. However, the Bible does tell us to resist Satan (James 4:7) and oppose him with the armor of God when he attacks us (Eph. 6:10-18).

If the Evil One were totally under our power and authority, it would mean he could not work anywhere in this world. Even better, we could cast the devil into the abyss right now. The believer cannot demolish the kingdom of darkness and he cannot prescribe the boundaries of Satan's power. Even Paul could not do this (1 Thess. 2:18). Satan can at times limit our work according to God's sovereign limitations and we must accept this in the realm of God's providence. *It's one thing to claim victory over Satan in our own personal lives but it's another thing to prescribe the boundaries of Satan's work and*

*completely overcome his kingdom of darkness.* Remember that God in His providence still has plans for the devil to carry out (1 Tim. 4:1) and nobody is going to change those plans (Rev. 12:13).

There is another inaccurate and false display of the believer's authority over Satan. It involves the unbiblical offensive approach of believers moving about and claiming that they can bind Satan and his demons. This so-called authority ministry of today is based upon several verses (Matt. 12:29; 16:19; 18:18). In Matthew 12:29 Jesus is said to bind the strong man (Satan) which He would ultimately do by defeating him upon the cross. However, there may also be an allusion to binding Satan prior to the Millennial Kingdom (Matt. 12:28; Rev. 20:1-3). Nothing in this passage suggests that believers can bind Satan. Only God can bind Satan!

This is because only Jesus has the keys of authority to death and hades where Satan will be bound (Rev. 1:18). *We can resist Satan (James 4:7) but we cannot bind Satan.* To say that believers can is a misapplication and total misunderstanding of our authority in Christ. Furthermore, a look at the text in Matthew 16:19 has to do with the apostolic authority of being able to bind wrong teaching (neuter – “whatsoever” – not whomever) and has nothing to do with binding evil spirits. In other words, this is referring to judging false teaching that goes against the true Gospel message that Peter was going to share on Pentecost and then spread to the Gentile people.

Binding and loosing was a very familiar phrase to the Jews, for their rabbis often spoke of “binding and loosing” which means forbidding or permitting. In this case, Peter would “loose” or permit the Gospel message to be spread to the Gentile masses but any false message that contradicted the Gospel would be “bound” or forbidden and not take the place of the true Gospel message (Acts 15:1, 7-12). Our Lord's statement in Matthew 16:19 referred specifically to Peter possessing the keys of authority, as a trusted steward, to various groups of people (Jews in Acts 2; Samaritans in Acts 8:14–17; Gentiles in Acts 10). The keys would open doors to share the Gospel message to lost people. Wherever Peter permitted the true message of the Gospel to be spread would indicate that it was already ordained in Heaven. But those messages that contradicted Peter's

Gospel message would already be bound and forbidden in Heaven. This passage has nothing to do with binding demons.

In the Matthew 18:18 passage the neuter term “whatsoever” is once again used and refers to *disciplinary actions* and has nothing to do with demons. And once again in this passage binding refers to something that is not permitted; loosing refers to something that is permitted. As in 16:19, the tenses imply that what is loosed or bound on earth will have been determined already in heaven. Contextually, the binding and loosing has to do with *church discipline*. The apostles were given the authority to either “bind” (forbid) a sentence of discipline to be meted out on an individual or “loose” (permit) a certain measure of discipline to be meted out on a defiant person. In other words, this is a promise of divine direction for the apostles to exercise correct judgments in the area of church discipline (see Acts 5:1-11; 13:8-11; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20) in the original expansion of the church and the Gospel message and has nothing to do with binding demons.

The promise is then given that when two or three apostles decide (“agree”) on “anything,” which is related to the subject matter of carrying out disciplinary measures on earth, that it would have already been approved in Heaven (vss. 19-20). I might add that the false notion that claims two or three believers can agree on earth about any matter, such as demons being evicted from certain people, or seeing certain people healed of diseases, or agreeing that people will receive financial freedom and increase, is a false notion based upon a faulty interpretation of this text. The scope of “anything” is limited by the context and refers to matters revolving around the apostolic disciplinary process and pronouncement of judgments on false Gospel messages during the infant days of local church life and the original expansion of church ministry (Acts 15:24; Gal. 1:6-9).

In any event, the modern day demonic phraseology (binding demons of lust and cancer) is out-of-sync with the Biblical imagery revolving around binding. Why don’t they ever talk about loosing demons! After all, loosing was also part of the apostolic promise. The point is this. God has never given any person on earth the ability to bind Satan or demons. Even Jesus during His earthly ministry did not bind Satan when he tempted Him to sin! Jesus simply resisted him and won the

victory. Only God has the authority to bind Satan and will effectively perform the task someday (Rev. 20:1-3).

### *The Delegation of Authority*

This is not to say that we cannot pray that demons would depart from people and that people would be saved and healed of physical afflictions (mental, physical, and spiritual) related to demonic control. How do we assist people who are possessed by demons today? Robert Lightner has made a helpful statement: "It is bold beyond our prerogative to demand that God or Satan do anything. It is far better for us to beseech God on the merit of Christ's finished work to grant deliverance from Satan and his cohorts." When it comes to seeing people delivered from demonic possession and intrusion into their lives God's people must follow the pattern of prayer and fasting for demonically oppressed people (Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:23).

It would seem that God can and does, according to His own sovereign plan, extend His gracious hand of blessing to many who are demonically influenced and possessed by demons, by releasing many people from the devil's grip in answer to the prayers of His people (James 5:16). When blessing does come it's because of the prayers of God's people being answered and not because of the power of some would-be deliverance minister. Prayer is the key since there are no apostles today who have the gift of miracles, which pertained to exorcism or the casting out of demons.

As previously stated, the miraculous ability to perform miracles and exercise power over the enemy in order to thwart Satan's kingdom was only given to the apostles and not to the average Christian (1 Cor. 12:9-10). These were special and very selective gifts given to a relatively chosen few. This means that our earthly authority over Satan does not involve the same mandate and program that was given to the original band of apostles and earthly disciples. ***The way God delegates His authority to believers today has changed.*** It could be stated this way. God's people within their Christian lives still have complete authority and victory over Satan in the heavenly or spiritual realm. This authority pertains to victorious daily living over the enemy. But the outworking of this spiritual authority over Satan no longer applies to God's people in the same earthly manner as it did to

the original apostles, which involved the supernatural and miraculous abilities to overcome Satan's kingdom. It has been remarked that there is a difference between apostolic *example* and apostolic *precepts*. We are not obligated to do all that the apostles *did*, but we are most certainly obligated to obey all that they *taught*.

We believe God's people today do have authority over Satan's kingdom but not in the same way the early band of apostles did. All efforts to duplicate the miraculous abilities of apostolic authority over Satan's kingdom of darkness are a *misapplication* of the believer's authority over Satan. God has changed the way this authority is delegated. But in a positional and practical sense within the Christian experience and life we still do have "all power over the enemy" (Luke 10:19) and "the devils are subject unto us through thy name" (Luke 10:17) in our daily lives and battles with Satan since we are in Christ. If earthly believers had authority over Satan it must be true of heavenly believers who are in Christ.

### *Spiritual Authority & Warfare God's Way*

Despite the claims today no believer living has any direct authority to command demons to obey them or demand that demons leave people. This power was given to the apostles (Mark 3:15; 2 Cor. 12:12) who were direct eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord (Acts. 1:22). As an apostle they also possessed the apostolic gifts of healing and were able to heal all people all the time of every disease and even raise the dead. Of course, no person can make this claim today. The spiritual battle against Satan is now fought with the spiritual armor and weapons discussed in Ephesians 6:10-18. And today God uses prayer to deliver people from the power of demons who may be inflicting them. Because of this the believer in Christ should never attempt to abuse God's authority by trying to order Satan around like some little child or thinking that they can kick Satan around like a plastic ball. This is a dangerous allusion.

Satan is a powerful being and is no match for cheap talk and self-determination. As noted above, even Michael the great archangel could not treat Satan like this or rebuke Satan on his own power without a special commission from God's throne (Jude 9). All efforts to bind Satan, expel him from people's lives through exorcisms, and



prevent his kingdom of darkness from spreading throughout the world (dominion theology) is a misunderstanding of our spiritual authority over Satan. Nor does this aggressive expression or approach to spiritual authority or warfare line up with the New Testament teaching concerning spiritual warfare, which is outlined in the epistles.

Spiritual warfare or waging battle against Satan God's way (Eph. 6:12) is accomplished by each Christian personally resisting the devil (James 4:7) on the basis of faith (1 Pet. 5:9 – "whom resist steadfast in the faith"). This is done through claiming God's armor (Eph. 6:10-20), which includes praying to God and relying on His inworking power or grace (Eph. 6:10; James 4:6). Our lives and bodies must be fully submitted or yielded to God (James 4:7) and clean before the Lord through repentance (James 4:8-9). Taking back lost ground is a necessary part in our time of submission and prayer as we yield to God (Eph. 4:27). This is the natural outcome of genuine repentance. When the believer follows these simple commands or carries out his responsibilities, God will draw near to him and the devil will flee from him (James 4:7-8).

You will note that there is no call to bind Satan or even to speak to him. Nor can some other person, who is a specialist in a deliverance ministry, submit for you and present you with victory. This is a personal matter and responsibility for every child of God. Each one of us is told to simply stand against the devil. Spiritual warfare does not involve seeking out Satan, binding Satan, rebuking or talking to Satan, and calling demons by name (spirit of cancer, arthritis, nicotine) as enthusiasts preach and practice today. No such authority has been given to us. Rather, spiritual warfare, as outlined for the saints in the epistles, involves keeping our lives pure and prepared for battle so we can effectively resist Satan by faith in the strength of God's power and the truth of His Word. Our responsibility is to resist or stand against the Evil One and obey God's pattern for spiritual deliverance. This is God's way for His children to engage in spiritual warfare today and is what brings divine deliverance.

Then too, the day-to-day walk of victory does not involve speaking forth mystical messages to God in some unknown tongue, nor does it revolve around reaching a certain height or plateau of emotionalism or passing through some extra-scriptural experience (second

blessing, trances, visions, laughing in the Spirit). Rather, the believer's victory consists of a daily walk and dependency upon the Spirit's power and provision (Gal. 5:25) and reliance upon the life of Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20). He must appropriate the person and power of Jesus Christ to his life (Rom. 13:14 – "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ"). The key words connected to spiritual warfare and victory would then be: Resisting (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9), armor of God (Eph. 6:1-10), prayer (Matt. 26:41), cleansing and repentance (James 4:8-9), submission and yielding (James 4:7; Rom. 6:13), the truth of God's Word (Matt. 4:1-11; John 15:4), walking in the light of God's holiness or keeping our lives pure (1 John 1:7), the filling or control of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16, 25), abiding in Christ (John 15:4) or maintain fellowship with Him so the Lord can work with our lives, reliance upon Christ's person and power (Eph. 6:10; Rom. 13:14; Gal. 2:20), and the inworkign of God's grace (James 4:6; Eph. 1:19; 3:20).

These are things that only you can do and nobody can do them for you – no deliverance minister, no psychologist, no counselor. Furthermore, in God's plan for spiritual warfare there is no mention of binding Satan, casting out demons, speaking in tongues, speaking to the devil, calling out the names of demons, etc. Living the victorious Christian life is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and His power, which is available to each one of as believers. Don't be caught up in fanaticism and some kind of false display of spiritual warfare and authority over the enemy. Instead, follow God's plan for spiritual warfare against the enemy and live victoriously in God's plan and provision. It works!

Never try to fight Satan in your own way and according to your own plan. Resist him the way Jesus did, with the Word of God (Matt. 4:1–11). Furthermore, let me give you an added word of caution. *Never discuss things with Satan or his evil associates.* Don't talk to Satan in the time of battle. Eve made this mistake and we all know the sad consequences. We do not have the same authority to address Satan and his demons as Jesus did (Matt. 16:23; Mark 5:8; 9:25); nor is talking to Satan part of God's plan, or blueprint for victory, as outlined in the New Testament epistles. There is a vast difference between talking to God and talking to Satan. God wants us to walk in the Spirits power instead of running around telling the devil what to do.

As we pray in the time of battle pray to God for strength and place your attention on the Victor instead of the enemy. Never see Satan without seeing God! In the time of prayer, we can thank God for the authority that we do possess over Satan in Christ. We can tell God that we are claiming this authority as our own and believing at this very moment for Satan's attempts to be defeated and thwarted in our own personal lives. As we prayerfully do battle with Satan a good old "Thus saith the Lord" is not out of order. Even the triumphant singing of God's truth (Col. 3:16) can aid us in the time of battle, as we prayerfully exercise personal faith in Christ's power and provision.

Likewise, a victorious proclamation of thanks for the Savior's victory over Satan can be of great help in ridding our lives of Satan's temptations and harassments. This kind of expression is not abusing our present-day authority. It is a natural and necessary part of spiritual warfare. *Remember that we deal with Satan and all spiritual wickedness on the basis of our authority in Christ.* Let us never forget our position in Christ. This is the ground of our victory. It is the place of all authority and victory. Demonic forces and the world of darkness cringe when Christians exercise their spiritual authority in Christ through faith and prayer. Believers do have authority over satanic forces that are waging war against their lives. Let us get our heads out of the sand and reclaim any surrendered ground we have given to the enemy.

### *Demon Possession?*

Most proponents of the modern day spiritual warfare movement believe and teach that a genuine Christian can be demon possessed or spatially indwell a believer when they do not avail themselves to their spiritual authority over Satan and the underworld. The demon experts use the term demonization (emphasizing control) over the words demon possession (emphasizing ownership). This is because they want to teach that a believer can still be owned by God but demonized or controlled by demons that specially live within a Christian. They push the conclusion that a blood bought believer can be spatially indwelt, completely controlled, overtaken, and owned by a demon (Luke 22:3). However, the Biblical data does not support such a conclusion. Clinical observations and subjective experiences, which are used to support this finding, take precedence over the truth

and finality of Scripture and must not be used as a way to support that God's people can be demon possessed. God's Word must be the only reliable source or truth about Satan and demons – not clinical data and experiences.

First, the New Testament Scriptures never warn believers about the possibility of being demon possessed. Second, the New Testament epistles never instruct believers to cast out demons from other Christians. In fact, only Christ and the apostles cast out demons and in every instance the demon-possessed people were unbelievers. Third, Satan is always seen to influence and attack believers on the outside – not from the inside (Eph. 6:12-17; 1 Pet. 5:8; James 4:7). Fourth, the collective teaching of Scripture tells us that demons can never indwell or spatially inhabit a Christian and take full control over their bodies. The Holy Spirit could never cohabit with demons (1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:15-16).

The believer's body is always said to be the place of the Holy Spirit and not demons. God has also delivered His people from the domain of darkness (Col. 1:13; Heb. 2:14-15; Luke 4:18; Acts 26:18). Salvation brings true protection and deliverance from Satan (Rom. 8:36-37; 1 John 2:13; 5:18). Satan and his hordes of demons are seen to be outside the believer in the world whereas God indwells the believer through the Spirit. 1 John 4:4 gives the promise, "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." These are glorious truths that must be affirmed. How one can claim these truths and yet believe that demons can indwell genuine believers and overtake their lives is paradoxical. God's people may be oppressed and obsessed by demons but not possessed by demons whereby evil spirits overtake their bodies and control them from within.

### **Riches and Victory**

Dearly beloved, remember *who* you are in Christ (a victor). Remember *where* you are in Christ (in the heavenlies – the place of spiritual authority). Remember *what* you have in Christ (1 Cor. 3:21-23 – "For all things are yours"). Don't live as a spiritual pauper. **You are richer than you think!** God's people have every spiritual blessing that we will ever need in Christ (Eph. 1:3 – "hath blessed us

with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ”; 2 Pet. 1:3 - “all things”). We don’t need any more blessings. What we need is discernment and understanding to know what we already have in Christ and apply these blessings to our lives through faith (1 John 5:4). We are complete in him (Col. 2:10 – “And ye are complete in him”).

“Complete in Thee!  
No more shall sin,  
Thy grace hath conquered, reign within;  
Thy voice shall bid the tempter flee,  
And I shall stand complete in Thee.”

***Only ignorance and unbelief can keep us bound to our former lifestyles.*** Nothing but unbelief, disobedience, or ignorance can keep us from experiencing liberty and victory over sin and Satan. *Too many of God’s people live beneath their privileges.* Let us reclaim our riches in Christ and win the battle over sin and Satan. As we pray we must know what our riches are and claim our spiritual treasures that we have in Christ such as union in Christ’s death and the defeat of sin (Rom. 6:6), union with the risen Christ and sharing His resurrection power – the same power that raised Him from the dead (Rom. 6:5, 8, 10; Phil. 3:10), righteousness, justification, redemption, sanctification, wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30), a peaceful standing before God (Rom. 5:1), total acceptance before God (Eph. 1:6), adoption and sonship (Gal. 5:5-6), love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Gal. 5:22-23), complete forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), the promises of God (2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Pet. 1:4); the nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4), access, fellowship with God, and the presence of God (Rom. 5:2; 1 John 1:7; Heb. 13:5), God’s unfailing love (Rom. 8:37-8-39), eternal life (John 3:16, 36; 6:47; 1 John 5:11-12), grace for living (2 Cor. 9:8; Heb. 4:16), intercession of Christ (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24), strength and power (Eph. 1:19; 6:10; 2 Pet. 1:3), authority over Satan and the world of darkness (Eph. 1:21), victory over temptation (1 Cor. 10:13) and Satan (Col. 1:13; 2:15; 1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 8:37). There is victory in Jesus, my Savior forever!

“I found something that money can't buy  
I found a goldmine beyond the blue sky.  
I found the land where I'll look when I die

I found the Lord rich man am I.  
I found the Lord that's too sweet to tell  
I found the faith that's known so well.  
I found the life that I'll live till I die  
I found the Lord rich man am I.”

### **Rescue and Victory**

Jesus said that he came “to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18). Galatians 1:4 says that Jesus died upon the cross bearing our sins so “that he might deliver us from this present evil world.” One purpose of Christ’s death is to rescue us from the present evil age, which is full of sin and wickedness, which is headed up by Satan. Those delivered had been within the grasp of an enemy. But because of Christ’s redemptive work upon the cross, believers have been delivered from the evil age and Satan’s power. This is something already accomplished. The aorist tense (effective aorist) of the word “deliver” speaks of an action that has occurred and which has continuing results. The stress of this word is on the ever-present reality of this deliverance that we possess today because of what Jesus accomplished upon the cross. Jesus has granted us deliverance through His saving work. The death of Christ is an emancipating and victorious message. It delivers believing sinners from the power of sin and the present world system just as certainly as it delivers them from eternal judgment to come.

“He breaks the pow’r of canceled sin,  
He sets the pris’ner free;  
His blood can make the foulest clean;  
His blood availed for me.”

Colossians 1:13 says, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Acts 26:18, “To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God...” I have come from the darkness to the light! This deliverance from the darkness of Satan’s kingdom and power is accomplished through Christ’s defeat of Satan upon the cross. 1 John 3:8 says, “... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

Hebrews 2:14 also states how this victory was achieved: "... "that through death he might destroy (render powerless – inactivate – put out of business) him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

We know that a strong man armed keeps his palace (Luke 11:20) but Satan (the strong man) was disarmed at Calvary. So Jesus says, "But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils" (Luke 11:22). Jesus is the stronger man! We have victory through the Lord. The believer has been rescued from Satan's gloomy castle or dungeon of darkness (Eph. 2:1-2). Charles Wesley wrote:

"Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free;  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee."

Man was created to have authority over the earth (Gen. 1:26; Heb. 2:7) but when Adam sinned the crown of authority slipped from man's head to Satan's. However, when Jesus died upon the cross he broke the authority Satan had over mankind, which consisted of the legal authority to keep man subject to spiritual death (separation from God), and under terrible bondage to sin (Eph. 2:1-3). The devil no longer has legal authority or jurisdiction over our lives as believers and we must no longer surrender ground to Satan and be subject to his ruling power (Eph. 4:27). Hebrews 2:14-15 states it this way: "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." *Jesus died upon the cross in order to destroy the devil in relationship to his power and authority over our lives and deliver us from his evil clutches!*

"The cross it standeth fast,  
Hallelujah! hallelujah!  
Defying ev'ry blast,  
Hallelujah! hallelujah!  
The winds of hell have blown,  
The world its hate hath shown,

Yet it is not overthrown,  
Hallelujah for the cross!”

Col. 2:15 proclaims, “*And having spoiled (disarmed) principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*” *Christ thoroughly defeated and disarmed Satan at the cross.* He took away the weapons and powers of Satan’s kingdom and marched triumphantly over all the wicked forces that were against our lives. We repeat what we said at the beginning. On the cross Jesus defeated Satan *strategically* in his attempt to keep man under the realm of his legal authority (Heb. 2:14), *spiritually* in that a large portion of people would be delivered from the power of his kingdom of spiritual darkness (Col. 1:13; Heb. 2:15) and *eternally* since the devil’s doom is sealed in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10; Matt. 25:41).

Unbeknown to Satan and his demonic hordes the cross spelled their utter defeat (1 Cor. 2:8, “Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”). There may be a veiled reference to the spiritual entities of this age in 1 Corinthians 2:8). Both the Jewish and Gentile rulers of Christ’s day did not understand about the wisdom being displayed in the cross (Acts 2:22-23; 3:17) but neither did the demonic princes (rulers or authorities) of this age (Eph. 6:12; Col. 2:15) who influenced their decisions and actions. The mystery or sacred secret of God’s wisdom (“hidden wisdom” – 1 Cor. 2:7) was withheld from the demonic world proving that they are not omniscient as God.

In other words, the wisdom of the cross was veiled to the spiritual forces of wickedness and this is why they wanted Christ to die upon the cross. They did not understand what the outcome of Christ’s death would mean for their evil world of spiritual darkness. The cross was a shocking blow and defeat for “the princes of this world” (1 Cor. 2:6) for it was through the cross that they were stripped of their power over our lives (“come to nought” – 1 Cor. 2:6 and Heb. 2:14 - “destroy” - same Greek word).

In looking ahead to the victory of the cross Jesus said, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12:31). John 16:11, “Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” These statements about the devil, who is the ruler of



this evil system of darkness, actually remind us about Satan's stinging defeat at Calvary. There on the cross, Satan was judged. He was "cast out" or expelled, driven out of his place of dominion and authority over our lives. When Jesus died upon the cross as God, he provided a deathblow to the devil. On the cross, Jesus triumphed over the devil and his demonic soldiers by disarming them of their power against the believer's life. Christ's death provided the victorious ground for believers to stand upon in the day of temptation. Jesus gives the reassuring words in John 16:33, "... be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The seed of the woman has crushed the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15 – "It shall bruise they head").

"God rest you merry, gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay;  
Remember Christ our Saviour  
Was born on Christmas Day,  
To save us all from Satan's power  
When we were gone astray.  
O tidings of comfort and joy,  
Comfort and joy;  
O tidings of comfort and joy!"

The Belgian artist A. J. Wiertz, in his great painting entitled "The Triumph of Christ," beautifully portrays the victory Jesus won through His ignominious death. As you look at this famous canvas, you see the Savior hanging in shame on the cross. Yet from the crown of thorns on His head shine beams of heavenly light. Above Him glorious angels sound their trumps while sinister, evil figures flee away into the darkness. These evil figures depict the victory that Jesus had over the devil and demons when He died upon the cross.

1 John 2:14 gives to us the promise and assurance that we have overcome Satan: "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." We rejoice with Paul who said, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). *We must stand fast in the victorious liberty that we already have and possess in Christ. And we must reclaim*

surrendered ground if necessary. The enemy is always ready to get our eyes off of our spiritual inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Satan wants to rob us of our wealth in Christ.

### **Personal Choice and Victory**

The ball is in your court. It's your responsibility as a believer to claim your victorious inheritance in Christ. Victory is a choice. And each believer must make the right choice. Because the believer already shares in Christ's victory over sin and Satan, possesses God's inner power, and has authority over the enemy, he must claim what is rightfully His through the work and power of Christ. The believer does not have to ask or pray that the Lord will remove sinful tendencies in his life in order to give him victory.

Christians have been known to blame the Lord for their own sinning and lack of victory because the Lord has not taken certain sinful tendencies away from their lives. Of course, this becomes a way to push the blame on God for their own acts of sin (Gen. 3:12), which they choose to do (James 1:14 – "his own lust"; 2 Pet. 3:3 – "their own lusts" and Jude 18 – "their own ungodly lusts). *Satan does not figure into the picture in this text because James is emphasizing our person responsibility in the time of temptation.* The unholy trinity (the world – 1 John 2:15-17; the flesh (Gal. 5:16; the devil – 1 Pet. 5:8) usually work together but each believer is responsible for what he does.

The devil may use the forbidden fruit of the world to entice us (Gen. 3:5-6; Matt. 4:1-11) and seek to stimulate the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) but man is responsible for generating lust in his own heart. All sin finds its root in the flesh or fallen nature of man. And each believer says yes or no to the seed thoughts of lust and is responsible for actually forming lust in his heart. In short, you are responsible for your own actions. The devil did not make you do it! God holds us accountable for what we do (Numb. 32:23; Ps. 51:4; Luke 15:18 – "I have sinned").

Some believers actually blame God for not removing their drive to commit sinful acts and seem to suggest that it's God's fault that they live in defeat instead of victory. But blaming God for not removing the

old nature and lustful passions from within becomes an excuse for a believer to live in the defeat mode and keep sinning or walking after the flesh (Rom. 8:4). However, instead of putting the blame on God, the believer must hate his sin (Rom. 12:9), claim the victorious ground that he already has in Christ, and become obedient to what God tells him to do (2 Cor. 7:1- “cleanse yourselves”). In other words, since the victory over sin is already provided in Christ it is ours to claim and activate. We must by faith claim what Jesus has already given to us by hating our own fleshly sins and yielding to God who is our new Master (Rom. 6:11-13). *The way to victory is not praying for the removal of sin but claiming the victorious ground we already have over sin.* This is done by yielding out bodies to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13). We must reclaim our victorious ground that we have in Christ.

Let us not blame God for failing to remove our sinful desires. We must point the finger at ourselves and blame ourselves for loving our sin more than yielding to the victory we already possess in Christ. James 1:14 says that a man sins “when he is drawn away of his own lust.” Second Timothy 4:10 says, “Demas hath forsaken me having loved this present world.” And this is precisely why believers sin. They love the pleasures of the world system and want to sin (Heb. 11:25). No believer in Christ has to sin. They want to sin! They sin because they love the world (1 John 2:15) and want to conform to it (Rom. 12:2) as they give in to their own lust, which they have generated in their heart in the time of temptation. God’s people are not trapped in sin as they were in their unregenerate state under Satan’s bondage (Eph. 2:1-3). Rather, they choose to sin and love their sin more than the victory that they have through Christ. We desperately need to recover a holy hatred for sin today (Rom. 12:9 – “Abhor that which is evil”) and then claim our victorious ground in Christ.

“I want a principle within  
Of jealous, godly fear,  
A sensibility of sin,  
A pain to feel it near;  
I want the first approach to feel  
Of pride, or fond desire,  
To catch the wandering of my will,  
And quench the kindling fire.”

## The Way of Victory

In short, when claiming our victory in Christ we must follow the pattern for victory outlined in James 4:6-9. In a very clear fashion the way of victory is outlined in this passage of Scripture and consists of three life-transforming steps.

### *Cleansing and Fellowship*

This passage calls believers to prepare themselves for victory through a cleansing process of repentance and drawing near to God in communion and fellowship. James 4:8-9 says: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.” The pattern for victory that we need to follow would be to first cleanse ourselves and draw near to God. This is the preparatory step to all victory. There comes a time when we must have a complete change of mind and attitude (repentance) about our sin which results in heart-felt mourning over sin. A believer cannot be helped until he is ready to repent. Only the Holy Spirit can put the finger on sin and bring “godly sorrow that worketh repentance” (2 Cor. 7:10). *Repentance includes hatred toward sin and a willingness and commitment to let go of sin.* Repentance involves renouncing the work of the enemy in our lives and committing ourselves to Jesus Christ. Without repentance nothing of any lasting value will happen. Then, after repentance takes place, the nearness or close communion and fellowship with the Lord can be experienced.

“Close to Thee, close to Thee,  
Close to Thee, close to Thee,  
All along my pilgrimage journey,  
Saviour, let me walk with Thee.”

The way that each believer experiences practical nearness to the Lord is through cleansing from sin. We must be clean and in fellowship with the Lord in order to claim our victory in Christ (John 13:18; 2 Cor. 7:1). Cleansing precedes all victory (1 John 1:8-9). If we

fail to walk close to the Lord by confessing our sins and worshipping Him we will be walking on the edge of an abyss.

### *Humility and Grace*

As we continue to view God's pattern for victory we learn that we must secondarily humble ourselves before God by acknowledging our need for His grace or divine empowerment for victory. Grace is the power for victory that we need and it takes humility to experience this grace in our lives for daily power and victory. James 4:6 goes on to say, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." *God's requirements are God's enablements!* I need grace if I'm ever going to be victorious. God's inworking grace (empowering and strengthening grace) gives us the power to overcome sin. What is the problem today? Has God failed? Why are so many saints playing around with sin in their lives? Why are so many of God's people defeated losers today when God has made His people to be winners and victors? The answer lies in the problem of pride. When we let pride come into our lives God withholds spiritual power. It zaps our life from spiritual power. God's resists the proud and withholds His victorious grace from our lives.

What kind of pride can the believer possess in his heart? There is the pride related to *self-centeredness*. We sometimes think that we can live victoriously on our own selfish terms but God says we can't do it. We are selfish and fool ourselves (Heb. 3:13) when we try to hold on to sin with one hand and ask God for victory at the same time. Many times we love our sin more than the Savior.

Jesus said that we should never become selfish in living but rather come to the place where we will "hate" our own life (selfish ambitions, sins, and personal agendas in life) and take up the "cross" of true surrender and sacrifice (Luke 14:26-27). In other words, we must humble ourselves and surrender ourselves fully to the Lord and make Him Lord of our lives. A self-centered and selfish attitude keeps God's people from the place of humility, strengthening grace, and victory. *You must be real in order to be made right!* True victory can only come when we repent of all known sin and face ourselves as we really are – a sinner who is selfish and in need of cleansing and

grace. Peter said in Luke 5:8, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

There is also the pride related to *self-sufficiency*. We sometimes think that we can live victoriously in our own strength. We are prone to think that we can gain victory by standing on our own two feet but this attitude smacks humility in the face and keeps God’s grace from flowing into our lives. We create our own “do-it-yourself” kits and think that they will work against the enemy. When we think we can do it on our own or when we love our sin more than the Savior, then God will “resist” us for being full of pride and withhold grace from our lives!

Pride is the biggest downfall that keeps Christians from victory. God resists the proud. And if God resists us by withholding grace and power from our lives, does it really make any difference who is for you? You might say that your Christian friends and family are sticking with you no matter what. So what? None of this really matters if God is resisting you and not providing you with His victorious grace. God is able and ready to give us victory (1 Cor. 10:13). But as long as we allow pride in our life it’s all over for us spiritually. It’s just a matter of time until we fall and until we go back into the world. Pride precedes a fall! Pride is allowing self to sit on the throne. But God gives grace to the humble backslidden person who says, “God, I can’t do this on my own, I want to do your will and I need your strength to do it.”

God wants us to be humble; Satan wants us to be proud. “Ye shall be as gods” (Gen. 3:5). Beware “lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6). God will give us His grace for victory if we will come to the place of humility before Him. This is His promise.

Annie Johnson Flint wrote these lovely words:

“His love has no limit,  
His grace has no measure,  
His power has no boundary known unto man,  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.”

## *Submission and Resisting*

James 4:7 finally says: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Believers submit themselves to God by dedicating their bodies (Rom. 6:13; Rom. 12:1-2) minds (Phil. 4:8) and emotions to loving Him (Matt. 22:37) and their wills to serving Him (Eph. 6:6-7). *The believer must be willing to submit to God in every area of his life.* He must be willing to rank himself under God’s authority or else he will experience constant defeat. If a person is not ready to fully submit to God, he will live in defeat and be swallowed up by the devil (1 Pet. 5:8). It’s only when we submit to God and His authority that we can actively resist the devil (James 4:7) by standing in the finished work of the cross and the victorious power of God’s Son, which comes from our union with Him. The promise is this. The devil will flee from us (“he will flee from you” – James 4:7). We must refuse to give up our position or ground. And sooner or later, inevitably, the devil will flee from us - the attacks will cease (Matt. 4:11 – “Then the devil leaveth him”).

### **The Key Words of Victory**

Believing that we possess a union with Christ in His death (the ground of our victory), resurrection (the power for victory) and ascension (the authority of victory) is the way victory can be channeled into our lives. As we have seen in this study, *knowing* (Rom. 6:6, 9) and *reckoning* (Rom. 6:11) the truths related to our union with Christ, as being true, and then *yielding* (Rom. 6:13) to God become three key words to help us in overcoming sin and Satan. When applying these glorious positional truths to our lives we can effectively resist sin, the devil’s temptations, and experience victory.

The application of these victorious positional truths to one’s life and all that we have in Christ (Eph. 1:3) are accomplished through the channel of *faith* (1 John 5:4; Gal. 2:20) and will out of necessity be accompanied or integrated with other important key facets or features associated with victory such as *humility* (James 4:6), *grace* (James 4:6; Heb. 4:16; Eph. 6:10), *submission* (James 4:7; Luke 9:23), *resisting* (James 4:7), *drawing near* and *cleansing* (James 4:8), *repentance* (James 4:9), application of the *armor of God* (Eph. 6:10-18), the *renewing of the mind* (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:13), the *Word of*

*God* (Matt. 4:1-11), *God's promises* (2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:20), reliance upon *God's life and nature* (Phil. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1: 4; 1 John 3:8; 5:18; Rom. 7:22), *sobriety* or staying spiritual alert (1 Thess. 5:6, 8; 1Pet. 1:14; 4:7; 5:8), *prayer* (Luke 22:40; Matt. 26:41 – “watch and pray”), *praise* (Ps. 50:23; Josh. 6:5, 16, 20), *possessing a clear conscience* (Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:19-20), *obedience* (1 Sam. 15:22), *the prayer of Jesus* (John 17:15), *the life of Jesus* (Gal. 2:20; 2 Pet. 1:2-4; Phil. 3:10) *the name of Jesus* (Phil. 3:9-10) and *the blood of Jesus* (Rev. 12:11).

These are some of the key words associated with the practical application of Christ's victory to the believer's life. As we launch out in faith and rely on these divinely ordained methods to obtain victory in the time of temptation we will be applying the positional victory that we have in Christ to our own personal lives. In other words, we must practice these things if we are going to experience victory through the life of God, which has been communicated to us by the Spirit. Everything that we have flows forth from our position in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3).

Therefore, in order to claim the blessings, we must practice God's plan for victory by using these appropriate God-given means to experience this victory in our daily lives. *Knowledge, reckoning, yielding, faith, humility, submission, resisting, drawing near to God, cleansing, repentance, grace, the armor of God, the renewing of the mind, the truth of the Word of God, God's promises for victory, God's life and nature, sobriety, a good conscience, prayer, praise, the prayer of Jesus, the priestly ministry of Jesus, obedience, the indwelling life of Jesus, the blood of Jesus, and the name of Jesus* all have a practical and significant role to play in providing victory in our lives. The believer must remind himself of these key words associated with victory and learn to use the means that God has provided to possess and maintain victory in his daily battle. Always remember that the Christian life is not a playground but a battleground (Eph. 6:12 – “For we wrestle ... against principalities and powers in high places”).

“I am on the battlefield for my Lord;  
I am on the battlefield for my Lord.



And I promised Him that I would serve Him 'til I die,  
I'm on the battlefield for my Lord."

### **Victim or Victory?**

V – Is for victory! Are you experiencing daily victories in your life instead of defeat? Be honest. Are you a victor or victim? Of course, no believer has a perfect track record over sin (Phil. 3:12; 1 John 1:8-9). An older brother in the Lord, who knew the Scriptures, once said to me, "There is not victory all the way but there is victory along the way!" This means that victory is promised and overcoming defeat and bondage should never become a way of life for the child of God. Alexander White said: "The victorious Christian life is a series of new beginnings." Let us never forget that Jesus came to set the captive free from the power of sin and Satan. Jesus said in Luke 4:18 that He came "to preach deliverance to the captives ... to set at liberty them that are bruised." Jesus also said in John 8:32, "... ye shall be free indeed." Free indeed! Praise the Lord I'm free at last!

"I'm free from the fear of tomorrow,  
I'm free from the guilt of my past.  
I've traded all my shackles for a glorious song,  
I'm free praise the Lord free at last."

God wants us to live victoriously instead of living in a defeated manner. **We are to be a victor instead of a victim!** We no longer must collapse in the clutches of sin and Satan. 2 Tim. 4:18 says, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work." What a tremendous promise! As we learn more and more what it means to yield to God (Rom. 6:12-13) and rely upon His inworking power of grace (Eph. 1:19 – "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward"), it's then that we will experience greater victory in our life and not allow ourselves to be controlled by the Evil One – "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan" (Rev. 12:9). Someone stated: "It's amazing what ordinary people can do when they know that an extraordinary God is with them!" "And all things are of God" (2 Cor. 5:18).

## The Benediction of Victory

Jude 24, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” This is a benediction or pronouncement of God’s blessing upon the believer in Christ. You might call it God’s invocation or benediction of victory. In other words, this is God’s wish and desire for each one of us who are His children. Since this is a benediction we believe that God’s people need to close their reading of God’s word having their minds centered on God’s victory. In fact, we need to close every day of our lives with God’s benediction of victory! We need to remind ourselves that we are on the victory side.

There are actually many victorious benedictions and blessings given in Scripture, which remind God’s people of their complete victory over sin and Satan. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 closes with these words: “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*.” Hebrews 13:20-21 says in closing, “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21 concludes with these words: “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” This is God’s desire for your life and mine. God wants us to walk in His plan for victory and experience daily victory over sin and Satan.

Let us add one more victorious benediction before we close this study: “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen” (Rom.16:20). *Here we find that Genesis 3:15 is used as a promise for the saint’s present victory over Satan.* In using the prophecy of Satan’s defeat in Genesis 3:15, Paul reminds the believers at Rome

that God has promised a present-day victory for His church, who was being divided because of false teachers (Rom. 16:17).

The Genesis account which speaks of bruising or crushing the head of the serpent (a vital blow) is used as a reminder that Satan was defeated at Calvary and that this crushing defeat could in a practical way be experienced in their own church and personal lives. He promises that a complete victory over a divisive spirit would shortly come to pass, despite Satan's crafty attacks upon their ministry and work. The enemy will be defeated which Paul bases on the truth of Genesis 3:15. God will "bruise" or crush Satan, under the feet of the faithful saints, and He will do it speedily.

Dear friend, we are on the victory side and Satan is on the losing side! We are the victors and Satan is the loser! 2 Corinthians 2:14, "Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." It's also worth repeating: "If God be for us, who can be against us" (Rom. 8:31). What is more, "**We are more than conquerors through him that loved us**" (Rom. 8:37).

"We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us so.  
The Christ who dwells within us is the greatest power we know,  
He will fight beside us though the enemy be great.  
Who can stand against us?  
He's the Captain of our fate.

Then we will conquer never fear, So let the battle rage.  
He has promised to be near until the end of the age.  
We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us so.  
The Christ who dwells within us is the greatest power we know."

Shout it from the rooftops! Shout it from the heavenlies!

"The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" (Ex. 14:14).