

## DELIVERANCE & SPIRITUAL WARFARE

### *Part Two*

Tonight I would like to continue with the subject of deliverance and spiritual warfare. Let me start off by saying that there is a terrible lack of revelation and understanding among God's people regarding the work of demon spirits. It seems that when it comes to *external* attacks or situations, or even some types of physical illnesses, Satan is mentioned (in a very general way) as a possible cause—though *specific* spirits are rarely mentioned as possible causes. However, when it comes to many of the *internal* temptations and problems and struggles we face, it seems that every cause under the sun is mentioned *except* Satan. Instead, these internal problems are almost always attributed to either our own lust (*James 1:14*), or the wickedness of our own hearts, or a lack of self-denial.

You are all familiar with the verse that says the heart is “*deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*” (*Jer. 17:9*). Well, I want to call your attention to what else the Scripture says about the heart—particularly the heart of the believer—because it's wrong to continually accuse ourselves (and others) of having a wicked heart. It appears that many are confusing the heart with the “flesh” nature. It's true, our fallen Adamic nature is very wicked, and it always will be wicked. The flesh cannot be redeemed or sanctified because it is hostile to God and the things of God. This is why Paul said: “*For I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] dwelleth no good thing...*” (*Rom. 7:18*). But that's the flesh. This is not necessarily the condition of the heart of the regenerated man or women. Even under the Old Covenant, the Scripture talks about the need for God's people to have a “clean” or a “pure” heart.

Moses said the Lord would “circumcise” the heart of Israel so they would be able to love God with all their hearts (*Deut. 30:6*). King David asked God to create a “clean heart” in him after he sinned with Bathsheba (*Pss. 51:10*). He also said God is good to those who are “of a clean heart” (*Pss. 73:1*). Again, in Psalm 24:3, David asked, who can ascend the hill of God, or who can stand in his holy place? The answer is: “*He that hath clean hands and a pure heart...*”. When speaking of the time when Israel would be restored to God, after centuries of being His enemy, the prophet Ezekiel said:

*For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and **I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.** And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

*Ezekiel 36:24-27*

This is what happens to a person when he truly repents of his sin. The blood of the Lord Jesus is applied to his life and he receives forgiveness and justification. He is born again. He is given a new heart, so to speak, which makes him a new creation in Christ. But when you constantly tell people their hearts remain deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, this leaves them with the impression that regardless of how obedient or committed they are to the Lord, *they* are still wicked and will always remain that way. This is not scriptural, and it will never help us come forth in the image of Christ because it will cause us to

continually *identify* with a wicked heart that never becomes clean, and from which we can never escape. If our hearts remain wicked and unknowable, even when we are serving God with all our might, then many verses in the New Testament would never have been written because they would be untrue, and it would be impossible to *obey* them. Consider the following examples:

*A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*

*Matthew 12:35*

*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with **all thy heart**, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

*Matthew 22:37*

*And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on **the good ground** are they, which **in an honest and good heart**, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

*Luke 8:14-15*

*Now the end of the commandment is charity **out of a pure heart**, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:*

*I. Timothy 1:5*

*Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord **out of a pure heart**.*

*II. Timothy 2:22*

*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another **with a pure heart** fervently:*

*I. Peter 1:22*

*For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, **if our heart condemn us not**, then have we confidence toward God.*

*I John 3:20-21*

The view that most of us have of ourselves, as a result of constantly hearing that we (ie: our hearts) are desperately wicked, regardless of how long or how faithfully we have served the Lord, makes it impossible for us to ever believe we could really obey the Scripture when it tells us to do things like, follow

righteousness out of a *pure* heart, or love one another with a *pure* heart, or walk in charity towards one another out of a *pure* heart. How could we ever do these things with a “pure heart” if our hearts remain desperately wicked, even after we have become a new creation in Christ?

If all you ever hear about yourself (ie: your heart) is that it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, you will never believe that you can obey Jesus’ command to love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart. After all, how can a desperately wicked heart love God at all, let alone fully love Him? If all you ever hear about your heart is that it’s desperately wicked, you will never believe what Jesus said about the “good” man bringing forth good things out of the “good treasure” of his heart. How can anything good come from a desperately wicked heart?

If we resign ourselves to the fact that our hearts will *always* be desperately wicked, we will never really believe what Jesus said about the “honest and good heart” which received the seed (the Word of God) and produced fruit. I mean, hey! How can a desperately wicked heart be a “good and honest” heart? And how can a desperately wicked heart produce good fruit?

If we walk around continually believing that our hearts are desperately wicked, it will be impossible for us to ever imagine a situation like the apostle John describes, where our heart does *not* condemn us. I mean, how can a persistently wicked heart *not* condemn us?

The reason I am taking the time to share this is because one of the most important things we must learn to do as a believer is *identify with* our new man rather than our old man. The reason it’s so important is because one of the most successful tricks demon spirits play on us to plant evil thoughts and desires in our minds or hearts in such a way as to make us think these things are coming from us. Spirits just love it when we walk through life assuming the thoughts and desires *they* are giving us are coming from our own “desperately wicked hearts” because as long as we view the situation this way, the activity of these demons will remain *hidden* and they themselves will remain *un-discernable* to us.

Most Christians never realize that they are under attack from an *external* enemy because these spirits have the ability to make them feel as though these things (ie: thoughts, desires, feelings) are coming from *inside* them. Since it feels like they are coming from the inside, they assume it’s *their own* wickedness that keeps popping up. Consequently, they never engage these spirits in battle and as a result, the demons are never defeated. Believers continue to go around the same mountain, again and again, until eventually they grow weary and give in to the wrong thought or desire. Then, after they have acted upon them, the same spirits that prompted them to sin, turn right around and heap condemnation on them.

The more you see how these spirits are continually deceiving, tempting, vexing and oppressing God’s people, the more of a hatred you will have for them. It’s a terrible error to assume (or teach that) the sin and weakness of God’s people is *always* a result of their own wickedness. When you do this, and then you try and help them, all you will ever do is end up accusing and condemning them because you will always blame everything on their own wicked hearts.

Before we go on, I guess I need to interject that I know many people have used the work of demons as an *escape* from accepting any personal responsibility for their sin. It has, unfortunately, become standard practice for so-called deliverance ministries to lay all the blame for everything we do wrong on evil spirits.

I want to make it clear that I am *not* advocating this. It takes two to tango. Spirits can't *force* us to do anything. We have to choose to yield to them, just like we have to choose to yield to our own evil desires. Nevertheless, it remains a fact that these spirits are *supernatural* creatures who know us very well—better than we know ourselves, I'm afraid. They know our weaknesses, and they know just how to push our buttons. They are very skilled at using our ignorance against us to bring us into bondage.

Those who have been exposed to counterfeit deliverance ministries, and/or erroneous deliverance and spiritual warfare teachings, and who have come away with the attitude that the whole idea of deliverance as a joke as a result, are as useless to God's kingdom as any unsaved man or woman would ever be, for they end up rejecting *all* truth about the reality of demon spirits. They will never be able to help anyone who is in spiritual bondage because they now assume the whole idea of deliverance is just a cop-out. When they come across someone who needs real deliverance, their answer will always be the same—if you would just *die to self* and then ask God to deliver you, you'll get free.

If this is your view, then I'm sure you won't be interested in anything else I have to say.

So, let's start with a few basics. Exactly where do these demon spirits dwell (when they are not dwelling in a person)? Well, the passage we looked at last week (*Eph. 6:12*) says that they dwell in "heavenly places". The term, heavenly places, is used four times in the book of Ephesians.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings **in heavenly places** in Christ:*

*Ephesians 1:3*

*And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward 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:*

*Ephesians 1:19-21*

*Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, **and made us sit together in heavenly places** in Christ Jesus:*

*Ephesians 2:5-6*

*And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now **unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places** might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:*

*Ephesians 3:9-11*

The first thing we notice in these passages is that Paul talks about heavenly places (plural), not about *a* place (singular) called heaven. There are *places* in the invisible spiritual realm, just as there are places here in the physical realm. All the spiritual creatures God created, including the holy angels, are able to move from place to place in this realm, and so can Satan and all his demons.

The second thing we can see is that some of these places in the spirit realm are *higher* than others. While God, the angels and the demons all dwell in heavenly places, Paul also said that Jesus has been raised *far above* all the evil powers in those heavenly places, to sit at the Father's right hand. So the Father, the Holy Spirit and the Son dwell in the *highest part* of the heavenly places Paul talks about; while Satan and his demons dwell in the *lower part* of those heavenly places.

This is why Jesus could say He saw Satan "fall" like lightening (*Lk. 10:18*). You see, Satan, whose original name was Lucifer, was not created the wicked creature he now is. He was created a "cherub". The Scriptures calls him "*the anointed cherub that covereth*" (*Ezek. 28:14*).

Now if you want to know what a cherub covers, just look at the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle of Moses. They cover the Mercy Seat. The glory cloud of God's presence rested on top of the Mercy Seat, between the two cherubims. So they are associated with the throne of God and glory of God. We see this again in the description of the cherubims in Ezekiel chapters ten and eleven.

*Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was **above the head of the cherubims** there appeared **over them** as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of **the likeness of a throne**....Then did **the cherubims** lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and **the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.***

*Ezekiel 10:1 & 11:22*

Once again, where did Paul say God dwells? He said God dwells in the highest part of the heavenly places. So if the cherubims are directly under the throne of God, and they are also associated with the glory of God, where do you suppose *they* dwell? They dwell with God in the highest part of the heavenly places, just beneath His throne—and that's where Lucifer dwelt when he was the anointed cherub that covereth. But when he rebelled, he fell like lightening from that place—and since Jesus was there when it happened, He could say He *saw* him fall.

Where did he fall to? He fell to the *lower part* of the heavenly places, where he now dwells. This lower part of the heavenly places includes the air all around us. In Ephesians 2:2, Paul reminds Christians that in times past we walked according to the course of this world, according to, "...*the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*". So here we are told that there are demonic powers in the very air around us, and that they are the spirits that work in the children of disobedience. They are the spirits that cause people to be disobedient to God.

So the term, "heavenly places" is just a reference to the *unseen* realm. It's not talking about a place way out in outer space. The spirit realm stretches from the air that's around us, to the highest part where God dwells. This is why demons can always be around us.

Just how many demons are dwelling in the air around us, and in the lower parts of the heavenly places? No one really knows. But the writer of Hebrews informs us in a round about way there are quite a few of them because speaking of God's holy angels, he said there is an *innumerable company* of them. (*Heb. 12:22*).

Just how many is an innumerable company? I don't really know. Maybe a billion—which is ten hundred million. Maybe a trillion—which is ten hundred billion. Beyond that my puny little brain gets lost. But this innumerable company of angels is *what's left* after a portion of them fell.

Most scholars interpret Revelation 12:4, where the Dragon pulls a third of the stars out of heaven, as Lucifer causing a third of the angels to fall in the original rebellion. I don't believe this passage has anything to do with the original fall of Lucifer, but just for the sake of argument, let's say the scholars are right. Take one third of an *innumerable* company of angels, and that's how many of them fell and became demon spirits. That's how many are moving through the air all around you and me, 24/7. That's how many of them there are to tempt us, harass us, shoot wrong thoughts into our minds, plant wrong desires in our hearts, etc. every day. Whatever the actual number is, you can bet that's it's big!

When we realize the very air around us is full of demons, and we realize what they are capable of doing with regards to talking to us and tempting us, we will begin to understand why Paul told us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We will begin to understand that we cannot fight these spirits with *carnal* weapons. They are not impressed with our religious knowledge or our human wisdom and talents. They are not impressed by our worldly promotions or our organizational skills. They are not impressed with the millions of dollars we spend to get people into churches that at best, go through a worthless ritual every Sunday morning, and at worst, are nothing but religious theaters and night clubs.

These fallen angels are *laughing* at today's Christians—and I'm not talking about the ones who are deluded and part of the great apostasy. I'm talking about us! These spirits are laughing at *us* because we live in such ignorance regarding them. They are laughing at us because most of us have no idea how to recognize them or war against them. Consequently, they know we are no real threat to them or their kingdom. The only time they *stop* laughing at us is when we start looking *behind* the visible realm and begin to see the *invisible realm*. They are only impressed when we go before God in prayer, and yield to the Holy Spirit as He begins to show us how to recognize them and wage a successful war against them. They are only impressed when we begin to realize that the enemy we are fighting is *not* flesh and blood, and as a result, we stop fighting each other in the flesh and we start fighting *them* in the spirit.

Once God has established the reality of this invisible demonic kingdom in our minds, we will also understand why Paul told us to put on the whole armor of God. I would like to take just a few minutes to look at this armor and what it represents because I'm pretty sure that any teaching we have heard on this subject will have had little to do with the *real* reason Paul talked about it.

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

*the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 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 ye 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.*

*Ephesians 6:10-18*

When reading about the armor of God in this passage, the first thing we notice is that the reason for putting this armor on is stated very clearly. It's so we will be able to stand against the wiles (ie: tricks, tactics, attacks, temptations) of the enemy. I've heard quite a few sermons on this topic over the years; but very few of them have focused on the reason given by Paul for putting this armor on—which is spiritual warfare.

### **Loins Girt About With Truth**

The first piece of our armor is truth. It's only when we know the truth concerning the reality of demon spirits—their nature, their characteristics, the spiritual weapons we are given to defeat them—that our loins are girt about with *the truth* that is able to set us free from the grip they have on some area of our lives. The truth gives us the ability to withstand the lies they seek to project into our minds every day.

Jesus said the “truth” would make us free (*John 8:32*). In this context, learning the truth about how these spirits operate will dispel much of the *fear* that binds us when it comes to deliverance and warfare. Indeed, some times just exposing how the enemy works and teaching God's people how he moves is enough to start setting them free because they begin to realize that the source of the problem they are facing is not their desperately wicked heart after all. Rather, it's the power of another (invisible) person. When they realize this, they stop trying to deal with outward manifestation of the problem and they begin attacking *the spirits* which are the root of the problem.

### **The Breastplate Of Righteousness**

The breastplate of righteousness speaks of two kinds of righteousness. The first one is the righteousness we actually walk in. If we are not walking in actual righteousness, then when these spirits come to tempt us or trick us, they will succeed very easily. And as soon as they cause us to commit some act we know we should not do, they come right back and begin to condemn us.

You all know that one of the names of Satan is “the accuser of the brethren”—and believe me, he loves to live up to that name. After his demons tempt us or pressure us to sin, he comes to accuse us non-stop of failing God. He casts a sense of shame over us so that we feel that we are no good, and that we will never get the victory over that besetting sin—so why even bother to try? He does everything he can to keep us walking under a heavy weight of condemnation and guilt because he knows this breaks our fellowship with the Lord. But when we have on the breastplate of righteousness, when we are *walking in* actual righteousness, Satan's weapon of condemnation is much less effective and it is much harder to separate us from God.

The other kind of righteousness is the “imputed” righteousness of Jesus—and this is a powerful weapon to defeat spirits of accusation and condemnation. It’s a powerful weapon because God knew that Satan would continually be tempting us to sin and causing us to sin. He knew that when we gave into that temptation, the enemy would turn right around and condemn us. For this reason, the Father provided *justification* through the blood of the Son, so that when we do fall and when we do fail, we can come to God in true repentance, we will have the faith to believe that He will forgive and cleanse us because we know that it’s the blood of Jesus that makes us acceptable to Him. We will not only be able to pray with faith and receive the forgiveness of God, but we will also have faith to *go on* to overcome that weakness or sin. We can stand in the *imputed* righteousness that is given to us until such time as we come unto that perfect righteousness of our own, which God will lead us into. So the breastplate of righteousness is a very important weapon in our warfare against Satan and his demons.

### **Feet Shod With The Gospel Of Peace**

This is actually a piece of armor ancient soldiers wore in battle. It was something to cover the feet, and especially the heel. Sometimes it was made of thick leather, and other times it was made of some kind of metal. It speaks of our spiritual walk. We should have our walk *protected* with the true peace of God.

Unfortunately, this piece of armor was is *always* spoken of in the context of evangelizing the lost. We are told by ministers that it is our duty to share the “gospel of peace” with the unsaved so they can be reconciled to God and find peace with him. But I have news for you. Paul wasn’t talking about evangelizing the lost in this passage. He was talking about standing against the wiles of the demonic kingdom. He was explaining the things we need to have on in order to *protect ourselves* from spiritual harm!

The reason our feet must be shod with peace is because demon spirits are always trying to stir up strife and division and contention in our lives. They are always trying to cause enmity, not only between the people of the world but between Christians as well. The purpose of the demonic kingdom has always been to bring division, strife and warfare. They do to keep us in an continual state of upheaval and misery because they know that if we walk in strife and misery continually, eventually it will weaken our mind and our faith—and that’s exactly what they want. They want to wear us down and wear us down till we get to the place where they can eventually gain complete control of us.

But when our feet are shod with the peace of Christ, we can stand right in the middle of all the strife or misery or upheaval around us, and it won’t wear us down. It won’t weaken our faith. Jesus said: “*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you: not as the world giveth give I unto you*” (John 14:27). The peace that Jesus gives is not the kind of peace the world gives. The peace the world gives is a temporary feeling of contentment and security that one has when things are going well financially, when no one in the family is sick, and when we have plenty of material goods. But when we are depending on that kind of peace, we are on false ground. Tomorrow the kids may get sick, or financial problems might arise, or spirits contention may sweep in and completely disrupt the family—and suddenly our peace is gone.

The peace Jesus gives is not the kind that only gives comfort when things are going well in the natural. True peace is knowing that all things work together for good to them that love and serve God. Whatever tests we face, we know that God is only leading us toward the goal of our redemption. True peace enables us to stand right in the midst of the storm, knowing that God is with us even unto the end of the world.

### **The Shield Of Faith**

This is the weapon which we use when the enemy begins to project his fiery darts of doubt, unbelief and lies into our minds. We can stick this shield of faith in front of us—faith in the Word of God; faith in the promises of God; faith in the power of God and the power that is in the blood of Jesus; faith that God is ever with us—and with this shield we will quench those darts.

### **The Helmet Of Salvation**

The helmet goes upon the head and spiritually speaking, it protects the mind. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of love, and of power, and of a “sound mind” (*II. Tim. 1:7*). Spirits try to work on the mind continually. Sometimes they will *bombard* the mind with thoughts or desires to get us completely distracted and down in the flesh. Isaiah said: “*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee*” (*Isa. 26:3*). As we meditate on God’s Word, on His goodness, on the salvation we are partaking of, our minds can fend off the constant barrage of thought that are coming from the enemy.

So few of God’s people understand that demon spirits have the power and the authority to project *their* thoughts and desires into *our* minds. We cannot stop them from doing this. However, we don’t have to accept those thoughts and desires; we don’t have to dwell on them; and we don’t have to yield to them or obey them. This is why it’s so important we do what Paul said in Second Corinthians:

*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

*II. Corinthians 10:5*

You see, many times we can’t really tell if a thought that’s coming to us is coming from our own heart and mind, or if it’s coming to from an *invisible* person (ie: demon spirit). If we get in the habit of taking *every* thought captive to the obedience of Christ, then there will be no chance of us accepting a thought or a desire that is coming from a spirit.

How important is this? Well, listening to our own fleshly thoughts or desires is not nearly as dangerous as listening to the thoughts and desires of a demon spirit, for you see, our flesh has no supernatural power. The power of the flesh is strong; some times very strong. But even at it’s strongest, it’s only a *human* power. The power of fallen angels is a *supernatural* power. When we accept and act on the thoughts or desires which come from demon spirits, we are brought under the supernatural power and influence of those spirits—and this power much harder to break. So it is for our own spiritual welfare that we put on the helmet of salvation and protect our minds.

### **The Sword Of The Spirit**

All the weapons mentioned so far—the breastplate of righteousness, loins girt with the truth, the helmet of salvation, feet shod with the gospel of peace, the shield of faith—are *defensive* weapons with which to resist the attack of the enemy. But the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is an *offensive* weapon. Remember, when Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted by Satan, He took the Word of God and defeated Satan.

### *Additional Armor*

I would like to mention two other weapons we are given to defeat Satan. The first one is the weapon of *praise*. Demon spirits cannot stand *true* worship and praise. They cannot stand it when we are praising God and adoring Jesus *in the spirit*. This is because they have a nature which is diametrically opposed to the Spirit of God. We Christians love to be in an atmosphere where people are talking about God and worshipping Him. But put us in a bar room with all the evil that's manifested in these places, and with all the filthy language that's in the air, and it would grate against our inner man so much that we would want to get out of that place as quickly as possible. After a while, we would just have to get out.

It's the same way with demon spirits. Put them in an atmosphere where Spirit-filled people are praising and worshipping the name of the Lord Jesus, and it grates upon their wicked natures so much they cannot stand it and they have to get out. However, a word of caution is needed here. For, though it's true, demon spirits can't stand to be around *true* worship and praise, it's also true, they are not bothered one bit by *fleshy* or *soulish* worship and praise. Neither are not bothered by people who talk about the things of God out of the flesh or the soul realm. As a matter of fact, there is one particular class of demon that *loves* these things—they are called religious demons. They will walk right into most of our churches, and sit beside the Christians and sing right along with them. They will speak in (false) tongues and give forth (false) prophecies and do all the things the Holy Spirit does through believers. These spirits are powerful and they are brazen. They are not intimidated by anything except the *genuine* Spirit of God.

The other weapon we have is *thankfulness*. Demon spirits hate it when we walk in a thankful and grateful attitude towards God. And I'm not talking about some fake or artificial thing that we work up in our own flesh. I'm not talking about the plastic smile or the shallow happy face the unsaved often put on. I'm talking about genuine thankfulness and gratitude, which springs from faith and love towards God. Demons can't stand to be around genuine, spiritual thankfulness. That's why they are always trying to plant thoughts in our minds which remind us of all the bad things that are happening to us. They want us to think on these things so we will begin moving in ingratitude, doubt and unbelief. That's why they are always trying to remind us of all the bad things that have happened to us in the past. One thing you will notice that's common among those who are walking under severe demonic oppression or possession is that they are *constantly* rehashing in their minds all the wrongs that have been done to them their whole life.

This is one of the signs that a mind is under the control of demon spirits. It *continually* thinks negative, defeating thoughts; it *continually* meditates on sorrow and misery. Of course, we are not suggesting that Christians retreat into a fantasy world and refuse to face the realities of life, or the realities of the battles we face every day. But walking in reality does *not* mean that we must continually meditate on things that bring us misery and sorrow. It does *not* mean that we must continually rehash all the horrible things that have happened to us over the years, or that we must continually dwell on some particular horrible past (or present) event in our lives.

One of the ways we can tell if we are walking under the influence of one of these negative spirits of unbelief, or depression, or defeat, is if, when we casually look back over the past months and years of our lives, all we remember are bad things. If we can't remember any of the good things, if we can't remember any of the times that God spoke to us or moved supernaturally on our behalf, that's an indication we are walking under the influence of a spirit, because when we are walking under them, they block our minds from recalling any of the good things that God, or that other people, have done for us.

As I mentioned in part one of this study, there are six basic areas of work these fallen angels carry out in the human experience: deception, temptation, vexation, depression, oppression and finally, possession. What we need to realize is that these spirits are going to be fighting and striving against us *daily* in the first four of these areas—deceiving, tempting, vexing, and depressing.

Unfortunately, because we don't normally feel like we are being oppressed or possessed by these spirits, most of us assume we are not being affected by them at all. If we should ever stop and consider the possibility that the problems we face could possibly have their source in the work of invisible spirits, we would soon be persuaded *otherwise* by ministers who confidently boast that a Christian "can't have a demon", and who then tell us the root of our problem lies with our desperately wicked hearts, or the fact that we are not taking up our cross daily. So those who are bound by spirits not only remain bound by them, they now have the additional privilege of walking under *guilt* and *condemnation* because they have been assured that they are *totally* responsible for whatever is happening to them.

No doubt the minister who counseled them this way will feel wonderful about himself. He will probably feel very spiritual and revel in how much spiritual wisdom has. Yet, he is nothing but a tool of Satan—and on the Day of Judgment, he will answer for all *the blood* of those who remained in bondage to demon spirits because they followed his religious pride and ignorance. It's my hope that none of us will be guilty of this kind of thing, and that none of will find ourselves in this kind of situation when we stand before the Lord.

So, let's take a quick look at these six areas of demonic work. As we look at them, remember that in each one the purpose is to wear down and weaken the mind and the will of the believer over a period of time, destroying our faith and our spiritual strength, so they can ultimately enter in and indwell us. Also, remember that this is just a general overview. If you want to know more about how these things work, go to God and ask Him for wisdom and revelation. Just as no man can teach us how to "walk in the Spirit" or "hear God's voice", so it is, no man can teach us how to recognize the work of demon spirits, or how to war against them. We must be able to be led by the Spirit of God in these matters.

#### \*DECEIVING WORK OF DEMONS\*

First we have the deceiving work of spirits. This work is in three main areas: (1) deception in the realm of presenting their thoughts and desires as ours; (2) deception in the realm of religious teaching; and (3) deception in the realm of our ability to recognize our own *true* spiritual condition.

Regarding the first area, I have already described how demon spirits come to us in *our own* name because they know that we are much more likely to accept and act upon the thoughts and desires and feelings they are giving us if we believe they are our own thoughts, desires and feelings. If you knew it was a *demon spirit* who was giving you a certain thought, desire, or feeling, you would be much less likely to listen to it or act upon it, than if you believed it was your own, that it was coming from your own person. These spirits deceive us so easily precisely because they have the power to speak to us in our own name. They make us think the thing *they* are desiring is what *we* are desiring. They are skilled at making us think the thing *they* are thinking it what *we* are thinking. They are expert at making us think the thing *they* are feeling is what *we* are feeling.

This is why we must learn to identify with our “new man”, or the new nature we received when we were born again. This is why Paul said: “...reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11). When thoughts or desires or temptations come, we must reckon the old man (ie: the old us) who loved those things dead indeed, and *identify* with our new man (ie: the new us) who no longer loves those things, but who loves righteousness and holiness.

Regarding the deceiving work of spirits in the realm of doctrine, anyone who reads the Scripture knows that it predicts a day would come when people would be giving heed to seducing spirits and the doctrines or teaching of devils (*I. Tim. 4:1*). This is the deceiving work of demons, whereby they project into our minds, false ideas and revelations about God and about His plan. They deceive men by giving them beautiful revelations which appear to be from God, which appear to be great light—thus fulfilling the scripture which says: “...for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (*II. Cor. 11:14*)—but which are lies and deception.

The third area of deception concerns our ability to rightly judge our true spiritual condition. Spirits of deception also come to us and present us with a *false view* of ourselves. They make us think we are more spiritual or more mature than we really are. They give us a feeling of superiority regarding other believers, so that we think we are advanced far beyond them spiritually. They blind us to the obvious things we are doing wrong, while convincing us that we are doing right things, when in fact we are not doing these things. They have all kinds of tricks to make us think we are something we aren't. This is why it's so important to let the Scripture function as a “mirror” when we read it. We must stop comparing ourselves with other people, and stop viewing ourselves through the prism of our (good) intentions; but instead, continually compare our lives and our conduct with the standard revealed in Scripture. The life of Jesus is the plumb line. Perfection is the standard.

#### \*TEMPTING WORK OF DEMONS \*

The tempting work of demons is closely related to the deceiving work of demons. In this area, spirits project into our minds, thought and sometimes even beautiful mental pictures, of how nice it would be to do this or how nice it would be to have that. At the same time they are projecting these thoughts into our minds, they are causing us to *forget* that the thing we are thinking, or the situation we are seeing in our mind is against the Word of God or the known will of God. They tempt us continually with this thought, or that idea, or with a mental picture of something in an attempt to get us to sin. They try to get us involved in things that will separate us from the Spirit of God and bring us more and more under their influence.

The temptations are usually fitted to our own specific weaknesses and desires. For example, to the business man, they project beautiful mental pictures of how he can make this step in his business or that step. They give him ideas on how to make more money, but these ideas will go against the spirit of righteousness and holiness, so that if the man follows them, he is being separated from God and coming under the leadership of the spirit that is communicating with him. The spirits are using the man's own desire to succeed against him to bring him into spiritual bondage. They tempt him to follow their ideas so that they can lead him into a position whereby he will be hurt mentally, spiritually and perhaps even prosecuted by the law. They are tempting, tempting, tempting us every day! Every Christian will have spirits come against them in this manner. This is why Jesus said in the Lord's Prayer that we should pray daily for God to deliver us from the evil (one). They are going to come against us daily—spirits of lust, lying spirits, spirits of envy, spirits

of greed, all kinds of spirits who are especially trained in the art of projecting these very desirable kinds of temptations into our minds. They tempt us away from the leadership of the Spirit of God.

#### \*VEXING WORK OF DEMONS\*

Next, we have the vexing work of demons. These are spirits whose express purpose is to continually vex and aggravate people, especially Christians. These are spirits of irritability, which all of us have at one time or another experienced; the extreme irritability whereby it seems that everything anyone says or does just irritates us. Sometimes people are not even doing anything wrong, or doing anything against us, but there is something which just irritates us horribly. Eventually we end up “snapping” at the person and we hurt their feelings. Sometimes they will answer back sharply, and an atmosphere of contention and misunderstanding is quickly developed. If we do not understand what is happening, these spirits will do this continually so that we end up living in a continual state of unhappiness and misery.

This is the work of vexing spirits. They cause extreme irritation upon the nervous system, which makes that person miserable. They seek to make our loves miserable so that everyone around us will be miserable as well. Living in a persistent state of misery weakens our minds and our spirits, so that ultimately we break down under it. There are all kinds of spirits whose express purpose is to continually vex and aggravate us. They use people in the world to aggravate us when we go to take care of some business. They cause things to break; they cause the mail to get lost; they cause all kinds of situations that are designed to make us irritable, miserable, critical, and so on. They are working, working, always working to weaken our minds and our wills in an attempt to gain more and more control over our lives.

#### \*DEPRESSING WORK OF DEMONS\*

Very few people have not had a time of experiencing depression. When adverse external situations arise, spirits of depression and defeat use these things as tools to cause depression. Sometimes, even when the external situation isn't that bad, Christians are still depressed and they do not know why they feel that way. They are feeling that way because demon spirits are exerting a spiritual force against the mind, the will, and the spirit of that individual. The object is, once again, to weaken us, beat us down, and destroy our faith in a good God and in His ability to meet our needs. Unfortunately, because so few of God's people understand that many times depression is not a feeling that's coming from them, but is a spiritual force that's being projected on them by an invisible person, they don't deal with it as an evil spirit, resisting it in prayer until they are free. Instead, they yield to it. They go around being depressed, worn down and beat down.

*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, **my soul is cast down** within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar... **Why art thou cast down, O my soul?** and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*  
*Psalms 42:5-6 & 11*

King David knew what it was to be depressed. When his soul was cast down, he thought about the goodness of God. He reminded himself of what God had done for him in the past. He put his hope in God and he praised Him. This is what we should do too, when we are facing a spirit of depression. First, call it what it is—a filthy, unclean spirit. Then resist it and pray against it. Bind it in the name of Jesus and through the power of the blood of Jesus. Then get your mind off of that depression and off of any circumstance that may have opened the door for that spirit to move. Do what King David did. Praise the Lord; renew your hope in God; and call to mind all the good things He has done for you in the past.

People who continually give into spirits of depression whenever they attack them will eventually become so weak, they open the door for demon oppression, which is much more serious. For it is at this stage that the demons enter in and become indwelling.

#### \*OPPRESSING WORK OF DEMONS\*

At this point the demons have so depressed the person, and so weakened their minds, they are able actually indwell them. They have found a permanent home. When this happens you have what is commonly called nervous breakdowns and mental breakdowns. The demons do not yet have absolute control of the person, but they are getting close to it. There will be periods of time when the demons are able to overcome the individual's mind and will, so that they begin to manifest all kinds of bizarre behavior. During these periods, the person is not his own, but the possession is only temporary. Oppression, nervous breakdowns, and mental illness is where a person is often not his own and not in control of himself.

#### \*POSSESSING WORK OF DEMONS\*

The sixth stage of demon work is possession. This is where so many spirits have been able to indwell a person, to so weaken their mind and spirit, that they are able to completely control that person's mind, will, emotions, feelings, desires (ie: the entire personality), as well as the body. The person is no longer able to rule over his own vessel. The spirits are in complete control. They are able to manifest whatever they are at will. The true personality and nature of the person has been locked away and the spirits have free reign to manifest themselves through that person's mind, emotions, and body. They manifest their own evil nature through that person causing that person to do insane things like the man with the spirit named "legion" in the Scripture, who lived in the grave yard, ran around naked, and was continually cutting and hurting himself (*Mark 5:9*). In this account we see the true nature of these spirits. We see what they would ultimately like to do to *all* of us if we ever give them the opportunity to do so. They get extreme pleasure out of tormenting people and torturing them.

I could share a lot about our own experiences in this area deliverance and warfare, but I'm not sure it would be profitable. First of all, I'm not sure you would even believe some of the things we have experienced, even if I told you. Secondly, we are all different; so we will be facing different kinds of spiritual battles. Maybe some of the things God has led *us* to do as we have battled these spirits, He won't lead you to do. Maybe He has a completely different kind of battle plan for you and your particular situation; and if you try to copy my experience, you may just make things worse.

So in closing, let me quote the old adage: “*an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure*”. As true as that is in the natural, it’s even more true in the realm of deliverance and warfare. If we would just stop *fearing* the whole subject of demons and ask God to show us how to recognize them and defeat them, there would be much less need for people to have them “cast out”.

Let me say that running from the truth won’t help us and it won’t protect us. Ignoring the reality of spirits will only guarantee our eventual defeat at their hands. Greater is the Spirit of God who lives in you and me, than the demon spirits of this world. Ask God to show you how to recognize them and fight them in your own live. He want you to be free from them even more than you do, of that I can assure you. And once you have gained some experience in defeating them, God will be able to *use you* to help others get free.