

USING EXPOSITORY PREACHING TO TEACH CHURCH  
MEMBERS ABOUT SPIRITUAL WARFARE,  
TALBOT PARK BAPTIST CHURCH,  
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

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A Ministry Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Robert Harwood Carpenter

May 2007

**APPROVAL SHEET**

USING EXPOSITORY PREACHING TO TEACH CHURCH

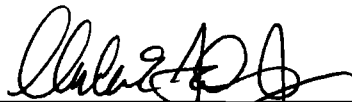
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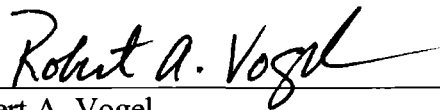
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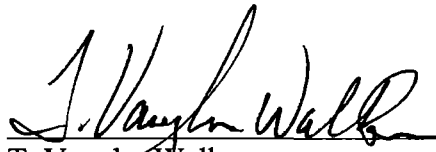
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T. Vaughn Walker

Date March 23, 2007

To my Savior  
Jesus Christ, the One who  
called me to preach His Word  
despite my speech impediment

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## PREFACE

I would like to begin by sharing my continued amazement that the Holy Spirit would call me to proclaim His life-transforming message of forgiveness and salvation. I will always be aware of my human weaknesses as a result of my speech impediment. Lord Jesus, I have seen You honor Your Word, and I pledge my life to the faithful proclamation of the gospel. As the apostle Paul challenged Timothy, my desire is to be ready at all times to stand and declare the good news. Thank You for allowing me to feel Your presence and peace when Satan's attacks were their fiercest.

I thank the Lord for my dear wife, Suzanne, who has been a constant support to me over the past sixteen years of our marriage. I appreciate all the times you have encouraged me in ministry as we have served the Lord and His people together. I love you very much, and I look forward to spending the rest of my life with you.

I will be forever thankful to my parents, Bobby and Joyce Carpenter, for the never-ending love, support, and encouragement they have offered me throughout my entire life and ministry. The sacrifices you both have made will be evident in everything I accomplish. I pray you will always know how proud I am to be your son.

I am also appreciative for my brother, Jeff, and sister, Karen, and the love we share despite the fact that our crazy schedules often keep us from seeing each other as much as we would like. I love you both very much.

My mother-in-law Betty Bennett has been a real blessing to me for so many years. We truly share a special relationship, and I hope you know that I will always love you.

I will always be thankful for all that Southern Seminary professor, James L. Blevins taught me during my Master of Divinity studies. For the rest of my years in ministry, his godly influence and biblical instruction will always be evident as I preach and teach God's Word. I will never forget his love of Mark's gospel, the book of Revelation, and for the Bible as a whole. For the years God allowed me to spend with Jim and Maxine in Louisville, I am truly grateful.

I am also thankful for all the time and assistance my supervisory professor Chuck Lawless, offered me throughout the course of my doctoral studies at Southern Seminary. I remember all that I learned from you during my years with the Graham School, as well as during our correspondence for this ministry project. I sincerely appreciate your willingness to work with me in all my graduate school endeavors.

My dear friend, Todd Smith, has been a great encouragement to me these past three years during our Doctor of Ministry studies in Expository Preaching. I love you like a brother, and I know that our friendship is one which will remain for many years to come despite the miles between us. We have both grown together in so many ways during this course of study, and I am thankful that God placed us in the same cohort class. For your friendship, I will forever praise our Savior.

I would like to say a special thank you to our dear friends, George, Nancy and Gracie Mayotte for all the love you have shown Suzanne and I as you welcomed us into our new home and surroundings in Chesapeake, Virginia. We were greatly blessed by the Lord when we became your neighbors earlier last year. We love you all like family, and we look forward to many more wonderful times with you in the future.

What a difference our church office manager, Barbara Jackson, has made in my ministry during my first year at Talbot Park. I will always remember your willingness to offer your valuable insight into the statistical research as shown in chapter 5 and the Appendix. I hope you know that you are a true joy to work with each day.



In closing, I would like to say to S. Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick-fil-A, Inc., that my ministry will forever show evidence of your positive influence on my life. I will always remember that you believed in me before I ever believed in myself. I know that I will always reap the benefits of my many years with Chick-fil-A. I hope you know that you are very dear to me, and I pray that my life will be a reflection of the corporate purpose and core values of the company you founded many years ago.

Robert H. Carpenter

Norfolk, Virginia

May 2007

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this ministry project was to equip the members of Talbot Park Baptist Church with the knowledge of spiritual warfare and the armor of God through expository preaching.

#### **Goals of the Project**

The first goal of this ministry project was to teach the congregation what the Bible says about spiritual warfare through preaching expository sermons relating to putting on the whole armor of God.

The second goal of this project was to improve my skills in expository preaching. My hope and prayer remain that I will continually grow in my abilities as a minister of God's Word.

The third goal of this project was to prepare the members of our church to stand firm against the schemes of Satan and his evil forces. I am a firm believer that one of my responsibilities as a pastor is to equip God's children with the truths of scripture as I preach and teach the Bible.

The fourth and final goal of this ministry project was to instruct the congregation about the role and importance of prayer in spiritual warfare. By acquiring a solid understanding about what the Bible teaches about spiritual warfare, we became a stronger body of believers that will continually seek to live in the victory Christ secured for us. Satan knows that our prayers are both powerful and effective, so therefore, we must remain committed to praying for our church and for one another.

## **Context of the Project**

Talbot Park Baptist Church is located in Norfolk, Virginia, which is a neighboring city with Virginia Beach, Newport News, and Hampton. The church is about seven miles from the largest naval base in the world. The United States Navy has stationed many of its aircraft carriers, submarines, and other surface ships at the Norfolk base facility. There are numerous other military commands from the Marine Corps, Air Force, and the Army also located within the region known as Hampton Roads, Virginia.

In the autumn of 1940, the Norfolk Baptist Council purchased a field in a sparsely settled residential section called Talbot Park. On May 23, 1943, an organizational meeting was held at the local Granby High School. Attendance at this meeting was composed of 96 people from the surrounding community. It was at this meeting that Talbot Park Baptist Church was born. The church met every Sunday at Granby High School, and soon plans were being formulated to erect a church building. Even though America was at war, and new buildings were being limited due to a shortage of materials, this small group of enthusiastic Christians could not be discouraged.

Acting on faith and armed with hope and love, two representatives from the congregation were sent to acquire permission from the United States Congress to build a church. The permission was granted, the money borrowed and the contract given to begin construction. Numerous Baptist churches in the area offered their financial resources toward the building fund for this new body of believers. During the years 1943-1971, Talbot Park was served by three pastors who led the church with great focus and emphasis towards the growing population of young families and youth.

In 1962, the church began a mission congregation in the new Aragona Village subdivision of Virginia Beach to reach out even farther in the community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Also, another community ministry was born in 1984 when Talbot Park began offering a weekday preschool program to children ages two-Pre K.

Currently, there is an average of 85 children enrolled throughout the school year. In the fall of 2001, a fifteen member committee began a year long task of preparing a strategic plan to guide the life of the church for many years to come. The completed plan was presented to the congregation in 2002, with a number of recommendations for new and exciting ministries that could reach out to local families not only in Norfolk, but also in the neighboring cities as well.

With the church leadership already stepping forward to put these new ministries into action, the congregation launched programs designed specifically for the children, youth, and all adult ages. At the beginning of 2005, our total membership was 865, with 553 of those being resident members. There remains clear evidence that the Holy Spirit is moving in our congregation as people of all ages are growing in their relationship with Christ through the various discipleship training classes that are being offered throughout the year.

Throughout the different generations in the church since its founding in 1943, there have been strong family ties which still hold true at the present. As is clearly evident by the construction of numerous condominiums by the downtown Norfolk waterfront, the city is targeting substantial growth as more baby boomers and senior citizens continue to move into the area. Since the Hampton Roads area as a whole is heavily populated by transient military families, there is constant change as new people are regularly moving into the region.

When I began my ministry at Talbot Park in early 2006, I could immediately see that the congregation was looking for new ways to reach out into the community with the message of Christ. Therefore, we have been planning on increasing the number of discipleship training and outreach classes in the coming months and years. Some of the people I spoke with during my initial months stated that the congregation was longing for a more outward focus in order to reach the unchurched in the area. Over the years, I have seen the great need to focus on an area of evangelism that C. Peter Wagner addresses in his book, *The Healthy Church*. He

discusses a category of evangelism that I believe has applied to Talbot Park Baptist Church for the past three-four decades. Wagner defines E-0 evangelism by writing,

It signifies winning to Christ a person who is already a church member, but who has never made a personal commitment to Christ. When E-0 evangelism occurs, the church, of course, does not grow visibly, because the individuals are already church members. But it becomes a better church. It grows in quality; and that is certainly a commendable thing.<sup>1</sup>

In order to classify our church correctly, I read through Tex Sample's book *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches*. I believe that we have characteristics pertaining specifically to two typologies Sample presents. I would characterize our church as a local and big heritage congregation while being a strong pillar among the community. Despite the fact that the cultural left make up only a small number in our church, their views and desires do make a difference. The definition Sample offers of this group is one which has similarities to those I know and have seen within the congregation and community. He writes,

These baby boomers reacted sharply to the conformism they witnessed in their parents as they grew up. Often they saw parents working at jobs they did not really like, staying in marriages with spouses they did not love for the sake of the children, living in accord with community standards they did not actually agree with, and committing themselves to churches that were not finally compelling in belief and action. With this came a refusal to abide by traditional 'oughts' and 'shoulds.' The obligations of community, business, family, country, and faith failed to capture the commitment of most baby boomers, especially the cultural left.<sup>2</sup>

After further examination, I am convinced that the majority of the congregation is made up of the cultural middle. Many of the following aspects that Sample discusses describe numerous individuals and families in the congregation. He states,

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<sup>1</sup>C. Peter Wagner, *The Healthy Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), 76.

<sup>2</sup>Tex Sample, *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 25.

The people of the cultural middle are the most successful in the society, or at least they strive to be. Career is therefore central to their lives and the major source of high social status. Higher education is often required for top business and professional jobs, and the university or college is the place where one picks up not only the knowledge and skill but the tastes and savoir faire necessary for upward mobility. Motivation for schooling characterizes most in the cultural middle and becomes a key focus of their family lives, especially in the socialization of children. Their jobs are typically the best in the society with more freedom, more authority, and more opportunity to consider options and make choices among them.<sup>3</sup>

There continues to be a significantly strong heritage of doing whatever is necessary to provide for the family, make a living and keep their lives as stable as possible. The older generations have been very strong in pursuing high paying careers, with many doctors, bankers and high-ranking military officers making up the long-standing membership of the church. Except for the current military members and their families, many of these professional people, as well as their ancestors, have grown up in the surrounding Norfolk communities. As a result, the ties they have to the church are very strong and prevalent. In further explanation, Sample also writes,

At least three subgroups can be found within the cultural middle. While all three are deeply committed to achievement and career, their lifestyles are different. I will call them the Successful, the Strivers, and the Conflicted. The Successful are upper-middle-class and business professional people in the society. As business executives, lawyers, physicians, scientists, politicians, and so forth, they live the comfortable, affluent, affable, outer-directed life.

A second subgroup of the cultural middle can be called Strivers because of their intense efforts to make it to the top and be like the Successful. Deeply affected by the lifestyle and values of Successfuls, they are the most outer-directed group in the United States. They work hard, find themselves in concert with the trends of the times, and have a mean income below that of the nation.

The third group in the cultural middle is the Conflicted, so named because they are caught in a commitment, on the one hand, to achievement and career, and, on the other, to family. They are a step or two or three removed from centers of decision-making, and they lack the autonomy, the social mobility, and often the higher levels of education necessary to make it to the top. In terms of stratification the Conflicted are middle-middle class.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 103-05.

I chose to present this long quote because I am convinced that all three subgroups make up the membership of our church. For example, the Conflicted group of people maintain a definite presence because they are largely from the United States military. Many of our families are higher-ranking officers, but we also have a substantial number of lower-ranking enlisted personnel as well. As is very common among the enlisted members of the armed services, these people have little influence in the decision-making processes at work, largely due to their rank and status.

As the years and their rank progress, these service members become more involved in their commands and they begin to make a greater impact in their respective professions. Despite the fact that they may have little influence at the office, we are working to make them vital members of our congregation as we assist them in becoming more involved in the different ministries of the church. Sample adds,

With the focus on career and high mobility--both geographical and upward--upper-middle-class families tend to be uprooted, hence removed from kin and previous residences. In the cultural middle, career means mobility, mobility *around* and mobility *up*. It is a life committed to moving. Hence, it is uprooted. Others in the cultural middle *must* move, and while friendships can be sustained long distance, they are subject to the next promotion. As one executive said, 'When the jobs come and go, you have to move with them.'<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, these aspects identify many of our military members and their families as they are constantly facing change. The generational ties at Talbot Park are very strong, where the "pillars" of the church are still very much remembered and revered. The rich heritage remains a strong aspect for many of the people who were both born and raised in the Norfolk area. There are many positive aspects to a long history, but I also feel that there are enough people who want to change and make a new impact for Christ. While the reality remains that there are some who would rather live in the past, there are far more holding leadership positions who are willing to bring about the needed changes within the congregation.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 105, 110.

I have often been asked if I am a shepherd or a CEO in my leadership style as a pastor. Throughout my business, military, and ministry experiences, I have acquired numerous hours of leadership training with Chick-fil-A, Inc., the Navy, and in various denominational courses. I definitely feel like my temperament and leadership style fits that of a shepherd. I understand and realize that I have many more years in which to learn how to lead God's people effectively as I continue my ministry within the contexts of the local church as a pastor, as well as within the U. S. Navy as a military chaplain.

### **Rationale for the Project**

During my childhood years in my home congregation at First Colonial Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia, I remember hearing how Satan and his demons were actively engaged in hindering the cause of Christ. Now as a pastor myself, I have acquired a greater understanding of just how our enemy works to destroy families, churches and anyone seeking to be faithful in their relationship with the Lord. I can look at my own life and see how the devil has attempted to defeat me and take away my peace during times of crisis. Even though I know he has lost the victory over my soul, I have often felt defeated in my Christian walk. My interest in spiritual warfare has continued for many years, but after much thought and prayer, I felt led to address this subject as the focus of my project in expository preaching.

I am convinced that many believers are living defeated lives as a result of not being trained nor equipped in understanding what the Bible teaches about spiritual warfare. I have personally seen how important it is to put on the whole armor of God daily as I lead both my family and the people of our congregation. Satan seeks to destroy not only our lives as believers, but also our witness for Christ. We can clearly see the evidence of this reality in the newspapers and on our television networks. Therefore, we must be willing to equip the people of God in winning the daily victory over our enemy as he implements his strategies to defeat us.



Clearly, there is a need to address the subject of spiritual warfare and the armor of God because Satan's presence has attempted to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit when great things were happening in our congregation. As I look back over my ministry as a whole, there is no doubt that when people were accepting Christ as their Savior and lives were being changed, the forces of evil went to work causing divisions, quarrels, and major issues of conflict. As I now complete my first year at Talbot Park, I continue to discuss with many of our members the need to equip the church with the knowledge and tools to live victoriously over our enemy.

As the Apostle Paul instructs us in Ephesians 6, we can stand firm if we put on the armor our Lord has provided for us. One of the benefits our church has received from this ministry project in expository preaching and spiritual warfare was seeing how our membership could be equipped and mobilized for victory at the present, and for many years to come. My hope and prayer remains that God will use and bless our congregation through this project for His glory and for the spread of the gospel.

### **Definitions and Limitations**

The terms addressed on spiritual warfare and expository preaching may be defined in a variety of ways by different people, depending upon their knowledge and understanding of the subject. I needed to define these terms at the beginning stages of writing to explain my focus and approach. During the course of this ministry project, I realized that I would not see all the results in a short period. Clearly, my goal was to begin raising the overall awareness and knowledge of the members in our congregation about the realities of not only our enemy Satan, but also about spiritual warfare as a whole. These areas of foundational instruction during the beginning stages were vital as we began the process of being equipped through putting on the whole armor of God.

*Spiritual warfare and the armor of God* - B. J. Oropeza offers insight into acquiring a definition and an understanding by writing, "Spiritual warfare is sometimes defined as the invisible confrontation between the forces of God and the forces of the

devil, the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of darkness. Unlike earthly warfare, spiritual warfare involves fighting an invisible enemy (2 Kings 6:15-18). Donald Grey Barnhouse calls this the 'invisible war.'<sup>6</sup>

Even though the following insights are not specifically classified as definitions, the following thoughts from Charles Lawless will enable us to better understand and to wage war against our enemy. In *Discipled Warriors*, Lawless states that spiritual warfare is "not about *reacting* to the Enemy--it is about putting on the armor of God in preparation for the battle. The church, rather than the Enemy, should have the upper hand in the battle by standing armed against the Devil's attacks. The armor we are to wear is *His* armor, not ours (Eph 6:13)."<sup>7</sup>

*Expository preaching* - Expository preaching is defined by Stephen and David Olford as: "The Spirit-empowered explanation and proclamation of the text of God's Word with due regard to the historical, contextual, grammatical, and doctrinal significance of the given-passage, with the specific object of invoking a Christ-transforming response."<sup>8</sup> My hope and prayer remains that our congregation will be equipped and mobilized against Satan and his strategies as they live and rely on the Holy Spirit.

### **Research Methodology**

The sixteen-week ministry project was designed to equip the members of Talbot Park Baptist Church to put on the whole armor of God through preaching a series of fourteen expository sermons and conducting discipleship training classes on

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<sup>6</sup>B. J. Oropeza, *99 Answers to Questions about Angels, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 113-14.

<sup>7</sup>Charles Lawless, *Discipled Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That Are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002), 18, 32.

<sup>8</sup>Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), book jacket.

spiritual warfare. Prior to the implementation of the project, I chose a focus group of eight members from the congregation who agreed to participate in more intensive meetings and discussions on the biblical teachings concerning spiritual warfare and the armor of God.

I requested that each of the group members offer detailed feedback and insights on the application of each message I preached during the Sunday morning worship services. These preaching evaluations definitely assisted me as I continued gauging my progress over the course of the entire project. I chose the focus group members by personally asking those within the congregation who had expressed an interest in learning more about spiritual warfare.

After months of pre-planning and advertising, I distributed a pre-seminar questionnaire to the congregation to initially gauge their biblical knowledge, understanding, and beliefs from the very beginning stages. The discipleship training classes that were offered to the congregation began at week 5 and continued through week 15. The proposed class schedule allowed me to introduce the subject through the sermon series and then to begin the intensive discipleship training the following Wednesday evening.

As the project came to a close, I distributed a post-seminar questionnaire which assisted in gathering my data analysis of what the congregation learned throughout the entire sixteen-weeks. Specifically, the pretest and the posttest questionnaires offered a substantial analysis in measuring change in both the knowledge and understanding of the congregation as a whole. Each of these instruments and the analysis they presented are included in the appendix. I also met with the members of the focus group to discuss in greater detail the specific strengths and weaknesses of the project.

My desire remains that the insights and knowledge gained will continue to spread and increase throughout the congregation in the years ahead. As the goals for the project were addressed in greater detail, the congregation was strengthened with the

truths of God's Word as we continued facing the attacks of the enemy in our church. As stated in the third goal for the project, once we began acquiring a biblical understanding about what the Bible teaches about spiritual warfare, we were on the road towards becoming a stronger body of believers as we daily seek to live in the victory Christ secured for us.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND THE ARMOR OF GOD

Throughout my research and study for this chapter, I became aware of numerous reference materials which offered a wealth of information about the subjects of Satan, the origin of evil, spiritual warfare, and the armor of God as discussed within the pages of Scripture. The importance of acquiring a firm biblical understanding of how our enemy has operated in the past, as well as how he continues to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives today, cannot be stressed enough. As Christians, we must be aware of his goals and strategies as we seek to be empowered and victorious. In his commentary, *Our Riches in Christ: Discovering the Believer's Inheritance in Ephesians*, Ray Stedman addresses the reality of the spiritual battles we face by writing,

We can only truly understand life when we see it as the Bible sees it. That is why the Word of God was given: to introduce us to real reality. When we come to the Bible, we learn the truth. Here the world is set before us as it really is. One of the most fundamental truths the Bible presents to us is that, behind the facade of this world, there is an invisible battle raging. This battle takes many casualties, and there are no innocent bystanders, no noncombatants.

Every human being on the planet, whether he or she is aware of it or not, is forced to take one side or the other in this great cosmic war. There is no room for any neutrality. So it is critically important that you and I know how to defend ourselves and arm ourselves for battle. If we don't want to end up on the casualty list, we need to train ourselves for the battle and arm ourselves with the armor God has provided.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ray Stedman, *Our Riches in Christ: Discovering the Believer's Inheritance in Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1998), 338.

## **The Reality of Spiritual Warfare**

One of the realities of the spiritual battle we are engaged in on a daily basis centers on the attempts of Satan and his demons as they seek to render us ineffective as witnesses for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must be prepared with a foundation that is solely centered in the Scriptures. David Jeremiah discusses this aspect by writing,

People today don't want to believe in the devil anymore. Even many people who say they are Christians don't believe in the reality of Satan. But he is alive and well on planet earth, destroying the work of Jesus Christ whenever he can. Scripture plainly teaches this. In Ephesians 6:11 we are told that we are doing battle in everyday life against the wiles of the devil. The word "wiles" means "strategy" or "plans of war," so Satan is attacking the lives and causes of Christians. He is at war with those who would defeat his plans, which is why Christians feel so much of the effect of his presence. Satan is not after those who already belong to him; he is after those who want to defeat him.<sup>2</sup>

In *Discipled Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That Are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare*, Charles Lawless discusses the importance of having a strong biblical foundation by stating, "Churches without a biblical foundation have little to offer to a world searching for purpose. They certainly don't alarm Satan very much. Jesus Christ is both the cornerstone and the head of the church (Eph. 2:20; 5:23), but it is through the Scriptures that we know Him."<sup>3</sup> When our congregations begin to take this spiritual battle seriously, we will see the enemy both alarmed and defeated as we firmly stand on the authority of God's Word. In *When the Enemy Strikes*, Charles Stanley shares,

Just as important as knowing who Satan is and what he is up to, we also must recognize the limitations of Satan's power over us. We must have a clear understanding of what Satan can and cannot do in our lives. The devil cannot overcome or negate the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. What can Satan do?

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<sup>2</sup>David Jeremiah, *Spiritual Warfare* (San Diego: Turning Point, 2002), 10-11.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Lawless, *Discipled Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That Are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 27.

The devil does have the power to attack us and tempt us. He has the power to deceive us and oppress us. We cannot defeat the devil by human intellect, cleverness, or force of personality. Defeating the devil is the work of Jesus Christ alone, and that work has been accomplished on the cross. The Scripture never tells us to go out and take on the devil--to seek him out and pick a fight with him. The truth of God's Word is that the war has already been won.<sup>4</sup>

One of the responsibilities we have as ministers is to equip our members with the truths of the Bible so that they can live in the victory they have in Jesus. Neil T. Anderson states in *Winning Spiritual Warfare: Steps to Freedom in Christ* that our heavenly Father wants us to realize that we can become mature believers as we begin to understand the freedom we have received through our faith in Christ. He writes, "God has given us everything we need to grow to maturity in Christ (2 Peter 1:3). But Satan is opposed to our maturity and will do anything he can to keep us from realizing who we are in and what we have in Christ. Since we wrestle against principalities and powers instead of flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12), we must experience victory over the dark side before we can fully mature."<sup>5</sup> In *The Adversary*, Mark Bubeck shares his perspectives by writing,

Believers are being jolted awake to the reality of their participation in a spiritual warfare. This warfare promises to intensify as the return of our Lord draws near. Christian believers should welcome the increasing number of books which are being published by evangelical, Bible-believing Christians on the subject of Satan's kingdom and how it relates to Christian believers. Biblical studies on the ways and plans of Satan need to be prayerfully read by believers who are serious about their responsibility to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12).

The biblical doctrine concerning the fallen world of darkness deserves much more careful study than most believers have given it. Ignorance of Satan's devices leaves gaping holes in our defenses, through which the enemy is only too willing to move against us. It is my conviction that believers need to know what to do and how to proceed in their responsibility to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of

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<sup>4</sup>Charles Stanley, *When the Enemy Strikes: The Keys to Winning Your Spiritual Battles* (Nashville: Nelson, 2004), 18-19.

<sup>5</sup>Neil T. Anderson, *Winning Spiritual Warfare: Steps to Freedom in Christ* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1990), 8.

His might" (Eph 6:10, KJV). They need to have usable tools at their disposal. They need to know how to proceed in getting free from the bondage of the devil and how to help others get free and stay free from a deflated, oppressed condition of demonic attack.

Such willful ignorance of biblical teaching seems inexcusable and is long overdue for correction. The woeful lack of teaching and preaching on the subject of spiritual warfare during the last fifty years is in itself a testimony to the cleverness of the wiles of the devil. Believers have all they need to defeat Satan's kingdom. It is important that we keep a biblical balance in our warfare. This is not a topic for idle curiosity or trifling interest. There is too much at stake for us to be satisfied with anything less than being "mighty through the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Co 10:4, KJV).<sup>6</sup>

### **The Believer's Position in Christ**

Over the years, I have seen far too many believers who have lacked the knowledge about who they are as believers in Christ. I am convinced that unless we acquire a solid biblical understanding of our "in Christ" position, we will be unable to fully counter the attacks of our enemy. Regarding this aspect, C. Peter Wagner offers his insightful perspective in *What the Bible Says about Spiritual Warfare* by writing,

On the cross, Jesus "disarmed principalities and powers" (Col. 2:15), assuring Satan's ultimate defeat. But while Satan is *defeated*, he is not *destroyed*. The Bible says, 'Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices' (2 Cor. 2:11). Is it important to understand Satan's powers and his devices. Obviously, according to this Scripture, to the degree that we decide to be passive about Satan or to ignore what he is doing in our cities and elsewhere, he will take advantage of us! We thereby can become victims instead of victors!<sup>7</sup>

What believer would seriously say that they wanted Satan to take advantage of them? But, whether we realize it or not, we sometimes give him free reign in our lives by not knowing what the Lord has done for us. We often live defeated lives because we do not fully understand the way Satan operates. Charles Stanley adds,

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<sup>6</sup>Mark Bubeck, *The Adversary: The Christian versus Demon Activity* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1975), 15-18.

<sup>7</sup>C. Peter Wagner, *What the Bible Says about Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2001), 25.



The devil has a specific strategy. He doesn't operate in a haphazard way. He has used his strategy from the beginning of time. Why? Because it works! We human beings keep falling for the same strategy generation after generation. Satan's foremost strategy is revealed in his temptations of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He revealed to them just how subtle he can be in his manipulation and temptation, and also how devastating the consequences can be when a human being gives into his temptations.

Throughout the Old Testament, Satan used the same tactics and measures again and again. In the New Testament, he used the same kinds of deceptions, lies, and manipulations. Why should he change his strategy? It has worked for thousands of years. If we're honest, we have to admit that his strategy works on us, unless we are aware of it and armed against it.<sup>8</sup>

When our churches become aware of what our Lord has accomplished for us, we can stand strong in the strength He provides as we continually rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain us in the daily battles we encounter. Anderson continues his thoughts by sharing,

Before we received Christ, we were slaves to sin. But because of Christ's work on the cross, sin's power over us has been broken. Satan has no right of ownership or authority over us. He is a defeated foe, but he is committed to keeping us from realizing that. He knows he can block your effectiveness as a Christian if he can deceive you into believing that you are nothing but a by-product of your past, subject to sin, prone to failure, and controlled by your habits. As long as he can confuse you and blind you with his dark lies, you won't be able to see that the chains which once bound you are broken.<sup>9</sup>

In *How to Meet the Enemy*, John MacArthur adds, "The only way you will ever know victory in the Christian life is by daily studying the principles of God's Word. That way you'll be ready to apply them whenever the world, the flesh, and the devil choose to attack. That means you must saturate your mind with God's Word."<sup>10</sup> In *Preparing for Battle*, Mark Bubeck offers specific insight into his understanding of spiritual warfare by writing,

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<sup>8</sup>Stanley, *When the Enemy Strikes*, 96-97.

<sup>9</sup>Anderson, *Winning Spiritual Warfare*, 8.

<sup>10</sup>John MacArthur, Jr. *How to Meet the Enemy: Arming Yourself for Spiritual Warfare* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1992), 123, 141, 149.

In order to defeat our enemy rather than be defeated by him, it is critical that we understand who he is, where he came from, where he gets his power, the means he uses to attack us, and the deceitfulness of his methods. We are in a fierce battle with the Enemy of our souls. Spiritual warfare is a biblical reality. It occurs whether we acknowledge it or not. Satan doesn't need our assent to attack us. If we are not on guard, wearing our spiritual armor and equipped with the tools of biblical warfare, he will try to rip our lives apart.<sup>11</sup>

Again, what will the result be? We will be able to stand empowered by the Holy Spirit and ready for the battle that constantly rages around us. As the apostle Paul proclaims in Ephesians 6:10-11, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."<sup>12</sup> Ed Murphy also shares his thoughts and perspectives in *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* by writing,

The church is revealed in Scripture not only as the people of God and the body of Christ, but also as a part of God's warrior kingdom in ongoing conflict with internal evil (the flesh), social evil (the world), and supernatural evil (the spirit world). I call this a multidimensional sin war. Today God seems to be awakening His church anew to the vivid reality that we are at war: we are at war with evil; that evil is personal, not impersonal; it is supernatural evil, the kingdom of Satan. Jesus, the Lamb (the gentle, sacrificial Savior) and the Lion (the mighty warrior) calls us out of our complacency to be soldiers of the cross. Girded with the full armor of God, we are to overcome the Evil One, to challenge the principalities and powers who hold individuals and peoples in bondage with the authority we have in Christ through declaration and intercession.<sup>13</sup>

In this chapter, I address and discuss various passages of Scripture from both the Old and New Testaments. As we begin seeing what the Word of God proclaims about our spiritual enemy, we will come to know, understand, and utilize how we can stand firmly against the missiles of the evil one as Paul states in Ephesians 6:16.

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<sup>11</sup>Mark I. Bubeck, *Preparing for Battle: A Spiritual Warfare Workbook* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 9-10.

<sup>12</sup>All Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

<sup>13</sup>Ed Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), vii.

## **The Reality of Satan and Spiritual Warfare in the Old Testament**

In this section, I also address specific Old Testament scriptures which discuss the activities of Satan and the reality of spiritual warfare.<sup>14</sup> Clearly, Satan's desire is to keep our congregations in the dark about who he is, what his strategies are, and how we can stand in the victory Jesus Christ has secured for us on Calvary.

### **Genesis 3:1-6: An Introduction to Our Enemy and his Tactics**

In the International Theological Commentary on Genesis 1-11, Donald Gowan offers his exegetical perspective on this encounter between the serpent and Eve by writing,

All of ch. 2 sets the stage for the story of ch. 3, which begins immediately with the Bible's first conversation. We have been well prepared for most of the developments in this chapter: relationships between man and woman and between God and humans have been clearly delineated. God's care to provide a good place to live in the garden has been emphasized, and the limits defining human freedom have been established by the tree from which they have been forbidden to eat. But we are not prepared for the first development, the introduction of a fourth character, the serpent.<sup>15</sup>

One of our callings as ministers is to teach and apply the truths of God's Word so that our congregations can acquire the knowledge they need to battle against

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<sup>14</sup>In this section, I will address only specific passages which make reference to the devil either by his name Satan, or by one of his titles, such as deceiver, the accuser, or the serpent. I realize that there are other Old Testament passages that describe Lucifer's position as in Ezekiel 28:14-17, as well as his rebellion against God in Isaiah 14:12-14. These passages from the Old Testament could have been researched, as well as others from the New Testament; but as approved in the project proposal, I have chosen other verses to discuss in detail.

<sup>15</sup>Donald E. Gowan, *Genesis 1-11: From Eden to Babel*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 51.

Satan and his evil forces.<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Matthews offers insight to this passage by stating,

The serpent is unforeseen in the narrative and appears suddenly. The snake is described by the narrator as "crafty," alerting the reader to weigh the words of the beast carefully. Although the origin of the snake is attributed to God, there is no attempt here to explain the origins of evil. The narrative explains only the origin of human sin and guilt. There is no explanation for the serpent's capacity to talk other than possibly that it was "crafty." It is assumed that the animal has this ability, and the fact that the woman did not find this alarming only heightens the suspicion that the serpent is representative of something or someone sinisterly powerful.<sup>17</sup>

While it is true that this narrative passage explains the first human sin and the resulting guilt of that sin, we can also see the evil present in the serpent as he leads the woman to rebel against God. John Hartley adds further insight by writing,

As the most astute creature, the serpent held the highest position among the animals. Given its description as "more crafty," it is not surprising that this creature, which represents the animals and the forces of nature, could speak. The serpent initiated conversation with the woman. Her lack of surprise and the depth of the discussion suggest that this was not their first conversation. Its skeptical approach drew the woman into discussion and opened her to considering that God might have acted out of self-serving motives. With this twisted assertion the inquisitor cast a shadow over God's benevolence.<sup>18</sup>

In *An Exposition of Genesis*, R. S. Candlish shares, "The agent in the temptation is undoubtedly not a mere serpent, but an evil spirit under the form of a serpent. He possesses and abuses the powers of reason and speech. The art of this

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<sup>16</sup>Genesis 3 does not identify the serpent as the devil in this passage. He is only referred to as the serpent, even though we might often make the assumption that Moses is talking about Satan, or the devil. As John states in Rev 12:9, the great dragon, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan is identified as the serpent in Genesis 3. Also in Rev 20:2, John again uses the same language description to identify Satan as the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

<sup>17</sup>Kenneth A Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 232.

<sup>18</sup>John E. Hartley, *Genesis*, New International Biblical Commentary, Old Testament Series (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 64-65.

temptation is very much the same as that which still prevails over men in whom there is 'an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God' (Heb 3:12). It is by arguments of unbelief that the wily fiend solicits to sins."<sup>19</sup> Gordon Wenham also adds,

The serpent begins by asking a seemingly innocent question, "Has God really said . . .?" The narrator expects us to ask, did the snake know anything about God's command? If he heard that command, why has he grossly distorted it? Thus, in his very first words, the snake's shrewdness is illustrated. It is in the snake's reply that we can see why he is called shrewd. His words sound like a sharp rejection of God's. But as commentators have often pointed out, the snake was uttering half-truths. There is a subtle ambiguity in his words which warrants describing him as shrewd. The ambiguity is clearest in the serpent's claim that their eyes will be opened.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding the lies of the serpent, John Skinner writes, "A Jewish legend says that the serpent took advantage of this innocent and immaterial variation by forcing her to touch the fruit, and then arguing that as death had not followed the touch, so it would not follow the eating. The gratuitous insinuation reveals the main purpose of the tempter, to sow the seeds of distrust towards God in the mind of the woman."<sup>21</sup> In *Victory over the Darkness*, Neil T. Anderson discusses the effects of the Fall by writing,

What happened to Adam and Eve spiritually because of the Fall? They died. Their union with God was severed and they were separated from God. Did they die physically? Not immediately, although physical death would be a consequence of the Fall as well. They died spiritually; they were separated from God's presence. They were physically cast out of the Garden of Eden and a cherubim waving a flaming sword was stationed at the entrance to "guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>R. S. Candlish, *An Exposition of Genesis* (Wilmington, DE: Sovereign Grace, 1972), 44-45.

<sup>20</sup>Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco: Word, 1987), 73-74.

<sup>21</sup>John Skinner, *Genesis*, The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 74-75.

<sup>22</sup>Neil T. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness: Realizing the Power of Your Identity in Christ* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2000), 32.

### **1 Chronicles 21:1-4: The Opposition of Satan**

True to his nature, Satan once again set his focus on the children of God as he makes an attempt to stand up against Israel. In these four verses, we can also see where he influenced the Israelite king David to move against his own people. Eugene Merrill shares his thoughts on the context of this passage by stating,

Late in David's reign, probably after Absalom's rebellion and perhaps in response to it (cf. 2 Sam. 24), David commanded Joab to number the fighting men of Israel and Judah (vv 1-8). This was done, the chronicler says, at the instigation of Satan (v. 1). The author of Samuel, however, attributes it to the Lord himself (2 Sam. 24:1). Theologically, there is not inconsistency between the accounts for God controls the actions of Satan ultimately and even uses him to accomplish his purposes (cf. Job 1:12; 2:6; 1 Kings 22:19-23). Consistent with the chronicler's tendency to protect the reputation of the Lord and his king, it is no surprise that he emphasizes the agency (Satan) and not the cause (God) of David's act.<sup>23</sup>

R. J. Scoggins shares that the Chronicler offers a picture of a personal enemy whose purpose is to thwart God's doings.<sup>24</sup> Roddy Braun adds,

Satan, "Adversary," without the article, rather than God, is the instigator of David's census. Such a figure does not appear elsewhere in Chronicles (or Ezra-Nehemiah); indeed only Job 1-2 and Zech 3:1 does a somewhat similar figure appear. In both of these cases, however, the definite article is attached, ("*the* adversary") so that the text of Chronicles probably represents the final stage in the OT's development of a figure of Yahweh's heavenly council who not only brings charges against his people but actually incites them to evil. Since such a figure does not appear elsewhere in Chronicles, it probably reflects the commonly held piety of the day, which hesitated to speak of God as the direct cause of evil.<sup>25</sup>

The Chronicler's focus is on the immediate rather than the ultimate cause. Joab and his commanders were given the task of counting Israel. While the nature of

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<sup>23</sup>Eugene Merrill, *1, 2 Chronicles*, The Bible Study Commentary (Grand Rapids: Lamplighter Books, 1988), 50-60.

<sup>24</sup>R. J. Scoggins, *The First and Second Books of the Chronicles*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 107.

<sup>25</sup>Roddy Braun, *1 Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 14 (Waco: Word, 1986), 216-17.

the offense involved in taking a census is unclear, Joab had no doubt that it would bring guilt on the nation and expressed himself strongly. David's persistence left him without excuse since he had been forewarned. The military nature of the census is suggested not only by General Joab's involvement but also from the report of its results.<sup>26</sup>

### **Job 1:6-12: Satan Tests Job**

During my years of pastoral ministry, I have met people who shared that they were perplexed by the encounters between God and Satan as told in Job. In looking at these specific seven verses in this passage, we are led to see that "to present themselves" has the sense of "to take up their position" or "to station themselves," which is rendered more generally by TEV "to appear before." It depicts a body of servants waiting in attendance on Yahweh, who presides over the assembly.<sup>27</sup> In *Preaching Job*, John C. Holbert shares insight into this passage from Job 1 by stating,

In what way more does Job "fear God"? The relationship between Job and his God comes to the fore here and will be one of the major issues of the tale. The scene shifts to the divine world, and two divine beings are introduced. As the council of the gods gather, the Satan appears. It is important for a reader of this story to note that this figure is *the* Satan; Satan is not his name but his title. He is "the adversary" or "the accuser." The council assembles, and YHWH, who is clearly the leader of the council, addresses the Satan in what sounds like stylized language. "Where have you come from?" The Satan responds, "From roaming the earth, walking around on it." The Satan's answer suggests his role in the council; he observes the affairs of human beings and reports back at the instigation of YHWH and the council. "Have you set your heart on Job?" asks YHWH. "There is no one like him on earth! He is a man *tam* and *yashar*, who fears God and shuns evil." YHWH quotes the narrator of verse 1 exactly, reinforcing the apparent fabulous piety of Job.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>J. A. Thompson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, The New American Commentary, vol. 9. gen ed. Kenneth Matthews (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 161.

<sup>27</sup>William D. Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 38.

<sup>28</sup>John C. Holbert, *Preaching Job* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999), 4.

In his commentary on Job, John E. Hartley shares, "The *sons of God* are the celestial beings or angels whom God created as his servants. On this day *they came and presented themselves* as courtiers to give an accounting of their activities to God. On this occasion *the Satan also came among them*. Here the Hebrew word *hassatan* has the article, so it functions as a title rather than as a personal name. The Hebrew root *stn* means 'to oppose at law.' On this basis some scholars conjecture that the Satan may be the prosecuting attorney of the heavenly council."<sup>29</sup> Reyburn continues by adding,

The testing of Job is Satan's idea, since testing people is his job. The destruction he carries out against Job is not in opposition to God, but rather is done with divine approval. In doing so he operates within his role as God's servant. Job would, if he knew the plot hatched in heaven against him, consider Satan the worst sort of enemy. All of this to say that "the Satan" in the Book of Job cannot be entirely identified with "the Devil" or "Satan" in the New Testament.

However, readers of the Scriptures have normally forced their idea of Satan based on the New Testament. Accordingly the translator is faced with a serious translation problem. If he is translating for people who are regular readers of the New Testament and merely transliterates the name "Satan," his readers will be misled, since they will read their New Testament meaning into it. If the translator is translating Job for people who have not read the New Testament and transliterates "Satan," those readers will attempt to read the Satan of the Book of Job into the New Testament.<sup>30</sup>

I do not agree with Reyburn that testing Job was Satan's idea. God was the One who brought up Job's name while ultimately allowing him the opportunity to put His servant under extreme trial. I would also like to mention that I disagree with Reyburn's statement that "the Satan" in Job cannot be entirely identified with "the Devil" or "Satan" in the New Testament. From my perspective, he is the same figure in both testaments. I felt it was important to present insights and perspectives from varying authors even though I may not completely agree with their beliefs.

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<sup>29</sup>John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 71-72.

<sup>30</sup>Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, 39.



Continuing his thoughts on this passage, Hartley adds, "The main function of this assembly here is to provide an open forum in which Yahweh permits the testing of Job. That is, the plan to test Job was not hatched in a secret meeting between Yahweh and the Satan. In this setting Yahweh's motivation, based on his complete confidence in Job, was fully known and thus it was above question."<sup>31</sup> In verse 8, we see that Yahweh takes the initiative in drawing Satan's attention to Job, who might otherwise have been left in peace. Yahweh calls Job "my servant," which in the Bible is a title of respect.<sup>32</sup>

In all his comings and goings, has the Satan "given his attention" (lit., 'set the heart') to Job? Of course he has, not just because of Job's exemplary life, but because of the Satan's diligence.<sup>33</sup> The idiom in Hebrew is literally, "have you set your heart on?" The heart is not only one of the seats of emotion in Hebrew psychology, but it is also one of the locations of thinking, reasoning, or planning.<sup>34</sup> Clines continues, "I often wonder how often our adversary 'thinks' he knows what our response would be if and when tragedy were to strike us and our families. The Satan uses the imperative voice in addressing God; he makes his prediction of Job's behavior in colloquial fashion with a 'self-imprecation' ('I'll be damned if he doesn't curse you to your face')."<sup>35</sup>

Confident of his servant Job, Yahweh accepted the Satan's challenge. He granted the Satan full power over Job's possessions, but not over Job's body. The single

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<sup>31</sup>Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 72.

<sup>32</sup>Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, 41.

<sup>33</sup>David J. Clines, *Job 1-20*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 17 (Waco: Word, 1989), 25.

<sup>34</sup>Robert L. Alden, *Job*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 54.

<sup>35</sup>Clines, *Job 1-20*, 26.

issue at stake was the motivation for Job's upright behavior and his fear of God. The Satan functions as God's servant, solely an instrument of testing.<sup>36</sup> In response to Hartley's perspective, I will agree that Satan is ultimately under God's control, but clearly, he is also in direct opposition to the plans, purposes, and will of God.

Dhorme adds, "The contention of Satan is that Job's virtue depends on a self-interested calculation in verse 9. One test is possible, that which Satan has suggested: that of withdrawing the properties which Job possesses. The goods of Job are in your hand, i.e. at your disposal; you can do with them as you please. Hardly has Satan received the necessary authorization when he hastens to put the plan into execution."<sup>37</sup>

### **Job 2:1-7: God Allows Satan to Further Test Job**

John Hartley mentions that this account of the assembling of the sons of God and of the dialogue between the Satan and Yahweh is almost identical to the first heavenly scene. Movement and suspense are created by varying the wording at crucial points. It is emphasized that the Satan was present at this assembly to give an accounting of his ways before Yahweh.<sup>38</sup> Hartley continues his analysis by sharing,

After the opening formalities Yahweh, as in the first heavenly scene, brought Job to the Satan's attention. Since Yahweh initiated the subject, he obviously was delighted that Job, his servant, has proved that his worship was genuine. To underscore the fact that not a single flaw had been found in Job's character, Yahweh repeated the full fourfold description of Job's moral excellence and added that Job continued to hold tenaciously to *his integrity* (Heb. *tumma to*). Job had endured all the losses without compromising his blameless and upright character in any angry outburst against God.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 74.

<sup>37</sup>Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 8.

<sup>38</sup>Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 79.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 79-80.

In the first test Satan has been allowed to penetrate the hedge, perhaps the first layer of "skin." Yahweh's hedge still limits Satan's attacks, and for this reason Satan challenges Yahweh to remove it.<sup>40</sup> When God has afflicted the bones and flesh, Job will revolt and blaspheme. Such is Satan's thesis.<sup>41</sup> As verse 7 indicates, the Satan departed from the Lord's presence and afflicted Job greatly. This second affliction of Job resembles the first group of calamities in its suddenness and completeness.<sup>42</sup>

Yahweh hands over to Satan the power to strike Job again. In place of "all that he has" in 1:12, the attack now is to be directed against Job's person. The word "spare" in "only spare his life," translates a Hebrew verb meaning "protect or watch over" and normally expresses the care which Yahweh gives for his own, as in Psalm 16:1.<sup>43</sup> In his concluding remarks on this passage, Hartley also writes,

Although God rejected the Satan's reasoning, he released Job into the Satan's power for further testing. But again he set a boundary to the affliction by prohibiting the Satan from taking Job's life. This concession reveals the full extent of God's confidence in Job, namely, that Job's basic commitment is to God alone. This means that Job, being ignorant of this dialogue, is about to experience the most dire circumstances. The shadow of death will fall over him so heavily that he will think he is afflicted by a terminal illness with no hope of recovery. In this way God allows Job's faith to be tested to its innermost core.<sup>44</sup>

### **Zechariah 3:1-7: Satan, The Accuser of the Saints**

In *A Commentary on Zechariah*, T. V. Moore offers his contextual analysis by stating, "The scene is laid in the temple. Joshua the high priest is seen standing

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<sup>40</sup>Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, 58.

<sup>41</sup>Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 17.

<sup>42</sup>Clines, *Job 1-20*, 47.

<sup>43</sup>Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, 59.

<sup>44</sup>Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 81.

before the Divine angel performing the functions of his office. He is not, as some suppose, arraigned for trial, with Satan as his accuser, but is standing in his official character to represent the people and the priesthood. He represents the people in his character as priest, and the priesthood in his character as high priest. The representative character must be carefully noted, as it contains the essence of the vision."<sup>45</sup>

Joshua, the Jewish priest, needed three things for his priestly office: pardon, purification and investment with holy robes, which the angel redeemer graciously afforded him.<sup>46</sup> In *God Remembers: A Study of Zechariah*, Charles Feinberg states, "In the first three visions of his prophecy Zechariah dwells on the themes of the deliverance of Israel from captivity and oppression, the consequent enlargement and expansion, and the subsequent prosperity and material blessing of the land. Now the prophet occupies himself under the direction of the sovereign Spirit of God with the matter of internal cleansing and purification of Israel from sin. The fourth vision of the book reveals how Israel will be purged, cleansed, and reinstated into her priestly office and functions."<sup>47</sup> Continuing his thoughts on this challenging passage, Moore shares,

The high priest stands as the representative of the theocratic people, and the priestly order as then existing. But he is clothed in filthy garments, the common symbol of sin. Both people and priesthood feel that they are sinful and unworthy, and hence fear to hope for a blessing from a holy God on their labors. It is not Jerusalem that chooses Jehovah, but Jehovah that chooses Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>T. V. Moore, *A Commentary on Zechariah* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 63-64.

<sup>46</sup>Herbert Lockyer, *All the Angels in the Bible: A Complete Exploration of the Nature and Ministry of Angels*, ed. Herbert Lockyer, Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 86.

<sup>47</sup>Charles L. Feinberg, *God Remembers: A Study of Zechariah* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1965), 42.

<sup>48</sup>Moore, *A Commentary on Zechariah*, 64.

The reality remains that commentators differ as to whether the scene is a judicial or a priestly one. The questions at issue is: Does Joshua stand before the Angel of Jehovah as a defendant in a lawsuit, or is he performing the proper functions of his high priestly office? The best solution seems to be that the priestly scene is in the sanctuary before the Angel of Jehovah who is attended by His many angels, when Satan appears to lodge accusations against Joshua that the favor and grace of God might be hindered from flowing out toward His people.<sup>49</sup> Ralph Smith offers further contextual insight by writing,

The form is that of a vision report (3:1-7) plus an accompanying oracle (3:8-10). The structure of this vision report is very different from the other seven in that there is no interpreting angel, and no questions from the prophet. The prophet seems to interrupt the proceedings in v. 5. Zechariah sees Joshua the high priest standing clothed in filthy garments before the angel of Yahweh and the Satan is standing at his right side accusing him. Yahweh rebukes the Satan. The angel commands that Joshua's filthy garments be removed and clean, white garments be put on him because his iniquity has been taken away.<sup>50</sup>

Before Satan could speak, God demanded his silence with a rebuke. The time for accusing was past; the time for absolving had arrived.<sup>51</sup> Smith adds,

The cleansing, reinstatement, and recommissioning of Joshua is represented by a change in clothing. The filthy robes were removed and a fine white festival garment was put on him. After Joshua's clothes were changed, apparently Zechariah noticed that the high priest had nothing on his head. Then the prophet (or the angel) said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." The word "turban" comes from the root "to wind around." It is used here as the mark of the new dignity conferred on the high priest rather than the regular word for the priest's mitre. With his head covered the priest was properly clothed to approach Yahweh.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, 43.

<sup>50</sup>Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 32 (Waco: Word, 1984), 198.

<sup>51</sup>Paul L. Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 63.

<sup>52</sup>Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 200.

The ritual act of replacing Joshua's filthy clothes symbolizes removal of the "guilt" of the high priest. "See I have taken *your* guilt away from you" (3:4). According to the NRSV, Joshua will be reclothed with "festal apparel." The Hebrew word for "festal apparel" is used only here and in Isaiah 3:22. In the latter passage it occurs in a list of luxury goods. Reclothing him with festal apparel symbolizes his ritual purity.<sup>53</sup> We can be thankful that as believers in Christ, both our sin and guilt have been taken away forever through our Savior's sacrifice on Calvary.

### **Satan and Spiritual Warfare in the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul**

As we begin looking at the reality of Satan and spiritual warfare in some of the Gospel passages as well as the Epistles of Paul, I offer numerous insights from commentators and other biblical scholars as we examine the activity of our enemy during the time of Jesus. What a great truth we can discover when we see the power our Lord Jesus had over Satan and the forces of evil. As we will address later in this chapter, the Apostle Paul proclaims to us that we can stand victorious against this evil one and his kingdom as long as we stand strong in the power of the Lord.

#### **Mark 5:1-20: Jesus and the Gerasene Demoniac**

As Mark explains in extensive detail, the very power behind this man bowed in submission before Jesus when he saw Him from a distance. The ancient manuscripts of the Gospels disagree on this site of this miracle, both here and at the parallels in Matthew 8:28 and Luke 8:26. The three candidates are Gerasa, Hadara, and Gergesa. Of these Gerasa appears the least likely, because the city was thirty-seven miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee. Gadara (the preferred reading in Matthew 8) was five miles from the sea, and the shoreline in that vicinity is low. The most appropriate site,

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<sup>53</sup>Edgar W. Conrad, *Zechariah* (Sheffield, England: Academic Press Ltd., 1999), 93.

therefore, is the obscure town of Gergesa (modern El Koursi), near which is the only steep cliff on the eastern shore.<sup>54</sup>

Donald Juel highlights some contextual aspects by writing, "More important than precise location is the description of the territory: it is unclean, out of bounds. A herd of swine is there, suggesting impurity; pigs were forbidden food for Jews. A cemetery is nearby, also unclean. The man who comes to Jesus has an unclean spirit. The whole land is taboo for Jews, but as has become customary, Jesus ventures precisely into such forbidden territory."<sup>55</sup> R. Kent Hughes also states,

As we study Mark 5:1-20, the story of the Gerasene demoniac, we will affirm the Biblical reality of Satan and his host. Our goal is to reveal Satan's purpose and then to demonstrate Jesus' power over evil forces and his ability to heal the harm which they have done. Verses 1 and 2 reveal that Christ's encounter with the demoniac took place the morning following his calming of the great night storm on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus came straight from his confrontation with the storm in nature to confront an equally violent storm in human nature.<sup>56</sup>

The onrush of the naked yelling maniac must have tried the newly recovered confidence of the Twelve. We can imagine their surprise when, on approaching, he threw himself on his knees.<sup>57</sup> James Edwards adds, "The Greek verb for 'fell on his knees,' *proskynein*, denotes prostrating oneself before a person to whom reverence or worship is due, even kissing his feet or the hem of his garment."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Douglas Hare, *Mark* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 64.

<sup>55</sup>Donald H. Juel, *Mark*, Augsberg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 79.

<sup>56</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word: Mark*, vol. 1 (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1989), 118, 120.

<sup>57</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament: The Gospel according to Matthew/The Gospel according to Mark*, vol. 1, (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1930), 295.

<sup>58</sup>James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 156.

R. T. France provides some detailed contextual information by writing, "Following Jesus' astonishing control over the wild forces of wind and water, Mark tells of his equally remarkable control over the untamable force of a man possessed not just by one demon but by a whole army of them."<sup>59</sup> Discussing the power of Jesus, Edwards also shares,

The unclean spirit is expelled from the demon-possessed man solely by the authoritative word of Jesus. The discovery of Greek magical papyri in Egypt informs us of the long and convoluted formulas, spells, conjurations, and catchwords that ancient exorcists employed as they sparred with demonic opponents to gain advantage over them. But with Jesus there is no elaborate protocol, nor is the effectiveness of the exorcism dependant of the words he utters. The power to prevail over the demonic resides within Jesus himself. He speaks and the demons are expelled; his word is deed.<sup>60</sup>

R. A. Cole adds, "Such great truths, as James tells us, 'the devils also believe, and tremble' (Jas. ii.19); because for them these are not such abstract principles as at times they seem to us. The demons knew Jesus from afar."<sup>61</sup> Ed Murphy states,

We note that the demons were terrified that Jesus was going to begin their torment now. 'It is not yet time,' they protest in Matthew 8:29. They were filled with fear. Next we discover that the demonic emotions run from screaming defiance (Mark 5:7a), to angry acknowledgment of His divine sonship (7b). This is anger mixed with sheer terror to the point that they begged Him in the name of God not to begin their awaited, future torment now.<sup>62</sup>

As we address the number of demons that are described in "legion," we might wonder how many thousands of demons were actually present. A. T. Robertson assists us in acquiring a better understanding of this aspect by writing,

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<sup>59</sup>R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 226.

<sup>60</sup>Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 156-57.

<sup>61</sup>R. A. Cole, *The Gospel according to St. Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 97-98.

<sup>62</sup>Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 283.



A full Roman legion had 6,826 men. (See on Matt 26:53). This may not have been a full legion, for Mark 5:13 notes that the number of hogs was 'about two thousand.' Of course, a stickler for words might say that each hog had several demons. These words present the crucial difficulty for interpreters as to why Jesus allowed the demons to enter the hogs and destroy them instead of sending them back to the abyss. The question of one man containing so many demons is difficult also, but not much more so than how one demon can dwell in a man and make his home there. One is reminded of the man out of whom a demon was cast, but the demon came back with seven other demons and took possession.<sup>63</sup>

Joel Marcus adds, "Realizing that, despite their huge numbers, they are hopelessly outmatched by Jesus, the demons try to negotiate a way out of their predicament by pleading with him to allow them to enter the pigs (5:12). Jesus gives them leave (5:13a), and it seems for a moment that the two parties have come to a mutually amicable agreement; the demons leave the man, as Jesus wants, but they will not have to leave the Gerasene 'land,' as they want."<sup>64</sup> James A. Brooks shares his perspectives on verses 14-17 by writing,

No doubt Mark's description of the man in v. 15 pictures conversion. The man's composure doubtless made a more positive impression on Jesus' disciples than on the local residents. Because of their superstition they were terrified by anyone who had such enormous power, and they begged Jesus to go away.<sup>65</sup>

Referring to the application this passage can have on our lives today, Douglas Hare states, "The former demoniac joins the much larger group of followers, to which we also belong. Like him, we are commissioned to tell our family and friends how much God has done for us in and through Jesus."<sup>66</sup> In his commentary on Mark,

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<sup>63</sup>Robertson, *The Gospel according to Matthew/The Gospel according to Mark*, 296.

<sup>64</sup>Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 352.

<sup>65</sup>James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 23 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 91.

<sup>66</sup>Hare, *Mark*, 65.

Johnnie C. Godwin adds, "The grateful witness wanted to become Jesus' disciple and follow him. But in effect, Jesus said, 'You follow me by staying at home and telling what I have done for you' (v. 19). The man obeyed Jesus! Throughout the ten Greek cities known as Decapolis, he announced the powerful, compassionate thing Jesus had done for him (v. 20). The people were amazed at the healed man's testimony."<sup>67</sup>

### **Luke 4:1-13: The Temptation of Jesus**

Luke shares this account in Jesus' ministry as he informs his readers about our Lord being "full of the Spirit" as He was led "by the Spirit" into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for forty days. Norval Geldenhuys shares his insights by writing,

As real Man, Jesus could really be tempted, and from His childhood days until the end of His earthly career, He was exposed to all the temptations that every human being has to contend with--except, however, those temptations that come from within as a result of the inward original taint or of the influence of former sins. Owing to His intrinsic spotlessness, temptations in His case could only come from the outside. Throughout His earthly life he triumphed over all temptations, although they came upon Him with incomparable ruthlessness.

Nevertheless the temptations in the wilderness were special temptations. They were not merely intended to tempt Jesus as Man, but to attack Him as the Messiah. This is evident from the fact that the temptations came immediately after His baptism when He has finally taken upon Himself His vocation as Saviour, and when God, by means of the heavenly voice, had given His approval to His decision and conduct, and had also equipped Him for carrying out this vocation by the special impartation of the Holy Ghost in all His fullness.<sup>68</sup>

And as Luke shows in verse 3, it was then that the devil came at Jesus with his lies and clever temptations. Robert Stein discusses this aspect by writing,

Having been affirmed as God's Son by the voice from heaven, and having been anointed by the Spirit, Jesus was led out by the Spirit into the desert to do battle with the devil. The temptations draw upon the divine pronouncement of

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<sup>67</sup>Johnnie C. Godwin, *Mark*, Layman's Bible Commentary, vol. 16 (Nashville: Broadman, 1979), 51.

<sup>68</sup>Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke: Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 156-58.

Jesus' sonship at the baptism ('You are my Son') and are Satanic temptations directed at this sonship ('If you are the Son of God'). There is no developmental view of Jesus' sonship portrayed in the temptation. On the contrary, he who was led by the Spirit to do battle and defeat the devil was God's Son long before this.<sup>69</sup>

Commenting on the first temptation, John Nolland adds, "When Jesus is hungry the Devil suggests that such hunger does not befit his dignity as Son, that sonship should be treated as a privilege to be exploited. Jesus should see to his own needs. He has the power to make stone into bread; he should not neglect his opportunities. Jesus replies with words from Deut 8:36. God will provide, as he had with the manna."<sup>70</sup> Geldenhuys also does a masterful job at sharing his perspectives about the conflict Jesus encountered from the devil. He also shares the reality that Jesus fasted during this period of time, and therefore, when the forty days were over, He became hungry. He elaborates by writing,

Fully equipped with all gifts for the execution of His calling as Messiah, the divine Redeemer, He is for forty days tempted by the devil. The conflict with the prince of the forces of darkness demands His attention and powers to such a degree that, although for days on end He had taken no food, it was only at the end of that period that He was conscious of hunger. The sense of physical need had been supplanted throughout by the violence of the spiritual conflict.

Exhaustion followed upon this long period of wrestling and fasting, and it was now, at the end of the forty days, that the enemy came with his overwhelming attacks. When the Son of Man had been physically and spiritually exhausted to the utmost, the conflict with the Evil One reached its climax. After Christ had rejected the temptations, the proof had been furnished that, although He had found Himself in the most unfavourable circumstances when the devil launched his most ruthless attacks against Him, He was nevertheless victorious.<sup>71</sup>

Leon Morris discusses the second temptation as presented in Luke where Satan challenged Jesus to bow and worship him by writing, "Luke does not say, as

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<sup>69</sup>Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 144.

<sup>70</sup>John Nolland, *Luke*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35A (Dallas: Word, 1989), 182.

<sup>71</sup>Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, 158.

Matthew does, that the devil took Jesus to a high mountain to show Him *all the kingdoms of the world*. He emphasizes not the place from which the vision came but the fact that the evil one brought before Jesus all this world's pomp. He claimed it as his own (for Satan as 'the ruler of this world' cf. Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and promised to give it to Jesus if only He would worship Him."<sup>72</sup>

A. T. Robertson also writes, "It is the ingressive aorist (*proskuneseis*), just bow the knee once up here in my presence. The temptation was for Jesus to admit Satan's authority by this act of prostration (fall down and worship), a recognition of authority rather than personal merit."<sup>73</sup> Discussing the second temptation, John Nolland adds, "The Devil's speech is introduced as in v. 3. Whereas in Matthew, it is the kingdoms which are offered, in Luke it is "all this authority [i.e., which you see now that I exercise] and their glory."<sup>74</sup>

The object of the third temptation was to seduce Jesus to test the faithfulness of God in a purely arbitrary manner and to expect of Him a spectacular intervention for His safety.<sup>75</sup> Leon Morris also offers further insight into the strength Jesus exhibited during His temptation encounter with Satan by writing,

Notice that on all three occasions Jesus countered the temptations by quoting from Deuteronomy and in fact from the restricted area between 6:13 and 8:3. These chapters refer to the wilderness experiences of Israel, the people of God. It may well be that Jesus had given a lot of thought to these passages as He reflected on the mission to which God was calling Him. There were parallels in the experience of the ancient people of God to those in His own experience.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Leon Morris, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 103.

<sup>73</sup>Robertson, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 51.

<sup>74</sup>Nolland, *Luke*, 180.

<sup>75</sup>Geldenhuis, *The Gospel of Luke*, 162.

<sup>76</sup>Morris, *Luke*, 104.

Throughout each of these temptations, Jesus answered the devil with the words, "It is written" as He clearly showed that the source of His answers were grounded in the scriptures. He was armed with the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17) for his battle with the devil.<sup>77</sup> Paul also proclaims that we can be victorious against the lies and temptations this same devil throws at us. But, we must also utilize the sword of the Spirit: the literal Word of God.

In verse 13, we read that when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Jesus until another opportune time. Speaking to this last verse, Morris adds, "There is no freedom from temptation in this life. There was not for Jesus and there is not for us."<sup>78</sup> Nolland adds, "The Devil has tried every kind of temptation, but he will be back. Jesus' whole ministry is marked by temptations (trials; Luke 22:28), but particularly the passion period will be a time of special onslaught by Satan (22:3, 31, 53, 39-46) as Jesus' ultimate act of obedience (22:42) draws near."<sup>79</sup>

### **Luke 22:31-32: Satan's Desire to Sift Peter like Wheat**

In the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Darrell Bock discusses this passage by writing,

Only Luke notes Jesus' direct address to Peter, who represents the apostles in 22:31-32. The double direct use of Simon, Peter's other name, indicates the seriousness of the situation (cf. prior double direct addresses in 8:24; 10:41; 13:34). The apostle is the object of satanic attack, reminiscent of how Satan went after Job (Job 1:7; 2:2). Perhaps by exposing Peter, all will lose heart. Using an agricultural figure, Jesus says that Satan has asked to sift Peter like wheat. The picture is of a grain in a sieve, where the head of grain is taken apart (cf. Amos 9:9). Our English idiom of "picking someone to pieces" or "taking someone apart"

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<sup>77</sup>Stein, *Luke*, 146.

<sup>78</sup>Morris, *Luke*, 104.

<sup>79</sup>Nolland, *Luke*, 183.

has similar emotive force. Satan would like to bring Peter to ruin and leave him in pieces, exposing his lack of faithfulness. This leader of the Twelve is a prime target, and Jesus knows it. The warning should make Peter alert. Jesus promises to come to Peter's defense in the time of testing (the pronouns in this verse are second-person singular, so only Peter is now in view). While Satan has requested permission to test Peter and the others, Jesus has interceded for him, that Peter's faith may not fail.<sup>80</sup>

If we could possibly visualize what happens when wheat is sifted, we might be able to better understand the intensity of Jesus' words to Peter. Our Lord knew full well what His disciples were going to do, and yet, He offers them words not only to be watchful for the coming attacks; but also, the truth that they would recover. Jesus warns of an imminent time of Satanic sifting.<sup>81</sup> Nolland continues by writing,

While Simon is addressed, it is clear that Satan has the whole band of disciples in view. "Asked for you all" makes best sense in connection with the kind of image of Satan that is found in Job 1-2: Satan needs God's permission to bring the kind of difficulties upon people that, he (Satan) hopes, will reveal their lack of integrity in their devotion to God. As in Job, God is understood to have given his permission for the trial. The content of Jesus' prayer is that Peter's faith would not be drained away to nothing by the Satanic onslaught (the verb, "to give out/fail," is used of running out of money in 16:9).<sup>82</sup>

Peter will rebound from his temporary faithlessness to lead his brothers (cf. Acts 18:23; 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Pet 5:10). His responsibility will be to make their faith more resolute in its allegiance to Jesus. Acts 1-12 shows Peter obeying this command. Satan fails to destroy Peter because Jesus intercedes for the apostle. The postresurrection restoration of Peter is found in John 21:15-17.<sup>83</sup> We can be encouraged knowing that despite his acts of denial, Peter was restored by the forgiving grace of God.

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<sup>80</sup>Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1754.

<sup>81</sup>John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35C (Dallas: Word, 1993), 1072.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1755.

Leon Morris shares some concluding comments on this passage from Luke by writing,

In Satan's prayer *to have you, you* is plural and includes all the disciples. The Greek appears to mean 'Satan has obtained you by asking': there is the thought that the petition has been granted. The metaphor of sifting *like wheat* is unparalleled, but it is obvious that it signifies great trials. There was a turbulent future before the little band and specifically before Peter. Jesus goes on to assure Peter that He has prayed for him (*you* this time is singular and indicates prayer specifically for Peter). Notice that the Master did not ask that His servant might be freed from trouble. The undergoing of difficulty and hardship is an integral part of the Christian way.<sup>84</sup>

### **The Teachings of Paul on the Armor of God in Ephesians 6:10-17**

In his commentary, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Peter T. O'Brien writes, "Having concluded his instructions to the various groups within the Christian household (5:21-6:9), Paul now addresses *all* his readers and exhorts them to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. The reason is that they are engaged in an ongoing battle with the powers of darkness, as the following verses show."<sup>85</sup>

Klyne Snodgrass offers his perspectives on this passage by writing, "As believers in Christ, the Word of God promises that we can stand victorious against anything Satan hurls at us as long as we utilize the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells us. Since Ephesians is about power for living in Christ, it comes as no surprise that the concluding exhortation has this emphasis."<sup>86</sup> In *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, F. F. Bruce adds,

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<sup>84</sup>Morris, *Luke*, 309.

<sup>85</sup>Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 460.

<sup>86</sup>Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 338.

Be strong in the Lord might be rendered more literally "Strengthen yourselves in the Lord." This form of words has OT precedent. In a critical situation in the life of David, he is said to have 'strengthened himself in the Lord his God' (1 Sam 30:6). The "mighty power" of God by which his children are to be strengthened--literally, "the power of his might"--has been mentioned already in this letter. It is "the surpassing greatness of his power in us who believe"; it is the "operation of his mighty strength" by which he raised Christ from the dead (Eph 1:19-20); it is the power with which Paul has prayed that his readers may be strengthened by the Spirit of God in their inner being (Eph 3:16).<sup>87</sup>

Paul has spoken of the greatness of the purpose of God in Christ, of the glory of his high calling, and the life that should follow from it. Yet he still wants to remind his readers that such a life cannot be lived without a spiritual battle, of whose intensity he has become more and more conscious in his own experience.<sup>88</sup> Foulkes adds,

Such strength is needed, for the conflict is fierce and long. But Paul now expresses in another way the equipping that the Christian needs--it is the *armor of God*, the *panoplia* (cf. 1 Thess 5:8). These weapons that he is to describe are given that people *may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*. *Stand* indeed is the key word of the passage. This is the first indication of the difficulty of the fight. It is not just against the strength of man, but against the stratagems of a spiritual enemy, the subtle plans of the enemy of souls of which every experienced Christian warrior is well aware (cf. 2 Cor 2:11).

*Therefore*, Paul says, as you realize the grim power and resources of your spiritual foes, *take up the whole armour of God*. Only at great peril can it be neglected. Three times he repeats now the word that has been used in verse 11, when he says that the great objective of the Christian warrior is to be able to *stand*. In fact the first use of the word in this verse is in the compound verb *withstand*, implying a stand against great opposition (cf. Jas 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9, where the same word is applied to the same spiritual conflict).<sup>89</sup>

The apostle's intention, however, in urging his readers to put on God's armor is that they might prevail against the stratagems and tactics of the enemy. Paul wants to

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<sup>87</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 403.

<sup>88</sup>Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 177.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, 178, 180.



see Christians strong, stable, and robust (cf. 4:14-16) so that they remain firm against the devil's wiles. The fundamental reason for this confidence (though not presumption) is that the decisive victory over the powers has already been won by God in Christ (1:19-22; cf. 4:8). Not only has the authority of the powers been broken, but also their final defeat is imminent.<sup>90</sup> Snodgrass continues,

The passive form of the verb (“be strong”) indicates that this empowering is something done to Christians, not something they do themselves; its present tense shows the empowering is continual. This is not instruction for a quick fix, but for a life spent drawing strength from Christ. To be strong in the Lord means to know his strength and to draw closer to him. It is an exhortation to act on what is known. The words translated “his mighty power” (v. 10) are the same as those translated “his mighty strength” in 1:19. There Paul had prayed that the readers would know the greatness of God’s power; now he exhorts them to use this power.

“Put on the full armor of God” (v. 11) recalls the command in 4:24 to “put on the new self, created to be like God in true holiness and righteousness.” Putting on the new self is in essence the same as putting on the armor of God. The “armor of God” can be understood as the armor that God provides, the armor that God himself wears, or even the armor that is God himself. The language describing the armor in verses 14 – 17 is drawn from Isaiah 11:5; 52:7; 59:17. While the Old Testament background suggests that the intent is the armor God wears, in the end all the armor language is a way to talk about identification with God and his purposes.<sup>91</sup>

As I understand it, the apostle Paul's point is about a lifestyle that all believers in Christ Jesus are called to live by on a daily basis. When we take up and put on all the armor our God has provided for us, we will be able to stand firm in the strength of the Lord. In the following paragraphs, I briefly highlight each piece of the armor from Ephesians 6:10-18.

The Belt of Truth is the knowledge, acceptance, and use of the truths of God’s Word. To put on the belt of truth, we must know God's Word. One of the ploys of Satan is to have cults feed off churches that are full of members that do not know

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<sup>90</sup>O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 464-65.

<sup>91</sup>Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 338-39.

biblical doctrine. These people are unprotected from the seduction of strange teachings. Therefore, we are to take advantage of every opportunity to learn more about God and His Word so that we can be armed against the enemy.

The Breastplate of Righteousness involves the truth that every child of God who goes into battle must have integrity of character. Satan knows our sins and our weaknesses, and he will use them against us every chance he gets. The breastplate is what protects us when Satan hurls his flaming missiles. The devil and his forces of evil are aiming to hurt, disarm and destroy us by sending a never-ending attack upon the sin in our lives.

There are two aspects to the breastplate. The first is Christ's righteousness; which is the Lord's righteousness bestowed upon us. When we become Christians, Scripture tells us that we are equipped with the righteousness of Jesus. When we put our trust in Him for forgiveness and salvation, He not only forgives our sin, but He gives us His righteousness. At the moment of our conversion, we became righteous in Christ. The second is our righteousness. Many believers are happy to accept their position in Christ, but are unwilling to change the way they live their lives. They have not become in practice what they are in position.

The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace have to do with witnessing to advance the cause of Christ. The call involves being prepared with the good news of peace. The Shield of Faith protects us against one of Satan's powerful weapons: doubt. He is always trying to cause us to doubt God. The Bible says that the way we are to withstand this attack is to take up the shield which is our confidence and belief in God's Word and His promises.

Like on a real battlefield, the Helmet of Salvation protects us from suffering a blow to our head. It is our salvation with Christ that protects our minds from Satan's lies. The best way to keep Satan's thoughts and lies out is to keep Christ's thoughts and truths in. God's Word becomes the helmet of protection to our minds. Scripture tells us

to take in our hands an offensive weapon, the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. As believers in Christ, we are to never cease in taking up the sword of the Spirit. We can use the sayings of God in our lives to help us live according to His Word and to help us fight victoriously. But, like in the Belt of Truth, we need to first know God's Word. We can fight victoriously only as we build our lives upon God's Word as we become grounded in the truth. Just as Jesus said, "It is written," we can combat the devil by using God's Word to defeat the enemy.

In every believer's life, the importance of prayer cannot be stressed enough if we ever expect to engage in victorious spiritual warfare. We must realize that we cannot fight our spiritual battles in our own power. Our power comes from God's Holy Spirit, and as we remain faithful in prayer, we will be strengthened even during difficult times. If we are praying every day asking for God's divine direction and guidance, if we are putting on His armor, we will have the power needed to stand firm against the enemy of our souls. We can experience the victory, the joy, and the peace that are available to us through Jesus Christ. Snodgrass adds,

The content of verse 11 is repeated in verse 13 with slight changes. The singular "day of evil" is interpreted by some as a reference to an outbreak of evil just before the end time, but the focus of the text is on life in the present. The meaning is "any time evil is encountered." The intent with "after you have done everything" is not clear, but probably refers to everything related to putting on the armor (detailed in vv. 14–17). The word translated "struggle" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament and is not frequent in other writings. It refers primarily to wrestling, but can be used more generally of a fight or battle. "Flesh and blood" is a Semitism for "human." What Paul means, therefore, is: "Our struggle is not with human beings, but with evil spiritual forces." This is the only place in the New Testament where the Christian life is described in this sort of language.<sup>92</sup>

The importance of standing firm in the power of the Lord and in the strength of His might must not be overlooked by any child of God who desires to live the victorious Christian life. God's mighty power is required for a specific purpose, namely,

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<sup>92</sup>Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 339-40.

that believers, both individually and together as a unity, might stand against the powers of darkness and successfully resist them. The three exhortations of verses 10, 11, and 13, which are similar in meaning and stress the need for divine empowering, at the same time remind the readers that the devil can be resisted since God has provided all the necessary resources for the battle.<sup>93</sup>

### **The Importance of Prayer in Experiencing Victory in Spiritual Warfare**

When we reflect on the power of the spoken Word of God, how can we fail to see the vital role that prayer plays in our lives as Christians? As the devil seeks to destroy us and our testimony for God, we must utilize the weapons that are at our disposal from the Lord if we expect to stand in the victory Christ has secured for us.

#### **Luke 22:39-46: The Garden of Gethsemane**

As we begin addressing this passage in greater detail, we are led to see the reality of the intense suffering Jesus experienced just prior to His arrest and crucifixion. He knew full well all the horrors and pain of His Father's holy wrath against sin--the sin which He would soon become and bear while fulfilling His role as the Lamb of God. As we read the Gospels, we can see the power that Jesus had as the incarnate Son of God. Through the Gospel writers, we can almost visualize His power to calm the raging storms, His power to heal the sick, and witness His authority over the demonic spirits.

We can see His power to raise the dead; and yet, now, in a place called the Garden of Gethsemane, we see a different side of Jesus. We must remember that the Jesus we see in the Garden is truly the same Jesus who performed all the miracles proclaimed in the Gospels. But now, Jesus was someone stricken with intense grief. He

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<sup>93</sup>O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 470.

was someone who was very distressed and struggling in extreme sorrow. Why? What did Jesus see that caused Him so much fear and pain? Jesus saw something that we cannot even begin to understand--the wrath of God.

Jesus understood that in His death, He would soon bear the full wrath of God against sin--our sin--as He became our sin. Jesus was not some poor, helpless victim, caught up in circumstances beyond His control. He freely and willingly took the journey to the cross.<sup>94</sup> Jesus knew the power of temptation and the need of prayer as Satan pressed Him harder than ever before.<sup>95</sup> John Nolland adds,

While the disciples are challenged to pray that they might be spared the brunt of the troubles to come but cannot rise to the occasion, Jesus wrestles in prayer with the conflict that appears to have opened up between his own will and what he had understood to be his Father's will. He first asks for the removal of the threatening disaster; but then he reaffirms his commitment to God's will as supreme over his own. It is very difficult to bring together the confidence of Jesus about the nature of the will of God, which is sustained through the Gospel narrative, and the present request for the removal of the cup, if God should will. The words are clearly spoken in relation to a sense of imminent crisis.<sup>96</sup>

Bock continues, "Luke notes Jesus' emotion and the physiological effect of trauma as Jesus entreats the Father more fervently. Along with the intense prayer came a physical reaction: sweat that dripped like clotted blood. Luke goes out of his way to portray Jesus' humanity. Jesus realizes the terrible fate he faces, but he is ready to face death now because God has strengthened him for the task."<sup>97</sup> Nolland continues his exegetical analysis by writing,

This cup is to be seen in connection with OT language where the drinking of the cup is an image for being overtaken by disaster, that is understood as flowing

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<sup>94</sup>Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1757.

<sup>95</sup>Robertson, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 272.

<sup>96</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1082-84.

<sup>97</sup>Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1761-62.

from the wrath of God but as at times enveloping the innocent along with the guilty. Presumably the angel is strengthening Jesus for the battle in prayer, which is involved in the need to align his own will with that of his Father. The Father's will is clearly not for the cup to be taken away. Jesus' prayer reaches such an intensity as he works this matter through that he drips with perspiration from the exertion and emotional strain. What stands finally as fundamental for Jesus is the will of God his Father; to this he commits himself afresh.<sup>98</sup>

### **Ephesians 6:18-20: The Persevering Prayer for Boldness**

The Apostle Paul concludes his presentation and discussion of the armor every Christian warrior is called to literally "take up" and utilize as believers. Francis Foulkes assists us in acquiring a better understanding about how prayer relates to the armor of God by writing,

Prayer cannot quite be described as a part of the armour, but the description of the Christian's equipment for the conflict cannot but include reference to prayer. RSV begins a new sentence with this verse, but the Greek has a participle, 'praying', which may in fact be taken with all the foregoing commands. The different parts of the armour have been described, and in effect the apostle would say 'Each piece put on with prayer', and then continue still in *all prayer and supplication*.<sup>99</sup>

F. F. Bruce offers his perspectives on these verses by stating, "There is not obvious separation in the Greek text between this exhortation to prayer and the immediately preceding encouragement to resist spiritual foes. Praying 'in the Spirit' means praying under the Spirit's influence and with his assistance."<sup>100</sup> Snodgrass also stresses the importance of prayer in spiritual warfare by sharing,

The words translated "pray" and "be alert" in verse 18 are participles, not imperatives. Some would connect these participles all the way back to "stand

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<sup>98</sup>Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1085.

<sup>99</sup>Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 184-85.

<sup>100</sup>Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 411-12.

firm” in verse 14 and see them as describing how all the armor is acquired. Theologically this makes sense, but grammatically it is unlikely. The well-armed soldier in Christ’s army, by definition, is continually praying in the Spirit and alert. Whether prayer is a seventh piece of equipment is debated. Grammar suggests it is not, or else being alert, which is a parallel to praying, would have to be considered a piece of the equipment as well.

But the question is irrelevant, for whether it is a piece of the equipment or the demeanor with which the equipment is worn, neither prayer nor being alert is optional for believers. By definition, to be Christ’s soldier is to pray and keep alert. Prayer is the focal point of this verse, mentioned four times; the word “all” is also used four times, one of which the NIV translates as “always.” With this repetition Paul underscores how important prayer is for all of life.<sup>101</sup>

### **Conclusions from a Biblical Foundation**

As preachers of the Word, the focus of our attention should always be on the Scriptures as we stand in the pulpits of our churches each week and teach God's truths to His people. I wonder how often I have lost sight of this truth as I became involved in the pressures of the day and the continual demands of pastoral ministry. May the truths of the written Word literally change the way we preach and teach as we pray for the empowering Holy Spirit to shine through us.

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<sup>101</sup>Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 344-45.

## CHAPTER 3

### A THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF SATAN, DEMONS, SPIRITUAL WARFARE, AND EXPOSITORY PREACHING

When reflecting on a detailed study of theological issues relating to Satan, demons and spiritual warfare, we must be committed to approaching the Word of God with open minds, asking that the Holy Spirit will lead us in acquiring a thorough foundation for biblical preaching and teaching. In this chapter, we will address numerous aspects involving the realities of the battles we as believers are facing on a daily basis against Satan and his forces of evil. Also in our studies, we will hear from respected theologians, both past and present as we set out to acquire a solid, biblical and theological understanding of the activities of our spiritual enemy.

As one biblical example from Genesis 3 shows us, Satan's desire is to destroy not only our lives, but also to disrupt the harmony in our homes as we see when Adam blamed Eve for their disobedience and rebellion against God's commandments. In his attempts at achieving his evil goals, Satan can easily be effective in hindering the work Jesus has called us to accomplish. The call before all Christians is to become aware of Satan's strategies as we remain constantly on guard and ready for battle.

When we address the ever-present realities of spiritual warfare, our thoughts should always turn to the Word of God. In our quest for a greater knowledge and understanding pertaining to the battles in the spiritual realm, we can also research the insights of scholars and theologians as they offer their perceptions based on words of Scripture. Wayne Grudem discusses the origin of Satan and his demons by writing,



Satan and demons were once like the good angels but who sinned and lost their privilege before God. Like angels, they were also created, spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence but without physical bodies. We may define demons as follows: Demons are evil angels who sinned against God and who now continually work evil in the world. When God created the world, he 'saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good.' (Gen 1:31). This means that even the angelic world that God had created did not have evil angels in it at that time. But by the time of Genesis 3, we find that Satan, in the form of the serpent, was tempting Eve to sin (Gen 3:1-5). Therefore, sometime between the events of Genesis 1:31 and Genesis 3:1, there must have been a rebellion in the angelic world with many angels turning against God and becoming evil.<sup>1</sup>

We have a tremendous responsibility to both search and study God's Word so we can be better able to stand firm with the knowledge and power our Lord has provided for us through His Word as we face Satan and his demons. Grudem adds further theological discussion by stating, "Satan is the personal name of the head of the demons. The name 'Satan' is a Hebrew word that means 'adversary.' The New Testament also uses the name 'Satan' simply taking it over from the Old Testament. So, Jesus, in his temptation in the wilderness, speaks to Satan directly saying, 'Begone, Satan!' (Matt 4:10), or 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven' (Luke 10:18)."<sup>2</sup> Mark Bubeck also shares his thoughts by stating,

Satan is an enemy to be respected and understood for his God-created and granted position and power, but we must not fear him. To do so is to fail to appreciate the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The victory of Christ over Satan is total and complete. From a biblical perspective, we should know all we can about Satan's tactics and his methods of attack against us. We must also know the biblical basis of our victory over Satan and his world of darkness.<sup>3</sup>

In his Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, "The Relationship between Evangelism and Spiritual Warfare in the North American Spiritual Warfare Movement

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<sup>1</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 412.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 414.

<sup>3</sup>Mark I. Bubeck, *The Adversary: The Christian versus Demon Activity* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 79-80.

1986-1997", Charles Lawless writes, "That Satan is the adversary to the Church is little debated within and beyond the spiritual warfare movement. Leaders of the spiritual warfare movement rightly recognize that Satan is the captor of unbelievers and the enemy of the Church. He blinds the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor 4:4) and accuses believers before God (Job 1; Rev 12:10). As the spiritual warfare movement emphasizes, the battle against the enemy is real."<sup>4</sup>

We cannot fail to recognize that there is an intense spiritual battle going on for the souls of men, women and children. One of our callings as ministers of the gospel is to realize that this battle will continue as we faithfully preach and teach the Word of God. Southern Baptist theologian James P. Boyce offers his insight into these fallen angels we face as believers by stating,

The belief of evil spirits has been almost universal in the world. The exceptions may indeed be said to be only the few who, in more modern times, have supposed this universal opinion to be simply the result of superstition. The Jews undoubtedly held this faith. It is not disputed that it is taught in their later books, and that in the time of Christ the belief in such spirits was universal. The use of the word "devil" also teaches the existence of evil spirits. In Ps 106:37 the Israelites are said to have sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils (demons). Evil angels are also spoken of by the name of "evil spirits."

In Judges 9:23, God is said to have sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem. In 1 Sam 16:14, the Spirit of the Lord is said to have departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord to have troubled him. The existence of such beings is plainly taught; we are told in Scripture that they sinned, 2 Pet 2:4, and all argument of this kind is merely an argument from our ignorance. And Christ only teaches more plainly the existence of such beings, declaring that he beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven, at the same time assuring them that even the power to cast out devils was no subject of joy in comparison with the fact that their names were written in heaven.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Charles E. Lawless, Jr., "The Relationship between Evangelism and Spiritual Warfare in the North American Spiritual Warfare Movement 1986-1997" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," 1997), 96, 223.

<sup>5</sup>James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Sytematic Theology* (Louisville: James P. Boyce, 1887), 181-85.

At times, we might wonder how someone can deny what the Bible clearly teaches concerning Satan and his demonic forces. The reality remains that there are people within our congregations who not only have serious doubts about Satan's existence, but they also question the perceptions that there is a continual assault against the work of the Holy Spirit through the New Testament Church. Discussing this aspect in great detail, Merrill Unger writes in *Biblical Demonology*,

Little should need to be said as to the reality of demons, inasmuch as Scriptural testimony on this point is so clear and unequivocal. It hardly requires pointing out that the Bible doctrine of a personal devil and demons has met with a great storm of skepticism in recent years. Men in the church and out of it, blatantly assert that there is no personal devil, that the devil is only personified, and that whatever devil there is, is in man himself, and that there is enough of that variety to answer all theological requirements. It is also confidently declared that no longer can a respectable scholar be found anywhere who believes in a personal devil or demons. Demons do exist, first and foremost, for God in His Word says they exist.<sup>6</sup>

In *The Invisible War*, Chip Ingram also describes the war we are facing by writing, "Our real struggle--our battle, our wrestling match to the death--is not against physical or material adversaries like people, circumstances, and organizations. It is against a hierarchy of demonic forces doing battle in the spiritual realm. This cosmic conflict has eternal implications; lives are at stake. The enemy's strategies affect us every day. Our responsibility is to become acutely aware of Satan's methods but not be preoccupied by them. We do not fight for victory, we fight from victory."<sup>7</sup> Charles Stanley shares his thoughts by adding,

Each of us faces a spiritual battle with the devil today whether we realize it or not. The very nature of the enemy of our eternal spirit is to defeat us, destroy us, and to kill everything that is important to us. The Holy Spirit enables us to

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<sup>6</sup>Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of Spiritual Forces at Work Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994), 35-36.

<sup>7</sup>Chip Ingram, *The Invisible War: What Every Believer Needs to Know about Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 17-19, 21.

withstand the assaults of the devil on a day-to-day basis and to experience peace and wholeness even in the face of severe opposition. One of the foremost rules of warfare is: know your enemy. The more you know about your enemy--how he thinks, what motivates him, his intrinsic nature--the better you are able to devise a means of counteracting his moves and defeating him. To overcome the enemy of our eternal spirit, the devil, the first thing we must know about him is his nature.<sup>8</sup>

We must know how our enemy operates and what his strategies are not only to defeat us, but also to destroy our lives, our families, and our witness for Christ. As I briefly stated earlier, there are numerous Christians who do not realize that they are in a battle with the enemy of God. James Garrett adds further commentary by writing,

One of the pressing needs of the present is for Christians to correlate their formal beliefs and understandings about Satan with their actual living out of the Christian faith. It should be recalled that the major thrust of the references in the New Testament epistles--Pauline, Johnnine, and general--is toward the Christian life. Christians are responsible for resolving every possible question about Satan's origin or his future activity.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, Garrett's perspectives are in fact very relevant to the modern-day Church. We must be willing to correlate both our beliefs and our understandings about the devil and his demonic forces with actually living out our Christian faith on a day-by-day basis. In his book, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, Unger also states, "Satan in Scripture revelation is presented as irremediably confirmed in rebellion against God. His attack upon the saints is relentless and implacable. He opposes them as he opposed Christ when Christ was upon the earth. The saints must realize that they are the bull's-eye, as it were, against which Satan and his demon helpers aim their most fiery darts. They constitute Satan's deadliest foes and the greatest threat to his authority and power."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Charles Stanley, *Overcoming the Enemy: Discover God's Plan for Winning Spiritual Battles*, The InTouch Study Series (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), viii, 7.

<sup>9</sup>James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 1:388.

<sup>10</sup>Merrill F. Unger, *What Demons Can Do To Saints* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 16.

## Theological and Biblical Insights about Angels

As the Scriptures clearly show, God is the originator of all the heavenly hosts (Gen 2:1). Norman Geisler shares his thoughts in *Systematic Theology* by adding,

The study of angels is a major but often neglected division of theology. Angels play an important role in God's plan of redemption (Heb 1:14; Matt 18:10), and their origin, nature, function, and destiny are significant themes in Scripture. Although technically angels are only a certain kind of God's spiritual creatures (namely, "messengers"), "angels" is the term commonly used of all spiritual creatures. Angels are not eternal; they were created. The psalmist declared, "Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. . . For he commanded and they were created" (Ps 148:2,5).

Nehemiah said, "You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry hosts" (Neh 9:6). Genesis concludes that "the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished" (Gen 2:1). Thus, angels were probably created when the Scriptures say, "God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). They were definitely created before the earth was, for they sang when its cornerstone was laid (Job 38:6-7).<sup>11</sup>

Daniel Kauffman discusses the theological aspects pertaining to the origin of Satan in *Doctrines of the Bible* by explaining,

It has pleased God not to reveal, in so many words, where Satan came from, how he was created, and how he came to be the devil. We cannot conceive that God would create a being of great power and resourcefulness, such as the Scriptures ascribe to Satan, whose mission is to bring His work to nought. We must conclude that when God created the devil He created Him as an angel of light; that, having exalted himself through pride, and with him a multitude of "angels which kept not their first estate" (Jude 6) he was cast out of heaven; and, that ever since that time he has been carrying on his nefarious work on earth.<sup>12</sup>

Satan is focused and determined to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church today. He will do anything he can to infiltrate our congregations with false teaching and division so as to weaken our witness for Christ. We must therefore keep

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<sup>11</sup>Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2003), 2:475-76.

<sup>12</sup>Daniel Kauffman, ed., *Doctrines of the Bible: A Brief Discussion of the Teachings of God's Word* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1956), 206-07.

our eyes open to what is taking place among us and resolve to confront the satanic threat boldly, with a confidence that comes only from being in tune with the one who defeated Satan at the cross.<sup>13</sup> Fred Dickason discusses the origin of the angels and demons in *Angels: Elect and Evil*, by writing,

All angels were created good and holy, just as God made and pronounced all His creation good (Genesis 1:31; 2:3). It is inconsistent with God's character that He could directly create anything wicked. Not only were they holy in nature, but they were surrounded by every good thing and influenced by every holy thing. They were not holy creatures in an evil or even amoral atmosphere, but holy ones in a positively holy atmosphere. They enjoyed God's presence (Matthew 18:10) and heaven's environment (Mark 13:32). This made the rebellion of some the more sinful. There are now two moral classes of angels; the elect, who remained loyal to God (1 Timothy 5:21), and the evil, who followed Satan in his rebellion against God (Matthew 25:41). But originally, all were created good and holy.<sup>14</sup>

While there will always be great debate and discussion about the origin of Satan even within the local church, we must realize that God has always been in control, even from the beginning of all creation. In *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, Emil Brunner states,

Apart from the doctrine of angels in general, however, what the Bible has to say about Satan has a direct connexion with the heart of the Biblical revelation--with the redemptive work of Christ. Here, then, we must be ready to listen to the voice of Scripture. What does the Bible say about the Devil? He is powerful, it is true; he is stronger than man; but he is not almighty like God. Paul goes so far as to call him the god of this world, or of this age, but he is subject to the will and power of God.<sup>15</sup>

As we focus our preaching and discipleship ministries solely on the Word of God, we must be clear that our doctrine concerning Satan and his demons is grounded

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<sup>13</sup>Mark I. Bubeck, *The Rise of Fallen Angels: Victory over the Adversary through Spiritual Renewal* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 35-36.

<sup>14</sup>C. Fred Dickason, *Angels: Elect & Evil* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 29.

<sup>15</sup>Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), 2:136.

firmly in the Scriptures. Paul speaks of a whole army of forces which are hostile to Christ, but he does not make it clear how these powers differ from one another or how they are organized. Paul, like Jesus Himself, speaks of the power of darkness--not only in the plural but also in the singular--and of the devil or Satan, and Jesus speaks of the devil and his angels.<sup>16</sup> While we know that the devil is subject to the will and power of God, we might be tempted to wonder with Kauffman,

Why did God permit such work? How could evil originate in the pure environment of heaven? In such questions we are entering the realms of mystery and of speculation. In due time all things will be revealed; and when they are, we will see the wisdom and goodness and justice of God in it all. But summing it all up we know that God created all things, that all that He created was "very good;" that the devil and his angels are depraved and vicious creatures for whom the eternal lake of fire was prepared (Matt 25:41), and therefore must have become so since their creation; that God has made every provision for the salvation of every human soul that comes to Jesus Christ by faith (Jn 3:16), and we are willing to leave it to Him as to when the how and why and wherefore of these things will be more fully revealed.<sup>17</sup>

We may deduce that evil angels are nonredeemable. Assuming a certain position of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, we may conclude that those who followed Satan in his sin fell decisively and are permanently left in their evil state without recourse or even the possibility of redemption.<sup>18</sup> Geisler continues,

Since angels cannot change, they are fixed in their nature; hence, once an angel sins, he is doomed forever (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Indeed, the Bible says explicitly that Christ did not die to redeem angels (Heb 2:16). Those angels who sinned are never called upon to repent, nor can they be. The Cross is never presented as a means of their salvation, but only of their condemnation, for Jesus, "having disarmed the powers and authorities. . .made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col 2:15).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 137.

<sup>17</sup>Kauffman, *Doctrines of the Bible*, 207.

<sup>18</sup>Dickason, *Angels: Elect & Evil*, 43-44.

<sup>19</sup>Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 488.

Like all of God's rational and moral creatures, angels were given a choice. And, like humans at death (Heb 9:27), once they have made their final choice, it is forever too late. Since they cannot change by nature, once angels make their decision, it is final and they know it (Matt 8:29).<sup>20</sup> Discussing the origins of sin, Geisler also shares,

In God and His heaven, there was no sin (Hab 1:13; Jas 1:13), yet Lucifer sinned and rebelled against God (1 Tim 3:6), leading one-third of all the angels with him (Rev 12:4). How could a perfect creature, made by a perfect God and placed in a perfect environment (heaven), commit a sin? Sin could not rise from God, nor from Lucifer's environment, nor from his perfect nature. Whence, then, sin? Sin arose from Lucifer's free will. God made perfect creatures and gave them perfect natures and perfect freedom.

But with freedom, though good in itself, comes the ability to sin. So, sin arose in the breast of an archangel in the presence of God. Freedom is good, but it contains the possibility of evil. God made Lucifer perfectly good; Lucifer made evil. God gave him the fact of freedom (which is good); Lucifer performed the act of freedom to rebel against God (which is evil). God provided the good power of free will, but Lucifer performed the bad action of free will.<sup>21</sup>

### **Theologians: Martin Luther**

I would like to address the perspectives of Bernhard Lohse as he discusses the theological insights of Martin Luther pertaining to the reality of Satan and demons.

There is much of the traditional in Luther's idea of the devil. The triad of sin, the world, and the devil, or flesh, world, and devil, was often combined as early as in medieval catechetics, from which Luther appropriated it for his own explanations to the catechism. In Luther's own life the idea of the devil played a signal role: his struggle with the papacy and against the falsifying of the gospel, for which he reproached the popes, was also a struggle against the devil and his attack on the Christian church.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 496-97.

<sup>22</sup>Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, ed. Roy A Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 253.



Lohse continues sharing his thoughts concerning Luther's theology by writing, "According to Luther, humans are positioned as it were between God and the devil. It is not true, as they suppose, that they are like observers in the battle between God and the devil. They must themselves do battle in the arena: one is 'ridden' either by God or by the devil. Humanity thus stands in the midst of a struggle between God and the powers hostile to God."<sup>23</sup> Addressing sin and its forgiveness, Luther writes,

We must confess, as Paul says in Rom 5:11, that sin originated from one man Adam, by whose disobedience all men were made sinners, and subject to death and the devil. This is called original or capital sin. The fruits of this sin are afterwards the evil deeds which are forbidden in the Ten Commandments. This hereditary sin is so deep a corruption of nature, that no reason can understand it, but it must be believed from the revelation of Scriptures, Ps 51:5; Rom 5:12 sqq.; Ex 33:3; Gen 3:7 sqq. The spirit of man is compassed about and besieged by the assaults of the devil and can hardly meet, hardly withstand them all.

The forgiveness of sins is declared only in God's Word, and there we must seek it; for it is grounded on God's promises. Original sin, after regeneration, is like a wound that begins to heal; though it be a wound, yet it is in course of healing, though it still runs and is sore. So original sin remains in Christians until they die, yet itself is mortified and continually dying. Its head is crushed in pieces, so that it cannot condemn us.<sup>24</sup>

Edward Plass also presents some of Martin Luther's theological perspectives by adding,

Luther had much to say about the devil. It was one of his firmest convictions that Satan is the head of the angels of darkness. The evil angels fell and did not stand firm in the truth. How this happened is not known. However, it is very probable that they fell by pride, because they despised the Word, or the Son of God, and wanted to exalt themselves above Him. While the Bible say little about the fall of the angels, it does say much about the nature of their activities after the apostasy.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 254.

<sup>24</sup>Martin Luther, *A Compend of Luther's Theology*, ed. Hugh Kerr (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), 84-85, 87.

<sup>25</sup>Edward Plass, *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 391-92.

Continuing his discussion on Luther's theology, Lohse further adds, "Luther more strongly accented the power of the devil but also held to the idea that ultimately God alone has the power, even to the point of drawing the devil into the divine plan. Luther thus avoided an actual dualism, though some of his statements have a dualistic tone."<sup>26</sup> For all of his power, Satan is limited. He can be successfully resisted, and will flee (Jas 4:7; Eph 4:27). He can be put to flight, however, not by our strength, but only by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26; 1 Cor 3:16).<sup>27</sup> Plass also writes,

We must be warned to be on our guard and not to be deceived, but to hear His Word. But this very Word the devil tries to tear away from man. However, to achieve this aim in particular, he must disguise himself and his purpose. And so in the name of "truth" he leads men away from the truth. When he engages in this strategy, "the old evil Foe" is called the "white devil" by Luther, for instance in his interpretation of Gal. 1:6. All the cunning of the devil is exercised in trying to tear us away from the Word. If in the external preaching he does not succeed in making people unwilling to hear the Word, yet he succeeds in the heart by persuading them not to cling to it.

Experience has taught the devil that he cannot ignore Scripture. Therefore he tries to make it appear as speaking his language and thus to defeat the Christian with his own weapon. He even tried this strategy on his assault on Christ (Matt 4:6). The devil, too, can quote Scripture and deceive men with it. But his use of Scripture is defective. He does not quote it completely but only so much of it as serves his purpose. The rest he silently omits.<sup>28</sup>

Luther believed that Satan cannot bear to see God speaking. If he cannot prevent it nor hinder God's Word by force, he opposes it with a semblance of piety, takes the very words which God has spoken, and so twists them as to peddle his lies and poison under their name. This strategy becomes an occasion for stumbling to many people and at times misleads even those who have and know God's Word.<sup>29</sup> In *Luther:*

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<sup>26</sup>Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 254.

<sup>27</sup>Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 449.

<sup>28</sup>Plass, *What Luther Says*, 394-95.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 397.

*The Preacher*, Fred Meuser states, "Nothing in life or death can ever really harm the person who is hidden in Christ. He resurrected life begins in us now, will never cease, and will be fulfilled perfectly when he raises us up out of physical death. This victory of Christ was always closely tied to the idea of a real, cosmic battle between God and Satan."<sup>30</sup>

James Garrett also presents his thoughts and perspectives on Luther's theology regarding the redeeming work of our Savior Jesus by sharing, "In *The Small Catechism* (1529) he declared that Jesus Christ has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, delivered me and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold but with his holy and precious blood with his innocent suffering and death."<sup>31</sup> In looking at a specific writing of Martin Luther himself, we are offered clear insight into his theological thoughts as he highlights,

The king Christ, by going to the Father has overcome both the world and the devil; and now he causes this to be proclaimed that he is the Lord of all and has power and might to condemn and to punish, with everlasting hell fire, everything that opposes him, including the devil and his angels. This is what he says, that this conviction shall continue against the world that persecutes the gospel, and finally prevail over it, so that its judgment and condemnation shall be overpowered, and in turn be condemned and put to shame; and not only the world, but also its God, the devil, who incites the world against Christ.<sup>32</sup>

### **Jonathan Edwards**

Offering his insight into the theological perspectives of Jonathan Edwards, John Gerstner states,

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<sup>30</sup>Fred W. Meuser, *Luther: The Preacher* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983), 73.

<sup>31</sup>James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 2:51.

<sup>32</sup>Martin Luther, *Sermons of Martin Luther: Sermons on Gospel Texts for Pentecost*, ed. John Lenker (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 3:155.

How does the devil go about his devilish ways? He blinds and deceives. He suggests thoughts such as casting oneself from the temple, taking the census, betraying Christ as well as forwarding men's natural lusts. Perhaps Satan's master strategy is to appear as an angel still. Satan oftentimes transforms himself into an angel of light. He does this as a teacher of false doctrine.<sup>33</sup>

Gerstner also addresses Edwards' theological perspectives as it relates to the fall of the evil angels by stating,

Edwards traces the fall of angels to the proclamation of the incarnation in heaven: "It seems to me probable that the temptation of the angels, which occasioned their rebellion, was, that when God was about to create man, or had first created him, God declared his decree to the angels that one of that human nature should be his Son, his best beloved, and should be united to his eternal Son, and that he should be their Head and King, that they should be given to him, and should worship him, and be his servants, attendants, and ministers: and God having thus declared his great love to the race of mankind, gave the angels the charge of them as ministering spirits to men. Satan, or Lucifer, or Beelzebub, being the archangel, one of the highest of the angels, could not bear it."<sup>34</sup>

Edwards offers his theological insights into the origin of sin by writing, "The depravity of man's nature appears, not only in its propensity to sin in some degree, which renders a man an evil or wicked man in the eye of the law, and strict justice, as was before shewn; but it is so corrupt, that its depravity, either shews that men are, or tends to make them to be, of such an evil character, as shall denominate them wicked men, according to the Covenant of Grace."<sup>35</sup>

### **John Calvin**

Curt Daniel offers insight into the theology of John Calvin by writing,

Where did sin come from? There can be no doubt that sin exists, but where did it come from? Deeper still, why does it exist? The matter of sin is the greatest

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<sup>33</sup>John H. Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards: In Three Volumes* (Powhatan, Berea Publications, 1992), 2:218-19.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 216.

<sup>35</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *Original Sin*, ed. Clyde Holbrook (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 158.

difficulty in the relationship of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Calvinists assert that God is the first cause of all things. Does this include sin? How could God create what He forbids? How could a holy God foreordain unholiness? It is important to remember that God did not create Man or Satan as sinful beings. They were created holy and, for whatever reasons, they fell into sin. If God created them sinful, then God would be blameworthy to some extent.<sup>36</sup>

Wilhelm Niesel comments on John Calvin's theology regarding our sinful natures by writing, "We sin freely because sin would not be sin if it did not happen in freedom of will; but we are so given over to sin that we can voluntarily do nothing else but sin because the evil that reigns in us constantly impels us to do so. Our condition is one of estrangement from God; we decide for evil and follow it willingly. But we can no longer in our own strength free ourselves from the necessity of so deciding. We cannot depart from the path which we have chosen."<sup>37</sup> Daniel also explains that Calvin believed the angels, along with people, were elected by God as he presents specific insight into the angels who fell into sin. He shares,

Very little is explicitly stated in the Scriptures concerning the election of angels. In fact, there is only one verse which specifically mentions it. That alone would be sufficient to prove the doctrine. The one explicit verse is 1 Tim 5:21, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of his chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality." The KJV and other versions render this phrase, "elect angels". The phrase "elect angels" means that some angels were elected. "Angels" is in the plural, so obviously there are many angels. Now it is evident at once that we find a difference between elect angels and men. All elect men fell into sin, but none of the evil angels have ever sinned. There is not the slightest indication in Scripture that God elected some of the fallen angels.

Since salvation is the product of election (2 Thess 2:13), and none of the fallen angels will ever be saved (Matt 25:41), it follows that none of the fallen angels were elected. So, their election was tied in with the decree to keep them from falling. Just as the election of the holy angels was in two stages, so was the reprobation of the fallen angels: (1) Negatively, they were foreordained to fall into sin, (2) positively, they were left in that sin and predestined to suffer the

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<sup>36</sup>Curt Daniel, *The History and Theology of Calvinism* (Dallas: Scholarly Reprints, 1993), 227-28.

<sup>37</sup>Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 87.

consequences. The reprobate angels are eternally doomed. None will ever be saved. God did not have to keep them from falling and He does not have to save any of them. He has chosen to leave the fallen angels in their sins, even as He has chosen to leave all the unfallen angels in their holiness.<sup>38</sup>

Like Satan, we choose to sin and rebel against God and His Word. In *The Teaching of Calvin Today*, Harold Whitney states, "Man is so enmeshed in sin that he is incapable not only of achieving but also even of willing what is good."<sup>39</sup> The reality of our sin natures can be traced back to the Garden of Eden where the devil continued his rebellion against God. But, we must wonder when he decided to rebel? Daniel adds,

Satan tempted Adam and Eve, but who tempted Satan? Satan is not eternal. How did sin arise in Satan's heart? Scripture would teach that Satan was the first being ever to sin. But how? And when? The fall of Satan is taught explicitly and implicitly in several passages (Isa 14:12-20; Ezek 28:11-19; Luke 10:18; Rev 12:7-12; Jude 6; 2 Pet 2:4; Matt 25:41). 1 Tim 3:6 strongly implies that pride was the sin that transformed the holy angel Lucifer into the evil devil Satan.

We do not know exactly when this occurred. 1 John 3:8 says, "the devil has sinned from the beginning", and theologians usually take this to mean "from the beginning of creation". Some say this was early in the first week of Gen 1, perhaps shortly before Adam and Eve. Others say Gen 1-2 deal only with the visible universe, and the creation and fall of Satan in the invisible may have preceded Gen 1 by a long time. This does not affect the problem. In any case, Satan sinned first. But how? But why?<sup>40</sup>

Daniel offers further insight into Calvin's theology by adding, "The reprobate angels are so constituted in the penal state, that their reprobation is known by them, and they know to increase their desperation that no spark of hope is left for them; so that here also they differ from reprobate men, whose reprobation although sure from eternity and immutable, is however infallibly known by no one while on earth; but the devils so bear the punishment of damnation, as to know that they have no hope of pardon."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Daniel, *The History and Theology of Calvinism*, 328-30.

<sup>39</sup>Harold J. Whitney, *The Teaching of Calvin for Today* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 105.

<sup>40</sup>Daniel, *The History and Theology of Calvinism*, 228.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 330.

In his recent writings, *John Calvin's Ideas*, Paul Helm also shares his thoughts on Calvin when he states,

Calvin would not have recognized the problem of evil as it is usually discussed today. Today, the argument from evil challenges God's existence. Calvin's approach, as a self-conscious exponent of the Christian tradition, takes as its chief premise: God, our righteous Creator and Lord, exists. There is evil in the world that God originally created good. So there must be some way of reconciling with the original goodness of the creation and with God's immaculate righteousness both evil's entrance and its continuance. God cannot be the author of sin; not the author of the first sin or of any subsequent sin. According to Calvin, God not only created the universe, he also rules or governs it, including ruling or governing evil events and actions. Those events that are evil and that apparently thwart his will are in fact made to serve his will; God willingly permits evil and so all actions, including evil actions, are decreed by him.<sup>42</sup>

In *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, John Calvin discusses our spiritual enemy and the armor of God by writing,

God has furnished us with various defensive weapons, provided we do not indolently refuse what is offered. We ought to be prepared on all sides, so as to want nothing. The Lord offers to us arms for repelling every kind of attack. It remains for us to apply them to use, and not leave them hanging on the wall. To quicken our vigilance, he reminds us that we must not only engage in open warfare, but that we have a crafty and insidious foe to encounter, who frequently lies in ambush; for such is the import of the apostle's phrase, "the wiles of the devil." To impress them still more deeply with their danger, he points out the nature of the enemy, which he illustrates by a comparative statement, "not against flesh and blood."

The meaning is, that our difficulties are far greater than if we had to fight with men. This is not bodily struggle. Let us remember this when the injurious treatment of others provokes us to revenge. Our natural disposition would lead us to direct all our exertions against the men themselves; but this foolish desire will be restrained by the consideration that the men who annoy us are nothing more than darts thrown by the hand of Satan. While we are employed in destroying those darts, we lay ourselves open to be wounded on all sides. We must go straight to the enemy, who attacks and wounds us from his concealment, who slays before he appears.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 93-94.

<sup>43</sup>John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 334-36.

In many areas of our lives, we can easily see that Calvin's perspectives and insights as stated in his commentary are true because we are to be prepared at all times. Our foe is indeed crafty who lies to ambush us with his evil tactics. As a result, we are not engaged in a bodily struggle. We must go straight to the enemy who cleverly waits to attack us without warning. Calvin also adds, "Paul describes our enemy as formidable, not to overwhelm us with fear, but to quicken our diligence and earnestness; for there is a middle course to be observed. When the enemy is neglected, he does his utmost to oppress us with sloth, and afterwards disarms us by terror; so that, where the engagement has commenced, we are vanquished. Still, his object in producing alarm is not to fill us with dismay, but to excite us to caution."<sup>44</sup>

### **New Testament Theological Insights and Perspectives**

There is an invisible world that is just as real as the visible world (Eph 6:12). The Bible does not inform us of this invisible world in passing references or isolated verses here and there. The witness is resounding and pervasive. If the spiritual world of angels and demons is not reality, neither is the Bible. The context of the invisible world in Scripture is just that emphatic. It cannot be rationalized out of the Word.<sup>45</sup> As we share the truths of God's Word, we can expect the attacks of Satan to continue because his desire and focus are to hinder the biblical text from being proclaimed and understood.

As in Matthew 13:24-30, we can see that the devil continues to sow his tares through false teachers as they prey on those people who do not know Christ as their Savior, as well as on those who simply do not know what the Word of God teaches. The false doctrine they proclaim can easily infiltrate our congregations if we are not

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 336.

<sup>45</sup>Ingram, *The Invisible War*, 32-33.



prepared to combat the heresy as we stand in the truths of the biblical text. The effects of such false doctrine can linger on in many churches for decades if it is not confronted and stopped using the authority of the Bible.

In *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, Unger offers further insight into this area by writing, "There can be no doubt that the greatest inlet to demon power among God's people is through the ever-widening door of false doctrine and mushrooming cults. Solemnly Scripture warns of the latter-day rise of demonized religion. With stark realism the Bible predicts how this alluring substitute for pure biblical Christianity will vie with revealed truth to capture men's hearts and minds in order to enslave them in error under demon power."<sup>46</sup> Addressing the reality of spiritual warfare, Ingram further discusses the determined and focused strategies of our enemy by writing,

The fact that we were born into the middle of a war raging in the invisible world is not comforting news, but it is vital information. It impacts nearly every area of our lives and, in fact, is the real arena in which we live. In Paul's teaching in 2 Cor 10:3-5, he clearly informs his readers that they are in a battle against unseen entities and that the battle is intense. He reminds the Corinthians to look beyond visible appearances and to use the spiritual weapons God has given them. Paul's observation gives us great insight into where the majority of this battle occurs. Most of it is between our ears.

Our minds, our belief systems, our worldviews--this is where the enemy aims. The god of this world has a master strategy to blind the minds of people so that they will not be able to grasp the truth. That's why intercessory prayer is so crucial--there's a vital relationship between acceptance of the gospel and the invisible war. There is a visible and an invisible world that intersect, and we live in the intersection. A cosmic conflict is raging, and it has eternal implications. The enemy seeks to blind us all to the truth, to dull our souls and ruin our lives. That's what spiritual warfare is all about.<sup>47</sup>

As Christians, we need to come to proper conclusions as to the relation of belief in Satan and evil spirits to the teaching and activity of Jesus.<sup>48</sup> In the Gospels,

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<sup>46</sup>Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, 202.

<sup>47</sup>Ingram, *The Invisible War*, 38-39.

<sup>48</sup>Garrett, Jr., *Systematic Theology*, 387.

Jesus had numerous encounters with Satan and his demonic forces. Addressing these accounts, Erickson adds, "Jesus cast out demons without pronouncing an elaborate formula. He merely commanded them to come out (Mark 1:25; 9:25). Jesus invested his disciples with the authority to cast out demons (Matt. 10:1). But the disciples needed faith if they were to be successful (Matt. 17:19-20)."<sup>49</sup> Grudem further discusses the Satan's activity, both separate from, and through his demons, by adding,

After hundreds of years of inability to have any effective triumph over demonic forces, it is understandable that when Jesus came casting out demons with absolute authority, the people were amazed: "And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him'" (Mark 1:27). Such power over the demonic forces had never before been seen in the history of the world. This authority over demonic powers was not limited to Jesus himself, for he gave similar authority first to the twelve (Matt 10:8; Mark 3:15), and then to seventy disciples.

After a period of ministry, the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (Luke 10:17). Then Jesus responded, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18), indicating again a distinctive triumph over Satan's power. Authority over unclean spirits later extended beyond the seventy disciples to those in the early church who ministered in Jesus' name (Acts 8:7; 16:18; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9), a fact consistent with the idea that ministry in Jesus' name in the new covenant age is characterized by triumph over the power of the devil (1 John 3:8)."<sup>50</sup>

Responding to how spiritual warfare relates to, and affects our preaching of the Bible, Grudem also writes,

With regard to preaching the gospel to unbelievers, the New Testament pattern is the same: although occasionally Jesus or Paul would cast out a demonic spirit that was causing significant hindrance to proclaiming the gospel in a certain area (see Mark 5:1-20 [Gerasene demoniac]; Acts 16:16-18 [soothsaying girl at Philippi]); that is not the usual pattern of ministry presented, where the emphasis is simply on preaching the gospel (Matt 9:35; Rom 1:18-19; 1 Cor 1:17-2:5). Even in the examples above, the opposition was encountered in the process of gospel proclamation.

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<sup>49</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 450.

<sup>50</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 417-19.

In marked contrast to the practice of those who today emphasize "strategic level spiritual warfare," in no instance does anyone in the New Testament (1) *summon a "territorial spirit"* upon entering an area to preach the gospel (in both examples above the demon was in a person and the demon-influenced person initiated the confrontation), or (2) *demand information from demons about a local demon hierarchy*, (3) *say that we should believe or teach "demonic strongholds" over a city have to be broken* before the gospel can be proclaimed with effectiveness. Rather, Christians just preach the gospel, and it comes with power to change lives!<sup>51</sup>

The devil's chief target is the godly. His very onslaught against their Redeemer brought their redemption. His power is a limited power. By nature, he cannot create, search hearts, give life, give spiritual life or prevent men from coming to Christ. When a person is converted he is out of Satan's ultimate reach for Christ is above the devil, and the devils are left with nothing to do but tremble at the wrath of God.<sup>52</sup> Ingram addresses Satan's power, his strategies, and our responsibility when engaging in spiritual warfare by adding,

He is a formidable foe, and we must realize that in our own flesh, we are no match for him. If we were to face him on our own, we would be overpowered. How can we make sure that we are not ignorant of Satan's schemes? That is the vital question. Many of us just don't have a clue what Satan is doing or how he operates. But if the stakes of this invisible war are as high as the Bible tells us they are, we have to know. We cannot afford to be indifferent. In this case, ignorance is not bliss; it is devastating. There are demonic powers that are secretly seeking to destroy your life, your marriage, your friendships, your self-image, and your confidence. The master strategy is to undermine your fruitfulness and discredit the name of Jesus.<sup>53</sup>

Clearly, we cannot deny the work of our enemy in our midst. Satan and his demons have been active since the days of Genesis, continuing through Jesus' time until now. The offensive weapon we have at our disposal as Christians is the Word of God as we both preach and teach the truths that can change lives. As Lawless adds, "Clothed

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 420-21.

<sup>52</sup>Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 222-23.

<sup>53</sup>Ingram, *The Invisible War*, 46, 49, 54-55.

positionally in Christ, enabled practically by obedience, and undergirded by prayer, believers take up the 'sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Eph 6:17-19) to battle Satan. Like Jesus in the desert, they use the Word offensively."<sup>54</sup>

Erickson also writes, "It is clear from the Bible that a serious and intense struggle is going on between, on the one side, Christ and his followers and, on the other, Satan and his forces. Revelation 12 pictures a war in heaven between, on one side, Michael and his angels and, on the other, Satan and his angels, a war which results in Satan's being thrown down from heaven to earth, and then attacking Christ and his church."<sup>55</sup> Satan has been defeated, and although he continues to fight on desperately, his fate has been sealed. The Christian can take comfort in the realization that he need not be defeated in any of his specific encounters with Satan (1 Cor 10:13; 1 John 4:4).<sup>56</sup> Kauffman offers us some additional commentary on these areas by stating,

Because many Christians fail to exercise their privilege of arming themselves with the full armor of God, the devil, as a roaring lion, devours them. Satan's dominions are enlarged because there are too many professing Christians asleep. Contrast, for a moment, the every watchful attitude and continual day and night activity of Satan and his hosts with the lethargic, listless, indifferent attitude of professing Christians. Is it any wonder that Satan makes such frightful headway in enlarging the borders of his kingdom, in extending his nefarious work of destruction? It was while men slept that the enemy sowed his tares.<sup>57</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As stated earlier, Satan and his forces of evil are focused and determined to destroy our lives and our witness for our Savior. If they can hinder the evangelistic

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<sup>54</sup>Lawless, "Evangelism and Spiritual Warfare," 256.

<sup>55</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 450-51.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 451.

<sup>57</sup>Kauffman, *Doctrines of the Bible*, 212, 215.

efforts of our churches, they have achieved some level of victory in their war against the cause of Christ. If we think of the overall emphasis of the New Testament epistles, we realize that very little space is given to discussing demonic activity in the lives of believers or methods to resist and oppose such activity. The emphasis is on telling believers not to sin but to live lives of righteousness.<sup>58</sup>

As I read through the Book of Acts, I am struck by the clear indications which Luke offers regarding the characteristics of the Early Church. These believers were focused on the Great Commission; they were passionate about the gospel; they were committed to the teachings of the apostles; they were unified together in Christ; and they were determined to remain faithful to the Lord, regardless of the cost. If our preaching fails to boldly proclaim the absolute necessity of properly equipping ourselves for this daily battle, we have not been completely faithful in our calling as the shepherds of God's children. In light of these spiritual warfare realities, Kauffman adds,

The Great Controversy for human souls is going on. God is offering freedom for every captive soul, having sacrificed His only begotten Son to this end. By authority of Jesus Christ there are messengers in every land, preaching "the good tidings of salvation." In the freedom from sin in time and the glory of heaven in eternity there is sufficient urge for every soul to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and to press hopefully on towards the heavenly goal. On the other hand, Satan is resting neither day nor night in prompting the cause of damnation and destruction. All the misrepresentation, deception, and lying slander can do is being done to subvert the hearers of the truth and to turn them aside unto fables.

On the side of the Lord are the Spirit-directed churches and all allied institutions and enterprises. On the side of Satan are the evil angels and fallen men (Eccl 7:29), and all the vain allurements of an evil world. The practical questions that comes to every readers is Who has the victory in my soul, God or the devil? The question naturally arises, "Since salvation from sin means nobility of soul, freedom from condemnation, and the blessed hope of an everlasting crown in glory; and since a sinful life means a degraded life in time and banishment from God in eternity, why do so few decide for Christ and so many fall victims of the devil?"<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 420.

<sup>59</sup>Kauffman, *Doctrines of the Bible*, 213-14.

The decisive battle in the war between good and evil was fought and won by Christ in the crucifixion and the resurrection. Satan has been defeated, and although he continues to fight on desperately, his fate has been sealed. The Christian can take comfort in the realization that he need not be defeated in any of his specific encounters with Satan (1 Cor 10:13; 1 John 4:4).<sup>60</sup> Brunner adds,

The Christian Gospel describes the deliverance from this conflict as the effect of the act of Jesus Christ, understood in faith. Jesus Christ is described as the only One who was able to resist the power of temptation, which assaulted Him from without, not from within. Hence He came to 'destroy the works of the devil.' It was He who 'delivered us from the power of darkness, and placed us in the realm of the Son of His Love.' What the Bible says plainly is this: that there is a power of darkness, and that it is of great significance. It defies all definition because it refuses to come out into the open, and be made manifest. It can only develop its power in darkness. It loves and understands the art of dissimulation, of camouflage. It even dissimulates its nature by pretending to be an 'angel of light' in order that it may carry out its dark designs all the more undisturbed.<sup>61</sup>

May the Holy Spirit of God continue to empower us as we proclaim His Word in our churches; and as we fulfill the Great Commission. May we be faithful in standing firm against the devil and his forces of evil as they seeks to destroy us and our witness for Christ. We have the victory. May we always praise the Lord for that wonderful truth.

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<sup>60</sup>Erickson, *Systematic Theology*, 451.

<sup>61</sup>Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, 141, 143.

## CHAPTER 4

### A MODEL FOR TALBOT PARK BAPTIST CHURCH PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

When I began serving as the senior pastor of Talbot Park Baptist Church in January 2006, I knew that I would have to implement this ministry project in an entirely new congregation within the first year of my ministry. Right from the start, I began to see many spiritual areas that needed to be addressed within my initial months of serving and leading the church. After talking with numerous members of the deacon body and other lay-leaders, I knew that my proposed project on spiritual warfare and the armor of God would be very beneficial to the majority of the congregation.

Over the past fourteen years of ministry within the local church, I have seen that many people who claim to know Jesus as Savior and Lord live defeated Christian lives. We might ask ourselves, "Why is this a reality within the Body of Christ? Why do Christians live defeated lives?" I believe that one of the reasons we see these sad realities stems from the fact that far too many people who would classify themselves as strong Christians simply do not know the basic foundational truths of the Word of God. Even a greater number of people within our congregations do not know anything about the teachings concerning Satan and spiritual warfare.

Many have even admitted to me that they are completely unaware of the strategies and tactics of our spiritual enemy. For various reasons, there are those within our churches who do not want to hear anything about this character the Bible calls Satan, the devil, and/or his demonic forces. Based on my assessment of the spiritual condition surrounding the subject of spiritual warfare within our congregation, I decided

to address this important topic in greater detail for my ministry project. During these past ten months, I have come to see that the majority of our congregation has little understanding of who Satan is, and what his evil strategies actually are like. I often wonder how many people never came to understand that they were in a spiritual battle with the enemy of God as a result of this sad reality.

As stated in chapter 1, the purpose of this ministry project was to equip the members of Talbot Park Baptist Church with the knowledge of spiritual warfare and the armor of God through expository preaching. As I thought about the importance of each of the following stated goals, I knew that we would encounter severe opposition from our enemy as we progressed through each sermon, discipleship training session, and the project as a whole.

The first goal of this ministry project was to teach the congregation what the Bible says about spiritual warfare through preaching expository sermons relating to putting on the whole armor of God. As I discuss in greater detail in chapter 5, I believe this goal was successfully achieved. I was extremely encouraged to hear the many comments our members shared with me as we progressed through the sermon series and all aspects of training.

The second goal of this project was to improve my skills in expository preaching. Overall, I believe that the time I spent each week in sermon preparation and delivery, the Holy Spirit spoke to me through the sermon evaluations of my focus groups members, as well as through my own time of prayer and reflection. My desire will continually remain to never stop growing in my abilities as a preacher and minister of God's Word.

The third goal of this ministry project was to prepare the members of Talbot Park Baptist Church to stand firm against the schemes and weapons of Satan and his demonic forces. Through a detailed exposition of Ephesians 6:10-18, I began to see that many of our members were beginning to understand just how they could gain the



biblical knowledge they needed concerning the devil as they learned how to take up and put on each element of God's armor.

The final goal of this ministry project centered on the importance of instructing the congregation about the role and importance of prayer in spiritual warfare. As we met together each week, I had the opportunity to talk with numerous members about how prayer can make such a vital difference in our living victorious Christian lives on a daily basis. For the most part, the majority of those I spoke with were very excited about the project and all we would address each week on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights.

I would now like to mention something that I feel is an important element concerning Talbot Park Baptist. Over the past year, several people approached me stating that the subject of spiritual warfare was an unaddressed topic during the past twenty years. These comments caused me great concern due to the lack of apparent spiritual knowledge of sound biblical doctrine within the congregation. When I began speaking with the pastoral search committee during the summer of 2005, I was informed that the church has been in a "spiritual wasteland for far too long."

In fact, the chairman of the search committee informed me that they were looking for a pastor who would stand and preach the Bible as God's inerrant Word. He said that the leadership of the congregation had realized they were dying spiritually, and that the only way for the church to experience revival was to return to the authority of the Scriptures. Some of the members of the committee shared that they wanted the Holy Spirit to revive the congregation and to use them to reach out to the community with the gospel of Christ.

During the beginning stages of this D.Min. program, I began to pray, asking for God's guidance concerning the subject of my church ministry project. Even though I had not been in contact with my new church at that time, I knew the Lord was leading me to focus on spiritual warfare and the armor of God. I also began to purchase and

read numerous books and other material relating to these important and relevant subjects. As a result of extensive research, I felt both excited and ready to implement this project at Talbot Park even though I was still in my first year of ministry with this new congregation.

I conducted a sixteen-week ministry project where I attempted to involve as many people as possible in the church who were over the age of eighteen. After months of pre-planning and advertising, I began with an introductory sermon to present the series to the congregation. Throughout the entire sermon series, outlines were distributed to the congregation in the worship bulletins each week to help facilitate the teaching and learning processes for everyone in attendance.

### **Selection of Participants**

As discussed in chapter 1, my goal was to secure a focus group of about eight to ten church members who would have previously agreed to participate in more extensive discipleship training discussions. From the start, I instructed each of the eight group members on how to critique and evaluate my sermon content and preaching delivery by addressing the specific areas as shown in great detail in Appendix D. Each of these eight focus group members had agreed to evaluate the sermons throughout the series not only to help facilitate my learning, but also to assist in their learning as well. I believe it was important for each of our group members to remain committed to the sermon series evaluation process, as well as to the discipleship training classes as I continued throughout the four month implementation of the project.

I also requested that the focus group members be willing also to offer specific and detailed insight into the application of each message as I attempted to relate the truths of the text to the congregation. As the weeks progressed, I read through and reflected upon these sermon evaluation forms in great detail as they assisted me acquiring a better understanding of how our congregation was hearing and perceiving

what the Lord had laid on my heart as I prepared and delivered the message. I would like to mention that I prayerfully and carefully selected my group members by personally asking those within the congregation who had previously expressed an interest in learning more about spiritual warfare. Throughout the project, I remained confident that each of the members of our focus group would continue to offer helpful and honest evaluations of the sermons I preached during the entire sermon series.

### **Weeks 1-2: Introduction of Ministry Project through a Congregational-Wide Questionnaire / Focus Group Meetings**

As we began the implementation of our ministry project, I distributed the pre-project questionnaire to only those members of the congregation who were over the age of eighteen. The decision to take this approach was made prior to submitting my request to the Ethics Committee that both the Pre and Post-Project Questionnaires (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) would not be distributed to anyone under this age. I felt that this detailed questionnaire would offer me extensive and insightful information about the specific beliefs of those within the congregation concerning spiritual warfare and the armor of God.

I made the decision to hand out the questionnaires in the various adult Sunday Schools, as well as throughout the sanctuary just prior to the morning worship services over the course of a three-week period. Overall, I am very pleased with the verbal and written responses I received from the congregation. In many ways, I was surprised at the excitement about the series from a great number of our members since these subjects had not been believed in or addressed in numerous years.

During these initial weeks of the project, I distributed the pre-project focus group questionnaire (Appendix 3) to those within the congregation who had agreed to participate in further discussion, evaluation and study. The time I spent with each member of the group offered us the opportunity to share our expectations and hopes for

how the Holy Spirit would use the project not only in their individual lives, but also in the life of our church as a whole. In these initial weeks, I was greatly encouraged at the interest among many within our church. I requested that both the Pre-Project Congregational Questionnaire (Appendix 1), and the Pre-Project Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix 3) be returned within two-weeks of distribution to allow me the time needed to review the data. The information I received offered me further insight into the current beliefs of the members of our congregation. Overall, I believe that we had a great introduction to the ministry project.

### **Weeks 2-6: Introductory Sermon Series on Spiritual Warfare**

I have had a number of members tell me that the subjects of Satan and spiritual warfare were scoffed at, and therefore, they were never preached as biblical truth. As I became aware of this reality within my initial weeks at the church, I knew that I must make it very clear what the Bible actually does teach as we began opening the pages of God's Word together. The decision was made to extend the entire sermon series to thirteen weeks because after further study, I felt like the congregation needed a more detailed foundation about Satan and spiritual warfare before jumping right in to the armor of God as found in Ephesians 6:10-18. In the following paragraphs, I offer a highlight of each introductory message while showing the outlines (Appendix 6) that were distributed to the congregation during each of the Sunday morning services.

#### **Sermon 1:**

Title: "War? What War?"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-13

As I prayed about and thought through the course of direction for the series, I knew that without a better understanding about who Satan is, when he originated, what his tactics are, and who we are in Christ, the congregation would have great difficulty in seeing why they would need to stand firm in the strength of the Lord. As a military

chaplain, I have some insight into the realities of war as I minister to the servicemen and women who are daily engaging the enemies of the United States. In this capacity, I serve as their pastor as I minister to their spiritual needs, as well as to the specific needs of their families who remain stateside. In this first sermon, I felt like I needed to be clear in addressing the fact that even though we claim to be believers in Christ, there are many within our congregations who do not even know that they are at war.

### **Sermon 2:**

Title: "Who is this Satan, the Enemy of God?"

Text: Ezekiel 28:14-17

In this second sermon, my goal was to address some of the passages that discuss the origin and fall of Satan. What was his position before the throne of God? Who was he before he rebelled against his Creator? I knew that there were many in our church who had no idea what the Bible teaches about who Satan is and why he was cast out of heaven, so my desire was to start back with the basics. As I briefly shared earlier in the project, for the past eighteen years, Talbot Park suffered greatly from a lack of solid biblical teaching. I felt it was imperative that I address many of the passages that deal with these fundamental areas concerning both Satan and his demons.

As was the case with Talbot Park, in many churches, there are subjects which are taboo and associated with the words, "We don't talk about that here." Some of these deal with sin, judgment, hell, and the devil. The Scriptures say a tremendous amount about Satan and his angels--from the Genesis account in the Garden to the end of the world in the final chapters in Revelation. Who in fact are these forces of evil we need to be aware of? The Bible calls these spirits by various descriptive titles such as, demons, unclean spirits, evil or fallen angels, principalities and forces of wickedness.

Satan is a fallen angel. He is real, not symbolic, and he is constantly fighting against those who follow and obey God. The Bible does not spend much time describing how these angels fell into rebellion and sin. Their demise occurred sometime

before the Garden of Eden since Satan is present there in a form of a serpent tempting Eve in Genesis 3. Immediately after this sermon, I had members coming to me saying that they had never before been taught these biblical truths about Satan and his demons.

### **Sermon 3:**

Title: "The Same Old Schemes of the Devil"

Text: Genesis 3:1-8

In this message, I was excited about taking the congregation back to the book of Genesis as we looked at the biblical account concerning the fall of Adam and Eve. I felt like a careful study of this passage would offer us great insight into the same tactics Satan has been using since the Garden of Eden when he first tempted God's human creation to sin. In these eight verses, we were confronted with the truth about how the devil tricked Adam and Eve into disobedience, thereby causing them to fall from their communion with God into a life where they experienced shame, sorrow and death.

Clearly, the devil continues to deceive mankind today as he entices us to sin. Understanding Satan's tactics makes us better able to utilize the full armor of God and to stand firm against his evil schemes. If the devil can undermine our confidence in Scripture, he has been successful in severely weakening our defenses. The mind is the spiritual battleground where the battle is either won or lost. Satan is aware that if he can influence what we think, then he can influence how we act. As we can see in Genesis 3, Satan came to Eve in the Garden and deceived her mind, leading her to disobey God.

### **Sermon 4:**

Title: "Be on the Alert"

Text: 1 Peter 5:8-9

In this fourth message, I wanted to focus on the passage from 1 Peter as we saw the importance of being watchful for the attacks of the devil. Far too often, I have not remained aware of Satan's attacks even in my own life. Every believer needs to remain on the alert knowing that as we resist Satan, we will be better able to stand firm.

As I continued building the foundation for knowledge about spiritual warfare in this fourth message in our introductory sermon series, I was pleased to see the results of such a detailed approach before discussing each element in the armor of God. We are to notice the term Peter uses to describe our enemy: Adversary. The Hebrew words for adversary lead us to the following definitions: active hostility, hatred, strong opposition. These words should cause us to take notice as we prepare for spiritual warfare against the enemy of God.

### **Sermon 5:**

Title: "The Believer's Position in Christ"

Text: Ephesians 1:13-14

As I concluded this introductory sermon series on spiritual warfare, I wanted to address the truths of the Bible regarding what it means for us, as believers, to be in Christ. Many Christians may have great difficulty understanding how they can be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might (Eph 6:10), unless they have a stronger, biblically-based knowledge and understanding of who they are as God's children through faith in Christ.

Knowing that we are in Christ is first step to victorious spiritual warfare. When we talk about defeating Satan, we must know what the Bible says about our position as God's people. We must believe that our being in Christ is an absolute truth which grants us the victory over our enemy, and that to be in Christ means great truth for us as believers. We are united to Christ in all the victory that He achieved in His redemptive work at Calvary. Thankfully, our victory over Satan belongs to us through our union with Christ.

Our position in Christ allows us to use our authority to resist the devil and to defeat Him as James 4:7 instructs us. How imperative it is that we know and understand who we are in Christ and what this position means for our daily lives. For Paul, faith brought about a unity with Christ. Every Christian is inseparably united with

the Lord Jesus as we are placed by God into complete oneness with Him. I continually stressed to the congregation: "What great truths to behold."

### **Weeks 5-15: Discipleship Training Sessions on Spiritual Warfare and the Armor of God**

Throughout the course of the planning stages, I wanted to have the opportunity each week to provide intensive instruction and discussion about the biblical passages that were being addressed during the course of this project. Also during these initial stages, I met with many of our deacons and other lay leaders seeking their thoughts and insights into the available options that would be most beneficial to my new congregation on a weekly basis. I made the decision to take the one-hour Bible study time on Wednesday nights as the best opportunity for further discipleship training and study. One of the encouraging and visible signs that the direction of the project was the best course of action centered around the fact that the excitement was spreading around the church about the sermon series and the discipleship sessions that were being advertised throughout the church.

After opening with requests and prayer each week, I led the church into a intensive analysis of the passages that were addressed during the sermon the previous Sunday morning. As the discipleship series began, I asked the members to take notes on the sermon outlines that were placed in the worship bulletins each week. I also requested that they bring their outlines on Wednesday nights so they could raise any questions they might have about a particular verse or specific point that was brought out in the message.

The range of questions that were shared varied each week depending upon the subject and passage that the sermon was based upon the previous Sunday morning. For example, there were questions such as: "How do we know that there really is a devil? Can we take what the Bible says literally when it discusses Satan and his evil tactics?" When these questions were shared with me, I knew immediately where they



were coming from because of my knowledge of the theological stance of the former minister. I addressed these and other questions such as, "How can we stand firm against the devil since he is so powerful? Is it possible for us to put on the armor Paul describes on a daily basis?"

Throughout the discipleship training sessions, I was amazed at just how little the members understood about Satan and spiritual warfare as they shared their thoughts and perceptions with me. A dialogue or discussion during the delivery of the sermon on Sunday morning is virtually impossible, so I wanted the members to know that we would have the time to verbally discuss the biblical passages in great depth for their increased retention and understanding.

As the sessions progressed, I could see that more people were becoming comfortable with asking questions and making comments in this public forum. There were numerous times when members would say how pleased they were because they have never before had this type of intensive Bible study at Talbot Park. Some of our older members even shared that they had been members of the church for over thirty years, and they have learned more during this sermon and discipleship training series than they had in previous years. There were also some who expressed their pleasure that the Bible was being taught as the literal Word of God. What an encouragement these comments were to me week after week.

### **Week 6: Meeting with Members of the Focus Group**

One of the benefits of having a committed focus group has been the increased evaluation opportunities of the ministry project throughout the course of the first six weeks. The discussions I had with various group members were helpful as I continued planning the sermon series and discipleship training sessions for the congregation. The sermon series evaluations were also very helpful as they offered me almost instant feedback within the course of a few days after delivering the message

during the Sunday morning worship service. I distributed the Spiritual Warfare/Armor of God Sermon Series Evaluation Form (Appendix 4) each week to the members of the focus group that were in attendance that particular Sunday morning.

The group members were asked to address each of the areas that were listed on the evaluation form. I formulated the questions to focus on specific areas of the sermon, along with other personal areas that I felt needed further attention and evaluation as can be seen on the form. The responses varied at times depending upon the sermon and the manner in which I delivered the message. There were times when I struggled with fluency patterns of speech as I progressed through the series. These patterns and areas are something that I constantly deal with as a stutterer.

I tried to meet with the members of the focus group as often as their schedules allowed. There were weeks when I had numerous meetings with just a few, and then there were other weeks when I could only meet with a large number of people. Even though I have known the members of the congregation for less than a year, I felt that this ministry project has brought us closer in many ways as we continued to meet for further discussion and evaluation. I appreciated their openness and willingness to share their thoughts with me throughout the entire implementation of the ministry project at our Talbot Park Baptist Church.

### **Weeks 7-15: Detailed Sermon Series on the Armor of God**

#### **Sermon 1:**

Title: "Putting on the Armor of God"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-18

Because the sermons addressed each of the individual pieces of the armor, I will present a brief overview of the message along with my personal insights and perceptions. In this first sermon dealing specifically with the armor of God, I wanted to begin addressing each element as Paul describes in this passage. After completing the

introductory series, my desire was to lead our congregation in acquiring an even stronger knowledge and understanding of how we as believers can in fact live as victorious Christians.

I also wanted to provide a brief introduction into the armor before we actually begin addressing one piece each week. I shared how Paul states that we are doing battle in everyday life against the schemes or wiles of the devil. We are called to a struggle with unseen forces and the fight is real. But, we cannot win unless we are armed and ready. That's why Paul said to "Take up the whole armor of God."

### **Sermon 2:**

Title: "The Belt of Truth"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-14a

One of the reasons I decided to focus on one specific piece of the armor each Sunday morning was to spend quality time dealing with each element so that an in-depth and thorough understanding could be obtained by all in attendance for the individual sermons, or for the series as a whole. This is our knowledge, acceptance, and use of the truths of God's Word. To put on the belt of truth, we must know God's Word. Our call is to take advantage of every opportunity to learn more about God and His Word so that we can be armed against the enemy.

### **Sermon 3:**

Title: "The Breastplate of Righteousness"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-14

I have often wondered, "What does it mean to wear the breastplate of righteousness? Is it possible for us to live righteous lives when we are bombarded with the temptations of the world?" Throughout the course of my studies, I have come to learn that there are two aspects of the breastplate that we need to be aware of as believers in Christ. Having the breastplate of righteousness is more than belief -- it is allowing the truth of God's Word to permeate every aspect of your life. Perhaps one of

the reasons the church suffers so today is that many Christians know how to fake their walk with Christ. Satan points out that we are very good at stating our beliefs, but we are not so good at living out those beliefs. Far too many believers are happy to accept their position in Christ, but are unwilling to change the way they live their lives. These believers have not become in practice what they are in position. The breastplate of righteousness is one which we must be aware of daily as we resist the devil and his temptations. Far too many Christians are more concerned with the passing pleasures of this world, but the call before us is to consistently pursue righteousness.

#### **Sermon 4:**

Title: "The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace - Part One"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-15

When I think about peace, I sometimes wonder why it seems to be so difficult to experience lasting peace. In Ephesians 6, Paul describes peace as the shoes of the Christian soldier. Peace is something that many people want, but few actually know how to go about acquiring it in their lives, homes, churches, and within this world in which we live. In this sermon, I wanted to address many of the aspects of what the Bible says about peace. One of the Greek words for peace means "to bind together."

The Scriptures tell us that this kind of prevailing peace is found only in a relationship with Christ. For in this relationship, we are literally "bound together" with Christ wherein nothing can ever sever this peace because it is rooted in our relationship with our Savior. The Bible proclaims that in spiritual warfare, peace is such a vital element in the believer's armor.

#### **Sermon 5:**

Title: "The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace – Part Two"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-15

The opportunities I have had to personally grow in my own knowledge and understanding about the truths of the Bible have only been enhanced throughout this

series. After further study, I began to feel that I could not address this element in just one sermon; so I decided to divide it into two messages while attempting to tie them together during this second message. At first, I honestly struggled with having two sermons for one piece of armor, but I knew I would need two sermons in order to cover all that I felt led to share with the congregation.

I often wonder, "Why don't we witness?" If fear is one of the main reasons, why are we afraid to share the Good News of the gospel? The enemy of our souls and the gates of hell are intimidated when Christians get serious about their faith and begin sharing Jesus. When we share the peace we have found in Christ, we are literally planting our feet firmly in the truths of God's Word.

#### **Sermon 6:**

Title: "The Shield of Faith"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-16

One of the questions that was presented to me earlier one week from one of our members focused on the all-important element in the armor of God. They asked, "Robert, what does it mean for us to take up the shield of faith?" I had the opportunity to dialogue with this person for a few minutes before Bible study, and we discussed some of the perceptions people have had about believing in something they could not see. As Christians, we know that faith is how we come to know God through receiving His Son as our Savior.

#### **Sermon 7:**

Title: "The Helmet of Salvation"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-17a

As we approached the final few sermons in this series on the armor of God, I was confident that there were people who did not have the assurance of their salvation. Over the years, I have spoken with many who were afraid that they were not going to heaven when they died. One of the areas that I would like to do further study that deals

precisely with this assurance the Bible says we can possess through our faith in Christ. Satan has targeted the minds of those who do not know Christ so that they might not see the truths of the gospel. But for us as believers, putting on the helmet of salvation is a requirement if we want to stand firm in the peace and assurance of our salvation.

The shield of faith can only function around the truths we have been taught. We cannot have faith in truths we do not know. Therefore, our minds need to be filled with biblical truth like the fact that as a result of our faith, our salvation is secure in the hands of Jesus. These truths of salvation, faith and hope will continually flow from a mind that has allowed itself to be saturated in God's Word and transformed by the Holy Spirit. The helmet of salvation offers us an unquenchable hope.

### **Sermon 8:**

Title: "The Sword of the Spirit"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-17

For me personally, one of the great joys of pastoral ministry has been seeing the members of our church growing in their relationship with the Lord through the Sunday morning sermons and other discipleship training classes we have offered to our congregation over the years. As believers, when we claim the truths of God's Word, we will begin seeing just how standing firm in the strength of the Lord is indeed possible for us on a daily basis. We are to immerse our minds in the truths of the Scriptures as often as we can.

All spiritual victory is bound inseparably to our relationship with Christ as proclaimed in the Word of God. If we are going to stand strong when Satan tempts us, we must become men and women of the Bible. We can fight victoriously only as we build our lives upon God's Word and as we become firmly grounded in the truth of the Scriptures. Relying on our feelings will not do because they are as changeable as the wind. One day we are up, the next, we are down. Only God's Word will never change, and it is upon His truth that we can stand and defeat the enemy.

**Sermon 9:**

Title: "Living the Believer's Victory through Prayer"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-18

In this concluding message in the sermon series, I wanted to discuss the words of Paul as he stresses the importance of prayer in the lives of all believers in Christ. As the project continually progressed throughout the past four months, I was able to see the many benefits our congregation received as a whole resulting from this extensive study about spiritual warfare and the armor of God. I attempted to share that we will not be successful in spiritual warfare without prayer.

When we obey the Lord and put on His armor, we become formidable opponents against the enemy of our souls. Satan will use every device he can to keep us from praying. He will cause fatigue, doubt, and discouragement to filter into our lives to keep us from spending time with God in prayer. Satan wants to keep us out of touch with God by being preoccupied with other matters. Clearly, his goal is to take and keep our focus off of the Lord who is the sole source of our strength and our victory. We cannot fight our spiritual battles in our own power. No matter how talented we are, if we try to fight Satan in our own strength, we will be defeated.

We must be in constant contact with the One who gives the power to engage the enemy and be victorious. Our power comes from God's Holy Spirit, and as we remain faithful in prayer, we will be strengthened even during difficult times. If we are praying every day asking for God's divine direction and guidance and if we are putting on His armor, then we will have the power we need to stand firm against the enemy. We will experience the victory and the peace that is available to us through Jesus Christ.

**Weeks 14-16: Post-Project  
Congregation and Focus-Group  
Questionnaire Distribution**

In the final weeks of the ministry project, my desire was to distribute our final survey instruments which would offer an even greater evaluation of what our

members as a whole learned throughout the course of the sixteen weeks. Again, I would like to mention that as the project progressed, I was often offered immediate verbal and written feedback from certain members of our church family. Clearly, this information from our congregation was very beneficial to me during the project. These two respective instruments would assist me in both compiling and presenting all my final analysis in determining the overall success of the project. As required, I present and discuss the results from these questionnaires within chapter 5.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout all the stages of the project, I prayed for the clear direction of the Holy Spirit as I began this course of study within a brand new church context at Talbot Park Baptist Church. One of my concerns in moving to a new congregation during my D.Min. studies centered on whether or not my proposed project could be approved, implemented, and even successful in my first year at the church. My questions and concerns were put to rest once I arrived at the church earlier this year, and as I continued sharing what I was proposing to preach, teach, and accomplish. At this time, I can see how the Lord definitely used this ministry project to draw me closer together to the congregation in ways I did not see when I began four months ago.

As I briefly shared earlier, I could see the excitement in our members as we began and progressed through the project. In fact, there were some who even said that the sermon series and discipleship training sessions went by way too fast and that they wanted them to continue even longer. I can say that these were words I loved hearing as I concluded this ministry project in our church. Without a doubt, I learned more than I thought possible when I first submitted my proposal for approval, and as I began the project in the church. I am thankful to the Lord for the leading of His Holy Spirit as I conducted my research and implemented this project at Talbot Park.



## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

As I reflect on the entire ministry project as a whole, I would like to begin this chapter by stating that a detailed and proper evaluation will involve numerous aspects as set forth in the Doctor of Ministry program guidelines. These specific areas will pertain to my overall effectiveness in reaching the goals that were originally stated and approved in the proposal. Throughout this chapter, I address each of the required areas in reflecting on the implementation of the project in spiritual warfare and the armor of God at Talbot Park Baptist Church.

#### **Did the Project Accomplish Its Intended Goals?**

To my delight, I am confident that the project accomplished all the original goals that were presented in chapter 1. During the proposal writing stages, I worked diligently with my professors to establish goals that could realistically be achieved within the context of our local church. The success of these goals would be beneficial not only to me as a minister and student, but also to the members of our congregation that would be working with me during each of the implementation stages as well.

The first goal of this ministry project was to teach the congregation what the Bible says about spiritual warfare through preaching expository sermons relating to putting on the whole armor of God. As the Sunday morning sermon series continued each week, I could see that this goal was definitely accomplished not only through the verbal and written feedback I received from the congregation, but also from those in our focus group. Over my years of pastoral ministry, I have relied on the insights of those

who hear me preach sermons on a regular basis. I was greatly encouraged at the excitement from many of our members who shared how pleased they were over all they were learning from the Bible concerning spiritual warfare and the armor for the very first time.

The second goal of this project was to improve my skills in expository preaching. As stated in the proposal, my desire in the future will be to continually grow in my knowledge as a minister of God's Word. I was thrilled at all I learned during the hours I spent in sermon preparation each week, and as I evaluated my delivery throughout the entire series. I address the survey data acquired from the members of my focus group in greater detail later in the chapter.

The third goal of this project was to prepare the members of our church to stand firm against the schemes of Satan and his evil forces. I believe that this goal was accomplished not only through the sermon series on Sunday mornings, but also through the Wednesday night discipleship training sessions we had each week. As with the second goal, I both present and discuss the data I received from the members of our focus group and the congregation.

The final goal of this ministry project was to instruct the congregation about never losing sight of the role and importance of prayer in spiritual warfare as we daily take up and put on the armor of God. As I shared in great detail during the final sermon and discipleship training session, prayer is such a vital element in being successful in the spiritual battles we face as believers. The specific evidence pertaining to the context of this final message and Wednesday evening training session can be seen in sermon 9 of Appendix 6. In the coming months, and possibly into the next few years, I will be able to evaluate even further all that we have accomplished. As I continue to serve at Talbot Park in the years ahead, I will have many opportunities to gauge the growth of the congregation as we progress ahead in future expository sermon series, as well as through numerous other intensive discipleship training courses.

## **Data Analysis**

Throughout the implementation of this ministry project, I distributed a number of evaluative instruments to the congregation as a whole, and some that were designed just for the members of our focus group. I will address the results of the Pre-Project Questionnaire (Appendix 1), and the Post-Project Questionnaire (Appendix 2), in a separate section immediately following my discussion of the feedback and information I received from the focus group instruments which include: the Pre-Project Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix 3); the Spiritual Warfare/Armor of God Sermon Series Evaluation Form (Appendix 4); and finally, the Post-Project Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix 5). In this section, I will highlight some of the answers and comments to the specific questions that were asked of the group members as they willingly offered their insights and assistance on a weekly basis.

### **Pre-Project Focus Group Questionnaire Results**

In the Pre-Project Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix 3), I asked five specific questions that were designed to offer me some insight into where these members were at the beginning weeks in both their theology and knowledge about Scripture, Satan, and spiritual warfare, etc. For example, in question 1, "Does the subject of Satan and spiritual warfare make you feel uncomfortable?," some of the responses were as follows: "No, by the power of Jesus, I can rebuke him and his clever schemes."

Another person responded by writing, "No, biblical teaching never makes me feel uncomfortable unless it is convicting me of my sin." Someone else shared, "No, not at all because I was raised with this information. I saw some pretty wild stuff growing up and now I understand it a lot better." And finally, "No, because God speaks to His followers about these subjects in Bible. If we, as Christians believe in the Word of God, then we need to understand and take action on these subjects."

In discussion concerning question 2, "Please describe in detail your current knowledge and understanding about spiritual warfare and the reality of Satan," I was able to acquire a better understanding of more specific information as the following answers were offered: "On spiritual warfare, I knew very little prior to this sermon series, and in fact, have never heard these words 'spiritual warfare' until now. On the reality of Satan, I knew of Satan due to what is written in Scripture, but not to the depth of understanding Satan's ways, methods and deceptions." A second focus group member wrote, "I believe that Satan and his demons are real and that their sole purpose is to kill, steal and destroy from the children of God."

In question 3, I asked, "Do you feel it is important that all believers understand what the Bible teaches about Satan and his tactics to defeat us and destroy our witness for Christ? Why or why not?" I asked this question with the goal of obtaining further insight into the theology of some of our members. One answer stated: "Yes, to battle the adversary, you need to know all you can about him and his ways." Someone else shared, "Yes, it is imperative that all saints be cognizant of the devil's schemes because without this knowledge, we could not live victoriously in the victory that Christ won."

In response to question 4, "How can we stand strong in the Lord while we are constantly facing temptation on a daily basis?," one particular response was offered: "We are to pray and study God's Word daily, and put on God's armor that He equips us with. But more importantly, we are to use the armor God provides us. When Satan attacks, Christians stand-up and say, 'It is written . . . .'" Someone else added, "Put on the armor of God. Bind Satan and his demons with the name and blood of Jesus. Quote Scripture back to the temptation by saying, 'It is written . . . .'"

As I conclude my discussion of Appendix 3, the final question asked, "Do you feel it is important for the pastor to teach and equip the congregation on all aspects of Scripture? What about teaching on the difficult subjects such as Satan, evil, and

hell?" I would like to present two answers that stood out among all the others, "Yes, Yes. All subjects in the Bible are God's words and therefore, should be taught, whether it make us, as Christians, feel uncomfortable or not. As Christians, we need to convey to unbelievers what lies ahead if they do not believe and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We are God's missionaries and need to tell of His love, grace, forgiveness and salvation for those who believe in Him." The second response stated, "Yes, by all means. Preach on, brother, with power and authority from the position of victory!"

### **Spiritual Warfare/Armor of God Sermon Series Evaluation Forms**

Over the course of the sermon series on spiritual warfare and the armor of God, I handed out an evaluation form (Appendix 4) in which I asked the focus group members to complete as they shared their comments, insights and suggestions for improvement on the messages throughout the series. I attempted to design the questions in such a way that addressed specific areas pertaining to the structure, content, and delivery of the message I preached. I was also looking for further information into how these focus group members were hearing and receiving the sermon as a whole.

On the form, I asked the same nine questions throughout the entire sermon series because I wanted to be evaluated thoroughly on each message in order to see which specific areas I needed to address and work on as my noted areas of weakness. In framing question 1, "The sermon focused on the biblical text," I wanted to start off by asking whether the members of the focus group felt like the message was, or was not biblically based. As the series progressed, the marks ranged from within the "9 to 10" range on each sermon. I was pleased by knowing that in the opinions of these group members, the sermons were focusing on the passages that were being addressed.

Also, questions 2 and 7 dealt with whether or not the introduction helped in leading the members into the passage, and whether the conclusion was relevant to the overall message of the sermon. In these two areas, I wanted to see the perceptions

concerning these important aspects of the message because throughout this doctoral program, I have repeatedly heard just how vital the introduction and conclusion are each time a sermon is delivered. The scores ranged from "8 to 10" as different stories and illustrations were utilized in each message.

In questions 3, 9, and 10, the main thoughts were focusing on whether or not the sermon was inspiring, encouraging, and/or convicting as specific application was made to the congregation. I felt like it was important to address these areas because biblical and contemporary application is so crucial to every sermon. Over the years, I have worked hard to gain stronger skills in applying the text to the lives of those in our church. The numbered responses were consistently ranging from "8 to 10" in each of these three questions respectively.

I feel that over the course of the past few years since entering this D.Min. program, I have seen a tremendous difference in my preaching as a result of all I have learned. One of the encouraging aspects of this personal growth is seen when the members of our congregation make mention of how they have noticed the difference as well. In my opinion, question 6 also relates to this specific aspect as well in that an understanding of the main truths was gained after hearing the sermon.

The final area that I would like to address in this section relates to my speech patterns and how I delivered the message each week. The main reason I wanted to highlight this aspect centers on the severe stuttering problem I have had since the late 1960s. Until the summer of 1997, I had great difficulty saying my name or answering the phone as a result of my impediment. In July 1997, I attended an intensive speech class which teaches stutterers how to talk all over again. The class was amazing, and it helped me tremendously; but as the saying goes, "Once a stutterer, always a stutterer."

Even though the class taught me how to re-form my words as I am preparing to speak, there is no cure for stuttering. I have learned how to manage my speech patterns and to maintain as much fluency as possible as a result of utilizing the

skills I gained in the pronunciation lessons and practicums. Every time I enter the pulpit to lead the worship service or to preach, I know without a doubt that I need the strength of the Holy Spirit in order to deliver effectively the message He has given me during the week. There is never a time when I do not realize my absolute dependence on God as I am forever confronted with my human weaknesses and inabilities. I have to remember to breathe slowly and to speak every word as clearly as possible in order to maintain proper fluency. Since I face the speech issue every time I preach, I wanted to have feedback on just how well or how poorly I was delivering the morning message.

I constructed question 5 to address this aspect by asking, "The preacher's rate of speech and fluency in pronunciation were both satisfactory as he progressed through the sermon." During the series, there were times when I had greater difficulty speaking certain words, such as words that start with a vowel. For some reason, vowels have always been difficult for me to say, even after going through the speech course almost ten years ago. The scores that were marked for this question ranged from "7 to 10" for the majority of the time. There was one particular Sunday morning when for some reason, I had more trouble than normal. I realize when I am struggling, and I do my best to "get back on track," but my speech deficiencies are something I will always face.

I am very thankful to the Lord for enabling me to preach each week despite my inabilities. One of my favorite passages of Scripture comes from 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, when Paul states, "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake for when I am weak, then I am strong" (NAS). Overall, I am satisfied with the feedback and insights I gained from these specific members of my focus group as they shared their thoughts and perceptions with me throughout the sermon series for this ministry project.

## **Post-Project Focus Group Questionnaire Results**

As the sermon series and discipleship training sessions came to a close, I was able to gain some helpful information not only from the members of our focus group, but also from various members of the congregation. But, in this specific post-project focus group questionnaire (Appendix 5), I wanted more detailed data as I began finalizing my ministry project. Some of the specific areas I decided to address focused on the following aspects.

The first question I asked our focus group members stated, "Has your knowledge and understanding of spiritual warfare increased during the course of the ministry project? If so, how? If not, what do you think is the reason?" All of the members shared that their knowledge did increase as a result of the project. I did not have anyone who answered in a negative way. Some of the reasons they gave were: "I never knew that the Bible deals so much with Satanic strategy and spiritual warfare. I feel better equipped to face the temptations that come my way because I can now put on the armor each and every day." Another member responded by offering the following comments, "The sermon series and discipleship training classes really helped me gain knowledge that I did not have before. I am very pleased with all I learned."

The second question, "What were the specific strengths and weaknesses of this project?" was designed to assist my own knowledge of what the members felt were the positive and negatives of the project. The vast majority of responses said that they felt like there were no significant weaknesses except that there were a few that did not like hearing about Satan and spiritual warfare. I was made aware that some members were uncertain about Satan's activity in the world, and that the subject should not be given so much attention in the church because it makes people feel uncomfortable. I heard these comments and overall, I felt like our focus group members were saying that the perceived weaknesses were the viewpoints of a small few within the congregation.



In question 3, I asked, "Do you feel the church has been taught the biblical foundations of spiritual warfare?" In response, each member said that a resounding "yes" could be given to this question. I even had a few people say that they wanted the sermon series and Wednesday night training sessions to continue longer. These comments were delightful to hear. My desire from the start of all my research, and in the implementation of the project, was to teach the biblical foundations for spiritual warfare to our congregation.

The fourth question, "Do you feel the congregation now has the knowledge about putting on the armor of God, and the benefits of such actions and obedience?" was presented to deal specifically with the knowledge of how to put on the armor of God on a daily basis as believers seek to live in obedience to His Word. The majority of the comments which were shared with me stated that the congregation does have the knowledge from the Scriptures because both the sermon series and the training sessions were not only biblically based, they also applied to individual lives as believers in the local church. A few focus group members mentioned that these principles from Scripture can only enhance the life of the local church as believers are living victorious Christian lives on a daily basis.

In question 5, I asked two questions, "How can the church continue teaching these biblical principles to our congregation as a whole? Should we even attempt such a ministry on a regular schedule?" Many of the responses I received to this question stated that continually teaching these principles from Scripture could be possible maybe in a small discipleship group at the church. The note was taken that it would be difficult to continue a sermon series on spiritual warfare and the armor of God because of the length of the ministry project as a whole. For those who would like to continue their studies, they could easily attend a discipleship class if one were offered in the future.

In the sixth and final question, the members were asked to reflect on their overall experience as members of the focus group at the end of the project. The

question stated, "Do you feel strengthened in your relationship with God as a result of your participation in this focus group on spiritual warfare and the armor of God? Why or why not?" Clearly, all of the members shared that they feel strengthened in their relationship to God because they have learned so much of what the Bible teaches concerning Satan, his demonic forces, his tactics, and God's provision for our experiencing daily victories through taking up and putting on His armor. The numerous comments that were shared helped me see that this ministry project as a whole was definitely a great benefit for the majority of the congregation at Talbot Park Baptist in our first year of ministry at the church.

### **Detailed Results of the Pretest/Posttest Data**

Right from the beginning, I came to see that the majority of our members were very receptive to both the Pre and Post Project Questionnaires (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). Throughout the course of the ministry project, a detailed record of all pertinent data was recorded and maintained. As the results show, I feel that our members offered their honest thoughts and perspectives as they answered each of the stated questions. For months prior to the start of the project, I was made aware of the fact that the subject of spiritual warfare was something that had great interest for many of our members since it had not been discussed or addressed in the church for over two decades. Clearly, there were numerous people who were very hungry for hearing and learning about the Word of God.

The data gathered through these two tools enabled me to test the knowledge level of the congregation regarding spiritual warfare and the apostle Paul's writings on the armor of God from Ephesians 6:10-18. Each of these congregation-wide questionnaires consisted of ten areas of inquiry that allowed me to gain valuable information not only as I began the project but also as I concluded during the final weeks. Overall, I was pleased with the results I received from the members of our

church as 85 out of 140 pre-project questionnaires (60.71 percent) that were distributed were returned. A total of 93 out of 140 post-project questionnaires (66.42 percent) were submitted at the end of the four months.

In the following pages, I analyze the data that I received from both congregational-wide evaluative instruments. As seen in both questionnaires, I wanted to begin by finding out the gender distribution of the men and women who were offering their insights and perspectives. In the pre-test, a total of 35 men (41.18 percent), and 50 women (58.82 percent) participated whereas in the post-test, a total of 42 men (45.16 percent); and 51 women (54.84 percent) shared their concluding perspectives.

In the second question, I was seeking information about the various ages represented. In the pre-test, four young adults (4.71 percent); 38 median adults (44.71 percent); and 43 senior adults ( 50.59 percent) took the time to answer the questions. In the post-test questionnaire, the numbers were very similar. A total of 8 young adults (8.60 percent); 33 median adults (35.48 percent); and 52 senior adults (55.91 percent) completed this final assessment.

In the third area, I sought to find out the membership breakdown of those who participated. In the pre-test, 72 people (84.71 percent) marked that they were members of Talbot Park Baptist. There were 6 (7.06 percent) who stated that they were regular attendees, and 7 (8.24 percent) answered that they were visitors. The post-test showed one exact figure, where the other two inquiries were slightly different as follows: in the pre-test, a total of 72 people (77.42 percent) checked that they were members of the church, whereas 18 people (19.35 percent) stated that they were regular attendees.

This increase in numbers from the pre-test is an indication of the number of new people we have had come to our church on a regular basis over the course of the ministry project. Many of these people are new military families, and I have spoken to them personally about their salvation and about becoming members of our church

family. A slight decrease was seen in the post-test results in that only 3 people (3.23 percent) marked that they were visitors, as opposed to the seven which were already present in the pre-test results.

In the remainder of both instruments, I began asking specific questions in order to gauge where the members were at that given time in the implementation stages of the project. In question 4 of the pre-test, I asked, "I think I have a thorough understanding of spiritual warfare." A total of 19 people (22.35 percent) marked that they strongly agreed, where a surprising 50 people (58.82 percent) checked that they agreed. An even more surprising 11 people (12.91 percent) answered that they were undecided, with 5 (5.58 percent) stating they disagreed. At first, I expected that there would have been more who marked that they were undecided, or that they disagreed simply because of what I briefly shared earlier in that the subject of spiritual warfare was not addressed from the pulpit for twenty years.

I posed question 4 as, "As a result of this ministry project, I have a better understanding of spiritual warfare." The post-test showed a significant difference in the numbers given in that 66 people (70.97 percent) answered that they strongly agreed, 26 (27.96 percent) marked that they agreed, and only one person (1.08 percent) stated that he was still undecided. In my opinion, what an encouraging statistic to reflect on at the end of the project. I was very pleased to see that the sermon series and discipleship training sessions made this type of impact on our congregation as specifically shown in these noticeable results.

In both the pre and post-test, question 5 stated the same, "The Bible teaches that all believers in Jesus Christ will encounter spiritual warfare." I will admit that the following results were surprising to me because of the theological history of the church. A total of 57 people (67.06 percent) marked that they strongly agreed with this statement. There were 26 (30.59 percent) who answered that they agreed; and 2 people (2.35 percent) stated that they were undecided. The post-test results showed

almost the same numbers in that 57 people (61.29 percent) stated that they strongly agreed; 34 (36.56 percent) checked that they agreed; and probably the same two people (2.15 percent) stated that they were still undecided.

Again, in both questionnaires, I framed question 6 as, "I believe that Satan and his demons are real beings." In the pre-test, 53 people (64.71 percent) stated that they strongly agreed, whereas 19 people (22.35 percent) marked that they agreed. There were 10 people (11.76 percent) who stated that they were undecided about whether or not Satan and His demons are real beings, and only 1 person (1.18 percent) said that he was in disagreement. At first, I would have thought these two numbers would have been higher. I will admit that I was also very surprised that no one checked the strongly disagree box on the pre-test.

Now in the post-test, there is somewhat of a variation in the results that were given in that 61 people (65.59 percent) answered that they strongly agreed, 31 people (33.33 percent) simply agreed with this statement; and only 1 person (1.08 percent) marked undecided. The decrease in the undecided and disagree sections was an encouraging signal to me in that there was a noticeable difference in the theological beliefs of our members as a result of this ministry project. I was very pleased that this statistic shows that the sermon series and discipleship training sessions did have a positive impact for many of our members.

In question 7 on both instruments, "I believe the activity of the devil is accurately described in the Scriptures," the question was designed to immediately follow the focus on the beliefs about Satan and his demons. The results for question 7 are almost identical to the answers given to question 6 in the pre-test. There were 54 people (63.53 percent) who marked that they strongly agreed with this statement, whereas 20 people (23.53 percent) stated that they were simply in agreement. A total of 10 people (11.76 percent) checked that they were undecided, and 1 person (1.18 percent) said that he was in disagreement.

Now on the post-test for question 7, as was the case between the two on question 6, we find similar results in the two instruments. We see that 61 people (65.59 percent) answered that they were strongly in agreement; 30 (32.26 percent) stated that they agreed, and only two people (2.15 percent) checked that they were still in disagreement. As with some of the other questions posed in the pre and post-test, I was very pleased with the difference that these two statistics are showing me and our congregation after the completion of the project.

In the next two questions, I was able to see a dramatic difference between the two instruments. The questions are almost identical on both, with only a slight variation between the two as I will present and discuss in greater detail in the following paragraph. In the pre-test, question 8 asked, "I fully understand the armor of God that the Apostle Paul discusses in Ephesians 6." There were only 18 (21.18 percent) who marked that they strongly agreed, where again, 53 people stated that they agreed.

A total of 11 (12.94 percent) said that they were undecided; 3 people (3.35 percent) said that they were in disagreement; and 1 person (1.18 percent) strongly disagreed. The post-test for question 8 asked, "I better understand how to put on the armor of God as described in Ephesians 6. There were 50 ( 53.76 percent) who answered that they strongly agreed; 42 people ( 45.16 percent) stated that they simply agreed, with only 1 person (1.08 percent) was still undecided.

On the pre-test, I posed question 9 as follows, "The Bible teaches us about the victory Jesus won over the devil at Calvary." The results that were compiled showed that 27 (31.76 percent) answered that they strongly agreed with this statement, whereas 48 people (56.47 percent) checked that they were in agreement. A total of 9 (10.59 percent) said that they were undecided, with only 1 person (1.18 percent) in disagreement. The post-test again shows an noticeable increase between the two questionnaires when the following statement was presented, "I am more aware of what the Bible teaches about the victory Jesus won for us." There were 58 people (62.37

percent) who stated that they strongly agreed, with 33 (35.48 percent) simply in agreement and only 2 people (2.15 percent) who were still undecided.

In looking at the numbers from the last question that was presented on both questionnaires, I feel that a difference can be seen between the two as a result of the ministry project. On the pre-test, the question was raised, "I would be willing to participate in discipleship training classes/seminars in spiritual warfare and the armor of God." As I compare these two dissimilar questions, there were 35 people (41.18 percent) who stated that they were in strong agreement, with 36 (42.35 percent) marking that they agreed. Another unsurprising number in the pre-test showed that 13 people (15.29 percent) were undecided, and only 1 person (1.18 percent) stated he disagreed.

In the post-test, I asked, "I am better equipped with the truths of the scriptures that teach how I can stand firm and live victoriously over the attacks and temptations of Satan." The numbers were different from the pre-test, but not all that different from question 9 in the post-test. A total of 62 people (66.67 percent) said that they strongly agreed with this statement; 29 (31.18 percent) answered that they were in agreement; only 2 (2.15 percent) were still undecided. I hope these results will show that the ministry project was indeed successful in many ways as we progressed through each of the sixteen weeks.

### **Theological Reflections**

As I reflect on the ministry project, I am very pleased with the comments that were shared with me during the past sixteen weeks. I know that many from within our congregation experienced the Lord and the truths of His Word as a result of all we studied and discussed together. I know for a fact that I learned far more personally and professionally than I first thought was possible. The knowledge I gained through all my research helped me in many aspects of daily pastoral ministry by better equipping me to assist people with the promises and assurances that we can live victorious Christian lives. There is great joy in seeing people come to claim and experience God's Word all

for themselves as they hear and accept what the Holy Spirit reveals to them. There have been many within our church family who have learned new truths as a result of the Sunday morning sermon series and the Wednesday night discipleship training sessions.

On a personal note, I would like to share some areas where I experienced the Lord and the truths of His Word in new ways in my own life and ministry. Over the course of this Doctor of Ministry program in Expository Preaching, I so often experienced the presence and peace of God in ways I will never forget. Right after our third seminar during the summer of 2005, I received my first contact phone call from the senior pastor search committee at Talbot Park Baptist Church. During the next three months, I was in constant conversation with the committee as we met and prayed together seeking the Lord's direction about our coming to serve this congregation in Norfolk, Virginia.

Throughout these months, my wife, Suzanne, and I clearly felt the Holy Spirit leading us to the church; so just prior to my fourth and final seminar in January 2006, I accepted the call to come as their senior pastor. After the confirmation was complete, I then notified the deacons and congregation at Modest Town Baptist Church as we began the preparations to transition to our new congregation. As excited as we were over all the Lord had opened up for us at Talbot Park, we were experiencing some sadness in leaving our church family of over twelve years at Modest Town.

As we were packing and saying our goodbyes, I was still in the preparation stages for the Old Testament seminar with Daniel Block. Without a doubt, the transition activities in addition to all the intense coursework requirements for Old Testament made my life and ministry very difficult. In the midst of all this, I still had to complete my Navy chaplaincy duties at Arlington National Cemetery and at other commands within the Washington, DC area. When I finally left for Louisville right after the new year began, Suzanne was dealing with all the final details and preparations because when I returned home from the seminar, we were moving the very next week.



I clearly remember the stress and anxiety I experienced the week of the seminar as I tried my best to concentrate and study, all the while dealing with the issues at home with constant phone calls and other situations that happened to arise. All during this time, the Lord made His presence and peace known to me as I dealt with everything that was occurring in my life. I was thrilled to be finishing our final seminar, but I still had to complete the AME requirements during my initial few months at Talbot Park while beginning work on changing my ministry project proposal to focus on our new congregation.

In the midst of all the hectic five months of talking with a new church, packing and preparing to move, and finishing coursework for our final seminar, I could see the Lord's hand directing all my steps. I will admit that there were days when I wondered if I was crazy even thinking about transitioning to a new church until after I graduated from the D.Min. program, but I could clearly feel that Talbot Park was where God was leading us. During all those difficult months, I also experienced intense attacks from the enemy as he caused all kinds of doubts and questions to come across my mind. As I prayed, I could literally feel the strength of the Lord helping me to stay focused as I trusted in Him.

As a result of all I experienced, I felt even more prepared for this ministry project on spiritual warfare and the armor of God because of all we had been through during the last half of 2005 and early this year. Our first year at Talbot Park Baptist has been one in which I have grown both personally and professionally in many ways. I have come to know and love an entirely new congregation of believers as I have often been asked to assist our members with the deepest struggles in their lives and families. I am so thankful that the Lord continually renews my calling as a minister of the gospel.

I feel very blessed that I can serve the Lord as a pastor in the local church and as a chaplain with the United States Naval Reserve. The military chaplaincy is so much like being a missionary because my congregation prayerfully supports the two to

three days each month that I am away from the church while serving as a pastor to our servicemen, women and their families. I am constantly amazed that God has opened up all the doors He has provided for me over the past seventeen years since I first began Southern Seminary in August 1989.

### **Implications for Further Study**

During my reflections on the implications for further study relating to the ministry project we just successfully completed, I believe we should offer our congregation future discipleship training classes and other opportunities for those who might be interested in continued studies. I have already heard from some within our church who would like to plan possibly a one to two day seminar and/or weekly classes specifically designed for intense study and research on spiritual warfare. In the coming year/s, I would like to continue discussing the success of the project with the members of our focus group. The studies that will be planned, advertised and implemented in the future will be designed to involve the church body, as well as the community.

### **Conclusion**

As I continue in both ministry contexts, my prayer remains that I will be used by the Holy Spirit as He leads me to minister to His people and to share the gospel with those who are lost in their sins. My doctoral project in spiritual warfare and the armor of God has definitely enabled me to grow in so many ways over the past year. I am very thankful for all I learned throughout the entire course of study in this Doctor of Ministry program at Southern Seminary.

During this past year, I have been encouraged over all that God is doing in the life of Talbot Park Baptist Church. The excitement is visibly evident among our members as they are seeing the Lord bringing new visitors to our church every week. On a consistent basis, we are witnessing people come for salvation, and for a re-dedication of their lives to God. By seeing the clear evidence that the Holy Spirit is at

work, our members want to be involved even more in what He has planned for the future. My prayer has been that God will use this ministry project to further equip our congregation to stand strong against Satan's attacks as he seeks to cause division, and hinder the spreading of the gospel from within and outside the doors of our sanctuary. May we unite together in the service to our Lord Jesus Christ as we share the truths of God's Word with boldness and sincerity of heart.

## APPENDIX 1

### TALBOT PARK BAPTIST CHURCH SPIRITUAL WARFARE CONGREGATIONAL PRE- SEMINAR QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess your understanding of spiritual warfare and the armor of God as proclaimed throughout the Holy Scriptures. This research is being conducted by Dr. Robert H. Carpenter for purposes of project research for the Doctor of Ministry Degree in Expository Preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this research, please read each question carefully and mark the response that best reflects your understanding or feeling regarding spiritual warfare and the armor of God at this time. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

1. I am: (35) male (50) female
2. My age group: (4) young adult (38) median adult (43) senior adult  
18-30 31-60 61-70+
3. I am a : (72) member (6) regular attendee, but not a member (7) visitor
4. I think I have a thorough understanding of spiritual warfare.  
(19) Strongly Agree (50) Agree (11) Undecided (5) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree
5. The Bible teaches that all believers in Jesus Christ will encounter spiritual warfare.  
(57) Strongly Agree (26) Agree (2) Undecided ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree
6. I believe that Satan and his demons are real spiritual beings.  
(55) Strongly Agree (19) Agree (10) Undecided (1) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree
7. I believe the activity of the devil is accurately described in the Scriptures.  
(54) Strongly Agree (20) Agree (10) Undecided (1) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree
8. I fully understand the armor of God that the Apostle Paul discusses in Ephesians 6.  
(18) Strongly Agree (53) Agree (11) Undecided (3) Disagree (1) Strongly Disagree
9. The Bible teaches us about the victory Jesus won over the devil at Calvary.  
(27) Strongly Agree (48) Agree (9) Undecided (1) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree
10. I would be willing to participate in discipleship training classes/seminars in spiritual warfare and the armor of God at Talbot Park Baptist Church.  
(35) Strongly Agree (36) Agree (13) Undecided (1) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree

## APPENDIX 2

### TALBOT PARK BAPTIST CHURCH SPIRITUAL WARFARE CONGREGATIONAL POST- SEMINAR QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess your understanding of spiritual warfare and the armor of God as proclaimed throughout the Holy Scriptures. This research is being conducted by Dr. Robert H. Carpenter for purposes of project research for the Doctor of Ministry Degree in Expository Preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this research, please read each question carefully and mark the response that best reflects your understanding or feeling regarding spiritual warfare and the armor of God at this time. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

1. I am: (42) male (51) female
2. My age group is: (8) young adult (33) median adult (52) senior adult  
18-30 31-60 61-70+
3. I am a: (72) member (18) regular attendee, but not a member (3) visitor
4. As a result of this ministry project, I have a better understanding of spiritual warfare.  
(66) Strongly Agree (26) Agree (1) Undecided ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree
5. The Bible teaches that all believers in Jesus Christ will encounter spiritual warfare.  
(57) Strongly Agree (34) Agree (2) Undecided ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree
6. I believe that Satan and his demons are real spiritual beings.  
(61) Strongly Agree (31) Agree (1) Undecided ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree
7. I believe the activity of the devil is accurately described in the Scriptures.  
(61) Strongly Agree (30) Agree (2) Undecided ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree
8. I better understand how to "put on" (NASB) the armor of God as described in Eph. 6.  
(50) Strongly Agree (42) Agree (1) Undecided ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree
9. I am more aware of what the Bible teaches about the victory Jesus won for us.  
(58) Strongly Agree (33) Agree (2) Undecided ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree
10. I am better equipped with the truths of the scriptures that teach how I can "stand firm" (NASB) and live victoriously over the attacks and temptations of Satan.  
(62) Strongly Agree (29) Agree (2) Undecided ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree

## APPENDIX 3

### PRE-PROJECT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess your understanding of spiritual warfare and the armor of God as proclaimed throughout the Holy Scriptures. This research is being conducted by Dr. Robert H. Carpenter for purposes of project research for the Doctor of Ministry Degree in Expository Preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this research, please read each question carefully and mark the response that best reflects your understanding or feeling regarding spiritual warfare and the armor of God at this time. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

1- Does the subject of Satan and spiritual warfare make you feel uncomfortable? Why or why not?

2- Please describe in detail your current knowledge and understanding about spiritual warfare and the reality of Satan.

3- Do you feel it is important that all believers understand what the Bible teaches about Satan and his tactics to defeat us and destroy our witness for Christ? Why or why not?

4- How can we stand strong in the Lord while we are constantly facing temptation on a daily basis?

5- Do you feel it is important for the pastor to teach and equip the congregation on all aspects of Scripture? What about teaching on the difficult subjects such as Satan, evil, and Hell?

**\*\*Follow-up questions will be asked, but will always be within the framework with the original question.**

## APPENDIX 4

### POST-PROJECT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess your understanding of spiritual warfare and the armor of God as proclaimed throughout the Holy Scriptures. This research is being conducted by Dr. Robert H. Carpenter for purposes of project research for the Doctor of Ministry Degree in Expository Preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this research, please read each question carefully and mark the response that best reflects your understanding or feeling regarding spiritual warfare and the armor of God at this time. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

1- Has your knowledge and understanding of spiritual warfare increased during the course of the ministry project? If so, how? If not, what do you think is the reason?

2- What were the specific strengths and weaknesses of this project?

3- Do you feel the church has been taught the biblical foundations of spiritual warfare?

4- Do you feel the congregation now has the knowledge about putting on the armor of God and the benefits of such actions and obedience?

5- How can the church continue teaching these biblical principles to our congregation as a whole? Should we even attempt such a ministry on a regular schedule?

6- Do you feel strengthened in your relationship with God as a result of your participation in this focus group on spiritual warfare and the armor of God? Why or why not?

**\*\*Follow-up questions will be asked, but will always be within the framework with the original question.**

APPENDIX 5

SPIRITUAL WARFARE/ARMOR OF GOD  
SERMON SERIES EVALUATION

**Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess your understanding of spiritual warfare and the armor of God as proclaimed throughout the Holy Scriptures. This research is being conducted by Dr. Robert H. Carpenter for purposes of project research for the Doctor of Ministry Degree in Expository Preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this research, please read each question carefully and mark the response that best reflects your understanding or feeling regarding spiritual warfare and the armor of God at this time. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

**Biblical Text:**

(Please list a numeric grade beside each statement based on the scale below)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Uncertain		Agree		Strongly Agree	

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The sermon focused on the biblical text.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The sermon's introduction helped lead me into the passage.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The sermon was inspiring/encouraging and/or convicting.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The preacher effectively transitioned through each point in the text.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The preacher's rate of speech and fluency in pronunciation were both satisfactory as he progressed through the sermon.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I understand the main truths of the passage after hearing this sermon.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The conclusion was relevant to the message of the sermon.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ The preacher made application from the text to the congregation.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I have a better understanding of how the passage applies to my life.

\*What advice, correction, encouragement, or comment do you have for the preacher?

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## APPENDIX 6

### SERMON SERIES OUTLINES

#### **Introductory Sermon Series:**

##### **Sermon 1:**

Title: "War? What War?"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-13

##### Introduction:

As we begin our sermon series on spiritual warfare and the armor of God, I would like us to address something that many of you might not have ever thought about before today. Do you realize that we are at war? You might be saying, "Yes, I know that we are at war in Iraq and Afghanistan." But I wonder, how many of you realize that as a believer in Jesus Christ, you are at war with the enemy of God?

We can be thankful that unlike the military wars we fight in this world, the outcome of our spiritual battle is confirmed: Satan has already been defeated by Jesus! But the reality remains that we are engaged in daily fierce spiritual battles, and the Bible shows us how to live in victory. But first, we must acquire an understanding of who our enemy is, and what his tactics are so that he does not gain any advantages over us.

\*Ephesians 6:10-13

\*1st - The Call to Stand Strong in the Strength of the Lord - vs. 10-11.

a. As Paul shows in v. 10, we can thank God that we do not stand alone! Our Lord is with us! Through His Spirit, we can stand strong in the strength of our God in midst of the enemy's attacks.

b. In v. 11, Paul is telling us that we need to stand firm in the Lord's strength as we battle against the schemes or wiles of the devil.

\*2nd - The Call to Know Our Enemy - vs. 12.

a. The Bible tells us that we are in a war, and that we struggle or wrestle against a spiritual enemy--God's enemy. These two terms are viewed with great intensity.

b. We have lost the sense that we are at war, and that is why we are so often defeated. It is not that we as Christians in the local church do not want to win. We live defeated lives because we do not even know we are at war.

**\*3rd - The Call to Take Up God's Armor and Stand Firm - vs. 13.**

- a. It is our responsibility to daily put on God's armor which will protect us in our battles against our spiritual enemies.
- b. By God's power, we can battle the enemy and not be defeated. But, we can't win unless we are armed and ready with the truth of God's Word.
- c. We are already victorious through Christ, so rather than becoming casualties, God wants us to learn how to be victorious warriors in the great spiritual battles we face.

**Conclusion: Mark Bubeck - The Adversary**

The biblical doctrine concerning the fallen world of darkness deserves much more careful study than most believers have given it. Ignorance of Satan's devices leaves gaping holes in our defenses, through which the enemy is only too willing to move against us. Such willful ignorance of biblical teaching seems inexcusable and is long overdue for correction. The woeful lack of teaching and preaching on the subject of spiritual warfare during the last fifty years is in itself a testimony to the cleverness of the wiles of the devil.

**Sermon 2:**

Title: "Who is this Satan, the Enemy of God?"

Text: Ezekiel 28:14-17

**Introduction:**

The best strategy to defeat an enemy is to know as much about him as you possibly can. The Scriptures claim that the Christian life is a warfare experience and that an unseen spiritual battle rages around us. As believers in Christ, we are called to be on the alert and ready for action. The benefits of studying Satan in God's Word are:

- 1. It will remove our ignorance of the devil - 2 Corinthians 2:11
- 2. It will allow us to stand firm against the devil's schemes – Ephesians 6:11
- 3. It will release us from any fear of the devil - Hebrews 2:14

**\*1st - Lucifer's Position - Ezekiel 28:14-17**

- a. Lucifer was God's worship leader.
- b. Lucifer lifted up his heart with pride.

\*2nd - Lucifer's Rebellion - Isaiah 14:12-14

\*Luke 10:18

- a. Lucifer wanted to receive worship as God.
- b. As a result of his pride, Lucifer became corrupt.

\*1 John 3:8

Conclusion:

I would like to offer some of the passages of Scripture concerning our spiritual enemy as we conclude today. Please take these verses home and open the Word of God as you come to better understand what the Bible says about Satan and his demons.

*The Bible gives him various names and titles:*

- \*the serpent (Genesis 3:1; Revelation 12:9)
- \*Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12 - KJV)
- \*anointed cherub (Ezekiel 28:14)
- \*Satan (Zechariah 3:1; Revelation 12:9)
- \*the devil (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:2; Revelation 12:9)
- \*the tempter (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5)
- \*our enemy (Matthew 13:39)
- \*the ruler of demons (Luke 11:15)
- \*a deceiver and a liar (John 8:44; Revelation 12:9; 20:3)
- \*the prince of this world (John 12:31; 16:11)
- \*the evil one (John 17:15; 1 John 5:18)
- \*the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2)
- \*our adversary (1 Peter 5:8)
- \*the destroyer (Revelation 9:11)
- \*the great dragon (Revelation 12:3, 7, 9)
- \*the accuser (Revelation 12:10)

**Sermon 3:**

Title: "The Same Old Schemes of the Devil"

Text: Genesis 3:1-8

Introduction:

Satan continues to deceive mankind today as he entices us to sin. Understanding the devil's tactics makes us better able to utilize the full armor of God and to stand firm against his evil schemes. As we can clearly see from Scripture, he has not changed his methods since the beginning.

\*Genesis 3:1-8

\*1st - The Devil Denied God's Truthfulness - vs. 1-4.

- a. He questioned God's words in v. 1, "*Indeed, has God said?"*
- b. He denied God's word in v. 4, "*You surely will not die..."*

\*Genesis 2:16-17

\*2nd - The Devil Questioned God's Goodness - vs. 5-8.

- a. He contradicted God's words in v.5, "*You will be like God...."* Satan's primary objective is wrapped up in one word: deception.

\*Genesis 3:12-13

- b. James 1:14-16 informs us that sin leads to death.
- c. Even today, the devil schemes to make sin look attractive.

### Conclusion:

Since Adam and Eve, people have always tried to cover sin themselves. Some try to cover their sin by religion and good works. Adam and Eve tried to cover their sin and shame with fig leaves, but they were unsuccessful. In many ways, we are all like Adam and Eve. We have all been deceived by Satan by continually falling for his lies and temptations. But we can thank God that He sent Jesus free us from Satan's power.

### **Sermon 4:**

Title: "Be on the Alert"

Text: 1 Peter 5:8-9

### Introduction:

In some evangelical churches, there are subjects which are considered "off limits" by many within the congregation. They are often associated with the words, "We do not talk about those sensitive issues here." Subjects such as sin, judgment, hell, and the devil, who is also known as Satan, or the adversary. Do we really believe in this prideful character whom the Bible also calls the deceiver and the father of lies?

Do we understand the authority we have in the name of Jesus to defeat him and his forces of evil? Who in fact are these forces of evil that we are told to be aware of? The Bible calls these spirits by various descriptive titles: demons, unclean spirits, evil or fallen angels, principalities and powers, forces of wickedness, etc. As believers, we are to always be aware and prepared for action as we face our spiritual enemy.

\*1 Peter 5:8-9

\*1st- We Are to Be on the Alert - v. 8.

a. Peter tells us that we need to always be sober or self-controlled and alert.

\*1 Corinthians 16:13

b. Notice the term Peter uses to describe our enemy: Adversary. The Hebrew words for adversary lead us to the following definitions: active hostility, hatred, strong opposition.

\*2nd- We Are to Resist Satan by Standing Firm - v.9.

a. Peter exhorts all believers to “resist him, standing firm in the faith.”

b. What then can we do to defend ourselves? As mere humans, we are absolutely powerless against this powerful enemy. But, we can always remain thankful to God because we do not face the devil alone!

### Conclusion:

As Christians, we must be aware of his goals and strategies as we seek to be empowered and victorious. In his commentary, *Our Riches in Christ*, Ray Stedman addresses the reality of the spiritual battles we face by writing,

When we come to the Bible, we learn the truth. One of the most fundamental truths the Bible presents to us is that, behind the facade of this world, there is an invisible battle raging. This battle takes many casualties, and there are no innocent bystanders, no noncombatants. Every human being on the planet, whether he or she is aware of it or not, is forced to take one side or the other in this great cosmic war. There is no room for neutrality. So it is critically important that you and I know how to defend ourselves and arm ourselves for battle.

### **Sermon 5:**

Title: "The Believer's Position in Christ"

Text: Ephesians 1:13-14

### Introduction:

In these verses, the Apostle Paul talks about the work of the Holy Spirit who seals us in Christ the moment we receive Jesus as Savior. God's Spirit is the seal given to us as believers to verify that we belong to Him.

\*2 Corinthians 1:21-22

\*1st - The Believer's Position in Christ.

- a. Knowing that we are in Christ is the first step to victorious spiritual warfare.

\*2 Corinthians 5:17

- b. Victory over Satan belongs to us through our union with Christ.
- c. Our in Christ position allows us to use our authority to resist the devil, and to defeat Him (James 4:7).
- d. Every Christian is inseparably united with Christ.

\*Colossians 2:6-10; 12-15

\*2nd - The Believer Receives the Holy Spirit.

- a. As a result of our being in Christ, we have God's Spirit dwelling within us.

\*1 Corinthians 3:16

\*John 14:16-17

- b. We are placed in Christ the moment we are saved.
- c. The Holy Spirit is our assurance that we possess eternal life.

Conclusion:

In Eph. 6, Paul uses the word "against" six times in describing our battle with Satan. This is a war for all believers in Christ. The only real power we have against our enemy is through God's Holy Spirit who indwells us. When we realize who we are in Christ, we will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the evil one.

**Weeks 7-15: Detailed Sermon  
Series on the Armor of God**

**Sermon 1:**

Title: "Putting on the Armor of God"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-18

Introduction:

Whether we realize it or not, a war is being fought in the spiritual realm and as believers in Jesus Christ, we are on the front lines of battle. Because of this reality, we

cannot afford to just be spectators. We must always be ready for action. From a biblical perspective, it is imperative that we remain on the alert and ready with the spiritual armor our God has provided for us as we wage war against our enemy.

\*Ephesians 6:10-18

\*1st - The Belt of Truth: This is our knowledge, acceptance, and use of the truths of God's Word.

\*2nd - The Breastplate of Righteousness: Satan is aiming to hurt and disarm us by attacking the sin in our lives. There are two aspects to the breastplate:

a - Christ's Righteousness:

b - The Believer's Righteousness:

\*3rd - The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace: We must be willing to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in order to be completely protected against the enemy.

\*4th - The Shield of Faith: The Shield of Faith is our confidence and belief in God's Word and His promises.

\*5th - The Helmet of Salvation: The best way to keep Satan's thoughts and lies out is to keep Christ's thoughts and truths in.

\*6th - The Sword of the Spirit: We can fight victoriously only as we build our lives upon God's Word as we become firmly grounded in His truth. Just as Jesus said, "It is written," we can combat the devil by using God's Word to defeat the enemy.

\*7th - The Armor of Prayer: Our power comes from God's Holy Spirit, and as we remain faithful in prayer, we will be strengthened to face Satan's attacks.

### Conclusion:

As we learn how to literally "put on the whole armor of God" in the coming weeks, we will be able to see how each one of us can stand both strong and victorious in the spiritual battles we encounter from Satan and his forces of evil.

### **Sermon 2:**

Title: "The Belt of Truth"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-14a

### Introduction:

In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul states that there are six pieces of the armor of God which are our sources of strength and security in spiritual warfare. Since it is armor for

fighting, note that God has provided no protection for the back. Our Lord expects no deserters in His army. He wants us all to face the enemy and to stand firm in the strength He provides.

\*1st- We Must Take Up the Full Armor of God - vs. 10-13.

- a. In verse 11, we are told to put on the full armor of God so that we can stand firm against the schemes or wiles of the devil.
- b. In verse 12, Paul offers us insight into our spiritual enemy.
- c. In verse 13, Paul proclaims that "having done everything, we are to stand firm."

\*2nd- We Must Equip Ourselves with God's Truth - v. 14a.

- a. Satan is at work today through false teachers who misquote Scripture and teach heresies which contradict the written Word.

\*2 Peter 2:1

- b. Our first piece of armor is a direct defense against Satan's #1 tactic: Deception.
- c. As we take up the belt of truth, we are clothing ourselves with the protection of the Lord Jesus Himself.

### Conclusion:

For us to be armed with the truth means that we must know God's Word so that when Satan attacks us, we will be able to be victorious against his lies and temptations. Literally, you and I can use our knowledge of the Scriptures to battle Satan the same way Jesus did. Paul wanted these believers to understand that God's Word was the truth they could use in the spiritual battles they encountered.

### **Sermon 3:**

Title: "The Breastplate of Righteousness"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-14

### Introduction:

Our decision to claim the righteousness that we already possess in Christ is something we have to consciously do in order to be properly clothed for battle. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, you are righteous in Christ. The apostle Paul states that righteousness is a vitally important element in our warfare as believers.



Having the breastplate of righteousness is more than belief -- it is allowing the truth of God's Word to permeate every aspect of our lives. Perhaps one of the reasons the church suffers so today is that many Christians know how to fake their walk with Christ. They can "talk the talk" but they can't "walk the walk." Satan points out that we are good at stating our beliefs, but we are not so good at living out those beliefs.

\*1st- The Righteousness of Christ.

\*Philippians 3:9

- a. In spiritual warfare, this aspect of the breastplate gives us the confidence, assurance and courage to face the enemy knowing that we can remember what the Bible proclaims about the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.
- b. The Old Testament provides us some verses which proclaims the truth that our God is the righteous One.

\*Psalm 48:10

\*Psalm 119:137

\*Psalm 145:17

\*Isaiah 61:10

\*2nd - The Christian's Righteousness - Romans 6:1-19

- a. In verses 2 and 6, Paul teaches that the believer's old "sin nature" is dealt a deathblow at conversion.
- b. Do we realize that we are "dead to sin and alive to God?" Our responsibility is to "not let sin reign."
- c. Far too many believers are happy to accept their position in Christ, but are unwilling to change the way they live their lives. They have not become in practice what they are in position.

\*2 Timothy 2:22

- d. God calls us to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.

\*2 Timothy 3:16-17

- e. We can learn how to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace only through reading and obeying the Scriptures.

f. Our God has once and for all removed our sin and our guilt. In God's eyes, it is like we were never touched with the stains of sin.

\*Hebrews 9:26

\*Col. 2:13-14

\*Romans 8:1

Conclusion:

Knowing that we are not condemned before our heavenly Father gives us great strength when doing battle with our spiritual enemy. God wants us to apply these truths to our individual lives right now. Far too many Christians are more concerned with the fleeting pleasures and treasures of this world, rather than on God. The call before us is to pursue righteousness. May this be our prayer today and every day we live as we seek to serve the Lord!

**Sermon 4:**

Title: "The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace - Part One"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-15

Introduction:

The peace Jesus offers is the confidence that He is with us in the midst of the trouble. As believers in Christ, we have the absolute assurance that He will keep His promises. When we know this to be true, we will experience the peace the Scriptures proclaim to all who trust in Him as Savior.

\*Genesis 39:2, 21, 23

\*Exodus 3:10-12

\*Psalm 23:4

\*Matthew 28:19-20

\*1st - We Accept the Peace that Comes from the Savior.

a. The Scriptures tell us that we are "bound together" with Christ.

\*Romans 8:35-39

b. Time alone with God ushers in the peace of our Lord as He speaks to us and quiets our restless hearts.

\*John 14:27

\*Ephesians 2:14

\*Philippians 4:6-7

Conclusion:

One of the reasons so many believers live defeated Christian lives is because they have nothing on which to rely when temptations come their way. But for those of us who seek to live by the Bible, when Satan's attacks come, we will be able to call forth God's Word to stand firm and defeat him, and therefore remain in peace.

a - We need to meet the Author of Peace – John 3:16

b - We need to meditate on the Prince of Peace - Isaiah 26:3-4

c - We put on the shoes of the gospel of peace by claiming and treasuring the Word of God - Psalm 119:165

Conclusion:

Satan seeks to create chaos in our lives and in our churches, but the Word of our Lord reminds us that we have His promised presence and peace--forever. Therefore, as we share the gospel, we have hope to declare with those who are lost in their sins without Jesus Christ.

**Sermon 5:**

Title: "The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace – Part Two"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-15

Introduction:

What can the Lord of Hosts do in our generation with men and women who are willing to stand for and share the truths and peace of God's Word? In Ephesians 6:15, Paul describes peace as the shoes of the Christian soldier. After receiving the grace of God through Christ, we should then be prepared to extend His mercy to others. Last Sunday, we saw that we must accept the peace that comes from the Savior. Today, we must make sure that:

\*1st - We Share the Peace that is Offered by the Savior.

a. In the Scriptures, the Gospel actually means, "Good News."

\*Luke 2:8-11

- aa. The Good News is that Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary to pay our sin debt in full.
- bb. The Good News is that all those who trust in Him are forgiven and absolutely cleansed of their sin.
- cc. The Good News is that the power of sin is broken, Satan has been defeated, for Jesus has set us free.

\*Romans 1:16

- b. Evangelism is an intimidating word with a simple meaning. It means "to announce the Good News."

\*Mark 5:18-20

### Conclusion:

Why don't we witness? Fear? If fear is one of the reasons, why are we afraid to share the good news of the gospel? When we share the peace we have found in Christ, we are literally planting our feet firmly in the truths of God's Word. May we unite together to reach the lost world for Christ!

### **Sermon 6:**

Title: "The Shield of Faith"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-16

\*Psalm 5:12

### Introduction:

When looking at Ephesians 6:16, can we not almost visualize the images in Paul's words. Various translators use graphic language to describe the deadly nature of what Satan shoots at us. Words such as, "flaming arrows, fiery darts, and blazing missiles" all convey the deadly nature of the devil's purpose. In the days of walled cities, if attacking troops could shoot flaming arrows over the walls to start fires, their battle was easier. Satan's strategy against us is similar as he seeks to divert our attention away from God and onto our circumstances by creating panic and fear.

\*Hebrews 11

\*1st- Faith Firmly Rooted in God's Faithfulness is a Powerful Weapon.

- a. Faith is to believe what we do not see, and the reward of faith is to see what we believe.

b. Faith means absolute confidence in God, His promises, and His power.

\*2nd- Faith Firmly Exercised Provides Us with Confidence and Peace.

a. A second reason the shield of faith is so critical is because it offers us the confidence of protection.

\*Deuteronomy 7:9

\*Psalm 13:5-6

\*1 Corinthians 1:9

Conclusion:

We raise the shield by applying the truths of the Scriptures to our personal situations and circumstances. We decide to say, "I am going to believe God despite what my circumstances look like right now. This is God's Word, and these are His promises to me. Therefore, I am going to believe and trust." The Christian faith enables us to face both life and death; not because we can see, but with the certainty that we are never out of our Savior's sight. He is our shield and as long as we trust in Him and His love for us, we will remain in peace knowing that He is with us always!

**Sermon 7:**

Title: "The Helmet of Salvation"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-17a

Introduction:

Do you realize that God desires for each one of us to know with absolute assurance and confidence where we will spend eternity? Satan's lies are so clever that we have little defense against them unless we soundly know the truth of God's Word. According to the Bible, the mind is where most of the battles are fought in the lives of believers.

\*1st - We Take Up the Helmet of Salvation by Knowing God's Word.

a. Salvation is a word that embraces our past, present, and future.

--We have been delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin (John 5:24).

--We are being delivered from the power of sin (Romans 6 and 8).

--We will be delivered from the presence of sin (2 Cor 1:9-10; Col 1:13-14).

\*2nd - We Take Up the Helmet of Salvation by Living Holy Lives.

\*2 Corinthians 10:3-5

- a. The term "fortresses" refers to a place where the enemy is entrenched.
- b. The Bible tells us that it is the power of God within us that is able to destroy those fortresses and recapture the territory of our minds for Christ.

\*Romans 8:6-8

\*2 Corinthians 4:3-4

Conclusion:

The helmet of salvation offers us an eternal hope. Christians who are not filling their minds with Scripture are like warriors going out to battle without their helmet on. We are to immerse our minds in the truths of the Scriptures knowing that Satan can do nothing to take away our salvation. What a wonderful truth! What a wonderful Savior!

**Sermon 8:**

Title: "The Sword of the Spirit"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-17

Introduction:

There are two Greek terms which are translated in the Bible as "word." The first term "logos" is the most common and is the one found in John 1. When speaking of Jesus as the Word, the Apostle John writes, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

But, this is not the word we find in Ephesians 6:17. The word we find in this verse is "rhema" which literally means "the sayings of God." As believers, we can use the sayings of God in our lives to help us live according to His Word, and to help us fight victoriously against Satan's attacks. But first, we need to know the sayings of God in order to use the sayings of God.

\*Deuteronomy 6:6

\*Joshua 1:8

\*1st- The Scriptures Show Us Our Need of a Savior.

\*Acts 2:37

- a. All spiritual victory is bound inseparably to our relationship with Christ as proclaimed in the Word of God.

\*Luke 4:1-13

\*2nd- The Scriptures Show Us How to Live.

- a. If we are going to stand strong when Satan tempts us, we must become men and women of the Bible.

\*Colossians 3:16

Conclusion:

We can fight victoriously only as we build our lives upon God's Word, and as we become firmly grounded in the truth of the Scriptures. Relying on our feelings will not do because they are as changeable as the wind. One day we are up, the next, we are down. Only God's Word will never change. Let us praise the Lord for His blessed Word as we claim these wonderful truths!

**Sermon 9:**

Title: "Living the Believer's Victory through Prayer"

Text: Ephesians 6:10-18

Introduction:

Paul uses the word "against" five times in describing the battle we are facing. As verse 12 tells us, this battle isn't just a war for apostles, pastors and missionaries; this is a war for all believers - "for our struggle..."

\*1st - The Believer's Position and Relationship to Christ.

\*Ephesians 1:13-14

- a. Satan knows that he has lost our souls because of Jesus' sacrifice and victory at Calvary, but he has a focused strategy to destroy our lives and our testimonies for Christ.

\*2nd - The Ministry and Work of the Holy Spirit.

\*1 Corinthians 3:16

\*Romans 8:37

- a. Daily victory over Satan comes when we rely on the Holy Spirit.

\*3rd - The Whole Armor of God.

- a. When we obey the Lord and put on His armor, we become formidable opponents against the enemy of our souls.

\*4th - The Power of Prayer.

- a. We will not be successful in spiritual warfare without prayer.

\*Romans 8:26-27

\*Mark 14:38

Conclusion:

If we study the prayers of Paul in the New Testament, we will find that he continually prayed for his friends. We all know the power behind intercessory prayer. At this time of the year, we are reminded to be thankful for our families, our health, our homes, our food, and our jobs among many other blessings God has bestowed upon us.

May we never forget that we can also be thankful for the victory God has blessed us with through Jesus Christ, and what He accomplished for us on Calvary. We have His Holy Spirit, His power, His promises, and His protective armor available to us as we seek to live victorious Christian lives. We are truly a blessed people!



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## ABSTRACT

### USING EXPOSITORY PREACHING TO TEACH CHURCH MEMBERS ABOUT SPIRITUAL WARFARE, TALBOT PARK BAPTIST CHURCH, NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

Robert Harwood Carpenter, D.Min.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Charles E. Lawless, Jr.

This ministry project was designed to teach the congregation at Talbot Park Baptist Church about spiritual warfare and the armor of God as the Apostle Paul describes in Ephesians 6:10-18. Chapter 1 offers the stated goals of the project, as well as an in-depth introduction into the church and local community surrounding the Tidewater area of Norfolk, Virginia.

Chapter 2 specifically addresses biblical foundations for spiritual warfare and the armor of God. An examination of Satan, demons, and spiritual warfare in both the Old and New Testaments is presented.

Chapter 3 was designed as a theological study of Satan, demons, spiritual warfare and expository preaching. Throughout chapter 3, I addressed the theological insights and perspectives of respected theologians in response to spiritual warfare as it relates to the Bible and the local church.

Chapter 4 is the step-by-step implementation of the ministry project that was successfully completed at Talbot Park Baptist Church between August and November 2006.

Chapter 5 offers an evaluation of the ministry project. I also addressed the project's strengths and weaknesses and added personal reflections which were gained throughout the course of the sixteen weeks. Also, a detailed analysis of all relevant statistical information is also presented and discussed within the context of Chapter 5.

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