

CHAPTER 9

SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH DEMONS SEEK TO DO IN YOUR LIFE – AND HOW TO RESIST THEM

²⁶ and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

2 Timothy 2:26 (NASB)

⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

John 8:44 (NASB)

⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua 1:9 (RSV)

How demons seek to discourage you and get you to give up your hope

The first question to consider is what is *discouragement*? Then we shall look at why demons want us to be discouraged, i.e. how it helps them and harms us and why they put so much effort into discouraging us. For our purposes, we could define discouragement as the belief that your problems, obstacles or opponents are too large for you and therefore unbeatable.

This was the negative idea that was planted into the minds of 10 of the 12 spies that Moses sent ahead of the people to spy out the Promised Land and to see how it could be won for Israel. Only two of these spies, Joshua and Caleb, saw the potential and opportunities in the situation they faced. They both believed the land could be taken.

But the other ten spies had already been *defeated in their minds* before they even began. They were crippled when they saw the size of some of the Canaanites and how strong they were. When they saw them, they were immediately discouraged, because they focused solely on the scale of the problem, not on how big God is:

²⁵ At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. ²⁶ And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan."

Numbers 13:25-29 (ESV)

Contrast that with the positive, hopeful, confident attitude shown by Caleb even though he was responding to the very same facts. He had seen all the same things but with a very different heart attitude. Therefore, he wasn't discouraged. On the contrary, he was encouraged by what he had seen and he tried to raise their spirits:

³⁰But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it."

Numbers 13:30 (ESV)

However, Joshua and Caleb's positive report wasn't enough to overcome the discouragement which had by then taken hold of the hearts and minds of the people of Israel. They had chosen to believe and focus upon the negative, fearful report of the 10 unfaithful spies rather than the positive view from Joshua and Caleb. That was mainly because they, like most people everywhere, were prone to being discouraged far too easily and quickly. This is how they spoke, magnifying the problem and wanting to give up and turn back:

³¹Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are."

Numbers 13:31 (ESV)

⁴And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

Numbers 14:4 (ESV)

It shows why discouragement is such a favourite weapon for demons and how much they gain from it. It caused the people to become so paralysed by discouragement they no longer wanted to go into the Promised Land. They actually asked to go back to Egypt instead. That angered God because it was His will for them to take the Land and He had fully intended to help them do it.

Therefore, in the end, He rewarded Joshua and Caleb but punished those who had given negative reports. He also punished those who *chose to allow those reports to discourage them*. That point, in particular, needs to be a warning to us as to how seriously God takes this. He does not view discouragement as a valid excuse for inactivity or disobedience, even if we may think it is:

⁵Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. ⁶And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes ⁷and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. ⁸If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. ⁹Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." ¹⁰Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel. ¹¹And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?"

Numbers 14:5-11 (ESV)

God was angry at the people's disobedience and therefore decided that He would not allow any of that generation of adults to enter the Land, except for Joshua and Caleb.

²² *none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice,* ²³ *shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it.* ²⁴ *But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it*

Numbers 14:22-24 (ESV)

God therefore kept that whole generation waiting in the wilderness for 38 years until everyone who was 20 years old or more at this point had all died off, one by one. It all happened because *they had allowed themselves to become discouraged*. Evidently God does not see it as something beyond our ability or strength to deal with.

God punished the ten negative, unfaithful spies more directly by sending a plague upon them so they died from disease. He punished them instantly, rather than over a period of time, because He was even more angry with them than with the general population.

God expects us to keep control of our minds and emotions and to remain obedient to Him whatever the circumstances. He also holds us accountable if we don't and if we allow fear or discouragement to cause us to disobey God. Certainly, discouragement is not a legitimate excuse for disobedience:

²⁶ *And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,* ²⁷ *"How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumblings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me.* ²⁸ *Say to them, 'As I live, declares the LORD, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you:* ²⁹ *your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me,* ³⁰ *not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.* ³¹ *But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected.* ³² *But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness.* ³³ *And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness.* ³⁴ *According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.'* ³⁵ *I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die."* ³⁶ *And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land--* ³⁷ *the men who brought up a bad report of the land--died by plague before the LORD.* ³⁸ *Of those men who went to spy out the land, only Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive.*

Numbers 14:26-38 (ESV)

We all need to pause and reflect on how seriously God responded to the people when they said they did not want to go into the Land. He did not consider their disobedience to be a minor matter. We must not do as they did and fail to do our duty when we face discouraging facts or circumstances.

More to the point, we must not allow the demons to succeed in discouraging us in the first place, which is what they are always seeking to do. The mistake made by the people, when they heard the reports of the twelve spies was to:

- a) listen to the cowardly, unfaithful ten instead of the brave, faithful two
- b) allow discouragement to take root and to grow inside them, instead of stamping it out as soon as it began
- c) listen to others around them who were also becoming discouraged, instead of contradicting them or at least walking away, to avoid being contaminated by their negative influence

Don't make important decisions while you are feeling discouraged

However, perhaps their greatest error was *to make their decision* not to go into the Land and to announce it (to Moses) *while they were still feeling discouraged*. Instead, they should have said “*We're obviously discouraged at the moment. Let's not make any decision until we have had some time to pull ourselves together, get a grip, and start to see the situation differently*”.

The demons assigned to you will, likewise, want to try to get you to make your decisions while you are feeling low. If you are naïve enough to allow that to happen then you will make wrong decisions, disobey God, and miss opportunities God had set up for you. To increase the chances of this, the demons will seek to keep you discouraged for as much of the time as possible.

However, if they can't succeed in keeping you continuously discouraged, they will at least seek to get you to make important decisions at moments while you are still feeling low, such that you will harm yourself and your future. That's a key point. Much of the time the demons can't directly harm you. They can't make you do anything, unless the demon is inside you and has a high level of control. So, they generally have to rely on persuading you to harm yourself.

Be aware of their lack of power to force you to do things. Therefore, refuse to cooperate with them. Also, refuse to be discouraged in the first place but, if you fail in that, then at least refuse to make any key decisions at those times when you feel discouraged. Adjourn the decision to be made later when you are feeling more positive again. That is just common sense.

Over and over again in the Bible God urges His people, including His prophets, to be encouraged or to take courage and to hold on. He does so because it is so very normal for us to feel discouraged. Demons are not the only cause of discouragement, but they are one of the main causes. They will whisper into your mind for example to say “*I'm a useless failure*”, or “*I can't possibly do this*”.

They want you to pick up that thought and run with it as if you had thought of it yourself. At such times you must remember the command God gave back in the book of Joshua that we must not be frightened or dismayed and must instead be strong and courageous. That isn't a suggestion. *It is a command* and He expects us to obey it:

⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9 (RSV)

The demons want the opposite. Therefore, they will seek to get you to believe you cannot succeed or that the odds against you are too great and it is not worth trying or carrying on. God is urging you to keep trying and to keep going, no matter what, but the demons want to persuade you to give up. If they

can get you to give up, they have rendered you useless. It is difficult to over-emphasise this point, as this one tactic alone can rob us of most of our effectiveness.

One of the demons' favourite times for getting at you is when you are already tired, especially in the middle of the night when your body is naturally at its lowest ebb. Indeed, that is why the most common time for people to die is between 3.00am and 4.00am. Many people find that it is also when they are most heavily bombarded with dark and gloomy thoughts, or with reminders about all sorts of risks and dangers. That fact alone is clear evidence of demonic involvement as it can't be a coincidence.

The demons know exactly when you are at your lowest ebb and they will wait to attack you most severely then. This tactic is illustrated by the evil advice which Ahithophel gave to the rebel, Absalom, who was trying to lead a rebellion against his own father, the godly King David. Note the emphasis Ahithophel placed on attacking *in the night*, when King David would already be feeling "*weary and discouraged*":

¹ Moreover Ahith'ophel said to Ab'salom, "Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will set out and pursue David tonight. ² I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged, and throw him into a panic; and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down the king only,

2 Samuel 17:1-2 (RSV)

The advice was, effectively, to find David's moment of deepest discouragement as the best time for Absalom to attack. That was the tactic advised by Ahithophel, a human being, but the policy he recommended is exactly what the demons do with us. They wait for the right moment, when you are already feeling low for any number of reasons, most probably when you are alone with your thoughts at night.

That is when they will launch their main attack. Therefore, we need to keep such times of discouragement as mild, brief and infrequent as possible. However, the demons are not content merely to wait for you to get discouraged by natural causes such as tiredness, difficulties, upsets, bad news, physical illness, etc.

They want to speed up and intensify that process by saying and doing things that actually *cause* you to become discouraged. Therefore, they will intervene and get directly involved in the events of your life, and with the people around you, in order to artificially increase your discouragement. The demons' aim is to maximise:

- a) the *depth* of your discouragement
- b) the *duration* of each period of discouragement
- c) the *frequency* of those periods of discouragement

In other words, the demons want you to be:

- a) as *discouraged* as possible
- b) for as *long* as possible
- c) and as *often* as possible

If they could have it entirely their own way, then, ideally they would, like to have you feeling continuously discouraged on a permanent basis. That would suit them, and in some people's lives they can manage it. You must ensure you are not one. So, your task is to achieve the opposite of what the demons are aiming for, in each of those three aspects. Therefore, you want any episode of discouragement that you feel to be:

- a) as *minor* as possible
- b) as *brief* as possible
- c) as *infrequent* as possible

No matter who you are, or how mature you may become, you will never be able to prevent any discouragement ever arising. You cannot stop demons ever whispering to you, no matter what you do. Plus, you can't control all events or the actions of all other people. You may not be able to control any. So, you have to be realistic. Times of discouragement will inevitably come.

However, the mere fact that you have not been able to completely prevent or eliminate all discouragement does not mean the demons have won, or that you have lost, or that you should give up. That is what they want you to think, but it is a lie and you must never believe it.

As Winston Churchill said: "*Never, never, never give in.*" He kept Britain at war with Germany, even when we were alone in Europe as the only country still fighting and with almost all our weapons lost at Dunkirk. Lesser men would have at least toyed with the idea of a negotiated settlement with Hitler. However, Churchill forbade even the mention of that idea within the Government.

He just hung on tenaciously like a bulldog which will not release its grip. He was convinced that, sooner or later, the tide would turn and Hitler would make a mistake of some kind. And he eventually did so, in spectacular fashion, in 1941 when he invaded Russia in the June and then declared war needlessly on the USA in December.

However, Britain's first major victory on land over the Germans, which was at El Alamein, did not come until October 1942, three years into the war. We need some of that same moral fibre and strong spine that enabled that generation to keep on fighting for those three bleak years, despite a relentless stream of bad news and hardly any good news. This was mainly due to Britain's lamentable state of unpreparedness when the war began, whereas Germany had already been preparing flat out for war for six years before we even started to get ready.

The correct definition of victory, or of being an overcomer in the battle against discouragement, is not that you prevent any discouragement ever arising. That is far too high a goal, this side of death, and is entirely unrealistic. Your real aim therefore should be to make those inevitable times of discouragement as *minor, brief and infrequent* as you can.

If you can do that you can be sure the demons assigned to you will be very frustrated and vexed. They will see you as the overall winner, not themselves. They would have put in a lot of effort in seeking to knock you down, only to find the period of discouragement they created lasted just a few minutes and made no difference, and that you then bounced straight back, undaunted. You can see why that would be galling for them.

So, it's essential that you define your objective realistically. Otherwise, even on that point itself, you could get discouraged. Therefore, next time you get discouraged, as you undoubtedly will, say to yourself "*I'm feeling discouraged. That's not right and it's not good for me. So, I'm going to make this mood as minor, and as brief, as I can*".

Just saying that, and starting to turn your mind to thinking of ways to encourage yourself and get yourself out of the gloomy mood, will mean you are already half way to victory. The emphasis has to be on you *encouraging yourself*, because very few people have the gift of encouraging others which Barnabas had.

Therefore, you can't rely on meeting a Barnabas whenever you need one, because the strong likelihood is you won't. They are very rare people. Therefore, you must learn to be your own Barnabas and to encourage yourself, by yourself, for yourself as King David did at Ziklag. But, at the same time, although you probably can't find anyone to encourage you, you can at least seek to be a Barnabas to others.

How Sanballat and Tobiah tried to discourage Nehemiah and how demons use the same method with you and me

Nehemiah was a godly man and he knew God wanted him to organise the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. However there were wicked men who were determined to stop him. Foremost amongst these were Sanballat and Tobiah. They were sly and devious but they had not got enough men to force Nehemiah to stop the rebuilding. They therefore had to rely on the power of lies to try to get Nehemiah to stop the work of his own accord as a result of being discouraged by their negative, mocking, belittling words:

¹Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. ²He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?" ³Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, "Even what they are building--if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!"

Nehemiah 4:1-3 (NASB)

However, Nehemiah refused to fall for any of that. He just carried on and would not stop even for a moment to come down from the wall to speak to Sanballat and Tobiah. So, they resorted to trying to intimidate Nehemiah by making false accusations that could have got him into trouble with the King if they had been believed. But Nehemiah refused to be stopped even by that, as we shall see below under another heading.

I had a friend many years ago who suffered quite severely with feelings of discouragement and with dark, gloomy, ominous thoughts. I told him many times that those anxious thoughts and feelings of insecurity, inferiority and the expectation of failure were not coming solely from himself but were being whispered into his mind by demons. He accepted that was true and agreed with it as head knowledge, but he did not manage to make it *feel real*, such that he was capable of withstanding and rejecting the things said by that whispering voice.

He made some progress, however, and became better than he was at the beginning. Back then, he could easily be devastated and knocked flat for weeks by the mere possibility that something might go wrong. As time went by, he became able to recover his composure more quickly, or at least some of it, and in a matter of days, rather than weeks.

I told him the target was to improve his recovery time even further so that he would be back up off the boxing ring ‘canvas’ in hours rather than days. I said that once he achieves that, the objective should then be to achieve a recovery of his confidence and optimism within minutes rather than hours. Then he should try to reduce the number of minutes. If you do that, the demon will eventually start to think it is no longer worth the effort of trying to discourage you.

That’s how he and I worked on the problem, with me trying to get him to learn how to take control of his own thoughts, so that he was capable of deciding what thoughts he was going to have, and even what mood he is going to be in, rather than having both of those foisted on him by a demon. The Bible has a phrase for this. It is called “*taking every thought captive*”

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (RSV)

To “take every thought captive” means that you decide what your own thoughts are going to be rather than be the passive recipient of whatever thoughts, good or bad, happen to form in your mind or get whispered into it by the demon who is assigned to you. It’s like a wartime situation and you go out and make all your thoughts “prisoners of war”, rather than you being their prisoner and doing their bidding.

Then the thoughts that are validly your own, provided they are positive, constructive and wholesome, can be released and allowed to influence your actions. But the dark ominous, negative thoughts that come from the demons remain locked up as *POWs* and don’t get their freedom. You don’t allow those thoughts to be in your mind.

What apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians only makes sense if you believe it’s possible to have that much control over what you think. The truth is it is possible, though it will probably take quite a long time to learn new habits and to get rid of old ones if you have grown used to allowing demons to knock you flat whenever they whisper into your mind.

However, in the early days, as my friend was finding, this policy may not always succeed. If so, just do your best and keep at it regardless. Eventually good, positive habits will develop and will replace any old, negative habits of thinking that you may have. It will all seem contrived and artificial at first, but eventually thinking positively and optimistically will get easier and will even become your automatic reflex reaction.

Therefore, seek to minimise the period of time for which a demon can keep you depressed, sad or fearful. Steadily reduce it from days to hours, and then from hours to minutes. Seek eventually to get to a place where you can recover your morale within 2-3 minutes. That rapid recovery of emotional stability will cause the demon to give up and seek some other approach.

Demons will seek to get you to believe that you are alone and isolated

You will know the famous account in 1 Kings of the prophet Elijah and how he defeated the prophets of Baal and called down fire from Heaven to consume the sacrifice, which they were unable to do. That episode was a high point for Elijah but afterwards he was on the run from King Ahab and his wicked wife, Queen Jezebel. She even sent him a death threat which caused him to flee:

² Then Jez'ebel sent a messenger to Eli'jah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." ³ Then he was afraid, and he arose and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

1 Kings 19:2-3 (RSV)

So, Elijah fled into the wilderness and he felt very defeated and isolated. As things appeared to him, he was alone and was the only one left:

⁹ And there he came to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Eli'jah?" ¹⁰ He said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

1 Kings 19:9-10 (RSV)

God then encouraged Elijah and told him to get up and go and do some tasks. But, interestingly, God also pointed out to Elijah that he was not in fact alone, or the last survivor, but that God actually had 7000 others in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal:

¹⁸ Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Ba'al, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

1 Kings 19:18 (RSV)

Remember this at times when the demons are whispering into your mind that you are alone, the only one left, the only one who believes as you do or the only one trying to turn things around. I can testify that in England as it now is, it often feels as if I was living in the middle of the Sahara Desert with few, if any, like minded people around me. But it isn't true. Even in apostate England, or wherever you live, however alone and isolated you might feel, it is an illusion.

You are not the only one. There are in fact other faithful servants whom God has, even though you don't know them. Remind yourself of that at low times and press on with renewed enthusiasm to do God's work knowing that no matter how it seems, you are not actually alone, just as Elijah wasn't. If you can get hold of that message and let it really sink in you will make the demons which follow you around feel very frustrated.

Demons will prevent other people from understanding your ministry, calling or gifting

Moses was called by God to deliver the people of Israel and to lead them out of Egypt and out of slavery. You might imagine that if God calls a man to do something or to operate in a certain ministry then He will also tell everyone else so there is no opposition or misunderstanding. I am afraid that is not how it

works in practice. Therefore, you will find that other people will not understand you, not even people you are close to or whom you imagined would correctly interpret your motives, goals and purposes.

At any rate, Moses did not find that to be so. Therefore, when he intervened to defend a fellow Hebrew and killed an Egyptian his fellow Hebrews did not understand or correctly identify his motives. Far from being thanked and praised for his actions, he had to flee to the land of Midian where he stayed for 40 years.

²⁵ He supposed that his brethren understood that God was giving them deliverance by his hand, but they did not understand. ²⁶ And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and would have reconciled them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren, why do you wrong each other?’ ²⁷ But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? ²⁸ Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ ²⁹ At this retort Moses fled, and became an exile in the land of Mid’ian, where he became the father of two sons.

Acts 7:25-29 (RSV)

³⁰ “Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. ³¹ When Moses saw it he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to look, the voice of the Lord came, ³² ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.’ And Moses trembled and did not dare to look. ³³ And the Lord said to him, ‘Take off the shoes from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. ³⁴ I have surely seen the ill-treatment of my people that are in Egypt and heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.’ ³⁵ “This Moses whom they refused, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’ God sent as both ruler and deliverer by the hand of the angel that appeared to him in the bush.

Acts 7:30-35 (RSV)

So, things did not turn out the way Moses expected, and people did not understand him, or his motives, or God’s calling upon his life. They misunderstood everything. Of course, when that happens, it is not because other people are inherently confused or lacking in discernment, though many are. It is usually brought about by demons whispering lies into their minds to *cause* them to misunderstand you or even to deliberately undermine you.

Examples of how church leaders and others have deliberately undermined me

And they are doing exactly the same today, not just in Moses’ day. It has happened in my life many times. When I was in my thirties, running a law firm but with a strong desire to teach the Bible. I was told by ‘Rick’, the church leader I discussed earlier, that he felt my role was to “*support the church with money, not to teach or preach*”.

However, Rick didn’t say that because he misunderstood the position. He said it out of intentional malice, because he felt threatened by my abilities and my growing knowledge of the Bible and he wanted to undermine me. I felt very deflated by that put down because I had such a love for the Bible and felt I had the ability to teach it and yearned to do so.

But I persevered and eventually got a preaching slot one Sunday and the talk I gave was extremely well received by the whole congregation. God really anointed it. But that did not please Rick. On the contrary, he did all he could to stop me preaching again, as he felt so envious, insecure and threatened.

Even so, I persisted, despite a series of fob offs and deliberately evasive responses from the person in charge of the speaking rota. That man wasn't Rick, but Rick had told him to stonewall me and not give me any speaking slots. But he underestimated my persistence and eventually ran out of lame excuses. Therefore, I was at last allocated another speaking slot of 40 minutes.

I was told this had to finish sharp at a certain time due to other things that were happening. However, just before the start of my talk, as I stood by the lectern, Rick suddenly stood up to make a supposedly "important" announcement. I thought he would take only a minute or two, but he actually rambled on for 17 minutes during which he just waffled about totally inconsequential, non urgent things.

That left me with just 23 minutes to give a talk which I had carefully timed to last 40 minutes because the time limit was strict. So, I suddenly had to throw half of my talk out and speak quickly. I also felt very thrown off balance by it as I had absolutely no warning that this would happen, so that made me even more disorientated. Plus I was upset and angry which made things even harder.

Of course, as I later learned, Rick had played this dirty trick *deliberately to seek to undermine me* as he felt threatened by me and wanted to sabotage my talk. It was also Rick who had told the person in charge of the speaking rota to give me the runaround and resist giving me a speaking slot!

I couldn't make any sense of it at the time as I was very naïve, deferential and trusting towards church leaders, whereas what he did was so sly and wicked. But when I later learned that Rick had a demon, which I (and another leader) saw in his eyes, it all began to make sense. The demons were influencing him and urging him to oppose me. (I tell the story of how I and another trustee saw the demon in Rick's eyes in chapter one of my Book 9.)

Many years later, after I had sold my law firm in order to write and teach full time, a young man called Joel who was a trainee minister at an FIEC (evangelical) church asked me what I was doing now that I had given up running a law firm. I replied that I was writing a series of books on Christianity, starting with what the Gospel is, then on discipleship, how to study the Bible and so on.

But when I said this he laughed out loud in my face, as if I'd said I want to be an astronaut. He was a trainee minister and his own father and father-in-law were both evangelical ministers. He therefore considered it impossible that God would ever call me, a mere lawyer who was not "ordained" and had never even been to a seminary or Bible college, to teach or write anything about Christianity. It seemed a joke to him and he clearly didn't mind letting me know it.

Again, I felt deflated as well as insulted but that young man was only saying what the demons had prompted him to say. How else could he form the absurd view that non 'clergymen' can't write Christian books? Obviously, his background and the clergy-minded prejudices he had picked up from the cradle onwards played a part in it.

But even that had, in my view, been the result of demonic whispering to create a "doctrine of demons", as the Bible puts it, to the effect that only the clergy class can do such things and that non clergy like me should know our place and stay in it. But it isn't just "clergymen" like Joel who think like that,

thereby disqualifying the rest of the population. The lie has been so successful it has spread far and wide.

I was once at the barbers and was asked what I do so I replied I was writing a book explaining the Gospel i.e. my Book 1. The barber looked horrified and said, “*Has anyone given you permission to do that?*” Clearly, she thought that was not something a lawyer could do or should be allowed to do. I was deflated but I made a decision to pay no attention and to treat that discouragement as further evidence that the demons didn’t want me to do this, in which case, I should press on all the more.

If God has called you to do something for Him do not expect others to understand or support that, especially church leaders, and be careful whom you tell

The point is that whatever God has called you to do, whether in a church role or outside of the church, you can’t expect other people, not even Christians, *and not even leaders*, to understand or approve of what you intend to do. Indeed, leaders are perhaps the least likely to understand or validate you since they are the most likely to feel threatened by what they see as a potential rival.

Therefore, be ready for this and don’t allow yourself to be hurt by it. Expect to be misunderstood. Expect to be lied about and expect to be opposed. Brace yourself to press on regardless, *provided you believe God is calling you to do it*. By all means seek advice and help from others. But do not make it a pre-condition for you obeying God and pursuing what He is calling you to, that other men must first understand it, agree with it and validate it.

The fact is many of them won’t, for all sorts of malicious reasons or just out of ignorance, inadequacy or lack of imagination. I can assure you of that. And the more genuine, sincere and biblical you are, the less you will be approved of and endorsed. If you do require the prior approval of others before you do what God is calling you to do then you make it very easy for the demons to derail you before you even begin.

All they need to do is find some insecure, weak, envious leader and induce him to tell you that you aren’t valid, aren’t called or aren’t qualified. Of course, I don’t mean you should never listen to anyone or take advice. Clearly you should. But you must always be very careful as to *whom you take advice from*. You can so easily find that you are “casting pearls before swine” and that you will be hurt by the way people respond to what you believe God is calling you to do. They may trample upon your vision and take pleasure in doing so.

So, do take advice, but very carefully, and make sure it is *never from weak, insecure, low calibre men* who might feel threatened by you. They will be putty in a demon’s hands and will be used to mislead you and to crush your dream. So, don’t let yourself walk into that “sucker punch”. Go to seek the advice of strong, confident successful men, *preferably in a different field or profession*, as they won’t feel threatened or envious.

I hasten to add, however, that this does not mean you should never allow anyone to tell you that your goal, plan, idea, dream or vision is not a good one, or is not realistic, or even biblical. There is always the possibility that it is you who are mistaken, not the man advising you. So, if you think God is calling you to be an astronaut, be prepared to justify that belief with sound, sensible reasons. Otherwise, expect to be contradicted, for your own good, to stop you wasting your life on a pipe dream.

But the point is that anyone who advises you that you are not called, or not capable, or not suitable, needs to be a man who speaks to you with respect and in a wholesome, constructive, tactful manner and who can justify his views with sound facts, logic and reasoning. If he isn't like that, or can't do that, then beware of allowing his negative advice to deter you from pursuing what you believe God is calling you to do.

By the way, I don't mean to be negative or critical of church leaders. It is just that such a high proportion of them today are false, apostate, carnal, worldly or heretical so you can't view them as a safe pair of hands, at least not automatically, not unless you know them well and have good reasons to trust them. If this was 1950 or 1850 I would probably speak differently, but it isn't. This is the apostate 21st century, so we must all be very careful.

How demons seek to put fear and anxiety into you

For many years I had no idea how afraid and anxious so many people are, and of the huge range of things people are afraid of. I used to think it affected just a minority of people but I now think the majority live lives that are blighted by fear. We do have a God given capacity to feel legitimate and healthy fear. God deliberately gave that to us for two main reasons:

- a) to enable us to appreciate the significance of dangerous situations and to be motivated to flee or to protect ourselves, or to take care to avoid the hazard. So, when you are in the presence of a wild animal like a lion, fear is a healthy, appropriate emotion. It helps us to think and act wisely, i.e. by getting away quickly.
- b) to enable us to fear Him, so as to be better able to realise His awesomeness, holiness, righteousness and impending judgment. If we had no capacity for fear we would not be able to see Him in His fullness or appreciate all of what He is and we would not feel the respect and reverence for Him that we should. In part those godly responses come from, or are contributed to, by our fear of Him.

However, outside of those two things, I cannot see any advantages that come from feeling fear, anxiety, dread, apprehension, worry, tension or any of the other emotions which come as a result of fearing someone or something. All of those emotional responses are negative and damaging. They can even be crippling to some people and will certainly reduce your effectiveness, productivity and confidence.

But how can you expect to win this battle with fear unless you first realise there is a battle to be fought and that fear is a weapon being used against you? If you can win this fight, however, and reach a place where you live in daily control of your fears, so that you master them, rather than them mastering you, then you will be free. You will no longer be paralysed and will be capable of going forward, instead of standing still or holding back, in those stressful situations where God wants you to attempt things for Him.

This struggle with fear is a mental battle. It is won by forcibly changing the habits and patterns of our thinking. That means saturating our minds with the Bible and dwelling on God's promises rather than demonic whisperings. That can't happen overnight. But, over time, if you are diligent, you can learn new habits, until it becomes ingrained. Train yourself to memorise Scripture and to repeat key promises or faith building verses out loud whenever fear comes into your mind. For example, try this verse:

¹³ ***I can do all things in him who strengthens me.***
Philippians 4:13 (RSV)

Eventually you will reach a point where the demon isn't sure what to do with you, because every time he whispers a dark thought to you it just gets you thinking of God's promises and His faithfulness and reciting Scripture out loud. That is the last thing the demon wants to see happening.

The demon isn't fussy about what to get you to fear. Anything will do. It could be death, illness, exams or losing your job or home. It could be absolutely anything under the sun. They don't mind what they use, so long as it is effective and stabs at you whenever they remind you of it.

We all differ on the details, but the general tactic is the same. They just want you to be as afraid as possible, as much of the time as possible and in as many different ways as possible. That's because fear, whatever form it takes, is such a negative, destructive and wasteful emotion. It saps you and wears you out, but contributes nothing.

It makes you ineffective and can be used by the demon to get you to avoid doing good things or to disobey God or to miss the mark in all sorts of ways, simply because you were afraid of something. And, ironically, it will almost certainly be something you never needed to fear because it was never going to happen, as the demon knew very well from the outset.

Unless you are willing to force yourself to do things, even when you are afraid, it is easy for a demon to stop any project just by using intimidation. They will do it by planting thoughts into your mind, for example about how the project or task is likely to fail and that if it did you would look foolish or there would be bad consequences.

Another favourite technique is for the demon to get some person to threaten you or intimidate you so you don't do what God wants you to do. In this next passage we see Nehemiah being got at again by Sanballat and Tobiah who want him to stop rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. They threaten to report him to the King:

¹Now when it was reported to Sanballat, Tobiah, to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall, and that no breach remained in it, although at that time I had not set up the doors in the gates, ²then Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together at Chephirim in the plain of Ono." But they were planning to harm me. ³So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" ⁴They sent messages to me four times in this manner, and I answered them in the same way. ⁵Then Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same manner a fifth time with an open letter in his hand. ⁶In it was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu says, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel; therefore you are rebuilding the wall. And you are to be their king, according to these reports.

⁷"You have also appointed prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, 'A king is in Judah!' And now it will be reported to the king according to these reports. So come now, let us take counsel together." ⁸Then I sent a message to him saying, "Such things as you are saying have not been done, but you are inventing them in your own mind." ⁹For all of them were trying to frighten us, thinking, "They will become discouraged with the work and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

Nehemiah 6:1-9 (NASB)

However, Nehemiah was wise enough, and courageous enough to ignore the threat of reporting him to the King and to carry on regardless. Therefore, with him intimidation didn't work, but Nehemiah was the exception, not the rule. Most of us do allow fear to stop us or at least to restrict us. Therefore, we do less for God than we would have if we had not had fear, or if we had been brave enough to press on regardless of our fear.

Sometimes the demon plants a very specific fear in your mind. If they see that it works they will keep on using it again and again. Other times they go for vague, undefined fears i.e. the possibility that some kind of generally bad, non-specific thing might happen in some way or other. That kind of vague fear is what I would call "anxiety". It is harder to tackle in some ways because there is nothing specific to look at squarely and to disprove by checking it out.

Its very vagueness is the reason why anxiety is so effective in getting you down. If it was clearly defined in writing you'd soon realise it was nonsense. But, because it's vague, you can never quite put your finger on exactly what you are worried about. So, whenever you feel that kind of nagging, imprecise worry there is a high chance that a demon lies behind it. They are using it to cause you to dwell on it and get yourself into a state where you can't function properly or even think straight.

I used to run a large law firm and, in the end, I ceased running any files of my own or acting for clients. Instead, I spent all my time supervising other lawyers, or trainee lawyers, or supervising their supervisors. That vantage point gave me a unique access into the fears which people have within the workplace which prevent them doing their job properly because they were too scared to:

- a) give bad news to a client in case he gets angry
- b) confront an opponent or ring them to negotiate or to debate a point in case the other person is better than them
- c) write a difficult letter or draft a complex document in case they don't do it well enough – so they do nothing at all and leave it undone
- d) admit a mistake, even where failure to correct it might harm the client's case. They would prefer the client's case to be harmed rather than come forward to admit their mistake
- e) put forward an idea in a meeting in case others don't like the idea
- f) do advocacy in court in case the opposing lawyer might be better than them or the judge might be aggressive
- g) continue to run a file after a client has complained, or a mistake has been made. They then avoid and neglect that file, even where attention is urgently needed, because they can't bear to look at it. We used to call such files "bogey files" and I had to keep a close eye on all staff to identify any files being neglected in this way through "file phobia".

In all these ways, and more, staff would display extraordinary levels of fear to the extent that it prevented them doing their job properly. I was surprised by how many staff were subject to such fears. If I hadn't put in place such tight supervision there would have been many disasters with clients' cases

being neglected to the extent that real harm would be done. I always managed to avoid that, but only by great effort.

But the question is what made so many staff so afraid when there was no need to be? I believe it was largely demonic. The demons were whispering into the staff's minds to whip up that fear and multiply it to harm their performance, partly to harm the member of staff and partly to harm my firm. I should add that I was not immune to such fears myself. I also had them earlier in my career when I had cases of my own to run.

But I learned at an early age that the only way to overcome such fear was *to face it head on* and do whatever I was afraid of. I just used to brace myself and force myself to face up to a "bogey file" or to ring a difficult client and give bad news that had to be given, and so on. It was a simple policy but it worked. Indeed, I think it is the only policy that can work.

You just have to get a grip on yourself, summon up your courage and do whatever it is that scares you. And you must do it today! Don't put it off until later. That only makes it worse. Face it today and get it over with and you will then feel a real sense of relief, and achievement, when it's over. And you'll also discover, every single time, that it wasn't anywhere near as bad as you expected it to be.

After a while, I began to get a reputation for knowing how to tackle "bogey files" and so my bosses began to transfer other colleagues' bogey files to me, so I ended up running lots of them, mostly other people's. Plus, I would be given the tasks that other staff were too afraid to do. For example, one day a band of gypsies came and camped on industrial land belonging to one of our commercial clients.

The only way to get rid of them was to get a court order and then for someone to go to the site and personally hand the Gypsies the eviction notices. And if they wouldn't accept them then the notices had to be attached to wooden posts and driven into the ground. Guess who my bosses gave that job to. But I thrived on it because I had discovered the secret to overcoming fear, which is simply to go ahead and *do whatever scares you, regardless of your fear*, and then the fear will go away.

I learned that lesson early in life, but very few of my colleagues ever did. And very few of my subsequent employees ever learned it either, no matter how many times I told them how fear is overcome. They just didn't want to overcome it I suppose. They preferred hiding from it, which is why I always needed such close supervision to compensate for their timidity and neglect of duty.

I could not take the risk of letting clients' interests be jeopardised through the cowardice of my staff. I believe many of those staff, deep down, had a belief system to the effect that they could not be expected to do something if they were afraid. In their own minds that obviously excused them of any need to do it. The concept of duty had not been taught to them by their parents or teachers. Neither had the concept of courage.

Therefore, even when I lectured them about their duty to the client, and the vital need never to let a client down, they were still not persuaded, no matter how much they nodded in agreement and promised not to do it again. Deep inside they were thinking "*I may have a duty to the client but not to the extent that I have to do things that frighten me.*"

You can guess by now where that thought came from. It was planted in their minds by the demons to get them to justify being afraid – *and always to give in to their fear*. And it worked astonishingly well

for the demons as a tactic. Their whisperings to induce and multiply fear were far more effective than my pep talks and exhortations to staff to face their fears and overcome them.

I suppose that was partly because employees' own self interest already predisposed many of them to choosing the line of least resistance. But it was also because they always assumed those fearful thoughts to be their own thoughts, and thus obviously correct and more important than anyone else's thoughts.

The only way to be set free from fear is to do what you are afraid of while you are still afraid

This may sound like brutal advice, as if I were a sergeant in the Marines, but it is true. You might have been hoping to be told of some technique which takes all the fear away and makes it possible for you to go forward without any fear. But it doesn't work like that. In real life the only way to overcome fear is to go ahead and do the thing you are afraid of *while you are still afraid*. So, the correct order to put this in is:

- 1) you do the thing you fear
- 2) then you cease to be afraid

I promise you that doing it in that order works and is very effective. Sadly, it doesn't work the other way round such that you find a way to stop being afraid and then (and only then) do the thing you used to be afraid of. It would be nice if it worked that way but it doesn't. Or at least I have never found any technique which can work in that order.

Therefore, sadly, my brutal advice is the only truthful answer and the only effective way to get rid of fear. But I can at least say this – it works! I know because I have done it and proved it many times, as discussed earlier. The word for this policy is 'courage' which means *doing the thing you fear while you are still afraid*.

A man who isn't afraid in a war zone, while in contact with the enemy is not brave. He is insane. It takes fear to be brave, because without fear there is no such thing as courage. That is just the way it is and it is going to stay that way. Therefore, we have to find a way to train ourselves to be courageous.

Examples of fears which I personally have overcome

Here are some examples of things I have feared in my life:

- a) public speaking
- b) court advocacy in front of fierce judges
- c) sacking a bad employee
- d) the possibility that my business might fail and I could be bankrupt

The things you fear could be very different. Nevertheless, the general principles are the same. Therefore, let me say a little about how I faced up to and overcame each of the above fears (a) to (d). You can then adapt and modify that advice to fit your own particular circumstances.

How I overcame my fear of public speaking and court advocacy

I vividly recall when I was 16 years old and went into the 6th form i.e. the last two years of school. I was elected to be Chairman of the 6th form and I needed to make a speech to all my fellow pupils and to chair a meeting involving all of them. The problem was that, despite the fact that it was my ambition to become a lawyer and in particular a litigation lawyer doing court advocacy, I was afraid to speak in public and had never done it.

Nevertheless, I stood for the post and was elected and the day of the meeting came. It worried me and I wondered whether it would be a flop and I would make a fool of myself. Nevertheless, I reasoned to myself that if I want to be a lawyer one day then I must at some point face my fear of public speaking head on and overcome it. It was either that or seek some other career.

Therefore, all I can say is *I forced myself to do it*. I prepared some things to say, as best I could, but although that was necessary in terms of knowing what to say, it didn't remove the fear of doing it. Therefore, I walked into the crowded 6th form and stood up to speak while still feeling scared. And the fear stayed with me all the time – *until I began to speak*.

It was then, *and only then*, that I discovered I was good at public speaking and the fear disappeared. Moreover, I found I could make an audience laugh, even without having prepared any scripted jokes. Things just came to me spontaneously and the audience were amused and responded really well.

But the key point is that as soon as I got up onto my hind legs and began to actually do some public speaking *the fear went away*. I felt relaxed, comfortable, confident and even exhilarated at discovering I had a talent I never knew I had. The reason I never knew it was because I'd never done it. And the reason I'd never done it was because I feared it!

Therefore, had I not faced my fear that day I might never have realized I had a skill for speaking in public and I might have chosen another career and stayed afraid for my whole life. So, I'm very glad I did what I did and I would urge you very strongly to do the same and *to do whatever you fear* – provided of course it is something you feel you ought to do or are called to do.

Ask yourself “*What is the worst thing that can happen if I do this?*” Then accept that, reconcile yourself to it, and seek to improve on it.

Ask yourself this – what is the worst thing that can happen if I fail or if it all goes wrong? It helps to set it out squarely in your mind or better still on paper so you can see exactly what it is that you fear. Then accept it and reconcile yourself to it *as if it had already happened*. You may find that until you do this the fear remains unspecified, amorphous and undefined and therefore all the more difficult to handle.

But, when the fear is written down explicitly on a sheet of paper and you can see exactly what it is and accept it, as if it had already happened, you will probably find it shrinks from a 20 stone giant to a seven stone weakling. You may well find yourself saying “*Is that all? Is that what I'm afraid of? Is that all that is stopping me?*”

I have done this many times, especially when considering business risks involving the possibility of financial difficulty or even ruin. By seeing it written down and reconciling yourself to it you find it's

not all that bad and nothing like as scary as it had felt before. You can then set your mind to thinking of ways to improve on that position which you have reconciled yourself to, so as to make the outcome even less bad than that. Very quickly you will find you are quite relaxed and are at peace about it.

Every time I ever did this and wrote down on paper what I felt was “*the worst that could happen*”, it always turned out to be smaller than I had imagined and much less scary. It never turned out to be bigger or more frightening – not even once. The fear always shrinks when you write it down and make it “stand to attention” in front of you, on a piece of paper, as if on the parade ground.

It does not shrink to nothing at all but it always goes down in *size*, in *severity* and in the *likelihood* of happening, which are the key criteria for measuring any risk. So, had I done such a written statement when I was 16 and about to speak in public for the first time, it might have read like this:

- a) I might do badly and people might not be impressed
- b) They might not laugh at my jokes
- c) It could mean I’m not cut out to be a lawyer

But the immediate answer to each of those points is:

- a) So what? In any case, that’s not likely
- b) So what? They’ll soon forget all about it even if I don’t.
- c) So what? I’ll easily choose another career.

Years later, when I came to do court advocacy and was put into a position where I would need to think quickly on my feet and deal with aggressive opponents and sometimes rude, demanding judges, I experienced similar fears to those described above when I was 16. But I learned to control myself and to face my fear in the same way as described above.

If the demons want you to be too scared to do something, that is a clear sign that it would be good for you to do it

I also learned from repeated experiences that my fears were never fully justified and no case ever turned out as badly as I’d feared it might. After a while I began to realise my fears were *always exaggerated* and over stated. Not even once did I understate them. I also figured out why that was – i.e. because demons had been whispering into my mind and they always over egged the pudding.

I realised the fear was obviously coming from demons in the first place or else was being multiplied and exaggerated by them. But I then deduced from that a very valuable maxim which is that ***if the demons want me to be afraid to do a thing it means that thing must be good for me.*** I therefore concluded I ought to be even more determined to do it than I was before they tried to make me afraid.

In other words, we can derive an indirect form of guidance, reassurance or ‘corroboration’ from our fears. That is to say that because 99% of our fears are illegitimate, unjustified and unnecessary, we can be fairly sure that anything we fear is likely to be good for us.

If it wasn't, the demons wouldn't have tried so hard to prevent us doing it by stoking up needless fear. Try to think of it in those terms and to see their perverted logic and it will help you to get a grip on yourself and convince yourself that you can and should do the things you fear.

How I overcame my fear of sacking bad staff

As for sacking people, which I had to do quite often, as we had 80 staff at our peak, and there was always someone causing problems, I never got to the point where I didn't dread doing it. But I did learn to trust my own judgement and to know that if the evidence showed they were dishonest, incompetent, lazy or whatever else then, provided I had investigated it thoroughly, I could rely on the evidence and go ahead with the dismissal without any risk that I had done an injustice. That was the main thing I dreaded.

Instead, in absolutely every case, I found that after the departure of the wrongdoer, other staff felt freer to speak. Those who had previously told me they knew nothing about the incident suddenly began to speak openly. Therefore, more evidence always emerged to confirm it had been exactly the right decision – never the other way round, not even once. So, recognising that consistent pattern reassured me and was a big help.

How I overcame my fear of business failure and bankruptcy

Concerning business failure and possible financial ruin, this was an ongoing concern to me because I ran a law firm which worked almost entirely on a "No Win No Fee" basis using "Conditional Fee Agreements" known as "CFAs". That meant we only got paid at the end of the case, by the losing party's insurer, but only if we won.

However, the insurance companies were challenging these CFAs all over the country and if they could find anything wrong with the wording of the CFA document, however slight, then it became unenforceable. That meant they wouldn't have to pay us anything for the legal costs if we won a case. As a result of this many law firms were destroyed.

Given that all our CFAs were worded the same way, it meant that if we were ever challenged and it was held that our CFA was invalid due to some legalistic technicality, then they would *all* be invalid on all our cases. If so, we would have been ruined overnight. All the firm's files would suddenly be worth nothing and our income would have reduced to zero overnight.

I had to live with that sword of Damocles hanging over me for ten years before one of my CFAs eventually reached trial before a specialist costs judge on an obscure costs issue, having been challenged by an insurance company. Thankfully, we won on every point and the judge described my firm as "exemplary". Not long after that, I sold the business and retired.

But, until then, I had always faced the constant threat of total overnight financial ruin. So, I had to learn how to live with the never ending risk of bankruptcy. I believe I achieved that too, although it took a long time. However, until I learned how to overcome that fear, the demons used it to torture me, especially in the small hours of the morning if I woke up at night.

As to how I overcame it, the answer is I did it slowly and with difficulty. It was mainly, as discussed above, by looking at what was the very worst thing that could happen and then inwardly facing that and accepting it. So I said, *“OK, I’m possibly going to have this business ruined and be made bankrupt. If that happens then so be it. I will start a new business when I can and get a job working for someone else in the meantime. I’ve done that before and it wasn’t so bad. Therefore, I can do it again.”*

I strongly recommend that technique of facing the very worst, defining it in writing, and reconciling yourself to it. *That doesn’t mean you believe it will happen.* It just means you have looked it straight in the eye and come to terms with accepting it if it does happen. So, it isn’t being negative or speaking a curse over yourself. Let’s be clear on that.

If you put into clear words exactly what the danger is and what it could mean for you, it suddenly becomes smaller and doesn’t seem such a big deal after all. This happens every time, without exception. That is partly because defining precisely what the danger is excludes all the other vague, undefined fears that have been buzzing around in your mind in the small hours of the night. They all suddenly disappear. By doing that you will really exasperate the demon.

That is because he was relying on being able to continue using that fear for months or even years to torture you, debilitate you and keep you awake at night. But now you’re facing it squarely and saying *“That’s not so bad”*. That simple statement pulls the rug out from under the demon’s feet. He then has to go away and think up some other scheme, which he will of course. But at least you will be more ready for the next one and more skilled at handling fear.

Demons want to deceive us

A remarkably high proportion of the things we think are not actually true. This is especially so with the things we think about ourselves and about our abilities, faults, potential, prospects, relationships etc. The demon alongside you or within you will take great care to make sure that as many as possible of your beliefs and assumptions are untrue, so that you will act on those wrong beliefs to your own detriment. And they will do this even in the tiniest of ways, not only over major issues.

The Devil is a liar and the “father of lies”. Almost everything he says is a lie and even if he says something that is technically true, he only says it to add authenticity to some other more damaging lie, so we will accept that lie. The same is true of every demon. They are all blatant, habitual liars. They will all lie to you in any way they can if they think there is any chance of you believing it:

“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

John 8:44 (NASB)

Demons will tell you whatever lies are necessary to get you to act to your own detriment, or to be ineffective, or to help them to achieve any of their other objectives in your life, such as discouragement, demoralisation and so on. They achieve most of their aims simply through lying to you directly and getting you to adopt those lies as your own thoughts – and your own beliefs.

They also do it by getting other people to lie to you, or by lying to them about you. Don't forget, other people have demons too, and their demons work together with yours in close cooperation. So, some of the lies told to you will come from human beings. But they are probably only repeating what their own demon told them. Therefore, the original source of the lie may be a demon either way, whether it came from your demon or theirs.

Plus, because they know you so intimately, your own demon knows exactly what kind of lies you are most likely to believe. People tend to imagine that the activity of demons is all at an extreme level. In fact it is much more practical and mundane most of the time. Thus, when a demon lies to you, he will usually do it in quite ordinary ways and about everyday things.

If they told you a huge spectacular lie that was nothing to do with your day to day life you probably wouldn't believe it. They know that very well which is why they stick to telling more mundane lies which are relevant to your daily life and are about ordinary humdrum issues.

For example, you might be planning to go to apologise to someone but before you do so the demon will lie to you by saying, as if it was your own thought, and always in the first person, *"They won't want to listen to me and they won't accept my apology anyway"*.

On hearing this, which you assume to be your own thought, you might turn round and go back, without ever giving the apology. In that very easy way, the demon has prevented you from resolving a relationship problem, with potentially serious consequences in your life and the other person's.

They will also lie to you about your own character and nature. For example, the demon will say you are not a sinner, or there is no God, or no judgment, or that some other religion is true. Alternatively, if you are determined to believe in God and you already know you are a sinner, the demon will turn it round 180 degrees and speak the opposite lie into your mind, saying *"Yes, I am a sinner, and a very bad one. God could never forgive someone as bad as me"*.

You are not necessarily innocent if you get deceived. It could be your fault that you believed the lie.

It is often assumed that deception is something we can't avoid or protect ourselves from, such that if we get deceived we can't be blamed for that. It is seen as an unfortunate, or even random, event and that if we have been lied to or tricked it is solely the fault of the one who deceived us, whether a human or a demon, but not our fault. There is an element of truth in that. Of course it is true that if we have believed a lie and acted on it then we may not be wholly to blame and sometimes we may not be to blame at all.

However, that is not always the case. Much of the time we get deceived as a result of our own carelessness, laziness, lack of preparation, lack of study and failure to remain on our guard. God actually commands us to pay attention, to be shrewd and to be on the alert so as to avoid getting deceived.

The fact that He says all that indicates that He considers the avoidance of deception to be largely our own responsibility. If not, He wouldn't give any commands about it, as He never tells us to do

impossible things or sets us tasks which are not our responsibility, such as commanding us to be tall or to be handsome. So, when He does give a command, it means we are capable of obeying it.

***¹⁶Take heed lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them,
Deuteronomy 11:16 (RSV)***

Likewise, we are given the responsibility for making sure we do not believe or follow false prophets and false teachers. They are, of course, wrong to teach what they do. But we are also wrong, and are seen as being at fault, if through our own failure to study God's Word, we fail to recognise and reject such people.

¹ "If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, ² and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' ³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him, and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and cleave to him.

Deuteronomy 13:1-4 (RSV)

Indeed, even if the liar or false teacher is a relative, it is still our duty to be on our guard, to be discerning, to identify any false teaching and to reject it:

⁶ "If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son, or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, entices you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which neither you nor your fathers have known, ⁷ some of the gods of the peoples that are round about you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other, ⁸ you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him;

Deuteronomy 13:6-8 (RSV)

You can often identify a demonic lie by its tone and how it makes you feel

You can often tell that a thought has come from a demon by its tone. If it is condemning, destructive or causes you to feel hopeless it certainly isn't from God. It very probably isn't from you either, unless they have got you so thoroughly trained to think that way that you manufacture such thoughts for yourself.

A person I know suffers particularly badly from listening to the deceiving voice of the demon that is within him. It lies to him about what his boss may think of him and gets him into such a state of anxiety about it that he does not go to see his boss when he needs help or advice because the demon has convinced him the boss will: "*get angry, explode, not understand how I feel, even sack me*".

The problem is if you get to the stage where you believe those untrue things and act upon them then, like my friend, you will cause harm to yourself. He made the mistake for over a year, of avoiding his boss, not seeking help, not admitting his errors and not getting help when he desperately needed it, simply because he feared what the boss might think.

The irony was that throughout all that time his boss wasn't angry with him at all, and *never had been*. It was all a lie, from beginning to end. But because he believed it and acted on it, he did great harm to himself and caused himself a lot of needless stress and pressure at work. And it was all because he listened to demons whispering into his mind and *acted on what they said* as if they were his own thoughts.

Demons also lie to you about your situation so you will make bad decisions and act to your own detriment

Demons lie to you about other people or situations, to cause you to make wrong decisions and to damage your future and your effectiveness. That is exactly what both sides did in World War 2 to cause the other side to waste its time, resources and men on wild goose chases or on defending coastlines which were never going to be attacked. For example, British Intelligence successfully deceived the Germans into thinking the invasion of France was going to take place at Calais.

This belief was so strong that even after the invasion of Normandy was well under way, Hitler still held back panzer divisions at Calais and refused to allow them to go north to Normandy. He had been thoroughly tricked into believing the real invasion would be at Calais and that D Day in Normandy was just a "feint" or a dummy invasion prior to the real one.

That was a brilliant piece of deception by British Intelligence which had a major impact on the outcome of the invasion. In a much more ordinary way, exactly the same is happening on a daily basis in your life and mine. You are being systematically lied to, day after day. The best defence you have to that is to know God's Word thoroughly, but also to carefully *question and check everything you are told or any thought that comes into your head*, even if you think it is your own thought.

Do not believe everything people say or take anything at face value. *Do not believe your own thoughts either*. Check and "cross examine" those just as much as if it was something said to you by some other person. ***Your own thoughts are no more trustworthy than anyone else's*** and just as likely to have come from a demon. So, check the facts but also check it against what the Bible says.

Then you can face every kind of situation with a correct understanding of what God specifically says about it and also with knowledge of His general guidance from the Bible about how to become wise, shrewd and discerning. If you have such knowledge and take it seriously, you are much more difficult to deceive. That's one reason why demons hate it when you study the Bible diligently and apply it.

But they also hate it when you check the factual accuracy of what you are told about people or rumours you hear, or even your own thoughts – or rather what you assume to be your own thoughts. As I try so hard to emphasise, ***not all our thoughts are our own***. Many actually come from demons, which is why even your own ideas and opinions need to be checked, because they may not actually be yours.

You literally can't even trust yourself – or what you assume to be yourself, because a high proportion of your thoughts are not yours at all but were planted into your mind by a demon. Realising that little known fact will save you from a ton of trouble, provided you take it seriously and act upon it by checking all your thoughts.

How demons will seek to oppress and demoralise you

The demon wants to sap your morale so that you lose your will to fight. Therefore, he will do whatever he can, by remorselessly whispering into your mind, to get you *to expect to be defeated* and to underestimate what God can do in and through you. Again, the main antidote to this is to know God's Word and in particular to know His character. Then you can recognise and resist such demonic whisperings when they come to you.

The demon wants to wear you down through creating or exacerbating adverse circumstances but, more to the point, by influencing *how you see those situations*. Remember difficult circumstances are not necessarily a bad thing. They are used by God to train and mature us, if we approach them in the right way. They can also lead to us receiving rewards and promotions when we pass the tests that God sets for us.

So, trials and tribulations can be an opportunity to grow and to be rewarded. That's how God wants you to see them, i.e. in a positive and confident way. It's the way a parent wants their child to approach a school exam, i.e. to see it as a challenge to be overcome, not something to be feared, avoided or complained about.

Some of the difficult circumstances we face are, in fact, from God. He uses them to teach us but also to discipline or correct us when we go the wrong way, just as any loving parent does with their child. We need to retrain our minds to *see problems as opportunities and adverse circumstances as character building*. Make a decision, therefore, that you will endure whatever comes your way and ask for God's help to do so:

³*Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. ⁴In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."*

Hebrews 12:3-6 (NIV)

The demon doesn't want you to see adversity or difficult circumstances in any of these positive ways, because if you did, you'd gain from them, become mature and pass God's tests and "exams". The demon wants you to see your troubles or the opposition you face as unusual or negative, and as being something unfair that ought not to be happening and which serves no purpose.

The demon wants you to grumble so as to avoid gaining anything from the trial or experience. Better still, they want you to just give in and stop fighting. Even more, they want you to blame God and to resent Him for letting you get into that situation rather than to seek His help in the difficult time and become wiser and more mature as a result of it.

Demons want to distort your view of God so that you will not trust Him

Demons want to deceive you about as many things as possible. However, the top prize for them, if they can manage it, is to lie to you about God Himself. They want to trick you so that when you think of God your mind and your emotions are filled with ideas about Him being uncaring, untrustworthy,

unreliable and even cruel. They want you to think of God as someone you ought not to trust and whose motives you should suspect.

When you face difficulties, defeats, bereavements, and disappointments, as all of us will, given that we live in this fallen world, they want you to blame God for those things and to start to resent Him. If they can get you to accept their lies and distort your view of God, they hope to achieve the following objectives:

- a) undermine your trust in God so you feel He can't be relied upon
- b) undermine your relationship with God so you begin to avoid Him and keep your distance
- c) erode your confidence in and desire for God's Word, believing that there is no point studying the words of someone who is "not to be trusted" and who is "to blame for the difficulties I face".

You need to know ahead of time that this is one of the categories of lies the demons are going to tell you. See it as inevitable and be ready for it and refuse to fall for it or to cooperate in any way. Then, when they whisper vile things into your mind about God's character, be on your guard so you can immediately knock that ball out of the park by saying:

"I will not allow God's Name to be blackened. This thought is a lie and comes from a demon and I reject it. He has not let me down or betrayed me. He is not cruel or mean or untrustworthy. I reject all those lies here and now".

Think of this from the demon's perspective. If he starts to see that every time he whispers a lie into your mind about God's character you immediately reply in those glowing terms, *declaring the truth about Him as a proclamation* and further entrenching the truth in your own mind, they will soon stop doing it. They will see it as counter-productive.

But, from your perspective, using proclamation in that way not only rejects the lie in the immediate term but also trains and reprogrammes your mind to trust God and see Him as He really is and for that to become an ingrained habit and an automatic reflex response. If so, that is doing you a lot of good and turns the 'lemon' of the demon's lie into a 'lemonade'.

Also think of this from God's perspective. How do you imagine He feels when He hears Himself being lied about and He then hears you believing the lie, repeating it and even acting on it. It must be heart breaking for Him, as it would be for a Dad who hears his child being told a blatant lie about him and the child instantly believes it. The Dad would feel so disappointed, hurt and even betrayed.

Certainly, if someone had ever come to me and told me that my Dad was a liar or a thief, or stingy, or cruel, or selfish I would have laughed in their face. I would have said *"You obviously don't know my Dad. He's as straight as a die and the most honest man I have ever known. He's also the most generous, kind, faithful, reliable and trustworthy"*.

Now imagine my Dad somehow came to hear what I had said, or heard a recording of it. Don't you agree that his heart would have been deeply touched to hear me defend him so stoutly and so instantly, without even giving the lie a moment's consideration? But, as good a man as my Dad was, God is greater, better and even more reliable. That is a fact. It is not a matter for debate. It's just self evidently obvious and it doesn't matter what happens or who denies it or what anybody else alleges about Him.

God is exactly how He is described in the Bible, no matter what may be happening in your life. So, you might be bewildered or confused but don't resolve that confusion by *redefining God's character* to put the blame on Him. Resolve it instead by changing *the way you see your situation*. I assure you, if you can do this then the demons in your life are going to be very frustrated indeed.