

Spiritual Warfare

Living as Light inside the Kingdom of Darkness

The Bible, and the New Testament in particular, often, and in real-life language, describe the Christian life as warfare. Second Corinthians 10:3-4 reads, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war (*strateuometha*- wage war; engage in a battle, fight) according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare (*strateias*- military engagement, campaign) are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses” [NAS95].¹ So it would only seem logical that any theological discussion of the Christian life/Christian spirituality ought to give some consideration in dealing with the spiritual forces that war against God and His people.

I. Initial Considerations regarding Spiritual Warfare

A. Evil Supernaturalism

Certainly, we recognize that God’s realm should be referred to as ‘supernatural.’ The phrase “evil supernaturalism,” however, refers to that realm within the Realm which is opposed to God. This realm consists of angelic² beings (OT, “sons of God,” “gods” *elohim*, Psalm 8:5 cp. w. Hebrews 2:7; Psalm 82:2, 6) “who did not keep their own domain but abandoned their proper dwelling place,” Jude v6. This phrase, evil supernaturalism, also refers to the activities and strategies employed by these beings.

B. God and the Spiritual World

Foundational to our understanding about Christian spirituality and our conflict with evil supernaturalism are our ideas about God. Specifically, our ideas about God influence how we view our spiritual lives and the attending struggles. To properly relate to the conflicts in the spiritual realm we must have a healthy perspective about who we are and God’s role in these conflicts.

First, we must settle it in our minds that God’s plan for our spiritual well-being includes trials and tribulations. We battle the presence of sin in the flesh, we struggle against others who wittingly or unwittingly oppose godliness, and we face the influences created by these angelic beings. If we are honest with the testimony of Scripture we concede that everything exists as it is because God made it and everything exists for His purpose, Revelation 4:11. Thus, creation, including the presence of sin, death, and angelic beings (i.e., the sons of

¹Other passages indicating the warfare include Ephesians 6:10-12; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3-4; 4:7;

²In these notes we will use the words “angel(s)” to signify the spiritual beings created by God who administrate many aspects of God’s plan. The word “angel” means messenger and properly refers to a functional identity, “one who delivers a message.” Not every angel serves this purpose. Thus, the Bible uses a variety of words and descriptions to depict the beings we will refer to as “angels.”

God), Psalm 104:4 cp. with Hebrews 1:7, are a part of God's glorious plan. Spiritual beings and their subterfuge are an integral part of God's created order. They were present at the creation of the earth, Job 38:4-7, and they exist as part of God's design for the universe.

Having said that, we must accept the fact that angels, all angels, serve God, Psalm 103:20-21. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, God works even the corruption of the fallen angelic beings into the structure of His will, Psalm 33:1; Ephesians 1:11, The Bible even provides credible evidence that the angelic beings, those sons of God, periodically assemble with God and form His council, Job 1:6ff., 2:1ff., Psalm 82:1; 1 Kings 22:19-23. This council seems to be the method by which God commissions His angels with assignments to facilitate the divine plan. His all-inclusive plan, which manifests God's righteousness, mercy, and grace through the triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ, involves the intermediating work of angels. Thus, we must acknowledge that God, in His infinite wisdom, has ordained a reality to include sentient spirit beings, some of whom serve God's plan aiding the heirs of redemption, Hebrews 1:14, while others of whom have objectives and activities contrary to God's character and desire for His creation. Regardless of the disposition of these fallen beings, they serve God's purpose. And that purpose also includes the life and spiritual journey of the believer. To be specific we must now state things plainly, spiritual warfare, including the presence and works of angelic beings serve God's purpose in bringing the redeemed to glory. The trials of our faith, the attacks and oppression God's redeemed experience, ultimately result to greater maturity in spiritual character, Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4, the further future judgment of these rebellious spirits, 1 Corinthians 6:3, and the greater glory of the redeemed, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

C. The perfect man, Jesus Christ³

When God created humanity mankind was made lower than the gods [*elohim* MT], Psalm 8:5, or angels [*aggelos*, Gk NT citing LXX] Hebrews 2:7. When the Word became human, John 1:14, God the Son took a station "lower than the angels," Hebrews 2:7-11. The humility of divine love presents the divine character/standard through which God planned to redeem mankind.

1. Jesus presents God's real presence in the person of a human being, John 1:18

- The manifestation of God's love, Philippians 2:5-8

God is love, 1 John 4:7-8. It is this love by which the Word emptied Himself, Philippians 2:5-8 the reality and essential character of the invisible God was explained through the visible presence of the man, Christ Jesus.

- The manifestation of God's righteousness, Romans 3:21-22

³The Humanity of Christ: The Second Person of the Godhead, became a sinless human being, lived a sinless life, died a sinner's death, rose from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and will physically return to earth establishing God's Kingdom for His followers. The accepted understanding about the union of divinity and humanity is that the second Person of the Godhead became a human being without sin, two natures, divine and human, united in one person, being conceived and born apart from a human father (avoiding Adam's curse) yet, through a human mother, being assured that Jesus could be both human and sinless. Thus, the virgin birth is the divine sign, Isaiah 7:14, that God's salvation is guaranteed. Further, the Second Person of the Godhead remains a human being forever.

God is righteous and all His works are done in righteousness, Psalm 11:7; 145:17. Christ's faithfulness in this life manifested the righteousness of God. Apart from the law, Romans 3:21, Christ's righteous obedience. countered Adam's failure, Romans 5:19. Christ's faithful obedience became the divine means by which God could justifiably declare and, eventually, make many righteous, Romans 3:26; 5:18-21.

- The transforming embodiment and provision of God's grace, John 1:16-17

The resurrected Christ, exalted as Lord overall, Acts 2:32-36, has become God's living grace that enlivens (makes alive/energizes) everyone who trusts God's promise/ Word. The selfless love and faithful righteous life of Christ is God's transforming and life-giving grace, John 1:16; Colossians 2:19; 3:3-4, that reigns unto eternal life, Romans 5:21. In Christ, God lives in and through the believer, Galatians 2:20. In Christ we have been raised and seated in Heavenly places, Ephesians 2:4-10.

2. Christ Jesus, the last Adam, through death, dealt with Adam's sin removing the legal hold of the sons of God held over humanity, Colossians 2:13-15

Christ died under the law to the law becoming a curse for us, Galatians 3:14. The legal bondage to sin's power of death has been removed, consider 1 Corinthians 15:56-57. The Christian is no longer under law, Romans 6:14, having died to that which held them, Romans 7:6. And where there is no law there is no transgression, Romans 4:15. Jesus, through His life and death, has fulfilled the law and freed the Christian from sin's power to kill, Romans 6:7. This legal freedom has disarmed the spirit world, Colossians 2:15. Satan and his angels can no longer hold the believer in bondage to the fear of death, Hebrews 2:14-15.

3. Raised to a higher authority than the angels, Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 1:20-23; Hebrews 2:7-11.

Having been made lower than the angels, Hebrews 2:7-11, and having died under the law to remove the curse of the law, Jesus has been exalted, seated at the Father's right hand, being given a name above every name, Acts 2:32-36; Philippians 2:9-11; Ephesians 1:20-23. A human being, faithful and obedient to God, has been made Lord of all, Acts 2:36. Seated at the right hand of the Father, Jesus is head over all creation and, as a human being, has been granted authority over all angelic beings, Ephesians 1:20-23.

4. Through Christ God has provided new life free from the Adamic curse, Romans 5:19-21

The resurrection and ascension of Christ to highest authority have provided divine life to all who align with Christ by faith. Christ is our life, Colossians 3:3-4. We are washed through regeneration and experience the renewal of the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:5. Free from the curse, from the law, we are free in Christ. In Christ all the fulness of deity dwells in bodily form, Colossians 2:9, and we are complete in Him, Who is the head of all rule and authority, Colossians 2:10. The implications for spiritual living and the conflict that ensues are astounding. Once subject to the consequences of sin and the cruelty of the sons of God, those in Christ are seated in heavenly place with Christ, are no longer under the curse of

the law, and can experience the freedom, peace, and joy which the obedient Son produces in us.

D. The position of the believer in Christ

Getting a bit more specific with what has just been said it serves us well to repeat ourselves. Everyone who has trusted Christ for salvation has been united with Christ's life. This union takes place through and is enlivened by the presence of the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:13. Along with this reality, several important observations need to be emphasized regarding this union as it pertains to spiritual warfare.

1. United with Christ's death believers are free from the law and sin's power to kill, Romans 6, 3-4, 14

United with the death of Christ (having been crucified with Christ, Galatians 2:20) frees the Christian from law's governance and sin's reign. The legal grip of Adam's disobedience no longer controls the destiny of the believer. In Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive, 1 Corinthians 15:22. There is nothing a fallen angel can do to reverse Christ's obedience. The Christian can stand firm in Him and in this freedom.

2. United with Christ's life the believer is living under grace, Romans 6:7,14; 7:4-6

Grace, the life of Christ by the Holy Spirit, is the new law for spiritual living, Romans 8:2 tells us that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set [us] free from the law of sin and death." Grace, the life of Christ by the Spirit, is the new operating system for the Christian, Romans 6:14; 7:4-6. When dealing with the fallen spiritual realm the Christian can rely upon Christ's life, i.e., the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. As Paul tells us, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me," Galatians 2:20.

3. Seated with Christ the believer is positioned above the angelic powers of darkness, cp. Ephesians 1:23 w. 2:4-6

Once lower than the angels, Psalm 8, Christ is now seated above every name that is named, Philippians 2:9-11. Seated with Christ is the heavenly realm, Ephesians 2:6, followers of Christ are authorized to confront and judge the angels, Ephesians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 6:3. How and when this takes place certainly leaves room for discussion, but the facts remain, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us, Romans 8:37, and, nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, Romans 8:39.

Summary:

God's plan includes sin, death, and angels. These angels include those who have left the original domain and are in a state of rebellion against God's perfect will. That said, these angels still fulfill a purpose in the grand divine plan.

Secondly, while humanity was created lower than the angels, this humble station in God's order led the way for the eternal Word to become flesh and reverse the curse brought upon humanity through Adam's disobedience. Now, as the God-man, the embodiment of law and grace, Jesus has reversed the consequences of Adam's fall and sin's power to kill. Further, Jesus has ascended to the highest position in God's universe.

Second Adam is no longer lower than the angels. Jesus, God as a human being, governs the universe.

Finally, all who place their faith in the triumphant Christ are spiritually united with Him and are benefactors of His faithfulness, life, and position with the Father. Believers are seated with Christ in the heavenly places and have the potential to walk by faith in Christ's finished work. Regarding spiritual conflict we, while remaining under God's ultimate timetable and plan, have the birthright to confront and subdue the powers of darkness.

II. Defining Spiritual Warfare

A. Understanding the Nature of Our Spiritual Warfare

When we think about spiritual warfare, we often think this involves some direct confrontation with evil spirits, e.g., Acts 16:18. Yet in the New Testament we discover that this is not usually the case. The Bible uses "warfare" terminology in the context of several arenas of our experience.

1. Our primary conflict/war is against indwelling sin

While the believer is free from the Law that empowers sin to kill, and, thus, free from God's final condemnation (wrath) Romans 5:9; 6:14; 7:11; 8:1; 1 Corinthians 15:56-57, the New Testament makes it clear that the Christian must tackle the indwelling conflict created by the presence of sin within our fleshly members. Paul expresses this conflict using warfare terminology in Romans 7:21-23 stating, "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good...I see a different law in the members of my body, **waging war** against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members." Similarly, James writes, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is it not the source of your pleasures that **wage war** in your members?" James 4:1. Finally, Peter tells us, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which **wage war** against the soul." 1 Peter 2:11. To these passages we might add many others depicting sin's presence that creates conflict within the believer. It is with sin, and our human inability to overcome its power, that provides the primary focus of our spiritual warfare.

2. Our warfare intensifies through the conflict in our mind's world view.

The Christian is transformed by the renewal of the mind, that is, the network of thought patterns that form our conscious and unconscious worldview, Romans 12:2. In Second Corinthians Paul relegates this conflict of mind to the realm of spiritual warfare stating "For though we walk in the flesh we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ," 10:3-5. While sin inherited from Adam's failure in the garden constantly assaults our best intentions, our understanding of self, others, and the world around us reinforce and often justify sin's grip and sway, Romans 1:32. This grip on our reasoning informs us as to what Paul may have

meant when he used the word “fortresses,” [*ochuroma*, “military stronghold” DBAG sv. ὀχύρωμα] 2 Corinthians 10:4. The self-justifying reasoning still present in each person serves as a fortress for spiritual strongholds. It is only through the destruction of these fortresses (through the renewing of our minds) that we begin to live as God intends.

3. Our warfare intensifies as we struggle with ‘outside’ influences

Adam’s fall in the garden introduced “self” as the essential consciousness within every human being. Self-awareness, self-authentication and sufficiency, and, the basic instinct, self-survival, guide and direct every human being. When any of these ‘selfies’ are threatened we respond. Regarding Christian spirituality, these inward self-modes become more apparent when we sense we are being attacked. For example, when illness or pain through insults, accusations, rejection, or assaults threatens our well-being, our response is naturally from self and about self. Our need to preserve self overrides our spiritual better-judgment and we can allow fear, anxiety, anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, revenge, or even passivity overtake us. Through the course of our lives behavioral patterns develop through countless life-circumstances as we figure out ways to cope with outside influences. These coping mechanisms, or flesh patterns, become spiritual strongholds and our behavior yields “ground”, or tactical advantage, to spiritual forces.

4. Spiritual warfare may include the intensifying presence of evil spiritual beings assigned to destroy the lives of those created in God’s image.

At the heart of Adams failure and man’s sin is idolatry. Paul begins his letter to the Romans spelling out the deadly process of this idolatry telling us, “they...exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures...for they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever,” Romans 1:22-23. Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness reenforces this notion about idolatry. All three of Christ’s test were focused upon putting Himself ahead of God. Interestingly, in the decalogue (ten commandments) only the sin of idolatry comes with a specific familial curse and blessing, Exodus 20:4-6. Finally, Paul tells the Corinthian church that the practice of idolatry is to fellowship [*koinonos*-“participant”] with and partner [*metecho*-“to have a part or share in something with someone”] with demons, 1 Corinthians 10:14,20-22. Serving self, the idolatry of self, not only reenforces flesh patterns and the world’s wisdom, but may invite the reenforcing presence of fallen angelic beings.

Thus, a final aspect of spiritual warfare may well include having to deal with the presence and strategies of fallen angelic beings. When we discuss the mechanics of and the strategies in dealing with our spiritual conflicts we will dig deeper into this subject. For now, we need to understand that spiritual warfare may include dealing with spiritual beings who taken control of the fortresses (mentioned above) and use the ground (mentioned above) given through our self-worship, for their tactical advantage. As the world lies in the power of the evil one, 1 John 5:19, so we must concede that there may be times when we will not be wrestling against flesh and blood, Ephesians 6:12. Spiritual warfare, as most assume, may involve dealing with spirits.

B. Arriving at a definition for Spiritual Warfare

As we have seen warfare language in the New Testament includes more than dealing directly with spirits. In fact, the primary focus of all our warfare should be dealing with our embedded sin-strongholds and the ground given over to the flesh, namely, our flesh patterns. That stated as our primary focus, I would like to define spiritual warfare as the conflict Christians experience against sin because of the influence of the sin in the flesh, the world system ideologies embedded in our minds, and the influences we might experience from the overlordship presence of Satan (Satan is used here to refer to and encompass the entire governing structure carried out by fallen sentient angelic beings of which Satan is chief), particularly when the Christian strives against evil and lives to please God.

III. The Effects Our Perspectives have about Spiritual Warfare

Before we dive into the details about the mechanics of and the strategies against this warfare, it is important to discuss our own disposition about this warfare. This discussion will help us greatly in relating to God and His design for our lives. We will focus upon three perspectives that greatly hinder our ability to deal with the reality of the spiritual world and the one essential perspective that is essential for true spiritual progress.

A. Denial about, Fear of, or, over self-confidence, create obstacles allowing fallen angels to create and maintain strongholds over the oppressed.

1. Denial about evil supernaturalism allows these spirits freedom to work

While the Bible unquestionably speaks often about evil supernaturalism,⁴ one of the greatest obstacles we must overcome is the denial about the reality regarding spiritual warfare. Normally, Bible believing Christians profess the existence of Satan and the demons but we remain determinedly distant and willingly confused about any experience with these beings. Paul, however, tells us that “our struggle is not with flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, [and] against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places,” Ephesians 6:12. John (1 John 5:19) tells us “that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” Denying the

⁴Let’s remind ourselves of a few examples depicting spiritual warfare. Certainly, Genesis three provides the first and the greatest example of evil supernaturalism. Satan, using one of the familiar animals, deceives Eve which leads to Adam’s sin and introduces death into God’s creation. The rest is history. Genesis six and Job chapters one and two reference the presence of the sons of God and Satan (Job 1 & 2). Both the sons of God and Satan are seen as challenging God’s creation as well as those faithful to God. First Samuel 16:14; 18:10-11; and 19:9 mention “an evil spirit from the LORD” oppressing Saul, while 1 Kings 22:19-22 recounts a council of angels suggesting ways to entice King Ahab.

The Gospels and Acts assume the reality of evil spirits (demons), while the epistles regularly speak of the presence and the strategies of fallen spirits. First Corinthians 10:20-21 informs the Church that partnership with idols is fellowship with demons. Paul recounts his own “torment” due to a thorn in the flesh, namely “a messenger [angel] of Satan.” John tells us that “the whole world lies in the evil one,” 1 John 5:19. James tells us to resist the devil, James 4:7. Finally, the Revelation mentions fallen spirits and their work against humanity throughout its pages.

presence of evil supernaturalism is an effective strategy of the enemy. We will not deal with things we do not believe are there.

2. Fear of the evil supernaturalism allows these spirits of gain control

Anything that poses extreme or unknown danger might prompt a response of fear. And while many Christians sing the praises of Christ's victory, many of us will not even talk about the unseen realm of evil supernaturalism. It is as though our victory in Christ is wonderful as a game plan but that it cannot be taken on to the playing field. Like encountering a bad dog or a snake Christians allow their fear of the spiritual bullies in God's creation to have their way without any resistance. Writing to Timothy while facing his execution for the Christian faith, Paul writes that "God has not given us a spirit of timidity/cowardice [*deilias*—mental or moral cowardice], but of power and love and discipline," 2 Timothy 1:7. To shrink back from what may be God's opportunity to grow in grace allows our spiritual enemies to build, control, and manipulate strongholds of fearful living that will influence other areas of our lives.

3. Misplaced Self-confidence allows the spirit world to manipulate and control lives

Familiarity breeds contempt. Contempt has many faces. For example, disrespect, scorn, and condescension come to mind. Supernatural spirits are powerful beings. Furthermore, they are still a part of God's created order and as part of God's created order, these spirits are still fulfilling a purpose that fits God's plan to bring about a new human race under Christ. The only human champion over these creatures is Jesus, and He accomplished His victory by humbling Himself to a death on the cross, entrusting His life into God's hands who promised to raise Jesus from the dead. This was the moment of faith and obedience which, without exception, characterized our Savior. We share in this victorious faith and obedience, but we experience the power of the resurrection only as we maintain the same humility that won our salvation. We are to have the same mental attitude, which was in Christ, Philippians 2:5-8. To trust ourselves as sufficient for any phase of spiritual warfare is to deny the grace of God, Christ, for spiritual life and ministry. Passages such as 2 Corinthians 3:5; 4:7, 10; 10:4; and 12:9-10 leave no room for misplaced self-confidence. We are more than conquerors, but only through Christ, Romans 8:37. Our faith is not in ourselves or our methods, our faith is in Christ.

B. The one essential perspective that enlivens true spiritual progress.

As Christ emptied Himself of divine privilege, Philippians 2:5-8, lived in complete dependence upon and obedience to His Heavenly Father, John 8:28, so we must learn to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in matter of spiritual conflict. We must allow God to empty us of self (ambitions, expectations, flesh-patterns) and live, as Christ lived, totally dependent upon the life and will of His heavenly Father, consider John 8:28-29; 14:10.

We are not better than the fallen spirits. They were created sons of God as was Adam, Luke 3:38. We, however, are redeemed and acquitted by grace through our champion, Christ. We are not endowed with greater wisdom or power than these angelic beings. We were made lower than the *elohim*, the gods ("angels" in Hebrews 2:7), Psalm

8:5, and we, as they, are subject to God's plan, Ephesians 1:11. Our dependence upon the indwelling Spirit to enliven our sensibility is the only successful approach in living the Christian life (or engaging in spiritual battles). The only successful attitude for our spiritual conflict is that of total dependence upon God through Christ, by the Holy Spirit

IV. Learning about Our Spiritual Opposition Helps Us Appreciate Our Need for God's Grace

This is not a course on angelology⁵. It is, however, important to learn and know some of what the Bible says about angels, as angels are a strategic part of God's method for running the universe. Knowing about angels increases our awareness about God's invisible universe, 2 Corinthians 4:18, and helps us better understand how God's universe operates, e.g., Daniel 10:12-13; Hebrews 1:14. Finally, for the purposes of these notes we will primarily focus upon those angels that oppose God's plan and God's people. The subject of sin in the flesh and the ideologies of this world system will be discussed under 'the Machinery of Our Warfare.'

A. The Identity of spiritual beings who did not keep their own domain

1. The Devil

The devil, 'the Satan', is mentioned throughout the Old and New Testaments. He is described as a spiritual being who is both real and personal (having personality). According to Ezekiel 28:14, Satan was created as an anointed cherub (a classification of angels). Nineteen of the twenty-seven books of the NT mention Satan by one of his names

The Devil's names reveal his character

Briefly let's acquaint ourselves with the Devils titles. First, there is the name, **Devil**, used 35x's, and literally means, "slanderer," or "one who trips." **Satan** is used 52x's and may be a

⁵A brief outline of biblical information about angels (At least thirty-four of the sixty-six books of the Bible mention angels, e.g., OT: Psalm 68:17; Ezekiel 1; Daniel 8:15-17; NT: Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16; John 1:51).

Angels were created as holy beings before the worlds at the time of God's six days of creative activity to serve God, Genesis 2:1-3; Job 38: 6-7; cp. w. Exodus 20:11; Mark 8:38; Ezekiel 28:15; Colossians 1:16; Psalm 148:2,5; Nehemiah 9:6; Jude v6. Angels are personal beings possessing emotions, intelligence and self-determination, Psalm 148:2; Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 24:36; Jude v9; Revelation 19:10; 22:9; 1 Peter 1:12; Luke 2:13-14; Luke 15:10. Angels possess great abilities having unusual strength, consider Psalm 103:20; Isaiah 37:36-37; Revelation 14:18; 16:5; Revelation 16:1ff. Angels can inflict physical and mental illness, Genesis 19:11; Luke 1:20; Mark 5:15; Acts 19:16; Job 1. Angels are numbered and organized, Psalm 68:17; Luke 2:13; Revelation 5:11

The position of angels is above man but not to be worshipped, Matthew 4:10. The rank of angels has to do with power and task, e.g., Archangels, Jude 9.

Certain angels administrate service in the presence of the Lord. The seraphim, Isaiah 6:1-3; the cherubim, Ezekiel 1; Revelation 4,5 are example of these serving angels.

Certain angels serve believers, Hebrews 1:14; Matthew 18:10, being involved with answering prayer, Acts 12:1-17, encouraging in the time of danger, Acts 27:23-24, and to continue God's work, Acts 5: 19-20. Some, come for the righteous at death, Luke 16:22; Jude v9.

Finally, certain angels have a role in the rise and fall of nations, Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Revelation 8,9,16. And in so serving, angels are involved in the lives of non-Christians, Genesis 19:13; Revelation 14:6-7; Acts 12:23; Matthew 13:39; Daniel 4:13, 23; Revelation 9:11; Daniel 10:13.

title “the Satan”,⁶ which literary refers to the Devil as a prosecuting adversary or challenger/opposer. Other titles are, prince of this world, John 12:31; 16:11, prince of the power of the air, Ephesians 2:2, the god of this world, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Lucifer, Isaiah 14:12, literally the “star of the morning,” or “son of the dawn.” The “serpent of old”, is found in Revelation 12:9, as well as “the great dragon,” Revelation 12:3,7,9. Additionally, the descriptors such as the “serpent,” 2 Corinthians 11:3; “the evil one,” John 17:15; 1 John 5:18, the “destroyer,” Revelation 9:11, the “Tempter,” Matthew 4:3, the “accuser,” Revelation 12:10, “liar, deceiver,” John 8:44; Revelation 12:9; 20:3, and the spirit that now works in/among the sons of the disobedience, Ephesians 2:2, are used in the New Testament and provide insight into the Devil’s character and work.

The fall of Satan reveals his character.

The two primary passages often understood to depict Satan’s fall into sin/rebellion are debated. Scholars are divided as to whether these passages refer to the king of Babylon or a supernatural being (or somewhere in between⁷). While we will not enter into this debate here, I prefer the direct reference approach, namely, these passages refer to the spiritual being, Satan. For all practical purposes the indirect approach recognizes the satanic character of kingly activity making the description that of Satan, while the non-supernatural approach may lead one to exclude satanic influences in the political world.

Isaiah 14:12-17— If this passage refers to the devil, then the fall of Satan was due to a desire to be equal with God and to establish himself as god, cp. Genesis 3:5. This self-worship is at the heart of all spiritual warfare and is the sin of Adam’s fall in the flesh, consider Romans 1:18-23.

Ezekiel 28:11-17— The Ezekiel passage indicates that the pride of Satan’s own position and beauty led to the rebellion against God. Hence, self/pride seems to be the overriding sin committed by Satan in his fall, cp. 1 Timothy 3:6. As spiritual warfare, at its core, is about self, the Christian struggling with spiritual oppression is struggling with self-issues which are intensified by the activities of spiritual beings.

The work of Satan reveals his character

There are several passages that describe the work of Satan (and his legions). Without giving much detail, the following represents a few broad categories of these works. First, we understand from the words of Christ that the devil commits both murder and lies, John 8:44. Additionally we learn that those who are “the sons of the (the definite article is in the original language probably referring to the Adamic disobedience) disobedience, Ephesians 2:2, are like the devil. The devil’s objective is death to his victims. The devil’s means is through lies. A second passage that characterizes the devil’s work is “sin”, 1 John 3:8. John, however, adds an important word of encouragement, namely the “the Son of God

⁶Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 56-57.

⁷Geoffrey W. Grogan, “Isaiah,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, Frank E. Gaebelein, General Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 105. Grogan, taking an indirect satanic reference, writes, “When Satan works his malign will through rulers of this world, he reproduces his own wicked qualities in them, so that they become virtual shadows of which he is the substance.” Ibid.

appeared...to destroy the works of the devil.” Finally, the author of Hebrews tells us that Christ partook of flesh and blood so that through death He might render the devil powerless over death. This victory over death frees “those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives,” Hebrews 2:14-15. The bondage of fear through lies leading to death are always the objectives of the offerings of the devil.

2. The sons of God

Scripture speaks of spiritual beings who violate and oppose God’s desired/declared intentions for His creation. In the Old Testament these beings are often referred to as **the sons of God**, Genesis 6; Job 1, 2; Deuteronomy 32:8 (variant reading LXX); Psalm 82. In brief these are angels who play an important role in human history. Below is a brief list to help us understand what the Bible says about ‘the sons of God.’

- These angelic beings are referred to as “gods,” Psalm 82 w. John 10:34.
- These angelic beings regularly met in/as God’s council, Job 1, 2; Psalm 82
- These angels invaded humanity reproducing their spirituality through other human beings, Genesis 6:2.
- These beings were given authority over the nations, Deuteronomy 32:8 (variant reading)⁸, at the time when humanity was divided into nations (Genesis 11).
- These beings violated God’s trust and presented themselves to humanity as gods, Psalm 82.

For our purposes the sons of God in the Old Testament are angelic beings mentioned throughout the Bible.

3. Demons⁹

There has been discussion about the origin of demons. Regardless of one’s conclusion both Old and New Testaments, Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:36-38; Matthew 12:22-28, attest to their existence. For our purposes we conclude that these spirits, who are never presented in a positive sense, are angelic spirits who left their first assignment, Jude v6.

The word demon comes from the Greek root *dai* which means “divide,” disrupt,” or “distributor of destiny,” and may serve as a general designation emphasizing their function. That said, these spirits (angelic beings) work against God and God’s creation. Demons,

⁸ The discussion in the NET Bible assesses this variant reading as the following: “For the reading ‘sons of Israel’ a Qumran fragment has ‘sons of God,’ while the LXX reads ‘angels of God,’ presupposing *b^ene el* or *bene ‘elohim*. ‘Sons of God’ is undoubtedly the original reading; the MT and the LXX have each interpreted it differently. MT assumes that the expression ‘sons of God’ refers to Israel (cf. Hos. 1:10), while LXX has assumed the phrase refers to the angelic heavenly assembly (Pss 29:1; 89:6).”

⁹ Fallen angels (demons) were created spirit-creatures who did not remain with the assignment for which they were created, Jude v6; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:4. There is not, however, any one text in the Bible that states demons are fallen angels. Their identity is assumed from 1) Angels exist, 2) Certain angels did not remain holy, 3) Demons exist without further explanation, 4) Fallen angels must be the same as demons. However unlikely, it is entirely possible that demons are their own created order governed by the sons of God.

then, may be a general designation to any angel opposed to, or attempts to disrupt, God's righteous plan.

As mentioned above, both Testaments speak about demons. First, demons are associated with the worship of idols, Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:36-38; 1 Corinthians 10:20-21. Additionally, the works of these fallen angels further reveal their character. They destroy God's creation, Matthew 9:32-33; 17:15; oppose God's program, 1 Thessalonians 2:18; counterfeit God's truth, 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 14-15; wage warfare upon the Christian, Ephesians 6:10-12; plant doubt, Genesis 3:1-5; entice to sin, Acts 5:3; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Timothy 3:6; 1 Peter 5:6-10; incite persecution, Revelation 2:10; and, they promote division, 2 Corinthians 2:10-11.

In addition to the term 'demon,' the Bible identifies certain demons by name, for example, Beelzebul (lit. "lord of flies") in Matthew 12:24, originally a Philistine deity, is designated as ruler of the demons. Other fallen angels are mentioned by name throughout the Old Testament, e.g., Baal, Astarte, Judges 2:13; Chemosh, Numbers 21:29; Molech, Zephaniah 1:5; Dagon, Judges 16:23; Marduk, Jeremiah 50:2; and Nebo, Isaiah 46:1, to mention a few. Further, the Old Testament mentions spirits including, "an evil spirit from the Lord," 1 Samuel 19:9, and "the night monster," [NASB] (Lilith), Isaiah 34:14.

B. The Classification of Fallen Angels informs us about their organization

Finally, there are classifications of spirits, first by their freedom (or lack thereof) and, second, by designated rank.

1. Classification according to assignment (freedom)

The classification according to a spirit's present assignment or freedom is simple. There are certain fallen angels that are free to roam about, even when summoned into the presence of God, cp. 1 Kings 22:19-23; 1 Samuel 19:9. Other fallen angels are bound in the abyss (*tartaros*), 2 Peter 2:4.

2. Classification according to rank

Classification according to rank is a bit more involved. Satan (discussed in greater detail earlier) is considered to be the leader of the fallen angels, Revelation 12:4. The other angels are ranked according to the categories previously listed, i.e., thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, might, world rulers, unclean/evil spirits. Here is a summary of these ranks and their functions in God's plan.

Thrones—(*thronos*) The Greek word means 'chair' or 'throne' and denotes the supreme power over a political entity. Applied to angelic beings, this rank refers to "the one enthroned" who wields supreme power. Consider Colossians 1:16.

Dominions—(*kuriotetes*) This term refers to the supreme power of the lord. This angel bears the ruling power of lordship and dominion. Consider Colossians 1:16.

Principalities—(*archas*) This Greek term has to do with "beginning." The rank denotes "the one with whom a process begins." This angel may be said to be the one who initiates. Consider Colossians 1:16; 2:15; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Romans 8:38.

Powers—(*exousias*) The term has to do with authority. Involved is the freedom to command, the capability or right to command and control, or the bearer of ruling authority. Consider Colossians 1:16; 2:15; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12.

Might—(*dynameis*) This term indicates the potential for functioning. The idea here is “power, might, strength, capability.” As applied to angelic beings, this rank denotes a creature that functions in a remarkably powerful manner. Consider Ephesians 1:21; Romans 8:38.

World Rulers—(*kosmokrator*) This term was used of world-ruling gods. Thus, this term probably denotes a spirit being who has a portion of this world under its control. The term is found in second century magical formulas and refer to the spirit who can be conjured for information (fortune telling, astrology, etc.). Consider Ephesians 6:12.

Angels/ unclean spirits—The rank is probably the lowest form in the spiritual realm. These angelic beings probably make up the largest group of angelic order.

It has been the experience of many who have dealt with evil supernatural entities that these ranks form the power structures that rule over individuals as well as keep the oppressing spirits on task. The idea of specific task brings us to the final category of demonic classification.

3. Classification according to task (influence)

The Bible gives evidence that fallen angels are also categorized according to their task. In the OT one reads of a lying spirit from the Lord. In the NT there are descriptions based upon physical maladies (e.g., a deaf and dumb spirit). Knowing the task, which reveals the purpose of an oppressing spirit, aids in helping the afflicted Christian to focus upon God’s leading in becoming free. To know, for example, that a spirit’s charge is to create and enhance bitterness helps the Christian to allow God access to the deepest recesses of the heart and to remove the flesh patterns of bitterness from one’s daily experience.

C. The impact of fallen angels

While more will be said about the influence/impact of fallen angels later in these notes for now we will provide a summary.

First, it is important to understand that corporately, humanity is affected by the presence and activity of fallen angels, Ephesians 2:2; 2 Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 2:14-15. The variety of world religions, the worship of ‘so-called’ gods, 1 Corinthians 10:20, and the various “doctrines of demons,” 1 Timothy 4:1, create an immediate spiritual blindness to God’s presence and His truth. Further, the instigation of carnal strife and warfare, e.g., 1 Kings 22:19-23, speaks of the murder/destruction suffered by humanity because of fallen angels. First John 5:19 informs us that ‘the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.’ Paul reminds the Ephesians that they were “dead in [their] offenses and sins, in which [they] previously walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air (Satan), of the spirit that is now working in [“among”] the sons of the disobedience (unbelievers).”

Second, fallen angels also impact individuals (various phases of the fall and demonization). As is true of the whole of humanity, so it is true of the individual. The bondage of religious and philosophical falsehood, as well as the anger and strife exhibited through man's inhumanity to man speak to the reality of demonization (the impact of fallen angels). Whether residing in a body or exerting influence or control from outside the individual, demonization occurs when the fallen angel exerts influence over the mind, or the body of a person, group, or place, e.g., Acts 16:16; Mark 5:5ff. The Bible depicts the effects of demonization to include physical disease (Matthew 9:32-33), mental derangement (Matthew 17:15) and psychological mis-identity (Mark 1:23-26; Mark 5:6-12). Individually, some may experience various degrees of oppression from demons (ranging from physical problems to fully dysfunctional psychological disorders), cp. Matthew 12:43-45. Finally, the effect of demons in the world (and upon Christians) may include false doctrine (1 Timothy 4:1-3); false spiritual experiences (2 Corinthians 11:1-4); persecution (1 Thessalonians 2:18); as well as the spiritual, physical, and/or emotional bondage (Matthew 12:22; 2 Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 2:14-15).

D. The judgment of fallen angels

The Bible, and the New Testament in particular, assures us that those angels who have left their first assignment will be judged. For some the judgment has already taken place, Jude v6. For other fallen angels their judgement takes place in stages through the redeemed, the church, 1 Corinthians 6:3; Ephesians 3:10, culminating in the final judgment in the lake of fire, Revelation 20:10.

1. Immediate judgment

Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church the presence and effects of fallen angels upon a person, a group, or a place may be removed, James 4:7. While there is no prescribed formula for this removal, all experiential freedom comes through the living presence of Jesus Christ, His victory over sin and death, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

2. Eternal judgment

Fallen angels, while already judged, Colossians 2:15, will experience the permanent wrath of God in the Lake of Fire, 2 Peter 2:4; Jude v6; Revelation 20:10. Some experience imprisonment now while the remainder will experience this before the New Heaven and New Earth. It is important to note that all the fallen spirits know they are judged without any redemption available. They believe that God is who He is, James 2:19, and that there is no help for them in Christ, Hebrews 2:16-17. Angels are a "host," thus, singularly created. Humanity is a "race," descended from one man and woman. As Christ became human to die on behalf of humans, the fallen angels do not have a substitute who died for their sins and they understand that they must pay for their own.

In summary, then, the Bible assures us about the judgment of angels. Below is a summary of the scope and sequence outlined in God's Word.

- The judgment of Satan, Revelation 20:2,10.

- The judgment of other fallen angels, 2 Peter 2:4; Jude v. 6.
- Some fallen angels are already in the Abyss, Jude v.6.
- Some fallen angels are being sent to the Abyss, Mark 5:7.
- Some fallen angels will be released from the Abyss during the tribulation period, Revelation 9:1-6.
- All fallen angels will be sent to the Lake of Fire, Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10.

III. The dynamics of spiritual warfare

As mentioned earlier, we now will define and apply the ideas of sin in the flesh and the world (our culture) to the milieu of spiritual warfare.

A. The Machinery for spiritual warfare

The strategies involved with spiritual warfare are straightforward. The warfare begins in the flesh, strengthens through the ideologies of the world system, and culminates in experiential strongholds that attempts to discredit God's character and destroy human lives.

1. The flesh: The platform through which all our spiritual warfare originates and occurs

The universal nature of spiritual warfare began with Adam's failure in the Garden. Spiritual warfare continues with and through Adam's sin embedded in the flesh. The platform for spiritual warfare is the flesh (our weak humanity) and the overriding, indwelling principle of self (sin).

The New Testament uses the idea of flesh to communicate several important factors regarding our spiritual lives. First, the flesh may simply refer to our humanity, or the 'house' 2 Corinthians 5:1, ("hardware") in which our spirit resides and through which it/we must function. When John tells us that "the Word became flesh," (human), John 1:14, or when Paul says that he lives his life "in/by flesh," Galatians 2:20, we see the concept of 'flesh' as a reference to our present human existence. That said, we also learn that the flesh became embedded with sin, an active principle of self-authentication and dependence that seeks its own way to survive and thrive. As a result of being embedded with sin, the flesh becomes the locus and facilitator for spiritual conflict. Paul calls the flesh "weak," Romans 8:3, that is, unable to keep God's law. The flesh, embedded with sin, is now characterized as having hostility toward God, being both unwilling and unable to subject itself to God's laws, Romans 8:7. Consequently, the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Corinthians 15:50. So, while the believer (our reborn spiritual self) is a new creation in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:17, this new creation resides in the body of Adam's death (consider Paul's language in Romans 7:24). And, while the new creation lives recreated in righteousness, Ephesians 4:24, this new creation expresses itself in and through Adam's "sinful" flesh. It is here that our conflict originates and persists, 1 Peter 2:11. It is through the flesh that our spiritual conflict progresses. To use contemporary computer language, our regenerated spirit represents the latest software. Our flesh, however, is old hardware. The new software is subject to 'freeze' or 'crash.' At the resurrection we who follow Christ will receive eternal hardware, a new immortal, resurrected body.

2. The world: Cultural worldviews and values programing us with the understanding that prompts and reinforces our behavior

God assigned the nations to the sons of God, Deuteronomy 32:8; Psalm 82, who, in turn, misused their position and created cultures, through the flesh of humanity, whose ideologies (values and world views) were contrary to God. Thus, the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, 1 John 5:19. Today, no one alive can fully escape the world into which they were born and raised. How we satisfy our need for security and significance has been woven into the fabric of our consciousness. What makes one great or what determines one to be a failure and of no consequence, is determined by the values and world views taught to us through our culture. So, while the flesh seeks self, the way we come to express this passion for self is realized through ideas fostered and nurtured by angelic beings who have forsaken God and His assignment. Humans, apart from God's redemptive grace in Christ, are spiritually dead/detached from a life with God, living according to the "course of this world (our culture), which is according to the prince of the power of the air (Satan and the fallen angels), Ephesians 2:1-2.

Our spiritual conflict with sin in the flesh intensifies through the various world views that rob a person of the true knowledge of God, Romans 1:21. What we considered truth is falsehood, perpetrated by evil spiritual beings, shaping and informing the flesh about life. These notions about right and wrong, truth and lies, even our understanding about good or evil, are a part of our interpretive functionality, namely, the way we understand the world and how we respond to what we understand. These cultural values become strongholds of thought and behavior influencing our view of God and the world. Only by bringing every thought captive to Christ and being transformed by the renewing of our minds can we begin to see and do things God's way, the way of the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Romans 12:2.

3. The Devil: Spiritual warfare culminates with strongholds of mind and heart allowing the spirits of evil supernaturalism the freedom to take possession of God's creation.

Without question the biblical record informs us that there are evil spirits. We also understand that God has, for His own purposes, given the world system over to the evil spirits, consider Deuteronomy 32:8 with Matthew 4:8-9. With sin (self-survival) and our culturally informed estrangement from the true and living God, the universal experience for every human, we now need to recognize the third and culminating mechanism regarding spiritual warfare, namely, the direct influence from fallen spirits upon the human victim.

It is plausible to argue that everyone is a victim of the effects of fallen angels or demons. There are those, however, who have a direct attachment to certain spirits whose task it is to bring its subject into a state of total bondage leading to self-destruction and/or the destruction of others.

Biblical evidence seems to connect this kind of direct presence in a person's life to the binding practice of idolatry. Idolatry is explicitly associated with the worship of demons, Deuteronomy 32:16-17; Psalm 106:37-38; 1 Corinthians 10:20. Further, the practice of idolatry carries a generational impact declared as aspect of God's commandments. Exodus chapter twenty verses three through six inform us that God will visit "the iniquity [by

context, idolatry] of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate me,” Exodus 20:5. So, as one wholly dedicates themselves to the worship of false gods, demons, these spirits legally bind themselves to such. This bondage transcends generations, impacting the children and the children’s children. The children of idolators are subject to the presence of the false gods, the demonic spirits. In a process that uses the flesh embedded with self (sin) and indoctrination with world views and values that deny or set God aside, these spirits may wreak havoc upon a person’s mind and body to the detriment of the generational/ancestral victim and others impacted by a life beset with spiritual disfunction.

So, we see a pattern. The worship of false gods is the practice of devoting oneself to the protective care of a demon/demons. This ancestral bond targets the offspring to a life in which the presence of ‘another spirit’ serves as a guide to self-destruction. From this bondage only God can deliver, 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

Summary: The flesh (our humanness beset with the active presence of sin) indoctrinated with self-serving and destructive worldviews and values, leads some to worship and serve these lying spirits, binding future generations to experience the deadly impact of unclean spirits at work in, through, and around them.

B. The strategies of spiritual warfare

While most spirit-driven strategies individuals are very personalized, i.e., the strategies are tailored to the weakness that the spirits have nurtured during a person’s lifetime, the overriding strategic methods are strategies of deception and/or Intimidation.

1. Strategies of deception

Satan is a liar and the father of lies, John 8:44. He also knows the qualitative weaknesses of the flesh. Since all of us are familiar with our own values and desires, for example, desires for power, prestige, pleasure, and possessions, the deceptions leading a person down the path of fortune and fame are many. Through the flesh the need for significance is built into every human being. The path to achieve the flesh’s desired significance are as varied as a person’s life circumstance. The flesh is the platform for the ideological lies of Satan to drive a person (or a culture) to ruin. Every human is groomed to desire that which further alienates us from God. More than that, everyone is nurtured to pursue their desires through means that do not include Christ. The simple adage, “God helps those who help themselves,” fuels the fire of self-sufficiency. This fueling process ultimately is designed to lead to spiritual blindness, even when the result might be to create a personality obsessed with spirituality. Religious beliefs and practices based in self, rather than Christ is Satan’s greatest deception, 1 Timothy 4:1-3; Colossians 2:16-18. These beliefs coupled with experiences (spiritual experiences other than the enlivening of the Holy Spirit fulfilling the law of Christ) combine to keep a person in darkness leading to death, 2 Corinthians 11:1-4; Colossians 2:18. Further, various human philosophies, Colossians 2:8, promising to satisfy our desires, to make us whole, to help us find happiness/fulfillment, only take us down a deadly path. Even knowledge itself (including knowledge of the Bible) stokes the flames of

pride/ arrogance, 1 Corinthians 8:1, so that in our pride we find ourselves further alienated from Christ, consider 1 Peter 5:5-6.

To sum up, the strategy involved in our conflict with sin is about self; self-promotion, self-authentication, self-sufficiency. The fallen spiritual realm is all about ‘selfies.’

2. The strategy of Intimidation

At its core sin motivates us to thrive. If that fails, then sin is all about survival. We not only want to be significant (above), we want to be safe. We want to feel secure. As Satan is a murderer from the beginning, John 8:44, he is an expert in cornering us through our desires and his lies. He brings us to the bondage of fear. We fear others (what they think, what they might do, etc); we fear pain (sickness and suffering); we fear loss (what may or may not happen), and, we fear death, Hebrews 2:14-15. These fears bring us into bondage, both physically and spiritually, Matthew 12:22; Luke 13:16. And so, Satan threatens humanity with punishment, persecution, loss, and death, 1 Thessalonians 2:18. Through fear a person hides and pursues safety through a variety of emotions, thoughts, and practices. Through the strategy of intimidation Satan leads people into lifestyles that divide families, friends, churches, and nations. He’s the master of war. Humanity is in his crosshairs, cowering, resisting, striking back, learning to survive through the ingenuity of the flesh, doubting the existence of our Creator God who cares.

C. The path of spiritual warfare: the journey to bondage and destruction

1. Level One: our battle against sin in the flesh (the Adamic curse), and the inevitable bondage to flesh patterns

Flesh-Strategies for Living

We’ve been mentioning flesh patterns throughout this chapter. Now is the time to take a closer look at what this is all about.

As stated earlier, the flesh, refers to my own weak humanness, saturated with sin’s overpowering influences. Through the course of one’s life we (in the flesh) develop many patterns of behavior. Many of these are so deeply ingrained in my person that my personality may often be identified with them. Thus, humanity in the flesh (pre-conversion) has only one option, to do the best it can do to succeed in achieving society’s values, which are the product of evil supernaturalism and corporate human sinfulness. Living independently from the inward life of Jesus Christ in the Spirit, however, results in personality habits that place us in bondage, and, in some cases, give significant ground to the evil of Satan and his angels. Below is a brief definition and list describing some of the flesh patterns that have made each of us a perfect mess.¹⁰ It is little wonder that we desperately need divine intervention and transformation. Human endeavor has failed. Man’s attempts to live up to God’s standards fall short. We need a solution. We need to be rescued from ourselves.

¹⁰The initial quote and the list of the various flesh patterns has been used by permission from Exchanged Life Ministries, Dallas, Texas.

“The flesh (human self-life) is the condition (mind-set, attitude, strategy of living) where my focus is primarily on myself (even if it is good-looking, well adjusted, and socially acceptable) where I am living out of my own resources (heritage, education, IQ, personality, looks, talents, abilities, capabilities, skills, self-strengths) in order to: 1. Cope/deal with life; 2. Solve my problems; 3. Meet my needs (significance and security); 4. Become a success.”

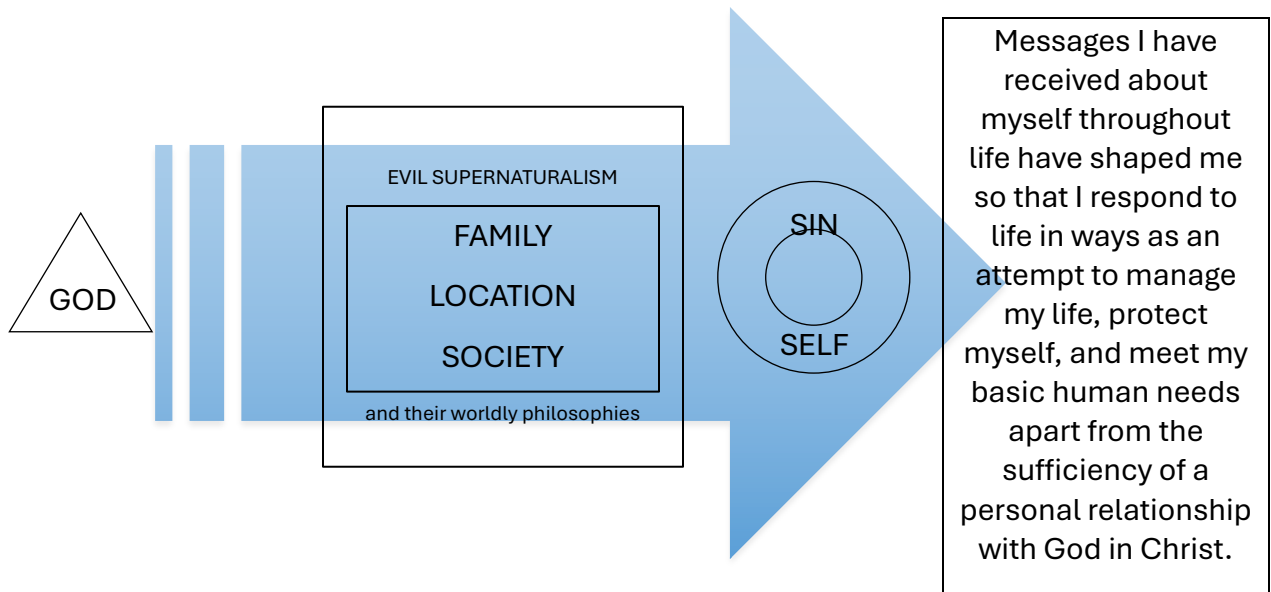
- **Becoming self-absorbed by** becoming overly introspective, self-pity, depression (stuffing my anger and frustrations), and self-deprecation, focusing on my suffering for attention, playing the victim.
- **Withdrawing by** becoming aloof, avoiding others, being unapproachable, giving the silent treatment.
- **Becoming obsessed with** accomplishments, recognition, status, looks, physical health, the past, devotion to a cause, structure, rules, order, regulations, religious activity.
- **Escaping pain/pressure through** carousing, overeating, drugs/alcohol, religious activity and service, television, work, athletics, sex, hobbies/games, talking, computers, sleep, pornography, religion, entertainment, reading.
- **Becoming self-disciplined (self-reliant) by** being a perfectionist, overcompensation, legalism, being too hard and strict, setting unrealistic standards, basing acceptance on performance.
- **Becoming self-indulgent (self-gratifying) by** impulsiveness, buying things, craving alcohol, caffeine, tobacco, sugar, junk foods, sex, drugs.
- **Becoming anxious (worry and fret) by** living in fear, lacking peace and rest, being emotionally paralyzed, paranoia, seeking answers from questionable sources (various religious groups, cults, occult which will give significant ground to fallen spirits).
- **Becoming dominant by** being bossy, being demanding, becoming overbearing, becoming manipulative, intimidation, demanding my rights.
- **Trying to stay in control by** blackmailing (making threats), using coercion, using profanity, playing helpless, not eating, casting blame, showing favoritism.
- **Becoming complacent by** saying things like, “It doesn’t matter...it’s ok.”
- **Becoming insensitive by** saying things like “I don’t care,” being indifferent, being unconcerned, being unsympathetic.
- **Challenging others by** resisting authority, being uncooperative, being unteachable, causing dissension, irritating others, becoming argumentative, rigid, inflexible, stubborn, obstinate, unreasonable, or unyielding.
- **Becoming pessimistic by** being skeptical, being suspicious, distrusting others (myself, God, church, government), expecting the worst, assuming the worst-case scenario to protect myself from disappointment and pain, being dissatisfied and discontent, becoming jealous of others’ success and happiness.
- **Developing a critical attitude by** finding fault with others, everything, and myself in general, becoming judgmental and opinionated, complaining.
- **Becoming hostile (venting my anger) by** being cynical, being malicious, being harsh, being sarcastic, and having a quick temper.

- **Becoming self-assured (self-confident) by** depending upon myself instead of God, being egocentric, bragging, boasting, knowing it all, not asking for help.
- **Becoming self-righteous (self-justifying) by** being defensive, making excuses, covering up mistakes, assuming not to be the problem, blaming others, avoiding responsibility for failure, having difficulty with apologizing, asking for forgiveness, expressing gratitude.
- **Becoming tense (nervous and agitated) by** being impatient, being restless.
- **Becoming emotionally insulated by** avoiding intimacy, denying feelings, not being honest and open with feelings and opinions, being unable to express love in a meaningful way.
- **Denying reality by** ignoring problems, denying that anything is wrong, lying (misleading), deceiving others, exaggerating, hiding your real intentions.
- **Holding a grudge (being resentful) by** sulking, harboring bitterness, being unforgiving, keeping record of wrongs suffered, getting even, wanting others to fail or get hurt.
- **Fighting unfairly by** gossiping, using humor to hide real feelings, procrastinating, forgetting things.
- **Putting up a front (not being real) by** faking it, putting on a show to get attention and impress others, becoming superficial, being too sentimental.
- **Living by my feelings by** being too sensitive to criticism, taking things personally, reading rejection into various settings, being irritable, being controlled by anger, doubts, and fears, believing all is ok when I feel it is ok.
- **Becoming a pleaser (being nice) by:** trying to be all things to all people, trying to do the “proper and correct” thing, trying to keep everyone happy, trying to keep peace at all cost, avoiding conflict at all cost, becoming a doormat (letting others take advantage of me), expressing to others what I think they want to hear, giving in too easily, being controlled by others, having difficulty saying no, setting boundaries, standing up for myself, being too submissive and compliant.
- **Becoming passive (lacking initiative) by** quitting too easily, not taking chances, playing it safe, waiting for someone to tell me what to do and how to do it, depending on others instead of God, vacillating, being indecisive, avoiding failure at all cost, procrastinating, becoming lazy, apathetic, or lethargic.
- **Becoming self-deprecating by** assuming I am always the problem, being overly apologetic, being too hard on myself; having difficulty receiving love, receiving compliments, receiving forgiveness, forgiving myself; clinging to those who finally accept me; being uncomfortable with success.
- **Becoming a caretaker (rescuer) by** being overly protective, taking responsibility for another’s feelings, making decisions for others, giving unsolicited advice, trying to prevent others’ failures, becoming possessive, being a busybody, lecturing others, trying to find someone I can rescue, nagging, talking too much and listening too poorly.
- **Becoming too intense (overly serious) by** becoming unemotional, having trouble dealing with feelings, being overly analytical, being stern, lacking joy or life, not being fun or having fun.

Dynamics

While all of us have behaved in ways depicted by the list above, we are not asserting that an occasional bout with any of these characteristics result in spiritual bondage. Flesh

patterns refer to the characteristic control these patterns may exercise over our personality. We are talking about how sin in the flesh exercises its power, gained through the law of cultural expectations, and lies we have come to believe about ourselves. We are referring to sin in the flesh taking opportunity through lies to create patterns of behavior that brings us into a deadly lifestyle of emotional, intellectual, or behavioral bondage.



Diagnosis

Only God knows our hearts. Only God should be trusted to expose flesh patterns that are leading us down a path of destruction. Our relationship with the Lord should regularly include the soul-searching sentiments of David's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way," Psalm 139:23-24. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Corinthians 1:9. He will reveal any hurtful way and lead us to the deliverance found only in Jesus Christ.

Deliverance

Trust God to reveal the area(s) from which He wants to deliver you. When He does reveal the flesh pattern (and He always does), be willing to renounce the pattern as sin and be willing to allow the Holy Spirit to break the habit/pattern. With the Holy Spirit leading some flesh patterns can vanish within several weeks. Others may linger because God isn't done using them to shape the depth of our spiritual character.

Second, learn about and embrace, by faith, Christ's riches in mercy and grace toward you. We are His new creation. Further, Embrace your identity and position with Christ. Learning to rely upon the leading and enabling presence of the Holy Spirit; allowing God's Spirit to direct our focus and trust upon God's grace rather than trusting our own self-tendencies rooted in prideful authentication, is God's way for deliverance. We have been made alive by the Spirit "let's follow the Spirit as well, Galatians 5:25 [NASB 2020 edition].

STOP**2. Level Two: influences through the philosophies of the world****Description**

Being directed or driven to excel or respond to life according to the cultural norms rather than the Word of God describes a second level of bondage. Along with flesh patterns we discover a world view that not only excuses our behavior but often encourages the right to be the way we are, consider Romans 1:32.

Dynamics

Our mind's reasoning is nurtured by and becomes informed by a broken world system which promotes values contrary to Christ (See the diagram above which illustrates how worldly philosophies come to us and embed themselves into our own worldview). The deception of spiritual indoctrination and false teaching is discussed throughout the Bible. First, false doctrine can be devised/promoted by demonic spirits, 1 Timothy 4:1-3. That said, false doctrine is spread by human teachers, 1 Timothy 6:3-16; 2 Peter 2:1-3, 10-22; 2 Corinthians 11:4, 12-15. These false teachers are described as being self-centered, self-seeking, and deceptive, 1 Timothy 6:4; 2 Peter 2:10-15; 2 Corinthians 11:15. Discerned by the words that come out of their mouths, cp. Matthew 7:15-20 with Matthew 12:33; also Luke 6:44; 2 Timothy 2:14-18, false teachers, and their doctrine, attack the cardinal truth of God's Word, consider 2 Corinthians 11:4 "another Jesus," "another spirit" (cp. 1 John 4:1), "another gospel," resulting in the destruction of the fruitful Christian life, 2 Corinthians 11:3; Galatians 4:9; Galatians 5:4. Ideas and instruction that place our well-being in our own abilities to change are deadly. While one's salvation is not in question, false teachings defraud Christians from the rewards of a faithful life toward God, Colossians 2:18,19. Christians resist the lies of false teachers and their doctrine through God's truth, God's church, and a godly living.¹¹

Diagnosis

Only The Lord knows our areas of blindness to the teaching of God's Word. Fortunately, it is still God's mission through Christ to seek and save those who are lost. It is His desire to transform us into a new humanity fit for the new heaven and new earth. Praying for direction in the matter of our philosophies, doctrine, and values will result in God disclosing to us the hurtful way. Again, from the Psalms, we might pray, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight," Psalm 19:14.

Deliverance

The Lord is rescuing us from "this present evil age," Galatians 1:4; 2 Peter 1:4. As such, we are being transformed, 2 Corinthians 3:18, into Christ's image through the renewing of our minds, Romans 12:1-2. Destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God is essential in our warfare, 2 Corinthians 10:5. This is what Paul meant when he exhorted the Corinthians to take "every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,"

¹¹ Christians must resist the lies of false teaching by knowing the truth, 2 Timothy 2:15. Christians must resist the lies of false teaching by submission to the church, 1 Timothy 3:15. Christians resist the lies of false teaching by remaining steadfast in the truth, 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

2 Corinthians 10:5. As the Lord reveals those philosophies that rob us of His best, we must trust God's remedy, the voice of the Word of God, Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice and they follow Me." Resisting the Devil, James 4:7, begins with hearing and embracing the voice of Christ through the written Word leading us away from the temporal values of the world and learning to follow the leading of the Good Shepherd. We can, by the Holy Spirit, renounce falsehood and submit to God's truth. As we resist the devil in this way he will flee from us, James 4:7.

3. Level Three: influences through direct contact with spiritual beings which bind their victim to both the flesh patterns, cultural norms contrary to God, and the personalities of the fallen spirits.

For most of us spiritual warfare consists of the fight against the ways of the flesh and the ideals of the world (which appeal to the flesh). For some, especially those who come from a background of intentional ancestral idolatry, that is, the practice and dedication false religions empowered by demonic forces, the spiritual battle usually includes the direct presence of the spirit world. Through ancestral devotion to demons, the application of Satan's strategy of lies, intimidation, indoctrination, now includes personal interference and oppression. And, as mentioned earlier, this bondage may well be part of a family curse through the guise of prior dedication to false gods (empowered by the 'sons of God' who left their original assignment).

The Dynamics of the oppression and demonization

Now we focus on an area that most Christians would associate the spiritual warfare. That said, there is hardly any consensus among scholars as to what is meant by demonization, or, if the experience is even possible in the life of a true believer. Let's take a moment to explore the possibilities.

The meaning of demonization

To begin with, the term demonized¹² refers to the direct influence of a victim's body/mind by a demon (demons), in which the spirit exercises some control over the victim. This control and influence may be in many or just a few areas of a person experience. Emotions, thoughts, physical pains and symptoms, or spiritual inabilities and bondage to certain sins represent a few areas demons may affect. Initially the control is temporary at which time, however, the victim usually does not successfully resist. From these beginnings ground is yielded and strongholds are developed, leading to further alienation.

Arguments AGAINST the demonization of believers

There are a variety of arguments against the idea that Christians can be demonized.

¹² Concerning the word *daimonizomai* (to be demonized) CF Dickason writes: "First there is the root, *daimon*, which indicates the involvement of demons. Second is the causative stem, *iz*, which shows that there is an active cause in the verb. Third is the passive ending, *omenos*. This conveys the passivity of the person described as demonized. Putting it all together, the participle in its root form means "a demon caused passivity." This indicates control other than that of the person who is demonized; he is regarded as the recipient of the demon's action.

The Spatial argument: Since the infinite Holy Spirit dwells within the Christian there is no room for demons. However, God is non spatial. The universe exists in and through Him. A spirit does not have to be within a person to have an impact on that person. We can be held hostage through the mind set on the flesh intensified by the spiritual world without a permanent indwelling. Permanent indwelling leads to the next argument, ownership.

The Ownership argument: The Christian is bought with a price and is the property of God, having been delivered from the domain of darkness, Colossians 1:13. However, demonization is not talking about possession but influence. As mentioned, evil influences impact the Christian's life all the time. To think the spirit world cannot influence the Christian defies the testimony of Scripture, consider Acts 5:3.

The Identity argument: The Christian is now "in Christ" and a vital identity/union with Christ. Further, no demonic force can separate us from the love of God in Christ, Romans 8:38-39. Yet, while this is true, the flesh and sin through Adam are the demon's platform for influencing the life of the believer. The new creation (our identity in and through Christ) cannot be touched, consider 1 John 5:18. But the flesh remains, until the resurrection. Through the domain of Adam's flesh the fallen spirits may have access.

The Moral Presence argument: It is said that God cannot dwell with evil and since God dwells with every believer, evil cannot dwell there, Psalm 5:4. The idea of God dwelling speaks of His relationship with the redeemed. One, however, must concede that the entire universe, including the evil presently within it, dwells in God's presence. For evil to influence a believer does not violate God's holiness.

Arguments FOR the demonization of believers

- Certain passages seem to indicate demonic influence over the spiritual and physical dimensions of Christian, consider Acts 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 12:7.
- Church discipline seems to allow for demonic influence (in extreme cases), 1 Corinthians 5:5.
- False teaching (a device of demons) can influence and control the Christian, 2 Corinthians 11:3-4.
- The warfare in which the Christian is engaged involves demonic forces including the very thoughts and behavior of the Christian, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6.
- While Christ is victorious over the world, the flesh and the devil, Christians are not removed from the world, have not had the presence of sin removed and, it might be argued, have not been delivered from the devices, strategies, and influences of demonic presence, consider 2 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 6:1-12.
- The flesh and indwelling presence of sin are a part of the Christian experience and are there because of Adam's disobedience. This remains the platform by which the spiritual world has access to the Christian.

The DYNAMICS of demonization

Due to Adam's failure, the body of this death, Romans 7:24, provides the access needed for the spirit world to oppress the Christian, 2 Corinthians 12:7. So, while the new creation is

beyond Satan's purview, the flesh is not.¹³ With access through the flesh, the spirit world is able to influence the mind, heart, and soul of the believer, consider Acts 5:3.

When a spirit is present the traits of demonic oppression in the life of a Christian may include the inexplicable loss of control in physical, emotional, and spiritual endeavors.¹⁴ The prescribed response of the Christian to satanic oppression is that we **submit** to God and **resist** the devil, James 4:7. Submitting to God and resisting the devil requires taking control of the ground that the enemy controls. Submitting to God and resisting the devil requires a commitment to live for God according to His revealed will, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. This Second Corinthian passage mentions both our thoughts captive (aligning our values and world view with God's) and obedience. Finally, submitting to God and resisting the devil requires standing firm in the lifestyle which prevents the enemy from gaining any spiritual access, Ephesians 6:10-18.

Diagnosis

The importance of a proper diagnosis regarding demonic activity is essential. Many have come to my office believing to be demonized when really they needed to turn from their self-interested lifestyle and renounce the worldly philosophies that were leading them astray. For a true diagnosis there are a number of areas that need investigation. These areas isolate several key factors such as mentioned below.

Ancestral history

The personal spiritual heritage of an individual is a key factor in determining the presence of demonic influence. If the parents, grandparents/great grandparents were involved with idolatry then demonization should be considered possible. If this is unknown there are several other factors that could indicate the presence of demons.

Dreams

If the ancestral history is unknown, questions revealing spiritual experiences are important. First involve a person's night experiences. When we sleep the spirits are active (we are more passive). Supernatural powers and nighttime visitations, i.e., dreams that have characters or objects that bind a person's ability to move or talk, are common for a demonized person. Dreams involving evil supernatural episodes, pain, bondage, or sexual experiences should also be taken seriously.

¹³ Job 1,2 – Job (an OT believer) experienced outward harassment and physical disease due to satanic oppression. Matthew 16:16-23 – Peter is influenced to confront Christ about the cross. Luke 22:31,32 – Peter was tested by Satan. Acts 5:3 – Ananias experienced inner satanic control in lying to God. Luke 13:10-17 – A daughter of Abraham (OT for believer) experienced years of physical disease/infirmity due to satanic oppression. 1 Samuel 16:14 – Saul, a man in whom the Holy Spirit once resided, was tormented by an evil spirit (this spirit apparently came and went as it suited him). 2 Corinthians 12:7-8 – The Apostle Paul was afflicted by an “angel of Satan.” Additionally, the Corinthians believers were warned not to “share” partner with demons, 1 Corinthians 10:20-21.

¹⁴ “Demonized persons were seen as dominated and controlled by the demon, who worked his will through the use of his victim. Demons could use the vocal chords of the demonized to speak (Matthew 8:29,31), or keep him from speaking (Matthew 12:22), cause blindness (Matthew 12:22), give supernatural physical strength (Mark 5:3), promote nakedness (Mark 5:15), force self-mutilation upon the victim (Mark 5:5) or even produce insanity (Luke 8:35). In these cases, the demonized person appears to be unable to successfully resist the demon's malicious control. He is enslaved.” Alex Konya. *Demons: A biblical perspective*, 21.

Oppression

Along with these characteristics is the sense of being oppressed. Oppression comes in many forms but usually prohibits the victim from acting freely. Rather, they are under the constraint of an outside entity. This oppression may be while asleep or awoken. Any inability to say no to sinful impulses could indicate demonic influence.

Physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences

Next, a person's physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences should be taken into consideration. Demons can inflict many physical maladies. Blindness, deafness, inability to talk, and various pains are often experienced in the lives of those demonized.

Emotionally, the victim may experience the emotions of the demon. These spirit's can inflict their hate, sadness, and evil intent in and through the demonized person. These emotions can be uncontrollable sadness, anger, fear, anxiety, or doubt (especially regarding God and Christ). These experiences usually lead to spiritual and lifestyle problems. The inability to focus upon the Bible when it is being preached or read, the inability to pray, the discomfort of being in a spiritual context such as a prayer meeting, Bible study, etc., are indications of possible demonic activity.

Deliverance

So many times we reduce deliverance to some formula using Jesus' name. Deliverance, however, is not about the Messiah's power or authentication. Rather, deliverance is about the believer's surrendered lifestyle to the will of God through Christ. The Christian victimized by the spirit world needs to evaluate and submit his entire life (especially in the areas of demonic oppression) to the Lord. We are to devote ourselves to God purposes. To do this the victim needs to be counseled. This lifestyle counseling often takes time. Fortunately, as the Christian submits to God and renounces the satanic lies, the spirit can be confronted and exiled.

Reeducate; Renounce/repent

Because bondage to strongholds is based upon lies, freedom from spiritual bondage requires re-education in the truth. Being grounded in what Christ has accomplished for us and who we are in Christ are essential truths for the Christian life. As false beliefs are exposed, we must renounce the lies and embrace the truth, James 4:7. In the deliverance/counseling process re-education/renunciation should take up about 45% of the time spent.

Remove/confrontation of lies and the liars.

Occasionally the renouncing of strongholds is met with a spiritual presence directly in charge of this falsehood. At this time direct confrontation might be required. This confrontation is focused upon gathering only information that leads to the removal of strongholds and the permanent removal of the spirit. This is not entertainment or fortune telling. Acquiring the name, rank, and purpose of the spirit's presence provides all that is needed to release a person from its control as the believer renounces the spirit's lies and embraces God's truth. In the counseling process, only about 10% of the time spent should involve confrontation.

Rededicate/renew

As strongholds and oppressing spirits are removed, a person experiences increased spiritual freedom. Voices disappear and the confusing “noise” within subsides.

Unfortunately, those ancestrally oppressed have developed a lifestyle of flesh-patterns that are more demonic than human. These patterns may seem to be as pervasive as the spiritual presence was previously. Now, the delivered Christian needs to learn how to live by the enlivening and superintending presence of the Holy Spirit. To live by the Spirit is the only way to overcome the desires of the flesh, Galatians 5:16.

God’s Intervention for Spiritual Victory

For freedom in the spiritual realm we need to “hold fast to the Head,” Colossians 2:19. The finished work of Christ frees the Christian from sin, the world system and the powers of evil supernaturalism, Romans 6:6-7; Galatians 6:14; 1 John 3:7-8. The living Christ provides the life that transcends all power and might, Ephesians 1:19-23. Our birthright in Christ is well stated in Romans.

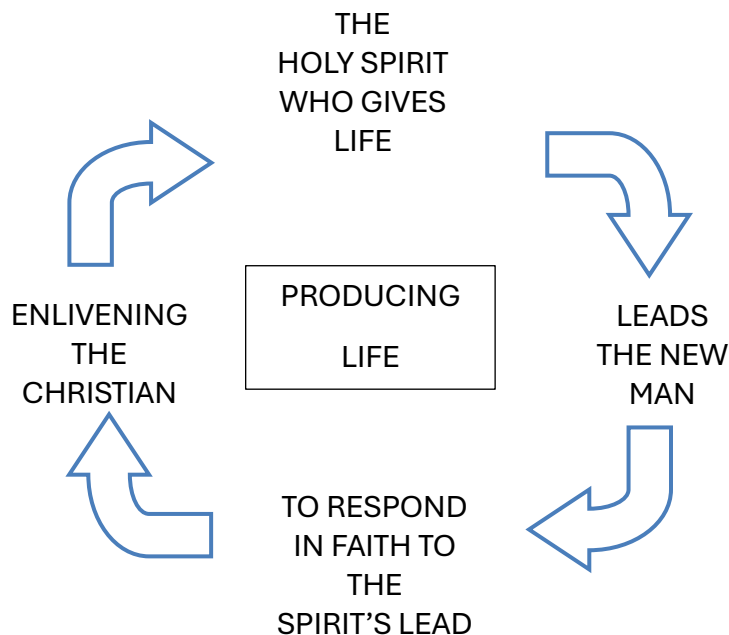
“What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the One who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword...but in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” Romans 8:31-35,37

Christ’s faith/ faithfulness demonstrated through His sinless life, John 8:28; Hebrews 4:15, provides the righteousness for our standing with God. Christ’s righteous obedience realized God’s plan to reverse and remove our death sentence, while giving satanic forces no ground or stronghold, Romans 5:18-21; John 12:31; 14:30; 1 John 3:7-8. Christ’s death provides the ransom allowing God to release us from our sin and death. Christ’s death on the cross provides the forgiveness of sin, the ground for imputed righteousness, lifting the curse of God’s law (Galatians 3:13), transferring the Christian from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13-14), while disarming satanic forces of their spiritual-legal grip (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14). Additionally, Christ’s resurrection is God’s seal of approval, Romans 1:4, with the life of Christ becoming the spiritual life of every born again person, Colossians 3:3-4. Finally, Christ’s ascension places the living Savior as Head over all, a name above every name, Philippians 2:9, giving mankind (through Christ) a vantage point higher than the angels, Hebrews 2:7-8, and the spiritual vantage point for triumphant living, Ephesians 1:18-2:7. Mediating the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:33, Christ, by the Holy Spirit, enables the Christian to live for God. By the enlivening presence of the Holy Spirit the Christian can live above the desires of the flesh, Galatians 5:16, above the philosophies of the world, Colossians 2:8-10, and free from the fear of and any bondage to the accuser and his realm, Colossians 2:15.

IV. Living as Light inside the kingdom of darkness

A. Light in the darkness

The New Testament considers the Christian to be light in this world of darkness, Matthew 5:14; Romans 13:12; Ephesians 5:8ff... As such, we are to live as children of Light. We are “sons of light” 1 Thessalonians 5:5. To live beyond the evil supernatural world a certain lifestyle must be attained and maintained. This lifestyle, however, is not generated by the flesh, that is, self-effort. The Christian lifestyle must come from above, through the enlivening ministry of the Holy Spirit. Below is a simple diagram illustrating the spiritual life process.



B. The Armor of Light Ephesians 5:18—6:19 —especially 6:10-19

The lifestyle for the Christian is not about keeping updated rules and regulations. Rather, the Christian life is about life in and by the Spirit, Romans 8:9, 14; Galatians 5:5-6, 16,25; Ephesians 5:18. We are to be born of the Spirit; to be led by the Spirit; to follow the Spirit; that we might experience the life of the Spirit. A great example of this teaching is found in Ephesians 5:18—6:19. In Ephesians Paul exhorts the church to be filled with the Spirit, 5:18. Within this exhortation, Paul encourages the proper behavior between husband and wife, parent and child, and master and slave. After these practical exhortations Paul concludes his letter with a general admonition to live in the power of God, or, to be precise, to live, “filled with the Spirit,” Ephesians 5:18. For Paul, the concept of “putting on”/ “wear”/ “adorn” was equivalent to living a lifestyle in the strength of Christ by the Spirit (consider Romans 13:14; Ephesians 4:22-24 where these terms are employed). In our passage, Paul closes his letter to the Ephesians by giving us the lifestyle that protects us from the

schemes of the Devil. To understand Paul's exhortation, we will discuss the 'armor of God' passage verse by verse.

Wearing (living) the armor of God for spiritual victory

Ephesians 6:10-18 in Paul's letter to the Ephesians

The first three chapters of Ephesians supply the theological message (e.g. God's glorious salvation bringing the nations together under the promises). These chapters detail God's work on our behalf and the results of His redemptive work, namely, Jew and Gentile in one body, in Christ, by the Spirit, consider Ephesians 2:11-22.

The last three chapters make the practical application based upon the spiritual unity inherent in the theological message of the first three chapters. Paul tells us that, since there is one body, and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, with one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father over all, through all, and in all, Ephesians 4:4-6, live in submission to one another by the strength of the Holy Spirit, 5:18. Which, in closing this letter, Paul, reflecting back to a reference made earlier, Ephesians 1:19, tells us that the Spirit provides the "strength of His might," i.e., the life of the resurrected Christ. Ephesians 6:10-18. So Paul, in concluding this letter, provides the Christian community an overview of the Christian life. The life that keeps us safe from falling victim to the wiles of the Devil.

The specific details of Ephesians 6:10-18 and the meaning of this passage

Observations From the Text

Strength in the Lord – the verb "be strong" (better, "be made strong") is found in Paul's writings 6x's. All uses except Romans 4:20 (and here) explicitly indicate that the strength is a supernaturally derived enablement through Christ Jesus (see Philippians 4:13; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 2:1; 4:17). The idea of "strength" is compounded with two other words "power" and "might" each of which is attributed to the Lord. These "power" words have already been used in this epistle part of the prayer Paul prays for these Christians, Ephesians 1:18ff. This spiritual power is the power of the resurrection, the spiritual life of the recreating, life-giving God.

"put on" – As mentioned above, the idea of donning/wearing/putting on in Paul's letters indicates lifestyle when speaking of this present age. In Ephesians 4:24 Paul exhorts the readers to "put on the new man." This exhortation is then followed by several verses instructing the Christian about honesty, integrity, generosity, wholesome speech and kindness, concluding with an exhortation to imitate God and the Lord Jesus. In Romans 13:12,14 putting on the armor of light and putting on the Lord Jesus should best be understood as the exhortation to quitting old ways and living according to the standards of Jesus Christ. Finally, Colossians 3:12 makes it very clear that the concept of donning indicates lifestyle. Finally, since this an exhortation, one assumes that this 'donning' is not automatic but must involve some cooperation with God's provision.

"the armor of God" – the equipment that is from God. This armor is that which is identified with God and His purposes. He supplies it; He would wear it; the armor, then, depicts

aspects of a Christ-like lifestyle that God's own strength (through the Holy Spirit according to the larger context) makes possible.

“wrestle” – This term depicts wrestling in the various athletic contests at that time. In classical Greek the word was used for combat. Since the full armor would not have been used for athletic contest, close, hand-to-hand combat is suggested. The Christian's encounter with spiritual warfare is likened to hand-to-hand combat. The lifestyle suited for victorious combat are the pieces of armor in the following verses.

“rulers” ... “powers” ... “world forces” ... “spiritual forces of wickedness” – these terms refer to certain rank and file of the angelic world, particularly the fallen angelic world. Rulers (fourth highest rank) is that angelic being who initiates the process of attack; “powers” (fifth highest rank) has the right and authority to command and control; world forces (seventh in rank) usually associated with those spirits involved in magical formulas who control certain regions or areas. “Spiritual forces of wickedness” refers to the lowest rank and file (unclean spirits).

As we discuss the armor (think lifestyle) we will evaluate the historical context, optional views (when necessary) and the implications for daily living.

Truth

The armor

“girded in truth” – the piece of armor most likely refers to a leather apron that went around the waist and protected the thighs. The picture is one who is preparing for rigorous action.

The Truth of the Bible view

The truth of the Gospel/Bible – “truth...refers to the truth of God revealed in the Gospel which as its outworking in the lives of believers who are members of the new humanity.”¹⁵ Thus, the Christian wear the essential truth of the faith as his girdle/apron.

The ‘Lifestyle’ View

Truth (honesty and integrity) in the distinction to lies, falsehood, fraud, etc. Satanic strategy is primarily deception (see above). For believers to lie is to be like the father of lies (John 8:44). To be honest is to be like the Father of Truth, the Spirit of Truth, and the Way, the Truth...Note: also, Paul's order in Ephesians 4:24ff. By living in truth safeguards the Christian and the community from strongholds of deception.

Righteousness

The armor

“breastplate of righteousness.” This piece covered the chest to protect these vital organs.

The Imputation of Righteousness view

The imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ is the ground upon which the Christian can stand. Marcus Barth, *Ephesians*, the Anchor Bible Series, 34A (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 796-97. Every Christian should live aware of their position of righteousness in Christ.

¹⁵ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians PNTC* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 473-74.

The ‘Lifestyle’ View

Good Works (moral excellence and the acts of mercy). Righteousness is often seen as ‘good works’, consider Matthew 6:1. While we are not saved by “deeds done in righteousness,” Titus 3:5, the Christian life is to be a life characterized by good works, Galatians 6:10; Titus 3:8. Hence, the exhortation is for the Christian to imitate God in His moral rightness and perfection, consider Matthew 5:48. By one’s good deeds the Christian silences his opponent, cp. 1 Peter 2:12,15.

Peace

The armor

“feet shod in preparation of the gospel of peace.” There is no particular shoe or boot mentioned in this passage. Here we learn that the soldier is to wear the appropriate footwear for the type of battle to be engaged. Certain boots were for marching; certain shoes provided good footing on slippery ground.

Various views

The phrase used by Paul is unique. Both the term gospel and peace are genitives further limiting the “preparation” or readiness. The picture may well be that of the messenger (Isaiah 52:7-10) running to tell Israel that the salvation of the Lord has come. Israel is blessed with shalom (peace, prosperity and God’s favor). Ready to share the gospel with the world. The most common view links this piece of armor with the Christian’s readiness to share the Gospel that has brought peace (cp. Ephesians 2:11-22) and reconciliation between Jew and Gentile.

The ‘Lifestyle’ View

To ward off enemy advantages the Christian is to be willing and ready to **live the implications of the gospel of peace** (forgiving, peacemaker, reconciling, blessing) in distinction to unforgiveness, anger and ill-wishing. As we have partaken of the Gospel, so we ought to live (cp. Ephesians 4:29-5:2).

Trust

The armor

“The shield of faith” – The shield referred to is the full-body shield that protects the entire soldier. It was designed to handle any of the various types of flying assaults made by the enemy.

The Christian Faith (our beliefs) View

The Christian faith view suggests that this shield refers to sound doctrine. Thus, faith refers to the protection that sound doctrine (the faith) handed down to the church by the Apostles and prophets would provide against various lies of the enemy. This is defended based on the presence of the article preceding “faith.” “The faith” would possibly be a reference to the body of Christian truth/doctrine.

The ‘Lifestyle’ View

Trusting God in all circumstances expresses the content of faith (mentioned above). We live toward God in faith according to His Word. The lifestyle view simply takes “the faith” a

step farther. We are to live our lives with submission and gratitude in distinction to complaining and manipulating circumstances. The use of the definite article does not require an identifying significance. Rather, often serving as a function marker in a genitive phrase, the article appears with no semantic function at all. In Ephesians alone Paul uses the word “faith” with an article 5x’s (1:15; 3:12, 17; 4:13; 6:16) and only 4:13 likely refers to the body of Christian teaching, “the faith.”

Hope

The armor

“The helmet of salvation.” This was a bronze helmet with side cheek pieces to protect the face.

Various views

This phrase may well encompass the entirety of God’s saving grace. The genitive phrase may well be understood as a genitive of apposition, thus identifying helmet and salvation as the same thing. Already mentioned in Ephesians are God’s choice, predestination, infilling, exaltation, new creation, forgiveness, reconciliation, and future destiny of those who trust Christ. Paul uses this metaphor in First Thessalonians 5:8, with, perhaps, a little clarifying phrase, “the helmet, the hope of salvation.” The conscious awareness of God’s eternal perspective and His proven devotion toward the redeemed, in distinction to a temporal and earthbound mindset, is the reality from which God would have us operate. Regardless of our present trial, (in fact, trials produce ‘hope,’ Romans 5:4-5) we live with the sure hope of salvation/rescue/ deliverance.

The spoken Word of God

The armor

“the sword” mentioned here has a short blade useful in close, hand-to-hand combat.

The confrontation view

Here the spoken word is seen as a weapon to be used in direct confrontation of a demonic being. Thus, this view asserts that proclaiming the word God in the realm of darkness is the means by which others held by demonic forces will be liberated.

The ‘Lifestyle’ view

Using **Scripture** as the content of our speech not only a lifestyle expected in the assembly of believers, Ephesians 5:19, but having God’s word ready in all circumstances helps thwart the efforts of the enemy against us or others. The spoken Word of God seems to indicate by Paul’s use of the Greek word, *rhema* (instead of *logos*). *Rhema* may refer to the spoken word or (*Louw and Nida*) what has been stated (i.e., the content of what has been stated, the message). God’s Word is light and life; it bears fruit; makes one wise; grows within the Christian; produces faith; and transforms. The Christian, in every life situation, should live with an inscripturated worldview.

Prayer and watchfulness

Prayer is not associated with any limiting weapon or piece of armor. Prayer is an overriding spiritual practice assumed upon the Christian who is engaged in close combat. Prayer is to always be for all and at all times. Apart from prayer a Christian may be left to his own resources.

As we pray we watch. Watchfulness carries the sense of alertness. While, and for the purpose of praying, Christians are to remain alert both toward their present circumstances, the answer to prayer, and for the coming of the Lord. Apart from this watchfulness a Christian may lose his awareness of both self and others (as well as the Lord).

Concluding Thoughts

The Christian, as an ambassador for Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:20. As an ambassador we understand that we are foreigners from another country (kingdom), consider Colossians 1:13. The kingdom in which we are stationed, however, is hostile toward Christ and His people. Hence, while we are strangers and sojourners, 1 Peter 2:11, we may be confronted with the hostility which governs the domain of darkness. Certainly sin, the present worldview, and the ruler of this age are present. And so, we must learn the skills and demeanor necessary to thrive while we await extraction. While we wait, we must learn of and prepare for conflict; conflict with sin, conflict with culture, and, sometimes, direct conflict with hostile spirits. This is spiritual warfare.