

CHAPTER 1

THE THREE BATTLES WE NEED TO FIGHT AGAINST THE WORLD, THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL

¹¹Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

1 Peter 2:11 (NASB)

¹⁵Do not love the world nor the things in the world If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

1 John 2:15-17 (NASB)

¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12 (NASB)

²⁹For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Philippians 1:29-30 (ESV)

If you are an average Christian, in an average church, you will probably have heard little or nothing about these three battles every Christian faces against the world, the flesh and the Devil. There would not have been that silence if you had lived 100, or even 50 years ago when these subjects were still widely spoken about.

Sadly, all of this teaching has gone right out of fashion and is now ignored in most churches in the Western world. For example, I attended an FIEC (Evangelical) church for five years and I never heard the word ‘demon’ mentioned even once in any sermon or even in any conversation or house group. For that matter, they never mentioned the world or the flesh either.

In this book I attempt to fill these gaps and redress the balance. My aim is to raise your awareness and help you to fight these three battles more successfully or perhaps to begin to fight them at all because most Christians (in the West) are not even aware these three battles exist, let alone actively engaged in fighting.

The flesh or old man

Let us briefly define what we mean by each of these terms and then consider why they matter. By ‘*the flesh*’ we mean our own sinful nature inherited from our first ancestor, Adam, due to the fall. The same thing is also referred to in the Bible as the ‘*old man*’. That fallen flesh nature is present in all of us, even after we become Christians and it predisposes us to sin like a virus which has corrupted our ‘software’. The result is we are drawn to sin as an addict is drawn to drugs.

Indeed, the only thing our flesh knows how to do is to sin, which means to fall short of God's perfect standards. It can do nothing other than sin because, even when we are at our best, we still fall short of God's perfect standards and can do nothing that He would classify as good. That is why we are told: "*and they that are in the flesh cannot please God*" Romans 8:8 (ASV). In short, anything done in, or through, the flesh is automatically sinful because it will inevitably fall short of God's perfect standards, even when we are on our very best behaviour.

This first battle, against the influence of our own flesh, is not against some other person or force external to us. *It is a civil war within our own self.* That makes it probably our hardest battle and the one we least understand. It is effectively a contest *within ourselves* between two parts of our own self, the 'new man' and the 'old man'. It is a contest between, on the one hand, our flesh/old man and, on the other hand, our *spirit*, or *new man*, which is reborn within us when we are justified, i.e. at our conversion.

That is why we speak of being '*born again*'. Our spirit is the part of us that is reborn at our conversion, which is why the Bible also refers to it as the '*new man*' and speaks of us as a "*new creation*". Beforehand, our own spirit is "*dead in trespasses and sin*". That is how it remains until we respond to the Gospel and are saved and "regenerated".

Then it comes alive and becomes active, but only to find it is co-habiting alongside our old man or flesh, with which it has nothing in common and can never agree. So, this battle within ourselves is between our *own* newly reborn and sinless spirit and our *own* sinful flesh. They are both our own and are both equally entitled to say they are '*us*', and to use the personal pronouns '*I*' or '*me*'.

These two sides of every Christian's nature are opposites and never want the same things or agree on anything. Our flesh only ever wants to sin, whereas our spirit or new man never sins and only ever wants to please God. These two sides of ourselves are continuously at war within us. The only question is which of them will get its way and be in the driving seat, being our spokesman, and exerting the most influence upon us as we face each situation.

Within chapter 4 I have included a detailed analogy which people have told me is helpful in illustrating, in practical terms, how the different parts of a person interact. I am not only referring to our 'old man' and 'new man', but also to our mind, emotions, body and will. Each of these have vital roles to play and are capable of being influenced, for both good and ill, by our new man and old man.

The analogy takes the form of a committee, seated around a table, the members of which are the will, mind, emotions and body plus the old man and new man. In addition, either sitting at that 'table' or observing and heckling from nearby, are demons seeking to influence each of the 'members' of the committee and the decisions they make.

I believe this committee analogy is a God-given insight. It has helped many people make sense of what happens within themselves and how they often feel torn between right and wrong, obedience and disobedience, as if a civil war was being conducted within themselves, which they may regret, but cannot stop.

Unsurprisingly, if you aren't even aware of the existence of this civil war within yourself, or if you only know of it vaguely and aren't consciously engaged in fighting it, then you will inevitably be defeated. You can't possibly win this battle against your flesh unless you *know what is going on* and are *determined to fight*.

Once you realise the position, you can start to make decisions, *with your will*, to take the side of your new man in opposing and undermining the old man. Our *will* is that part of each of us which *makes the decisions*. It is the part of us which decides, at any given moment, whether our *new man* or *old man* will get their way. It is with our will that we decide which of these two sides of ourselves will speak for us and which of them we are going to listen to and be influenced by.

So, moment by moment, your will has to decide which of these two parts of you it is going to ‘hand the microphone to’. It can give it to your old man/flesh and let that side of you be the spokesman. If so, you will sin. Or, it can hand the microphone to your new man/spirit and let it speak for you. Then you will say and do what is pleasing to God.

This is not a battle that can ever be won once and for all, with a single decisive victory which ends the whole war. If it was like that then it would be a lot easier. We could just make one big decision and get it all over with. Instead, it is a lifelong stream of little, moment-by-moment decisions. Collectively, that series of choices determines the direction of your life and your effectiveness, or ineffectiveness, in God’s service.

This battle against our own flesh will only end when we die. At that point, and not before, we will be finally set free from the very presence of our old man. We will then no longer have a flesh nature at all. Sadly, until then, we must wage this war constantly, without giving any quarter to our flesh, because you will pay a high price for any concessions you make.

That is why the Bible speaks of us needing to ‘*crucify the flesh*’ or ‘*put it to death*’. The flesh is not something that can be taught, ‘house-trained’ or made to behave in a civilized way. It can never improve and will never alter its nature. Your only way forward is to deny it what it wants and refuse to cooperate with it in any way, so as to reduce its influence over you.

It is a long-term war of attrition, in which you must *starve your flesh and feed your spirit*, both literally and metaphorically. We starve our flesh by denying it what it wants and by not letting it have its own way. That involves many things, including literal fasting from food.

Fasting is an excellent, even essential, way to weaken the flesh and reduce its power over us. At the same time, we also need to feed our spirit on God’s Word so that it is strengthened, both in absolute terms, and relative to our flesh. It is also made more informed and thus better able to speak for us and represent us.

The world

As for the ‘*world*’, we mean the values, priorities and whole way of thinking of the unsaved population of this planet. It refers to the ungodly way in which the rest of the ‘herd’ operates given that they all think, say and do the opposite of what God wants a Christian to do. That’s because the world is made up of billions of people who all simultaneously operate in accordance with the values, standards and priorities of their sinful flesh nature. They all have the same corrupted ‘software’.

The world is rather like a huge flock or ‘murmuration’ of starlings flying in tightly synchronized formation and all turning, in perfect unison, up and down or from side to side. If you have ever seen them, it is as if they were all responding to the instructions of a choreographer. The world is rather like

that because, when you put all that flesh together, you have an overall world system which operates in a remarkably consistent way. It manifests the collective flesh nature of every sinner combined.

Its consistency comes from the fact that they all have the same sinful flesh nature. The reason it is the same for the whole world, even for Christians, is we all inherited it from the same person, our common ancestor, Adam. That is why the pull of the world is so strong, and so appealing, and has such a hold over us. It is almost like the gravitational pull of the planet itself. We are drawn to the same sins which the people around us are drawn to because our old man wants us to fit in and be like them.

The crucial difference between a Christian and an unsaved person is the Christian has at least got a *choice*. He can choose to swim against the tide and refuse to fly in formation, *if he wants to*. But the unsaved person is entirely controlled by his own flesh and is entirely worldly. All he can ever do is sin so it is inevitable he will join in with the world and imitate whatever they are doing.

Therefore, a Christian's battle against this *world system*, or the values of this *evil age*, is a struggle to avoid conforming to the values, standards and practices of the unbelieving, unsaved world around us. A Christian is an alien or foreigner in this world, at least during the present 'evil age'. That evil age will continue until Jesus returns, in bodily form, to the Earth to take it over and rule it Himself.

Then, after His return, this world will be transformed and will reflect His standards and operate His way. Until then, it does not. Indeed, it stands for the very opposite of what Jesus wants. So, our objective in this second battle is *not to fit in* with the world around us. We are not to conform, compromise or be intimidated, and we are not to be manipulated or seduced by worldly people or what they stand for.

Avoiding and resisting the influence of all of that involves bracing ourselves and being resolved to reject this world's values and cling to what Jesus says is important. We are to be like a solitary starling which refuses to fly in formation with the flock, and insists on choosing its own flight path, rather than following the signals transmitted by those around it.

But this requires us to be willing to stand alone and to be seen as different, or even ridiculous, by those around us. Christians today, especially in the West, are finding this very hard. The gravitational pull of the world seems stronger than ever. Many Christians find it difficult not to accept current fashions and standards. That includes the current fashion for woke "politically correct" ideology, all of which is absurd, ungodly and obviously untrue.

But people go along with it, not because they believe it, but because they are too cowardly to contradict it publicly. So they start by pretending to believe it and often end up actually believing it. They just find it easier to fit in with the people round them. Conforming feels easier and creates so much less hassle and is increasingly the choice many of us are making, but to our great cost.

Thus, the Church in the West is becoming hard to distinguish from the world, because we so closely resemble it. That may be the case for the average Western church, *but it does not have to be the case for you*. It is still up to you to decide what *you* do, i.e. whether you as an individual conform to what this world does, or do what God wants.

The Devil and his demons

Our third battle is against the Devil, or Satan, who was originally called Lucifer. That is his real name. We often use his name, or rather his titles, as a shorthand expression to include not only the Devil himself, but also all the demons who work under him. Satan was a cherub, the most senior order of created beings. They were above the seraphs who were, in turn, above the angels. And Satan, then called Lucifer, was the most senior cherub. I look at this much more closely in chapter 7.

As for the demons, they were all angels in the distant past until they joined with Lucifer and rebelled against God. At that time, he was the most senior cherub and had the name Lucifer. He is now called *Satan*, which means *adversary* or *opponent*. He is also called the Devil, which means *slanderer* or *accuser*. Those words are descriptive titles, rather than names, and reflect what he is like and what he does.

The problem, at least in the West, is most Christians either do not believe in the Devil or demons at all, or they do not believe they are active in our lives or have any effect on us. Even amongst that minority of Christians who *do* believe demons oppose us and influence us, there is still a large element of unreality. So, even to such people, demons don't *feel* real and are not taken as seriously as they should be.

Many Christians will accept, *in theory*, that they are being afflicted by demons, but only in some distant, nebulous way. It does not feel or seem *real* to them and it does not affect their daily lives or the decisions they make. They can accept that other people, far away or long ago, may have been affected by demons. However, their own struggles, here and now, and the problems of their own family and friends, are assumed to have a purely natural explanation.

This unwillingness to take demons seriously suits the Devil and the demons perfectly. They are pleased when we deny or ignore their existence and activities. That failure to believe in them or take them seriously, enables them to get on with what they want to do, unresisted. Then the Christians they are attacking, tempting, undermining and deceiving are oblivious to what is going on.

They attribute all adverse events and circumstances either to random chance or natural causes. A Christian who is doing nothing to resist the demons, and who doesn't even believe there is anybody there to resist, will be defeated again and again, which is hardly surprising.

My aim in Book 7 is to alert you to each of these three battles, to set out the things we need to watch out for, and to explain how we can have the victory or 'overcome'. That brings us to one of God's main objectives for every Christian, which is we should learn to be '*overcomers*'. Much is promised in the Bible to this category of Christians who learn how to *overcome*.

There are many things we are meant to overcome but foremost amongst them are these three battles we are addressing here, against the world, the flesh and the Devil. They are the three principal theatres in our war, just as an earthly war is simultaneously fought on land, at sea and in the air.

Likewise, all three aspects of our spiritual war are crucial and cannot be overlooked or neglected. Therefore, God wants us to be wise, informed and discerning and to know what we are up against in each of these battles so we can stand firm, resist effectively and be victorious. There is much to be gained if we can win these battles, or at least start to win some of them some of the time. For many of us that would be a huge step forward.

It will have a profound effect on our own lives, the lives of our family, and those we work with or care for. Moreover, our increased effectiveness will be richly rewarded and praised by Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ. (See Book 4). Accordingly, it would be difficult to overstate the benefits, advantages and rewards which flow from learning how to take part in and succeed in these three battles.

That said, you won't succeed overnight. On the contrary, it will take time and you will have to persist and be willing to accept many setbacks and defeats along the way, *and learn from them*. Moreover, you cannot expect that these battles will only go on for a limited time. They will continue until you die or are taken up to Heaven in the Rapture.

In particular, the Devil and his demons will fight to the end. They will never surrender. We must therefore be realistic and prepare ourselves for a lifelong war on all three of these fronts. But if you do join in and play your part in this war, and if you are willing to endure and persist, you will certainly have some victories and those victories will become larger and more frequent as time goes by and as you develop into a consistent, regular, overcomer.

Finally, let me turn to the issue of deliverance or the casting out of demons. I will not address that here in this book, but will do so in my Book 9 and give detailed practical advice on how to go about it. By the way, when we speak of casting a demon out of a person we are only referring to those situations where the demon is *inside them*, not cases where the demon is influencing them from the *outside*.

None of us are immune to demons whispering into our ear *from outside of us* and so, when addressing that ordinary external problem, which affects absolutely everyone, I speak of "resisting" the demons. The demons doing that can't be cast out because they are not inside the person to begin with.

Accordingly, in this book I will give a lot of attention to that problem of resisting the demons who are influencing and harassing us from the outside because, even though it is less serious, it affects *all of us*, whereas having a demon on the inside which needs to be cast out is only a problem for some of us, not all of us. Nevertheless, I will say a little bit here about deliverance, i.e. casting demons out who are on the inside, as a foretaste of what we will cover in Book 9.

I have noticed that books about casting out demons tend to have two main faults:

- a) They often sensationalise the subject, making it sound weird, spooky and highly dramatic. I suspect some authors do that on purpose to increase book sales by making it sound "exciting". I don't want to do any of that. I intend in Book 9 to cover this whole subject in a calm, orderly, analytical style and to avoid sensationalising any of it. Demons are not a video game put there to entertain us. They are not there for us to have conversations with either, or to tell us secret things we can't get from the Bible.

All we should do is cast the demon out, not engage it in a conversation or provoke it to manifest in strange and dramatic ways. I also believe it should all be done as calmly and quietly as possible and any manifestations should not be looked for by us. If they happen, then so be it, but don't seek to make any of it happen. People are already needlessly frightened of deliverance, fearing they will be humiliated and that they will make a spectacle of themselves and we should try hard not to add to their fears.

- b) They often over simplify the subject and make it sound like casting out a demon will solve all the person's problems and it is then all over and everyone can live happily ever after. That is not how

it works in practice. Casting out the demon is just one of many things which need to be done in the person's life and it doesn't solve everything overnight. Above all, remember that when the demon is cast out it doesn't go to Hell or take early retirement. It will continue to harass the person, *but from the outside, not the inside.*

Please don't misunderstand me. That distinction really matters, and I am not minimising it. A demon on the inside is certainly able to do far more harm than one on the outside. Nevertheless, casting it out is not the end of the story. The fight has to carry on, not only in terms of resisting demons on the outside of us, but also the lifelong battles against our own flesh and the world system.

All three of those battles need to be won if we are to succeed overall in the Christian life – and if we want to make sure the demon who has been cast out can never get back in. That is why these three subjects have to be dealt with together, because they are all vitally important. But, anyway, we shall look at the subject of deliverance when we get to Book 9.

What exactly is meant by the word 'demonised'?

I will only address this point briefly here because I shall discuss it closely in chapter 1 of Book 9. But I do want to clarify the issue at the outset to avoid confusion as you progress through this book. I refer to the Greek word '*daimonizomai*' which ought to be translated as 'demonised' but very rarely is.

Instead, as I discuss in Book 9, other phrases are used, usually involving the word 'possessed'. We shall look at that later and show how inappropriate it is, principally because it gives the false impression that demons can completely 'own' or control a person. That is not what the Bible means and it is not what the Greek word '*daimonizomai*' means.

If therefore, people were to use the word 'demonised' it would be more helpful and accurate. In particular it would convey far better the fact that the level of difficulty a demon can cause to a person is actually on a wide spectrum, ranging from very little right through to catastrophic and including every stage in between.

If we use the word 'demonised' it ranges from the less serious situation we all face whereby demons are on the *outside* of us seeking to distract, deceive, harass, discourage, tempt etc. This happens to *everyone* and therefore, in that lesser sense of the word, we are all demonised.

But even at this lower end of the scale where the demon is only on the outside, not within the person, they can still do a lot of harm and seriously hinder a person's growth as a disciple. In situations like this our task is to resist the demon, not to cast it out, because it is not inside the person to begin with and therefore can't be cast out.

However, we also use the same word, 'demonised', for more severe situations where the demon is *inside* the person due to having acquired a right of entry for various sorts of reasons which we shall examine later. When the word is used in this more serious sense there is scope for a great deal more harm to be caused and for the demon to exert far more influence over the person.

Therefore, when we have a demon *inside* us we need to go beyond merely resisting it. It now needs to be cast out or expelled, for which the Greek word used in the Bible is "*ekballo*". Perhaps it will help to think in terms of this analogy. Imagine we were to invent the word "*bacterialised*" and we were to

use that word to refer to all situations where, to any degree, large or small, a person was affected by bacteria.

It could therefore range from extremely mild situations, such as where there are bacteria on the person's hands which simply require him to wash his hands regularly to prevent any harm being caused. Therefore in dealing with those bacteria we might use the same word the Bible uses and say we are 'resisting' them. But what if it was more serious and bacteria had got inside our body and had caused an infection which was injuring our health?

For example it could be something like a throat infection at the lower end of the scale or, at the top end, something like sepsis, i.e. an infection of the blood which can be very harmful indeed, even fatal. On this upper end of the scale where the bacteria has gained entry to our body we need to do more than just resist it. We need to get rid of it, which corresponds to the need to cast out a demon.

Nevertheless, even on the lower half of the scale, where the bacteria is *outside* us, there are still degrees and levels of seriousness. So we might be moderately careful about washing our hands but far more careful to properly cook chicken or pork to kill the bacteria within the meat so as to avoid food poisoning which could be very serious.

And, likewise, on the upper half of the seriousness scale where the person has got active bacteria *inside* their body or in their blood, actually creating an infection, the response needs to be much more vigorous involving various strengths of antibiotics to get rid of it depending on how severe the infection is.

I hope that clarifies the position. Therefore, if we return to the context of demons, we might be looking at a mild threat coming from a demon on the *outside* of us. Or perhaps it could be a more serious threat from a demon which, although it is on the outside of us, has, for various reasons, got the ability to do substantial harm.

Nevertheless, whether that demon operating from the *outside* is capable of doing serious harm, or only minor harm, they are to be handled in the same way. In both cases they are to be dealt with by simply resisting the demon, with no need to cast it out because it isn't inside us in the first place and therefore can't be cast out anyway.

Likewise, we could also be looking at many different levels of seriousness even where the demon is on the *inside*. The cases you will come across are not all the same. In some cases, for various reasons, perhaps to do with our strengths in other areas, the demon will be limited to causing lesser problems even though it is inside us.

However, in other cases where the demon is inside the person it could have such a high level of control that it is capable of causing more serious harm, for example urging the person to commit murder or suicide or some other grievous crime. That might arise in cases where the person has other pre-existing weaknesses or past traumas which make them more vulnerable to demonic attack than the average person is.

The point is that whether the demon is on the outside or the inside there is, in both cases, a wide range of levels of potential harm that can be caused. That is because the extent of the harm the demon is capable of causing does not only depend on *where* it is, i.e. inside or outside, but also on other issues such as your character, your weaknesses, the relationships you are in, your mental state and various other factors too. In other words, it is complicated.

So let's try to be flexible and to look at the whole subject of demonisation with an awareness that there is a wide spectrum of possible problems and levels of dangers, not just a one size fits all approach. And let us also remember that this range of potential levels of influence applies whether we are referring to demons on the outside who only need to be resisted or to demons on the inside who need to be cast out. Either way, there is a wide range of levels of severity.

Some Bible translations do helpfully try to reflect these gradations of meaning by using phrases like "harassed by demons", "oppressed by a demon", "afflicted by demons", "tormented by demons" and so forth. Sadly, many others cling to the misleading term "possessed" which has caused so much confusion as it conjures up images of deranged lunatics living in tombs and attacking policemen.

People then assume that if a person isn't acting in a crazy way like that then he can't be demonized at all. That is a huge mistake, because most demonised people look normal and don't do anything bizarre or violent, even in those cases where the demon is on the inside.