



## Overcoming The Dragon

### Part Two

In the first part of this message we tried to show from the Scripture that the power of Satan is not going to diminish in the last days but increase. So the attitude that we shouldn't pay too much attention to him, or that we can overcome him *without* actually dealing with him, is really one of the "devices" he uses to make us over-confident, lull us to sleep, and eventually overcome us.

Jesus said the disciple is not above his master, but *shall be as* his master (Lk. 6:40). When we look at the life of Jesus, we see that before and during His earthly ministry He had to deal with Satan personally. He had to face his attacks and temptations, and He had to overcome them.

*And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, **Being forty days tempted of the devil.** And in those days he did eat nothing: and **when they were ended, he afterward hungered.** And **the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.***

Luke 4:1-3

Here we see that before Jesus could begin His earthly ministry, He had to face Satan in the wilderness and defeat him. Luke said the Lord was tempted the whole forty days. Then, *after* those days were ended, the Devil offered Jesus three more temptations and these are the three we are all familiar with. But they were not the only ones Jesus faced during those forty days.

After defeating Satan in the wilderness, Jesus spent the next three and a half years delivering *God's people* from the power of Satan and evil spirits. It was the greatest "deliverance ministry" the world had ever seen.

*And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases **and torments**, and those **which were possessed** with devils, and those **which were lunatick**, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.*

Matthew 4:24

Please notice that evil spirits are not only responsible for all kinds of *physical* illnesses, they are also the cause of various *emotional* problems ("torments") and *mental* problems ("lunatick"). Through His deliverance ministry, Jesus was revealing that evil spirits are the root cause of the physical, emotional, and mental problems we face.

Unfortunately, most of today's Christians have missed the point. They continue to view these illnesses as "human conditions" which can be managed through medication, psychological counseling, 12-step programs, and so on. The truth Jesus revealed has been ignored—and it will continue to be ignored because it goes against one of the basic (sacred cow) doctrines of the Evangelical Church, which is that a Christian cannot have a demon.

Even though Jesus demonstrated His power over all the power of the Devil *by* healing multitudes of people from conditions which *came from* the power of demon spirits, Jesus Himself was not immune from attack—and we can see one of these attacks in Matthew sixteen.

*But he turned, and said unto Peter, **Get thee behind me, Satan:** thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

Matthew 16:23

If our hearts are open, we can learn some very important truths through this account. *First*, we see that evil spirits can speak through God's people. A spirit can put a thought in our minds. If we accept it and speak it out, then the spirit that planted it is the one who is really speaking. We are just *the vessel* he is speaking through. The same is true of desires. Satan can give us a desire, and if we yield to it, then it is he who is acting through us. This is a reality that most of today's Christians absolutely refuse to accept.

*Second*, the thoughts or desires which do come from the enemy are not always overtly evil. In the case of Peter, his desire to protect the Lord seemed like a *good* one. Indeed, that desire would have been viewed by most of us as a manifestation of Peter's love for Jesus—and in a sense this was true. No doubt this was what Peter *thought* he was doing. But he didn't realize Jesus had to go to the Cross, and Satan was able to use that ignorance against him. He was able to use that ignorance to make him say something that was designed to stumble Jesus.

*Third*, it reveals that many times our worst enemy may not be the unsaved, but rather, fellow believers. Satan can easily speak to us through someone who is close to us and loves us, but who doesn't understand what God is doing in our lives. Many who are reading this newsletter have probably experienced this when you decided to leave the Church System. There is always some well-meaning person who is concerned for our spiritual welfare, who comes and begs us not to leave the church.

*Fourth*, it reveals that Jesus had very keen spiritual discernment. He knew the difference between flesh and spirit. He could tell when people were simply talking or acting in the flesh, or when a demon spirit was actually talking or moving through them.

*Fifth*, it reveals that even though Jesus defeated the power of Satan every day, as He delivered people who were in his grip, Satan never accepted that defeat. Therefore, he never stopped trying to stumble the Lord.

This is precisely the situation we face today. Satan knows that if we are "in Christ", then we have been given the power and the authority to overcome him. He knows that: "...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). But none of this phases him because he still doesn't accept the fact that he has been defeated—and because of this, he will *never stop* trying to defeat us.

*Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him, but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him.*

*John 13:26-28*

When observing the last Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus said: "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Lk. 22:15 NIV). In other words, that gathering was very special to Him. It was to be an intimate occasion—an occasion when Jesus would give the ones He loved His final words. Yet even during this most intimate of times, He had to confront Satan *in* one of those disciples.

The Scripture says that after Jesus gave Judas the sop, Satan entered into him. Exactly why Satan entered him at that point and not at some other point, we are not told. What we are told is that Satan did enter him at that point. You can be sure that just as Jesus knew Satan was moving through Peter on a previous occasion, He knew Satan had entered Judas at that point. So when He told Judas to do what he was about to do quickly, he knew he was talking to Satan as well.

*And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*

*Matthew 27:39-40*

Matthew doesn't explicitly say it, but I believe Satan was putting his very own words in the mouths of those who mocked the Lord while He hung on the Cross. For what Satan said to Jesus in the wilderness was: "**If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread**" (Matt. 4:3). These people said: "**If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross**".

So we see that even though Jesus had the power to drive evil spirits out of the bodies and souls of others, He could not stop Satan from harassing Him, tempting Him, and attacking Him throughout His entire ministry, and even in His final hours on the Cross. Sometimes those attacks or temptations came directly; while other times they came through men—even those who were closest to Him. And while it's true, Jesus overcame Satan at every turn, He didn't overcome him by *ignoring* him. He had to face him, battle him, and defeat him.

It's important for us to remember that Jesus had no fallen sin nature for Satan to touch or work through. Jesus never walked in "the flesh". He was a living manifestation of the death to self life. He never said anything except what the Father told Him to say. He never went anywhere but where the Father told Him to go. He never desired anything but the Father's will. He walked in perfect obedience, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Yet Satan was still able to harass, tempt and attack Him.

If the sinless Son of God had to face Satan personally, if He had to battle him in order to overcome him, then what in the world makes us think we are so special we won't have to do the same thing? Those who think they don't have to do what Jesus did are saying the disciple *is* above his Master, and they are no different from those who say we don't have to suffer because Jesus suffered *for* us. They are no different than those who say we should never be poor because Jesus became poor *for* us, or we should never be sick because Jesus became a curse *for* us.

Those who claim they are living a victorious Christian life without ever having to battle and overcome the power of the enemy are walking in religious delusion because it's not possible to ignore him. The reason it's not possible is because *he doesn't ignore you!* You can be sure that he will try to seduce, or deceive, or tempt, or attack us in some way, every day of our lives—and when he does, either we will overcome him or he will overcome us.

Unfortunately, God's people always seem to gravitate to opposite extremes of every issue. When it comes to dealing with the power of Satan, some of us want to blame

everything on him, while others refuse to blame anything on him. In between these two extremes is the Scriptural view, which is the view Paul manifested in his writings.

*But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing **we made every effort to see you.** For we wanted to come to you--certainly I, Paul, did, again and again--**but Satan stopped us.***

*I. Thessalonians 2:17-18 NIV*

*Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes **I purposed to come unto you,** (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.*

*Romans 1:13*

Paul speaks of two different occasions when he wanted to visit the brethren in specific locations. In *both* instances he was prevented from going. But he was mature enough to know *the difference* between the types of hindrances he was experiencing and who was behind them.

In the case of his visit to Thessalonica, he knew *Satan* was the one who was hindering him because he knew it was Satan who had caused the unbelieving Jews of that region to have him thrown out of that town to begin with. He knew that the same power which caused him to be thrown out of that town was being utilized to *keep him out*. Satan thought that if he could keep Paul out of Thessalonica, he could use persecution to eventually destroy the church that had been raised up there.

In the case of his visit to Rome, even though he doesn't explicitly say so, the impression he gives is that it was God who was preventing him from going, for he said *the reason* he had been unable to go was so he might have more fruit among the Gentiles.

This was not a case where Satan was hindering him from going somewhere and doing God's will. Rather, it was a case where God Himself was using circumstances to order Paul's steps. God was not letting Paul go to Rome because it wasn't time for him to go. He had *more work* for Paul to do among the Gentiles, and He knew that once Paul got to Rome, his ministry would start drawing to a close. Paul would spend two years in Rome and then be martyred.

There is a big difference between God arranging or using adverse circumstances to order our steps, and Satan using (or creating) circumstances to stop us from doing God's will—and those who go through this life trying to ignore the enemy will *never know* that difference. When they come up against a hindrance that Satan is creating, they will always assume it is God ordering their steps.

Talk about giving glory to the Devil! How much glory is the Devil getting when those who say they are being led by the Holy Spirit, turn around and allow themselves to be led by circumstances Satan is creating? How much glory is Satan getting when we lay the responsibility of what *he* is doing at the feet of God?

*And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, **there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me,** lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing **I besought the Lord thrice,** that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory **in my infirmities,** that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

*II. Corinthians 12:7-9*

Notice how Paul dealt with this particular attack. He didn't just assume God was ordering his steps through it. First of all, he knew it was coming from Satan, and he wasn't going to accept anything he knew was coming from the power of the enemy. So he prayed for deliverance. He didn't just pray once. He prayed again and again *until* he got an answer from the Lord concerning it.

Once God told Paul He was allowing this attack in order to keep him humble, *then* Paul yielded to that situation as coming from the hand of the Lord. But accepting an attack of the enemy, as coming from the Lord, was *not* his first response because Paul was a *spiritual warrior*. He loved God and he hated Satan, and he had power in the Spirit to *defeat* Satan wherever he went. He would never accept anything he knew was coming from Satan, unless God gave him a specific word to do so—and this is the way all of us should walk.

*And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, **Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.***

*But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, **thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness,** wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*

*And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.*

*Acts 13:6-11*

Now let's look at how Paul deals with another Satanic hindrance. In this case he knew God had opened the door for him to preach the gospel to this Roman official, and he knew the time to do it was right then. So there was no question in his mind as to *the source* or *the purpose* of the hindrance. He knew this was not a situation where God was using Satan to order his steps, but that the enemy was trying to stop him from doing God's will.

Do you think Paul would have been able to continue preaching the gospel to that Roman official if he would have tried to *ignore* what Satan was doing? Absolutely not! If Paul would have tried to ignore the enemy at that point, Satan would have won that battle.

Also, consider what Paul did *not* do in order to win this battle. He didn't pray and ask Jesus to stop what was going on. Rather, being led of the Holy Spirit, he turned around and looked right into the eyes of the vessel Satan was moving through, and pronounced judgment on him!

How many of us would have done what Paul did? How many of us even know the difference between a situation where God is allowing adverse circumstances in our lives to order our steps, and when Satan is doing the same thing in order to stop us from doing God's will?

And what about the work of the enemy within our own hearts and minds? How many of us have enough spiritual discernment to even *recognize* when a spirit is talking to us or giving us some kind of desire? How many of us have the kind of determination it takes to defeat them? How many of us have *zero tolerance* for anything in our lives which has its source in them?

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:*

*II. Corinthians 10:3*

*This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;*

*I. Timothy 1:18*

*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

*II. Timothy 2:3-4*

When God calls us to be His sons and daughters, He is not calling us to a life of comfort and ease. He is not calling us to a life where all our carnal desires are met so we can experience self fulfillment. Rather, He is *drafting us into His army*. He is calling us to be one of His soldiers.

Whether we like it or not, we are (supposed to be) in a war that is every bit as real as any literal war—and this war has two fronts. One battle line involves the crucifixion of our flesh. The other one has to do with overcoming the ever-increasing power of Satan in the last days.

These two battle lines must not only be fought separately, they must be fought differently. Crucifying the flesh is a process, and it is something that must be done every day of our lives. That's why Paul said: "*I die daily*" (*I. Cor. 15:31*). We don't get up each morning and automatically do God's will. We have to spend time before the Lord to discover what His will is, and then we have to choose His will over our own desires.

Overcoming the power of Satan is a different battle—and dying daily does not cancel out the need to fight this battle. This should already be evident by the fact that Jesus Himself had to face and overcome the power of Satan His whole life. The same was true of Paul. Certainly, Paul walked in "death to self". He walked "in the Spirit". Yet he still had to face the power of the enemy wherever he went, and he had to overcome it. So dying to self does not automatically give us victory on this front—though it certainly does help.

Those who boast that they don't have to worry about the Devil, or that they are not required to face him and defeat him in their own lives, are not even in the battle. They may think that because they are not having any struggles they are walking in spiritual victory, but this is a fantasy. In reality they have been overcome and don't realize it.

Friends, it's just not possible to win a battle you haven't fought! In the same way, it's not possible to overcome the power of Satan if you refuse to face it and overcome it. Thinking we have won a battle we didn't even fight is the height of spiritual pride and self-delusion!

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