

CHAPTER 10

MORE OF THE THINGS WHICH DEMONS SEEK TO DO IN YOUR LIFE - AND HOW TO RESIST THEM

³ *But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?”*

Acts 5:3 (NASB)

² *I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.*
Philippians 4:2 (NASB)

How demons seek to undermine relationships and create divisions and mistrust between people

Creating disunity and mistrust is another key area for demons. They are very active, whether you know it or not, in lying to you and others to undermine relationships. Have you ever noticed how prone people are to misunderstanding things that others say and how frequently they take offence when there is no need to do so? You will have seen that many times in others but I doubt if you have ever noticed it in yourself.

And people don't just take mild offence. They often feel offended or angry to a vastly disproportionate extent and perhaps cut off all further contact with that person who offended them. They even retaliate by slandering them as a result of believing the lie the demon told which created the misunderstanding or over reaction in the first place. It isn't a coincidence and it usually isn't caused by the person themselves.

It happens because the demon has played a part by firstly magnifying the original misunderstanding so as to start the dispute and then fanning the flames and pouring petrol on the fire until it escalates and spreads. Therefore, make it your aim to avoid *taking* offence, not just to avoid *giving* it. Few people see that as their duty, but it is.

However, if something very bad really does occur and offence has to be taken, let it be to the briefest, mildest extent possible. Take offence reluctantly and only after careful reflection, checking the facts, taking advice from others and seeking clarification of exactly what was meant, just in case you misunderstood. Indeed, you probably did misunderstand, given that demons are so active in all our conversations and from both sides of it.

Make it harder for the demon to create any ill will or to destroy yet another relationship. Demons will always seek to cause relationship breakdowns and to promote envy, discord, hatred, bitterness, unforgiveness, rage and so forth. They want us to act hastily, unjustly and harshly, so relationships are damaged.

The demon particularly wants to achieve that between you and other Christians, but also with unbelievers wherever he can, so as to make you less effective in evangelism in your job and with neighbours. Thus, there is a vital need for us to grow in the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which means developing a Christ-like character so we are much less prone to acting in ways that will create discord, either by giving offence or taking it.

God also wants us to humble ourselves and to walk in daily repentance and forgiveness so that more relationships are preserved and fewer are damaged. It isn't possible for you to avoid ever giving or taking any offence, or to preserve all relationships, but you can at least preserve some. Or you can try to, and if you do the demons will not be happy because fostering resentment and bitterness is a key part of their 'business model'.

How and why demons seek to distract you from your purpose

If a demon cannot prevent you doing the things God *does* want you to do, they will go for the next best thing. That is to distract you into doing lots of *extra things* that God has *not asked you to do*. Obviously, their preference is to entice you to do evil and harmful things. But, if you are too knowledgeable and mature to be willing to do such things, they will be content to get you to do other things, *even good things*, provided they are not the things God wants you to do.

Thus, if you are a married man and a parent, God wants you to be an excellent husband and father and to bring up your children to know and fear the LORD and to nurture and cherish your wife. Such things would be at the very top of God's list of priorities for you. However, if a demon can get you to focus excessively on your job or business or on your hobby or even on good things, such as church activity, they would be content.

That's because they would be distracting you from *the priority that God wants you to focus on*. The same could be said of any situation where they can get you to do something else *instead of what God wants you to do*, even if that other activity is a good thing.

If someone has a willing heart and an eagerness to please God, one of their main dangers is that a demon will try to get them to do *too much rather than too little*. The demon's preference of course is for you to do nothing, but some of us have a character which makes us want to be active and to serve God. If so, the demon will know that and he is shrewd enough to say "*So be it, if you insist on being active, let's make you even more active, but in the wrong areas*".

Thus, the demon will use your own willingness and enthusiasm to trip you up. So, if you are naturally energetic, they will tempt you into the wrong type of activities or to do them too much or too often. They know you are likely to fall for that trick because you like activity generally and will not realise you are being led astray. It would not enter your mind that it could be wrong because "*It's a good thing, therefore how could it be wrong?*"

I find this is one of my problems. As I look back at my Christian life over the last four decades, I now think some of the things I did were wild goose chases. I was impulsive and did some good things that God never asked me to do. That meant I neglected other things and other people which I should have focused on more. The effect of that can be very significant.

Remember, God will not necessarily reward us for doing things He never asked us to do, even if they are good things. Even if He is pleased by our willingness or our work rate, He would not be pleased by our gullibility or our failure to hear His voice and discern His true plan for us. Therefore, a regular review of your lifestyle, priorities and mix of activities is wise.

Ask yourself and others, and especially your spouse, whether there is anything you are spending too much time on or giving too much emphasis to. And be willing to let people give you their honest

answers so they can alert you to your ‘blind spots’ which you just can’t see for yourself. That alone could help you to reorganise things and get them into a better balance so as to avoid being distracted from what God really wants you to do.

How demons tempt us to sin

One of the demons’ key goals is to get us to sin more often, and in bigger ways, and to bring in new types of sins. The more we sin the more it hinders our growth as disciples. It may even stop it entirely. Plus, it will undermine our relationship with God, or at least make us distance ourselves from Him.

Remember also that when we sin we may bring curses upon ourselves in the ways we saw earlier such that we effectively make God into our opponent. The demon knows how God will respond to our sins and he wants you to bring that opposition upon yourself. So, there is a lot at stake. Apostle Paul clearly taught that demons are involved in tempting us to sin:

⁵For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labour would be in vain.

1 Thessalonians 3:5 (NASB)

How then do demons tempt us to sin? Primarily they do it by planting thoughts into your mind, as they do with all their other schemes. But they don’t just say random things. Neither do they try to tempt you to sin in ways which they know you would never fall for. They will go for your areas of weakness and vulnerability, tempting you to do the things you already do or which your flesh craves to do or which the pull of the world’s influence is already leading you towards doing.

So, their voice is intended to entice you to go that bit further and to tempt you to actually commit a sin which was previously just a desire. But they won’t waste their time trying to get you to sin in ways which you have no desire to do. They know you and all your weaknesses, desires and faults and they will use that knowledge with ruthless efficiency to try to get you to sin.

Therefore, ask God to protect you from temptation and to give you the wisdom to recognise it and the strength to resist it. In addition, think ahead and avoid the places, situations and people which are likely to lead you into temptations.

³⁹And he came out, and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰And when he came to the place he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” ⁴¹And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²“Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”⁴³ ⁴⁵And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Why do you sleep? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

Luke 22:39-46 (RSV)

You don’t always have to fight against a demon. There is also a time and a place for just “running away” or seeking the “way of escape” when tempted.

I have spoken often of the need to “resist” demons and the Bible also speaks in terms of warfare, as we see in Ephesians chapter 6 where Paul lists the armour of God and the sword of the Spirit. All of that

could give the impression that we are always required to fight and that fighting or resisting head on is always the right option in all circumstances. But that is not necessarily so.

There is a time for everything, which includes resisting and fighting head on, but there is also a time for retreating and even “running away”. That can sometimes be the right option or indeed the only option and we need to be aware of that and not view retreat or even fleeing as necessarily being a defeat. Retreat or flight can be a victory in certain situations, such as where you are being tempted to sin. Indeed, the Bible tells us we sometimes just need to find a “way of escape”.

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

What Paul means is that sometimes the right answer when tempted to sin is simply to run away or escape from the situation. You do not *always* have to stand and fight or be victorious in a head on confrontation. Sometimes the victory is achieved by escaping from the situation in which you feel tempted to sin. As in the military context, there is a time for attacking, as on D Day, but there is also a time for retreat, as at Dunkirk. Both were victories over the Germans, if viewed properly.

Indeed, it is not unreasonable to argue that the Germans lost the war in June 1940 when they failed to prevent the British army escaping at Dunkirk. In the military context the key objective sometimes is to seize or hold a piece of territory, whether it be a bridge, a crossroad or a town and so on. In such a case retreat is not an option and it is necessary to fight to the death to hold the territory.

But in other cases, as when fighting in the desert, and above all at sea, territory can be of secondary importance or not important at all and victory or defeat sometimes is measured in terms of the damage you inflict on the enemy forces and whether you manage to preserve the lives of your own men and their equipment so they can fight another day. A shrewd tactical leader needs to be able to tell the difference and to know whether the essential goal on a given occasion is to save the territory or to save his own troops.

Therefore, in a situation where you are tempted to sin, victory and defeat are defined in terms of whether or not the demon succeeds *in getting you to sin*. If you sin then the demon has won, no matter how it was achieved. But if you run away or find the “way of escape”, then the demon has failed to get you to sin.

That is therefore a victory for you and a defeat for the demon even though no “confrontation” occurred. Your victory in this context is defined in terms of *what did not happen*, i.e. not sinning, and the fact that it was achieved by running away is irrelevant. A victory is a victory, however it is gained.

For example, I was speaking recently to a person who struggles with an alcohol problem such that he feels drawn to drink, even buying alcohol secretly and hiding it in the house and keeping it secret from his wife. On one particular occasion he was feeling a strong temptation to have a drink, which I believe was clearly demonic, because the temptation was articulated in words, as discussed above.

But he dealt with it by taking himself away from the situation, i.e. away from the house and away from the shops where alcohol could be bought. He did so by going out into the garden and staying there until the temptation had passed. I praised him for that and said it was a victory and that “running away” had

prevented him from sinning by getting a drink. It had frustrated the demon's intentions and the demon had achieved nothing other than getting him to spend some unplanned time in the garden.

I told him that he had done exactly what Paul was speaking about in 1 Corinthians 10:13 above in that he had found and made use of the "way of escape". Therefore, in your own life, be ready to fight and to stand your ground where that is the right option but also be ready and willing to retreat or flee where that is the best answer. And consider both to be victories.

Indeed, there is a little known episode in the life of Winston Churchill after he had left the Army and gone into politics. He had become a Cabinet Minister at the age of only 32 and, one day, a woman invited him to her home to join a meeting to discuss some political issue. She then showed him in to the drawing room and asked him to wait there until the 'others' arrived. She then left the room but returned a few minutes later wearing a dressing gown.

She then took it off and stood before him stark naked. Now Churchill was reputed to be one of the bravest men in the Army. He would have been awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery had he not upset too many generals with his opinions. Anyway, you might imagine that the great warrior stood and fought. But he didn't. He ran out the door and down the street like an Olympic sprinter. So, if even Churchill is allowed to run away at times, then you certainly are.

How demons seek to make you blind to the truth of Scripture so you can read a page of the Bible but not notice what it says

One of the things that has always amazed me is how people manage to read the Bible without seeing the most obvious things that are there on the page but which they just don't notice, or don't grasp. So they read on without that point ever registering. Part of this might be caused by the person themselves editing out anything they don't like the sound of or don't want to obey. But it can't all be explained that way because, if it was, they would at least have some memory of the verses which they saw but chose to ignore.

I am talking about people being blind to what the Bible says so they can read it again and again, year after year, but never notice things. That is, in my view, the work of demons. We know they blind the eyes of *unbelievers*, as we see in the passage below, but I think they also blind the eyes of *believers* to stop them understanding, or even noticing, key things which the Bible says:

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (RSV)

So, what can we do about it? I think the first thing is to recognise the fact that this is an issue and ask God to help you to overcome it. Positively ask God to *open your eyes*, and your mind, and your spirit to be capable of seeing things in the Bible that you have been missing.

It is like a person on a walk in the countryside who fails to see all sorts of plants, flowers, trees, birds and animals that are there in plain sight to be seen but aren't seen. Recognise and accept that you are such a person and that you are missing things. Don't deny it. Admit it and ask God to open your mind to grasp what you have been missing.

Ask God to give you *understanding* of what you have read. Don't just rely on yourself or assume that understanding the Bible is purely a matter of intellect, as if it was Shakespeare. It isn't. The Bible is spiritually discerned and you need to be *open hearted, repentant and humble and have the fear of the LORD, the love of the truth and a determination to obey what it says*. If you make the effort to develop all those characteristics, God will open up the Bible to you and the demons' effort to blind your eyes to it will be thwarted.

However, let me also suggest a very practical technique you can use when reading the Bible in order to understand it better and get more from it. I describe it as reading the Bible slowly, with your finger or a pencil moving from word to word and pointing to it as you read each word. Do it as if you were 5 years old and were reading to your teacher.

My general observation is that people read the Bible far too fast, as if it was a novel they were reading beside the swimming pool. You will miss so much if you do that, even without any demonic interference. So, the first thing is to *slow down* and to remember that *this is God's Word you are handling*, not any ordinary book, and that great reverence is needed.

God gives understanding to people who respect and honour Him and who treasure His Word. And he doesn't give it to those who don't. Indeed, that is why I recommend, especially if you are reading a particularly difficult or obscure passage and you are struggling with it, to slow down to a snail's pace. I really mean it literally.

Then put your finger on each word, one by one, pausing for as long as it takes for you to ask yourself a series of questions about what it means, why that particular word was used, whether it's meant literally or figuratively, why some other word wasn't used, what nuances there might be which could suggest perhaps more than one way of interpreting the word and, if so, which is the right way, and so forth. The list of questions is endless and will depend on the context and complexity of the passage.

I would recommend treating the Bible just as you would if you were reading a complex section of a difficult legal contract which your commercial client wants you to advise him on. Or it could be a piece of legislation or a case report from the Court of Appeal in order to write an essay for your law tutor or an opinion for a client. Lawyers give much closer attention to working out what those documents mean than most people do when trying to decide what the Bible means, which is a very sad thing to say.

Let's give an example of how we might try to interpret a line of text. Take, for example, "*The cat sat on the mat*". Imagine that was in the Bible and we wanted to probe to find exactly what it means and what God is saying and not saying. So, we would poise our finger tip over each word, one by one, and slowly ask ourselves:

The - Why does it say '*the*' cat? Why not '*a*' cat? And is this a solitary cat or one of a group of cats? Does the use of the definite article '*the*' suggest it is an important cat or is the writer merely identifying it as the particular cat we are dealing with so as to differentiate it from other cats?

cat - Why a cat? Why not some other animal? And exactly what type or species of cat was it? Are we to assume it was a domesticated cat, given the fact that there's a mat? Or could it be a wild/feral cat which has wandered in like Thomas O'Malley the alley cat? Indeed, does the original Greek allow for it to be a large predator cat such as a tiger or leopard or is it a small household cat?

- sat** - Why was it sitting rather than standing, walking or lying down? Does sitting suggest any particular mood or tone? And how long had the cat been there? Had it just sat down immediately beforehand or some time ago? And does that make a difference to the point of the story?
- on** - Why was the cat on the mat as opposed to the carpet surrounding the mat? Or was it a wooden floor? Was it trying to keep warm, or sleep or get comfortable? And is it significant that it was on the mat rather than crawling under it or sitting beside it? Indeed, had the mat been disturbed, overturned or ruffled up by the cat?
- the** - Is there only one mat? Or were there a group of mats from which the cat chose this particular one? Indeed, was this the only mat the cat sat on or did it go on to sit on others as well, albeit at a different time? And is there something special or significant about this mat which caused the author to use the definite article “the”, rather than the indefinite “a”? Does the author want to draw attention to this particular mat in some way? If so, why? Why not just say “a mat”
- mat** - How big was the mat? And what was the material? Was it plain or patterned? Was it by the fire or in an open area in the hall? Was it a decorative mat or was it a rough one by the front door intended for the wiping of feet? What does the Greek word used here imply about the type, quality, appearance, size or purpose of the mat?

You might think I’m being silly, but I’m not. That is exactly how I question myself when I read the Bible and it is remarkable how many extra insights the Holy Spirit gives me as a result of cross examining the text in that way as if it was in the witness box in court.

To do so is actually to honour God’s Word because it shows you really want to understand it completely, to miss nothing and to squeeze every last drop of juice out of the lemon. God loves that kind of attitude and He rewards it by giving you insights and a lot more understanding than other people get who only skim read His Word.

How demons accuse some people and seek to make them feel condemned and guilty

Demons *continually seek* to accuse you of things to make you feel dirty, unworthy and inferior. They do this not only in relation to sin but also your worth, abilities, usefulness and so on. They will accuse you of whatever is most likely to get under your skin and make you feel worthless or guilty. Some people are particularly vulnerable to this and the demons will therefore really focus on them.

Note, however, in the context of sin, they are never trying to *convict* you of sin in a wholesome, constructive way, as the Holy Spirit does in order to get you to repent. The demons’ aim is very different and is to *condemn* you and get you to despair, feel wretched and give up. Look how Satan accused Joshua the High Priest and look how the angel of the LORD (which means the Son of God appearing in bodily form prior to His incarnation) defends Joshua:

¹Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. ²The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" ³Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. ⁴He spoke and

said to those who were standing before him, saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him " Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes." Zechariah 3:1-4 (NASB)

Accusation is a major area of demonic activity. Indeed, one of the Devil's titles is "*the accuser of the brethren*". The same is true of his demon followers. If you are a genuine Christian, they will accuse you of all manner of things to try to bring a false *sense of* guilt, shame, inferiority and unworthiness upon you which they hope will render you crippled and useless. They will accuse you of whatever you feel most vulnerable about and whatever is most likely to get under your skin.

A demon will rarely accuse an *unbeliever* of sin because he knows that could lead to conviction and possibly repentance and they won't risk that. This demonic tactic of false accusation works best with *genuine Christians* who have already repented and believed and thus who have had Christ's righteousness imputed to them. It works especially well if they are sincere, tender hearted, serious minded people who are already able and willing to see their own sinfulness

If a demon can get such a Christian to believe the lie that he is not actually forgiven or that he is not a genuine Christian at all, because he is guilty of some particularly serious sin that a real Christian would never commit, then that is a major victory for the demon. This tactic of false accusation works best for the demon in places, and at times in history, where the Gospel is preached properly and men and women are coming under conviction of sin which leads them to repentance.

Where that is the case and when there is widespread conviction and recognition of the reality of sin, then people are more easily deceived into going beyond that and accepting the false accusation. That accusation will be made directly *to you*, but also *about you* to other people and even to God Himself.

That is one of the reasons why Jesus now has the ministry of an "*intercessor*" and "*advocate*". He is like a defence lawyer who represents you in court and speaks up for you, just as He did when He appeared as the angel of the LORD and defended Joshua.

Every day for the last 2,000 years or so, Jesus has been praying to God the Father on behalf of His followers and speaking on their behalf as an advocate. When a demon accuses you of something, Jesus Christ speaks up for you to God the Father and points out that you are His follower and that your sins are forgiven. He does it as if He was a defence lawyer and you were His client.

The demon's tactic of accusation is intended to rob you of the confidence and assurance that is rightfully yours because of what Jesus did for you on the cross. The demon wants you not to believe that you have salvation and not to believe that you really are forgiven. He wants you to believe that you don't have those things and could never have them, as you are unworthy, inferior, even disgusting. At the very least, he wants you to be full of doubt.

I have never felt any of that myself but many have felt it if they are of a personality type or background which makes them vulnerable to such accusation and likely to believe it. The night, and especially the middle of the night, is one of the key times when a demon will seek to get at you and demoralise, deceive, depress and alarm you.

There are particular points in the night when you are in between being awake and asleep. At those times you can be especially vulnerable, because you are awake enough to think, up to a point, and to have ideas whispered to you. Yet you are not alert enough to be on your guard against deception.

The demon who has been allocated to you knows all about that and will seek to use such moments to your disadvantage by planting his thoughts in your mind. He then gets you to run with those thoughts and to dwell upon them and worry, fret, stew, etc. Demons operate slightly differently for each of us, because we are all different and have different weak areas. Different things will get to us and get us feeling down, guilty, ashamed or inferior.

Whatever it is that most troubles you, or whatever you are most ashamed of, the demon will keep whispering it into your half awake / half asleep mind. He chooses that moment to do it because he is cunning and knows how effective it is. If he can get you to run with that thought and feel wretched, inferior and unworthy it will weaken and undermine you.

How demons seek instead to make some people feel complacent and self righteous

What we saw above had to do with that group of sincere tender hearted people, a minority in our apostate age, who are vulnerable to being made to feel guilty and ashamed. But there is a far larger group of people today who are ashamed of nothing, repent of nothing and who "*parade their sin like Sodom*". They are brass faced, unapologetic and never blame themselves or admit they are at fault.

Such people are therefore suitable targets for the demons' main policy, which is to encourage complacency, defiance and self righteousness. We see this attitude at its most repulsive with the so called "*Pride marches*" and in "*Pride Month*" when homosexuals, transgenders and other confused and perverted people parade their sin in front of us with defiance, proclaiming it to be a virtue and insisting that we consider them "*heroic and inspiring*".

I find instead that it turns my stomach and is vile to behold, particularly when I see "drag queens" invited into schools and libraries to read perverted stories to tiny children so as to lead them astray. I think they are also hunting for children to molest because many of these men are paedophiles and predators. Indeed, why else would they want to expose their half naked bodies to little children and only to little children? They never want to read to old people in nursing homes.

But it is not only at that extremely stark level that the demons do this. They use this device with most of the population, seeking to get them to see themselves as being without fault, proud of themselves and having no need to repent. And given how hard it is to get anyone to respond to the Gospel today (in the West) and in particular to repent, the policy is clearly effective.

How demons seek to rob you of sleep and to attack your mind while you sleep

Another reason why the demon attacks your sleep and robs you of rest is simply because it wants you to become more tired and less effective the next day so that you will be less productive. You might wonder why a demon would bother to do that, but it makes perfect sense. He wants you to be ineffective, unproductive and defeated. He wants you to fail in every possible way and to be overcome by your circumstances. The reason for that is simple. It's because God wants the exact opposite.

God created sleep for our benefit, so we can be refreshed, restored, healed, calmed and strengthened. God wants those things so that in the daytime we will be effective, victorious, productive and overcome our circumstances rather than be overcome by them. This is a very important biblical theme. Start to look out from now on for how many times the Bible speaks of needing to be an "*overcomer*".

So, if the demon can get you to be tired, quite apart from all his other aims, he can set you back a long way and make you less effective than you would otherwise have been. To the demon, it is well worth bothering you in this way for that reason alone. But he also has other reasons.

Another aim the demon has in getting at you as you are half asleep is to get you to experience fear, and to become gripped and controlled by that fear. The demon wants you to dwell on dark thoughts about what might happen and how things could go wrong. The demon will use this tactic even more if you happen to be an imaginative, creative, or intellectual type of person. Such people are even more vulnerable in the area of the mind.

In other words, the demon will trick you into using your own imagination and your own creative mind to think up a never-ending range of sinister possibilities for how things could go wrong and so to frighten yourself. So, if you are an imaginative and creative type, all the demon needs to do is whisper a dark thought into your mind to get you started. Then, away you go, on your own, doing the job on the demon's behalf by frightening and alarming yourself.

This use of fear-inducing thoughts helps the demon in his other objectives of getting you to lose sleep and to lose your hope. It also fits in with his specific aim of getting you to be overwhelmed with, and controlled by, fear. Fear is a universal problem. We all suffer from it and have to face it. There are no exceptions. The only question is whether it will overcome you or you will overcome it.

The battle against fear won't go away. You have to face it. Thus we must resolve to be even more determined to overcome our fear than the demon is determined to defeat us through it. And the gift of sleep which God gave us is designed, amongst many other things, to help us to overcome fear and to be strong, clear minded and energetic. So, if the demon can reverse that process and use fear to rob you of sleep it will assist him in that goal and in all his other goals as well.

How demons seek to get you to give up hope

The Lord Jesus Christ is your Commander in Chief. Very few people realise this, or like the sound of it when they are told, but He is spoken of in the Bible as a military commander. That's why one of His many titles is the *'Lord of Hosts'*, which means the *Lord of armies*.

A more modern translation of that phrase would be *'Field Marshal'* which means a man who is in charge of armies plural, i.e. two, three or more armies, such as Field Marshal Montgomery in WW2. That military title is an aspect of His role and nature which few people are aware of. You are meant to serve and follow Him and to fight by His side and help to achieve His aims.

To be able to do all that, it is essential that your mind should be full of hope. Imagine a soldier fighting in a battle who has no hope of victory, or even of surviving and is plagued by doubt, pessimism and hopelessness. Imagine he fully expects defeat and disaster to come to him. Such a soldier would be of little use on the battlefield. That's how it is for us. We are on a battlefield. It's not just a metaphor or symbol. It's real.

There really is a war going on and we really are commanded to fight alongside our Lord, Jesus Christ, and to follow His orders. If not, we'll be ineffective and even useless. That is why it is so important from the demon's perspective, to get you to become "hopeless", i.e. without hope. If he can achieve

that, you will certainly be a lot less motivated, courageous and productive and you may well give up the fight altogether. Many people do.

That is the demon's ultimate aim but, in the meantime, he is pleased just to see you made *less* effective, even if he can't make you entirely ineffective. The demon is a realist. They are far more pragmatic than we tend to be. They see the tactical advantage of these techniques in at least *reducing* your strength and fighting ability, even if they can't totally knock you out of action through it.

It's just as in military warfare, where each army or nation seeks to sap the other's strength and to reduce their fighting power. Few, if any, battles, let alone complete wars, are won instantaneously. They are won by a thousand little cuts which ultimately reduce the strength of one side until it is weak enough to be finally overcome and defeated or made to surrender. In military circles it is called "*attrition*" i.e. a series of measures which gradually weaken an enemy's numbers, strength, resolve, morale and capability and wear them down.

So, be determined to guard your hope at all times. Derek Prince (a great scholar and Bible teacher who died in 2003) defined hope as "*the confident expectation of good*". It's not the same thing as faith. Hope is primarily a *mental state* or a mental activity. It is something we do, and have, *in our minds*. So, it is in our minds that this particular battle has to be fought. The demon allocated to each of us seeks to rob us of our hope and to sap our confidence.

How demons can also cause sickness, accidents and even death

There is no getting away from the fact that *one of* the reasons why people get sick, or have accidents, or even die, is because of the influence and involvement of demons. They may be spirits without physical bodies, but they are entirely capable if they choose to, of affecting *your body*. Moreover, they can if they wish use physical force, as if they did have a body.

I know that because I have experienced it twice when a demon has physically intervened. On one occasion it put its hand on the top of my head and on another it caused a heavy door to slam against me. I tell those stories in Book 9. What's more, there was another occasion when I believe an angel (not a demon) acted in a physical manner by detaching a small item in the engine of my car.

We had set off very early in the morning to drive home from the north of Scotland but our car suddenly broke down literally *just outside a garage!* And that was in a rural area where there were very few garages and those few were miles apart. So, we pushed the car about 30 yards into the garage and a mechanic looked at it about 15 minutes later. When he did he immediately noticed this small item had become detached so he re-attached it and the car worked perfectly. He refused to charge us because it took him less than a minute to fix it.

We then drove on another half mile or so and came to a winding country road where a policeman, who had just arrived, stopped us and told us there was a stretch of black ice ahead and we must do no more than 5 mph when driving over it. So, we proceeded and sure enough, it was treacherous, even at 5 mph.

But, on both sides of the road were a number of other cars which had veered off the road at high speed, in the previous 15 minutes and crashed into trees. If we had got to that stretch 15 or 20 minutes earlier, before the police had arrived to stop the traffic, we would have been in a serious crash because, as a

police driver, I did back then tend to drive a bit fast, like Toad of Toad Hall. Of course, I am a reformed character now.

My point is this. Demons are *capable of physical action*. They can move things, damage things and interfere with things if they want to – and if they are allowed to. In the first two instances I mentioned above, it was a demon. In the third case it was an angel who saved us from a car crash. But remember, a demon *is an angel*. It is just an angel which chose to rebel against God and follow Satan. It still retains all the abilities of an angel and we know how powerful they are.

Therefore, if a demon can grab my head and push a heavy door against me, and if an angel can tamper with the engine of my car, what reason is there to suppose a demon can't interfere *with your body*? To me it is self evident. Moreover, it is supported very clearly in the Bible, as in this passage where Jesus heals a woman who had been bent over for 18 years, unable to straighten her spine. Luke tells us it was a "*spirit of infirmity*". That is the phrase the Bible uses to indicate when an illness or some other affliction is *caused by a demon*.

¹⁰ Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹ And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹² And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." ¹³ And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God.

Luke 13:10-13 (RSV)

Note also how many times in the Bible, as with this verse from Acts, the casting out of demons is spoken of directly alongside healing. That doesn't mean that was so in all cases but it was the case very often, such that the departure of the demon released the person from the illness because it was *the demon who was causing it*.

³⁸ You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

Acts 10:38 (NASB)

Accordingly, be willing to consider the *possibility* that an illness *could* be caused by a demon and therefore that the solution to that illness is not necessarily medicine, or not solely medicine, but could also involve dealing with the demon that caused it.

That would require the demon to be cast out in some cases, which I discuss in Book 9. But it could alternatively be that the cause of the illness or being accident prone, is a *curse*. If so, the solution to that is to deal with the sin, occult involvement or other issue which *caused* the curse and then to *break it*. But I shall likewise discuss that more fully in Book 9 and elsewhere.

Please don't get the impression that I am suggesting *all* illnesses and accidents are caused by demons. I am *not* saying that. I am saying *some are*. The problem is that within churches the position has become polarised, with a few people saying *all* illnesses are caused by demons and the majority denying that *any* are (at least in the West). The truth is somewhere in between those poles and we need discernment in each individual case to know what's going on and what lies behind an illness or accident.

However, in terms of seeking to resist or prevent this, one thing is for sure. *Don't ever speak illness or death over yourself or over anyone else.* To do so is a curse, even a self imposed curse, and a demon doesn't need to be invited twice before responding to it. Therefore, **don't ever say** "I'm bound to catch that illness" or "My mother died of that so I'm likely to get it".

When you say such things you are speaking *with faith* and therefore what you say about yourself or a family member has power and is being heard in the heavenly places. Therefore, it may very well come to pass. Certainly, the demons will seek to exploit your negative, self cursing words if they can. Instead, always speak health, wholeness and blessing over yourself and your family.

To do so is to make a 'proclamation', which I explain elsewhere in this book, in my Book 3 and Book 9, and also in my audio series on proclamation. Therefore, for example, if you are sick and especially if you have a serious life threatening illness, speak this verse over yourself as a proclamation. And say it with faith, addressing your words to the heavenly places and believing that your words have power, because they do, either for good or ill:

¹⁷ ***I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the Lord.
Psalm 118:17 (ESV)***

The value of 'the ministry of encouragement' as an antidote to the discouraging influence of demons in the lives of others.

I don't think I have ever heard a sermon on encouragement itself, let alone on what I call '*the ministry of encouragement*'. In fact, I have never even heard these things mentioned in any of the churches of which I have ever been a part. Insofar as the concept of encouragement is ever thought of at all, which is seldom, it is assumed to be something Barnabas was good at, but not to be of any relevance to us.

Yet this is actually one of the most valuable and desperately needed ministries. It is also a ministry which is available to *all of us* no matter how young or old, rich or poor, talented or untalented we might be. Nobody is incapable of engaging in the ministry of encouragement. Neither can anybody say they are not called to it.

Therefore, we should all be continually seeking to find people whom we can encourage, and also to devise new and better ways to encourage them. Look at the example set by Silas and Judas in the book of Acts (the other Judas, who was the son of James, not Judas Iscariot). Try to imitate them by being an encourager and strengthener of other people:

³² ***Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message.***

Acts 15:32 (NASB)

If you apply reverse logic the enormous value of the ministry of encouragement is shown by looking at how much emphasis the demons give to their opposite aim of *discouraging* us. For them that is a core objective because they are well aware that a discouraged Christian will achieve little of any value, let alone fulfil all of his potential. They therefore want to keep it that way for as many of us as possible and for as long as possible.

That being so, it must follow that one of our primary goals should be to encourage other Christians and to help *them* to do what *they* are called to do. God does not want us to be focused solely on our own ministry, but to be mindful at all times of how we can help *others* to be more effective in what God wants them to do. That said, such encouragement is not only to be done for others. We must also encourage *ourselves*.

David did that at Ziklag on a very grim occasion when all the women and children had been kidnapped by Amalekite raiders. Things were so bad that even his own men wanted to stone him. However, instead of despairing and falling apart, David had the presence of mind to pull himself together and to begin to encourage *himself*. By so doing, he was able to turn the whole situation around and he then took decisive action and ended up successfully recapturing all of the women and children:

¹ *And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;*

² *And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.*

³ *So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.*

⁴ *Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.*

⁵ *And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.*

⁶ *And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.*

1 Samuel 30:1-6 (KJV)

The demons' preference is for you to be complacent about your sin. But if that fails, then their second choice is to try to get you to despair.

So far as your sin is concerned, the demons prefer to get you to be brazenly indifferent and to remain complacent and unrepentant. That is, by far, their first choice. However, if you nevertheless end up recognising the gravity of your sin then they will move to their 'Plan B' instead. That is to try to get you to despair and to feel wretched, guilty, condemned and without hope.

That is an acceptable second best so far as the demons are concerned, because it is almost as effective at causing you to sit back and do nothing, which is their real aim. They want, ideally, to get you to remain in your sin and be lost forever. But if that fails, they at least want to make sure you are ineffective so you don't reach anybody else with the Gospel and also so you don't bear any other fruit for God.

Therefore, despair or hopelessness is what the demons then seek to produce in us. They are well aware of how important hope is in causing us to keep going and to be productive for God. So it follows logically that removing your hope and causing you to become listless, passive, discouraged and inactive is just as important to them.

Therefore, if you do ever feel despair remember *it has not come from God* and almost certainly has not come from yourself either. Being in such a desolate condition is a classic sign that demons are involved

and that you are believing their lies. That is one reason why the ministry of encouragement is so important. It can go a very long way towards counteracting this major demonic tactic.

Moving back to the theme of sin, God's approach is not to *condemn*, but to *convict* you. That means He wants to reveal your sin to you, to remind you of it, and urge you to call it by its right name and turn away from it. That is a good and healthy response and it brings joy, i.e. 'the joy of repentance', which is brilliantly depicted at the end of Charles Dickens' novel '*A Christmas Carol*'. Ebenezer Scrooge dances along the street due to the joy he feels at having turned away from his old life and as he discovers the pleasure that comes from giving to others and from thinking of others instead of only himself.

Conviction contrasts starkly with the demons' counterfeit for it, which is *condemnation*. Unlike conviction, which is healthy and leads you to repent, condemnation is unhealthy and leads you to despair. It causes a person to feel their sin was so bad God could never forgive it and/or that, even if He did, He would never be willing to use a person who was so bad as to have done sins X or Y, or whatever it was you did.

However, this problem of guilt and shame is much less common today in this age of apostasy and lukewarmness than its opposite which is brazen indifference to our sin. Nevertheless, for that small minority of people with whom the demons can still use this device, even in this apostate age, it can be very crippling. Therefore, one small word of encouragement from you can make all the difference.

For example, I would remind such a person of God's promises about how He forgives sin and of how He removes it from us "*as far as the east is from the west*". I also remind them that He has said "*though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow*".

You might also remind them of 1 John 1:9 which says: "*If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness*". Proclaiming such verses over ourselves can very effectively counteract the lies the demon is pouring into our mind as they seek either to prevent you from repenting or to rob you of your assurance of salvation.

Though rare in today's lukewarm churches, one does sometimes still find some people who are tormented about their own sins. It particularly happens with victims of sexual abuse who feel shame at what was done to them, even though there was no sin on their part. The demons torture them with guilt and make them feel wretched, inferior and ashamed.

In such cases the person may feel unwilling to speak to you of their sin, or of what was done to them because the demon is lying to them and saying that if they do you will look down on them and condemn them. To such people I tell the story of how I used to be a policeman, when, while I was on foot patrol in the town centre at night in winter, I would go up on to the roof of the Sainsbury's supermarket.

I would then stand next to the air vents which blow hot air out of the ovens in their bakery. Those vents were very useful on such nights in warming you up. However, at those same air vents there were also tramps standing there, for the same reason, to try to get warm.

The point is we were all in the same position, whether we were a tramp or a police officer. We all had the same problem, the cold, and the same remedy for it, the air vents. Likewise, every one of us is in the same boat spiritually. We are all sinners, whatever we have done, and we all need the same remedy, which is God's forgiveness.

So, even in evangelism, we can encourage others and help to counteract the shame which the demons sometimes seek to create. They use shame to keep people away from repenting rather than drawing them to do so by conviction, as the Holy Spirit does. Accordingly, anything you can say or do which encourages a fellow Christian or raises the level of his hope or increases his confidence and motivation, is a huge help to God's purposes.

An encouraging word or action from you can have life-changing consequences for another person far beyond what you might expect. You could cause them to continue rather than give up, to try something rather than shy away from it, or to put themselves forward into a new ministry rather than hold back. In these ways, you can make a real difference in their lives.

And it would all be because you spoke an encouraging word to the right person at the right time and in the right way. Therefore, start to develop this ministry of encouragement or perhaps I should simply call it a habit. Make the encouraging and building up of others a central part of your life and something you do every day and everywhere you go with the people you know, or even with those you have only just met.

Therefore, set out to develop the ministry of encouragement so as to help others to succeed

Make it your aim not only to succeed yourself in your *own* work, ministry or family but also to help others to succeed in *theirs*. Seek to get *them* to keep going, to try harder, to aim higher and to believe they can succeed and that God really can use them. Sadly, the ministry of encouragement is a very rare ministry even though we are all called to it. Yet it is one which can yield disproportionately large results.

In fact, one little word of praise or encouragement from you can totally transform a person's life. That can not only alter *their own* future, but also affect the lives of all those *others* whom they themselves may later go on to help. Of course, encouragement may not always produce such a harvest. Sometimes it may not work at all. But the point is it often will.

However, whether it succeeds or not, it is our duty to try for the sake of the rest of the Body of Christ. Moreover, it is both vital and urgent because the vast majority of our fellow believers are starved of encouragement and are instead deluged with discouragement most of the time. That is one reason why so many Christians achieve so little and why so many give up and even fall away completely.

However, don't make the mistake of thinking it is only weak, timid untalented people who need encouragement. They certainly do need it but leaders need it too no matter how great or talented they may be. Indeed, it is often leaders who face the most intense and frequent demonic attacks and who can, therefore, become the most discouraged. That was the case even with apostle Paul to such an extent he sometimes despaired of life itself:

⁸For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself.

2 Corinthians 1:8 (RSV)

Therefore, if anything, leaders can sometimes need even more encouragement than non-leaders. Unfortunately, many people wrongly assume leaders don't need encouragement at all and therefore

don't give them any. Alternatively, many assume that even if it is needed, it is not their place to give it.

In fact, encouragement of leaders is desperately needed and it is most certainly our place to give it. Look at how even Joshua, a very mighty man, still needed to be encouraged and strengthened. Moses therefore urged *all* of the people to support him in that way:

²⁸But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall go over at the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land that you shall see.'

Deuteronomy 3:28 (ESV)

Perhaps the biggest reason why people don't encourage others is that what they have in mind to say would sound so obvious, so simple, and so unoriginal, they think there would be no point in saying it. They then hear a thought in their head, which they wrongly assume to be their own thought, but which is actually a demon's voice, saying the other person "*will already know that, and doesn't need me to tell him*".

Thus, where someone preaches a good sermon or arranges a good buffet lunch or sings a solo piece well in the church choir many people will say nothing to them because they think they would only be stating the obvious, or "*somebody else will already have told them*". However, almost certainly, nobody else will have told them.

And, although it is obvious *to you*, it will not be obvious *to them*. Therefore, even if someone else has already praised what they did, they possibly won't accept or believe their compliment. Thus, your words are still needed by way of confirmation in order to convince them.

The demons will have deceived the person into thinking their sermon was poor, the buffet lunch was disappointing, the solo piece was sung badly and so on. You will know that is not true, *but they won't*. They may be fully convinced they did badly and therefore they are contemplating not preaching again, or not singing any more solos, or not doing the catering again. They may be telling themselves that they "*just aren't good enough*" or "*are just not cut out for it*".

Therefore, a timely word from you, immediately after the service, when their self-doubt is just starting to form, can work wonders. However, it can also work wonders where the encouraging word is given hours, or even days later, when the demons' whispers have been really taking their toll and, unbeknownst to you, the person is feeling very low.

Then your encouraging word is all the more surprising and can be even more effective in lifting them up precisely because it was said later, out of context, when they least expected it. Accordingly, it is always the right time to give an encouraging word. It is never too early, never too late and never unnecessary.

Moreover, if the idea of saying an encouraging word ever occurs to you, then you can be virtually certain it is a prompting from the Holy Spirit, because it certainly hasn't come from the demons, or from your flesh, and very probably not from your own mind. Therefore, when the idea comes to you to encourage someone, treat it as a prompting from the Holy Spirit and go right ahead and say it before the demons can talk you out of it.

Removing the demons' 'habitat' so they lose the desire to remain in the person and can also cause far less damage

I have found this analogy helpful in terms of dealing with demons and helping people not only to resist them but also to cast them out. It has relevance to both situations. It is to think of demons as if they were rats living in an area of waste ground or an overgrown garden strewn with litter, junk and the remains of people's takeaway pizzas that they have thrown over the fence.

Imagine such an unkempt, dirty area of ground full of old tyres, dumped furniture, pallets and other rubbish, plus overgrown plants and shrubs. It is easy to see how rats could thrive in such a place with ample scope to build nests where they can hide away and have an abundance of food as people throw leftovers over the fence. It is an apt metaphor for how some people's lives are ideal 'habitat' for demons, where they find it easy to hide and a profitable place to operate.

But then imagine the owner of that land decided to get it cleaned up and so men arrive to take away all the junk, pallets and dumped carpets and other rubbish. Imagine they also dig up all the overgrown plants, weeds and shrubs and make the ground flat again.

Now picture the scene as those men also lay concrete slabs or tarmac/asphalt to cover the whole area such that it ends up clean, tidy, empty and completely unsuitable to provide any habitat or food source for rats. What do you think the rats would then do? They wouldn't even need to be driven out, killed or trapped. They would depart *of their own accord* because there would be nothing there for them and nothing to gain from remaining.

The point is that if a person takes all the right steps to remove the spiritual equivalent of all the "junk, litter, weeds and discarded food" from their lives then the demons operating on the outside of you may reduce their attacks upon you or even depart of their own free will. And any who are on the inside will be much easier to cast out.

Above all, any who are cast out will have far less incentive to try to return because there is a greatly reduced scope for them to do harm in a person whose life has been "cleaned up". The demons will find they have nowhere to hide, nothing to "feed on" and nothing to work with or use as 'leverage' in order to produce sin, discouragement, despair, rebellion etc. As with anybody seeking to produce things, they need raw materials to work on.

And those raw materials in the life of a person are their sins, their flesh, their attraction to the world, their ignorance of the Bible, their bitterness and unforgiveness towards other people and the curses over their lives due to their involvement in the occult or false religion – or the involvement of their parents or grandparents. If all of that, or even much of it, can be removed the demons become far easier to cast out and they have less incentive to stay as there is much less scope for them to achieve anything.

Another analogy to explain this would be to think of a town centre area on a Friday or Saturday night outside a row of pubs and night clubs. From the perspective of the police, that area is likely to be frequented by drunks and aggressive young men who will potentially cause trouble. I know because when I was a constable I walked such a beat and the presence of the pubs, night clubs and lots of girls drew aggressive young men into the area. So we knew there was likely to be trouble each night.

But if you moved a mile away there could be another beat area made up of warehouses and industrial units. If you were told to walk that beat on a night shift you would meet hardly anyone, and encounter

few if any public order problems because empty car parks outside warehouses and industrial units at night, where nobody is at work, are not very attractive to young men looking for trouble.

Likewise, even in the town centre, if there was rain, especially sustained heavy rain, we knew we would have no public order difficulties that night, even outside the pubs, because nobody wanted to hang around or congregate. Therefore, the expression arose “*PC Rain is on duty tonight*”.

The point is it is possible to change your life, or the life of the person to whom you are ministering, so it ceases to be a place where demons have any incentive to congregate or to hang around as there is nothing for them to gain and no excitement to be had. Therefore, it will be far easier to resist demons who are on the outside, because it reduces their scope to get at you or to trip you up because your life has become cleaner, ‘tidier’ and less complicated. But it also helps greatly in getting rid of demons who are on the inside because they become far less motivated to remain.

Moreover, the sins or other issues which gave them a ‘right of entry’ in the first place will be at least partially addressed by this approach. But we will look at all that properly in Book 9. I hope the metaphors are clear enough. Therefore, in your own life and with those whom you are advising and helping, let it be the objective to reduce or eliminate anything that provides either ‘habitat’ or ‘raw materials’ for the demons to use.

Make yourself or the person you are advising into the spiritual equivalent of an area of land that is covered in concrete slabs or tarmac with no vegetation or litter. Then you will be so much harder to tempt, intimidate, deceive or discourage and the demons will leave you alone, at least in relative terms.