

## The Victory of Christ

He spoiled the hosts of hell  
Like blazing stars they fell  
He led them forth on chains  
Now our mighty Victor reigns

Hymn

In this chapter we look at common approaches in spiritual warfare. These have taken on a much more animistic nature in recent years. *Animistic* refers to the belief that the good or bad events of life are controlled by spiritual forces. It includes the attempt by people to direct or manipulate these forces by power. It is not limited to Asian or African practice, but also permeates Western Christian thought.

Since the Reformation Western nations began to come out of superstitions about witches. Witches were commonly *discerned* and killed prior to this. But the Reformation brought us back to the truth that the power of Jesus Christ in the gospel overcomes all the power of the enemy.

However, a rationalist thinking also permeated the West, which along with liberal theology denied all spiritual reality, adhering only to physical or material existence. This mindset was transferred onto mission fields, where missionaries sometimes were unable to respond to a more spiritual mindset.

But in recent years there has been a swing back for various reasons, including the pneumatology of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, to Post Modernism and cultural relativism. With the dispensationalist views of Fletcher and Irving came a focus on spiritual things. Post Modernism highlights experience, especially that of the spiritual nature. Cultural relativism has led to the reinterpretation of scriptural passages and *spiritual warfare* meanings.

Modern Pentecostal meanings in spiritual warfare can trace their origins to the teachings of Jessie Penn Lewis, of the *Keswick Convention* and her book *War on The Saints*. There, spiritual warfare was more to do with sanctification: how to stop demons retarding your holiness and spiritual growth.

Wikipedia characterised this, "A preacher may discern that parishioners are experiencing obstacles in their faith, prayer life and general spiritual well-being. That process of discernment may yield an awareness of spiritual oppression caused by a combination of personal sin and demonic influence. The obstacles are then removed through prayer, delivering a parishioner from demonic possession and breaking down false beliefs about God."

These ideas have been developed more recently by authors such as Derek Prince in *Blessings and Curses*, where oppression from ancestral curses or demonic objects is discerned; and by C. Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft, where *territorial spirits* are discerned and engaged for progress in missionary work. It is our view that these ideas are harmful to Christian growth and not helpful to missionary work.

Pentecostalism in recent African experience did not begin with these cultural views on spiritual warfare. It proclaimed the victory of Christ and His finished work and faith, over which no demon or curse could gain an advantage. Victory was already achieved by Christ and the believer only needed to be filled with the Spirit, know who he is in Christ and live it out by faith.

If demons did possess people we met in evangelism they could be overcome or cast out by the gift of the Holy Spirit. But the position of the Christian was one of victory in Christ, not of struggling with the enemy. Spiritual warfare was seen biblically as standing in the faith, being not moved away from our position in Christ and bringing every lie of the enemy into the captivity of the knowledge of Christ through the gospel.

In this chapter we look at topics including:

- Law or grace.
- Christian practices and animism.
- Christ's victory.
- Satan's defeat and binding.
- God's sovereign care.
- Stand in the finished work.
- Territorial spirits.
- Strongholds of the mind.
- Give Satan no place.
- The word of God.

Satan does not have the attributes of divinity. He is a created being. Christ is a member of the Godhead. God is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. Satan is none of these. Christ lives in the born again believer and we are complete in Him.

### Interpretation

One of the bigger issues in the spiritual warfare debate is to do with interpretation of biblical texts. In a Post Modern climate interpretation is more subjective and open to cultural world views. This means that passages of scripture take on new meanings, not intended by the author. We take two examples here of how biblical context determines the real meaning.

Paul told Timothy to *fight the good fight of faith*. We often assume that this means that we should fight demons. But Paul was speaking about Timothy's pastoral duties. He told Timothy to let *no man despise* him as he lived the truth, preached the word and corrected error. He encouraged Timothy to be strong in grace, in power, love and a sound mind, as he spoke on covetousness and godliness.

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereto you are called...(1 Tim 6:11-12).

The fight of faith was *the following of these things*. The enemy comes at us through people who are offended at the gospel and godliness. Paul told Timothy to stand in his pastorate and not to be moved away from doing what is right in God's sight, regardless of the reaction from men. All the exhortations about *stirring up the gift, fighting the good fight*, are given in this context.

The second example is taken from Ephesians 6. This is a well known passage about *standing in the evil day* and not allowing the enemy an opportunity. The passage comes at the end of the epistle, where Paul exhorts the church concerning faith and godliness in family and in life in general.

Paul's conclusion is *live this way: do not allow the enemy to turn us aside to vain life styles. Stand in the faith and live worthily of the Lord who has called us*. When we read the whole epistle in context, Eph 6:10-23 becomes clear.

*Husbands, love your wives! Children, submit to your parents in the Lord! Parents, bring up your children! Servants, obey your masters! Love the Lord as He has loved us, live as His children in this society, giving Him the glory. Stand in the faith. Do not allow the enemy to move us from His love and faith and from all that which is honourable in the Lord!*

## Law or Grace

Spiritual warfare is cultural or religious law. In witchcraft people are told that if they will satisfy certain requirements of their law, then curses can be overcome. In Christian circles people are told similarly that if they satisfy certain spiritual requirements they can overcome perceived curses from their past, or from perceived enemies.

Once someone tries to obtain deliverance by law (their own requirements), they put themselves under a curse. Spiritual warfare cannot work in the long run, but will bring the Christian into frustration and far more harm. The *law of sin and death* will reign where there is law.

The Old Testament provided a law code for God's people to live righteously and avoid the curse. Their safety was not in fighting the devil, but in obedience to God. The law did not work because the people sinned.

Witchcraft attempts to pacify the curse that a person perceives is against him, by prescribing a series of steps or laws that the person must fulfil. The "worshipper" in witchcraft must walk by law for protection. This appears to work, but is deception and will bring the person under greater bondage in the future. Where there is law, there is curse.

This *self-help* attitude is brought into Christian spiritual warfare practices. Spiritual warfare with anecdotal evidence (testimonies) appears to work to a point. People will say that they get results, but the results are illusory and these practices cannot bring real deliverance or peace in the long run because they are not based on the gospel of Christ.

So we have a choice. We can go by practices which try to pacify, appease or manipulate demons, or we can go by the gospel, where Jesus has already totally overcome every curse for us.

## Crucified With Christ

If we are crucified and buried with Christ we are dead to the law and to the world (Rom 7:4, Gal 6:14). This is the corner stone of biblical deliverance. Where there is no law there is no curse. So if we are dead in Christ we are not under the law, meaning either Old Testament law or cultural and religious taboos. Law does not apply to us. "For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col 3:3).

This is why no witchcraft can touch us. We do not live, but Christ lives in us, if we are born again. We have Christ in us and the law of the Spirit of life so there cannot be a curse against us (Rom 8:2). Spiritual warfare practices are totally foreign to the New Covenant. They function under the law and are therefore more like witchcraft than faith.

God has delivered us from the rule of darkness (Col 1:13). This means He has taken us out from under the law and curse, the law of sin and death and He has placed Christ in us where Satan cannot gain entrance (Rom 8:1-2, Col 3:3). There cannot be any curse upon the child of God. God has lifted us above principalities and powers and seated us in Christ (Eph 1, 2).

He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph 1:3). He has spoiled principalities and powers, making an open show of them (Col 2:15). He destroyed him that had the power of death (Heb 2:14). Greater is He who is in us than He who is the world (1 John 4:4).

This is New Testament truth about spiritual warfare. Our enemy has been defeated and is under our feet in Christ. We have no need to appease, pacify or manipulate spiritual powers, or even to pray against them, but only to walk in faith in Christ.

The *strong holds* that need to be taken down are the imaginations in people's minds that oppose the knowledge of Christ's victory (2 Cor 10:4-5). No matter what the enemy does, he either gets

immediately put down by God, or God decides to work through it to reach more with the gospel. In every case, for the believer in Christ, the enemy is the loser.

### The Defeat of Satan

Christ has absolute victory. Nothing is done on earth except by the permission of an all powerful, all knowing and sovereign God. He never slumbers. He counts the hairs on our head and none of them falls to the ground without His knowledge. No curse can be placed without His permission. No witchcraft, no demon and no occult has any power against us. None can boast before a God who raises up and puts down entirely by His own will.

### The Old Testament

Adam did not give the world and authority to Satan at the *Fall* and Satan was not the author of the curse that came after the *Fall*. Genesis 3 says that God cursed the earth for man's sake. It is true that Satan acted in carrying out God's curse in the Old Testament, but only because God had purposed it, God had spoken it. It was God's judgement. Throughout the Old Testament God is in sovereign control over all things, even over Satan.

Likewise in Exodus 12 it says that God slew the firstborn throughout Egypt and God sent in the angel of death. In Ex 15:26 it says that God "put" (*active*, not the passive "allow") diseases upon the Egyptians. God controlled the demons and they did His bidding. Satan accused God concerning Job and God sent him against Job, with specific instructions on what he was allowed to do. This did not come upon Job because he feared it, but because God commissioned it to prove Satan a liar (Job 3:25).

In 1 Kings 22:22 God sent a lying spirit to deceive Ahab and the false prophets, as a judgement against them for their wayward heart. God specifically commissioned evil spirits, as He ruled over all His creation. The demons reported at His throne for assignments.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 24 the Lord moved David against Israel. In 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 21 Satan (lit. *adversary*, bad counsel David received from someone) moved David. God commissioned the counsel against Israel, to balance the books on their breaking His law over a period of time. He allowed David to count Israel, without giving the required offerings (Ex 30:12). God did set up punishments under the law in the Old Covenant. In Saul's case, "an evil spirit from the Lord" vexed him at times.

God is totally in charge, not the devil. We have no need to fear the devil, Satan, the accuser. In the New Covenant God has put away our sin and this has put away any charge of the accuser of the brethren against us. Because of the cross of Christ the Bible says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." (Rom 8:33).

The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that you might have abundant life. (John 10:10).

This verse is a summary of the Old Covenant and an introduction to the New Covenant. It is the *law contrasted with grace*. It is a repeat of John 1:17, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ".

When Jesus said that the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy He was speaking of the curse under the law, *not that Satan had any rule* of his own in the Old Covenant. Satan stole because of the curse and the curse was because of sin and sin by the law. But Jesus came with life through grace under the New Covenant.

## No Spiritual Warfare

The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules *over all*. (Ps 103:19).

There was no spiritual warfare in the Old Testament. God assigned nations against Israel in judgement, when bringing Assyria against them and later Babylon. He called Persia and then Greece to occupy the land. In each case it was the purpose of God. Spiritual warfare against those nations by Israel would have been totally futile, because it was God who sent them.

Satan is in rebellion against God and tries to work against His purposes, e.g. in tempting Eve, but in all this he also worked in line with God's will. It was not God's will that Adam fall, but it was God's will that Adam's freewill be used. So Satan served God's purpose.

In the New Testament Satan comes against the church, but again in each case God uses it for the promotion of the truth. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God and to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom 8:28).

God is in sovereign control, not in warfare. He reigns supreme. *Omnipotent* means *all* power. If He has all power, then Satan has no power. Satan himself is upheld by the word of God's power (Heb 1:3). In the Old Testament we do not see Satan being given the rule from Adam. We see the absolute rule of Jehovah over His creation.

## Dualism

Nebuchadnezzar thought that it was his power and the power of His magicians that raised him up. God taught him otherwise, by taking away his sound mind and causing him to eat with the cattle for seven years:

...until you know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever He will...and He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. (Daniel 4:32, 35).

The teaching of *dualism* is wrong. *Dual* means *two*, or in this case that there are two powers striving and struggling against each other in a battle. It is the basis of books such as *This Present Darkness* and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and to a lesser extent in C. S. Lewis' *Narnia*. There is one potentate and one ruler. Every power in heaven and earth is under the authority of Christ and cannot exist without His permission. Satan exists only because it is God's will.

God directs all principalities and powers. Man does not direct these in so-called spiritual warfare. Nebuchadnezzar's experiences shows that territorial spirits do not rule. "The most High rules in the kingdom of men."

## The Reign of Jesus

God did not ever lose His power in the Old Covenant. Why then does it say Satan was defeated on the cross? Jesus' victory on the cross was for our salvation, not for God to gain victory for Himself. Christ reigned in the Old Testament.

But at a point in time He took the victory for the seed of Abraham, the church. Jesus as the seed of Abraham conquered the enemy for us by dying for sin and taking away any charge against His

redeemed. As a representative of Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ now reigns in heaven, on earth and under the earth.

Some get this wrong and say, "Great, now I have power.". No, this is what Satan told Eve, that she could exercise power independent of God's will. This is how he tempted Jesus in the wilderness also. Christ in you has the power, not you. You do not have His power. He has you. It is not your confession of faith, but His word spoken through you. He must speak. This is the word of faith.

If Christ has all power, then Satan does not have any power and neither do we. If Christ has all, there is none left for anyone else.

All authority in heaven and on earth is given to Me. (Matt 28:18).

...His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds ... upholding all things by the word of His power...(Heb 1:2-3).

There are many pictures or symbols to describe the victory of Christ in the New Testament. Jesus has the keys of death and hell. This means that no one dies unless Christ unlocks the door. No one dies outside of the plan of God. Satan takes no one's life.

### Binding the Strongman

In Revelation 20 Satan is depicted as being bound in chains.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan and bound him a thousand years. (Rev 20:3).

This is symbolic, as is all the imagery of beasts and numbers in Revelation. The 1,000 years depicts the kingdom and reign of Christ and the total subjection of all His enemies through the cross. They are subjugated, but allowed to continue under God's plan for a time.

Other fallen angels are also depicted as reserved in chains (2 Pet 2:4, Jude 1:6). The cross of Christ has reconciled all things to grace for God's people. The kingdom of Christ is complete and He is working all things on earth according to His own will and none has the power to withhold God's plan. When God's appointed time comes He will bring His enemy's existence on earth to an end.

We must not measure Satan's power by sickness, death or poverty. Doing so is a type of *prosperity gospel*, where faith is shown by how much money we have. This has nothing to do with the truth. Satan never has victory over a child of God. The faith of a child of God overcomes the world. Overcoming is not measured by prosperity or health, but the faith of Christ within. No child of God can lose their faith. Satan's power in this is nil.

Faith is not proved by the things that you have, but by the new birth and the fruit of love. When Job lost all he said, "God gives and God takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21). This showed the complete victory of his faith, which was what Satan said he did not have. Satan was proved a liar.

When Jesus said on the cross "it is finished" it meant His faithful trust in the Father did not falter once (John 19:30). By this Satan was overcome on the cross. Satan lost when the faith of the Son of God was not found wanting. As it says, "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has prevailed." (Rev 5:5).

## The Victory of the Saints

Hebrews 11 records the heroes of faith. Some closed the mouths of lions or turned the enemy to flight. Some were sawn asunder and others stoned "by faith". In each case Satan was defeated. Sickness, loss or death is not evidence that Satan has power. He has power over no child of God. He can burn his enemies at the stake, but he cannot take their faith. In each case his power is bound. In each and every case he is defeated once again, as it is written;

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony;  
and they loved their lives not unto the death. (Rev 12:11).

The word of their testimony is the gospel of Jesus Christ, "And this is the record (testimony), that God has given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life." (1 John 5:11-12). This is the binding of Satan. He is without power before God and His Christ and His elect.

Paul rejoices in the same truth in Romans 8. Paul does not say if you are sick you are defeated. He does not say if you die then Satan has a victory. No child of God loses. Some say this is negative because it is not guaranteeing healing. No, anything that encourages the faith of God's people is positive.

If you are not healed and believe it is because you have no faith that is a victory for the enemy. The *prosperity message* sometimes attacks people's faith rather than encourages it. It makes them feel weak in faith because of what they do not have?

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
(Rom 8:37-39).

In everything the child of God is more than a conqueror. The faith that God gives us can never be quenched. Nothing in existence can even deplete it. The worse the attack, the more grace enflames faith. Satan is completely without an answer. He has never won in any manoeuvre against God.

There is nothing he can do, no dictator he can provoke, no plan he can devise that will in the slightest way slow God in His plans. Satan cannot even enter the heart of just one of the weakest of the brethren in Christ. There is no battle with God. God is in absolute control over all things and in the end all things glorify Him.

## God Supervises All

1 Cor 10:13 says that God stands in supervision over every temptation that a child of God may face and will not allow any temptation that He has not also given grace to overcome. Everything in life must pass through the hands of God.

There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Cor 10:13).

There is no dualism here. There is a God who directs all things according to the counsel of His own will. There is timing in God. "He makes all things beautiful in His time." (Ecc 3:11). He expects us to be patient and trust Him in the meantime;

For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. For yet a little while and He that shall come shall come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. (Heb 10:36-39).

These verses have nothing to do with the Lord's Second Coming. It is a quote from Habakkuk 2, where Habakkuk complains to God about the evil in the earth. God answers him that He has a purpose in it and in His time He will rein it in. God always leads us into the victory of Christ. God will always prevail and will do it His way. "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).

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:55-57).

### The Dog

Satan is like a dog on a leash. A dog barks and makes a fearful noise, but cannot go beyond the leash. The One who holds the leash is faithful and omnipotent. Satan's bark is a bluff. God created the waster and said to us, "Do not fear him."

In the Old Testament the *wasters* were the nations that God raised up to bring judgment to other nations. The term does not specifically refer to the devil, though in Jesus' ministry the devil was seen as the waster of individuals, due to the law (Luke 13:16).

In righteousness shall you be established: you shall be far from oppression; for you shall not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near you. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by Me: whosoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake.

Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire and that brings forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.

No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgement you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord. (Isaiah 54:14-17).

This passage is speaking of the New Covenant. It says that we shall be far from oppression because the law is taken away in Christ's redemption. It says also that enemies will still come out against us, but they shall fall. That is, they are bound in every sense by God's power.

The enemy may destroy the flesh but God will keep his faith and fulfil all of His purposes. This is what happened to all the first apostles. The enemy barked like a dog, struck with his rage, but could nothing against God's people. The church only grew.

...Be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, which after He has killed has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, Fear Him.

Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows. (Luke 12:4-7).

### Satan Destroyed

When the Bible refers to Satan being destroyed or bound it is referring to his power over the saints. He can no longer lay any charge against God's elect before God. "The accuser of the brethren has been cast out." (Rev 12:10).

Verses below describe the event of Satan's defeat. They show him conquered by the cross of Christ. It says that Christ *spoiled* (other translations say "disarmed") principalities and powers and triumphed over them in it. The cross was an absolute and complete vanquishing of Satan.

Christ did not overcome Satan in part, leaving us to "mop up" Satan's army by further spiritual warfare. He is not partly bound. Revelation 20 depicts him as bound by the gospel. He still exists in the presence of the redeemed on earth and will do until he is cast into the lake of fire. But his power has already been fully spoiled.

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (Col 2:14-15).

### Led Forth in Chains

Col 2:14-15 depicts the triumphant parade in Rome after a victorious battle against their enemies. The Roman generals marched through the city with the enemy generals and kings led in chains behind them. There was an open show of the totality of the conquest. There were no terms or conditions of surrender, but a complete vanquish and humiliation. Of Jesus Christ it is said, "He led them forth in chains...". This is what He did to all principalities and powers.

If Satan was disarmed, it means that Christ took away *all* his powers and left him in total defeat. "That through death He might *destroy* him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Heb 2:14). Satan was destroyed by Christ in His death. If that is the case why should we be surprised that Revelation 20 depicts him as bound already?

An important hermeneutical principle about the book of Revelation is that it depicts gospel truths. Revelation contains no new teaching that is not in the Gospels. In symbolic form it depicts the doctrines of the epistles and New Covenant. Its primary function is to encourage us on the rule of Jesus Christ over the world and His ultimate victory through what is already established by His gospel.

But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil his house. (Matt 12:28-29).

The kingdom of God has come in Christ. Christ's reign is absolute. He is not looking to us to finish the victory. If Jesus bound the strongman on the cross why would we think that Revelation 20 depicting the binding of Satan is about Jesus reigning in Jerusalem after His Second Coming? He was bound and destroyed through the death of Christ:

Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me. (John 12:31-32).

Satan was cast out 2,000 years ago when Jesus was lifted up on the cross. Satan no longer appears before the throne of God as he did in the Old Testament. The law has been fulfilled and therefore the accuser of the brethren is cast out.

### The Resurrection

It is through this resurrection of Jesus Christ that we come into the same position as Christ. It is by the resurrection of Christ that we are born again. It is the resurrection that brings us into eternal life. It is Christ alive today who gives us birth into Himself:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Pet 1:3).

The power of God was shown when He raised Christ from the dead and set Him above all principalities and powers at His own right hand.

And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

Far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And has put all things under His feet and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all. (Eph 1:19-23).

Christ is head over all things *to the church*. He said He will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. It does not mean that the church has this power of itself, but Christ lives according to His will in the church. God the Father raised us up with Christ and seated us in heavenly places in Christ. We are raised in the same position above principalities and powers in Christ.

*Spiritual warfare is accomplished by our salvation.* It is accomplished by Christ in us.

Even when we were dead in sins, He quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (Eph 2:5-6).

You are of God little children and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you, than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4).

This is the position of all born again believers. We are seated with Christ in heavenly places above all principalities and powers. We are in Christ. How can we pull down principalities and powers when we are seated above them? To pull them down, we must be under them. Spiritual warfare is a denial of the gospel of Jesus Christ and our position in Him.

We will look at this later, but we will misinterpret Ephesians 6 if we do not start with Ephesians 1 and 2 and gain a proper foundation in the truth.

### Christ in You

We have been to many places where witchdoctors and animism dominate. We never bind the enemy. We preach the gospel. We have seen witchdoctors healed, saved, burn all their charms and join the church. We have had them come against us and we have done nothing in response, not even prayed about it. It is the witchdoctor who needs prayer. He has taken on someone he cannot defeat – God.

We have spoken to some people who very unfortunately believe that they have been cursed. This teaching has inflicted great fear on them. We have told them that God, who made the heavens and the stars, has blessed them with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. “So who are you going to believe – man, devil or God?”

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. (Eph 1:3).

If God has spoken over us every spiritual blessing, then who can curse us? If God be for us, who can be against us? The teaching that believers can be cursed is an indictment on the church.

Christians cannot be cursed with generational spirits. We do not need forgiveness for the sins of our fathers. We do not need to break the curses or covenants of our fathers. We do not need deliverance for early childhood experiences. Christ died to disarm Satan. It is done and now He lives in us. When we try to do what Christ has done we have left Christianity and have gone into animism.

### Generational Blessing

We will digress to discuss these curses before continuing with Ephesians.

You shall not bow down to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me. (Ex 20:5).

In the law God visited the iniquity of the fathers to the forth generation of those who hated Him. This does not apply to the New Covenant, because:

1. That was the law. We are not under the law.
2. If you are born again you do not hate God.
3. God will not visit a curse on you that He put on Christ for you.
4. Satan cannot visit a curse on you that Christ has taken for you.
5. You have a new Father in heaven. You are a new creation. Old things are passed away.
6. Any covenants that your fathers made with Satan have no bearing on you whatsoever.
7. A covenant of sin does not have more power than the Covenant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

8. You are translated out of the realm of darkness into Jesus Christ.

It just does not make sense to say that God has redeemed you, saved, forgiven and transformed you out of sin by new birth and yet He is still visiting the punishment on you for sin committed by your fathers. Why would God do such a thing?

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:17-18).

We have a new Father, so instead of a generational curse, we have a *generational blessing* in Him.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree. (Gal 3:13).

Jesus bore the curse for us. He took the punishment of all law upon Himself.

Who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. (Col 1:13).

We are no longer in the kingdom of darkness or under its dominion. It is pointless to fight against something that we are already delivered out of.

How shall I curse, whom God has not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord has not defied? Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel. (Numbers 23:8, 23).

As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come. (Prov 26:2).

The greatest magician of the day, Balaam, could not curse Israel, the seed of God. The magicians of Egypt and Babylon could do nothing against Moses and Daniel. Satan could do nothing against Christ? Do not believe teaching that says you have to fight demons. If you believe it, it will bring you into bondage.

### Stand in Christ

The Bible does not tell us to fight the devil. It was the task of Jesus to defeat Satan. Our task is to walk in His victory by faith. We enter Christ's rest. We enter His victory and walk in it by the grace of God. The Bible tells us to fight the good fight of faith, not to fight the devil (1 Tim 6:12).

Ephesians 1 and 2 lay the foundation of the victory of Christ and our position in Him in heavenly places above all principalities and powers. Ephesians 6 speaks of the believer standing in that victory. God never told us to establish our own victory over Satan. He told us to stand in His victory which He won.

Finally, my brethren, be strong *in the Lord* and in the power of *His might*. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able *to stand* against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take the whole armour of God, that you may be able to *withstand* in the evil day and having done all, to *stand*. *Stand* therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. (Eph 6:10-18).

We are strong *in the Lord*. We stand in what is already done by Jesus Christ. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. Powers will oppose the gospel and those who minister the gospel, but our response is not to fight them, but to stand in the victory that Jesus has already one. Our response is *steadfast faith*.

The armour refers to the word of God, God's truth. The truth becomes our position, the rock on which we stand and are not moved. We stand and wait for God's triumph through Christ. We stand in our position of victory, that Ephesians 1 and 2 shows us we already have.

Then Paul says to pray. We do not pray to get this position. We pray from our position of victory in Christ. Paul did not tell us to pray against the devil. He spoke of prayer and supplication to God, with thanksgiving. That is the only prayer that Paul ever mentioned in any of his epistles, prayer *to* God. He never prayed "against".

Praying *against* is part of an aggressive nature. We are not supposed to have that nature. We fight in our homes, fight in our marriages, fight in our work places and then fight against the devil. It is blaming others. What would we do with ourselves if we had no one to fight? Try to live without fighting, except to stand in faith and not allow Satan to work through our own character to draw us aside. That is the fight.

God does not grant us miracles because we fight or earn them, but because He is good and kind. So do not think that you fought and that it worked for you. It was God who helped you. He will help you out of grace. Put your faith in Him, not in your practice.

### Territorial Spirits

Recent teaching that Satan has a hierarchy of spirits under him that rule over certain cities has become more popular. It is said that to take that city for Jesus intercessory warfare needs to be made against those spirits. It is claimed that when these territorial spirits fall the city will turn to Christ.

This makes several assumptions. One is that Satan has a hierarchy. Scripture does not actually teach this, but Intertestamental apocryphal Jewish literature does. This is where Christians have taken the teaching from, at various times in church history. We have spoken more on *princes* and a theology of Satan in an earlier chapter, which should be cross referenced with this chapter.

Ephesians 6 speaks of *principalities*, *powers* and *rulers of the darkness*, but does not actually state that this is an ordered hierarchy. It is possible that the words are metaphors, similes or descriptions of the same thing. Though some passages may appear to show a hierarchy, such a thing is not plainly taught in scripture. We may have the conviction that it is taught, but that is not the same as a doctrine being plainly taught.

The next assumption is that these powers are organised in different parts of the globe or territories, in a systematic conspiracy and detailed plan, assigned to nations, cities, human organizations, religions, etc. Some complex spiritual maps have been drawn up depicting each demon and its operation. Local entities are *discerned* through prayer, revelations or discussions with occultist groups.

The next assumptions are that these entities can be engaged in *warfare prayer* and then brought down. Warfare prayer is not once mentioned in scripture. Neither does scripture state that we may bring any spiritual power down. Verses are used to claim both of these and we shall look at some of these verses below.

Christians assume both the power and the wisdom to organize principalities. At this point we have left our given assignment of *gospel preaching* and taken to a non-given assignment of organizing angels and acquiring salvation for people. This is a serious step for us to take. The Bible calls it *leaving our first estate* (Jude 1:6). Jesus is Saviour. We are His *proclaimers*.

The assumption claims that the bringing down of these powers will result in people being saved. It is assumed that these demon powers prevent people from receiving the gospel and once the powers have been brought down people's minds will change and become receptive to preaching. Verses are used to support this, but these verses do not teach this. We will look at some of these verses later.

### Intercession

Warfare prayer models have been built on ideas about *intercession*. Intercession means praying for others. Paul said, "Pray for me; that I may preach boldly", i.e. that God will give him an open door for the gospel (Eph 6:20). And, "Pray for all men, for God would have all to be saved." (1 Tim 2:1-4).

Views of intercession may differ. Some hold that we can take just about any promise in scripture or need and pray long enough, passionately enough or skilfully enough and God will act in a way that we ask. Another view is that the Holy Spirit must tell us what God wants to do and then in cooperation with Him we pray His will into being.

Our view is that there is no guaranteed methodology here. There is intercession, but no *ministry* of intercession or a methodology of intercession. Prayer is part of every Christian's life as the Spirit leads. But prayer is to God, not to demons. And prayer is not to manipulate God, but to petition Him.

Examples of intercessional warfare prayer are sometime seen in Moses lifting his hands when Israel fought with the Amalekites (Ex 17:8); Israel marching around Jericho seven days and then shouting praise to God (Joshua 6); and Jehoshaphat marching against the enemy with the praise team at the front of the army (2 Chron 20:21).

In each case God had told them specifically to do what they did. In none of the cases was their action a spiritual warfare strategy. There is no indication in the texts that they were acting against spiritual powers, wittingly or unwittingly. The purpose of their action was to *give God the glory*, who was the one who gave the victory. There was no *spiritual warfare behind the physical warfare*, no concept of animistic dualism.

The pagans around Israel saw spiritual warfare this way. Instead of repentance they tried *spiritual engineering*. This is what Eph 4:17-19 speaks of, "Gentiles who walk in the vanity of their mind, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." God sent His law for enlightenment, to bring us out of *spititism* into truth. Israel turned everything God gave them into a charm: the ark, the ephod, the temple. We are not to walk in spiritual manipulations.

We need to take care when lifting examples from the Old Testament. When Israel fought the Amalekites Moses was on the mountain with the rod of God in his hand (Ex 17:8). Today people use such items as charms in spiritual warfare. The rod was used in this account to honour to the Lord. Items were sometimes used as Old Covenant types, such as the *brazen serpent*. But when items like these, such as Gideon's fleece, became charms, the people came under God's judgement.

### Revival Warfare

If spiritual warfare or intercession were a means of bringing revival, then they ought to work anywhere, anytime. We believe in prayer, but revival is not a mechanism that we switch on. It is brought about by God who calls and raises up His preachers. Revival comes with God, *sovereignly called* ministry of the gospel and prayer.

The notion of intercession being the force of revival is wrong. It comes from a wrong understanding of the *Welsh Revival*, which was led by the preaching of Evan Roberts. When Jessie Penn Lewis convinced Roberts to stop preaching and go into intercession the revival stopped and it ended Robert's usefulness. Roberts went to stay in Penn-Lewis' house, suffered depression and never came back into useful ministry.

This intercessory role is promoted in stories about Charles Finney. Finney entered into ministry at the end of the *Second Awakening*. The awakening helped his early ministry considerably. But when this awakening came to an end Finney's means of promoting revival no longer worked. This he admitted in earlier editions of his work, which was later edited out.

In his *Letters on Revival* 1845 Finney said, "There was a great falling off and decline in revivals...I have observed ... that for the last ten years revivals of religion have gradually been becoming more and more superficial." "I was often instrumental in bringing Christians under great conviction and into a state of temporary repentance and faith, but ... they would of course soon relapse again into their former state." (*Lectures on Systematic Theology* 1846-47).

Finney's *Letters on Revival* are especially frank:

When I first began to preach I was without knowledge and without experience on the subject of revivals. I can see that in some things I erred in manner and spirit; which things I want to point out both by way of confessing my own faults and as warning to others...

Efforts to promote revivals of religion have become so mechanical, there is so much policy and machinery in them, so much dependence upon means and measures, so much of man and so little of God, that the character of revivals has greatly changed in the last few years.

There are more quotes like this from Finney's own writings, but these are not in any modern editions of his work. Many of these can be found in *Revival and Revivalism*, by Iain Murray. Finney's mechanics of revival, even when made to sound spiritual, were wrong and have led people astray.

Finney's methods have been developed more recently into spiritual warfare intercession techniques. Wikipedia has some insightful assessments of recent spiritual warfare teaching:

Robert Guelich has questioned the extent to which spiritual warfare has shifted from its basic moorings as a metaphor for the Christian life. He is disturbed to find spiritual

warfare metamorphosing into "spiritual combat" techniques where Christians seek power over demons.

Missions specialists such as A. Scott Moreau and Paul Hiebert have detected traces of animist thought encroaching on both evangelical and charismatic discourses about the demonic and spiritual warfare. Hiebert indicates that a dualist cosmology now appears in some spiritual warfare texts and it is based on the Greco-Roman mystery religions and Zoroastrian myths.

Some apologists in the Christian countercult movement have expressed concerns that spiritual warfare techniques seem at times to have been based on spurious stories and anecdotes without careful discernment and reflection.

### God's Power

Jesus' temptation was not an encounter with a territorial spirit, to enable His ministry to be successful. If it was then it failed. The people of the region of Judea and beyond rejected and killed Him. Satan said to Jesus that he would give Him the kingdoms of the world, for they were his.

This appeared true and there is the temptation. Through the sinfulness of man, Satan has some sway over the spirit (attitudes) of the world and who the world regards as popular (Eph 2:2). But this is a fleeting power and not a true power.

Even this fleeting power is subject to God's permission and program. Satan has no real power over the world. "The king's heart is in the Lord's hands...He turns it wherever He wills." (Pr 21:1). Jesus knew that all power came from above. This includes spiritual and human powers. Jesus said to Pontius Pilate:

Then said Pilate to Him...Do You not know that I have power to crucify You and have power to release You? Jesus answered, you could have no power at all against Me, except it were given you from above...(John 19:11).

The idea that Satan has power and if we pull him down people will get saved, does not have scriptural backing. Man rejects the gospel because of his own nature. Man is not in bondage to Satan, but to the law of sin and death that works within him. Satan blinds those who do not believe, because of their sin. It is God's judgement (2 Cor 4:4).

Satan only has influence over man because God gives it to him. Rebuking Satan will have no impact on this. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thes 2:9-12). Better to fear God than fight the devil.

Thank God that we have the gospel to preach to those who are being saved. God opens eyes through the gospel. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor 4:6).

### Strongholds

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds). (2 Cor 10:3).

People sometimes read this verse and stop before the next verse. They read “weapons or our warfare” and “pull down strongholds” and conclude that strongholds are spiritual powers over cities and that our weapons are tongues and warfare prayer. The verse does not say this. This was not in Paul’s mind.

We get into a problem when we lift verses out of the Bible without reading the whole argument. Paul was speaking about the wrong attitudes of the Corinthians. He was speaking about the strongholds of worldly attitudes some of the Corinthian believers were embracing. They were building spirituality on worldly values. He said that these wrong attitudes were the strongholds. They had attitudes of spiritual pride.

They had high ideas about spirituality that came from their flesh and from legalism, rather than attitudes from Christ and His grace. They had worldly values on competition. The weapon was the gospel, the truth. Paul said, “Take the truth of the grace of Christ in the gospel and cast down false self-exalting imaginations about spirituality and bring your attitude into the captivity of Jesus Christ and His merits. Humble yourself under His grace.”

In fact, embracing attitudes of spiritual warfare, such as some do today, is doing the opposite to what Paul is asking for in this passage. The passage continues:

Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Cor 10:5-6).

Paul said that strongholds are imaginations and high (proud) thoughts (heresies) that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. Paul is not teaching that strongholds are spiritual powers that rule cities. Go through the ministries of Paul, the apostles and Jesus. None of them ever tried to pull down spiritual powers over cities to get people saved. It is not once mentioned in scripture.

Paul is teaching the same thing in 2 Cor 10:3-6 as he did in Ephesians 6. We bring our mind into the obedience of Christ. We take the shield of faith, which is the gospel of the finished work of Christ and with it we quench every lie of Satan. This is our warfare. Our weapon against falsehood is truth.

We expose lies by preaching the word of truth. The best warfare we can do against darkness is to turn on the light – expose it! By this preaching and teaching we are ready to revenge all lies of disobedience against the knowledge of Christ. But we ourselves must first obey the truth.

1<sup>st</sup> Kings 20 tells the story of kings attacking Israel on the hills. They did not succeed and so decided that Israel’s gods must be territorial. They then planned to attack Israel on the plains. This story shows that the concept of territorial spirits is pagan.

And the servants of the king of Syria said...Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain and surely we shall be stronger than they...

...Thus says the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into your hand and you shall know that I am the Lord. (1 Kings 20:23, 28).

The stronghold is not on the hills, or in the valley, but in people’s way of life. People commonly do things like misappropriate money to buy a fashionable pair of shoes to get preaching appointments

and then in warfare prayer bind strongholds to open doors of prosperity. The “stronghold” in this case is on the feet (the fashion we must have) and in the heart. This is where our problems come from.

### Contamination

In 1 Cor 10:14-33 Paul spoke of idolatry and the eating of meat sacrificed to idols. He told them to flee from idolatry. He also said that if any one saw them eating meat and then told them that it was sacrificed to idols, then they should not eat it, for the sake of the conscience of the one who told them. Our love for the weaker brother should be more important to us than our personal liberty to eat.

But the point here is that Paul saw no harm to us from the devil from eating the meat or attending feasts with an unbeliever. We would assume though that immoral sins were not being committed at these feasts. We should decide in our conscience according to what honours God. Paul’s concern is what is honouring to God and edifying to others, not what curse might be put on us from the idol.

Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor 10:31).

Concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world and that there is no God but one. (1 Cor 8:4).

For the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof (i.e. everything in the earth belongs to Him, nothing belongs to the devil.) (1 Cor 10:26).

Paul discussed this also in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8. His point is that we as Christians have the knowledge (or should have the knowledge) that an idol is nothing. The second point is important, “To us there is only one God.”. An idol is irrelevant to us.

The blood of Jesus has separated us from every other god. We do not do spiritual warfare, because when we are in Christ, who is over all things, there are no other gods. There are no other powers. He reconciled all powers to Himself. He brought them all under His subjection, to the church.

In those days at the market in Corinth those who killed meat first offered it to their gods. Then they killed it and sold the meat on the market. This still occurs in many nations. It is the usual practice. The meat they bought at the market place in Corinth had been offered to idols before it had been killed. This is the meat that the Christians were buying and eating.

Whatever is sold in the market place, that eat, asking no questions for conscience sake. (1 Cor 10:25).

Paul did not say that when they bought meat they must take it home and cleanse it from curses. He did not say they must pray over it, or anoint it with oil, or cast demons out of it. He just said eat, for the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it and an idol is nothing and to us there is only one God. That is straight forward.

Paul had no concern at all for spiritual contamination, but only for two things:

1. The conscience of the weak brother.
2. The honour and glory of God.

There is not one mention in any of Paul's epistles of any other concern in this matter of spiritual contamination from objects.

Teaching about contaminated objects cursing us is wrong. It is not biblical. At this point some people speak of testimonies they have heard of. Here we are dealing with what God says in His scripture. This is the truth. Do not follow weak testimonies and become weak. Grow in the knowledge of God.

### Satan Flees For Cover

Satan can do nothing but deceive us (Rev 12:9). He is called the deceiver. Bad dreams do not mean that the enemy is going to touch you. They are a lie. Most of these dreams come from our own fears and sub-conscious thoughts when sleeping. Then people act on them and they become self-fulfilling.

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

James said resist, not fight the devil. Do not listen to his lies. Do not give him a place or an opportunity. Do not yield to what he wants. Do not sin or compromise with the world. The choice is ours. The devil cannot force us. When we resist the devil he flees from us. The word *flee* means to run away to find safety. How can we fight the devil if he is fleeing from us?

### Give Him no Place

Peter said the same:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (1 Pet 5:8-9).

Peter said we resist the devil. We stand by the finished work of Christ in His gift of righteousness, with the word of God as the shield that quenches every lie of Satan. This is the only thing that stops the devil, the gospel. "They overcame him by the word of their testimony (the gospel)..." (Rev 12:11). This is the good fight of faith. It is good because Jesus has already won it.

Fight the good fight of *faith*, lay hold on eternal life, whereto you are also called and have professed a good profession before many witnesses. (1 Tim 6:12).

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, *I have kept the faith*. (2 Tim 4:7).

Be angry and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath: *Neither give place* to the devil. (Eph 4:26-27).

Satan does not have a place unless we give it to him. He only has what we give him. He can persecute, but this does not mean he has a place in us. Jesus said, "The prince of this world is coming and has nothing in Me." (John 14:30). When Satan came to try Jesus there was nothing in Jesus he could take hold of.

*Giving place to the devil* refers to how we live, our life style. Paul talked about the correct use of anger as an example, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." (2

Cor 2:11). Paul spoke of integrity and godly behaviour, for a lack of these things causes us problems. Sometimes we blame the devil, but our own lifestyle is the cause of our trouble.

### The Tongue

Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire starts! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell...For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. (James 3:5-6, 16).

Giving Satan opportunity means entering into strife with the tongue. James said that our tongue is the source of trouble. It sets on fire the course of nature. Without our tongue Satan is bound. He cannot start a fire of trouble without our tongue. When we bind the devil, the question is who loosed him? Find that person and bind him and you have bound the devil!

### Avoiding Strife

We strive to have peace with all men. We do not avoid strife by watering down the truth or by being non-confrontational. In the English Bible confrontation is called *exhorting*. The Greek word transliterated *nouthetic* means to confront verbally because of a fault and from a pastoral heart (Heb 10:25).

But when people strive against you for this it is not your strife. This is the strife of those who oppose themselves: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." (2 Tim 2:25).

### Satan is Limited

We must realize that Satan is limited:

1. He is tied to a leash.
2. He cannot walk where the redeemed walk.
3. He must steal the word of God before he can kill.
4. His power has been taken from him.
5. He can only deceive.
6. All his devices are in the flesh.

We must understand that Satan's power works in our flesh. His weapons are not mighty through God as the power of the gospel is. We have the gospel, but Satan only has deception.

Satan's weapons *are not spiritual*. He functions in the soul, mind and flesh. Once we know this we will know that he is under our feet. 1 Cor 10:13 says that no temptation has taken us but that which is *common to man*. Everything that can come against us comes through the realm of the flesh, through the things that are common to natural man. This is all Satan has.

## Works of the Flesh

Gal 5:19-23 shows how Satan operates through the flesh of man. *Witchcraft* is called *a work of the flesh*. If witchcraft is a work of the flesh and the Spirit of God is in us, then why should we bother to fight it? Why should we bind it? It is on a lower level than us.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like.

Of the which I told you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: *against such there is no law*. (Gal 5:19-23).

Every time we find the devil doing something it is always through the operation of one of these works of the flesh through people. Cut off the works of the flesh and we have cut off the devil. So instead of binding the devil, we correct our lifestyle. When we bind the devil we are in the flesh, fighting with our voice, yelling at nothing.

Notice in Gal 5:23 above regarding the fruit of the Spirit, "against such there is no law". If there is no law against us who live by new birth in the Spirit, then there is no way that the devil can bring a curse or any power against us. Curse comes by law.

## The Highway

Isaiah spoke of the highway of the redeemed. This is the *new and living way* spoken of in Hebrews (Heb 10:20). It is where we the redeemed abide: hid with Christ in God (Col 3:3). We have this through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not shed His blood for the devil, so he cannot walk where we walk. He cannot enter where we live.

And a highway shall be there and a way and it shall be called the way of holiness; *the unclean shall not pass over it*; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there.

But the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Is 35:8-10).

Where we walk in Christ the devil cannot walk (Ps 91:1). He cannot walk in the Spirit. He is limited to dealing with the flesh of man. Notice why we are hid, because we are dead to the law and raised up in Christ. There is no law against us, no curse because of the blood shed at Calvary and the new birth.

For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. (Col 3:3).

## World View

This does not come about by our *pleading the blood*. We have to get out of the mindset that deliverance is about what we do – that we have to do something. This is the source of all these false doctrines. It is animistic thinking and culture. It is instead about *who we are – in Christ*. It is about what He did in His finished work and His care over us as we stand by faith in His power.

How can we be in Christ and it not impact our mind and change us? It is pointless becoming a Christian, learning doctrine, going to Bible College and at the end of the day none of our ways, behaviours, mindsets or practices have changed. They have just taken on new names. This is the big issue in Pentecostalism today.

### The Wayside

Because Satan cannot walk where we walk, all he can do is deceive and draw us into the flesh, where his devices work. He cannot come on *the way*, where we live, but he lies in wait by *the wayside*. All we have to do is ignore him and stay in the truth concerning our life style.

The proud have hid a snare for me and cords; they have spread a net *by the wayside*; they have set traps for me. Selah. (Ps 140:5).

Traps are not spiritual devices. They are not curses. They are errors, deviations from the truth, temptations, the works of the flesh and deceptions. Satan is by the wayside, in the gutter. Why should we leave the way of the redeemed and go down and fight someone in the gutter? He might shout from the gutter. He might scare and say he will curse. But it is bluff. He has no teeth. He has been *de-feet-ed*.

### The Word of God

The temptation of Jesus shows how the devil works and how he is resisted. The devil used scripture and he twisted its meaning. Jesus answered him with the word of God. There was no argument and no fight. Jesus just answered "It is written..." (Matt 4:4). That is all Jesus had to do. Jesus said, "Man shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

The same can be seen with Eve's temptation. The serpent said to her, "Has God said..." (Gen 3:1). He brought doubt to Eve about what God had said and God meant. He changed the meaning of what God said. He took the word of God away from Eve because Eve and Adam allowed him to. The first thing Satan came against was the word of God.

Adam and Eve should have resisted him. They should have said, "God said do not eat of this tree.". That is all they needed to do. They did not need to prove it, or argue about it, or even rebuke the enemy. Satan would have left, to try again another day. Satan had no power at all over Adam and Eve.

Jesus said in Mark 4 that this is the nature of Satan's temptation. He comes with persecutions for the *word's sake* (Mark 4:17) and to *take away the word* that is sown in us (Mark 4:15). Notice it is by the *wayside*. The people who get picked off first are those by the wayside, those not committed to the church, those who allow wrong attitudes into their mind.

And these are they by the *way side*, where the word is sown. But when they have heard, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts...And have no root in themselves and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution arise for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. (Mark 4:15, 17).

Persecution, trials and the lust of riches arise *to take away the word* from people's hearts. Satan knows that if we have the word of God in our heart he cannot succeed against us. He must get that word out first, by using deception, or offence. Whether or not we give up the word of God is up to us. He can do nothing to take it, unless we give it up. He cannot defeat us if we hold fast to God's truth.

Any person that we meet who has left God's way, we will find that the problem is that they do not have God's word in them. They will not accept God's word. Satan has taken the word of God from them because their hearts are not right and this is their own choice. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Why do you not hear Me? It is because My word is not in you." (John 8:37-47).

### Steal, Kill and Destroy

In John 10:10 Jesus showed that the enemy comes to steal the word of God;

The thief comes not, but to steal and to kill and to destroy. I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10).

Jesus said that the thief has to steal *before* he can kill and *before* he can destroy. He has to get God's word out of the person before he can *kill* (*separate from God*) and then he can destroy. The order of words is significant here. He must steal the word of God first. This shows again his limitation.

1. He *steals* the word of God, by leading us away from it.
2. This *kills*, meaning to separate us from God's way.
3. Then he can *destroy*, meaning that he has us where he can work through the flesh, in the wayside gutter.

We keep the word of God and live by the word of God. This answers all other questions about cultic powers and whether the devil can harm a Christian. *Deliverance ministry* gets our attention away from the truth. It is Christ and His word that established us. "If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32).

And Moses ...said to them, Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you this day, which you shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; *because it is your life: and through this thing* you shall prolong your days in the land, when you go over Jordan to possess it. (Deut 32:45-47).

### Never Stumble

It is not Satan that brings us down, it is own life style. Peter said we should add certain things to our faith, such as godliness and love. Then he said that so long as we practice these things we shall never stumble. Therefore, if we stumble it is because we have left these things, have gone by the wayside into the works of the flesh.

For as long as our practice these things you shall never stumble. (2 Pet 1:10).

John said the same. He spoke of walking in the light and in love. He said that when we walk this way we also would not fall.

He that loves his brother abides in the light and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. (1 John 2:10).

Abiding in the light is essential. Satan is the prince of darkness. He is an expert at darkness. There is no way that any man can walk in darkness and keep himself from falling. Therefore, we must keep our self out of the enemy's gutter by living in the light.

This means that we live in truth. We live in honesty. We keep ourselves from all lying. Satan is the father of lies. Any lying in our lives brings us into darkness. We cannot say that we know the truth and walk in lies. "He that says that he knows Him and does not keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him." (1 John 1:4).

We know that whosoever is born of God sins not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself and that wicked one touches him not. (1 John 5:18).

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loves Him that begat loves him (Him) also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:1-5).

He that believes in Christ loves God and loves his brother and keeps God's commandments and by this faith of Jesus Christ which he has received, overcomes sin, the world and the devil. And we know that love is practical. We know the love of God because He sent His Son to die for us (1 John 3:16). "Therefore we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren." (1 John 3:16).

But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need and shuts up his compassion from him, how does the love of God dwell in him? (1 John 3:17).

### Anecdotal

Anecdotal means subjective, unreliable, untrustworthy and undependable. Arguments about spiritual warfare techniques use anecdotal evidence. They go like this, "We did such and such and this happened.". It is sketchy evidence. There are so many variables in this that we cannot base truth on it. Thank God the person was blessed! But base your truth on God word. We know that God works, blesses, heals and delivers, but we take truth about God from the word of God.

A common source of theology on spiritual warfare comes from testimonies. "I saw this. I had this dream. They came to curse me. I became sick. I used anointing oil. I am better. I had a vision. The Lord spoke to me. I felt in my spirit. I gave an offering. I received a miracle." What was left out of this testimony we will never know. It is given according to the convictions, or lies, of the person. We cannot base truth on it. If we do we will be deceived. "Your word is truth". (John 17:17).

"He who continues in My word will know the truth and the truth will make you free." "We have a more sure word of prophecy, unto which we will do well to pay heed." (2 Pet 1:19). We must never base our faith on testimonies. They are sandy ground. (Luke 6:46-49).

We rejoice in testimonies and follow the word of God. We can at times be taken in by testimonies of people who say they have gone to heaven or have seen Jesus. Some of these are true, but we do not know which ones. It is not wise to depend on our discernment. It is better to watch and pray. It is not wise to base our faith and what others say. When they fall our faith is then shaken. We base our faith on what God says.

Another source of error is from people who were saved from the occult. They sometimes go around giving testimonies in churches. Sometimes pastors use this to attract people. By itching peoples' ears,

these stories lead many astray. People saved from the occult need to attend church for two years and hear the true gospel, for their own salvation and then when they speak they should share the gospel, not their stories. These stories do not profit the hearers.

Deceivers operate in this area also. We know that as *sheep* we often do not want to believe this. We want to think well of things. We are believing people. But deception often happens in this area. Sometimes it is exaggeration and sometimes premeditated. Paul spoke of those who "lie in wait to deceive". (Eph 4:14). There are false brethren. Paul even said that God grants them genuine miracles to lure those who desire to follow a lie.

With all power and signs and lying wonders and with all deceivableness...because they received not the love of the truth...and for this cause God sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. (2 Thes 2:9-11).

We do not follow signs, but signs follow us (Mark 16:17). We follow Jesus.