

The world, the flesh and the Devil

BOOK 7 IN THE REAL CHRISTIANITY SERIES

SEAN KEHOE

(Advanced draft)

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Bob Hodgson, a Christian businessman, who was a huge help to me in explaining how to deal with witchcraft in the churches and also how to engage in proclamation.

THE WORLD, THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL

BOOK 7 IN THE REAL CHRISTIANITY SERIES

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INTRODUCTION

I ought to explain at the outset that this book is ideally meant to be read alongside my Book 9 entitled “*Deliverance ministry – casting out demons*”. This first book in that duo is about the world, the flesh and the Devil and is intended to look at our wider battles against our sinful flesh nature or “old man”, plus the evils of the world system. My aim is to view those two battles as a foundation for going on to look at our third battle against the Devil and his army of demons with whom we also have to contend.

The sections on the flesh and the world are in many ways simpler than the subject of demons and are fairly self explanatory. However, I need to make clear that when I go on to discuss demons in this book I am doing so solely from the perspective of *resisting* them, and am not addressing the separate subject of *casting them out*. That is what Book 9 is all about.

So, resisting demons is something we *all* have to do, not just some of us, and it relates to demons who are on the outside of us, not the inside. They are seeking to influence, undermine, tempt, deceive and distract all of us in a host of ways to render us ineffective and unsuccessful as disciples. So, when I discuss resisting demons in this book I am addressing a problem *we all have* and I am not talking here about casting them out, which is a problem that only applies to some people, not all.

A demon can only be cast out of a person if the demon has acquired the right to be inside them. From that vantage point they can do a lot more harm and exert far more influence over a person than is possible when the demon is only on the outside “whispering into our mind”. That is what they do to all of us, including those who do not to have a demon on the inside.

But, if you are fortunate enough to be in that position, and don’t be too quick to conclude that you are, you still have a big problem to which you need to pay a lot of attention. You must not suppose that because a demon is “only” on the outside of you it can’t do much harm or lead you astray. It most assuredly can, which is why you need to give this whole issue such close attention.

However, to succeed in that third battle against demons you also need to be aware of and paying close attention to the first two battles which we all face, against our own sinful flesh nature and the sinful world system, both of which are major problems in themselves. So, they need to be dealt with, even for their own sake, but also to get you into the best position to be able to deal with your third battle, which is against the demons.

If, however, you have a demon or demons *inside* you then you need to read Book 9 but I strongly emphasise that Book 7 is an essential preparatory step before reading Book 9. There are many vital points made in Book 7 which I don’t repeat in Book 9. Yet you need to know them if you are to successfully understand Book 9 and either engage in deliverance ministry with others, or seek it for yourself.

In other words, Book 9 pre-supposes that you have read and understood Book 7 and are therefore ready to move on to the more specialist, though by no means rare, problem of people’s need to be delivered from demons. That means to have them cast out from inside of us, rather than just resisting those who are on the outside of us. Therefore, my advice is effectively to treat the two books as one long book in two parts.

Sean Kehoe

1 September 2024

CHAPTER 1

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

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

1 Peter 2:11 (NASB)

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

1 John 2:15-17 (NASB)

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

Ephesians 6:12 (NASB)

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

Philippians 1:29-30 (ESV)

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

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

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

The flesh or old man

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The world

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Devil and his demons

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Likewise, all three aspects of our spiritual war are crucial and cannot be overlooked or neglected. Therefore, God wants us to be wise, informed and discerning and to know what we are up against in each of these battles so we can stand firm, resist effectively and be victorious. There is much to be

gained if we can win these battles, or at least start to win some of them some of the time. For many of us that would be a huge step forward.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

be humiliated and that they will make a spectacle of themselves and we should try hard not to add to their fears.

- b) They often over simplify the subject and make it sound like casting out a demon will solve all the person's problems and it is then all over and everyone can live happily ever after. That is not how it works in practice. Casting out the demon is just one of many things which need to be done in the person's life and it doesn't solve everything overnight. Above all, remember that when the demon is cast out it doesn't go to Hell or take early retirement. It will continue to harass the person, *but from the outside, not the inside.*

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

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

What exactly is meant by the word 'demonised'?

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

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

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

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

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

However, we also use the same word, 'demonised', for more severe situations where the demon is *inside* the person due to having acquired a right of entry for various sorts of reasons which we shall

examine later. When the word is used in this more serious sense there is scope for a great deal more harm to be caused and for the demon to exert far more influence over the person.

Therefore, when we have a demon *inside* us we need to go beyond merely resisting it. It now needs to be cast out or expelled, for which the Greek word used in the Bible is “*ekballo*”. Perhaps it will help to think in terms of this analogy. Imagine we were to invent the word “*bacterialised*” and we were to use that word to refer to all situations where, to any degree, large or small, a person was affected by bacteria.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

weaknesses or past traumas which make them more vulnerable to demonic attack than the average person is.

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 2

THE FLESH - ALSO KNOWN AS THE SINFUL NATURE OR THE OLD MAN

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 (NASB)

⁴¹"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Matthew 26:41 (NASB)

⁶³"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

John 6:63 (NASB)

¹²The night is almost gone, and the day is near Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. ¹³Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Romans 13:12-14 (NASB)

¹But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (ESV)

¹³ When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.

James 1:13-14 (NIV)

The word "flesh" is a technical term used in the Bible. Most of the time it does not refer to the physical tissue in your body. It means your fallen human nature which is proud, selfish, sinful, and continuously opposed to God's will. Once you become a Christian your war really starts, not only out there on the battlefield of the world, or against the demons, but also inside yourself. The flesh or 'old man' is like a traitor living inside us, opposed to everything God stands for and always resisting His will.

Before you became a Christian, your flesh ruled you completely. It had things all its own way. Therefore, there was no meaningful battle against it because, at that time, your will wasn't opposing your own flesh. On the contrary, it was indulging it. Therefore, whenever your will had to make decisions it would go along with whatever your flesh wanted like a weak chairman of a committee who gives way to a loud and pushy committee member:

³Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Your main problem is yourself

The further you go in the Christian life the more you realise how bad your flesh really is and that *you* are your own biggest problem. You are your own worst enemy because of the huge influence your flesh has over you. It is as if your new man was a pilot and your old man was the co-pilot of the same aircraft, constantly obstructing your new man's wishes, pressing the wrong buttons, pulling the wrong levers and being uncooperative.

That is rather like the position we are in. We want to please God and do His will but our flesh, the old man within us, doesn't want to. It wants to resist God every step of the way. Therefore, the key question is who is going to grasp, and keep hold of, the controls of the aircraft?

Remember the old man is *not a demon* influencing you from the outside, or even from the inside. *It is part of you*. Therefore, it cannot be cast out. It can only be weakened by being denied what it wants and 'crucified'. It is your own sin nature and is still very much alive in you even after you have become a Christian. It rebels against every good thing, craves for every bad thing, and opposes all that your new man wants to do.

My personal belief is that for most of us the flesh is more significant in our lives than demons are and is the main cause of our problems. Perhaps that is why, in the 21 letters in the New Testament, demons are mentioned only 10 times but the flesh is mentioned over 50 times. Plus 'the flesh' is only one of the phrases the Bible uses to refer to our own sinful nature. If you add all the other alternative phrases as well the level of emphasis given to the flesh is even more pronounced.

It's important to remember that and to keep a proper sense of proportion and balance. Everything in the Bible is important, but some things are emphasised more than others and the extent to which a thing is emphasised and how many times it is referred to helps us to assess its relative significance. Let us therefore look now at a list of the alternative phrases which the Bible uses for the flesh. There are lots of them but they all refer to the same concept, i.e. our fallen, sinful, fleshly nature which we inherited from Adam:

Alternative phrases for the '*flesh*'

To prevent confusion let us gather together in one list the alternative phrases or euphemisms which the Bible uses to refer to our flesh. Then, whatever phrase we may see, we can be aware it is referring to our flesh. The biblical phrases used are:

- a) the *flesh* (see John 3:6, John 6:63, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:4, Romans 8:8-9, Romans 13:14, 2 Corinthians 10:3, Galatians 5:19, Philippians 3:3 and many others)
- b) the *old man* – (see Romans 6:6)
- c) the *carnal mind* – (see Romans 8:7 KJV)
- d) the *body of sin* – (see Romans 6:6 KJV) (or *sinful body* - RSV)
- e) this *body of death* – (see Romans 7:24 RSV)

- f) the *body of flesh* – (see Colossian 2:11 RSV)
- g) the *old nature* – (see Ephesians 4:22 RSV)
- h) the *natural man* – (see 1 Corinthians 2:14 NKJV)

Some additional phrases which are not used in the best translations of the Bible but which are sometimes seen in Christian books, especially those written in the distant past, are as follows:

- i) the *sin nature*
- j) the *sinful nature*
- k) the *Adamic nature*
- l) the *carnal nature*
- m) the *sinful human nature*
- n) the *fallen human nature*

All these phrases refer to this part of us called the flesh or the old man. But it is useful to be aware of these other names for it in case you come across them in books or sermons. No matter how much you resist the Devil and his demons, which you absolutely must, you should place even greater emphasis on dealing with the problems of your own flesh. That said, few people take that advice because the flesh is not an “exciting” subject and dealing with it is far from enjoyable as it involves so much self denial and self discipline.

The 'works of the flesh' or 'acts of the sinful nature'

See what apostle Paul said about our sinful nature and the fruit, i.e. the character qualities it produces, as compared to the fruit the Holy Spirit wants to develop in us:

¹⁹The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:19-24 (NIV)

Note the examples Paul gives of the '*acts of the sinful nature*'. Do you recognise those features in yourself? If not, ask God to open your eyes to see yourself as you really are with your character defects exposed. Pray that God will show you the truth about yourself, 'warts and all', because passages like this are not put in the Bible to benefit “*other people*”.

Paul is not gossiping at a bus stop about others in the Church. *He is talking to you and me, and he is talking about you and me.* Therefore, ask God for self-knowledge and keep asking for it until you get it however much it hurts to face up to it.

Paul goes on to describe his battle against his own sinful nature in this famous passage. Remember this is apostle Paul speaking here, possibly the greatest Christian of all time. Therefore, if even he faced these problems with his flesh, isn't it inevitable that you and I will struggle with it even more?

¹⁴We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

²⁰Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²²For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 7:14-25 (NIV)

This passage above was written by apostle Paul when he was in his fifties and therefore very mature. He had developed enough wisdom by then to be able to write the letter to the Romans, which is perhaps the greatest document ever written. Nevertheless, Paul freely concedes that because of the war raging within him:

- a) he does *not do* the good that he intends
- b) he *does* the evil that he doesn't intend.

So, even Paul never reached a stage where he had fully won the battle with his own flesh. He could crucify it daily and put it to death but, just as with us, his flesh refused to stay dead. It is like dealing with persistent weeds in the garden which never completely go away, whatever we do. All we can do is keep up a constant battle, tackling the weeds over and over again, as we gradually gain ground and they lose ground.

The need to "crucify the flesh"

The Bible speaks of this battle against your own flesh in terms of us having to "crucify" it. In other words, you have to refuse to let your flesh have its own way by regularly saying "no" to it. Slap it down mercilessly as if you were in a fight to the death with a determined opponent. Its rebellion needs to be crushed, again and again, every time it rears its head. Don't give it any ground or make any provision for it:

¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Romans 13:14 (NASB)

To understand why the Bible tells us to "crucify" your flesh imagine it as a cancer being dealt with by chemotherapy or radiotherapy. The aim of the treatment is to *kill* the tumour, not to improve it or heal

it. The only way to deal with cancer cells is to destroy them, or at least to diminish and shrink the tumour. That is the only effective policy and handling the flesh is the same.

We cannot come to any arrangement with our flesh or make peace with it any more than our immune system can come to an arrangement with cancer cells. We must just keep up the war and never stop fighting. Therefore, think of putting our flesh to death as if we were trying to shrink a tumour in our body which is seeking to spread and take over completely.

In this lengthy passage from Romans Paul goes into detail about the battle between our flesh and our spirit, once our spirit has been reborn at our conversion:

⁵Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

⁸Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. ⁹You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

¹⁰But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

¹²Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

Romans 8:5-13 (NIV)

So, we are to wage a constant and relentless war with our flesh. We cannot afford to show it any mercy or “take any prisoners”. We must consistently refuse to indulge our own pride, selfishness, temper and lusts. Whatever our flesh craves for, we must always refuse to give it and do the opposite instead. Never indulge or pamper it, especially your pride. When you notice pride in yourself give it a dose of what it hates most, which is to humble yourself.

We must regard our old self, or flesh, as having been 'crucified with Christ'

As part of our battle against our flesh, or ‘old self’, the Bible urges us to consider it to have been crucified with Christ, i.e. put to death. Moreover, we are instructed to *continue* to put it to death thereafter by ‘crucifying’ it again every day.

Part of this process of dying to self is to realise that, technically speaking, every genuine Christian has already been put to death with Jesus Christ when He died on the cross. Therefore our ‘old man’ is now to be considered legally dead (even though in practical terms, it isn’t) and we are to refuse to take its cravings into account or to act as it would wish us to:

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20 (RSV)

Instead, we are to choose at any given moment to operate through our new man. That is our reborn human spirit which thinks and acts as Jesus Christ does. Technically, the old man's death occurs when we are born again at our conversion. But we symbolically display that death and proclaim it publicly when we are baptised in water. (See my Book 1).

That is one reason why it is so important to be baptised in water properly and to know at the time exactly what you are doing and why. As we go down into the water we are declaring to ourselves, and to everyone else, that, legally, our old man has been put to death. Then, when we rise up from the water, it is to start a new life in which our new man can come to life and start operating as Jesus would.

Therefore, in the first century Church, baptism in water usually took place very soon after conversion, or even immediately afterwards, such that the two events almost became viewed as one. They didn't go in for the long delays before being baptised that we usually see in the modern Church.

⁶For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- ⁷because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:6-11 (NIV)

However, it is only in the technical, legal sense that our old man or old self is 'dead'. In practical terms, in our day to day lives, it is still very much alive and active. That is why we must continue to deny our flesh and put it to death again every day in the sense of not letting it have its own way so it can't get us to obey its evil desires:

¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Romans 6:12-14 (NIV)

Note that final point above that we are "not under law but under grace." This is a concept that most of us struggle even to understand, let alone apply. It means that, for a Christian, Jesus has made available a new way to live. It is not achieved by observance of the Law of Moses, which, in any case, our old man is incapable of doing.

Instead, it is to live in obedience to *the Law of Christ*, which our *new* man is capable of doing, even though our old man isn't. That point is frequently misunderstood. Our old man is not capable of living in accordance with the Law of Christ, which one might say means allowing Jesus Christ to live through us.

Only our new man can do that, which is why we are urged to live in and through our new man, not our old man. Some make the error of thinking we are meant to try to get our old man to live the Christian life and obey Jesus. It won't, and never will. Only our new man can do that.

At our conversion when our spirit or new man comes to life, the Bible says we become a “new creation” or “new creature”

When a person becomes a Christian, i.e. at the moment when they are forgiven and justified, or made righteous in God's eyes, the Bible speaks of them being ‘born again’ or of being a ‘new creation’.

³ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born anew.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit.”

John 3:3-8 (RSV)

¹⁷Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (RSV)

Paul also speaks of this concept of being a ‘new creation’ or having a ‘new nature’ in his other letters:

¹⁵For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Galatians 6:15 (RSV)

²² Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22-24 (RSV)

The fact that God considers our old man to be legally dead opens the way for us to learn how to live through our new man. Unlike our old man, the new man is capable of obeying Jesus Christ. In fact, it positively wants to do so. Accordingly, we can bear fruit through our new man which our old man has never been able, and never will be able, to produce.

⁴So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. ⁵For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Romans 7:4-6 (NIV)

So, if we will allow it, our new man is able to do right and have the life of Jesus Christ lived out through him. We have been set free from the hopeless task of trying to obey the Law of Moses, or any other

set of rules. Nevertheless, there is still something in our flesh which likes laws and rules. However, it only likes law for the sake of trying to impress others, not because it is law-abiding.

That is one reason why '*religion*', i.e. the attempt to impress God by keeping traditions and obeying rules, appeals so much to our flesh. That is also why, throughout history, churches are full of man-made rules and traditions. Keeping such rules makes people feel pleased with themselves as if they were worthy of God's approval. Please refer to my commentary on Galatians and also my lengthy article on the Law of Moses for a lot more detail. Both are also available in audio format.

Alternative names in the Bible for the '*new man*'.

Just as the Bible uses several phrases to refer to our old man or flesh, it also uses different words to refer to the new man. Let's list some of these as it may help to avoid confusion:

- a) the *new man* (see Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10)
- b) the *spirit* (with a small s) (see Acts 17:16, Romans 1:9, 1 Corinthians 6:20, 1 Corinthians 14:15, 2 Corinthians 2:13, Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 4:6)
- c) the *inner man* (see Ephesians 3:16)
- d) the *hidden man of the heart* (see 1 Peter 3:4)

Whereas the old man cannot do anything other than sin, our new man is unable to sin at all. Our new man or spirit, having come to life at the moment we were justified, is not sinful. It is not affected by the curse that came upon the whole human race because of Adam's sin. It was affected previously, which is why it was dead, unable to do anything at all.

But when we are born again our spirit comes to life and becomes as it was meant to be, i.e. sinless and in tune with the way God thinks. Therefore, our new man cannot sin and thus, *at the times when we are operating in it*, we are not sinning. That is why the Bible urges us to act in accordance with our new man, i.e. to do what he wants, not what the old man wants.

What is meant by the "*renewal of your mind*" and what does that have to do with overcoming the flesh?

A Christian's own human spirit is incapable of sin. However, our body, mind, emotions and will are all entirely capable of sinning. They will sin whenever they act in accordance with the values and wishes of our old man. Conversely, they will not be sinning when they act in accordance with the values and wishes of our new man.

Therefore, it is important that we begin to get the rest of us, our body, mind, emotions and will, to change. This process of change takes up our whole lifetime and is known as 'sanctification'. Part of this process is retraining our minds to adopt the values of our new man. Paul refers to this as "*the renewal of your mind*":

¹I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good

and acceptable and perfect.³ For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him.

Romans 12:1-3 (RSV)

Whereas the rebirth of our spirit or new man is instantaneous, and is *done for us* by God, the renewal of our mind is a slow process. Moreover, *we ourselves* have to play a deliberate part in causing it to happen. We need to make choices, day by day, to force our mind to learn God's Word thoroughly and to do what our new man wants and to reject what our old man wants. Paul elaborates on this ongoing process in Ephesians:

¹⁷ Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; ¹⁸ they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; ¹⁹ they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness. ²⁰ You did not so learn Christ!—²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. ²² Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Therefore, putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need. ²⁹ Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, ³² and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 4:17-32 (RSV)

The main part of us which is driving this process of change is our will, the part which ultimately makes all the decisions. So, when you "*put off your old nature*" as Paul urges us to do, it is your will which is making the decision to do that. There is also a circular process going on involving the will, the new man and the mind.

The more the will chooses to listen to the new man the more the mind is also renewed and changed. And the more the mind is renewed, the more influence it exerts over the rest of us and so the more capable our will becomes of making right choices. So, every part of this virtuous circle is vital.

¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ³ But fornication and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not associate with them, ⁸ for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead

expose them. ¹² *For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret;* ¹³ *but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light.* ¹⁴ *Therefore it is said,*

*“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,
and Christ shall give you light.”*

¹⁵ *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,* ¹⁶ *making the most of the time, because the days are evil.* ¹⁷ *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.* ¹⁸ *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit,* ¹⁹ *addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart,* ²⁰ *always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.*

Ephesians 5:1-20 (RSV)

Our old man wants to be important and to be served, not to serve others

One of the most distinctive features of the old man is pride. It longs to be important and to be served by others. By contrast, the new man has no such cravings. The new man is happy to serve others whereas the old man always desires to be served:

³³*And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?"* ³⁴*But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.* ³⁵*And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."* ³⁶*And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them,* ³⁷ *"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."*

Mark 9:33-37 (ESV)

The new man knows how to take the place of a servant and actually wants to do so, because it has the humility of a child. The curious thing about God's Kingdom is the highest place is to be found at the bottom, not at the top. We achieve success in Jesus' eyes by becoming servants, and by being happy to remain so, not by getting others to serve us, which is what the world sees as success.

The Bible is such an honest book it shows us incidents that do not reflect well on the disciples. In the passage below the apostles James and John are trying to grab for themselves the highest positions in Jesus' Kingdom. Jesus corrects them, but we all need to take note, because their attitude is the same as ours much of the time. We need to turn from such pride and seek a place where we can serve rather than trying to get others to serve us. That is the way to achieve real happiness.

³⁵ *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."* ³⁶*And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?"* ³⁷*And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."* ³⁸*Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"* ³⁹*And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized,* ⁴⁰*but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine*

to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:35-45 (ESV)

In this next passage all the disciples were arguing as to who was the greatest. Imagine doing that in front of Jesus! Yet, that's what we do much of the time, exalting and asserting ourselves. When we do that Jesus is just as much in the room as when He was with the disciples. He just isn't visible.

The disciples were later cured of their longing to be important and admired which is one reason why they were willing to include such unflattering passages in their gospels and to appear in a bad light, rather than editing them out, as most of us would have done:

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵ And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶ But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷ For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

Luke 22:24-27 (ESV)

Would we have included passages which reflect badly on ourselves if we had written the Bible? One suspects not. Very few people do so when telling a story. We need to imitate the disciples and present our own faults and failures openly while being much quieter about our successes and strengths.

Consider whether you achieve that. It will indicate how far you have come. Listen to yourself in conversations and read what you write. Then set yourself the target of being as honest, modest and self-critical as the disciples were. Be frank about your failings and sins and quiet about your successes.

CHAPTER 3

OVERCOMING THE FLESH

²² Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22-24 (RSV)

²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

James 1:21 (NIV)

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Revelation 2:26 (KJV)

²⁶ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Revelation 3:21 (KJV)

The first step in overcoming the flesh is to “deny self”

The key phrase the Bible uses in relation to our dealings with our own flesh nature is to say we must “deny” it. That means to refuse to let it have its own way or even to be listened to at all:

²³ And he said to all, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

Luke 9:23-25 (RSV)

The believer is told to “deny himself”, meaning to refuse to indulge himself or to let his flesh nature have any say in what that believer does. But this is not a single event, after which the flesh has been “overcome” and is no longer a problem. It is an ongoing process, indeed a lifelong one, and there is no point at which we have a complete or permanent victory over the flesh.

It would be more correct to think of this as a “war of attrition” as the Army speaks of, whereby the goal is to gradually wear down our opponent by a sustained campaign of chipping away at their manpower, resources, fuel, food supplies, etc until the opponent has been weakened sufficiently for you to be able to defeat him. Thinking in those terms is more realistic than if you were to imagine yourself winning decisive battles whereby the whole position is transformed overnight.

Note also the metaphor of picking up and carrying your own cross, just as Jesus, and then Simon of Cyrene, were told to carry Jesus’ cross (or rather the horizontal cross beam) to the place of execution. The image is an apt one because your goal is not merely to weaken your flesh but to gradually put it to

death. That image brings out the intensity of the struggle. It is you or him. Either you defeat the flesh or it will defeat you. So resolve to take the fight seriously and to persist with it all your life.

We actually need to go so far with self-denial as to "die to self"

Our flesh is incurably selfish and sinful and the only effective thing we can do is to put it to death. There is no other way to deal with it. We must take every opportunity to 'die to self' which means being very severe with our flesh, especially our pride and self-centeredness. We have to do the things which undermine our pride and avoid anything which exalts ourselves or boosts our ego.

The trouble is this process is painful, hence the phrase 'die to self'. It isn't easy and it never will be. But it can be done, step by step. Jesus likens it to what happens to a seed when it is put into the ground. The seed, which represents self, is allowed to die so that something good can grow in its place.

²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.

John 12:24-26 (ESV)

Whatever time you may have left before you die, or before Jesus returns, you have a choice as to how to use each day. You can live for yourself and do what your flesh wants, or you can die to self by planting yourself in the ground and see something good grow from your life.

Whatever we do to deny ourselves and to die to self will produce a harvest in terms of benefit to others and also the rewards that will come to us. The alternative is to exalt oneself, live for pleasure, seek the approval of others and achieve nothing of any eternal benefit.

Dying to self involves putting Jesus ahead of yourself and choosing His will instead of your own

Dying to self involves putting Jesus ahead of yourself and choosing His will instead of your own. You could say that dying to self involves loving Jesus more than you love yourself. That may be easy to say as a slogan, but how many of us can honestly say we do it? I don't think I could, but I'd like to move in that direction. The way to do so is to start obeying what Jesus says, and keep doing so, because He measures our love for Him by *the extent to which we obey Him*:

²¹Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." ²²Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" ²³Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

John 14:21-24 (ESV)

Jesus was the perfect example of how to choose God's will instead of our own. Look at how Jesus operated in the Garden of Gethsemane. Three times He pleaded with God the Father to find some other way to save us that did not involve Him having to die on the cross.

But, each time, God said no and Jesus submitted. He accepted the Father's wish that He should stick to the original plan and go to the cross. Indeed, it was the only plan there ever was, or ever could be, to save mankind. That is the ultimate and most literal example of how a person can die to self:

³² *And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."*
³³ *And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.*
³⁴ *And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." ³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." ³⁷ And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹ And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."*

Mark 14:32-42 (ESV)

Luke adds a further section that Matthew and Mark do not have. As a doctor, Luke was interested in medical details and he reveals that Jesus was so afraid, and so dreadfully stressed, He actually bled out of the pores of His skin. That was because the agony He was in, mentally and emotionally, caused capillary blood vessels under his skin to burst. We will never match that, but it is our model:

⁴¹ *And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." ⁴³And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Luke 22:41-44 (ESV)

Dying to self also means putting the needs of other people ahead of your own needs

Another aspect of dying to self involves putting the needs of others ahead of our own. We all find that extremely difficult because we are so self-centered. Therefore, most of us never even attempt to put others first, let alone make it our consistent practice. We are never going to succeed fully in this objective, but it is realistic to hope we may achieve it from time to time. If we can start to do that there is also reason to hope we can manage to do it more frequently and for longer periods.

The verse below refers to laying down our lives for our friends. We generally interpret that as dying literally, in their place, and some of us may be called upon to do so. However, it also has a wider meaning, which is to lay down our lives metaphorically, in the sense of serving others and devoting our lives to them sacrificially to enable them to hear the Gospel and be saved:

¹² *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

John 15:12-13 (ESV)

To lay down our lives slowly in the metaphorical sense, day by day, over years, is probably harder than to literally die for someone, which may only take a moment. It is something we have to persist in, even when everything in our flesh is crying out for us to stop bothering about the needs of others and just focus on ourselves.

Putting off the old self and putting on the new self

Another way the Bible explains our battle with our flesh is to say we must ‘put off’ our old self and ‘put on’ the new self. In each case it is spoken of as if these were garments that we take off and put on:

²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)

So, the new self is spoken of here like a garment we need to put on. But we also have to *continue* putting it back on, again and again, because our flesh keeps reasserting itself. Therefore, by a decision of our will, we can choose to follow Jesus and with our mind we can know it is right to do so. But our flesh resists both our mind and our will and tries to sabotage their plans.

Therefore, we must recognise the existence of that traitor in the camp and refuse to cooperate with the flesh on any point. Say no to its cravings, resist its influence and continue putting on the new self and letting his wishes prevail.

The flesh is weak. Therefore, we need to ask for God's help

Nobody has a “good flesh”, not even relatively speaking. There is no such thing. There is nothing good about the flesh and it has nothing positive to offer. Therefore, we cannot even hope to achieve anything for God or to please Him if we are operating through our old man.

To do something in obedience to God it has to be done through our new man. To achieve that we need to pray for God's help to enable our new man to come to the fore and to gain the upper hand in any given situation. If we pray in that way God will help us operate in the new man, not the old man.

Here we see an example of the apostles letting Jesus down in His hour of great need. In part, that failure occurred because they did not pray for the grace to be brave, or even just the energy to stay awake, at that key moment when Jesus needed them. Instead of doing what was right, and giving Jesus what He needed, they just did what they felt like doing, which was to go to sleep:

³⁷And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?" ³⁸Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴²Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

Mark 14:37-42 (ESV)

In the garden of Gethsemane every disciple failed. If even one of them had prayed for the grace to stay awake, Jesus' ordeal of waiting for His arrest, trial and crucifixion would have been slightly easier. He would have had someone alongside Him to keep Him company as He waited to be betrayed which would have been at least a small fragment of comfort.

As we face times of stress, temptation or testing we need to pray for the grace to operate through our new nature rather than the old. Therefore, when about to have a difficult meeting or conversation, or when you feel you might lose your temper, or when about to do something which may tempt you to pride, why not pray along these lines:

“Father, I am about to enter a situation, or a day, when I will be sorely tested or tempted and where my pride, temper, or self-centeredness is likely to rise up and assert itself. Please give me the grace to operate through my new nature, and for my actions and reactions to please you and to be the opposite of what my flesh wants to do”.

The old self or old man cannot ever be cured or improved - it has to be put to death

God has not provided any cure or remedy for our flesh. He will not improve it, educate it, retrain it, counsel it or modify it. There is only one solution and that is to put it to death. Our old man can't be cured or rehabilitated. It has to be executed, day after day, for the rest of your life, and, what's more, God has specified that *you* must be its 'executioner'!

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Colossians 3:5-10 (NIV)

God will not do the executioner's job for you. This is a task reserved for you to do all by yourself on a daily basis. You are to put your own sinful flesh nature to death, just as you might go for daily radiotherapy or chemotherapy to shrink a tumour in your body. You would never try to “cure”, “rehabilitate” or “improve” a tumour, so as to make it into a ‘good tumour’. The only way to deal with cancer is to attack it, and keep on attacking it, without ever being content to co-exist with it:

This battle with our own flesh will never come naturally to us. It will always mean doing the opposite of what our sinful nature would like to do:

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

Galatians 5:16-18 (NASB)

²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:24 (NASB)

Set your mind on the things of the Spirit, not the things of the flesh

Before we can hope to see any change in our behaviour there must first be a change in our minds. We need to set our minds on the things of the Spirit, rather than on the things of the flesh. It must begin, however, with a decision of the will to start re-programming our minds. Then, as your mind begins to change, it will, in turn, have a positive impact on your will, and on the subsequent decisions it makes.

However, unless we begin by at least wanting to live differently, and pray for the grace to do so, we won't even get started on the process of change. If we try to do it on our own, without praying for God's help, our old man will stop us making any progress. But, if we pray beforehand, there is real hope of becoming able to set our mind on the things of the Spirit:

⁵Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.⁶The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. ⁹You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Romans 8:5-10 (NIV)

Starve the flesh (old man) and feed the spirit (new man)

There is an old saying that you should “*starve the flesh and feed the spirit*”. That means you deliberately deny yourself those things your sinful nature craves for. As well as enjoying sin the flesh also has physical needs, for example food. Therefore, fasting periodically from food is an important discipline which helps to subdue the power of your flesh and to reduce its overall hold over you. This has a beneficial effect in every area of your life.

At the same time as fasting to subdue your flesh, you also need to *feed your spirit*. You mainly do this through prayer, Scripture memory, reading the Bible and meditating and reflecting on it. That way your spirit steadily becomes stronger and you begin to hear God more easily. I should emphasise here that “meditating” on Scripture has *nothing whatsoever to do with the ideas we see in false eastern religions*. To them, meditation is about emptying your mind. **You should never do that.**

Biblical meditation is about focusing on a passage and reflecting or “ruminating” on it, as a cow does when it brings back up grass which it has chewed earlier and chews on it again to extract more goodness from it. That is how God gives you new understanding and insights into things which you have read before but never fully understood.

For example, my books on Galatians and the Law of Moses largely arose out of me setting out to memorise Matthew chapter 5. I then started to meditate on verses 17-20 and to ask God to help me to properly understand them. That led, in turn, to Him giving me such a thorough understanding of the current status of the Law of Moses and of why it ended that I was able to write a book on it plus a commentary.

So, don't confuse biblical meditation with the false type practiced in Hinduism, the New Age or Buddhism. True biblical meditation has nothing to do with any eastern religions and is a vital part of strengthening your spirit and also your mind.

At the same time, as you are feeding your spirit, if you adopt an ongoing policy of denying your flesh what it wants, your flesh will gradually become weaker and less of a problem to you. It will never cease to be a problem completely. Your flesh will always trouble you to some extent, until the day you die.

Until then, it is your responsibility to seek to overcome it day by day and not to indulge it or let it have its own way. Just as crucifying the flesh makes it weaker, pampering it makes it stronger. So, if we allow ourselves to indulge in sin we are strengthening that traitor who is living within us.

The importance of fasting if we are to overcome our flesh

Fasting is an important theme throughout the Bible. It was widely practised by the prophets and apostles, and even by Jesus, who began His public ministry with a 40 day fast. You are unlikely to make any substantial progress in subduing the flesh without fasting playing at least some part in the process. Our flesh nature is so closely linked to our physical body that to deny our body what it wants is a powerful tool for conquering our flesh.

There are few things our physical body wants more strongly than food. Therefore, to go without food for a day, or even for three days or seven days, or even 40 days, is an ordeal. There is no doubt about that. The difficulties are very real but, even so, fasting will do a number of positive things:

- a) It will expose any particularly sinful aspect of your nature which God is concerned about. That may sound like a backward step, but it helps you to then address that sin. For example, while fasting, you may find you lose your temper more quickly. If so, those around you will probably notice when you are fasting, at least in your early days. I generally used to fast on Mondays and my PA used to say she would like to have all Mondays off, because of what fasting did to my levels of irritability. I find that while I fast I have reduced levels of patience, self-control and endurance. But fasting doesn't *create* those deficiencies. It simply *reveals* that they are already there by bringing them to the surface. Fasting shows what you really are, so you are no longer under any illusions about the true level of your maturity. Then you can do something about it.
- b) Fasting will also weaken the power your flesh has over you and cause you to have small victories each time. As you persist with fasting, over months and years, changes will come in unexpected ways. You will find yourself overcoming things you had not previously been able to defeat or making progress in areas where you had not done so previously.
- c) It will also sharpen up your 'spiritual hearing' and enable you to hear God's voice, and your own conscience, more clearly and frequently. You will frequently find during times of fasting that you have ideas or notice things in the Bible you had not seen before. You will also have insights or you may discern things you had not realised before.
- d) It will also give you power to share the Gospel or to achieve God's objectives. You may therefore find that breakthroughs come while you are fasting. Or opportunities may arise, or doors may open,

that were not there before. It is no coincidence. Fasting leads to answered prayer and that makes a difference to our *circumstances*. More importantly, it makes *us* different because *we* change. Therefore, we become better able to handle our circumstances, even if they don't change.

Fasting can also be taken too far and turn into 'asceticism'. Man-made religious rules about food can be "a work of the flesh" in themselves.

Fasting is a good thing, provided you go about it the right way and don't become "religious" or arrogant about it, or start to think it can earn you any kind of righteousness. Self-discipline and self-control are obviously good things, but 'asceticism' is not.

That is the belief that you must subject yourself to extreme hardship, even to the extent of hitting your own body with a whip. This is seen in some parts of the Roman Catholic church, especially in the past. But it is a false form of humility, which just creates pride and is actually a work of the flesh in itself, rather than helping to crucify the flesh:

²⁰ Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? ²² These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Colossians 2:20-23 (ESV)

Fasting is also good for your health, boosts your immune system, and can even fight cancer

I want to add this short section on the medical benefits of fasting, quite apart from the spiritual benefits, as it may help some people. Therefore, if you can get yourself into a regular habit of fasting, such as one day a week or two days, and/or occasional longer fasts of 3 days, 5 days, 7 days, or even 20 to 40 days, your physical health could be transformed.

You will lose weight, which is critically important in itself, as obesity is a major cause of heart disease and also cancer. But even if a person already has cancer, even at an advanced stage, sustained *water only* fasting can be effective in shrinking and even destroying tumours, as well as killing thousands of cancer cells floating around the body like the seeds of a dandelion.

This little known process whereby tumors and cancer cells are "devoured" by the body during a sustained water only fast is known as "*autophagy*". It essentially means that when the body has no food it has been programmed by God to "eat itself". That means the body has a pre-ordained sequence which it goes through to determine which parts of you to "eat" first, second, third etc until, last of all, it begins to devour one's own organs at the very end of the starvation process.

However, before you get to that damaging stage, where one sees organ failure and death, the earlier stages are very different and extremely helpful. So, the body will begin by eating stored fat but also any tumours. In other words, God has programmed the body to heal itself through fasting and the tumours shrink and are consumed. What's more, fasting also serves to reset the immune system and to 'turbo-charge' it, so it can more effectively fight infections of any kind.

However, “autophagy” only really begins to happen after the third day of fasting. So, if you did a series of 3-day fasts your body would probably never even start the process of autophagy. Also, if you want to see autophagy happening the fast must be *100% water only*, not a mere diet, not even a keto diet. There must be no food at all and it must be maintained for longer than three days, ideally for as long as you can bear it. When doing this it is wise to take electrolytes dissolved in water to replace minerals your body may be short of.

You might ask why no doctor today ever recommends fasting, even though it has all these remarkable benefits, including detoxifying the body and the organs. For example, the best way to detoxify the liver is usually by fasting, not by taking medicines or even “natural remedies”. The answer is that there is no money to be made by recommending fasting. No medicines get sold and the pharmaceutical industry would get no profits.

Therefore, as the pharmaceutical companies control all the medical schools in universities and dictate the syllabus, things like fasting or even dieting, or even eating healthy foods, never get a mention – quite literally. So don’t necessarily be put off by the fact that doctors don’t recommend it, or even that they dismiss the idea as nonsense.

If they advise against fasting then ask them for their specific reasons, together with evidence, and don’t be satisfied with a mere brush off. I say all this because I spoke to a doctor before going on a lengthy fast and he reacted as if I had suggested throwing myself off a bridge.

Of course, there will be exceptions for example if you were already malnourished, or pregnant or diabetic or on certain medications. But your common sense would usually tell you that anyway. Remember the pharmaceutical companies are corrupt and have no qualms about lying to you or even keeping you sick so as to prolong drug sales.

Remember also that doctors today don’t always work things out for themselves. Very often they just do whatever their laptop tells them to do – and that computer was programmed by the pharmaceutical industry. See my talks on modern deceptions for more detail on this.

What does it mean to "*pick up our cross daily*" and follow Jesus?

Have you noticed that when Jesus used this phrase about taking up our cross daily, it was *before* He had been crucified? That's because the people were already familiar with crucifixion and had seen many taking place, probably every week, as the Romans dealt with ordinary criminals. They therefore knew that a man who was about to be crucified may be told to carry his own cross to the place of execution, as Jesus later had to do. So the phrase immediately made sense to them. Jesus spoke of this more than once:

²³And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

Luke 9:23-25 (ESV)

³⁸And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me

Matthew 10:38 (ESV)

The figure of speech, "*pick up your cross daily*" means being willing to take part in a daily process of self-denial and voluntary self-abasement, or humbling of oneself, by which the cravings of the flesh are denied or postponed, rather than gratified. We have to confront our flesh head on and refuse to yield to its desires:

¹¹And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. ¹³Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Romans 13:11-14 (NIV)

The cost of following Jesus

Following Jesus comes at a high personal cost. Anybody who is a genuine, active, obedient disciple of His, as opposed to merely accepting that He exists and having lukewarm feelings towards Him, will inevitably experience persecution:

⁵⁷As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." ⁵⁹To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ⁶⁰And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." ⁶²Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:57-62 (ESV)

Paying this cost does not appeal to our flesh because it does not want to suffer or be held in low regard by others. However, enduring these things for His sake will weaken our flesh and undermine its hold over us. The very persecution we will get from being a genuine disciple therefore yields a benefit in that it helps to undermine our flesh.

The 'works of the flesh' or 'acts of the sinful nature' – how these things are seen in our lives:

Galatians 5:19-21 lists 15 different 'works of the flesh', or 'acts of the sinful nature'. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but these 15 examples are representative of the ways in which our flesh nature manifests itself:

¹⁹The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21 (NIV)

These 15 things can be divided into four broad categories or groups: sensual sins, religious sins, social sins and sins of excess. Let's look at each of these:

a) Sensual sins - fornication, impurity and licentiousness

This refers to all kinds of sexual activity before or outside of marriage. Thus, it means pre-marital sex, adultery, masturbation, and any kind of homosexual activity. It also covers crudeness and vulgarity in our speech, thoughts or actions, plus jokes containing sexual innuendo, lustful thoughts and pornography. So, it covers a very wide range and includes all the ways in which the God-given sexual urge is misused, perverted, taken to excess, or used prematurely.

Sex is a God-given gift, but that does not mean we can use that gift in any way, or at any time, or with any person, that we want. We are responsible for the way we use every gift, including sex, and we will be held accountable for all that we do with it. However, as sinners, we are prone to indulging ourselves, without regard to the consequences. That is a very serious matter, because sexual sin is a sin against our own body, and also a defilement of our body, which is “*a Temple of the Holy Spirit*”:

¹⁸Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 (RSV)

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (ESV)

To refrain from sexual activity also involves self-denial which has a similarly beneficial effect as fasting in that it helps to weaken our flesh. That is especially so if we avoid sexual sin.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³ Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness.

Romans 6:12-13 (RSV)

b) Religious sins - idolatry and sorcery (witchcraft)

Idolatry is putting anything, or anybody, in the place of God by worshipping it. There are many things we might make into idols, such as career, money, success, fame, reputation, possessions, or even a football team. Sorcery is a form of witchcraft, in particular, where drugs are used as part of that.

Sins of this type, including false forms of worship or idolatry, and even witchcraft/sorcery, originate from the flesh nature. They do so because witchcraft involves the desire to control other people which

is a form of exaltation or worship of oneself. Instead we must let others be free to run their own lives while we submit ourselves to be under God's control.

Much of what passes for Christianity today is just people's attempt to create their own god. At the heart of this is pride and self-righteousness. Unbiblical forms of religion are outlets for the flesh nature because they all exalt self rather than denying it. We can also be fleshly where we follow individuals, factions or denominations instead of Jesus Christ:

¹And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? ⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.

⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labour. ⁹For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:1-11 (NASB)

c) Social sins - hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, self-ambition, dissensions, factions and envy

These eight sins listed above in the heading affect all our personal relationships and cause most of the problems we face in marriage and with our children, friends, colleagues and neighbours. We often seek to justify ourselves when we act in these ways. For example, if we have an outburst of temper we might excuse it by saying it only happened because somebody wronged us. But even if they have, it still does not entitle us to behave wrongly in our reaction to them.

¹⁹Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James 1:19-20 (ESV)

¹What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

James 4:1-2 (ESV)

All eight of these sins come ultimately from selfishness, which is therefore the root cause we need to tackle. Why would you hate others or have outbursts of rage towards them if you were not selfish? Temper and rage happen because we feel we are more important than other people and that our needs and wants, and our right to express our views, are more important than theirs. We may not put those underlying beliefs into express words, but that is the unspoken assumption behind such sins.

We cannot cease to sin in these ways merely by deciding to stop. The habit patterns are too deeply ingrained. What we can do, however, is to strike at the foundation of all these sins, which is the obsession with self. As we begin to do battle with our selfishness and refuse to let our flesh have its own way, we gradually undermine the platform on which all these sins stand.

d) Sins of excess - drunkenness and carousing

God views *drunkenness* as an act of the flesh. Therefore, it is sin. Yet, our society treats it as if it was an illness and tells us to call it “*alcoholism*”. But that is the wrong word, as it implies the person is not to blame and is simply ill. The correct biblical term for a person who gets drunk is a “*drunkard*,” not an “*alcoholic*”, because God holds us responsible for the choices we make, including what we drink.

Therefore drinking to excess is a sin, not an illness. And a compulsion to drink, where we can’t stop ourselves is actually a sign of having a demon (on the inside). I say that because any form of compulsion, whether it be to drink alcohol or anything else is evidence of the existence of a person who is doing the “compelling”, and that person can only be a demon.

The other word, ‘*carousing*’ might today be translated as “partying”, i.e. partying inappropriately, excessively and drunkenly, such that other forms of immoral behaviour are likely to follow. Doing things to *excess* is at the core of many of the wrong things we do.

Even where things are good in themselves, we can still sin by doing them too much, or too often, or at the expense of other things which God wanted us to do instead. It comes down to exercising self-control and acting in a balanced way, rather than giving ourselves unlimited licence for self-indulgence.

To what extent are we to blame for our own fleshly actions and thoughts?

These various sins of the flesh are not directly caused by demons or by the pull of this world. Those other factors do of course influence us, but our sins are ultimately our own personal responsibility even if demons or other people have tempted us. Our own flesh is usually the most important factor.

We therefore bear the primary responsibility for all our own actions, even if other external factors have influenced us. That said, our flesh nature is very prone to being tempted and influenced. Demons know that and take advantage of our flesh nature to entice us into sin.

That isn't difficult for them. The overall world system does the same at a macro level, and so do the people around us, at a micro level. Advertisers know we are carnal and easily influenced to sin so they focus their efforts on appealing to our lust, pride, envy and vanity, as they can clearly see those sins in us.

How do we control the flesh?

We can never fully defeat or eliminate our flesh nature. It will only finally go, for a Christian, when we die. However, for an unbeliever, it will not go even then, and they will take their carnal nature with them to the Lake of Fire and keep it for all eternity. What an awful prospect - to be sinful and fleshly forever. It is bad enough having to put up with that until we die.

Until then, our aim is to subdue it and undermine it, as if your flesh nature was a hugely overweight person whom you put on a strict diet to force him to shrink in size. You can't achieve this overnight. It is a long term battle and isn't easy. Yet, you can have substantial victories and make real progress if you are determined. There are four main strategies you will need to adopt consistently, over many years:

- a) learn and absorb the whole Bible
- b) be obedient to what it says.
- c) learn to be led by the Holy Spirit, rather than by our own appetites and desires.
- d) learn how to "*consider ourselves dead to sin*".

Let's look at each of these:

a) Immerse yourself in the Bible - become saturated by it

The Bible has the power to change you from the inside out. As we immerse ourselves in it and study it, memorise it and reflect on it, we are changed and gradually absorb God's values. These then slowly replace the selfish fleshly values and attitudes we had before. The Bible reprograms us and installs new 'software'.

It does not get rid of, or even improve, your old man or flesh. But it does help you to renew your *mind*. That is vital as a renewed, informed mind enables you to exercise your *will* more effectively and helps your will to choose to operate through your new man rather than through your old man.

Your will has to make that choice as to which of your two natures will be 'handed the microphone'. If your will is to be made more capable of making the right choice it needs the benefit of you having a renewed mind, full of knowledge and understanding, which has been changed by continual exposure to the Bible.

Therefore, set out to study *the entire Word of God* so the Bible can 'reprogram' your thinking. To do this you may need to grab hold of yourself by the lapels of your jacket and give yourself a good shake concerning your low expectations as to what is "normal" when it comes to reading the Bible.

Most of us have a mindset that considers it sufficient to have just a tiny little nibble at the Bible each day, perhaps a page or two, or even three. To do more is seen as "over the top" or even eccentric. Therefore, most people, even if they do read the Bible, are the equivalent of a man who eats one chicken nugget per day.

I grant you that "nibbling" is the normal approach to take to the Bible and is what most Christians do. But why on Earth would you want to be normal? What could be more lukewarm than that? You should aim to be way above average and to do all you possibly can. In particular, your aim should be to achieve a dramatic change in the time and emphasis you give to the Bible.

How else can you expect to be "saturated" in it or to have yourself "transformed" by it? Nobody ever became a champion bodybuilder by eating one chicken nugget per day. So set the bar high – much higher than the people around you, and aim to be exceptional, not "normal". That won't be difficult

because most Christians spend very little time reading the Bible and no time at all meditating on it or memorising it.

Be like the writer of Psalm 119 and imitate his wholehearted attitude towards Scripture. All your attitudes, habits, thought patterns, instincts, values and priorities need to change. They must all get into line with what the Bible says, instead of what you have picked up from the world or what your own flesh wants. The way you think has to be completely transformed and that will never be achieved by just doing what most other people do:

²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

It might sound odd to speak of our minds as being 'fleshly', but they are, in the sense of being carnal and sinful. They are programmed to operate on the basis of selfishness, self-indulgence, self-obsession, self-promotion etc. That is why the King James version speaks of the '*carnal mind*' in Romans 8, because the word 'carnal' comes from the Latin word *carne*, meaning flesh:

⁶For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

⁸So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:6-8 (KJV)

As we saturate ourselves in God's Word it seeps into us, like marinating a piece of meat. That is how God gradually 'rewrites our software', step by step, until our minds are transformed and renewed. However, the responsibility for making this happen is ours. We cannot just leave it to God and expect Him to do it for us while we sit back and do nothing. We must actively inform our minds and pursue a new way of thinking:

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9 (NIV)

Paul urges us to focus our minds on very different things from those we have been preoccupied with in the past. We must carefully decide what information, images and ideas we will let into our minds. That means changing the things we watch, read and do and the people we mix with.

We must eliminate anything which could be a bad influence. Start to regulate what you allow into your mind. Whatever goes in will come out again in your thoughts, words and actions. Therefore, only put in those things which God wants to see coming back out of you.

b) Be obedient to all that God says in His Word

We must commit ourselves always to obey God in every situation we face and to act in ways that please Him. So, for example, if we are driving our car on a summer morning, one hazard is scantily dressed

young women walking on both sides of the road! We need to avert our eyes but it is not easy when they dress so immodestly. Nevertheless, it can be done.

Simply make a decision to look away, every time, and to focus on the road and the traffic. In that way, as one little victory after another is secured, we will gradually change and the power of the enticement will reduce. Therefore, learn to walk in moment by moment obedience to God in your daily decisions and reactions.

Then the way you live can be brought into line with the new attitudes that are developing as our minds are renewed through our growing knowledge of the Bible and our application of it. This is how we put the Bible into practice and change our lives by every little act of obedience. It involves a daily putting to death of all that is fleshly in us:

⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

⁹Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Colossians 3:5-14 (NIV)

There is also a positive side to overcoming the old man. We not only remove things from our lives. We must also put other things in their place. Paul uses the phrase "*clothe yourselves*". He means these new attitudes and values are '*put on*', as if we were putting on a coat. We pick up that new biblical attitude, or godly way of thinking, and wrap it around us, '*clothing ourselves*' in it.

It is a deliberate decision of the will, which won't happen by itself. Every victory over the flesh is won by a series of choices to deny self and say yes to what God wants. The overall battle against the flesh is won in the countless little decisions you make, over your whole lifetime, to humble yourself, deny yourself and obey God, *especially where you don't want to*.

Your flesh is like a spoiled child. The worst thing you can do is to pamper it. Stand up to it and say no to it. Let your flesh realise you will no longer let it rule over you and that you are resolved instead to rule over it. Your flesh will put up a determined fight, but it will gradually get the message, and lose some of its power. Eventually things will get easier, though never easy.

c) Be led by the Holy Spirit, not by your flesh

As well as getting ourselves ‘reprogrammed’ with God’s written Word, we also need to learn how to be led by the voice of the Holy Spirit on a moment by moment basis. Again, learning how to do this is a life-long process, but it really can be done:

²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Galatians 5:25-26 (RSV)

Paul expresses the point well below when he speaks of ‘sowing’ to please either our sinful nature or the Holy Spirit. We may not have enough knowledge or maturity to know what is right or wrong across the board but we do have enough to know what feels right or wrong in the specific situation we are in at present. That is the moment where we must choose to obey the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit rather than the loud, strident demands of our flesh:

⁸The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Galatians 6:8 (RSV)

As we make each of these small choices we sow something that will either please our flesh or please the Holy Spirit. The more often we choose to please Him, the more we will grow and mature. But if we choose to ‘sow to our sinful nature’ we will reap a bitter harvest as our flesh produces the only things it knows how to make, namely the *works of the flesh*, or *acts of the sinful nature*, as listed in Galatians 5:19-20 which we saw earlier.

d) As Paul said, “consider yourselves dead to sin”

Paul uses this phrase in Romans in the context of how we are justified by faith and how God makes His grace available to us as a free gift if we ask for it. Paul explains that when we are baptised in water then, provided we are baptised as a genuine believer, not as an infant, we are “*baptised into his death*, i.e. into Jesus’ death”. We are also, symbolically speaking, “*buried with him*” as we go down into the waters of baptism:

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:1-4 (RSV)

That is what happens at our baptism, *if* we were old enough at the time to understand what we were doing and knew enough to have a real faith. Paul goes even further and says “*our old self was crucified with him*”. One of the consequences of that, for a true believer, is that “*we might no longer be enslaved to sin*”.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For he who has died is freed from sin.

Romans 6:5-7 (RSV)

If we see the full implications of our conversion and of our baptism in water we can more easily achieve victory over our flesh. However, that will only occur if we want that victory, take seriously our new status as a saved person, and change the way we think. A saved person is entitled to consider his old man to have died in the waters of baptism. For anyone who takes that seriously and acts upon it, truly believing it to be so, it becomes possible, *at any given moment*, to choose not to sin:

⁸ But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. ⁹ For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:8-11 (RSV)

However, although this is available to us, it will not happen by itself, merely by the passage of time, with no involvement on our part. Victory over sin is only possible if we want it strongly enough to take the necessary steps to obtain it. Therefore, start to take control of your body, your emotions, and your mind by decisions of your will.

Then refuse to let your flesh have what it wants, or to lead you into sin. Take seriously your status as a new creation, and the grace that is available to you, and yield yourself to God instead of your flesh. Then choose to do His will, rather than what your flesh wants:

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³ Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:12-14 (RSV)

Paul speaks of how, before we were saved, we were “*slaves to sin*” but now we *have been set free from sin*. Again, that doesn’t mean we never sin because the truth is we all continue to sin, even after we are saved and even when we become mature. It means that, *at any given moment*, we do not *have* to sin. In other words, we now have the power, moment by moment, to choose not to sin if we want to:

¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.

²⁰ When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. ²² But now

that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life

Romans 6:15-22 (RSV)

Over-confidence is a work of the flesh

God wants us to be confident, and even bold. We know that because the Bible commands us to be so. However, as with any other quality, it can be taken too far or misapplied such that what we imagine to be confidence is actually presumption, which is a sin, not a virtue. The essence of this fault is that your confidence is in yourself rather than in God such that you act rashly or make unwise, inadequately thought out statements which are more about bravado than faith.

When we do that we are operating in our flesh rather than in our new man. A classic example of this is the attitude of Peter and the other apostles on the Mount of Olives on the night Jesus was betrayed. Jesus told them straight-forwardly they would fall away and be scattered that night, i.e. that they would run away and leave Him.

They should have listened carefully to His words and been sobered by them and then asked Jesus to give them the grace not to fall away. Instead they began to “talk big”, making rash, macho promises about what they would do, but without ever asking God for the strength and courage to do those things:

³⁰ *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.* ³¹ *Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”* ³² *But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”* ³³ *Peter declared to him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.”* ³⁴ *Jesus said to him, “Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.”* ³⁵ *Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And so said all the disciples.*
Matthew 26:30-35(RSV)

Balance is needed here, plus the wisdom and experience that come from previous times where we have got it wrong, because the line between holy boldness and fleshly presumption can sometimes be very fine. Therefore, anyone who imagines this is easy, or that they will never get it wrong, is already being presumptuous.

God is totally realistic about us, as we can see from the fact that Jesus made that prophecy in the first place, plus His willingness to continue to have them as His disciples even after they had deserted Him. He had no illusions about them, and He has none about you either. He is willing to wait for you, and to stick with you, while you grow up as a disciple.

Therefore, be willing to learn from experience, over time, which inevitably includes making a series of mistakes. Then you will become brave enough to do whatever God commands, but wise enough to know you need His help in order to do it.

That way you will avoid talking with the bravado which Peter, and the others, displayed that night on the Mount of Olives. When you face crises then, instead of rushing in, you will ask for God’s help and for the wisdom and courage needed to do it. But you will still go ahead and do it rather than run away.

However, timidity and lack of confidence can also be fleshly, and can be a sign of pride

Life would be much simpler if there was no need for balance, and all we ever needed to do was avoid over-confidence. But the problem is it goes both ways, such that lack of confidence is also wrong and, what's more, can also be due to being carnal. The point is timidity and lack of confidence are not a sign of humility.

On the contrary, they are frequently due to pride and come from our unwillingness to be seen to fail, or to have done less well than others. On that basis, many will disobey God's commands because they are more concerned about what others might think of them if they obey than about what God might think if they disobey. However, they will then excuse their disobedience by saying they are "timid", or "lack confidence" or that they are "too modest" to put themselves forward.

But the reality may be it is just disobedience borne out of pride and from focusing excessively on themselves and what people might say. In other words, it may just be cowardice, which is a bi-product of selfishness and pride. Of course, not all timidity is due to pride. Much of it is due to demonic whispering, as the demons seek to convince us we are bound to fail, or are not capable, or have no talent.

But, even where that is so, the demons would not be able to deceive and manipulate you in these ways if you did not have pride and a flesh nature. They use these to exert leverage over you by making you anxious about what others might think of you if you were to fail, and therefore to be unwilling to take the risk of obeying God.

Taking sides, and forming exclusive cliques and divisive factions, are also fleshly conduct

Many of God's people, even the genuine ones, form cliques, factions and groups which display an attitude of superiority or exclude others who are considered to be outsiders or inferior. Often such factions are based on following a particular leader or teacher. Then others, who do not follow him online are looked down on, or even rejected.

It can also happen within a local church where haughty cliques are formed which view themselves as the "in crowd", and make others feel unwelcome and inferior. There has been such 'cliquiness' in every church and workplace I have known. We can, of course, listen to any teachers we choose but we are not to idolize the ones we like or look down on others who do not listen to them.

I went on a tour of Israel and some American ladies in the tour group said they only ever listen to the teaching of one particular Bible teacher, and nobody else. I also know a group in England who are devoted to the teaching of one Bible teacher and who speak of him in equally reverential terms. Such attitudes, and the pride, arrogance and quarrelling it produces, are another aspect of the flesh:

¹⁰ I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chlo'e's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren.

¹² What I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apol'los," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I am thankful that I baptized none of you except Crispus and

Ga'ius; ¹⁵ lest any one should say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ (I did baptize also the household of Steph'anas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any one else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1 Corinthians 1:10-17 (RSV)

Rivalry and partisanship, whereby people take sides, form factions, and feel superior to other groups, are therefore “*of the flesh*”:

¹ But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, ³ for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men? ⁴ For when one says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apol'los,” are you not merely men?

1 Corinthians 3:1-4 (RSV)

Religious hypocrisy and legalism are also works of the flesh

Before we look at this, let me make clear that studying God's Word and following the promptings of the Holy Spirit are not *legalism*, or being ‘religious’. Bible study and obeying the Holy Spirit's voice are good things and are nothing to do with living by a set of rules or observing religious traditions, customs or procedures. Such things are what most organised denominational religion is about, but that does not please God or promote righteousness.

Instead it promotes pride, hypocrisy and self-righteousness, which are all works of the flesh. Jesus upset the Pharisees by not observing their hand washing rituals which had developed as an oral tradition among some of the strictly observant Jews. They had created a mountain of over 3000 extra laws for themselves, all man-made and contrary to God's wishes.

In this way they supplemented the Law of Moses. These illegitimate, man-made regulations were not from the Law of Moses. Jesus always obeyed that. The hand washing requirements, and thousands of other little rules, were added later to form what became known as the ‘*oral law*’.

But this was purely man-made and had nothing to do with God. Therefore, Jesus did not accept it or abide by it. Indeed, He frequently went out of His way to break the oral law, in full view of everybody, such as when He walked through a cornfield on the sabbath and when He chose not to observe the Pharisees' elaborate hand washing rituals prior to dining with them :

³⁷ While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. ³⁸ The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. ³⁹ And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

Luke 11:37-41 (ESV)

It would be helpful at this point if we defined ‘*legalism*’, as it is a much misunderstood and misused word. As we saw, it does *not* mean obeying God's commands or taking the Bible seriously. Legalism

is the attempt by any person, of whatever group or denomination, to earn or achieve righteousness for himself by keeping any set of rules, regulations or traditions, rather than by receiving the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ as a free gift.

Please refer to my commentary on Galatians and the Law of Moses in which I examine all of this in close detail. There is a side of us that loves to create our own rules which we can congratulate ourselves for keeping and condemn others for not keeping. It is a way of creating our own self-righteousness in place of the true righteousness which Jesus transfers freely to all who believe in Him.

Man-made righteousness is not actually righteousness at all. It is bogus, and a work of the flesh, and does not impress God. Therefore, Jesus condemned it as in the above passage. Paul also speaks in Romans of how, in their ignorance, people seek to establish a righteousness of their own:

¹Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Romans 10:1-3 (ESV)

Jesus also went on to speak of how the Pharisees, whose name has become synonymous with self-righteousness, would observe the tiniest details of their own oral law, but neglect the things that really mattered, such as love and justice. That is typical of those whose hearts are focused on visible rule-observance, and being admired by others, rather than on actually changing in their hearts. Such an attitude is of the flesh and is based on pride:

⁴² "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ⁴³Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it." Luke 11:42-44 (ESV)

The observance of man-made rules and traditions, even good ones, cannot save us or make us righteous. They may impress other people who don't know any better and give them the false impression we are wise but such things do not actually achieve anything in addressing our self-indulgent flesh nature. On the contrary, our flesh is boosted by showing off to other people about our observance of rules:

²⁰ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations ²¹ "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" ²² (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. Colossians 2:20-23 (ESV)

Therefore, if we are serious about defeating our flesh, we have to avoid creating our own set of rules or following the rules of some other person or group. All those things can be just as carnal as anything else our flesh urges us to do. That is one reason why Jesus was so against manmade religious rules and traditions and went out of His way to break them when He came across them:

Therefore, we need to enter this battle against our flesh with our eyes wide open, fully alert to the danger of only replacing our more blatant forms of carnality with more subtle alternatives, which seem better, but are still fleshly.

A man who is trying to earn God's approval, and the approval of others, by observing man-made rules and traditions and who takes pride in his own 'success' is possibly just as carnal as a man who drinks, smokes, swears and chases women. Precisely how you manifest your fleshliness is not the issue. What matters is whether you are *acting in the flesh* or not. That is more important than exactly how you are doing it.

In fact, I generally prefer to share the Gospel with an ordinary sinner, who is not religious at all, than with a person who imagines they are already right with God because they are "churchgoers" and are observing the rules and traditions of their denomination. Such people are hard to reach as they are convinced they are already doing well and that God is pleased with them.

Moods, in themselves, can be a normal expression of our God-given emotions and are not sinful. However, 'moodiness' is of the flesh and is sinful

We have been looking at some things which many of us would not associate with being carnal or sinful and '*moodiness*' is another one. Of course, there is nothing wrong with us having different moods at different times and therefore feeling sad or happy, playful or serious, quiet or noisy, wanting company or wanting to be alone and so on. Such changing emotions are the result of our varying circumstances, or of our state of health, or even the time of day, and they are not sinful.

God gave us emotions and they are inherently changeable. Therefore, up and down cycles are normal, and not at all carnal. However, what is sinful is to allow our emotions to control us such that our dealings with others are governed by our moods especially where we excuse, and even cultivate, those moods at the expense of others.

So, we have the right to feel sad or down, from time to time, but not to "*take it out on other people*", such that they pay the price for our moods and are required to tip toe around us depending on what mood we happen to be in. That is self-indulgent and is also unfair to the people who have to live with us or work alongside us. Accordingly, it is never appropriate to be sulky, sarcastic or irritable or to allow ourselves to have outbursts of temper just because we feel like it.

There is always a duty to maintain our self-control even at times when we are struggling. Such times of difficulty do not entitle us to treat others in ways which we would not want them to treat us. Therefore, if we are the sort of person that people are wary of, such that they check our mood before approaching us, then we are acting in the flesh and sinning even though we aren't engaging in sexual sin or getting drunk.

Irritability and temper are therefore just as much a sign of operating in the flesh as drunkenness

This point about indulging our own moods must be emphasised or the average person is likely to excuse themselves for being impatient, irritable or bad tempered and view such things as only trivial sins, or not sins at all. Above all, they are unlikely to see such conduct as being fleshly or as areas where they need to repent and "crucify the flesh".

I have been guilty of these sins myself, and have been convicted of the need to exercise more self-control and not to be abrupt with others just because I am under stress and they are being a bit dopey or slow to understand. Such faults are certainly easier to see in others than in ourselves and I am reminded of a tour of Israel which I went on where the guide was snappy and short-tempered. Some of us must have been exasperating, but that did not excuse his rudeness.

Of course, he was wrong to behave as he did but always remember when considering any other man's faults that God is more interested in what we do to address that same fault in ourselves than He is in what that other man ought to do. Indeed, I have come to feel that where God allows us to see a fault in someone else it is often for the very purpose of enabling us to see it in ourselves because, until then, we may have been blind to it.

The key point is that such surly, grouchy, "*bear with a sore head*" moods are not something we can allow ourselves to inflict on others and we all need to examine ourselves in this regard. It is not only sinful but self-centred and it also pre-supposes that we are important and others are not. We cannot ignore or excuse such attitudes if we want to grow as disciples.

How can we overcome moods and get rid of our moodiness?

Of course, getting rid of such sins and bad attitudes is a lot easier said than done. Nevertheless, any process of change must begin with the recognition that there is a fault there that needs to be addressed. Until you know that there is such a sin, what it consists of, and that it is to be found in yourself, you won't even begin to tackle it. That is the first step and we can assist ourselves by asking God to reveal any such faults to us so our eyes can be opened.

From that point on it is a question of giving yourself "a stern talking to" whenever you are in such moods or are sulking or treating others snappily. Ask God at such times to reveal to you anything about your attitude or conduct that is carnal, or that He does not like for any other reason. Those are the prayers He is most eager to answer, provided you really mean it and are not just saying the words parrot fashion.

Then we need to turn upon ourselves, with some strictness, and metaphorically give ourselves a good shake by asking what right we have to speak or act towards this other person in the way we are doing. That might sound obvious but it is actually quite rare for us to do it because it is so contrary to our flesh nature which considers it self-evident that we are right in whatever we say, do or think. Thus, such questioning of yourself will never happen naturally because it runs entirely counter to the grain of our fallen human nature.

Therefore, you must take a hold of yourself, usually when you least wish to do so, and ask such questions as: "*What right do I have to raise my voice or to get into a sour, sarcastic or snappy mood with this person?*" Treat yourself objectively as if you were Person A being questioned by Person B and don't accept any excuses or let yourself wriggle off the hook. If you don't cross examine yourself in these ways then, realistically, who else will ever do so or who else will you ever allow to do so?

It is fleshly if we are ‘driven’ such that we “strive” and try to *make* things happen by ourselves, at our speed, rather than waiting on God and working alongside Him, at His pace.

Here is an example of carnality which few would recognise as such. It is the character trait of being driven such that we try to make things happen, all by ourselves, rather than waiting on God, seeking His permission and guidance, and doing things as and when He tells us to. Of course, as with so many other things we are meant to do, it is easier said than done.

Even the best-intentioned people fall into the trap of “*pulling on the lead*” like a dog eager to get to the park, and getting ahead of God and His timing. I know I have done it many times myself, so I cannot point the finger at anyone. For example, when I started my own law firm in 1999 I was in a hurry to expand it and to take on more staff and more files. That was partly because I felt I had a lot of ground to catch up.

I think also my pride had been hurt by dropping overnight from a successful Managing Partner of an established firm to being a sole trader with no staff, no files, no equipment and no clients. I wanted to prove to the world that I wasn’t a failure, which was a carnal motive, not a godly one. It meant I grew the firm too fast and that resulted in me recruiting some people I should never have taken on.

They then caused me a lot of headaches and I had to get rid of them later, which was very stressful. I also spent money too rapidly, due to excessive growth and that also caused me problems. Looking back now, with the benefit of hindsight, I realise I should have been more patient and willing to grow slowly, in accordance with God’s promptings rather than my own impulsive will and ambition.

So I learned some painful lessons and, although God still helped me, He allowed me to experience the painful consequences of my headstrong behaviour. I think He had no real alternative if I was to learn the lesson. Perhaps the classic example of striving in the Bible is the way Abram and Sarai, as they were then called, became impatient.

They tried to make God’s promises come true more quickly by getting Abram to have a child through Sarai’s maid, Hagar, rather than continuing to wait for the already aging, and apparently barren, Sarai to get pregnant herself. Let’s begin the story here, in these passages, where the promises are made to Abram about him and Sarai having a son, and a nation of descendants through him, and a land of their own to live in:

¹Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

Genesis 12:1-2 (RSV)

¹⁴ The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; ¹⁵ for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants for ever. ¹⁶ I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your descendants also can be counted.

Genesis 13:14-16 (RSV)

¹After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” ² But Abram said, “O Lord God, what wilt thou give me, for

I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Elie'zer of Damascus?"³ And Abram said, "Behold, thou hast given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir."⁴ And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir."⁵ And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be."⁶ And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:1-6 (RSV)

The problem arose because many years went by after God made the promise without any child arriving for Abram and Sarai and (understandably) they became discouraged and impatient. I am not criticizing them. I would have become even more frustrated myself. Nevertheless, what Abram and Sarai did was fleshly in that they tried to get ahead of God and to force His hand by having a child through Sarai's maid, Hagar. That son was called Ishmael but he was not the son God had promised:

¹Now Sar'ai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar; ²and Sar'ai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my maid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sar'ai. ³So, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, Sar'ai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. ⁴And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.

Genesis 16:1-4 (RSV)

¹⁵And Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ish'mael. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ish'mael to Abram.

Genesis 16:15-16 (RSV)

This 'bright idea' had catastrophic results in the end as this child, Ishmael, became the father of the Arab race which, ultimately, gave rise to the false religion of Islam, which has been a thorn in the side of Israel and the whole world ever since. Though waiting for God's timing can be hard, and even excruciatingly difficult at times, the right thing is still to wait on Him and not to try to go ahead of Him or to act without His permission or guidance.

So, Abram should have just waited patiently for Isaac to be born instead of causing Ishmael to be conceived. We must not create our own 'little Ishmaels' either, but instead wait for God to produce genuine Isaacs in our life. In Abram's case it meant waiting 25 years for Isaac to arrive and if you are called by God to serve Him then it is quite possible He will require you to wait patiently, perhaps for years or even decades, before His purposes are fulfilled in your life:

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." ³Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴"Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you.

Genesis 17:1-6 (RSV)

The battle with the flesh is a life-long battle. It won't end until you die.

Because our flesh won't go away until we die, we have to continue our battle with it permanently. Even apostle Paul had to. He speaks of his own dilemma and of how he doesn't do what he wants to do, but does the things he doesn't want to do. We saw this in the passage Romans 7:14-25 which is shown earlier in this chapter.

Most Christians give little or no thought to their battle against their own flesh. It is not on their agenda. Some might attempt the battle for a while, but become discouraged when they realise it will never end until death. If we are to avoid giving up the battle due to discouragement we have to get used to the fact that the fight against our flesh will never end until we die, and we must not let that put us off.

Some may wonder what the point is of fighting such a non-stop battle. There is every point, because your success and growth is measured by the series of small victories you have as you go along. It is also measured in terms of what area of our life the battle is being fought over as time goes by, i.e. over what particular issues and difficulties. If we look closely at this, we can gain encouragement that we might otherwise overlook.

For example, a person might become a Christian and at that point the battle with their flesh is being fought over the issues of theft, lying, adultery, pornography, foul language and drug taking. However, they gradually gain the victory over these things and turn from these sins in genuine repentance. Then, ten years later, they are still struggling against their flesh, but now it is over issues of punctuality, patience, temper etc. There is still a struggle, and the flesh is still refusing to surrender and causing difficulty, but the point is the battle is being fought over very different ground.

That Christian has moved on and has made progress. Nevertheless, to such a person, the demons will whisper that they are "*getting nowhere*" and are "*still not winning*" against their flesh. But it's a lie. That Christian may well be winning. It's just that the victory is not yet complete and is taking longer than they would wish. Even so, it's still a victory and it is his old man, not his new man, who is losing the battle. We must never overlook that or allow ourselves to be discouraged over things about which God wants us to be encouraged.

It's as if we were fighting a battle with the Nazis which begins on the Normandy beaches. It is hard-fought and difficult and there are lots of little victories and defeats each day, even each hour, as the battle slowly grinds along. However, it is the *trend* of the battle that really counts. So, as the weeks pass, more and more French villages and towns are liberated. Then other villages and towns become, for a while, the venue for this ongoing battle as we move from Normandy into the rest of France and then Holland, Belgium and eventually Germany.

It would therefore be foolish if the Allies in World War Two had said in April 1945 as they fought in the heart of Germany that they were "*not winning*". They had come a long way since 6 June when they were in Normandy. Admittedly, the Nazis had fought hard over every street, let alone every town, but they were still being defeated. It is the same with the flesh. It never surrenders but it can still be beaten, step by step. We must therefore encourage ourselves with that thought of making progress, even if it isn't complete or perfect. Then press on, without ever losing heart.

Other people have a flesh nature too, not just us

The flesh is not only a problem for you and me. It affects everyone. Therefore other people's carnality, not just our own, explains many of the problems we experience with them. They act as they do because, like us, they indulge their flesh rather than crucifying it, even if they are Christians.

We need to remember that if we are to understand other Christians realistically and if we are to learn how to be gracious with them. However, when dealing with unbelievers we need to be even more realistic because they are operating entirely in the flesh and have absolutely no idea they are doing so. They are "*dead in their trespasses and sins*" just as we were before we were saved:

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:1-5 (ESV)

We tend to justify our own fleshly actions but condemn the same behaviour in others

Our natural tendency is to excuse the ways in which our own flesh rears its head but to condemn the exact same things in others. We need to turn that around 180 degrees and expect fleshly behaviour from other people, and make allowances for it, but be strict and uncompromising with ourselves. Most of us do the opposite. We hate carnality in others and are intolerant of it but we are blind to it, or excuse it, in ourselves. That hypocrisy causes many broken relationships and disputes.

Those could be reduced, or even avoided, by grasping that fleshliness operates in the same way in other people as it does in ourselves and by learning to expect and handle their carnal ways. Unfortunately, doing that isn't easy. Hypocrisy is much easier. Which of us hasn't, on countless occasions, taken offence at comments made about us which we know we make about others, or objected to conduct which we do ourselves? Indeed, it's often precisely because we say and do those things ourselves that we are so annoyed when others do them to us.

How to recognise when something is fleshly

As you grow in the Christian life the problems caused by the flesh become less obvious and more subtle and the battles against it are fought over ever smaller issues. That makes it harder to see what the flesh is doing or even to realise it is still active. We can get to a stage where we think we have 'arrived' spiritually and got past all of that when in fact we are still operating carnally. So, how can we recognise when something we are doing is fleshly? It could be a good thing, such as setting up church or ministry or doing good works for the poor and needy. But it could still be being done in a fleshly way.

That is commonplace, and is not difficult to see when others do it. However, we will only see it in ourselves if we go out of our way to look for it and to ask God to show it to us. An example of where the flesh becomes involved in what would otherwise be good things might be a church leader who is

seeking to serve God and to reach lost people, but is using fleshly methods and techniques. He could be manipulative, controlling, and devious in how he handles people.

All of that is of the flesh and God doesn't want any of it even if it seems to be bringing about a "*successful ministry*". God does not see anything as a success if it is produced by, or through, our flesh. He sees it as sin, and junk, even if we thought it was impressive.

But the flesh can show itself in all sorts of less obvious ways. What if God is calling us to do a certain thing or to serve Him in a certain way, but we set about it in a hasty, impatient, driven way? We might be treading on toes, driving other people faster than they can go and striving to achieve. That is not God's way and is carnal even though it doesn't look like it. Striving means going about something in a way, or at a speed, or with an attitude, which God doesn't approve of and hasn't authorised.

We can end up pursuing the objective ourselves, in our own way, and in our own strength, without God, and without submission to Him, like an over enthusiastic subcontractor on a building site. He may be pressing ahead faster than the architect wishes to go and doing things which aren't part of his plan, or which are premature. I have done that many times in my own life, but I'm learning to recognise the signs of it much earlier now. It is a sin to which energetic people are particularly prone.

False teaching emerging from psychology which emphasises "*self-esteem*", "*self love*" and any other phrase starting with the word 'self'

Far too many people in the church have adopted the ideas, language and methods of secular psychology, which is an entirely unbiblical set of beliefs. For example, we hear a lot about the need to build and preserve "*self-esteem*". That view has become so widely accepted in the Church that it is now almost beyond challenge. Yet it needs to be challenged, because it is not biblical and does not reflect the truth about ourselves.

Be very wary of anything said by anyone from the whole "psychobabble" industry, because it is false and unbiblical to its very core. I say quite a lot about the heresy of psychology in various of my talks and books so do please refer to those too. I believe psychology is a subject for Christians to avoid like the plague. It is a wholly man made body of teaching which has nothing to do with Scripture.

Indeed, it contradicts what the Bible does teach about human nature, sin, selfishness, pride etc etc. The whole subject only came into being about 100 years ago and the many hundreds of "psychological conditions" they have invented since then are pure fiction which came out of men's imaginations or, more likely, were planted there by demons. Their teachings go against what the Bible teaches about our nature and our conduct.

We are not meant to love ourselves more - we already love ourselves too much

Accordingly, we don't need more self-esteem. We need less. Likewise, we don't need to love ourselves more. We are already head over heels in love with ourselves as it is. We have no need to make it even worse by trying to increase a love of self which is already obsessive.

Jesus simply wants us to increase the level of our love *for others* to match the enormous level of love *we already have for ourselves*, for which the dial is already showing a 'full tank'. There isn't a person

anywhere who doesn't already love himself. We often hear of people who supposedly "*hate themselves*" and who need to be "*taught how to love themselves*". But it's not true.

If a woman says she hates herself because of her looks or her weight what she really means is she loves herself and therefore wishes she could look better. She wants that precisely because she loves herself, not because she doesn't. If she really hated herself she'd be glad that she's ugly and would want herself to be punished by being made uglier still. Apostle Paul makes a similar point:

²⁹for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,

Ephesians 5:29 (NASB)

Thus, when a person says they don't love themselves what they really mean is they don't *like* themselves and wish they were slimmer, richer, cleverer, more popular etc. But they only want those improvements in their appearance or abilities *because they love themselves*, not because they don't.

CHAPTER 4

HOW THE OLD MAN AND NEW MAN OPERATE AND HOW THEY INTERACT WITH OUR MIND, WILL, EMOTIONS AND BODY

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:1-2 (RSV)

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would.

Galatians 5:16-17 (RSV)

Some analogies which help to explain the struggle between the 'new man' and the 'old man'

Some people struggle with what it means for us to have two natures at the same time, and for those two natures to be at war with each other, even though they are both part of us. Some wrongly assume the old man must be a demon inside us. That is a complete misunderstanding. The old man isn't a demon. *He is part of you.* He is your own sinful nature that you were born with, and that still causes you to sin.

The sins we commit are the work of our old man and they occur because we allow him to gain the upper hand and to have his own way. The question therefore, at any given time, is which nature are we operating in at the moment? When we say or do something, is it the old man or the new man who is behind it?

Our task is to make sure we are operating in and through the new man, not the old man. That is mainly achieved by self-denial, which weakens the dominance of the old man and by immersing ourselves in and obeying the Bible, which strengthens the new man and brings him to the fore. That all helps to weaken the old man and build up the new man, i.e. relative to each other.

But how does it work moment by moment? How do we ensure that we act or react through the new man, not the old? The answer has to do with self-control, which is the only acceptable form of control because controlling any other person would be sin. The control of oneself is vital for the avoidance of sin, whereas failure to control oneself leads to sin. Therefore, we must do all we can to bring the new man to the fore so he can be the leader and the one who sets the tone.

The new man and the old man 'cohabit' within us, like a Duke and a tramp who share a flat together

Imagine, a Duke and a tramp being forced to share a flat together. Neither can escape or throw the other out. Both are in the flat all the time and the only question is who is in charge and by whose standards is the flat organised, cleaned, decorated, etc? The Duke in our analogy represents the new man and the tramp represents the old man. Consider how they might live alongside each other, each

one determined that the flat will be run his way, and will reflect his nature, not that of the other. They are therefore going to be continually in competition to gain the upper hand.

Imagine that your will was the landlord of that flat and that it wanted the Duke to prevail, not the tramp. Your will might decide to starve the tramp, so he gradually goes down in weight and strength, eventually weighing less than seven stones and having very little muscle. On the other hand, your will gives the Duke a high protein diet and a gym so he can exercise and body-build.

He, therefore, ends up gaining a lot of muscle and eventually weighs more than twice as much as the tramp. As a result, when there is conflict, it is the Duke who will get his way most of the time. So, if we now apply that analogy to ourselves we see that by starving our old man and feeding the new man we enable our new man to gain the upper hand. Then, more and more of the time, it is he who gets his way rather than the old man.

But to extend the analogy further, consider the many different ways in which the Duke (the new man) could get himself into a position where he rules the flat most of the time. He could decide that whenever the doorbell goes or the phone rings, he will be the one to answer it. He could even keep the key and the phone on his person to ensure he gets to them first.

Likewise, in your own life when you need to react to events on the spur of the moment you need to make sure it is your new man who does so not the old man. You don't want him 'going to the door' or 'answering the phone'. That would correspond to the times when you respond in a fleshly way, losing your temper or being tempted to sin in some other way such as lust. At such times we respond in the flesh because we let our old man get to the door first.

It indicates we have not taken adequate care to ensure our new man speaks for us. We have instead let the old man react for us. You can apply this to all sorts of situations. Imagine you are having a row with your wife and she has just said something unkind. At that moment you have perhaps two seconds to decide who will answer her. Will it be the old man? If so, he will answer back harshly, rudely and with pride and will escalate the argument.

Or, will it be the new man? If so, he will answer softly, patiently and perhaps suggest a pause while you both pray about it. Or he may apologise, or answer graciously in a humble tone and defuse the situation. At such times you have a moment, perhaps just a few seconds, when your will decides who is going to be your 'spokesman' and set the tone of your response. At that moment it is possible to choose who will react. The chances of making the right choice will increase if you pray for God's help. You could perhaps pray something like this:

"Lord please help me right now to humble myself, stay calm and respond in a way that pleases you. Help me operate through my new nature rather than in the flesh."

In addition you could make a similar prayer each morning, in a general way, even before any difficult situation arises, whereby you ask God to help you to respond via the new man today, not via the old man:

⁴¹"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Matthew 26:41 (NASB)

God likes such prayers and will be swift to answer them. The new man will then be propelled forward to speak for you and the old man will be silenced. The old man will not be your 'spokesman' unless you *allow him to be* by being insufficiently vigilant.

Or, we could look at it another way. Imagine a football (soccer) match where one team represents the new man and the other represents the old man. In order to portray the way in which we can help the new man to prevail and to be more involved in our decisions and actions than the old man, consider this analogy. Each football team seeks to gain dominance in a game primarily by keeping possession of the ball. For much of the match neither team is scoring a goal and neither team is conceding one either.

The key battle ground on any pitch is not at either goal mouth, but in the midfield area. That is where one team or the other will prevail by gaining, and keeping, more possession of the ball than the other. So, imagine team A is able to keep possession of the ball for 70% of the match, (which would be unusual). If they could do that they would probably win, because only team A would have the ball for long enough to build up any manoeuvre, so as to get a proper chance to shoot at the net.

If team A can keep possession for a high proportion of the game it will make it difficult for team B to achieve anything. They would be so continually harassed, and so quickly tackled and dispossessed of the ball on those occasions when they do briefly get possession, they will have no realistic chance of scoring. They would be unable to keep the ball long enough to create a scoring opportunity.

That corresponds to how, in the Christian life, our new man has to compete with the old man. The new man needs to try hard to ensure he is the one in possession of the 'microphone', or the 'ball' or the 'steering wheel', whichever analogy we prefer to use. The new man must jockey for position and elbow the old man out of the way by making sure he is the one doing the talking and influencing what is done.

That is how the new man 'keeps possession of the ball'. If he can deprive the old man in this way, so he only ever gets brief moments with the ball before he is firmly tackled and it is taken from him, then he will be thwarted and will rarely be the spokesman. Even if he can grab the ball, or the microphone then, provided the new man can grab it back quickly enough, he still won't be allowed to do much damage before he loses it again.

So, even where we do lose our temper, or look lustfully at a woman, or begin to tell a lie, if the new man can quickly 'shoulder the old man off the ball' and seize back possession, he can bring that sin to an end before too much harm is done. Stopping a sin quickly is almost as good as preventing it in the first place.

You could get to the stage where, even if the old man manages to seize the initiative for a moment, such that there is a rude or harsh word spoken, the new man can then regain the initiative and 'put the fire out quickly'. In that way many an argument can be turned from a two hour fight followed by a long, angry silence into a two minute fight that is genuinely resolved. That is a difference which is well worth achieving.

Likewise, where the old man manages to seize control of a man's eyes for a moment and points them (as it does) at some scantily dressed woman in the street, the new man can redirect those eyes away again after only a second or two. Even that can make all the difference. In that way that particular battle with the old man is won and the flesh nature is defeated.

So, if we persist in this, the old man will be denied anything more than the occasional moment when he has the upper hand. We need to be realistic though. No matter how mature you get, (until you die) you are never going to be able to completely prevent the old man from ever "getting possession of the ball". He is bound to do so at times.

Likewise, even if Barcelona, or the Brazilian national team, were playing against the lowliest non-league side, or even a village pub team, there would still, inevitably, be times when the better team would lose possession of the ball, even if it is only for a moment. The aim is to keep such periods as brief as possible. That's the best we can hope for this side of death.

Who decides whether the old man or new man will get his way?

When I have explained this to people one issue that comes up is who is it exactly that decides things? Who chooses whether the new or the old man will get their way? The answer is it isn't either of them. Neither the new man nor the old man can actually decide anything for you.

The decision is always made, ultimately, by you. But what do we mean by '*you*'. Who is the '*you*' that we are speaking of here or, in other words, in this context, which part of you can most accurately be called the decision maker? The answer is that it is always your *will* which makes the decisions.

It does so after hearing and being influenced by each of the other parts of '*you*' rather like a chairman of a committee listening to the views of those around a table before making a decision. So, your will decides whether your old man or new man will get what he wants. It does so after hearing the views of the other parts of you, as set out below.

When we speak of '*you*', there are a number of things we may be referring to, depending on the context. A person is made up of all the following parts, all of which, singly or collectively, could be called '*you*':

- a) the physical body
- b) the soul. This is further subdivided into:
 - i) the mind
 - ii) the will
 - iii) the emotions
- c) the spirit. This was dead up to the point where the person was born again, at which point it came to life again. The human spirit is what we call the 'new man' in a saved person.

So where then does the flesh or old man fit in to this set up? It isn't any of the things listed above. It is our sinful fallen human nature which we inherited from Adam. The virus from Adam's 'computer' has spread to every person who ever came after him. The flesh is part of us, but it was never meant to be part of us. The things listed (a)–(c) above, plus our spirit are all we were ever meant to be.

And, if we are a Christian, they are what we are going to be after we die and are set free from our flesh. We were never meant to have a sin nature at all and we won't have one after we die – provided we are saved. The old man was not part of the original design and only came into existence when Adam sinned. So, you could say that the flesh is like a cuckoo in the nest or a squatter.

Or it is like an unwanted computer virus which has invaded a system it was not meant to be part of. We were never intended to have a sinful nature but, for the time being, we do have one and we can't get rid of it. It exists within us alongside our body, mind, will, emotions and spirit and it seeks to exert the maximum influence it can over all of them. Indeed, it wants to rule over us.

Moreover, until we become a Christian, it rules us almost completely. There is no competition for the rulership of our lives up to then. In a non-Christian the flesh gets its own way with little or no argument, because the new man isn't yet there to 'argue' with it, as he has not yet come to life. That only occurs at our conversion when our spirit (new man) comes alive for the first time.

The body, mind emotions and will are like a '*committee*' together with the old man and new man, who all compete with each other to influence the committee

When I was trying to think of good ways to explain the interaction of the new man and the old man, and their influence upon us, I believe God gave me an analogy. I have never heard anybody speak in these terms before, but I feel the analogy is a helpful one.

It is to think of every person being like a 'committee', with each of the 'parts' of that person either helping or hindering him at any given time as he seeks to obey God. So, imagine your 'committee', consists of the following members, all sitting around a boardroom table and each contributing to your decision-making process:

- 1) Your *body* – the physical body which *acts* and carries out the things you do
- 2) Your *mind* – the part of you which *thinks*, processes knowledge and gives understanding
- 3) Your *emotions* – the part of you which *feels* and operates at an emotional level
- 4) Your *will* – the part of you which *decides*. This is separate from your mind and emotions, but is influenced by them. It makes the decisions, and so I think of it as the 'chairman' of the 'committee'.

NB Please note these last three parts, the mind, emotions and will, are often lumped together and referred to as our '*soul*', which is a collective term for those three things combined. So, when you hear that word used, that's what is meant.

- 5) Your *old man* or *flesh*, otherwise known as your *sin nature*, which you inherited from Adam. This is the part of you which *causes you to sin* and creates most of your problems.
- 6) Your *new man*, or *spirit*, which was dead from your conception onwards but comes back to life when you are converted. This part of you *never sins*.

The contest only begins when our spirit comes to life at our conversion. Then, for the first time in our lives, this offers us an alternative to being ruled by our flesh. Now the new man joins the committee and says to the other members, but especially to our will: "*I'm here now – listen to me and do what I say*".

Previously the old man or flesh dominated the committee and, most of the time, the chairman (the will) went along with whatever the flesh wanted because the flesh had the loudest voice. Before we are

saved the body, mind and emotions didn't usually feel strongly enough, or have enough knowledge, to argue with the flesh. Even if they did, they wouldn't argue for long and the flesh usually got his own way.

However, when the human spirit is reborn at conversion and joins the committee it begins to form an alternative power base. It opposes the flesh and seeks to win round the mind, emotions, will and body to try to get them to see things as God sees them and to combine together against the flesh.

From that point on we have to make a choice, moment by moment, for the rest of our lives as to which voice we will listen to. Is it going to be the voice of our flesh, which previously had it all its own way, or to our new man, which has now arrived on the scene to challenge it? The part of 'you' which decides whether to listen to the new man or the old man is your will. That is the part of us which makes all our decisions.

Obviously, our will is closely linked to our mind, and our mind is heavily involved in the process by which our will makes its decisions. That is why it is so vital for our mind to be 'renewed,' as Paul said. A renewed mind is in a better position to inform our will and persuade it to make right choices than a mind which is still carnal, immature and uninformed.

Diagrams to illustrate this analogy about the various parts of you operating like a committee

It may assist you to look at each of the diagrams below to better understand the analogy I am using about a person being like a committee. If you picture a large boardroom table with six chairs around it, each 'part' of you occupies one of those chairs within the overall 'committee'. The will sits at the head of the table because it has the role of Chairman.

Therefore, if things are done properly, the will decides which of the other members of the committee are allowed to speak, and whether to listen to them. The will can even choose where to seat the other members of the committee around the table, placing them in seats which are calculated to increase or reduce their influence on the will as 'Chairman'.

For example, when Ted Heath was Prime Minister of the UK, and Margaret Thatcher was Secretary of State for Education, he disliked her and ensured she was seated as far away from him as possible. He also kept her to one side of him, rather than directly across the table, so as to be out of his line of sight. By so doing he was better able to ignore her and to minimise her influence on him.

He then put other more highly favoured ministers alongside him, or directly across from him, so that their influence would be increased. You can do a similar thing within yourself. Your will, as chairman of your 'committee', can make sure your new man is in one of the most prominent places at the committee table, directly alongside or across from your will, so as to maximize its influence.

Likewise, your will can put the old man as far away as possible, at the other end of the table, so as to be least heard, and least noticed. Imagine also that in each of the diagrams of the committee table there is a 'microphone', which is directly in front of the will, so that, ideally, our will can be our spokesman after it has made its decisions.

If a person is in a healthy condition spiritually such that their 'committee' is properly constituted with an optimal 'seating plan' then it will be the will, as chairman, that takes the leading role. Moreover, it

will be most influenced by the new man which is sitting very close to the will and having the greatest impact on the ‘discussions’ taking place within the committee and on the decisions the will makes.

That is how it should be, but if things go wrong then that metaphorical microphone may well be moved along the table and placed in front of the emotions or, even worse, the old man. Worst of all, it could be placed in front of a demon who is inside us and he then becomes our spokesman. So, let us now look in some detail at the first diagram which is intended to show the ‘seating plan’ for a spiritually healthy *male*.

Therefore it is the new man and the mind that are sitting alongside the will, exerting the greatest influence. Please note that in the case for a spiritually healthy *female* then it would be the new man and the emotions sitting next to the will, i.e. the mind and the emotions would swap places to signify the fact that in the average woman the emotions play a much bigger role than in the average man.

For each diagram please also imagine a ‘public gallery’ at the side of the committee room where the public can sit observing the committee table. One might see this in a council meeting which is open to the public such that people are allowed to listen to committee meetings. If the meeting is properly conducted such individuals are not allowed to speak and the chairman will stop them if they try to say anything.

However, if the Chairman is weak, and/or if the other members of the committee are receptive to interruptions from the public gallery, or even encourage them, then there will be an increasing level of rowdiness which may well influence the committee. Within the public gallery in each diagram there could be worldly people heckling and interfering. There could also be demons, i.e. the demons that are on the *outside* of us seeking to influence us from outside.

However, in some of the later diagrams we will include demons actually sitting *at the committee table*. These signify demons which are *inside* the person and which therefore have far greater ability to influence the committee because they have a seat at the table. These demons have to be cast out whereas those outside of us in the public gallery only need to be resisted. They can’t be cast out as they are not inside us to begin with.

Therefore, the committee is potentially being influenced by both demons and worldly people sitting in the ‘public gallery’, even if there are no demons actually sitting at the table, and even if the person is a Christian. The point is that even for a solid believer who has no demons within him, there is no getting away from the fact that both demons and the world will exert influence over us, even if only from the outside, if we will permit that to happen.

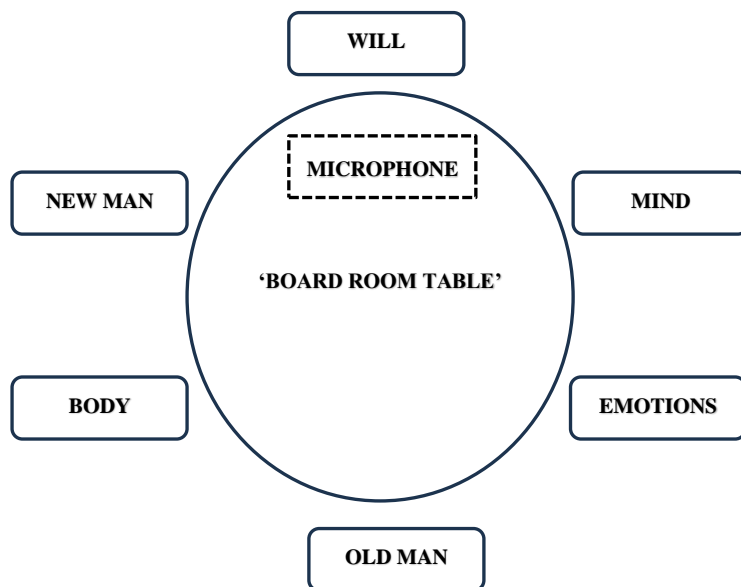
That is why all of us, including even the most godly and mature Christians, still need to *resist* the demons, even if they are on the outside of us, in the ‘public gallery’, rather than inside us, sitting at the very committee table. We must try to minimise their influence over us.

Likewise, we all need to resist the influence of worldly people, especially if they are members of churches, as we can never totally get away from them either, no matter what we do. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11, unless we go out of the world altogether, such people will always be around us. So, let us now look closely at the first diagram and then more rapidly at each of the others:

Diagram 1 – a saved man whose life is in good order

So, to recap, diagram 1 is intended to represent a spiritually healthy *male*, with an optimal seating plan for his committee table, such that the will has the microphone in front of it and is sitting directly between the new man and the mind. I say that because the way God has created the male is that his mind plays a more prominent part, or is ‘nearer to the surface’ than his emotions. As I shall seek to show in diagram 2, the opposite is the case for a spiritually healthy female, within whom the emotions play a much more prominent role and are nearer to the surface.

Thus, I portray the female, in diagram 2, with the will sitting between the new man and the emotions. Neither of these different arrangements for males and females is wrong. It is simply how God has created the man and the woman, and it is one of the valid differences between them. I wanted to represent that distinction within this illustration because it has significance in terms of how the average man and the average woman operate.



Our will can give orders to our mind, emotions and body and tell them what to do

Before we go on to examine other diagrams with alternative ‘seating plans’ and different problems, it is important to emphasise that our mind and our will are not the same thing. The will *decides* what we as a whole, i.e. our body, mind, emotions and spirit combined, are going to do. Our will can also make decisions which *override* or outvote what our emotions, our body, or even our mind, are saying.

We may be in a position where, in our mind, we feel anxious, troubled and reluctant to do the right thing. But our will imposes its decisions on our mind and says: “*Even though you are anxious about this, we are going to do it anyway.*” Likewise, our will can impose its decisions on our body. We might be doing some vigorous exercise and our body wants to stop, but our will says “*No, you are going to run for another 10 minutes on this treadmill, whether you like it or not.*”

Even the emotions can be told what to do by our will. We might, for example, feel sad or ‘low’ but our will can tell our emotions to cooperate with our body when we give thanks, and to rejoice or worship even when our emotions don’t feel like doing any of those things. In the same way, at times when our emotions are feeling fear, our will can say: “*whether you are afraid or not, we are going to go ahead and do this thing anyway*”.

It may help to illustrate this point about how the will can overrule, or outvote, all the other members of our ‘committee’ if I tell the story, probably apocryphal, of how President Abraham Lincoln outvoted his entire Cabinet and imposed his own decision when deciding whether he should sign the Emancipation Proclamation during the American Civil War.

Lincoln put the question to his cabinet and all of them voted no, or ‘*nay*’, as they used to say in those days. As the story goes, after his entire cabinet had voted against it, Lincoln raised his own hand to vote in favour, or ‘*aye*’. Then he said: “*Gentlemen, the nays 20, the ayes 1 – the ayes have it!*”.

This story is usually told as an example of how, under the American Constitution, unlike the British, Constitution, all executive power is vested in one man, namely the President himself. Accordingly, his Cabinet members, i.e. the Secretaries whom he appoints over each of the departments, are just glorified advisers, only able to wield such power as he delegates to them. Of course, in real life, only a very bold, or foolish, President would go it entirely alone in this way, against the unanimous advice of all his Cabinet Secretaries, unless he has very good reasons.

Nevertheless, it serves to make the point of how the American Constitution is meant to operate, at least in theory, and how it differs from the British Constitution, under which executive power is vested in all the members of the Cabinet combined. They operate on the basis of a majority vote and, amongst them, the Prime Minister is just ‘*primus inter pares*’, i.e. “first among equals”, able to lead, but not to overrule.

Thus, my analogy about the committee is based much more on the model of an American Cabinet than on a British Cabinet because, in the analogy as I present it, the will, as Chairman, has the final say on every issue. It can impose itself on the mind, emotions and body as well as choosing whether to listen to the old man or the new man and also where they should all be seated around the table.

Of course, God did not create each of us in accordance with the legal provisions of the American Constitution! Even so, the Abraham Lincoln analogy does serve a useful purpose in explaining how our own will can overrule all of the other members of our committee and insist that we, as a whole person, do something or refrain from doing something which is contrary to the wishes of one or more, or even all, of the other parts of our self.

We also see examples of this point about the authority our will has in the life of King David, in that he would often tell his own mind, body and emotions what to do. When he spoke in that way it was his will asserting itself and showing strong, decisive leadership over the rest of his ‘committee members’. In these verses and many others King David ‘interrogates’ his own soul which, as we saw, is a collective term to refer to our mind, emotions and will. Then, having asked his soul why it is cast down, he *commands* it to hope in God:

⁵ *Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation* ⁶ *and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.*

Psalm 42:5-6 (ESV)

¹¹ *Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God*

Psalm 42:11 (ESV)

In these next verses David's will *instructs* his own soul to bless the Lord and also *tells* it not to forget the benefits that the Lord brings to him:

¹ *Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!*

² *Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,*

Psalm 103:1-2 (ESV)

Then in this next verse, King David makes a declaration that he *will* sing to the Lord. It is clear from the tone and the context that this is something he is imposing upon himself, contrary to his own feelings at the time.

Accordingly, David may well have felt that singing to the Lord was the last thing he wanted to do at that moment but he was commanding himself to do it anyway because it was the right thing to do. Therefore his own will was insisting upon it, regardless of what his emotions felt, or what his mind thought, or whether his body was tired or fresh:

³³ *I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.*

Psalm 104:33 (ESV)

In each of these situations, King David's body was probably tired and his emotions and mind may well have been troubled, anxious, sad, depressed etc. However, by an exercise of his own will, he took firm control of himself, 'got a grip', told his own body, mind and emotions what to do and *instructed them* to hope and to praise.

His will was choosing to force all the parts of himself to do what it ordered them to do. David also forced his own soul to become more humble, by making himself fast from food, which was probably the last thing that any part of him wanted to do:

¹³ *But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.*

Psalm 35:13 (KJV)

David's will also *told* the other parts of himself, i.e. his mind, emotions and body, to give thanks and to extol or praise God. When he did this it was not always spontaneous or instinctive. Sometimes it

was by sheer force of self-discipline as he *commanded himself* to do it and then made himself obey the commands his will gave:

***²⁸You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God; I will extol you.***

Psalm 118:28 (ESV)

This concept of our will giving orders to ourselves, or to certain parts of ourselves, is linked to what apostle Paul meant when he told us to “*take every thought captive....*”. This basically means the way in which our will takes authority over our mind and *tells it what to think* rather than leaving our mind free to roam around, forming whatever random thoughts it wants to form, which might well be foolish or inappropriate.

⁵ We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

2 Corinthians 10:5 (RSV)

So, if we were to think of this in the context of my analogy about the committee table, then “taking every thought captive” would involve the will, as chairman, turning to address the mind, as a fellow committee member, and saying something like this:

“Mind, you are being negative, gloomy and defeatist and are dragging down the other members of the committee. You are upsetting emotions and causing body to feel tired and unenthusiastic. You are also playing directly into his hands of the old man, enabling him to exert a stronger influence over the committee as a whole and over me as chairman. Therefore, I am ordering you, right now, to pull yourself together, get a grip, put aside your negative thoughts, and think positively, in accordance with Scripture. That will help to fill the rest of us on the committee with hope and confidence, rather than the pessimism you are currently creating”.

Our emotions can be in turmoil and feeling sad, distressed and downcast when we are experiencing bad circumstances and yet, at the same time, our new man or human spirit can be feeling joy. That is not a contradiction. It is because the emotions and the spirit are two quite separate things within us, each having their own different roles to play on the committee. So, here in Romans 9:2, Paul is feeling “*great sorrow and unceasing anguish*” in his emotions.

² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

Romans 9:2 (RSV)

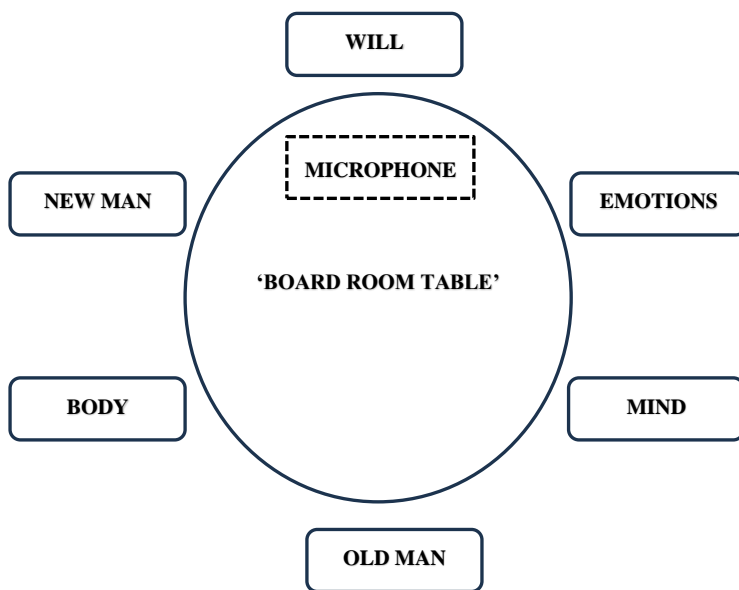
Yet, we know from many other verses that he was also able to live in ongoing joy, in his spirit regardless of his circumstances and no matter how his emotions may have felt about the awful things he was experiencing. This is because happiness or sadness are felt within the emotions, whereas joy is something we feel at a deeper level in our spirit. That means it is possible, if we get ourselves under control, to feel joy in our spirit even while we are unhappy in our emotions.

Imagine a man like John Bunyan who was in prison for many years simply for preaching the Gospel and teaching the Bible faithfully. I am quite sure he must often have felt sad, lonely and unhappy. But by operating through his spirit it was possible to also feel joy, at the same time as feeling sad, because these things are felt within different parts of us.

So, when we feel sad because it is wet and cold and things are going badly, we can still feel joy at the same time by focusing on our glorious future and our eternal life in God's Kingdom. I have cheered myself up many times by directing my mind to such things and therefore feeling joy even in the midst of sadness.

Some alternative arrangements of the 'seating plan' on the committee to show how the influence of the flesh, the world, and also demons, can increase or decrease in different situations

Diagram 2 – a saved female whose life is in good order

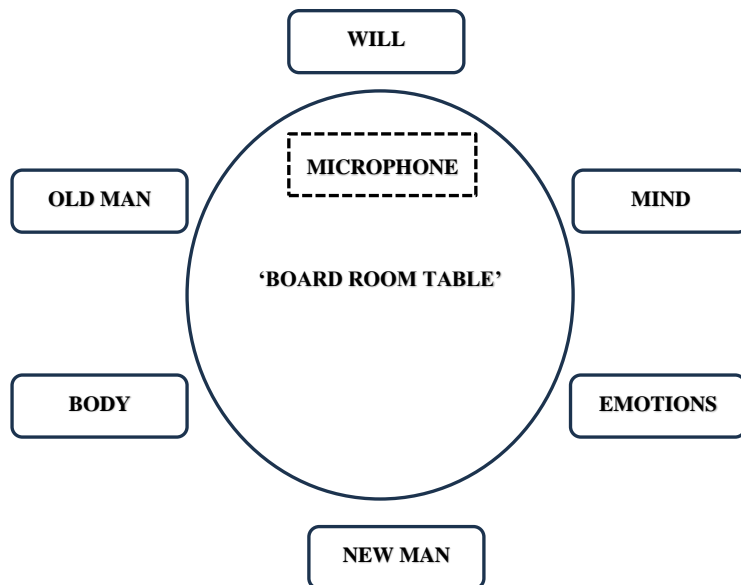


Everything is the same as in diagram 1 except that the mind and the emotions have 'swopped seats' at the committee table. In the female as God intends her to be, the emotions play a larger part, and are "nearer to the surface" such that they are revealed more quickly, more often and more prominently when distressing situations arise.

It is also true to say, of most women, that they spend more time 'feeling things' and less time 'thinking things' than in the case of the average man, whether saved or otherwise. It is part of how God has designed the female and is one of the thousands of differences between men and women, not only physically but also mentally, spiritually and emotionally.

So, in this case, with a saved woman, her emotions will sit right alongside the will, whereas the mind is across the table. Of course, that does not mean women do not think or cannot think, but only that they are built in such a way that their emotions play a much bigger role than in a man and are far more often heard, not only within the internal deliberations of the committee, but also in what the female says to other people when her emotions lean over and "speak into the microphone".

Diagram 3 – a saved man but one who is immature and carnal



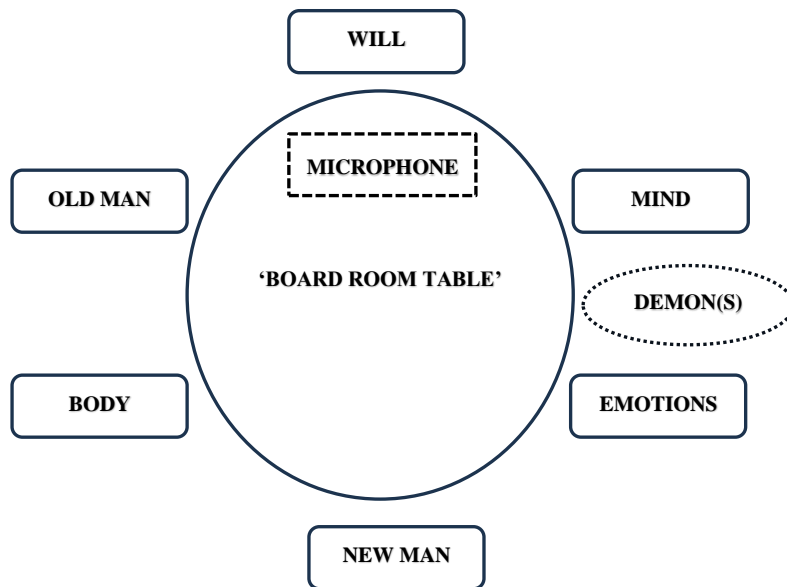
Here we see a saved man but one who is immature and carnal. Therefore the old man has moved up the table and taken a more prominent place, perhaps even right alongside the will. Thus, the flesh is better able to grab the microphone to speak for the person, thereby causing the person to become more carnal in their speech, actions and reactions.

Of course, in an unsaved person, the old man is always sitting right alongside the will exerting its carnal influence and having a major say on what the will decides. But the same can also be true of an immature or carnal Christian.

We can also expect that the 'public gallery' for a carnal Christian will be more crowded than in diagrams 1 and 2. There will be more worldly friends, and more demons, heckling from the sidelines and seeking to influence the committee. Of course, even in the best of people, the world, and the demons seek to exert their influence from the outside by heckling.

But where a person, even a saved person, has allowed themselves to become more carnal and to put their old man in a more prominent position within their committee, then the world and the demons will also increase in prominence and have a bigger impact because a carnal Christian will take fewer steps to resist them.

Diagram 4 – where a demon is within the man and therefore sits at the committee table itself



Here there is a further adjustment to the structure and membership of the committee, which many will consider controversial, and even impossible. Nevertheless, I will set out what I consider to be the case biblically and also from what I have observed in helping people, including Christians.

That is to say that, for some people, including saved believers, a demon can gain entry and thus be located *inside them*, such that, in terms of our analogy, the demon is actually seated *at the committee table*, right alongside the members, exerting its influence from within and no longer just heckling from outside.

This obviously has a major bearing on how much more effective that demon can be in derailing the work of the committee and the increased influence it can have over the will but also over the other legitimate members of the committee. So, the demon is obviously not a legitimate member of the committee.

Nonetheless, it is there, sitting at the table as a kind of squatter and causing far greater havoc than by heckling from the outside from a seat in the public gallery. NB If this was a woman, everything set out above would be the same except that the mind and emotions would swap places. In my Book 9 I devote the whole of chapter one to the question of whether a genuinely saved Christian can have a demon inside them. My belief is that they can and I present a substantial amount of evidence to support that conclusion.

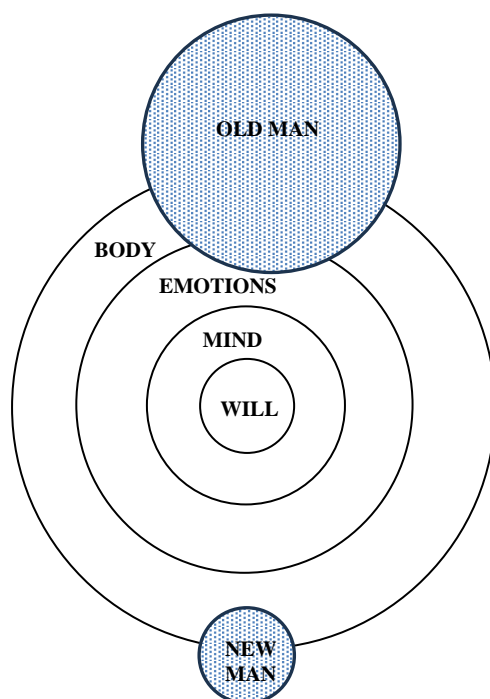
Another illustration, this time from astronomy, to help explain how the new man and old man compete to influence our mind, emotions and body and the decisions made by our will

I have changed the illustration now to help to see this another way, as if each of the component parts of a man were in orbit around the will, like planets around a star or moons around a planet. But here,

in this astronomical diagram, we shall firstly show the old man as being large and heavy, like a big moon with a powerful gravitational pull. Conversely, in this diagram, the new man is small and gives off only a weak gravitational pull.

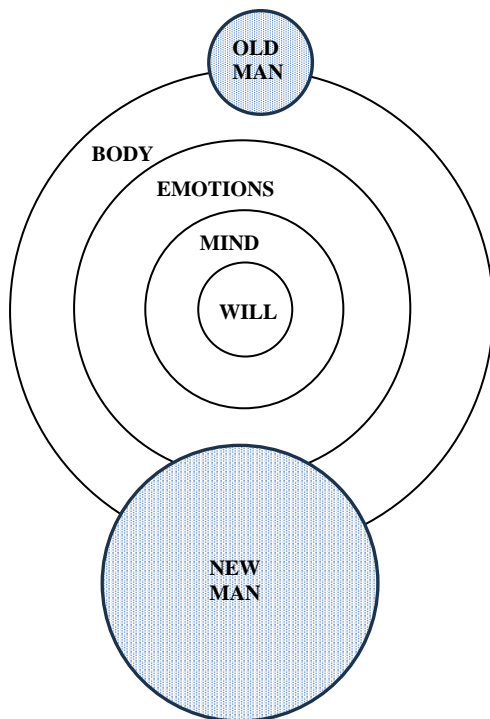
Thus in this diagram, which corresponds to a new believer, or a carnal Christian, the old man is exerting a much bigger influence over the person. NB If we drew the same diagram for a woman, the only difference would be that the emotions and mind would swap places, thus putting the emotions closer to the centre, exerting more influence over the will.

An immature, carnal Christian male in whom the old man is much bigger and more influential than the new man



So, in the above case, the vital need is for the person to take steps to shrink the size and influence of their old man and increase the size, influence and 'gravitational pull' of their new man or spirit. This is, of course, done by starving the old man, feeding the new man and causing the one to shrink and the other to expand until, eventually, the situation has been reversed. Then it will be the new man who is having the larger influence on the person, as shown below:

A more mature Christian male, in whom the new man has grown and the old man has shrunk



By a process of denying self and picking up his cross daily this Christian male has matured such that his old man exerts far less ‘gravitational pull’ and his new man exerts far more in both absolute and relative terms. Again, remember that if this was a woman the only difference would be that the mind and emotions would swap places, putting the emotions nearer to the will and thereby increasing the influence the emotions have over the will.

CHAPTER 5

"THE WORLD"

⁴You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

James 4:4 (NIV)

¹⁵Do not love the world nor the things in the world . If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

1 John 2:15-16 (NASB)

¹⁴"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵"I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 17:14-16 (NASB)

³³"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

John 16:33 (NASB)

¹⁹We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one.

1 John 5:19(RSV)

¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

1 Corinthians 2:12 (ESV)

What is meant by "the world" and "worldliness"?

The Greek word '*kosmos*', which is translated as '*the world*', does not mean this physical planet that we live *on*. It refers to this present evil age that we live *in*. It encompasses all the values, attitudes and ways of the unbelieving, non-Christian, God-hating world around us. The world, in turn, reflects the values, attitudes and ways of the Devil whom the Bible refers to as "*the god of this world*". However, it is not only non-Christians who are '*worldly*'.

We are all worldly to the extent that we reflect and adopt the standards of the world. One definition of *worldliness* is being attached to, engrossed in, or preoccupied with, the things of this present life. That affects Christians, not just non-Christians. We are all prone to it. Look again at how apostle John defines the nature of this present world:

¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

1 John 2:16 (NASB)

John identifies three key concepts which, taken together, we might classify as '*worldliness*'. They are:

- a) the lust of the flesh
- b) the lust of the eyes
- c) the boastful pride of life

We shall examine each of these key phrases below.

a) **the lust of the flesh** - this means our craving to satisfy the physical urges of our sinful nature. The power of these urges is reflected in the emphasis advertisers give to the use of sexual imagery to manipulate us to buy. Such adverts are only effective because the lusts within us are so powerful. The lust of the flesh causes us to operate without self-restraint or regard for right and wrong. This operates not only in relation to sex but also alcohol, food and any other things we long to have or that we use excessively, at the wrong time, or in the wrong way.

b) **the lust of the eyes** - this refers to our desire for things we see. It is closely associated with greed, envy and covetousness. Again, advertisers rely heavily on these urges, and manipulate us through them. Consider how many of our conflicts and stresses come from being discontented with what we have and longing to have *more* things, *better* things and, in particular, *other people's* things.

This world reflects the character of Satan who lost his position in Heaven because he envied the Son of God and craved to be in His place. When we long for possessions, prestige and money, we are repeating what Satan did. It is the exact opposite of what Jesus did, when He came to this Earth as a man. He emptied Himself of all His glory until, in the end, there was no lower place He could go to.

c) **the boastful pride of life** –This involves thinking of ourselves more than we should, focusing on self rather than other people, and seeking to exalt ourselves. It mirrors the attitude Satan showed in saying "*I will be like the Most High*". Few things are as ugly as pride. We hate it in other people but are blind to it in ourselves unless we go out of our way to look for it and ask God to help us to see it.

But I should make clear that God doesn't want us to think ill of ourselves or to consider ourselves useless or valueless. One could put it this way – "*God doesn't want us to think less of ourselves. He wants us to think of ourselves less*". So if you are a skilled violinist, God doesn't want you to pretend not to be. He just wants you to stop boasting about and dwelling upon what a great violinist you are.

Worldliness can therefore be recognised wherever we see any of these three things surfacing, i.e. the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. These are Satan's ways of thinking and the rules by which this fallen world operates. But we are commanded to live in exactly the opposite ways. That is one reason why we are out of step with this world. It operates on the basis of pride and rebellion but we are commanded to operate with humility and obedience.

Likewise, the world reveres men's ability and their feral cunning. But we are commanded to look to God's wisdom instead. The world seeks to control, dominate and manipulate, but we are commanded to serve others and set people free. The world seeks to accumulate wealth and possessions, but we are meant to enjoy giving things away.

Therefore, it is not surprising that, as believers living in an unbelieving world, we are likely to get jostled about. The Christian life is like trying to walk away from Wembley Stadium just before the FA Cup Final, when tens of thousands of people are streaming towards it and bumping into you. That

would not be a peaceful stroll. It would be jerky and bumpy, requiring lots of stepping to the side as people collide into you.

Yet, how can such turbulence be avoided if you are resolved to walk in the opposite direction to the great mass of people around you? The bigger question, however, is whether or not you are determined to spend the rest of your life walking in the opposite direction to the crowd. Most of us are not, at least in this lukewarm, apostate generation.

The ruler of this world is Satan

This world system belongs to the Devil and is run by him. It reflects his values and his principles, rather than God's. That is why the Devil is referred to as "*the god of this age*", "*the prince of this world*", or the "*ruler of the world*".

³¹Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

John 12:31 (NIV)

⁴The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV)

When Adam and Eve sinned, they effectively abdicated the rulership of planet Earth, which God had given to them. A vacuum was created which was then entered into and taken over by Satan. He has had the control of this world ever since and he will keep it until Jesus Christ takes it back from him completely at His Second Coming. For now, however, this world is run by Satan and it reflects him and his ways.

Therefore, in addition to having to fight a 'civil war' inside yourself against your own flesh, you also have to fight an external battle against this world system, all its values and what it stands for. That means you are going to end up in opposition to many things that are happening around you at work or in your neighbourhood or family.

The 'world system' is based on conforming and being squeezed until you fit into its mould

Most people are heavily influenced by the opinions of those around them. There is a strong craving to be accepted and approved of by others. In some people this longing to be accepted is so strong they cannot be happy without it and will do virtually anything to obtain approval.

We saw this during the years 2020-2021, in what I call "the covid hoax" when millions of people obeyed absurd rules, including isolating themselves in their homes, abandoning elderly relatives and closing down their churches for many months.

They also consented to having a series of "vaccinations" when the very best that could be said about those covid jabs was that they were "experimental" and "rushed". But I saw it as far worse than that as I discuss in my talks on covid and also in my audio series called "Modern Deceptions".

In my view our politicians and the scientists advising them were not incompetent, negligent or even reckless. If they had been all of these things, they would not be entirely to blame for their actions. I believe that, on the contrary, they knew exactly what they were doing and were deliberately seeking to do us harm, and to kill many of us.

But even if you are not yet persuaded of all that, look at the long list of controversial issues and debates which have surfaced in recent years in which our politicians are *always taking us in the wrong direction* and putting us all under a lot of pressure to conform to what is obviously false and wrong. They never accidentally go in the right direction or pursue a godly policy without realising it.

But that is what would have happened if they had merely been incompetent and were making decisions on a random basis like tossing coins. It wasn't like that. The 'coins' always came down tails, never heads, which convinces me that the harm they did was all deliberate. Moreover, they are not content for us to merely shut our mouths and let them have their way. They insist that we publicly endorse their agenda. One sees this, for example, with all of the following issues:

- i) *homosexuality* promoted as a virtue
- ii) the promotion of *transgenderism*, i.e. the belief that men and women can change their gender and indeed that there are literally dozens of other genders to choose from besides male and female
- iii) *global warming* – the false idea that CO² operates to warm up the atmosphere and we therefore need to make drastic changes to our whole way of life, including ending the use of gas, oil or coal, even though we have, as yet, nothing to replace those energy sources – and even though our competitors, China, India and Russia are not pursuing any of these “green” policies and are going full steam ahead building coal fired power stations
- iv) *feminism*, i.e. resentment towards men, even to the level of hatred, and the desire to rebel against male authority, in particular rejecting the authority of the husband and father within the family
- v) *abortion* - a practice that has always existed, but only ever on a tiny scale with victims dotted about, here and there, whereas the killing of unborn babies is now a major business, operating on a huge industrial scale. Opposition to this murder is silenced by levelling the accusation that nobody would ever oppose abortion except on the basis of being “*anti women*” or “*motivated by hate*”. Most people fall for that trick and shut their mouths, including Christians who should instead be shouting from the rooftops.
- vi) *immigration* – over the last 50 years, but especially the last 20 years, and now at an even faster rate over the last 5 years, all the governments of the Western World (but nowhere else) are letting in a flood of Muslim immigrants, including illegal immigrants and immediately putting them up in 4* hotels (while our own native homeless people, including ex-military, are left to sleep on the streets).

Our governments lie to us and claim these are “refugees fleeing war”. Actually they are virtually all fighting age Muslim men, aged 18-30, never women, children or old men. The truth is these men are let in deliberately by our own governments so they can get ready to wage jihad and destroy the “Christian West” or “Christendom”. That is the real reason why they are flooding in, exactly in line with what the Koran tells them to do.

Therefore, on all these issues, and many more, hundreds of millions of people all over the West are intimidated into silence and pressurised into conformity because they don't want to be disapproved of or labelled as "far right", "racist", "narrow minded", "Islamophobic" etc. But you are not entitled to be silent. And all of those slurs and insults are invented and false anyway and are designed purely to silence you.

You have a solemn duty to tell the truth, and to think the truth, and it will be no excuse at the Judgment Seat of Christ for you to say *"Well I admit I did go along with them, Jesus, and I didn't speak up for the truth, but you must realise, Jesus, these people can be aggressive and I didn't want to be unpopular at work or be criticised online."*

So, the gravitational pull of the world system is not only felt in the areas of smoking, drinking, gambling, drug taking and promiscuity, it also affects us in a host of other ways too, causing us to become weaklings and cowards, too afraid to speak the truth about moral or political issues or to openly live our life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever asked yourself about any of this or examined your motives for lamely giving in to intimidation and letting yourself be silenced and squeezed into the world's mould? I recommend you do and that you make it a robust cross examination, because the vast majority of us are guilty of this and it is getting steadily worse.

You must become willing to walk alone, to say unpopular things, and to receive no approval or praise from the world around you, *including within the churches*, many of which are fast becoming as worldly, politically correct and brainwashed as the unbelieving world is.

To do this, you will have to train yourself to be courageous enough to think for yourself, and to say what you think, based solely on truth and on the Bible, not group think, public opinion or what the media say. And if you haven't yet realised the media is totally corrupt and deceitful then you urgently need to wake up.

How much of a hold or a claim does the world have on you?

The only way you can answer this question is to interview yourself with some vigour, but you must not let yourself off the hook or accept flimsy or dishonest excuses. Always remember this world is currently ruled by Satan and therefore our natural place is to be opposed to this 'world system', not to fit in with it.

We are not meant to fit in. God wants us to stick out like a healthy thumb. We are also to make sure Satan has no "claim" on us, i.e. no right to speak into our lives or to influence us as a result of some aspect of our conduct which is sinful, unbiblical or disobedient.

³⁰***I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me,***
³¹***but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.***

John 14:30-31 (ESV)

And if you feel Satan does have some claim on you, or that there is some area of sin, compromise or cowardice in your life which weakens you in your fight, then take steps to confront those areas and to

repent/renounce/revoke etc whatever is the source of the problem. The most likely ‘claim’ that the demons, will have on you is your own cowardice, which is a grievous sin, although few people seem to realise that.

They excuse cowardice as a “weakness” for which they are not to blame. But the truth is we are fully to blame for it and God will not accept it as an excuse for disobeying Him or not doing your duty. Our cowardice is a sin, and of the highest order, because that one sin alone will lead you into many others.

Above all, cowardice will cause you to fit in when you ought to stand out, to be silent when you should speak out, and to do nothing when you should be taking action. But the only cure for cowardice is courage, which means being willing, *as an exercise of the will*, to be obedient and faithful even when you are afraid.

You cannot ask God to take away all your fear and tell Him that you will obey Him when it has all gone. It doesn’t work that way. It is the other way round and therefore the only way to get rid of your fear is by facing it *while you are still afraid* and doing the very things you fear most. I can assure you this is true. I have been set free from a lot of the fears that used to hinder me. But in every case the fear only left me *after I had faced up to it*, and done what I was afraid of, never before I did so.

God will use the ‘furnace’ of affliction, adversity and suffering to ‘melt’ away the influence of the world and the flesh – as He did with Joseph

The main person who is responsible for dealing with your flesh, and reducing the world’s hold over you, is yourself. That is to say God expects you to be actively engaged in dealing with both, doing whatever it takes to gain the victory over them such that you can grow into a mature, successful, productive, faithful disciple.

We need to get that fact straight from the start. The primary responsibility is yours and you must take action, discipline yourself, deny your flesh, humble yourself, reject ungodly values, refuse to conform with worldly standards, learn wisdom and develop the courage to stand alone whenever the truth is at stake. You have a lot to do.

Therefore, you can’t just sit back and expect God to do it all for you or for the mere passage of time to make you mature. That will not happen unless you actively participate in the maturing ‘project’ and cooperate with what God (and godly pastors and Bible teachers) advise you to do. If you don’t then the passage of 30 years in the Church will just turn you from an immature, carnal and worldly 20 year old into an immature, carnal and worldly 50 year old.

Nevertheless, although the main responsibility for getting yourself to a place of maturity is yours, God is also willing, indeed eager, to help any Christian who wants to be helped to grow up and become a solid disciple, such that they are no longer ruled over by their flesh or by the world. So, this help is available.

However, I need to tell you frankly that God’s way of achieving your maturity for you by intervening and imposing the necessary ‘treatment’ upon you is harder, and involves a lot more pain and suffering, than you will get from choosing voluntarily to pursue maturity for yourself.

Therefore, voluntarily humbling yourself, disciplining yourself and denying yourself by your own choice is by far the easier option – if you have any common sense. The problem is most of us don't have enough common sense to impose those things on ourselves. At any rate, we aren't willing to discipline or afflict ourselves strictly enough, and for long enough, to finish the job properly.

However, in principle, if you would only have enough sense to willingly do those things, take God's advice, and make right choices, then the process of changing from an immature, naïve, carnal, worldly timid new convert into a mature, wise, godly, courageous and unworldly disciple would be much easier.

It might involve a total of let's say "100 units" of discomfort, pain and suffering. But if you don't willingly subject yourself to those things and freely choose to humble yourself, deny yourself, discipline yourself etc, then you put God into a tight corner and give Him a difficult decision to make.

God could either:

- a) step back, do nothing, leave it all to you, and let you fail to deal with these things so that you remain immature, carnal, proud and worldly, such that you will probably be a failure as a Christian and even fall away completely OR
- b) intervene to help you by imposing upon you a set of circumstances, events and difficulties producing perhaps "500-1000 units" of discomfort which will have the effect of forcing you to grow up and to change *involuntarily*, because of your unwillingness to inflict these necessary things upon yourself by choice.

I call this second option "*the furnace of affliction*" and it is actually God's mercy and kindness which causes Him to do this. It is Him "*being cruel to be kind*" and it is done 100% for your benefit if you could only realise that.

Accordingly, if you freely choose to follow all of God's advice and impose a disciplined, diligent, self denying lifestyle upon yourself, then you can achieve maturity at the cost of only 100 'units of discomfort'. However, if you fail to do that and therefore make it necessary for God to intervene to do the job for you, it might require five to ten times as much discomfort, stress and pain to achieve the same outcome.

Obviously, therefore we should all come to our senses, see the point, and choose to do all of this voluntarily so as to get it over with more quickly and easily. But the problem is the vast majority of us are too foolish, weak, cowardly and flabby to make that choice, or to persist with it. Therefore God either has to intervene to impose the 'improvement regime' upon you or leave you to fail completely and get nowhere.

I wish I could tell you now that I was a model Christian who freely chose from day one to do all the right things and to humble myself willingly rather than requiring God to humble me, and to deny my flesh by choice rather than requiring God to do it for me by plunging me into painful circumstances against my wishes. But I can't say that.

Like most Christians, I didn't go anywhere near far enough in denying myself and I certainly didn't adequately humble myself. Therefore, God began to do the job for me, resulting in 5-10 times as much

pain, stress and grief. He did it by putting me into situations of affliction that I never wanted to be in and His aim was to “*knock the stuffing out of me*”.

In fact, God had already been doing this on a smaller scale for some years but, when I was 37, there was a very distinct turning point. I believe He gave me a choice as to whether to *ask Him* to step things up and increase the ‘temperature’ in the oven and keep me in the “*furnace of affliction*” for as long as He felt was needed and do whatever it takes to humble me, defeat my flesh, remove the attraction of the world, and teach me wisdom.

I believe God gave me the choice as to whether to step up the intensity of the maturing programme and that I could have refused it if I had wanted to. But I chose to accept His offer. I made that decision in June 1999 shortly after my 37th birthday at which point I had already been (involuntarily) in God’s furnace of affliction for many years and had come to have some understanding of what that is all about and why God does it.

So, by then I was no longer totally carnal or worldly. I had acquired some maturity and some wisdom but, in God’s opinion, not enough of either. But then, one day I listened to an audio sermon on tape in which the speaker explained this concept of God’s furnace of affliction and how it helps us, despite being very uncomfortable and even agonizing at times while we go through it.

The speaker then issued a challenge, accompanied by a frank warning, as to how much pain and stress it might involve. They invited the listener to freely, willingly, consciously *invite* God to put them into His furnace for as long as it takes and to do whatever it takes to achieve the job properly and to melt away all carnality, worldliness and foolishness such that we become a truly mature disciple capable of being used by God in the ways He intends.

I felt extremely convicted of the rightness of the message and of my great need to grow in maturity and I felt a very powerful yearning to achieve that and to become the kind of disciple God really wanted me to be. So, I accepted the challenge and made that invitation to God. And I really meant it. I knew it would be tough and could last a long time. So I had some idea of what I was getting myself into. What I did not know, however, was how tough it would end up being and how long it would last. I seriously underestimated both those things.

So, I then embarked upon a period of at least 13 years in the furnace, ending in 2012 when I sold my law firm and went full time as a Bible teacher. However, in some ways the furnace continued even after that point. Clearly God thought the project of bringing me to maturity was a vastly bigger job than I had ever imagined it to be.

I describe some of these events, ordeals and problems in more detail in my other books. The main stresses were experienced in my business career which suddenly became extremely difficult. Only a few weeks after I invited God to put me into His ‘furnace of affliction’ I discovered that one of my equity partners in my then law firm was stealing from the firm.

I was a one third equity partner and I went to see the senior partner and told him I had caught the conveyancing partner forging an invoice on the firm’s letter head with the intention of receiving the money himself rather than it going to the firm. This was serious professional misconduct and indeed it was a crime. The Senior Partner was shocked and he promised to support me in tackling the wrongdoer.

So, we called a meeting to address it. However, in the space of two days, the wrongdoer exerted some form of leverage over the senior partner, whether by blackmail or otherwise. Therefore, when we met and I set out the facts, the senior partner just stared at the floor in embarrassment and said nothing. He could not look me in the eye because he had changed sides.

To cut a long story short, the two of them then combined together to vote *to expel me* as a partner for being “*disruptive*” – i.e. for tackling the conveyancing partner’s fraud. So, all of a sudden I went from being a one third equity partner in an established law firm with a good income to being nothing at all, not even an employee. Moreover, they also stole my £250,000 equity stake in that firm which meant I could not take that money with me to start my own new law firm.

Consequently, I had to start all over again in a new “law firm” if you can call it that, as it had no files, no clients, no staff, no equipment, no furniture, no anything. When I began on day one there was literally just me in a small newly rented office which was completely empty. I used my mobile phone as the firm’s telephone system, with myself as the receptionist, because there were no staff. The only furniture was a dining room chair from home for me to sit on.

It was a dreadfully crushing, bruising, humiliating experience on top of which there was also a sense of outrage and trauma at the injustice of it all, having my position taken from me dishonestly and all my money stolen – simply for being willing to tackle a thief! But that was only the start of my ordeal. The firm did begin to grow and God blessed it with an abundance of new clients through an advertising campaign which the Holy Spirit inspired. So I can’t claim that it was all bad.

However, in hindsight, that growth was far too rapid, due to my impatience to get back to where I had been and to ease my wounded pride. That impatience then led to me recruiting a lot of people, far too rapidly, which then led in turn to a long series of problems with unfaithful, lazy, incompetent, dishonest, negligent staff, many of whom I had to get rid of. Removing them was very stressful in itself on top of all the other pressures.

In addition to all that a series of events occurred in the church we were then in, for which I was the Chairman of the Trustees. In particular, it involved me discovering that the senior leader, to whom I give the name ‘Rick’, was carnal, deceitful and manipulative. I began to tackle him about his misconduct, but met with a wall of hostility from him and other leaders, some of which I discuss later in this book and also in my other books. So I was subjected to a campaign of lies and malice which resulted in us leaving that church, all of which was deeply traumatic, bewildering and stressful.

There were very many other incidents and stresses too, such as when my bank suddenly tried to close me down and also when I faced a series of false, deceitful employment tribunal claims from ex staff whom I had had to sack. There are just too many things to list here. But the eventual outcome of all that stress, pain, suffering and trauma was that it knocked all the pride and self sufficiency out of me and taught me what it really means to have nothing and to be totally dependent on God.

I likened it to having my ankle attached to a rope and being dragged by a tractor over miles of farmland, across rivers and through hedgerows. It was utterly disorientating and ego-destroying. Yet, God used it all. Indeed, many of the awful experiences I had in those years formed the basis for my subsequent series of books, in particular Book 5 which is about wisdom, and also Book 6 which is about how to identify and handle wicked people.

Many have found those two books useful but the point is I could never have written either of them if God had not put me through that long, agonising 13 year period in the furnace of affliction. He wasn't just trying to change me and teach me a long series of lessons. He also wanted others to benefit from the many painful discoveries I made during those years. So, others have profited from the various ordeals I faced, but I have gained more from it than anyone else has and, looking back, I do not regret inviting God to put me into His 'furnace'.

What I do know is that if God had given me the choice, incident by incident, along the way as to whether to have an easy time or a tough time, then on every occasion I would have chosen to be given an easy time. That is just the way we are. God knows that all too well, which is why He knows that sometimes we need Him to pile on the pressure for us and to subject us to ordeals we would never have chosen to endure if He had left it all up to us.

By the way, I am not alone in this, and the furnace of affliction is by no means unique to me. We see it in the lives of many Bible characters, perhaps the most obvious being Joseph, the son of Jacob, who became the Prime Minister of Egypt under Pharaoh. We can read his story in Genesis chapters 37 plus 39 to 48.

We see in chapter 37 when Joseph is 17 years old that God's blessing is already on his life and that God intends to use his life in a major way. But the problem is he is proud, immature and naïve. In particular, he is very unwise in the way he speaks so openly of his dreams to his brothers, needlessly arousing their envy and resentment in a way that would have been foreseeable to an older, wiser person. But the problem was he was very naïve and insensitive and he handled it clumsily.

Had he been wise and mature already he would have said nothing about his dreams, except perhaps to his father. But he wasn't yet wise or mature. Those qualities only arose as bi-products of the 13 year period of pain, grief, injustice and suffering which he endured from the ages of 17 to 30. Remember how he was betrayed by his own brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused of attempted rape by Potiphar's wife, and then put in prison for many years – all totally unjustly.

Sometimes, when we read his story, especially if we read it quickly, we fail to recognise the intensity of the traumas he faced, in particular being betrayed by his own brothers, and we underestimate the agony he went through. But God used those 13 years in Joseph's life, just as He did in a much smaller way in mine, to knock the stuffing out of him.

The intention was to take away his pride, "sandpaper" his character to remove the rough edges, and to melt away his self-centredness such that he would cease to focus on himself and learn instead to focus on what God wanted and on helping others. We see this transformation very clearly from this next passage which occurs two years before Joseph's release from prison, at which point he had already had 11 years in the 'furnace of affliction'.

Evidently God did not think that was long enough as the job was not yet complete. In this passage Joseph has just interpreted the dreams of the butler (cupbearer) and baker and he appeals to the butler to mention him to Pharaoh when he is released. Note from this passage how many times Joseph uses the pronouns "I" and "me" and how his plea is entirely about himself:

¹⁴ Only keep me in mind when it goes well for you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this prison. ¹⁵ For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon.”

Genesis 40:14-15 (NASB)

What happens next however is the butler forgets Joseph and doesn't mention him to Pharaoh at all. God then leaves Joseph in the prison (furnace) for another two full years during which the affliction continues to do its work on his character. Note the stark contrast therefore two years later when the butler finally remembers Joseph and mentions him to Pharaoh after he has a strange dream. Joseph is then suddenly released and summoned to appear before Pharaoh. But look how differently Joseph speaks now, deflecting all credit away from himself and attributing it all to God. The self-centredness has gone.

¹⁴ Then Pharaoh sent word and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. ¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” ¹⁶ Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, “It has nothing to do with me; God will give Pharaoh an answer for his own good.”

Genesis 41:14-16 (NASB)

Joseph is then instantly elevated to become Prime Minister of Egypt and he later rescues his own family from the famine, including the brothers who sold him into slavery. It was the experience in the furnace of affliction that moulded Joseph and made him ready to handle so much political power in a righteous way and not to let any of it go to his head. Note how radically he has changed from the proud, boastful, insensitive teenager who had no idea that he was antagonising his brothers.

Therefore, learn from my experience, and from Joseph's, and don't make it necessary for God to put you into His furnace of affliction, or at least not for so long or at such a high temperature. Why don't you choose instead to be one of those exceptionally rare people who don't require God to put them in a furnace at all, or at least not for long, because they voluntarily humble themselves, deny their flesh, refuse to be conformed to this world and seek in every way to grow in wisdom?

If you were to do all of that, and keep on doing it, there would still be discomfort and pain, but it would be far less – i.e. only 100 units of discomfort instead of 1000 units. Looking back, I certainly wish I had been as sensible as that. But I wasn't. However, being realistic, the chances of you or anyone else being that sensible, on a consistent basis, and for long enough to finish the job of removing all your pride, carnality, worldliness and self sufficiency are not high. The truth is, therefore, that God is inevitably going to need to intervene to help you to finish the job.

Therefore, my advice to you is to recognise that fact and cooperate with Him as much as you can and in every conceivable way. Positively invite Him to do whatever is needed to bring you to a place of maturity. But, I think it is fair and sensible to also ask Him to do it as gently as possible and to have regard to your weakness. God is very kind as well as being realistic and pragmatic, and that is the sort of prayer He will be most willing to answer.

CHAPTER 6

OVERCOMING THE WORLD

⁵¹ Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; ⁵² for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; ⁵³ they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

Luke 12:51-53 (RSV)

⁹ I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine; ¹⁰ all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

John 17:9-11 (RSV)

³³ Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it.

Luke 17:33 (RSV)

⁴You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

1 John 4:4-6 (NASB)

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men; ¹⁰ not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹ But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one.

1 Corinthians 5:9-11 (RSV)

It is possible to break free from the influence of the world

We are commanded to resist the influence of this evil world system and to be willing to walk alone and refuse to conform. Yet, God never commands us to do anything impossible. Admittedly, it is very difficult to withstand the ‘gravitational pull’ of this world and we are likely to fail again and again even if we try wholeheartedly. The point is victories are possible, though perhaps small at first, and not always consistently.

But your success rate will improve as time goes by and as you develop greater knowledge, self-control and self-discipline. Therefore, never allow yourself to be told it is too hard or that you can never succeed in rejecting the values of this world. You certainly can succeed and you will if you truly want to and are willing to persist for as long as it takes. It is all about perseverance.

Reject all of this world's values and ways

We are to reject this world and all it represents. Therefore, although we are commanded to love other *people*, in the sense of self sacrificial “agape” love, we are not to love *this world system* or its values and ways:

¹⁵Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.

1 John 2:15-16 (NIV)

This world has a lot of feral cunning and guile like that seen amongst wild animals for example in the way a leopard will creep up on a potential victim which has its back to it. But the world has no real wisdom to offer us such as we find in the Bible. What the world calls wisdom is just foolishness in God's eyes:

¹⁸Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."

1 Corinthians 3:18-20 (NIV)

What this world stands for is entirely incompatible with what God stands for. We therefore have to choose whether to be a friend of the world or of God because we can't be both. Being a friend of this world and all it represents makes us an enemy of God. It is that stark:

⁴Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James 4:4 (RSV)

Therefore, we are not to imitate or adopt the standards, attitudes and practices, or even the social and political beliefs, of the worldly people around us. We are to reject the things they do and say and not copy their opinions either. Instead, we are to obey God's Word on every issue, and agree with Him, no matter how much that brings us into conflict with the people around us:

¹And the Lord said to Moses, ²“Say to the people of Israel, I am the Lord your God. ³You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. ⁴You shall do my ordinances and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the Lord your God. ⁵You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live: I am the Lord.

Leviticus 18:1-5 (RSV)

The world hates God and all that He stands for

We must therefore prepare ourselves for opposition and hatred from this world and all those who embrace the system and feel comfortable within it. Though we must not hate them, we should expect to be hated *by them*:

¹³*Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.*

1 John 3:13 (NIV)

¹⁸*"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.*

John 15:18-19 (NIV)

The people who are of this world hate truth. Therefore, they hate genuine Christianity and real Christians because their own deeds are evil and the true Gospel is a rebuke to them. It is like shining a bright light into the eyes of people who are accustomed to darkness:

¹⁹*This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*

John 3:19-20 (NASB)

We have to be "in the world but not of the world"

It would be so much easier if we could just opt out of this world entirely and not have to live our lives as disciples while surrounded by so much evil and so many corrupt people. But that cannot be. God has decided, in His wisdom, that we have to endure 60 or 70 years living in the midst of evil, distressing and hostile influences.

Therefore, Jesus in His 'High Priestly prayer' in John 17 does not ask God to take us out of the world but rather to help us to get through it successfully and to be 'kept from the evil one' meaning Satan and/or his demons. God makes use of the whole world system to toughen us up as if God had refused to remove all the bullies and nasty kids from our school. He knows we will gain more maturity from resisting and overcoming the bullies than we would if we were sheltered from them all.

⁶ *"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.*

John 17:6-19 (ESV)

The purpose and value of a daily “quiet time” or “devotional time” with your Bible and the effect that has on you

I had the great good fortune after I was converted to get the help and mentoring of a group called Insight Ministries which was an offshoot from the Navigators, an excellent group which focused on training Christians to become solid disciples. Therefore, right from the start, I was introduced to the discipline of a daily “quiet time” or “devotional time” and that one habit was the making of me.

It kept me on the narrow path and had a profound effect on my growth as a disciple in all sorts of way. So, I strongly recommend it, for all sorts of reasons, including helping you to break free from the choking influence of the world system and to develop a strong enough ‘spine’ to be able to stand alone and refuse to conform to the world’s mould.

Let’s look therefore at what a “quiet time” is and how to go about it so as to gain the most benefit. It is essentially about setting aside a time every day, without fail, which you devote to reading the Bible, prayer, adoration, thanksgiving, confession and supplication. Supplication means asking God for things and I placed it last in the list because for many people it is at the top of the list or even the only item on it. That should not be.

I would not recommend reading Christian books such as biographies or even commentaries during your morning quiet time. They are important, indeed essential, but should be read at other times later in the day, not during your precious time alone with God while you read **His** Word and speak and listen to **Him**. Reading any other kind of book during your quiet time would be like spending time alone with your wife or child, but going on your phone or reading a book while you are with them instead of focusing on them.

In my opinion, and I think there are many good reasons for saying so, the best time to do this is in the early morning so it is the first thing you do each day and can all take place before the business of the day gets started and before you head off to work or to school. That way you can ensure your mind is not filled with other distractions, or with the worries and pressures of the day.

It is also a sensible and practical precaution which ensures you never find that other events or pressures crowd out your time with the LORD and prevent it from happening. Remember your quiet time is *the most important thing you will do each day*. Therefore, it is vital and God wants it to happen. He wants you to make it your top priority and you need to get to a point where you see its vital importance and don’t look upon it as a ‘chore’.

But for the same reasons, being even more aware of its crucial importance than you are, the demons in your life do *not* want it to happen. Therefore, they will create whatever distractions are needed to divert you, waste your time, cause interruptions and phone calls and stop the quiet time happening. But that is so much easier for the demons to achieve if your quiet time is in the middle of the day or in the evening rather than first thing each morning.

All they would have to do at any other time of the day is make sure you are kept busy, with the phone or door bell ringing and people wanting things so you will say, as you go to bed that night, “*I never got a chance to have a quiet time today*”. In fact, what really happened was you played right into the demons’ hands by not putting the quiet time first on the agenda for the day.

However, if your quiet time is at the very start of each day, before the phone starts ringing and before there are any jobs to be done, or kids to be fed, or people tugging at your sleeve wanting your attention, then it is much more likely to happen and to be uninterrupted.

There is always time to do the first task of the day but not necessarily the 101st task. So, set about making this a habit. Carve out a time at the start of each day, unless you have truly compelling reasons to do it at some other time. Then, having started, stick to it rigidly.

If you can do that faithfully every morning for about 6-8 weeks it will become a habit and that habit will then keep you rather than you having to keep it. It will become so engrained and normal that you will do it automatically, without needing any self discipline and without even needing to remember. You will just head off on auto pilot to your study or some other empty, secluded room to start your quiet time.

But where you will need self discipline is during those first crucial 6-8 weeks while you are seeking to establish and entrench the habit. That is where the battle must be won. Therefore, make this vital habit part of your life and you will inevitably grow in maturity, knowledge and faithfulness and end up succeeding as a disciple. But if you don't, it is hard to see how you can possibly succeed. It really is that much of a game changer.

I recommend you start by aiming to spend only 20 minutes per day in which you read just a couple of pages, or three at most. Also read slowly, like a 6 year old child who has only recently learned to read. Focus on every word, one at a time, even pointing your finger at each word so you don't miss anything. This is important because, if you speed read the Bible you will miss lots of details.

Don't aim for too much to start with or you will fail and then give up on it and the habit won't form. But once the habit has been formed and is firmly entrenched, you can easily increase the amount of time you spend and the number of pages you read. Indeed, you will very probably spend longer by preference because you will find it so rewarding.

I was explaining this to someone recently and I made the point that the purpose of spending time in God's Word every day is not so that you can get some relevant message that will be useful to you that day. You might possibly do so, but that is unlikely and certainly isn't guaranteed.

The objective is not about what you specifically learn that day or about it having any particular relevance to that day. It is about you spending time alone with God one to one, and giving your relationship with Him priority, showing Him He is important to you and also *getting to know Him*, not just His Word, vital though that is.

It is just as when you spend time with your wife or child. That isn't done in order to receive some specific message from them relevant to that day, but to build relationship. We need to make it our aim to build that same personal relationship with God and a quiet time is the best way to do so.

Avoid places where worldly people congregate

There are, of course, some easy decisions you could make to reduce this world's influence over you by avoiding places which are obviously unwholesome or associated with sin such as night clubs, casinos or town centres late at night. But also, at a less obvious level, avoid friendship groups which involve

people who are coarse, vulgar or blasphemous. Pick and choose your friends carefully and be willing to have fewer of them.

Or it might be something much more mundane such as where you sit in the works canteen or when you choose to have lunch. That choice determines which colleagues you will see, or not see, and that matters a lot because even as you eat your lunch you could be being influenced, either for good or evil, by the people you choose to sit with. Therefore, decide only to be with wholesome people not those who are embittered, resentful, angry, crude or otherwise pumping their negativity into your life. Avoid those people and try to eliminate them from your life.

Likewise avoid other clubs, societies or even political parties which promote an unbiblical worldview

In the unusual years of deception we have lived through, in particular from 2020 onwards, with the Covid hoax, the health damaging jabs, the global warming hoax, the immigration hoax, the transgender insanity etc, many people's eyes have opened for the first time to the deception that is all around us. Some have gone further than that and have opened their eyes to the Bible as well. Therefore, we have had people getting converted recently who are coming from a 100% unchurched background.

Many of them have stumbled across, or been led towards, the Gospel by unusual, roundabout means. That is of course, very good. But it has also created a problem which is that we have new converts coming through whose eyes have opened on issues A,B and C but they still have not realised they had been lied to about issues D,E,F and G as well.

So, a person may have realised Covid is a hoax and that global warming is a pack of lies, but they have no idea they are still deceived, about "racism", mass immigration, Israel, Islam, feminism, transgenderism, the Welfare State etc. Therefore, we are seeing new converts whose eyes are wide open on certain issues but firmly shut on other issues.

Moreover, people may have been supporters of political parties or they have at least read newspapers and watched TV programmes which have left them with a residue of unbiblical views that they do not even realise are unbiblical. That is because they have never re-examined their beliefs in the light of having become a Christian.

It would never occur to them to do so because they assume the social and political views they have picked up over their lifetime are all correct and that becoming a Christian is of no relevance to what your social or political views should be. Indeed, they are likely to consider their opinions to be "obviously" correct since they are *"my own views and therefore self evidently correct."*

Sadly, that is the default setting for most people, such that they never even ask whether their own opinions are actually correct. More to the point, it doesn't occur to them that God might have something to say about their social and political beliefs.

I was recently in a debate with a couple who had found the Gospel as a result of the Covid hoax and were avid viewers of many conspiracy theory websites and blogs. But part of the problem for people who have had a revelation on one topic, usually Covid, is they can tend to imagine they are therefore exceptionally discerning and they develop excessive confidence in their own opinions.

This particular couple had listened for years to woke left wing ideas about Israel and the Arabs and nonsense about Islam being a “religion of peace”. Therefore, they were telling me that Israel is a problem, its leaders are corrupt, they are attacking innocent civilians and pursuing “genocide” etc, whereas the Gazan Arabs, Hamas, Hezbollah and even Islam itself, are all being victimised.

That is the left’s grotesquely distorted narrative but it has been widely accepted by naïve people and is now the view of all the main political parties, not just Labour. Sadly, that was that couple’s view and nothing would shift it because they were not open to being corrected. They knew for a fact that they were absolutely right.

Indeed, they argued with me at length and sought to persuade me that Israel was at fault and should be criticised. They were wasting their breath trying to get me to believe that so, in the end, we just agreed to disagree. They were certainly not willing to defer to my knowledge, even though I have studied Israeli history for decades and have been there six times, including some lengthy visits.

By contrast, they were new converts and had never read a single book about Israel or set foot in the place. But that didn’t reduce their certainty that they were correct in their opinions. Their view was that Israel was a purely political issue, not a theological one. I’m afraid God doesn’t see it that way. What He says about Israel in the Bible is the truth and should always be believed in preference to the junk we see on the TV or read in newspapers.

Here’s another example. My late mother-in-law used to attend the Catholic church and was very active in “The Justice and Peace Group”. You would imagine such a group would be innocent and could do no harm. Yet it constantly pumped out anti American, anti British, anti Israel propaganda that was mainly focused on opposing Israel, “defending” Palestinians (i.e. Arabs) from Israel, building bridges with the Islamic world and defending the reputation of Islam! That was how they thought world peace should be achieved. She even chose to get her news by listening to Al Jazeera TV! She thought they were the most trustworthy.

All sorts of groups and places may be wrong for you to continue attending after you become a Christian. Moreover, all of your political, social, historical and economic opinions need to be re-examined in the light of the Bible to find out whether those ought to remain your opinions or be discarded. For example you almost certainly need to re-examine your views on slavery, which is a subject about which we are constantly lied to.

The story they push is that the evil West, mainly the UK and USA, enslaved Africans. It follows, therefore, that slavery is a uniquely “white” crime committed only by the West and only against Africans. That is now what is taught as ‘history’ in our schools. The problem is it is a pack of lies. The real truth is that it was the British people, in particular *white evangelical Christians*, who first campaigned to *abolish* slavery, not to create it.

That had never been done in all of world history until we in the UK achieved it. British Christians fought first to abolish the slave trade and then to abolish slavery itself. The British then spent a fortune in taxpayers’ money paying for the release of slaves and also for funding the Royal Navy to enforce the new anti-slavery laws throughout the Empire and the wider world.

Shortly afterwards the Americans, again largely led by *white evangelical Christians*, campaigned to end slavery in the USA. Indeed, the Americans even fought the Civil War to end slavery at enormous cost to themselves in lives and money.

Why therefore are white people in Britain and American dishonestly portrayed as the villains of this story, especially given that slavery has always existed, and all over the world, not just in the UK and USA? Moreover, it always existed on a far larger scale *outside of Britain and America* than it ever did within them. That is to say we in the UK and even the USA had far fewer slaves than were held by African or Asian nations, and, in particular, by Muslims.

Indeed, Muslim slave traders actually raided the coast of Europe and *took millions of white Europeans to be slaves in the Muslim world*. Has any history teacher ever told you that? I suspect not. It does not suit the ideological narrative they are trying to push. The BBC will certainly never say it.

Indeed, slavery continues even today but is found, in the main, *only in Islamic countries*. For example, the lithium and cobalt being mined in Africa to make mobile phones and electric car batteries is done by slave workers, many of whom are children. Moreover, they work for negligible wages with zero attention paid to the safety of their working conditions. So why do we never hear those facts taught in schools, or stated in the media? And why aren't the woke left wingers protesting?

The official narrative being aggressively promoted in our schools and media is that white people are 100% the villains and black people are 100% the victims. That is pushed very hard to support the left's wider propaganda campaign about alleged "racism" all over the place. Yet, even in the eighteenth century when the UK was still buying slaves from Africa, we did not catch them ourselves.

They were all caught for us *by African slave traders, most of whom were Muslims*. Of course, that does not exonerate us, because we should not have bought them, but it does put a different slant on it and demolishes the idea of the black man as being exclusively the "victim", never the villain.

I have gone into some detail about the lies told about slavery, and how people unconsciously absorb all those lies, but the same level of deception applies with most of the other issues. We are equally lied to on those points and fed on a diet of non stop deception, worthy of Josef Goebbels, Hitler's head of propaganda. Therefore, on all of these issues, we desperately need to re-examine everything we think, why we think it, and where we got our information from.

Yet I see very few new believers (or even older ones) showing any willingness to re-examine any of their opinions, let alone all of them. Overwhelmingly they continue automatically to believe whatever political, historical, social or economic opinions they held before they were saved.

This is a vexed problem and it is really important for you not to fall into this trap of assuming your own settled opinions are "obviously correct". If you do you will consider it unnecessary to re-examine them. That then leaves you trapped in all those lies and vulnerable to being manipulated as a result of all the false things you have been told and have naively believed.

The world would have no power over us if we did not have a sinful flesh nature

Although the world system has a powerful influence over us, it would have no influence at all if we didn't also have a sinful flesh nature of our own. It is the very fact that we are sinful that draws us to

the sins committed by others. If we weren't sinners we would not be tempted by what others say and do. And if we didn't have pride and selfishness we wouldn't be drawn to the world's values.

That is what makes this whole problem so difficult as each of these problems, the world, the flesh and the Devil (demons), feed off each other and depend on each other in order to lead us astray. Consider dry newspaper and matches. Either of those things, on its own, is not likely to cause a fire. So, one could keep on striking matches all day but unless there is something to burn nothing will come of it and the matches will just go out.

Or you could have lots of dry paper but unless you also have matches no fire will result. It is the interaction of these things, as your sinful nature is drawn to the sinful world system that causes the real damage. Much less damage would occur if you only had a flesh nature and there was no world system, or vice versa.

The same could be said of how much easier it would be if we only had to tackle our flesh nature and the world system and there were no demons to tempt and deceive us. Unfortunately, we are stuck with all three problems and that will continue until we die or are raptured. So, we need to get used to tackling all three battles at the same time.

One cure for worldliness is humility, in particular ceasing to care what the world thinks of you

Pride was the sin that led to Satan's fall and pride also lies behind many of the sins we commit and the sinful situations we are drawn into. Therefore, anything we can do to combat our own pride and slap it down whenever it tries to assert itself will be good for us.

Not only will that keep us out of a lot of sin problems but it will also help to avoid us being deceived and brainwashed by the blizzard of propaganda directed at us by our treasonous governments, our corrupt media and the many equally corrupt organisations and institutions which seek to control our lives, such as the Police, Councils, hospitals, schools, universities and judges.

How many people fell for the covid hoax, or the global warming hoax, or the racism hoax, or the multi cultural hoax, or any other hoax, primarily because they wanted to be accepted and to fit in with the people around them and be in line with "majority opinion"? Most of us have become weak, cowardly and gullible precisely because (due to pride) we crave for the approval of those around us. And we are willing to compromise, and to sin, in order to get their approval.

But if we humbled ourselves and decided to say: *"I'm no longer going to be influenced or controlled due to fear of what other people might think of me or say about me"*, then everything would change overnight. We would suddenly be free to form our own opinions, make our own decisions, think for ourselves and swim against the tide, which we desperately need to start doing.

There is a clear connection between our pride and our desire to be approved of by others. I am certain it is a major contributory factor at the very least. Therefore, ask yourself *"Why do I want their approval anyway? What does it matter whether they think well of me or criticize me?"* You will probably discover you are far more influenced by the risk of being disapproved of than you have ever realized. Be willing to tackle this craving for approval and your life will be transformed.

Humility is the opposite of this world's way of operating

Being set free from the treadmill of having to seek for other people's approval is important but it is not the only benefit that comes from tackling our own pride. Humbling ourselves will benefit every area of our lives because the entire world system is based on pride and self-centeredness, whereas humility is the very opposite of how this world operates.

Therefore, developing humility will automatically put you in a better position to deal with every other issue that arises. It will predispose you to think biblically and to identify false teaching and sinful attitudes and practices because those evils are much more easily recognized and avoided by a humble person than by one who operates in pride.

⁴⁶ An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. ⁴⁷ But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side ⁴⁸ and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

Luke 9:46-48 (ESV)

Let the child Jesus spoke of be your model. See yourself as a child does – with innocence, guilelessness and the total absence of self-importance.

There is a lot of pride and ambition within church leaders

We must not imagine that pride is a sin which doesn't affect church leaders. I have been grieved to discover over the years and in many different churches that the leaders were frequently very arrogant, puffing themselves up, promoting themselves and undermining anyone they saw as a threat to their position.

See my Book 6 for numerous stories of church leaders I have personally known who have behaved in the most shocking ways with dishonesty, greed, paranoia and self-promotion. It is far from being rare. Indeed, I would go so far as to say it is commonplace and perhaps even the norm.

That was not always so. There have been times in history when the condition of the churches was far healthier, in particular from the 16th to the 19th centuries in the UK and the 18th to the 20th in the USA. But that is not the case in these apostate days in which we live in the 21st century.

Therefore, if you are a leader, do not puff yourself up. Do not seek for money, fame, glory or even recognition. Just seek to be faithful to God and to Scripture, and do your best to help others to grow as disciples and to fulfil their callings. Turn everything around 180° and start to think in terms of you being there to help *them* to succeed rather than of them being there to help *you* to succeed.

Life isn't about you, especially if you are a leader. And if you are a leader, remember the Greek word translated as minister simply means 'servant'. Churches might be better led if we got rid of the word 'minister' and called all leaders servants. Just imagine it being announced in your church newsletter that "*our church has appointed a new servant.*" It would affect how he is seen, but also how he sees himself.

There is also a lot of pride and worldliness amongst church members, not just leaders

In case you doubt that there are people inside churches who behave in a carnal, worldly manner, consider this passage:

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men; ¹⁰ not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹ But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber—not even to eat with such a one.

1 Corinthians 5:9-11 (RSV)

Look at the list of features and traits Paul gives here. Is he exaggerating? Is he mistaken? Or could it be that Paul is correct in thinking such people are to be found *inside* churches and in sufficient numbers to make them a danger to that church? Of course, Paul is right. He was right then in the 1st century Church and he would be even more right if he was to say it now of our lukewarm, apostate 21st century churches.

We have to drive the world out of ourselves and out of our thinking, just as the Israelites had to eliminate the Canaanites

The way the Israelites had to operate when they first entered the Promised Land is a lesson to us in dealing with the world. The Israelites were given land that had previously belonged to the Canaanites whom God was punishing and removing due to their extreme wickedness. So, God commanded the Israelites to totally destroy the Canaanites not only as a fully deserved judgment upon them but also because they would otherwise inevitably become a problem to the Jews:

⁵⁵ But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell.

Numbers 33:55 (RSV)

God has not given that instruction to us. Therefore, although we can't destroy or drive out the world, we can resist, avoid and ignore it and we must.

Do not marry, or go out with, a non-Christian

One would imagine this wouldn't need to be said, and that it is obvious, since letting an unsaved person into such a profoundly important place in your life is bound to cause great damage and obstruct you in your growth as a disciple. And yet, somehow, it is not obvious to millions of people worldwide who choose to compromise and marry, or go out with, an unbeliever.

So, although we can and should be friends with non Christians, we cannot allow them to be our spouse or even view them as a possibility. Therefore, we have to be willing to separate ourselves from those who would drag us down to their level. At least we must refrain from entering into intimate relationships with those who are worldly:

¹⁴ Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. ¹⁸"And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 (NASB)

There are two main contexts in which a Christian must not be intimately linked with a non-Christian. The most crucial of these is marriage. No believer should ever marry an unbeliever and if you think God is telling you to do so, then think again. It would be entirely contrary to His express Word and thus any such message you imagine you are getting could not possibly be coming from Him. To marry an unbeliever will inevitably bring intense problems and grief, usually for both parties. I have virtually never seen it work out well. However, the second context is going into business with a non Christian partner.

Do not go into business with a non-Christian

This is not quite so absolute, but is almost so. I know from bitter experience the harm that can come from entering into a close business relationship, in my case equity partnership in a law firm, with a man who was not only unsaved but also a Freemason. Therefore, I personally would never again join myself to an unbeliever in business.

We can be employed by an unbeliever in a paid job and we can also employ unbelievers to do a job for us because the employment relationship is far less intimate than equity partnership. Therefore, there is no prohibition against either of those things, although both are still likely to bring problems. But to enter into an equity partnership or to share the ownership of a private limited company with an unbeliever is asking for trouble. I did it once, but will never do it again. I became a one third equity partner with two other men, one of whom was a Freemason.

Everything he stood for was the opposite of what I stood for. In the end I caught him stealing from the business by forging an invoice on the firm's letterhead. His other misconduct led to further headaches as well and we were totally unsuited to run a business together. To do so requires total trust and confidence but it also helps enormously if you have the same world view, at least if you are in a smaller firm.

That said, I don't think this problem arises, or not to anything like the same degree, if you are offered equity partnership in a huge law firm or accountancy practice such as Eversheds or KPMG. In such a firm there are hundreds of partners, most of whom you would never meet. Therefore, that would be different, even if most of them were unbelievers, because there is no real intimacy or personal entanglement in such a huge set up.

We also have to stand out from the crowd in the things we *won't say or do*. There are times when we just can't join in with their sinful actions or crude conversations, or even be with them:

³But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Ephesians 5:3-4 (NASB)

This means that if you are a genuine Christian, rather than a compromiser, you will become like a square peg in a round hole. You will be, from now on, a foreigner who does not fit into this world's system. You will therefore stand out like the ugly duckling. The apostle Peter describes it as being like an 'alien or exile':

¹¹Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul.

1 Peter 2:11 (RSV)

You therefore need to change the way you think about most things and keep on doing so if you want to develop from being a naïve unbeliever to a mature believer:

²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

We have to be in the world but the world must not be in us

*"The boat in the sea is all right,
the sea in the boat is all wrong.
The Church in the world is alright,
the world in the Church is all wrong"* – Anon

God's Word requires us to turn our backs on many things which the people of this world hold dear. That is not a popular view today and therefore many churches are indistinguishable from the world in the way they speak, act, dress, work and socialise. But that ought not to be. We are obliged to live 'in' the world, as we have no choice but to do so. However, we must not be 'of' the world.

We are meant to be so different that the people of the world can tell immediately we are not like them. Some of them may then want to find out why that is and what makes us different, and perhaps some will be saved. Sadly, most will just be antagonised and repelled. The problem is most of us are not sufficiently different for anybody to notice anything unusual about us. Most Christians in the West are worldly, at least to some extent, and an increasing number of us are very worldly.

An individual Christian or church is meant to be like a lifeboat in the sea in stormy weather. It is right for the lifeboat to be in the sea, where it is close at hand to rescue those who are drowning. But it is not good for the sea to be in the lifeboat or it will sink. Likewise, it is right for us to be in the world, where we can do good and reach some people. But it's not right for the world to be in each of us, or in the Church as a whole such that it destroys our witness and hinders our growth.

The pull of the world causes many to fall away

The influence of the world doesn't only hinder our growth as disciples. I believe that in very severe cases it can also cause us to fall away completely so we cease to be Christians and even lose our salvation. Perhaps that is what happened to Demas who deserted Paul as a result of his love for the world system:

¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessaloni'ca; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

2 Timothy 4:10 (RSV)

Our clothing should be modest

This issue of immodest clothing applies most often, but not only, to women. I have been surprised in recent years by how many young women come to church dressed suggestively, with clinging garments, short skirts etc. One has to ask for whom are they putting on this display? I think they are so thoroughly steeped in the idea that women need to attract men that they do it all the time and without restraint, even in churches. Of course, they should not do it anywhere, but somehow doing it in church makes it so much more deplorable.

³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes.⁴Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands,

1 Peter 3:3-5 (RSV)

Therefore, wherever you are going, dress yourself to please Jesus, not men, and ask yourself whether He is likely to be pleased with the clothes you are proposing to wear. Instead of trying to fit in we should be trying to stand out, i.e. to be obviously different from the unsaved people around us, not imitations of them. This principle should extend to everything we think, say, do and wear.

Seeking the approval of the world instead of God's approval

Unless we set our minds to do otherwise, we are likely to seek for the approval of this world and the people in it rather than seeking God's approval. Seeking the world's approval will always lead us to make wrong decisions. Likewise, looking at this from the opposite direction, we must not fear the disapproval of the world but only God's disapproval:

⁴²Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

John 12:42-43 (NASB)

Fearing the opinions of worldly people, whether they are in the Church or not, will cause us to disobey God. We cannot have the approval of both God *and* the world. So, we have to choose to please one, or the other, because we can't please both. It is impossible, as they are complete opposites.

The majority is usually wrong

There is a tendency, especially in the English-speaking world, to revere democracy. However, the truth is that on many issues the majority is wrong. That is why the founding fathers of the United States wisely chose to make it a 'Republic', ruled by a settled body of law, enshrined in a written Constitution, not a democracy ruled by the ever changing opinions of the majority.

Indeed, in this exceptionally "dumbed down" generation we are now part of, I would go so far as to say the majority is usually wrong, at every level, and on most subjects. For example, most Western nations are financially bankrupt. Their national, commercial and personal debt levels are staggering.

This is mainly the fault of our corrupt governments acting on the instructions of the even more corrupt 'WEF' (World Economic Forum). Yet it would be wrong to blame our elected politicians alone for this. They acted stupidly, and did what the WEF told them to do, but they also did what most of us *wanted them to do*. If any political party in the UK had stood for election in 2010 on a platform of:

- a) cutting public spending
- b) reducing, and then eliminating, public borrowing
- c) paying off the national debt and
- d) living within our means,

then that political party would have been wiped out at the polls. At any rate, that was the assessment of all the major parties, and they were undoubtedly correct, at least in their election forecasting. Even in 2010, in the campaign prior to the UK elections, where it was obvious we were in an appalling economic mess, and had no alternative but to make heavy cuts in public spending, *no party dared to say so*.

It was an elephant in the room that none of them was willing to discuss honestly. However, that was not solely because our *politicians* are corrupt and foolish, which of course they are. It was also because they knew that *we* are corrupt and foolish. They accurately concluded that most of us were far too foolish to handle the truth. So, they hid it from us, to avoid us voting against them as a punishment for telling us the truth.

It was wrong of them to mislead us in that way, but it was also wrong of us to put them in a position where the only thing we would accept from them was unreality and self-delusion. Of course, that was not true of *every* voter, but it was true of *most* voters, as our political leaders correctly figured out.

But the same folly applies in every other context. The majority is wrong about many moral and ethical issues and is certainly wrong about most theological issues. Most people reject the real Christian Gospel, the real God and the real Jesus Christ. They like their own reinvented alternative versions of these, *but not the real ones*. That is why Jesus told us to go through the 'narrow gate' and to walk on the 'narrow way', where few people go, not on the 'broad way' on which most people are walking:

¹³"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴"For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Matthew 7:13-14 (NASB)

Jesus also told us quite bluntly that few people will be saved:

²³And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, ²⁴"Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Luke 13:23-24 (NASB)

Please see my Book 5, '*How to become wise*' for some more examples of misguided, politically correct philosophies that this world embraces. These all contradict what God says, and yet they are widely accepted, even by Christians, without any thought or critical appraisal. See also my audio series entitled '*Modern deceptions*'.

The world system isn't going to go away and it won't change either

It's no use praying for the world to change or for its values to become godly and biblical. That will never happen. We know that for sure because the prophetic Scriptures show what this world is going to be like at the end and also in the approach to the end. It is going to be as bad, or even worse, than it is now. All we can hope for is to reach individuals and bring the Gospel to them, not to the majority.

Christianity is not going to take over the world as some people, in particular "post millennialists", imagine. Moreover, we are not going to see the world as a whole turn to Jesus or forsake worldly/satanic values and standards. That will only ever be done by individuals and, until Jesus returns, they will always be in the minority.

Until then, we have to live in this evil world and endure what it does whilst also seeking (as individuals) to be an overcomer rather than being overcome by the world. One of the purposes for our being required to live amongst all this chaos, folly and wickedness is to pass the tests God sets for us and to grow in character. The other main reason for our being here is to reach out to others with the Gospel in the limited amount of time we have left.

Don't pray for all the tests and difficulties to go away

Therefore, don't pray for all these tests and problems to go away. That would be like a man at a gym praying that the treadmill or exercise bike would be taken away. What he needs is to face up to them and overcome the pain barriers as he exercises. Otherwise he won't improve. The spiritual battles we face are the same and so some of our situations just need to be faced and overcome and there is no point asking God to take them away. We need at least some of them if we are to grow in character, experience and wisdom.

Some things in the world just need to be avoided

However, there are times when the best way to deal with the pressure of the world's influence is simply to keep away from it, i.e. wherever you can. Therefore, don't deliberately put yourself in temptation's way and take care to avoid all those places, situations and people which are likely to compromise you or tempt you to sin. And avoid any job which involves dishonesty or the need to do something immoral.

Likewise, avoid people who are a bad influence. It is very important whom we choose for our friends. Choose them wisely, purposely gathering around you people who will be a good influence upon you. Of course, you will still have to mix with some bad people, at least at work, but you don't need to make them your close friends or allow them to influence you.

Avoid pornography and worldly films, TV internet sites and music

This is a really important point, especially as there are countless men worldwide (and some women) who are led astray by suggestive or even outright pornographic content. I know one man who was in a leadership position in a large church and yet he confided in me that he had an addiction to pornography and watched X rated films after his wife had gone to bed.

There is no way you can watch things like that and yet still grow as a disciple. Indeed, it is in doubt whether you could even continue as a disciple at all, let alone grow. So, take this very seriously and if need be, treat yourself as you would treat a child and put in place effective firewalls and other means of blocking "adult content". Protect yourself from yourself.

Have nothing to do with any film or programme which creates temptation or induces you to sin in any way. And it is not just sex but also horror films, occult films and even online gambling sites. Put all those things out of your reach so you can't be polluted by them. And remember, nobody will do any of this for you. You must do it all for yourself.

It is not just what we watch but also what we listen to that can lead us astray. Therefore, we must have a thorough reappraisal of what music or radio comedy programmes we allow ourselves to listen to. You need to adopt the role of a strict but sensible parent and tell yourself what is and is not acceptable for you to listen to.

I say that because today much of the music industry is utterly godless and immoral, not only in their dress and lifestyle but also in the lyrics to their songs which openly promote sexual immorality, the occult, feminism, selfishness and so on. Indeed, many of them glorify Satan and the singers themselves openly identify as Satanists. You see this in particular in the hand gestures they make which are intended to be seen by those who understand.

Therefore, if you are a new convert, or even if you have been a Christian for years, look closely at your CDs or downloads and critically appraise the music, and also the performers, with all of this in mind. Do not allow any corrupt, immoral or worldly lyrics to be heard by your ears or any of their dance videos to be seen by your eyes. Protect yourself as you would a vulnerable 11 year old child.

I remember when I was 19 and newly saved a man called John Van Harn who became a tremendous influence in my life and who was my first, and only, mentor said to me that I should rethink what music I listen to and get rid of anything that wasn't wholesome. I was a very earnest and teachable young man and I immediately took his advice.

Indeed, I believe I substantially over did it, because I got rid of *all* my music cassettes, not just some of them as John had in mind. I did so because I knew he had given me a very important piece of advice and I wanted to be receptive to it. I therefore threw away everything, including all my Simon and

Garfunkel and Beatles cassettes, some of which I then repurchased some years later. Although a few of their songs were not wholesome, the vast majority were alright in my view.

Yet, I don't regret it and I believe that although God was well aware that in my zeal to obey Him I was taking it too far, He was touched and honoured by my willingness to be instructed. I believe He therefore rewarded me for it, even though I went too far, and He made sure I later moved to a more balanced position.

A far greater problem than my youthful enthusiasm and excessive zeal is the attitude of being reluctant to do this at all. For example, I recently counselled a couple in their fifties who regularly went to open air rock festivals, usually taking place for a whole weekend. They were relatively new converts and I said, as gently as I could, that I was concerned they were attending such events, given the lyrics they would hear and also the lifestyle of the performers, and even the fellow audience members.

They looked at me with blank incomprehension, unable to grasp what on Earth the problem was. They asked if it was drugs I was concerned about and I made clear I had no anxiety about them taking drugs. I said my concern was about them allowing into their ears music and lyrics which could be, in some cases, worldly, immoral and sinful.

However, they brushed my concerns aside and I don't think they ever understood my point or grasped what danger they faced. They saw it as a complete non issue and that I was making a fuss about nothing. I would have been content if they had said *"Yes, I see what you mean. Perhaps singer X and group Y could be a bad influence on us and we will be alert from now on to examine other groups' lyrics too"*.

But they didn't. They just brushed it all aside as irrelevant and could not imagine how they could possibly come to any harm. Thus they were at the opposite end of the spectrum to my 19 year old self. I over reacted but they refused to react at all. We were both mistaken, but my mistake was healthier, and more capable of being rectified, as indeed it was, a couple of years later.

The temptation to fit in or join in with the world

Refuse to go along with worldly ideas and manipulative marketing. Reject that whole package of values and assumptions. For example, I once received a letter from a company wanting me to sign up to some contract. They offered me an incentive in the form of a "VIP card" which would enable me to go straight to the front of the queue at airports and to sit in a luxurious departure lounge away from other tourists.

That is not a problem in itself, but what put me off was that their letter spoke about how "important" this would make me feel and how it would reflect my "high status". Reading that flattery just made me want to laugh. The whole advert was based on the assumption that the world's self-promoting ways are right and that I would be on its wavelength and want to be part of all of this competitiveness.

Thus, that advert did not work for me, but only made me wince. I'm not saying it's wrong to go into a VIP departure lounge, if that's what you want. It's simply that I didn't want to be manipulated into that by any attempt to puff up my sense of self-importance. They automatically assumed I had a craving for status. But I already have enormous status, because I am a human being and am therefore *made in God's image*. I also have all the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to me.

How can my status get any higher than that? You could apply the same thinking to a multitude of different scenarios where advertisers seek to manipulate us through our own worldliness. We therefore need to recognize and reject the world's system and values whenever we see them surfacing and don't let yourself be manipulated.

God uses the world as a training ground for us, like an assault course

Part of the reason for God requiring us to be in this wicked world is that it is like being on an army assault course at times because of the opposition and hostility we face. That training regime will never be pleasant or easy, but it is beneficial, and we should not be surprised by it or consider it strange:

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; ¹⁶yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God.

1 Peter 4:12-16 (RSV)

God will use all the trouble and opposition this world creates to benefit you and you will grow because of it:

³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)

My Dad told me of how, when he was in the army in World War 2, he and his colleagues were required to crawl on their bellies across a field while the instructors fired live bullets just a couple of feet above their heads. The purpose of it was to get them well used to the experience of being under fire from the enemy. Then, if they had to face active service, they wouldn't panic when the real bullets were flying.

The training was so realistic that men were occasionally killed. But it served its purpose and I have to say that God's approach to training us for warfare is not dissimilar. He is willing to let us face real hardship and even real danger, to toughen us up and make us into mature disciples. So don't bother getting your Mum to give you a note asking God for you to be excused from all this. I am quite sure God won't pay any attention to it. As the saying goes – “You're in the Army now”.

There are rewards on offer to us if we can overcome the problems the world poses for us

The Judgment Seat of Christ awaits us. There will be rewards and honours for all of us who can learn to be overcomers and deal well with the challenges and opposition this world brings. Remember also that as your character grows through opposition and difficulty you can expect, one day, to be rewarded for that. It will not go unnoticed by God.

Without the opposition of this world we could not grow in character or earn the rewards God wishes to give us. That is why the Bible tells us to “give thanks in all circumstances” and to rejoice when we

face all kinds of trials, because we really do benefit from them, even though it never seems like that while we are going through it. If you can see that, then your mind is already starting to be renewed.

Beware also of getting your political ideas and values from the world

You do need to be careful how you form your social, political and moral opinions and how you develop your world view. Instead of being careful, most of us allow our opinions and beliefs to form themselves, based on what we hear on the TV news, whom we mix with, what job we do or what our background is. For example, I was once talking to a lawyer who was a Christian and whose focus was employment law. But he told me he only acted for employees, not employers, as he wanted to “fight for justice”.

Basically, he was left wing and assumed that in any dispute between an employer and an employee, the employee will always be the victim and the employer is always the wrongdoer. But that is naïve at best and a sign of narrow minded prejudice. In real life, victims and villains are to be found all over the place and on both sides of the fence. You can’t adopt a simplistic world view based on your political bias.

Likewise, I remember once getting into a debate with a young Christian woman about whether the Human Rights Act is a good or a bad thing. Her view was it is obviously good and that this was self evident. In fact, the only thing that was obvious was that she knew little or nothing about the Human Rights Act. More to the point, she had never even asked herself what God thinks of it. Presumably she assumed it was obvious that He agreed with her.

She particularly objected when I said God doesn’t think in terms of us having rights, but rather duties and responsibilities. So, the biblical position is that we do not have any rights as such, but we do benefit from the fact that other people have duties and responsibilities. And other people benefit from the fact that we have duties and responsibilities which limit what we are allowed to do to them.

That is God’s way of handling it. It puts Him at the centre, not us. By contrast, the Human Rights Act views mankind and the world through an unbiblical humanist lens which distorts everything, puts us at the centre instead of God, and leads to all sorts of perverse conclusions. That is why, for example, it protects criminals and puts restraints on the law abiding and on the victims of crime.

In my Book 5, I have a chapter on the whole subject of “rights based thinking” which I argue goes entirely contrary to the way the English legal system always used to work. That is because the English Common Law used to be based on biblical thinking and principles. You may find that chapter useful. But, at the very least, please be willing to be on the lookout to challenge worldly thinking and deceitful propaganda in every part of your life, including the places where you least expect it, because it is being fired at us in a constant cascade, like a farmer driving a slurry spreader across a field.

CHAPTER 7

THE DEVIL – PLUS A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO DEMONS, CURSES AND THE OCCULT

¹⁸For we wanted to come to you - I, Paul, more than once - and yet Satan hindered us.

1 Thessalonians 2:18 (NASB)

¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

2 Corinthians 11:13 -15 (NASB)

¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

John 17:15 (ESV)

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

⁸Be of sober spirit, be on the alert Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

1 Peter 5:8-9 (NASB)

² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,

John 13:2 (ESV)

²⁷ Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him.....

John 13:27(a) (ESV)

Who is the Devil (Satan) and what are demons?

Lucifer, also known by the titles “the Devil”, or “Satan”, was, and still is, an extremely powerful ‘cherub’. As we shall see more clearly below, there are three main orders of created beings which were created in God’s image before us. The lowest of these were the angels, with the archangels in command of them. They were the most numerous. Above the angels were the seraphs, or ‘seraphim’ who were given the honour of being allowed to surround God’s throne.

But above them were the cherubs or ‘cherubim’ who were given the greater privilege of being allowed to be under God’s throne. Then, even senior to the cherubs, was Lucifer whom we might view as an “Arch Cherub”. He was given the unique privilege of being allowed to be *over* God’s throne, forming a *canopy* over it. That shows how exalted his status was.

Lucifer was therefore the most senior created being God ever made. God created him, together with all the other angels, seraphs and cherubs before this world began and before the human race was created. Lucifer was the most important of all the cherubs and was also hugely gifted, beautiful, musical and talented.

However, a day came when pride rose up in his heart and he rebelled against God and then recruited multitudes of angels to join his rebellion. As far as I know, we are not told whether any other cherubs or even seraphs joined him in his rebellion against God. I personally think he got all, or at least most, of his followers from amongst the ranks of the angels, perhaps because they held him in greater awe than the cherubim and seraphim did, as the angels were more junior.

In the end, God stopped their rebellion in its tracks and Lucifer and all his newly recruited followers were thrown out of Heaven, i.e. out of the “third heaven” where God lives. He then acquired the new descriptive titles, ‘*Satan*’, which means *adversary*, and the ‘*Devil*’, which means *slanderer* or *accuser*, and his followers became known as demons.

When we say the ‘Devil’, what we actually mean most of the time is not the Devil personally, but him working together with all his fallen angels or demons. His title has become shorthand for the whole demonic realm, just as in World War 2, when men spoke of “*going off to fight Hitler*”, when what they really meant was fighting Nazi Germany. The Devil himself is very unlikely to meet ordinary people like you or me, or even to hear about us. He is busy dealing with Presidents and Prime Ministers and major world events.

He did get personally involved in opposing apostle Paul in the passage from 1 Thessalonians quoted above, but only because Paul's ministry was so strategically important. Satan could see that Paul warranted his personal attention, but he is not likely ever to bother with the likes of you or me, or even to be aware of our existence.

He has far bigger things to do. He will, however, make sure that some of the billions of demons under his command will give plenty of personal attention to you. Be assured, you won't be overlooked. They will definitely allocate you at least one demon to oppose you, especially if you start to get serious about the Gospel or about growing and maturing as a disciple.

Satan and his demon followers are consumed with hatred towards God and, in their bitterness, they seek to hit back at Him by striking at us. They know they have already had their Day of Judgment and been condemned and that they will therefore inevitably spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. There is no way out and no turning back for them and absolutely no hope of forgiveness.

Can you imagine how terrible that situation would be? Use your imagination for a moment and picture yourself trapped in a lake of burning sulphur and knowing it will continue forever, with indescribable pain, but without your body ever being consumed by the flames or the heat.

How does that prospect make you feel, even if it is not your firmly settled fate which, for them, it is? It explains, though it does not justify, their raging hatred towards God and anybody who serves Him. Yet, in His infinite wisdom, God has chosen to delay the actual carrying out of their dreadful sentence.

In the meantime, He has allowed them a large, *but not unlimited*, measure of freedom to attack, harass, deceive and undermine the human race. The demons know how much God loves human beings and

they therefore derive a perverted pleasure from hurting us, primarily because they know it hurts God when they do.

Their aim is to destroy as many as they can of the human race and to lead multitudes of us to follow them into the Lake of Fire that awaits them. That is their aim, but this book is intended to help you to understand their tactics and to learn how best to resist them. Apostle Paul tells us he was not unaware of Satan's schemes. He knew what kind of adversary he faced and how he operates:

“in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”
2 Corinthians 2:11 (NIV)

Sadly, most Christians today cannot say they are aware of Satan's schemes. On the contrary, most of us are almost entirely ignorant of his schemes and are making no effort to find out. We urgently need to address that deficiency.

Some people think demons are not fallen angels but are the ‘spirits’ of those who died in the Flood. I don’t believe that and the Bible doesn’t say it

I mention this in passing, just for completeness, as you might come across this view being expressed. The suggestion is that some of the demons, or unclean spirits referred to in the Bible are not fallen angels at all, but rather the spirits of people who died in the Flood. I do not accept this idea, and do not know of any conceivable basis for holding this view. I certainly see nothing whatsoever in the Bible to support it.

One argument I have heard put forward is that some of the things demons say during deliverance ministry can be so immature and childish as to cause people to wonder how a former angel could be so foolish. But there is no biblical basis for that view. It's just a suggestion and a weak one at that. My own response would be to say:

- a) At least 6000 years of sin and rebellion against God is likely to have caused those fallen angels to degenerate mentally and to become stupid, just as human beings do when they reject God. I have known people who had intellectual ability when young but decades of atheism, rebellion and sin lowers their IQ quite literally and they become what the Bible calls fools. Look at people today who believe the world came from a “big bang” whereby nothing turned into something and then, without any Creator or Designer, “evolved” from slime into amoebas and then into us. Others believe they can change their gender and become a woman by “identifying” as one. Some of these men believe they can then have a baby. What else can we call such ludicrous beliefs other than stupid? If so, then what are the people who hold such beliefs? Therefore, if human beings are capable of sinking to such intellectual depths, why can't fallen angels?
- b) Besides that, there is no reason, necessarily, to suppose that angels are all cleverer than us, or that all of them are clever at all. Obviously some are, just as some human beings are. But we are not all Einsteins and Shakespeares and I see no reason to suppose that all angels were created with huge mental abilities. I expect they vary widely, just as we do, and that some of them were given quite ordinary intellects.

I must also refer to Matthew 25:41 which speaks of the time when the Devil and all his angels, by which it means fallen angels who became demons, will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. The point is the verse uses the word “angels” for the very reason that demons are fallen angels, not the ‘ghosts’ or ‘spirits’ of dead people. If they were, then the Bible would not call them angels in this verse:

⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;

Matthew 25:41 (RSV)

Accordingly, I put no credence at all in the idea that demons are the spirits of dead human beings, whether from the Flood or any other time. Everything we see in Scripture indicates that the dead depart at death and are never active here again, with the exception of the prophet Samuel who returned briefly and spoke to King Saul. There was of course also the Transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus, though not with the apostles. But those are exceptions to the rule, not the rule itself.

Another argument put forward is that demons appear to want to reside within a body, as with the thousands of demons in the Gadarene demoniac who asked for permission to go into the pigs. The suggestion is made that former angels would feel no need to be inside a physical body but a former human being might want to be, because he used to have a physical human body. However, that is pure conjecture and speculation and there is nothing at all in the Bible to support that theory.

In any case, a very high proportion of demons, perhaps even a majority, are not inside people at all. Instead they are on the outside whispering in, or “sitting on the person’s shoulder” as they are often portrayed in drawings. Clearly, those demons who are performing that “whispering” role don’t need to be inside a body, whether they would prefer to be or not. On the whole, therefore, that argument is just an idea and has no biblical authority whatsoever.

Therefore, someone might be willing to consider it as a possibility but they would have absolutely no basis to treat the idea as a fact or as something the Bible teaches. Having said all that, it doesn’t ultimately matter who exactly the demons are. The point is we are told *what they do* and they are described as “evil spirits” or “unclean spirits”. That is what matters and it surely tells us all we really need to know in order to motivate us to resist and expel them.

How the Cherub Lucifer turned into Satan (the Devil)

The Devil himself is an individual created being who has fallen into sin and has thus been rejected by God. He was once the most, or at least one of the most, important beings in all of Heaven. Sadly, his greatness and extreme beauty led to him becoming proud and that pride caused his downfall. He began to harbour aspirations for himself and even set his sights on taking the place of the Son of God.

Of course, that was an absurd ambition, but his growing pride distorted his sense of reality and he became delusional, as the wicked usually are. His fall into sin then led to him being dismissed from his job as the chief of the cherubs and he also lost his honoured role as the canopy over God’s throne when he was cast out of Heaven. Jesus told His disciples He watched Satan being cast out:

¹⁸ ***And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.***

Luke 10:18 (NASB)

The Devil was therefore thrown out of Heaven, together with, I believe, about one third of all the angels who had chosen to follow his rebellion, and whom we now call demons. You might ask what my biblical authority is for saying that one third of all the angels rebelled and were cast out of Heaven.

I can't provide any explicit proof but there is a distinct clue given to us in Revelation 12:4. The verse is not, strictly speaking, referring to the time when the fallen angels were cast out of Heaven itself (the third heaven). That occurred much earlier, about 6,000 years ago.

But Revelation 12:4 refers to a future point, during the Tribulation, when one third of the angels (actually fallen angels or demons) who are currently located in the "heavenly places" (see below for a full explanation of that arena) are cast down from the air to the Earth. From that point on they will have to operate at ground level, not in the air.

³ ***And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth;***

Revelation 12:3-4 (RSV)

These angels referred to in the verse as "*stars*", which is a biblical expression used to refer to angels, were cast down from the heavenly places (the second heaven or upper atmosphere) to the surface of the Earth. The thing to realise is these particular 'angels' are fallen angels so they are actually demons.

We are told they are "*a third of the stars of heaven*". In short, therefore, they had already been cast out of Heaven itself long ago, when Satan was cast out. They currently operate from the heavenly places, in the upper atmosphere, as do the other two thirds of angels *who did not fall* and who are therefore still angels.

So, what matters, for our purposes here, is that the demons would appear to be one third of the total number of angels originally created. The point in time at which that is being said is not the issue. The issue is what proportion they constitute of the whole angelic realm.

Lucifer (Satan) is referred to in detail in Isaiah chapter 14 and Ezekiel chapter 28. Here are two extracts. In the first, from Isaiah, Satan himself is being spoken to. It sets out how his pride caused him to go so far as to want the position of the Son of God saying "*I will make myself like the Most High*".

¹³ ***You said in your heart,***

"I will ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne

above the stars of God;

I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly,

on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.

¹⁴ ***I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;***

I will make myself like the Most High."

Isaiah 14:13-14 (NIV)

In the next passage from Ezekiel we go back even further into Satan's life story. It speaks of when he was still in Heaven in all his dazzling beauty and splendour. Saddest of all, it tells of how he was once sinless in the days when he was still Lucifer. The dramatic change came when he allowed his pride to rise up and, all of a sudden, wickedness was found in him.

The day when that happened was the first time, in all of eternity, that sin had ever existed. Before Lucifer fell into sin there was no such concept. Nobody had ever heard of it. Neither he nor any of the angels had ever had any experience of evil or rebellion. Those words were totally unknown to them.

Accordingly, none of the angels in Heaven had ever sinned until Lucifer persuaded about one third of them to rally round him and follow his lead. This terribly sad story is given more fully in Ezekiel chapter 28. It tells of how Lucifer fell and became Satan and of how he will, one day, be removed from this Earth altogether and trouble us no more:

¹² *"You were the model of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.*

¹³*You were in Eden,
the garden of God;
every precious stone adorned you:
ruby, topaz and emerald,
chrysolite, onyx and jasper,
sapphire, turquoise and beryl.
Your settings and mountings were made of gold;
on the day you were created they were prepared.*

¹⁴*You were anointed as a guardian cherub,
for so I ordained you.
You were on the holy mount of God;
you walked among the fiery stones.*

¹⁵ *You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created
till wickedness was found in you.*

¹⁶ *Through your widespread trade
you were filled with violence,
and you sinned.
So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God,
and I expelled you, O guardian cherub,
from among the fiery stones.*

¹⁷ *Your heart became proud
on account of your beauty,
and you corrupted your wisdom
because of your splendor.
So I threw you to the earth;
I made a spectacle of you before kings.*

¹⁸ *By your many sins and dishonest trade
you have desecrated your sanctuaries.*

*So I made a fire come out from you,
and it consumed you,
and I reduced you to ashes on the ground
in the sight of all who were watching.
¹⁹ All the nations who knew you
are appalled at you;
you have come to a horrible end
and will be no more.' "*

Ezekiel 28:12(b)-19 (NIV)

After his fall into sin and his expulsion from Heaven, Satan continued to degenerate. Eventually he reached his present condition of extreme malice, hatred and evil. He is now utterly wicked, self-absorbed and cruel. His only remaining pleasure is to inflict pain and suffering on human beings wherever he can and to resist God's purposes. The demons have the same aims and characteristics as him. They simply have less power, authority and brilliance than Satan has.

Although God allows the demons to do many things, there are far more things which He doesn't allow them to do.

However, despite all his genius and strength, Satan is still only a created being and not even remotely equal to God. He has limits and can't do everything. Above all, he personally can only be in *one place at a time*. Moreover, he can only do what God *permits him to do*. Therefore, strange though it may sound, anything Satan or his demons do *has been allowed by God*. They were permitted to do it for a number of possible reasons which we shall examine later.

However, there are thousands of other things the demons would like to do in your life to harm or kill you, your wife, your children, your church or your business, but God has withheld His permission. So, those things haven't happened. That is why we need to adjust our attitudes and, instead of blaming God for the specific things He does allow them to do, thank Him wholeheartedly for the thousands of other things He *refused to let them do*.

That is a far longer list and much of it we will never know, in this life, because it never happened. Just remember though that every demon is far more evil and more full of hate than any criminal in prison, even those mass murderers on death row. The difference is those men may be wicked, but they still have certain boundaries they wouldn't cross and things they wouldn't be willing to do, or even want to do.

But that is not so with the demons. There is nothing they wouldn't do and no depth of wickedness to which they wouldn't stoop. If God removed His hand of protection they would therefore move to a whole new level of viciousness and depravity which we have never seen, but only because God didn't allow them. So, see things in perspective and *be thankful for what never happened, not angry at what was allowed to happen*, because for everything which God allowed them to do there must be 1000 things He refused to let them do.

Where are Satan and the demons now and how is his kingdom organised?

Satan organises his demonic kingdom like an army under his command and acting on his behalf with different ranks each focusing on different areas and objectives to make sure the whole world is covered. In this way they whip up the maximum amount of sin and suffering and interfere as much as possible with God's plans.

Having lost his place in Heaven, he now operates from the air, i.e. "the heavenly places" which means the upper atmosphere of this physical planet. That is why another of Satan's names is "*the ruler of the kingdom of the air*". These names in the Bible are not mere poetry. They each mean something specific and significant. In the same way as Satan, the demons also are able to move around throughout the Earth's atmosphere, as well as on the ground, and to exert their influence on a worldwide scale.

They are *not in Hell*, as many wrongly imagine. Except for a particular group of demons who are kept chained in a prison called *Tartarus*, all the other demons are free to operate throughout planet Earth. If the demons were not equally free to move around in the air then Satan would hardly be called "the ruler of the kingdom of the air". That would be an odd title, and an odd kind of rulership, if only he himself was allowed to go there.

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

Ephesians 2:1-2 (NIV)

What motivates Satan?

He has nothing good or wholesome to look forward to as his eternal fate is already sealed. Therefore, Satan's consuming obsession is to oppose God, to destroy as much as he can of the human race, and to frustrate God's plans for us. God's plan was to create a people who would be free to love and worship Him and freely relate to Him.

That kind of relationship with God is no longer available to Satan or his demons and never will be. Therefore, they want to rob you of it too, so you will share their dreadful fate. They are determined to bring you with them to the Lake of Fire by blinding your eyes to all that God wants you to see and to deceive you into rejecting God and losing your eternal life, just as they did.

We need to start to hate Satan and the demons instead of being limp and passive about them

What would you think of a human being who wanted to destroy your marriage, your church and to kill you and all of your family by tricking all of you into falling into a lake of fire? Would you consider such a person evil? Would their plans for your family bother you? Would you take them seriously? Would you be outraged? Then why do so many of us give the demons no thought at all and ignore them completely? It is because some of us have been blinded by the demons and therefore made passive, limp and unresponsive to the threat, with no fight in us.

³ *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (NASB)

I am convinced that if any of us had a human enemy who was pursuing a lifelong vendetta against us and our family and seeking to harm us in every way possible, year after year, with utter malice and hatred then it would provoke in us a reaction of anger, outrage and even hatred. We would be highly motivated to resist that evil, demented person who was out to get us, and even willing to use lethal force in self defence.

And yet, would you agree that most people are astonishingly laid back and inert in their attitude to the demon(s) attacking them and their family? I think the key reason for the difference in response is that a deranged human murderer stalking our family with a deep grudge against us *would seem real* and feel significant and worth getting upset about.

But demons *don't feel real*, even to those of us who, at least theoretically, believe they exist. It can be just head knowledge which has not yet impacted our feelings or our will. Therefore, many of us sit and do nothing rather than rise up in anger to defend ourselves, our families and our church.

Why do Satan and the demons hate us so intensely and seek to destroy us?

I think their hatred for us is based on three main factors. Firstly, it is simply because God loves us. They hate Him, and so it follows naturally that they would choose to hate us. Secondly, they hate us out of envy as we now have the chance to acquire a place in Heaven, which all of them once had, but threw away by following Lucifer in his rebellion.

They deeply regret that stupid choice, but their regret at what they lost has never made them repent. It only made them resentful. They cannot repent now anyway. It is too late for that as their day of judgment has already taken place. They are therefore enraged at us for having that chance to repent which they will never have.

Thirdly, God chose to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us to enable our sins, *but not theirs*, to be forgiven. No such opportunity for salvation was ever given to them. In their case, God moved directly to judgment, with no opportunity for salvation. We are not told God's reason for making that distinction between them and us.

I imagine they were held more accountable because they had the great advantage of having lived in Heaven, with direct access to God. Therefore, they had far greater knowledge than us and were more blameworthy. However, whatever God's precise reasons may have been, the fact that they cannot have the salvation that is being offered to us must cause some of the hatred the demons feel towards us and motivate them to try even harder to prevent us being saved, if only out of pure spite.

Where are Satan and his demons now living and what do they look like?

As we have seen, contrary to popular belief, Satan and the demons are not, and never have been, in Hell. Neither are they in the Lake of Fire. That is certainly where they are heading to, but they are not

there yet. That is one major error which many of us urgently need to correct. Far from being in Hell, most demons are at liberty to move all over the surface of the Earth. They also currently have a further freedom to operate in the air within ‘the heavenly places’.

They will retain that additional freedom until the mid point of the Tribulation spoken of in the book of Revelation. At that point Satan and the demons will be cast down from the heavenly places and confined to the surface of the Earth itself such that they will then have to operate at ground level throughout the second half of the Tribulation.

Strangely, Satan was even permitted to continue to walk back into Heaven (the third heaven) and to be in God's immediate presence, *even after his rebellion*. Look at this passage in the book of Job. The scene is in Heaven and the angels (*the sons of God*) are presenting themselves before God, as one would before a King.

By the way, the phrase “sons of God” is used to refer to any person, whether angelic or human, who is *directly created by God as an adult* and isn’t born as a baby. Therefore, it includes all the angels, seraphs and cherubs, and also Adam and Eve as well. But we are not called sons of God as we were all born as babies and therefore are called sons of Adam.

This meeting occurs after Satan’s fall but before the future point when he is thrown down to the ground at the mid point of the Tribulation. But Satan is right there amongst them. So Satan has obviously retained a “visitor pass” to Heaven. God even allowed Satan to engage Him directly in conversation, face to face:

‘Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ‘The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

Job 1:6-7 (NASB)

It is possible that at least some of the other angels who were there that day were not aware of who Satan was, because he still has the appearance of an angel of light. Satan is not an ugly gargoyle-faced monster. He still has all his beauty, talent and brilliance. If you want to imagine him then picture a young Brad Pitt or Robert Redford (no disrespect to them). He would look like a top film star, not ugly at all.

¹⁴No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

2 Corinthians 11:14 (NASB)

The “six abodes of Satan” – a brief look at Satan’s career and how he has repeatedly had to change his ‘address’ and will need to do so again before the end

I am indebted for these details to Dr Arnold Fruchtenbaum, a Jewish American Bible teacher. His excellent book on eschatology, *“The Footsteps of the Messiah”*, which is extremely detailed, includes a section on the various stages Satan has gone through and will go through in future and the various places or “addresses” which he has so far inhabited as his abode or where he will dwell in future. So, let’s briefly look at them in turn. Two of them are past. The third one is his present abode and the fourth, fifth and sixth are in the future.

The first abode of Satan (then called Lucifer)

We are told of this very first abode in Ezekiel 28:14 from the long passage we saw earlier. It is where Lucifer began and where he was stationed to carry out his duties from the very day he was created. So, he had no infancy or childhood. God created Lucifer as a fully grown adult, just as He did with Adam and Eve:

***¹⁴ You were the anointed cherub who covers,
And I placed you there.
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.
Ezekiel 28:14 (NASB)***

Note that this verse refers to him being “*the anointed cherub who covers*”. It also speaks of him being on the “*holy mountain of God*”. Usually, when the Bible refers to a mountain it is meant literally. But the word is sometimes also used symbolically. When it is used symbolically, it is consistently a reference to a kingdom, king or throne.

Therefore, Lucifer’s first abode was positioned *over* the throne of God where all could see him in that place of honour and his role was to provide a canopy to “cover” the throne. The rest of the cherubim were *under* God’s throne, which was also an exalted position but not as exalted as Lucifer’s.

The second abode of Satan – the Garden of Eden at the earlier time when it was made of precious stones

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes about this second abode in great detail but I propose only to mention it briefly. We are told of it in Ezekiel 28:13:

***¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your covering:
The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;
The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;
And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,
Was in you.
On the day that you were created
They were prepared.***

Ezekiel 28:13 (NASB)

This is not exactly the same as the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve later lived, as referred to in Genesis. It was the original of that, or the way it was beforehand. The Garden of Eden of Genesis was later filled with plants. But at this earlier time the garden was filled with precious stones. Lucifer served in this garden of precious stones for an unspecified period of time before Adam and Eve were created.

It may only have been for a very brief period, perhaps only hours. We simply aren't told. It was while Lucifer was serving in this original version of the Garden of Eden, while it was a garden of precious stones, that his fall took place. This fall is described in Ezekiel 28:16-17(a).

Note that even while Lucifer was in his second abode in the Garden of Eden, he still had full access to his original first abode in Heaven. Indeed, to be precise, he still has that access to Heaven, even now, as we have seen, and he will retain those temporary, intermittent "visiting rights" until the mid point of the Tribulation. At any rate, when Lucifer sinned, while occupying his second abode, that was when he was cast out of Heaven, from his exalted position covering God's throne:

*¹⁶ By the abundance of your trade
You were internally filled with violence,
And you sinned;
Therefore I have cast you as profane
From the mountain of God.
And I have destroyed you, you covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.
¹⁷ Your heart was haughty because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.
Ezekiel 28:16-17(a) (NASB)*

God cast Lucifer down from the place he was entitled to occupy above the throne, i.e. the "mountain", because unrighteousness was found in him. His pride had caused him to puff himself up and to seek to grab things for himself and, above all, to try to usurp the place of the Son of God. We see this pride from the various "I will" statements in Isaiah 14 that Lucifer makes in his self delusion and self aggrandisement.

The third abode of Satan – the heavenly places

Therefore, God had to cast Lucifer down out of Heaven, i.e. from the "third heaven" which apostle Paul visited but was forbidden to speak of. He was thrown down from there into the second heaven, "*the heavenly places*" which are the upper atmosphere. That is where Lucifer is now, with his new titles of Satan and the Devil. This third abode is described by apostle Paul:

*² in which you previously walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.
Ephesians 2:2 (NASB)*

*¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.
Ephesians 6:12 (NASB)*

Being in the second heaven or the heavenly places means Satan can travel about freely all over the Earth. But what few people realise is it also gives him a continuing right of access to revisit the third heaven, Heaven itself, as we saw above with reference to him visiting there to appear before God to discuss Job.

So, this third abode, where he now is, continues to give him intermittent access to Heaven, where he goes to be our accuser. That is why Jesus currently has the role of High Priest and intermediary or intercessor. He operates on our behalf as our defence advocate in the heavenly places and even when Satan visits Heaven, because, in both those forums, Satan is constantly accusing us and Jesus is constantly interceding on our behalf:

²⁵ Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7:25 (RSV)

I assume the demons assist Satan in this accusing role as Satan can't do it all by himself. Indeed, he has never heard of most of us. So, Jesus also acts as our defence lawyer or advocate in relation to what the demons say about each of us, not just what Satan himself says. As well as operating from the air, Satan and the demons can also freely access any part of the Earth too, causing harm on Earth in addition to the lies and slander they spread about us in the heavenly places.

The fourth abode of Satan – the Earth

This fourth abode is still future and will not happen until the mid point of the Tribulation. We see this in Revelation 12:7-12:

⁷ And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, ⁸ and they did not prevail, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying,

“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down, the one who accuses them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. ¹² For this reason, rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you with great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”

Revelation 12:7-12 (NASB)

Note that not only Satan but also all his demons (referred to in Revelation 12:9 as “angels”) will be at this future point, thrown down with him from the heavenly places to the surface of the Earth. The very fact that the demons will be thrown down from the heavenly places further proves that that is where they currently operate from. Therefore, they travel to and from the heavenly places while harassing us. And the fact that they do so proves that Satan isn't there all by himself.

However, Satan and all the demons will, from that future point onwards, be confined to the Earth, operating at “ground level”, during the second half of the Tribulation. During that time they will focus on attempting to destroy the Jews. Sadly, as we see from Zechariah 13, two thirds of the Jewish people will die at that time.

However, one third of the Jews will survive and it is to them that Jesus the Messiah will return when they suddenly realise who He is and call upon Him to return. See my audio series on Israel and also on Matthew's gospel for more detail on all that, plus my written article on Israel.

The fifth abode of Satan – the abyss

The fifth abode is known as “the abyss” and is effectively a prison and Satan will be confined there during most of the 1000 years of the Millennium. So, during that time the level of sin on the Earth will drastically reduce. However, even then, it will not be a totally sinless world because many people, especially at the end of the Millennium, will be in their ordinary mortal bodies. Unlike us, who will by then have been resurrected and made perfect, they will not be sinless.

¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ²And he took hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and he threw him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

Revelation 20:1-3 (NASB)

Satan, and presumably the demons, will actually be released from the abyss briefly at the end of the Millennium and those who are then in mortal bodies will be given a choice as to whether to follow Jesus or Satan. See below.

The sixth abode of Satan – the Lake of Fire

This is where Satan will finally end up, after the 1000 year millennial Kingdom has ended. Note that at the very end of the 1000 years Satan and the demons are briefly released again and given one last chance to deceive people. Sadly, and inexplicably, many of those who are then in mortal bodies because they were born during the Millennium to mortal parents, will choose to follow Satan rather than King Jesus.

That is despite having lived during the most perfect era, up to that point, in all of world history, with Jesus visibly reigning over the whole world from Jerusalem. We are told of this in Revelation 20, and the Lake of Fire to which he and all the demons are sent is where they will all stay, *fully conscious*, for all eternity. Sadly, that is where every unsaved human being will also spend eternity.

Some people deny that those in the Lake of Fire are conscious and argue instead that they must be annihilated by the flames so they cease to exist at all. Personally, I wish that was true, as the Lake of Fire is so horrific I wouldn't wish it on anyone. However, it plainly isn't true because we are told they are “*tormented day and night forever and ever*”.

But how can they be “*tormented*” if they have been “*annihilated*” and therefore don't exist, or even if they are alive but not conscious? That is an example of the sort of confusion we can get into if we base our theological beliefs on what we would *like to be true* rather than on what the Bible actually says.

⁷ When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them

together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. ⁹ And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Revelation 20:7-10 (NASB)

What does God currently allow Satan and his demons to do to us?

God deliberately allows Satan and the demons to play a very significant part in our lives. That is the reason why he is now called Satan, which means '*adversary*'. God has given him and his demons substantial, *but not unlimited*, freedom to obstruct, attack, tempt and undermine us, just as he was allowed to do to apostle Peter. Indeed, Jesus tells us Satan '*demanded*' the chance to attack Peter and that God allowed it:

³¹"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; ³²but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." ³³But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" ³⁴And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."

Luke 22:31-34 (NASB)

God agreed in advance to this attack being launched upon Peter. Peter was unwise, just as most of us are, in the way he responded to Jesus' warning about Satan's intentions for him. Instead of taking the warning seriously and praying for God's help to face the test, Peter only protested that he would not let Jesus down.

He even announced in an over-confident way that he would follow Jesus even to death. That was not said in faith, but in complacency and presumption. That is why Jesus corrected him and told Peter that he would, in fact, deny three times that he even knew Jesus. Now see how things then developed:

⁵⁴Having arrested Him, they led Him away and brought Him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. ⁵⁶And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too." ⁵⁷But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." ⁵⁸A little later, another saw him and said, "You are one of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" ⁵⁹After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too." ⁶⁰But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. ⁶¹The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." ⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly.

Luke 22:54-62 (NASB)

Peter let Jesus down because he didn't handle it correctly beforehand. He should have prayed for help, instead of making macho announcements with such unwarranted boldness. However, Peter only did

what many of us do, ignoring God's warnings and acting in over confidence and complacency until it is too late.

Now let's look at what the demons were allowed to do to oppose apostle Paul who faced many intense and prolonged demonic attacks. In this next passage he explains why God permitted them to harass and hinder him so much. It wasn't because he was sinful or was behaving wrongly.

On the contrary, it was for a very different reason, to prevent him from becoming proud as a result of the exceptional level of knowledge and revelation that had been given to him. He had personally met Jesus face to face, had been taught by Him, and had even been to Heaven (the third heaven) and seen and heard things he was forbidden to speak about:

² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. ³ And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—⁴ was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. ⁵ On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses.
2 Corinthians 12:2-5 (NASB)

Therefore, to prevent all of these amazing privileges from going to Paul's head, God allowed a powerful demon, a "messenger of Satan" to get in his way, to harass him severely on an ongoing basis, and to make life extremely difficult throughout his entire ministry:

⁷Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NASB)

To get a better picture of the kind of dreadful things the senior demon (the messenger of Satan) was allowed to do to him we can look at the list of his sufferings which Paul sets out in this next passage:

²⁴Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. ²⁶I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; ²⁷I have been in labour and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 (NASB)

Few have ever endured opposition of the level and frequency Paul experienced. It was so extreme it was off the scale. There can be no doubt most of it was caused by demons. It cannot all have happened naturally or by coincidence. Paul was a marked man and was targeted by the demons for non-stop opposition.

The demons' purpose in doing all that was very different from God's reasons for allowing it. From the demons' perspective it was not to help him stay humble but to slow him down and frustrate his plans. So, if things like that can happen to Peter and Paul, why should you or I expect to be immune? Let's look now at Job and the things God allowed (and did not allow) Satan to do to this exceptionally righteous man:

⁸The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." ⁹Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰"Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹"But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." ¹²Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

Job 1:8-12 (NASB)

Note how Satan has the impertinence to issue a direct challenge to God. He says the only reason Job is so remarkably righteous is because life has been going well for him, but that if he (Satan) was given freedom to attack him, then Job would turn against God. You might imagine God would reject such a challenge from Satan, or refuse to speak with him at all.

In fact, God accepts the challenge and Satan is given permission to destroy all Job's children, all his servants and all his livestock, just not Job himself, or his wife who is considered to be part of himself, since God views a married couple as "one person". So, we are looking here at an attack of an exceptionally extreme nature and Satan immediately seizes the opportunity to kill or destroy almost everything Job has:

¹³Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁴a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁶While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁷While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

¹⁸While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ²⁰Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." ²²Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

Job 1:13-22 (NASB)

Amazingly, despite all these traumas happening all at once, Job did not blame God for it although we see later that Job correctly concludes that God allowed it to happen. Therefore, 'round one' of the contest went to God. Satan's attacks on Job's family and possessions, despite their ferocity, did not

succeed in getting Job to curse God to His face. But Satan now issues a fresh challenge, after being allowed yet again to come into God's presence in Heaven, as discussed earlier.

This time Satan asks for permission to attack Job's own body, i.e. to take away his health. And again, permission is given to him. The only limit God imposes is that Satan must not take Job's life. Note how Satan then does exactly what is permitted and no more, because he knows he cannot go beyond what God allows him to do:

¹Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. ²The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." ³The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause."

⁴Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵"However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face." ⁶So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life." ⁷Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. ⁹Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" ¹⁰But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job 2:1-10 (NASB)

I won't tell the whole account, because it is long, but Job holds his integrity to the end, despite all that Satan does. Then God eventually restores Job to health and gives him twice the possessions he had before. But note that God only gives him the same number of children. That is because all Job's original children were in "Abraham's bosom" and thus he had not truly lost them. He would see them all again when he died.

The point of this account from the book of Job is to illustrate that Satan was given power in the life of a *believer* (and a very righteous believer at that) to kill his children, kill his servants, destroy his property and ruin his health. That sounds pretty extensive, as few of us are ever called upon to endure anything of that magnitude and certainly not all at the same time.

Most of us therefore need to adjust our theology to accommodate all of this as we find this very surprising and some would even call it impossible. And yet it happened to Job. Therefore, do not assume you are exempt from all this and that God would never allow you to be tested. The point is Satan could not do any of those things until God had given him express *permission*. Note also how he could not go one inch beyond what God authorised him to do.

Recognising that fact enables us to see our own suffering in a very different light, i.e. as something God has expressly permitted, for whatever reason. Job's sufferings were something God allowed the Devil to cause because God had purposes of His own, which the Devil's interventions were actually furthering rather than hindering, though Job did not realise that at the time. And neither did Satan.

Why does God allow Satan and his demons to attack us?

God gave Satan a lot of freedom to attack Job and He allows something similar with us. There is no getting away from that distressing fact. For believers and unbelievers alike, there is no immunity from demonic attacks. They do to us all the same things Satan did to Job and more besides, albeit hopefully not at such an extreme level. We have to conclude, therefore, that God still permits this, whatever level it might be for us.

But why? Why does God allow Satan and the demons to be at large and to cause us so much opposition, trouble, illness, damage and death? It does sound very strange, and at first sight, it is hard to make any sense of it. Here, in brief, are some reasons why I believe God allows us to come under demonic attack but we shall enlarge on all of this in the following chapters.

a) To keep us from becoming proud

Paul himself had to endure repeated attacks from a messenger of Satan and he disliked the suffering and opposition so much he asked three times for it to be taken away. But God repeatedly refused. Paul therefore had to come to terms with the fact that he was going to have to put up with it. It might surprise you that God should consider the reduction of pride to be so important. That is partly because most of us are unaware of our pride and don't see it as a sin. But God does. He absolutely hates pride and is willing to go to extraordinary lengths to tackle it.

My advice to you therefore is to make such measures unnecessary, or at least to limit their scope, by freely choosing to deal with your pride by humbling yourself, repenting of pride and ceasing to exalt yourself. Otherwise, you give God no option but to tackle it on your behalf by allowing you to face trouble and hardship so as to knock the pride out of you. Any sensible person will realise that voluntarily tackling it for yourself is by far the easier option.

b) To provide opposition for us

Demonic opposition gives us the opportunity to fight battles and to grow into 'overcomers'. If God did not allow such opposition, a major part of this assault course aspect of life would be removed. This is a little bit like the way the British Army is trained by putting it into real life combat situations. Due to our Empire and the worldwide connections we still have, the UK is engaged in a real war somewhere in the world virtually all the time.

From the British Army's perspective this constant conflict has its advantages, because it allows our troops the chance to train by seeing frequent active service, and in all sorts of climates and terrains, whereas the armies of some other nations hardly ever see any action and can only train on assault courses and firing ranges.

That is one reason why the British army was, until recently, one of the best armies in the world, man for man, until of course they became woke and started to focus on recruiting women, homosexuals and Muslims instead of masculine British men. I think there is an element of that same training dimension in the spiritual conflict we have to face. God is toughening us up by our exposure to real life battles, with real opponents, rather than mere theory taught in a classroom.

c) To knock the rough edges and corners off our characters

If God simply told us to alter our characters and become more like Jesus and then left it entirely up to us to do that, it wouldn't work. Realistically, most of us are not capable of changing our ways and attitudes unless the bad parts of our character are 'knocked out of us' by involuntary adversity, suffering and pressure. We simply aren't willing to do it voluntarily.

It would be nice if we could learn every lesson just by being given good advice and freely choosing to adopt it, but it doesn't work that way for most of us. We aren't willing to take unpleasant advice, not even from God. Therefore, all the biggest lessons are learned through hardship imposed on us unwillingly, and who is better qualified to provide such opportunities for hardship than the demons?

d) To help us to grow in holiness (i.e. sanctification)

Opposition also helps us to grow in holiness. That is it assists in the process of sanctification. Again, the demons don't mean it for our good. Their only aim is to destroy us and hinder us. Some of the time they succeed in that and people are lost and ministries are ruined as a result of demonic attack.

I remember one man with a prominent local ministry amongst young people in the 1980s who had to have his ministry closed down by the Board of Overseers because he committed adultery with one of the young women volunteers. So, his ministry was not helped to grow in sanctification by demonic attack.

On the contrary, it was destroyed. However, that is a risk which God is evidently willing to take in order that some of His disciples will be strengthened and matured by the demonic opposition and grow in holiness and self control despite it all, or rather because of it.

The point is that if we can resist all temptation and deception and come through the ordeal still faithful and still a disciple, then the whole thing hugely backfires on the demons. What they meant for our harm turns into a major benefit for us and not only toughens us up but actually builds holiness and godliness in us. And that, in turn, then benefits others through our subsequent ministries.

e) To help us to grow in wisdom, insight and discernment

The same principle applies here. Though we can learn a lot from books and teachers, it is practical personal experience that fixes the lessons best in our minds. Things usually need to be experienced in real life before they fully make sense.

Also our ability to discern between good and evil and between what is of human origin and demonic origin mainly comes from actually encountering demonic opposition in our own lives and overcoming it. After that kind of experience we are better able to recognise it when we meet it again later or when we see it happening in the lives of others.

f) To test our faithfulness, courage and obedience to Jesus

These qualities of faithfulness, courage, obedience and endurance are best developed by real life experience of adversity and conflict. That's how those virtues are built in us, but it's also how our progress is tested. Our performance under fire enables God to find out whether we are real or false,

committed or lukewarm, and brave or cowardly. But how could we display those qualities, and how could God test them, unless we have some real adversity, and real adversaries, to face?

Actions have consequences. So, if we let demons into our life the result will be damage.

We have looked so far at reasons why God allows us to be opposed by demons because of the benefits it can produce in us, though of course *that is not why the demons do it*. Our growth in maturity is not their goal, even though it is God's objective. On the contrary, they aim to harm, hinder and tempt us.

By the way, when I speak of God allowing all that, I always mean situations where demons *operate from outside of us, not from inside*. I want to stress the fact that *God does not want any demons to gain entry to our body*, such that they can then operate from *inside of us*. He only ever wants them to harass us from the *outside*, not from within. That is where and how He wants the training exercises to be conducted.

So, if they ever get access to operate *inside us* it has gone beyond what God wants. However, I believe the sad fact is that if we live sinfully and especially if we get involved in (or were previously involved in) the occult, then they may be allowed to enter us. At any rate, there is a high chance of it.

Sadly, actions have consequences. So, if we commit serious sin, or have anything to do with the occult, or if we are seriously failing to forgive a person who has wronged us, and are filled with bitterness instead, the result is we potentially create openings for demons which give them a right of access into our lives. They then use that opening to attack us. *This is not something which God desires*. On the contrary, He warns us of it and wants us to avoid all those things which create these openings or 'gaps in our armour'.

Nevertheless, though it is not His wish, He does allow demons to enter us. And of course, in most cases, these things that caused that had already happened even before we became Christians. As for why there are exceptions such that some people who sin badly or get involved in the occult or false religion don't end up with a demon inside them, my guess is it may be because somebody, somewhere, probably faithful parents or a godly teacher or pastor, were praying for them at the time.

It is a little bit like the stories that are sometimes told from World War 2 of how men survived death despite terrible odds, and they later learned that their godly mother was woken up in the night by the LORD and began to pray earnestly for them, and when they later check their diaries it turned out to be the exact moment when the danger arose. That is one possible explanation, but there may well be others.

A very brief introduction to the subject of curses

One of the mechanisms by which these attacks come upon us is '*curses*'. This is an area which causes much confusion. It may surprise you, or even offend you, when I say that the main person from whom curses come is God Himself. He will send curses on anybody, *including us*, if we disobey Him and act in sinful ways.

One place where we see this in the Bible, although it is not in operation today, is in the Law of Moses which ended when Jesus died. Nonetheless, the way God speaks of His curses in books like Leviticus

and Deuteronomy helps us to understand how the general principle of curses operates, even though that particular source of curses has ceased, i.e. when the Law of Moses ended.

Let us, nevertheless, look at some examples of such curses from the Law of Moses and then we will look at whether, and if so how, curses of other kinds might still affect us today as Christians, even though we are not under the Law of Moses. Consider for now what Moses told the people of Israel.

¹"Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ²"All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God:

Deuteronomy 28:1-2 (NASB)

Moses then sets out a long list of blessings from verses 3-14 which come from faithful obedience to God's Word. However, he then goes on to speak of God's curses and how those arise due to disobedience:

¹⁵"But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

Deuteronomy 28:15 (NASB)

Moses sets out an even longer list, from Deuteronomy 28:15-68, of the curses that came from God to those Israelites who disobeyed the Law of Moses. It involves a wide range of problems and blights, such as illness, poverty, defeat, frustration, confusion, exile, captivity, fear, etc. Here is just a short extract, because the full list is very long:

¹⁵ "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

¹⁶"Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country.

¹⁷ "Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

¹⁸ "Cursed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.

¹⁹ "Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

²⁰ "The LORD will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me. ²¹The LORD will make the pestilence cling to you until He has consumed you from the land where you are entering to possess it. ²² The LORD will smite you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with blight and with mildew, and they will pursue you until you perish. ²³ The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. ²⁴ The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

²⁵ "The LORD shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them, and you will be an example of terror to all the

kingdoms of the earth. ²⁶*Your carcasses will be food to all birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away.*

²⁷*“The LORD will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed.* ²⁸*The LORD will smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart;* ²⁹*and you will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways; but you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually, with none to save you.*

Deuteronomy 28:15-29 (NASB)

Let me emphasise again that *we are not under the Law of Moses anymore*. It has been fulfilled and then revoked as a result of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus, neither the blessings nor the curses contained within Deuteronomy 28 or Leviticus 26, (or any other part of the Law of Moses) apply to us. Please refer for more detail to my commentary on Galatians and also my article on the Law of Moses, plus the two separate audio series I did on them.

However, that does not mean God no longer curses anybody or that curses are no longer an issue for us. He does still do so and they are still an issue. The difference today is we operate under the Law of Christ, which does still allow a place for curses, albeit not of the type which Moses wrote about. For example, some curses which are still in operation, *even for Christians* are:

a) the curse which God sends upon those who lie and steal:

We are told of this curse in Zechariah 5 and it makes grim reading. We shall refer to it again in more detail in Book 9 but, basically, this is how God will curse anyone who lies or steals. The curse is presented rather like a heat seeking missile pursuing an aircraft. It goes after the person, even into their home. Moreover, there is nothing to suggest this only applies to unsaved unbelievers. On the face of it, it applies to everyone:

¹ *Then I raised my eyes again and looked, and behold, there was a flying scroll.* ² *And he said to me, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits, and its width ten cubits.”* ³ *Then he said to me, “This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the entire land; everyone who steals certainly will be purged away according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears falsely will be purged away according to the writing on the other side.* ⁴ *I will make it go forth,” declares the Lord of armies, “and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night within that house and destroy it with its timber and stones.”*

Zechariah 5:1-4 (NASB)

b) the curse which God will send on anyone who curses/hates/opposes Israel and the Jewish people:

I discuss this in much greater detail in my Israel series which is available on my website as audio talks, and also as a written article. Please refer to these for the full story. However, the basic fact is God has stated that He will bless anyone who loves and blesses the Jews and curse anyone who curses them. And there is no reason at all to suppose this doesn't apply to genuine Christians.

On the contrary, it applies to everyone, which is sad, because I know a lot of real Christians who, despite all their other qualities, have a blind spot on this issue of Israel and the Jews. They therefore think it is

alright for them to criticise Israel, or to condemn Israeli politicians, or accuse them of “genocide”, or to just dislike the Jews in unspecified, undefined terms, usually without even knowing why.

But let me break it to you – it’s not alright! God will hold you accountable for what you think, say and do in relation to Israel and the Jews. Therefore, show a grain of common sense and start supporting them, blessing them and praying for them. And, above all, stop criticising them. There are already far too many people doing that so your contribution isn’t needed. You can be very sure of that.

I will give you just a few brief references from Scripture to prove this, but please refer to my article and talks on Israel for the full story. It begins with a promise made to Abraham that God will bless him and his descendants, the Jews, *and curse those who curse them*:

² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.”

Genesis 12:2-3 (RSV)

The promise was then restated to his son Isaac and God specifically promised to fulfil the oath He had sworn to Abraham so that earlier promise is effectively incorporated by reference and restated:

² And the Lord appeared to him, and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. ³ Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfil the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴ I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give to your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves:

Genesis 26:2-4 (RSV)

Years later, Isaac passed on that blessing by giving his own blessing to his son Jacob as an inheritance in the same terms as above. This applied not only to Jacob himself but to his descendants, the Jews:

***²⁹ Let peoples serve you,
and nations bow down to you.
Be lord over your brothers,
and may your mother’s sons bow down to you.
Cursed be every one who curses you,
and blessed be every one who blesses you!”***

Genesis 27:29 (RSV)

If we were to follow this through the whole Bible, and indeed the whole history of the last 4,000 years, we would see very clearly that God blesses all those who bless Israel and the Jews, and he curses all those who curse Israel and the Jews. The examples are endless and I refer to a lot of them in my Israel article and audio series.

The long list of “coincidences” where people and nations who oppose Israel come to a grisly end are absolutely consistent and are impossible to explain away or deny. Moreover, they continue to occur even today. Therefore, no matter who you are, if you oppose, hate, criticise, mock, disparage, curse or belittle Israel or the Jewish people, you are the equivalent of a man who stands in the path of a high speed train. So don’t do it.

c) *the law of sowing and reaping:*

The law of sowing and reaping operates for everybody, and it can bring curses upon people whether they are Christians or not.

⁷ Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Galations 6:7 (RSV)

Therefore, if a person sows in a sinful way, they will inevitably reap a bitter harvest, even if they are a Christian. God will ensure that whatever we do to others is done later to us and any wickedness we do will be returned to us *and multiplied*, just as a seed which we plant is multiplied in the harvest.

That is why that agricultural metaphor is used to reflect the fact that we will *get back more than we sowed*, whether it was good or evil. If so, and if we have done evil, what is that but a curse? Some might quibble over the word ‘curse’ and insist on calling it an adverse consequence sent by God. But how is that any different from calling it a curse?

d) *the law of humbling and exalting oneself:*

This law, likewise, operates in every person’s life, and can bring curses upon them whether they are a Christian or not.

¹¹For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Luke 14:11 (RSV)

So, if a person, even a Christian, exalts himself, which means to puff himself up in pride as Nebuchadnezzar did when he beheld Babylon, then God will humble him. That simply means He will lower him, reduce him, diminish him, demote him etc. Again, how else can that be described as anything but a curse, and how can anyone deny that it comes from God Himself?

I stress that point because many argue that curses no longer exist and play no part in our lives. But they plainly do still exist and they do come from God. It is just that they no longer come as a consequence of breaking the Law of Moses specifically, because we are not under it. But that does not mean God does not operate in similar ways when we disobey *His other commands*, to the extent that He has said He will.

When curses operate, one consequence is that God allows demons access to our lives, to bring adverse circumstances upon us.

I have pondered for many years on the question of how exactly curses operate, i.e. what is the mechanism by which the curse is delivered, how does the unpleasant consequence get to us, and who delivers it? The answer is there appear to be many ways, and they are not fully explained to us. However, it seems to be self evident that one of those ways is that when a curse is affecting us demons are permitted to have increased access to our lives to harm, hinder, obstruct and diminish us.

We saw something like that happening above in the life of apostle Paul. However, I need to emphasise again that that was not a curse in operation, because Paul hadn’t done anything wrong. It was God allowing Paul to be hindered *for his own benefit*, to prevent him from becoming proud as a result of his

enormous knowledge and all the revelations and privileges he had been given. So, in many ways that was the opposite of a curse because it was intended for Paul's own good.

So, in that particular case, which was exceptional, it was not actually a curse at all, though it looked a bit like one. Even so, it still illustrates the general point. Therefore, when we are looking at curses, it is very clear that, in a similar manner, God uses demons to do jobs for Him by giving them the freedom to move into a person's life, whether they are a Christian or not, to cause whatever unpleasant consequences the curse is intended to bring.

So, for example, if a person was to exalt themselves, a demon might be permitted, or even instructed and sent, to do things to humble them by bringing them down a peg or two. Or if a person was to lie or steal or do something else which is sinful, a demon might be authorised to attack them, or you could say, to bring them a bitter harvest in return for whatever sinful act they 'sowed'.

An example of this is seen in the life of King Saul. He went wrong and behaved badly, disobeying God and being unfaithful to his calling. We see that God sent an evil spirit (demon) to harass and trouble King Saul. There is no getting away from that fact:

¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. ¹⁴ Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. ¹⁵ And Saul's servants said to him, "Behold now, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you.

1 Samuel 16:13-15 (RSV)

An even stranger episode is found in the life of King Ahab of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He was a wicked King and on one occasion a genuine prophet called Micaiah advised him that he should not go to war with the King of Syria and prophesied that if he did it would end in disaster. But King Ahab did not listen. He chose to go to war and Israel was defeated and Ahab was killed.

Those are the background facts. The key point is that God gave a revelation to the prophet Micaiah of what was happening *behind the scenes in the spiritual realm*. It was revealed that God sent a lying spirit, i.e. a demon, to speak through some false prophets and to entice King Ahab to go to war so as to be defeated and killed:

¹⁸ And Micai'ah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left; ¹⁹ and the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab the king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said one thing, and another said another. ²⁰ Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will entice him.' And the LORD said to him, 'By what means?' ²¹ And he said, 'I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go forth and do so.' ²² Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these your prophets; the LORD has spoken evil concerning you."

2 Chronicles 18:18-22 (RSV)

This is a strange passage, but we see from it that:

a) God sends a "lying spirit"

- b) It speaks through false prophets
- c) It misleads King Ahab
- d) And it entices him to go to war unwisely and be defeated and killed.

Each of the above steps were taken as *a form of judgment on King Ahab* because of his wicked life. So, God was cursing him, or opposing him if you prefer that word, and He was using a demon as His messenger or tool to do it. You might ask whether we can be sure it was a demon as opposed to an angel.

The answer is I can't be absolutely certain of that but it seems clear it was a demon because it was described as a "*lying spirit*", which one would not expect to be said of an angel. However, even if it was an angel, which I strongly doubt, the point remains that *it was sent* to deliver what was effectively a curse to King Ahab.

Demons will still interfere in your life, even where there are no curses in operation

All of us, whether we are Christians or not, come under relentless attack from demons and in all sorts of ways. That ought not to be seen as a controversial comment. In my opinion it is actually a statement of the downright obvious. However, many of us do not accept that demons are active in our lives, especially not in the lives of genuine Christians.

Many regard it as an insult even to suggest that a demon could be playing any part in their lives. They say that out of ignorance, mainly due to misguided teaching. Be assured however that demons have already played a part in your life for years, seeking initially to prevent you from ever becoming a Christian. Thereafter, they have been seeking to prevent you from growing into a faithful disciple.

You may be finding, right now, even in reading this book, that you come up against various distractions and diversions that demons have put in your way. They will certainly, try hard to prevent you reading this book, but even more so to prevent you reading the Bible. You may find you have struggled to concentrate, or have felt suddenly sleepy.

If so, this is very probably due to demonic interference. They seek to blind people's eyes and confuse their minds so they can't understand the Bible and especially the Gospel message. But if you have come through all that spiritual opposition and have become a Christian despite it all, the demonic resistance will only increase, not go away.

One or more demons will be made responsible for hindering you. They will then try hard to get you to give up being a Christian or, if that doesn't work, their 'Plan B' is to try to make you ineffective at reaching anyone else to share the Gospel with them. They are determined above all to stop you telling other people about Jesus.

If only we were as hard working and persistent as demons are

If we were even half as determined to do good as demons are to do evil, then we would do well. Their determination to keep going, year after year, century after century, is extraordinary. Why are they so committed? Why have they not grown tired of their campaign to ruin the lives of human beings? Why do they never seem to give up?

Part of the answer may be the hold Satan has over them. I don't know if this is true, and I have no specific authority to cite, but I suspect at least part of their zeal to destroy us comes from their own fear of Satan and of what he might do to them if they were to be slack in their work. Their own fear of him may provide an additional motivation, over and above their hatred towards us.

Demons have already been judged and are waiting to be sent to the Lake of Fire

So far, the demons have had about 6000 years on this Earth, waiting for their sentence to be carried out. In the end Jesus will throw them all into the Lake of Fire. The book of Revelation speaks of this dramatic future event:

¹⁰And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Revelation 20:10 (NASB)

When Jesus was on the Earth the first time, during His ministry, He cast many demons out of people. On one occasion the demons mistakenly thought Jesus was going to bring forward the time for them to be tormented, i.e. the day when they are at last sent to the abyss, during the Millenium and then, after that, for all eternity, to the Lake of Fire:

²⁸When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. ²⁹And they cried out, saying, "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

Matthew 8:28-29 (NASB)

Actually, that was not what Jesus intended. He merely cast them out of the person concerned, and was satisfied with that, without sending them on prematurely to their punishment. However, their response to Jesus illustrates how the demons fear the Lake of Fire and want to delay going to it.

Who can blame them? It is a dreadful prospect. Therefore, at least in that regard, they are a model for us because we ought to fear the Lake of Fire ourselves rather than ignoring it, or even treating it as a laughing matter, as so many of us do.

Demons have had nearly 6000 years of experience of undermining us. Therefore, we must use God's wisdom if we are to defeat them

During the 6000 years or so since this Earth was created, demons have had a vast amount of practice at dealing with human beings and causing sin, misery and chaos. They are therefore very skilled and experienced opponents, as they have seen it all before whereas we all have to begin as raw recruits and we only get one lifetime to learn how to fight.

Even then, the first part of that lifetime is as a child and in the last section of life we might be too old or frail to fight. So, our main opportunity for 'combat' is in the middle part of our lives and we need to use every moment of it. There is nothing you can do in your own natural ability to out smart them. They are more than a match for anything you can do to them in your own strength or ability. And even

if you were somehow cleverer than the demon harassing you, he only needs to speak to his 'supervisor' to get advice on how to outsmart you.

Yet, in God's strength, and if you go about things in the way He says, you are more than a match for them. The key is to humble yourself and then God will give you the grace and mercy that you need. Plus, you must submit yourself to God, which means being determined to obey Him. Then, and only then, are you in the right place to be able to resist the Devil and his demons:

⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James 4:6-8 (NIV)

Apostle Peter also tells us to resist the Devil. Again, he is using the word Devil as shorthand to represent Satan and his demons, not just Satan himself:

⁸Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

1 Peter 5:8-9 (RSV)

What is the occult? Why must we avoid it?

The word 'occult' just means 'hidden'. It refers to all those things that God, in His infinite wisdom, has chosen not to tell us. God has given us the Bible and that tells us everything He thinks we *need* to know. There is plenty in it to be getting on with for an entire lifetime. What He has not done is to tell us everything we might *want* to know. On the contrary, He has chosen to hide many things from us that we would dearly love to know.

We must just learn to be content with that. Some things are simply not meant to be looked into. It is just as a wise parent puts all dangerous medicines in a cupboard which is higher than the children can reach and tells them they mustn't open it. That cupboard is therefore 'occult' or off limits. Likewise, everything that God declares to be off limits is dangerous to us and should be avoided.

We would only be harming ourselves if we tried to enquire into such hidden things, especially if we are stupid enough to appoint demons as our tutors. That is of course what happens if we go to a medium or use tarot cards etc to try to find things out. Any response you get will not be from your deceased mother but from *a demon impersonating her*. Therefore, have nothing at all to do with any aspect of the occult.

Yet, there is something perverse in human nature that makes us prefer to get information illegitimately rather than legitimately, especially where we have been forbidden to look into it. That improper pursuit of hidden knowledge which God does not want us to have is what the occult is all about. But God forbids it – utterly. Therefore, any involvement you may have had in the occult, even in the distant past, will be very significant and please remember that when we get to Book 9 on casting out demons.

It will have harmed you when you did it and will continue to cause you great harm until and unless you repent of it and renounce it all. Therefore, ask yourself honestly, have you ever been involved, directly or indirectly, with horoscopes, tarot, ouiji, magic, the New Age, crystals, charms, spells, wicca, witchcraft, sorcery, superstitions, spiritualism, séances, tea leaves or any other kind of occult activity whatsoever?

Also, have you ever been involved in false, idolatrous religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Catholicism etc? They too are all off limits to us and any past involvement will have harmed us, and will still be harming us. If you have been involved in any of these things you need to specifically repent and turn away from all of it.

And you must also burn or destroy any “lucky charms”, crystals or little Buddhas or any other accursed objects, such as those hideous African masks made of wood depicting demonic faces which tourists buy. After you have thoroughly and sincerely repented then go on to renounce it all equally thoroughly.

Ask God to cleanse you of all its influence and consequences. Be aware that what you did, or said, or got involved in, can still be damaging you today, even if you no longer do it or have forgotten all about it. Therefore, ask God to reveal to you whether you have ever had any involvement in the occult of any type, or any false religion, even if it was many years ago, and if so, ask Him to bring it back to your memory.

If you have been involved then sincerely repent of it and earnestly renounce it. Don’t be glib or casual. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Ask God to cleanse you, to forgive you and to remove any ongoing influence that any form of occult activity or false religion might still have in your life.

You would be saying this to God as a prayer of confession of the sin and also of supplication in asking for help, not as a proclamation. However, proclamation will be needed next, so you yourself can *renounce* the occult activity in your own right, and *revoke* any words or oaths you spoke back then.

It must be you who renounces it in addition to asking God to forgive it and cleanse you of it. Yes, those are needed too, but so is your own personal renunciation of what you did or said. I say a lot more about this kind of renunciation in my Book 9.

I also need to emphasise the vital need to burn any occult books, pictures or objects you may possess. Do not keep any of it for a souvenir, not even one small item. Get rid of it all completely and do not sell it or even give it away to anyone else who might want it. If you did, it would be like handing them a bag of heroin.

I emphasise destroying these things because when a person decides to get rid of their old occult books, materials, pictures or objects, they will often feel drawn to hang on to some of it, even to one small item, perhaps for sentimental reasons as a souvenir of travel to far away places. People whom I seek to help have done this even when I told them not to keep anything and they promised to get rid of everything.

Do not yield to that temptation. It will be a demonic voice seeking to persuade you to hold onto something. But they only say it in order to keep you ensnared and to retain a hold over you. Resist that impulse and get rid of *all of it*. As they say in schoolboy football (soccer), “*if in doubt, kick it out*”.

Are the occult, witchcraft and demons real or imaginary?

Many of us find it extremely hard to believe demons are real. Some have a mental blockage in this area and find they can't believe. In fact, that intense difficulty in believing in demons is evidence, in itself, that people are being demonically resisted and their minds are being interfered with. Most of the time, in the West, the demons' policy is to seek to prevent you believing in them.

They will do this by many different means, for example by planting in your mind the idea that believing in demons is 'unscientific' and old fashioned and that you will be laughed at or criticised if you admit to it. If so, that makes it difficult to believe the occult or witchcraft are real either. So, if we come up against idolators, Satanists or witchcraft practitioners, many of us don't take it seriously or believe it to be real.

But Apostle Paul took it very seriously and said that when pagans offer sacrifices to their idols they are, in fact, making that offering to a demon, without realising it. Paul did not merely say such people *think* they are making the offering to a demon. He said they *are* doing so, i.e. the demons are real and making an offering to them really matters:

¹⁴Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? ¹⁹What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

1 Corinthians 10:14-21 (ESV)

Note also what the book of Exodus says about the magic or witchcraft practised by Pharaoh's magicians in Egypt. They saw Moses performing amazing miracles by God's power, to turn his walking stick into a snake, the river Nile into blood and to create swarms of frogs. However, when Moses did those things, by God's power, *the magicians then did the very same things* using the power of demons.

There can be no question that they merely *alleged* they could do these things. They really did, and not by using God's power either. That account demonstrates undeniably that Satanic and demonic power are absolutely real:

⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ⁹ "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Prove yourselves by working a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.'"¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. ¹¹ Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. ¹² For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

Exodus 7:8-12 (ESV)

¹⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.’”

²⁰ Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. ²¹ And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. ²² But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Exodus 7:19-22 (ESV)

⁵ And the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt!’” ⁶ So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. ⁷ But the magicians did the same by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

Exodus 8:5-7 (ESV)

Why so many Christians don't believe that demons play any part in their lives

As with other areas of theology, people tend to get their ideas and beliefs from what they have been told, or from their church's denominational traditions, rather than by simply believing what the Bible says. Therefore, if a man's church tells him demons play no active part in his life, that tends to become an immovable fixture in his mind.

It can become a mental stronghold or barricade which prevents him being able even to form the thought, let alone hold the firm belief, that demons could be real or active in his life. That viewpoint will not shift, even when he reads numerous New Testament accounts about demonic activity, deliverance from demons, the power of witchcraft and the occult. Any such references will be unconsciously edited out of whatever he reads, without even realising he is doing so.

If a person's mind is set in a rigid position then no matter what they see later in the Bible, or in their own experiences, it washes off them like water off a duck's back. That fixed idea comes from false teaching or their church's traditions or what they have been told by others or from what demons have whispered into their minds until they embrace the thought as their own.

It then causes them to ignore anything they read in the Bible or which they experience in life that contradicts that fixed idea which has become ingrained in their mind. Therefore, although many people are obviously being demonically attacked, most of us will insist it is something else causing it rather than a demon.

In this way, a man's theology or the church traditions and familiar customs and practices he has grown up with create immovable barriers, beyond which he will not allow his mind to go. This happens all the time and is another reason why we need to examine ourselves rigorously to get our theology right and to correct our approach to interpreting Scripture.

Then the Bible can help us to identify areas where our beliefs are wrong, even if we have held them all our lives. Sometimes our failure to realise demons are involved is just due to a lack of knowledge and understanding. Look at Job. He suffered all those calamities and he and his friends spent a long time discussing it, and wondering why God was allowing it, or even doing it, but it never occurred to any of them to wonder whether Satan was behind it.

They all assumed it came from God which, in one sense, it did, albeit indirectly, because God *allowed* it. Nevertheless, it was still Satan who *actually did it*. But the possibility of Satan's involvement never entered their minds, even though they all knew of his existence. Here Job is speaking, but he fully assumes it is God attacking him and he does not even mention Satan:

*¹"I loathe my own life; I will give full vent to my complaint; will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
²"I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me; Let me know why You contend with me. ³'Is it right for You indeed to oppress, To reject the labour of Your hands, And to look favourably on the schemes of the wicked?*

Job 10:1-3 (NASB)

It is a little bit like believing there are such things as Grizzly bears but only as something theoretical and far away and thus never expecting to actually meet one while out shopping or at work. Many Christians admit that demons may exist, in theory, but they are always assumed to be somewhere else, affecting someone else at some other time.

Like grizzly bears, demons are never thought to be here, affecting us today, in our own town or village. We therefore urgently need to remove those false ideas and replace them with an accurate biblical understanding of demons. We need to know what they are and how best to resist them. But, above all, that needs to become real to us, not mere theory.

Demons are not little monsters with horns. They must look like us, just as angels do.

It is one of Satan's cleverest tactics that he has caused so many of us (in the West) not to believe in him. If he can keep us believing he doesn't exist, or that he only exists in theory, or only did things in the past or somewhere else, to someone else, never here and now, and never to us, then we become defenceless.

We are hardly going to be well placed to resist an enemy whom we refuse to believe is real, or even one whose existence does not *feel* real, even if we notionally believe in him, in theory. Part of the cause of this widespread disbelief about Satan and demons is that so many of us have an unrealistic grotesque image of them with horns, red tights and a pitch fork.

Then, as C S Lewis said, if we cannot believe in that absurd caricature, we do not feel able to believe in them at all, not even as they really are. That is why Satan's policy in the West is to promote the idea that believing in demons means a person is unsophisticated, uneducated and even ridiculous.

He knows few of us are brave enough to express a view if it means we would be laughed at. However, demons are not ridiculous looking figures in red tights. There is every reason to suppose they look just like us. At any rate, one can see from the Bible that almost every angel that has ever appeared to anybody looks like us.

The only exceptions to that are some of the beings that Ezekiel sees in Heaven or the cases where an angel appears in a glorified form, i.e. shining with bright light and seeming to be very powerful. But even then, they still look like us in their basic appearance, other than the shining light etc. Also, Hebrews 13:2 tells us that some of us have "*entertained angels unawares*", i.e. some of us have met and spoken with angels *without even realising it*. I believe that happened to me and I tell the story in Book 9.

But, how could that be the case unless angels look like us? If they looked strange and different we would notice and would not be "unaware". So, if angels do look exactly like us, it follows that demons must look like us too, because they are just angels who have rebelled and fallen into sin. There is no reason to suppose the fall has altered their appearance.

It evidently has not altered Satan's, since the Bible says he can still appear as an '*angel of light*'. Certainly, when Satan entered Heaven to discuss Job with God in the presence of angels, none of them seemed to see anything different or untoward in his appearance. Indeed, it is quite possible that some of those angels didn't know who he was.

So, we need to stop picturing demons in our minds as hideous monsters, or as ludicrous figures in red tights. They are not like either of those images and it makes all the difference in taking them seriously when you realise that. The reality is when you sit down to eat with your family, there are demons around the room, perhaps standing alongside each of you, who are invisible but absolutely real.

If you were able to see all of them standing around in your home, they would look just like ordinary, good looking humans, probably about 30 years old. As you go about your business or talk with your family, that group of demons are all listening to what you each say, and are whispering into each of your minds, seeking to influence your conversations and actions. Try to picture them that way because it is a far more realistic image.

Why people get offended at the very suggestion that a demon may be involved in their life.

Many people become offended at the suggestion that a demon might be involved in their life or adding to their problems. I have seen people recoil with shock and disgust at the very idea of that. They become angry and view it as a personal insult, as if you had just suggested they might have fleas. I was at someone's house some years ago and the conversation came round to a particular man in the church who had been having extremely distressing mental problems.

He had deep depression and severe anxiety attacks and also heard audible voices saying horrible things and he had bizarre delusions. I politely asked this person, who was not a relative of his, but just a friend, whether anything had been done to investigate the possibility of a demonic cause to some of the problems. I saw that as a distinct likelihood given all the facts and the strange symptoms.

He was hearing voices in his head but the point is those voices *only ever said nasty, vicious, macabre things*, not a random selection of good and bad things, as one might expect if it was a purely medical problem, caused by something organic. I only spoke of it as a possibility that a demon might be involved. I was not being categorical about it.

Even so, some of the man's friends, who were at the house, were affronted at the very idea. There was an awkward silence and then one of them 'corrected' me quite firmly and 'defended' the man, as if I had just insulted him. They explained to me that the man's problems were "*purely medical*" and they knew this to be a certain *fact* because:

- a) he had seen a psychiatrist (a non-Christian) who had said so
- b) some Christian doctors from the same church had also said that his problems were medical.

But those doctors, even the Christian ones, didn't believe that demons play *any part in any of our lives*, just the same as the people I was speaking to. Every one of them had a rigid theology which had no place for demons. Thus, their conclusions about this particular man and his problems were pre-ordained by their pre-existing mindset, no matter what the facts suggested and no matter what the Bible says.

They were therefore incapable of even considering any demonic cause for his problems, not even the horrible voices in his head. So far as they were concerned it was purely 'medical' and that was all there was to it. Nothing more needed to be said. But points a) and b) above prove nothing at all.

People see what they expect to see and are unable to see anything else that does not fit within their pre-arranged theology, even if it is a metaphorical barn door that is only 10 feet away. They expect to see the things they believe in, not the things they don't believe in.

Therefore, if people believe mental problems are all caused by illness, they will only ever see mental illness, never demonic oppression, no matter how many blatantly obvious cases of demonisation they came across. Of course, it can work the other way too. A smaller group of people explain too many things in terms of demonic involvement and don't think *any* mental problems are ever due to brain injuries, traumas, stress or chemical imbalances.

Clearly, that extreme stance isn't correct either, and some mental problems are obviously purely medical or physical, such as when people get head injuries or a range of other possibilities. For example it is well known that an infection can cause a person to hallucinate. There are many possible causes of mental, emotional and spiritual problems. I fully accept that. However, there is still no getting away from the fact that *one of those causes is demons*.

Sadly, the friends of the distressed man I referred to above saw the idea of his having a demon as the equivalent of somebody having venereal disease. It was as if, on hearing that a man's wife has a painful rash, one was to say out loud, and in public: "*I wonder if it's VD*". The offence taken really can be at that level.

But there shouldn't be any sense of being insulted at all. Offence is only taken because the person's theology is mixed up and mistaken to begin with. That confusion causes them to see the whole picture wrongly and therefore to misunderstand the meaning and implications of a person being demonised.

When a demon attacks you he is paying you a compliment. It means he thinks you are a threat and are worth attacking.

The truth is there is nothing rude or critical about saying demons play an active part in people's lives and offence ought not to be taken. We are all affected by demons to some extent, including me. I am

not only speaking of others. The only questions each of us need to ask are *in what way*, and *how severely*, are we demonised?

It will vary widely from person to person in its nature and extent and in the precise details of what it leads to or what damage is caused. So, far from being an insult, if a demon is attacking you or trying to hinder you, it is actually a back-handed compliment. It means the demon thinks you are a threat and someone worth opposing. And they ought to know about that, having had nearly 6,000 years of practice at harassing humans.

Therefore, if their attack upon you or your ministry is a compliment when it is rightly understood, then so too is the suggestion that you might be being opposed. It means the person suggesting it sees you as a person whom demons would consider worthy to be opposed. How can that be anything other than a compliment?

Think of it the other way for a moment. What would it imply if we were to say a demon is *not* attacking or harassing you? To me it could only imply either that the demon thinks you are on their side, or that you are already making such a terrible mess of your life you don't need any 'help' from them in damaging it further. So, think more carefully before you announce that demons play no part in your life.

The mistaken belief that we are now living in the Millennium and that all demons are therefore bound and unable to deceive us.

This lack of understanding about demons flows partly from the fact that many churches have a wrong understanding of the end times and of Jesus' return to the Earth. If you were to ask those who believe demons no longer play any part in our lives "*Why are demons not active and where are they now?*" the answer you will often be given is the demons have been *bound*, i.e. put in chains and restrained, by Jesus.

Many hold that wrong belief as the indirect result of another mistaken belief, which has to do with Bible prophecy and the right way to interpret it. The problem is many people, for example most of those in Reformed churches, wrongly assume we are now already living in the Millennium. They believe this current period, the Church age, *is* Jesus' millennial reign on the Earth and He is now reigning on Earth indirectly through the Church, which is His body.

That viewpoint is known as "*amillennialism*", which literally means "no Millennium". However, that term is itself misleading, as what they actually believe is we are already in the Millennium. So, you could say they believe there will be no future Millennium that is still ahead of us. That then explains the prefix "A" which means "no".

At any rate, if they believe this is now the Millennium, it follows they must also believe the demons are all locked away, because the book of Revelation says Satan (and, by implication, his demons as well) will be locked away during Jesus' 1000 year (millennial) reign on the Earth:

¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ²And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so

that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

Revelation 20:1-3 (NASB)

Apostle John goes on to say:

⁷When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

Revelation 20:7-8 (NASB)

So, if a person has been brought up to hold to an amillennial viewpoint in relation to Bible prophecy, they will probably believe the following:

- a) The 1000 years referred to (six times) has only a “*spiritual meaning*” and is not to be taken literally. So, although the Church age has already been twice that length, this period we now live in is still assumed to be the Millennium.
- b) Therefore, it follows from what they assume that Jesus must now be reigning on the Earth (through His Church).
- c) It must also follow that Satan (and his demons) are currently bound in chains and locked away.
- d) Therefore, according to them, demons are unable to “*deceive the nations*” any longer.

It follows therefore, by their reckoning, that despite every appearance to the contrary, the demons are not active. They can't be, because they believe they are in prison. This is a classic case of forcing the facts we can see and hear to fit into a rigid pre-conceived view of what the Bible is assumed to mean.

Thus, no matter how active demons might actually be, those who take that amillennial approach cling to the view that demons can't possibly be active because they are certain this is the Millennium. Therefore the demons must all be in chains. But the obvious response to that is, as the saying goes, “*If Satan is chained up at the moment, then his chain is too long!*”

However, all of that reasoning about demons crumbles to nothing if we conclude, as I do, that this period we are currently living in is *not* the Millennium. That 1000 year reign will only occur in the future, after Jesus physically returns to Earth and that return clearly has not yet taken place. Therefore, there is nothing to prevent the demons being active and most of them are free, until the Millennium begins, to do as much damage as they are allowed to do, i.e. by God giving them permission to attack you and by you failing to defend yourself.

They are not wasting any time over that task because they know better than we do that the end of this present age is drawing near and Jesus' return is not far away. If anything, they are growing desperate and intensifying their activity, as is plain from all we see and hear. This is undoubtedly *an* apostate age for the Western churches and perhaps it is even *the* apostasy that Jesus said would come before His return to the Earth. I certainly think it is.

There couldn't be the epidemic of deception, error, carnality, corruption, perversion and abuse we have seen occurring in recent years, in both the world and the Church, unless demons are actively involved.

If anything, they seem to be working overtime at present and are achieving things they could never have done even a few decades ago in terms of promoting abortion, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, witchcraft, paedophilia, deception, gender confusion, the corrupting of our politicians and so on.

These events and the social and political movements, which in recent years have hit the Church and the world like a tidal wave, are not solely the work of men. There is clearly substantial demonic involvement behind it. That is true at a micro level within the lives of individuals and within churches and also at a macro level within nations, governments and institutions.

The things with which we are contending are not solely the works of men's sinful flesh nature either. There is much more to it. There is an obvious coordination to it all which goes far beyond what any human planning could achieve, even if it was done by a major corporation or a Government. Even they couldn't do it because it is worldwide and reaches into every kind of institution in exactly the same way and at exactly the same time.

The deluge of abortion, promiscuity and homosexuality, to name but three of the many unprecedented evils which have burst onto the world scene since the 1960's, demonstrates that the mind of an evil genius is involved. Whoever is behind this is capable of the world-wide choreography of thousands of different organisations, institutions and media outlets to bring about a coordinated, planned outcome.

There is nothing natural, spontaneous or coincidental about any of what we are seeing. It is incredibly well organised, in a way no human being, or even a large group, could ever achieve. So, for all of those reasons and more, we are clearly not in the Millennium and Jesus is not yet reigning on the Earth as King of Israel. Moreover, the Devil is not yet bound up in any prison and neither are his demons. They are anything but inactive.

Indeed, I believe the events of the last 100 years, and especially of the last 50 years, are Satan's preparation, setting the scene for the rise of the antichrist. But if all of that is true it means we are going to have to face their opposition and their various attacks upon us on an ever growing scale, right up until the Rapture. Therefore, in the chapters which follow we will look more closely at what demons get up to day by day in the lives of individuals.

CHAPTER 8

RESISTING DEMONS – AN INTRODUCTION

⁸Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:8 (NASB)

¹ Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

Zechariah 3:1 (NASB)

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Matthew 4:1 (NASB)

¹¹to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

2 Corinthians 2:11 (NIV)

²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity.

Ephesians 4:27 (NASB)

¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (NASB)

³⁸You 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)

¹ But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, ³ men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth

1 Timothy 4:1-3 (NASB)

Most Christian writers and preachers avoid the subject of demons entirely. They may address dozens of other themes, but demons won't be one of them. That may be because they don't understand demons or don't even believe in them. Or, perhaps, it is because they fear being criticised for being 'simplistic' or 'old-fashioned' if they take demons seriously and accept literally what the Bible says about them.

On the other hand, some people become obsessed with demons and over-emphasise them, over-state the extent of their power and say inaccurate things about how to resist them. They also put forward wild ideas and theories about 'spiritual warfare' which don't come from the Bible but from their own experiences, or what they have heard other men say or just from their own imaginations.

Both groups are probably unconsciously compensating either for the silence and neglect, or the errors and excesses, of the other camp. I hope to make neither of these mistakes. Instead, my aim is to approach this study of demons in a calm, balanced, orderly and biblical way, without either exaggeration or complacency and without under-stating, over-stating or mis-stating anything. That is a tall order and you must be the judge of whether it has been achieved.

In particular, I intend to take seriously *and literally* everything the Bible says about the nature, objectives and activities of demons. I shall not rely on my own experiences and opinions or on those of any other men *as a basis for any doctrine*. Nevertheless, I will refer to some of my own experiences, and those of people I know, but only to *illustrate or explain* what the Bible teaches, not in order to *prove* any point.

It is very important that we never present any such experiences or opinions as a *basis* for any doctrine or belief. When it comes to doctrine, whether concerning demons or any other issue, we must rely solely on what the Bible says and on nothing else and on nobody else, no matter how famous or “important” they may be.

If the Bible doesn’t say it then it is just some man’s opinion and has no authority. It may be a sensible point, and even helpful, but unless the Bible says it, it does not have any authority and can only be treated as an opinion which we need to weigh and assess to decide whether to accept it or not.

The Bible has a fair amount to say about demons, including *what* they do and *why* and also *how* they go about it. That said, it has even more to say about the problems caused by our own *flesh* nature, which draws us to sin and also the influence of the *world system*, which seeks to squeeze us into its mould and to get us to conform to its standards.

That is why I began this book by addressing the flesh and the world first rather than starting with demons. It is important to get our theological foundations properly laid and get everything into proportion and within its wider context so that demons are seen as one of the three battles we have to fight, not the only one.

Although I will admit that demons possibly cause us fewer problems than we cause for ourselves through our own flesh, the fact remains that the Devil and his demons are a major menace and are widely under-estimated. They deceive, distract, demoralize, divide, discourage, intimidate and obstruct us in far more ways than most of us realise.

Even those of us who are willing to accept that demons are active in our lives are usually unaware of how significant and extensive their influence really is. More importantly, whether you believe their influence is small or large, the point is ***we are commanded to resist them***. The Bible says so and there is no getting away from that. As with any other command, it creates a clear duty, which we have to obey. It’s not optional.

But we can’t obey it by merely ignoring demons because ignoring is not the same as resisting. Indeed, it is the opposite of resisting them. Therefore, we are obligated to do all we can to *learn how to resist* demons. And to do that we need to study what the Bible says about them.

Any failure to carry out such a study is a major omission on our part, for which we will pay a high price in terms of yet more victories for the demons and defeats for ourselves. However, instead of facing

this issue squarely, the majority of Western Christians think, say and do little or nothing about demons. Many even go so far as to say explicitly that they don't believe demons exist at all.

Others would not go that far but, for all practical purposes, they may as well not believe in demons, because ignoring them produces the same end result. That is, if all we do is to ignore demons, we give them uncontested access to our lives and let them do their wicked work, unrecognised and unresisted as if we were a security guard who sleeps in his cabin all day and doesn't bother to patrol the site.

Some might ask *why* God allows the demons to be at large and to cause all this trouble and be such a continual hindrance to us. Why doesn't He just send them to the Lake of Fire now, or even chain them up, as He will do in the future, during the Millennium? (That, by the way, is what Revelation 20 is actually talking about, not the present day.) The Bible doesn't give us a full answer to that question.

But, what we can say is that God *does intentionally allow them to be active*, just as He allowed Satan to cause havoc in the life of Job. He was an exceptionally righteous man, with whom God was pleased. Yet, God still gave Satan express permission to attack Job, albeit that He laid down strict boundaries which Satan was not allowed to cross.

At least one of God's purposes in giving the demons such ongoing freedom, while they wait to be sent to the Lake of Fire, is that *He actually wants them to oppose us*, (though not to defeat us.) But, we might ask, why would God want that? Why would He tell us to resist them and, at the same time, allow them to attack us?

The answer has to do with the wider purposes that God has for our time on this Earth as disciples. He wants to use it to enable us to grow in character and, in particular, to learn how to be what the Bible calls '*overcomers*'. That is someone who '*overcomes*'. This is a major theme in the Scriptures, but one which very few people ever notice and even fewer preach on.

For example, you will note that in Jesus' seven letters to the churches in the book of Revelation, *overcoming* is very important to Him. It plays a major part in determining the rewards and crowns etc that Christians will receive at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Please refer to my Book Four for a full discussion of this.

The point is, however, we cannot be overcomers unless there is something to overcome. That is where the demons come in. Evidently, God does not consider the ordinary difficulties of this life, by themselves, to be an adequate testing ground for us. Therefore, at least one reason why He permits the demons to oppose us, in addition to us facing all our normal problems, is to provide us with some heavy-duty opposition.

They create opportunities for us to learn through the struggles we face. Those battles also show God what we are made of. The demons' ongoing attacks and schemes create a lifelong series of tests of our character, in particular of our courage, faithfulness, effort, endurance, perseverance and determination.

It may assist to think of it in terms of this analogy. Consider a boys' school football team. My son played in a number of them when he was younger. I fully supported his team, and him in particular, and I always wanted him to do well and to win. However, my support for him did not prevent me from allowing the other team to go on to the pitch to oppose him and his team.

They would tackle my son, take the ball from him, mount attacks of their own and even score goals against his team. Sometimes he might even be fouled. But I did nothing to stop it and I never intervened. One could then equally ask me the same question that we have asked of God. That is why did I allow that opposing team to get anywhere near my son and his team?

Why did I not repeatedly run onto the pitch myself to stop those other players from tackling my son? Why not bar them entry to the school altogether? Indeed, why were they ever invited to play in the first place? The answer, of course, is that if I had not allowed those players from the other school to go on to the pitch and oppose my boy, he would never have developed the skills of a footballer.

So, in opposing my son, they were actually helping him, in the long term, though neither he nor they would have seen it that way at the time. More to the point, they were also serving my purposes and my plans for my son's life. If they had not been there, it would have been like it used to be at home, in the evenings, when my son and I would play football on our own, just the two of us.

I would usually be in goal and he would run around on our large garden tackling imaginary players and then take shots at me. Sometimes he would get past four or five of these non-existent players before shooting. But it wasn't the same as when there were real opponents in a genuine contest.

But you might say that where that analogy falls down is football is just a game, whereas the demons can cause us real harm, because they fire live ammunition and are not merely playing. That is true. In His wisdom, God has allowed us to be exposed to more than just a game. It is a real war in which people get hurt. Nevertheless, the purpose is the same.

It develops our characters and turns us into overcomers, provided we actually engage in the war as combatants, rather than stay out of it or sleep through it. My argument, in conclusion, is that we all need to take demons seriously and resist them, as we are commanded to do. They really do exist and, as we have just seen, they even have a useful purpose from God's perspective.

If we don't take them seriously we have no chance of resisting them. But, at the same time, we must always remember to avoid the errors of *fearing* them, which we never need to do, and/or of becoming *obsessed* with them. What we need, as always, is *balance*. We must be concerned but not afraid, confident but not complacent, and vigilant but not obsessed. Plus we must believe everything the *Bible* says, but not necessarily what *people* say.

Our battle against Satan and his vast army of demons has to be fought at both a personal, one to one level and also at a cosmic level, "*in the heavenly places*".

When we speak of resisting demons we need to be clear in our minds that there is a difference between resisting the particular demon or demons allocated to harass and obstruct you personally at what we might call "ground level", and resisting that same demon, or even the whole demonic realm, operating at a higher level in what the Bible calls the "*heavenly places*".

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

But what are the “*heavenly places*” and where are they located? The short answer is they are situated within the “*second heaven*”. The Bible speaks of three heavens. The first heaven is just the atmosphere which touches the surface of the Earth and extends upwards. The third heaven is much higher and is Heaven itself, where God currently lives.

Therefore, the second heaven is in between those two. It is not touching the surface of the Earth but is higher up in the upper atmosphere approaching what we call Space. It is there, up above us, where this aspect of spiritual warfare takes place. It may sound odd, but there it is. So, the “*heavenly places*” are located in the upper atmosphere, but *what* are they?

The Bible clearly shows they are the arena where conflict takes place between on the one side, Jesus, the angels *and the Church* and, on the other side, Satan, his senior lieutenants and all the demons. Therefore, not all of our resistance to the demons takes place at ground level within our homes, churches and workplaces. Some of it occurs at a much higher level where conflict, arguments and disputes are worked out and each side wins or loses particular battles.

In case you are not convinced that the heavenly places involve confrontation, and that it is a form of conflict in which we are meant to be involved, note that word ‘*wrestle*’ in Ephesians 6:12 above. Wrestling is not a gentle, passive, relaxing activity. Neither is it peaceful.

Indeed, with the possible exception of boxing, it is hard to think of anything more exhausting than wrestling. It uses every muscle and nerve and it is no coincidence that the Holy Spirit chose that word to describe the way we are supposed to act within the heavenly places. We are not there as tourists but as part of a war in which we ourselves are assumed to be taking an active part as combatants.

When you try to picture the heavenly places, which you need to do in order to operate at that level in prayer and proclamation, you must see it as a place of conflict. And see that conflict as involving you. Therefore, proclamation needs to be seen as something which can, at times, be warlike, aggressive and confrontational.

See yourself as being engaged in a wresting match over an issue in your life or another person’s life or over the well being of your children, or your church, or even of your nation. The key point is there is a place in the Christian life for warlike prayer. We are not meant to be one club golfers and so we need a full range of clubs in our golf bag. That range of options will include supplication, praise, worship, thanksgiving, and confession of sin, but also aggressive, warlike proclamation at appropriate times.

Some of those battles fought out within the heavenly places are on a large scale affecting whole nations and worldwide movements and issues. But some of them are on a much smaller scale, affecting only you, your family, your church or your workplace.

That is true, despite the fact that the battle is being fought at that very high level with you and your prayers and proclamations making a difference within the heavenly places. So, the issues over which you are “wrestling” may be personal or local but the arena within which your “wrestling match” takes place is not local. It is high above us in the heavenly places. And that fact needs to become real to you and feel real.

The words you speak, if said in faith, help to determine the outcome of conflicts which then have their outworking in your life at ground level, not only at a national or international level. One could view the heavenly places as being a bit like the House of Commons in the UK or the House of Representatives in the USA. Many battles are fought in those chambers and sometimes the right side prevails but at other times evil prevails. It depends on the numbers who turn up on each side and the determination and warlike spirit of those taking part.

Moreover, not every argument or speech in the House of Commons is about national or international issues. Much of it is about local issues affecting only one MP's constituency or perhaps even the life and welfare of one individual constituent. And I believe the battles in the heavenly places operate in the same way affecting not only whole nations, but also single individuals.

The thing I am trying to get across, which most of us never realise is *we are part of the arena or forum* where these battles take place. That is to say it is not just Jesus alone who is seated in the heavenly places. *So are we – the Church*, and that includes you if, and only if, you are willing to take this seriously and act upon it.

***⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
Ephesians 2:6 (NASB)***

Therefore, each of us, if we know this, and believe it, and are willing to act upon it, are *entitled to take part in those battles* being waged at a strategic level, high above the Earth in the heavenly places. That must be so because, in so far as Jesus is seated in the heavenly places, **so are we**.

This has to mean something and it makes us far more than mere spectators watching Jesus and the angels fight for us. Otherwise, the Holy Spirit would not have used the word 'wrestle' in Ephesians 6:12 as we saw earlier to describe what we do there. Spectators don't wrestle. They just sit and watch.

Your position as an individual Christian is rather like being an ordinary person in your day job or within your family or church but having in addition to that a seat in the House of Commons which entitles you, as of right, to enter the Chamber and to speak in debates and to fight for your constituents. Of course, most of the time, an MP is not speaking in the House of Commons, or even sitting in the Chamber at all. But the point is he has *the right to be there when he chooses to be*.

I believe the same applies to us because I take the Bible literally on this and I believe you should too. If you do, it will transform the way you see yourself, and how you speak in prayer and, above all, in proclamation. You will not view yourself just as little you, a lowly bank clerk or greengrocer, but as having the mighty and exalted position of being a member of the Church, part of the body of Christ, and of the bride of Christ.

That means you individually are *authorised to participate in the battles waged in that forum* – the heavenly places. You have a right of access or a right of audience, as lawyers say, entitling you to speak there. I find it helpful to picture it being a little bit like the House of Commons with rows of green benches facing each other and with King Jesus sitting on the front bench alongside the archangels Michael and Gabriel and other senior figures.

Behind them are multitudes of angels and some individual Christians sitting on the "back benches" listening, and also speaking on issues raised there. I say "some" because it only involves those

Christians who know they have a right to speak there and who exercise that right. Most of us don't. Then, on the opposing benches, are Satan, his senior lieutenants and all the host of demons he rules over sitting behind him and jeering, accusing and insulting those of us who are on the other side.

It helps to use your imagination in this way to try to picture what the Bible speaks of. The Bible is so brief and gives so little description and explanation of certain things, in particular the heavenly places, it is easy for the reality of it to pass you by when you read it. Many think it just sounds like flowery poetic language which doesn't really mean anything tangible. But it really does. It is literal.

The heavenly places are real and we really are seated there, *or at least entitled to be*, albeit that most of us don't know that and never take up our 'seats' or speak in any of the debates. We are like people getting on with our daily lives without even knowing we have the letters "MP" after our name and are lawfully entitled to speak in the House of Commons *if we choose to*.

There is a difference therefore between resisting demons at a personal 'one to one' level, which we can do in all sorts of ways, and resisting them at a higher level within the heavenly places. Most of this book is focused on the battles we face at a one to one 'micro' level against the individual demons sent to oppose us personally at "ground level" and to harass our family, our church, our business or our workplace.

However, when we engage in proclamation, some of it is done at a higher "macro" level and affects issues and situations far beyond ourselves. Nevertheless, it is also true that much of it is done at a personal 'micro' level. Therefore, proclamation is a weapon we can use at both an individual level to contend for ourselves and our families and churches, but also at a much higher level to affect what is going on in our corrupt governments and institutions and to resist what the senior demons are doing there.

The point is that some of our proclamation is targeted at the higher level of spiritual warfare within the heavenly places where both the angelic realm and the demonic realm contend with each other. But some of our proclamation, albeit that it is addressed to the heavenly places, is used to give us the victory over the demons at ground level.

In both cases we are operating within the heavenly places in our proclamation but sometimes the issues are personal and at other times national and international. So, the demons are contending with us in our own lives and in our homes and churches, and we can resist them there, at that ground level, and in all sorts of ways.

But the point is we can and should *also* resist them by what we proclaim into the heavenly places. So, proclamation and warlike prayer in the heavenly places is a valid part of how we are meant to resist demons but it is not the only way. We must resist them in many other ways too, as the following chapters will address. I hope the balance of that has been made clear. We need to do all these things.

Demons can only be in one place at any given time. However, they can move around freely and, in my opinion, they can do that very rapidly, such that an angel or a demon can travel around the world in seconds if they want to. That would explain how they can be with us at one moment and up in the heavenly places shortly afterwards.

The Bible doesn't say they can move rapidly like that and so I have no authority to cite for that assertion. It is just my personal opinion but I think it makes sense and fits the facts of our experiences and is consistent with the whole rationale of them operating in the air rather than on the ground. How else could they travel back and forth from the heavenly places to your home or church if they could not move rapidly?

Note also in the birth narrative of Jesus in Luke we see an angel of the Lord accompanied by a multitude of the heavenly host, i.e. angels praising God. It does not say they are in the air rather than on the ground but that seems implied, especially as we are told these angels then went away "into Heaven" which means they flew up to the third heaven which is a long journey. Yet it seems it is done very quickly. Moreover, even in conventional warfare, aeroplanes and missiles get around faster than tanks or marching soldiers.

⁸ And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; ¹¹ for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"*

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

Luke 2:8-15 (RSV)

There is a hierarchy among the demons. They have different levels of power and influence

We shall look at a number of passages which confirm the existence of a variety of different ranks of demons, with different levels of power and authority. As we saw in chapter seven, we know that there are three main orders of created beings, i.e. the angels (and archangels) and above them the seraphs and above them the cherubs, and that Lucifer was the most senior of all the cherubs.

However, what I am less clear on is the precise rank structure or hierarchy amongst the demons. My belief is Lucifer gained all or almost all his followers from among the angels, rather than from the seraphs or cherubs. But what I don't know for sure is how those demons are now ranked in order of authority. We know they do have a rank structure as can be seen from these verses which speak of levels of both angels and demons within the heavenly places.

The point is that the various words used in the Bible to refer to the ranks or levels of power and authority within the heavenly places apply equally to both angels and demons. That makes sense actually, because the fallen angels who are now demons used to be angels and were ranked and classified in the same way then as they are now.

In short, both sides appear to have the same rank structure, just as the British and German armies in World War 2 both had colonels, brigadiers, major generals, lieutenant generals and so on. It seems clear that when the demons were cast out of heaven they kept the same rank structure and titles.

¹⁰ so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 3:10 (NASB)

I have quoted Ephesians 3:10 in the NASB as it is a new translation and it chooses to use the words “*rulers and authorities*”. However, older translations like the KJV and RSV translate the same Greek words differently as “*principalities and powers*”. I mention that just to avoid confusion because each of us may be familiar with one or the other version. Here it is in the RSV:

¹⁰ that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 3:10 (RSV)

But there are other verses too which refer to the rank structure in the heavenly places. I won’t quote them all, but here are a few:

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

Ephesians 6:12 (NASB)

¹⁶For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Colossians 1:16 (NASB)

In case anyone is wondering why I maintain that these rank structures also refer to demons and not just to angels, as some suppose, consider how in Ephesians 6:12 above they are referred to as “*spiritual forces of wickedness*”. That can only mean demons, not angels. Note also that in Colossians 2:15 below we are told concerning the rulers and authorities that Jesus “*made a public display*” of them and also “*triumphed over them*”. Likewise, this cannot possibly refer to angels and must therefore refer to demons, even though the same ranks and titles are used:

¹⁵When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Colossians 2:15 (NASB)

So, even in those few verses, we see references to four different levels or ranks of demon and others are spoken of elsewhere. The ones we see here are:

- a) *rulers* (also referred to as principalities)
- b) *authorities* (also referred to as powers)
- c) *thrones*
- d) *dominions*

The Bible doesn't define each of these persons, titles or ranks as far as I know, or tell us exactly how they differ from each other in power or role or in their areas of responsibility. But, if we focus for a moment just on the evil side of the heavenly places, i.e. how the demons operate there, it might be helpful to picture it in terms of how Nazi Germany was organised.

Therefore, we might think of the leading figures who served Hitler and helped him to rule Germany. Some of these were the *Gestapo*, the *SS*, the *OKW* (which was the High Command of the armed forces), or even a unique rank Hitler created for Hermann Goering, the head of the *Luftwaffe*, called the "*Reich Marshal*".

There were also many other bodies and organisations which were responsible for ordinary policing, spying, organising the Holocaust, administration, government ministries and so on. Any large, complex group has to be organised into ranks and levels and also has to create sub groups with specific authority for particular tasks or projects.

I believe Satan does the same with his most senior "officers" and those who serve under them. Indeed, so does Jesus in the way He organises His senior angels on the 'good side' of the heavenly places. And, as we have seen, the same titles are still used on both sides for the various ranks.

As we must keep reminding ourselves, it is the place where both Jesus and Satan, angels and demons, and also we in the Church, operate and contend in the spiritual war that is raging. It is a huge arena and therefore those operating within it, on both sides, need to be divided up into ranks and levels. There is no alternative but to do so.

The metaphors the Bible uses for the demonic (and angelic) hierarchy within the heavenly places where both sides operate is therefore very reminiscent of how armies and governments are organised. That isn't a coincidence. The angels and demons arrange themselves in that way because it is the obvious system to adopt.

We do the same in our own armed forces with a strict rank structure and in governments too with descending stratas of National Governments, Devolved Assemblies, County Councils, District Councils, Parish Councils and so on. It is the obvious way to do things and it is how things are done in Heaven so it's hardly surprising that the demons would be arranged on similar hierarchical lines.

Accordingly, the demons allocated to oppose you and me at a personal level will probably be the equivalent of a lowly 'private' or 'lance corporal' in the Army. But some important person with a major ministry, or some church doing a lot of good work, might be assigned a 'sergeant', a 'lieutenant' or even a 'captain', metaphorically speaking. But whatever rank of demon deals with you, he will be required to report back to his supervisor just as any human employee has to.

What happens in the "*heavenly places*"?

The Bible never tells us exactly what happens in the heavenly places, or precisely how they operate. But I believe the analogy of them being a bit like the House of Commons is a reasonable one and people have found it helpful in being able to grasp how to deal with the heavenly places.

However, another way I picture them is to think in terms of a large company that you might work for, such as Rolls Royce or Ford. Imagine you work on the shop floor as a fitter or mechanic or as a cleaner.

Some of the decisions affecting your work and what you are meant to do will be made at ground level by your immediate supervisor who is himself a “blue collar” worker just one or two ranks higher than you.

However, then picture in your mind the senior management of that company such as the directors, heads of departments, senior managers and so on. Imagine them all working in a different part of the factory, perhaps on the top floor of a posh office block, with deep carpets, and expensive wallpaper.

I see that office building occupied by senior managers of many different ranks, as being a bit like the “heavenly places”. I think of the heavenly places as being where strategy is formulated, where the major decisions are made, where instructions are issued and the organisation is managed. If we think of the heavenly places in these terms it may be helpful in making sense of it all.

I believe it is where both the senior angels and demons make important decisions, formulate policy and issue instructions to those below them in the chain of command. Therefore, for you to operate in the heavenly places is a little bit like a blue collar worker walking into the senior managers’ block and speaking up about issues which are causing difficulty on the shopfloor, knocking on managers’ doors, reminding them of the company’s rules and procedures, and making requests or even insisting on action being taken.

Alternatively, you could view it as being rather like a divisional or brigade headquarters in wartime. That is yet another helpful metaphor to enable us to picture how the heavenly places operate. A military HQ is behind the lines but those within it are directing what goes on at the front, and it is there that the biggest decisions are made.

Of course, the angels are also in the heavenly places and they too are active alongside the demons but I am focusing for the moment on the heavenly places from the demons’ perspective since it is only they whom we are resisting. That said, I believe proclamation can also be used to support the angelic realm in what they are doing and in inviting God to use them and strengthen them in the battles they are involved in.

Therefore, in our prayers of supplication but also in our proclamations, we are affecting not only what happens at ground level within ourselves and our families but also what happens in the “House of Commons” or in the ‘management office block’ or at the demons’ (or the angels’) brigade HQ where the senior “officers” are located. You choose whichever of those metaphors most resonates with you.

I believe our prayers and our proclamations are of effect and have significance at both ground level and in the ‘House of Commons’, ‘management block’ or ‘headquarters’. They have effect all the way up the chain of command in both the demonic realm and the angelic realm.

Sadly, we can’t cast those demons out of the heavenly places. They are fully entitled to be there and to be active in pursuit of their goals (until, as we saw, they are cast down to the earth at the mid point of the Tribulation). But I believe we can hinder them and resist them in what they seek to do in the heavenly places, just as we can resist them at ground level when we contend with the individual demons who are personally assigned to us.

In what sense are Jesus and even we, “seated in the heavenly places”? What does it all mean?

Ephesians not only refers to the existence of the ‘heavenly places’ but also says that both we, and Jesus, are “seated” there. That is a curious phrase, and the Bible doesn’t fully explain or define it. So what does it mean? Let’s look at two passages:

²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:20-23 (ESV)

⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Ephesians 2:4-6 (ESV)

Whatever the heavenly places are exactly, the inescapable fact is that it is a place where authority is wielded and that both Jesus and we Christians are entitled to be “seated” there. The Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible wants us to know that. Being ‘seated’ is an expression which signifies having a position of authority and influence and the right to speak and be heard. The heavenly places aren’t defined in Scripture so far as I can see. Therefore, we have to do our best to interpret it using general biblical principles, common sense and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

If we extend the analogies I offered above about the heavenly places being like a House of Commons or a management block at a factory or brigade HQ behind the lines, where senior management make important strategic decisions, then the image of being “seated” there clearly implies we are given *the right to speak into and influence what happens there*.

“Seated” can’t mean just being a mute spectator who isn’t allowed to speak there as the same word is used of Jesus and He would hardly be forbidden to speak. Besides, as we saw earlier in Ephesians 6:12, mere spectators don’t “wrestle”. So, however that wrestling operates in practice, it clearly involves conflict.

The strangest fact of all is that the heavenly places are not occupied solely by Satan and the demons, but also *by Jesus, the angels, and we who are in the Church*. Both sides are present, as in the House of Commons on opposing rows of benches. Therefore, don’t make the mistake of seeing the heavenly places as somewhere where only the demons are present or where they get all their own way and call all the shots. It isn’t just you alone versus the entire demonic realm.

The Bible presents it as a place where high level spiritual battles are conducted. That means it is a “two way street” and a place of conflict, like any debating chamber, battlefield or conflict zone. My own favourite image is to view it as a huge House of Commons or House of Representatives where the demons and Jesus, and the angels, and the Church, have a right to speak.

It is a strange image, admittedly, but it fits in with what the Bible teaches. It illustrates how we are contending not only at a one to one personal level in our home with the demon(s) assigned to us, but

also at a far higher level in the place where major decisions are made affecting vastly more people than just yourself. In that sense, therefore, we are far more significant than most of us realise and we have powers, rights of audience and levels of authority that most of us are not using because we don't even know they exist.

That battle or 'debate' is conducted using the 'weapons' of prayer, thanksgiving, praise and worship but also, more to the point, in our proclamations. That is to say in the way we proclaim God's Word, declare His promises, and speak out His principles in faith with the whole spiritual realm on both sides listening to what we are announcing, and claiming, in faith.

The point we have to grasp and which needs to become real to us is that proclamation in particular is a weapon just as if we were firing a missile or throwing a grenade. God's Word has power and has great effect when *wielded by a person who believes it*.

When we engage in proclamation, the audience includes Jesus Himself, the Church, all the angels and archangels plus the whole demonic realm at all levels, and they all know the difference between people who truly believe God's Word and confidently rely on His promises and those who don't. Listen to my four audio talks on proclamation for more detail. However, I will address it further in this book and explain a little more about how we are meant to use proclamation and how to go about it.

What does it mean that Jesus is "*the High Priest of our confession*" and how does that affect the way we use proclamation?

This is a big subject, requiring a book of its own, but I shall try to deal with it briefly. We need to begin by realising that at different stages in His career, Jesus operates primarily in three different roles or ministries. He actually has far more roles than these, but I shall discuss only three of them and then focus on the second. So, we might put it like this:

- a) When he came in His incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth, and had His earthly ministry in Israel, Jesus operated as a *prophet* for about three and a half years.
- b) After His resurrection and ascension Jesus has operated, for the last 2000 years, as a *priest* and He does so within the heavenly places as well as in Heaven.
- c) After His return to the Earth, Jesus will operate as a *king* reigning over the whole Earth from Jerusalem during the 1000 year Millennium.

We shall focus on this second ministry, the one He has now, whereby Jesus is operating as a priest, in fact as our High Priest. As I discuss in much greater detail in my article on the Law of Moses, this priesthood that Jesus now has is not the same as the Aaronic priesthood that operated until the Law of Moses ended.

To be that kind of priest a man had to be both of the tribe of Levi and a descendant of Aaron. But Jesus is neither, as He is from the tribe of Judah. So, His priesthood is of a very different kind and we are told it is "*after the order of Melchizedek*":

⁵ *So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,*

*“Thou art my Son,
today I have begotten thee”;
⁶ as he says also in another place,
“Thou art a priest for ever,
after the order of Melchiz'edek.”*

Hebrews 5:5-6 (RSV)

The purpose of a priest, and especially a High Priest, is to operate as an intermediary, representative or intercessor between men and God. That is what Jesus is doing now for every saved person, interceding for them, being their advocate and **taking each person's proclamation, if it is spoken in faith, and bringing it to God the Father on our behalf.**

The High Priest in Jerusalem used to enter into the Holy Place and even the Holy of Holies in the Temple, to represent the people and to seek the covering of their sins and even to offer animal sacrifices on their behalf. Likewise, Jesus now offers God our proclamation, also referred to as our “*confession*”.

Remember, the word ‘confession’ when used in this context, doesn’t mean only the confession of our sins. It means “*to say the same as*”. So, when we confess God’s Word we are saying the same as God says on that topic or issue, which could be about anything, not just our sin. In this verse from Hebrews Jesus is referred to as the “*High Priest of our confession*”:

¹ Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.

Hebrews 3:1 (RSV)

What this means is that we are to present our confession or our proclamation to Jesus in the heavenly places. To do this we take a part of God’s Word, whether it is a promise or a statement, upon which we seek to rely in faith, and apply it to our circumstances, and we proclaim it boldly into the heavenly places. But we have to believe it and rely upon it. We can’t just say Bible verses like a parrot as mere words which we don’t truly believe.

Jesus is seated there, just as we are, and He will hear what we proclaim. But He will also take our confession or proclamation and present it to God the Father on our behalf. We need Him to do that, but of course He requires us to make that proclamation first, and to speak it out in faith, before He can present it to God the Father. He cannot present a confession which we haven’t made.

Therefore, make your confession/proclamation in faith and also “*hold it fast*” which means to persevere with it and not to doubt it or give up on it. Remember, it is a “wrestling match” and those can go on for quite a while so don’t expect all your battles in the heavenly places to last just a couple of minutes. You may have to persist in your proclamation.

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (RSV)

Jesus has been operating in this ministry of our High Priest since He ascended and He is still doing so. The only question is whether you are benefitting from it, i.e. whether you are confessing/proclaiming anything for Him to present to God the Father. Most of us aren't.

²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. ²⁵ Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶ For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

Hebrews 7:23-26 (RSV)

Therefore, when you face difficulties or you need help, healing, provision or any of the other things God has promised to give to us or to help us with, then take a verse or passage which is relevant to your circumstances or your need and proclaim it. Say the same about your situation, or your need, or your crisis as God says about it in any of the hundreds of promises, statements and assurances which He has given to us in the Bible.

Speak it out loud into the heavenly places with faith and confidence and both ask *and expect* Jesus to take it to His Father on your behalf. There are multitudes of such verses in the Bible but I have arranged a lot of them in a convenient format in the appendix to my Book 3. They are in business card sized format so you can print them off, cut them out, and use them when they are needed.

What would your objectives and methods be if you were a demon?

Imagine for a moment you had the great misfortune to be a demon. What would your aims and objectives be and how would you seek to achieve them? Let's look at that now, starting with high level, strategic aims, then mid level tactical objectives and finally, ground level objectives in the lives of individual Christians and unbelievers.

If we look at the whole picture in that descending order, we will get an overall view of what they are trying to achieve at all the different levels and be better able to distinguish one method or approach from another. We will then see how demons of all their various ranks seek to cause chaos internationally, nationally, regionally, amongst groups and organisations, in churches, and finally at a personal, individual level.

The high-level strategic objectives of demons

Here we are talking about the Devil's highest level objectives. With these he himself will sometimes get personally involved to plan, oversee and supervise what his most senior demons, i.e. the 'principalities and powers' or what we might view as his "cabinet ministers" or his "generals", "brigadiers" and "colonels" are doing on his behalf. These strategic aims will include things such as the following:

- a) Satan's opposition to Israel and his wish to stoke up hatred of Jews and prevent Israel from becoming a nation state again (he has already failed in this) and to prevent or delay its turning

belatedly, as a whole nation, to accept its Messiah. That day is coming and Satan dreads it because, at that point, Jesus will return and Satan's career will be almost over

- b) attacking and minimising the effectiveness of the Church as a whole, i.e. the overall body of Christ, causing division and false teaching wherever possible and perverting the structure, approach, policies and doctrines of the Church so as to delay and minimise its progress in evangelising the world
- c) promoting false religions worldwide, in particular Islam, but also Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, atheism, Catholicism, evolution etc and increasing their scale, power and effectiveness as much as possible
- d) creating and prolonging wars, famines, and other disasters on a global scale
- e) promoting sin and rebellion on a global level, in particular through enlarging the scale of abortion, pornography, promiscuity, gender confusion and family breakdown
- f) promoting and spreading sickness and disease worldwide
- g) influencing and perverting the thinking and decisions of national governments and international organisations such as the EU, NATO, UN, World Bank, IMF, WEF, WHO etc.
- h) delaying the return of Jesus Christ to the Earth

The mid-level tactical objectives of demons

These are Satan's mid level aims and objectives. Here he wants to influence:

- a) institutions
- b) church denominations
- c) large companies
- d) corporations
- e) councils
- f) hospitals
- g) schools and universities
- h) police forces
- i) government departments and
- j) media organisations
- k) pop stars and celebrities
- l) Hollywood and the film industry

Here Satan's junior ministers and what we might call his 'majors', 'captains' and 'lieutenants' will be given responsibility for each of these objectives, i.e. mid ranking 'officers'. Their orders are to get each

of these organisations to do Satan's bidding in a coordinated manner and promote his overall agenda, whether these organisations realise it or not.

If we consider both the high strategic and mid level tactical objectives combined for a moment, we might ask how these senior demons go about it. How do they plan, organise and coordinate things, including trends and patterns that occur simultaneously all over the world.

Your common sense tells you it can't all be happening by coincidence, not when hundreds, or even thousands, of institutions and organisations develop the same perverted, evil, corrupt policies all at the same time, often using the exact same words on the same day.

It is plain that there is a 'choreographer', or rather a team of them, making it all happen, just as a large team of officers planned the Normandy invasion with very intricate timings and dovetailed tasks, functions and objectives all fitting seamlessly together, including coordinating the logistics of over 5,000 ships, 11,500 aircraft, and over 150,000 soldiers and paratroopers on day 1 alone. You know perfectly well they didn't all turn up in Normandy on the same day by accident.

That is exactly how it is with worldwide trends, policies and lies pushed by groups like the World Economic Forum (the "WEF"), a very evil group of satanists and globalists, including psychopathic criminals like Bill Gates, Dr Anthony Fauci, George Soros, Barak Obama, Klaus Schwab, etc. They meet annually at places like Davos to plan and scheme at a human level but it is plain that they themselves are being guided by very senior demons.

Then they bring in worldwide policies such as the Covid hoax, the global warming hoax, the obsession with race, gender confusion, homosexuality, the restriction of free speech, and so on. All those things, and many more, are even harder to plan and coordinate than D Day was. Yet, they are achieving every part of it with astonishing efficiency.

Ground-level objectives of demons in the lives of individuals, families and local churches

This is the main area we will focus upon, both in this chapter and those that follow, because it is the most relevant battle from most people's perspective. It is also the one we can do most about, at least if we are ordinary people. Here we are looking at what Satan does to deploy ordinary individual demons whom we might view as privates, corporals and sergeants to deal personally with ordinary people like you, me and everybody else we know.

It is rather like 'man marking' in football, i.e. where the opposing manager tells one of his players to 'mark' you and to obstruct you constantly to prevent you playing well in that game. Likewise, the demon assigned to you, or perhaps demons plural, are told to obstruct you and prevent you achieving anything for God. They will also seek to bring about various problems for you and to carry out attacks upon you of the kind listed below and discussed in more detail in the chapters which follow.

You may find the list is much longer than you expected and contains many issues, problems and obstacles you never imagined had anything to do with demons. Even those people who do believe in demons are probably only aware that they tempt us to sin. It never occurs to them that demons are involved in a host of other things as well and undermine us in so many miscellaneous ways.

A brief summary of the different types of personal attacks demons will make on you, so you can see the overall picture

In the chapters that follow we will look at several different types of personal attacks that will be made against you and how we can best approach each of these attacks. We could summarise them briefly as follows, in no particular order:

- a) to deceive you
- b) to influence and misdirect your thinking
- c) to discourage you
- d) to frighten you
- e) to oppress you
- f) to demoralise you
- g) to create division, misunderstanding and conflict between you and others
- h) to get you not to trust honest people whom you should trust
- i) to get you to trust dishonest people whom you should not trust
- j) to distract you from doing what you are meant to do and urge you to spend time on what God does not want you to do
- k) to waste your time and slow you down
- l) to tempt you to sin
- m) to make you ill and even kill you
- n) to get you to be inactive and not to obey God's commands
- o) to stop you sharing the Gospel
- p) to stop you bearing fruit in your life
- q) to accuse you and make you feel guilty and unforgiven
- r) alternatively, to get you to excuse your sin and to feel complacent or self-righteous
- s) to create needless tasks and distractions to waste your time and exhaust you
- t) to rob you of sleep
- u) to undermine your hope
- v) to get other human beings to oppose you (by getting their demons to cooperate)
- w) to prevent you using the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- x) or to get you to use counterfeit gifts which are actually demonic
- y) to prevent you studying the Bible
- z) to prevent you maturing as a disciple

That's a long list, but it isn't anywhere near complete. The range of attacks is endless and their flexibility and inventiveness mean they will look for any openings or weak points they can find in your

“armour”. Or they will seek to catch you at times when you aren’t “wearing” it in the sense that some aspect of your character is not as it should be in that you are not being truthful, righteous, hopeful and so on.

If so, they will take any opportunity they can to trip you up and will do whatever they can get away with, without any mercy or restraint, other than the boundaries which God imposes upon them. However, we must realise that each part of our ‘armour’ only works in the particular way intended for it and does not protect us from all the other dangers.

For example, if you were to use what the Bible calls the ‘*helmet of salvation*’, which is hope, imagining that it will protect you from being *tempted to sin* it wouldn’t work. Hope is the defensive armour which protects our minds from *discouragement and despair*. It’s not designed to protect you from all the other attacks, such as temptation to sin.

Therefore, for each potential attack we must defend ourselves in the right way, keeping all the armour in place at all times, i.e. all the character traits, so we always have the correct armour for any attack we might face. That is to say each specific character trait protects you from particular things but not from all things. That is why you need all the armour, or rather all the required character traits, at all times. See chapter 11 below for a fuller discussion of the Ephesians 6 “armour”.

The long list of things above is what Satan wants to be done in the lives of individual Christians but also individual unbelievers, to prevent them from becoming believers. The same applies to small scale organisations, such as a local church, a local school, doctors surgery, police station or workplace etc.

Such things or places which are at ground level, i.e. on a small scale, are what Satan entrusts to individual demons at a junior level, i.e. “privates, corporals or sergeants” not middle or high ranking officers. The point is that none of these people or churches have any strategic or even tactical level significance. Their influence is only local and small scale. Therefore, a lesser demon is allocated to deal with such people or groups.

For most genuine, saved Christians the usual issue is not *casting out* demons, but *resisting* them. However, even to resist them we need to know what demons do in our lives and how they go about it. If we don’t know these things then it’s very difficult to resist them. Too many of us have a wrong understanding, which has often come from misguided things we have heard people say or from watching horror films like ‘*The Exorcist*.’

Demons are then seen as only being relevant in the lives of deranged people who do bizarre things. The reality is much more ordinary, so much so, that many people assume their low level, ordinary problems have nothing to do with demons. In fact, the main activities of demons in our lives are quite mundane and unspectacular, i.e. to discourage, frighten, deceive, demoralise, distract, and accuse us etc.

They rarely do anything openly supernatural, at least in the West. They focus instead on the routine day to day ways of obstructing and harassing us, as set out above. We shall now start to consider what demons are seeking to do to us and why. Then, we shall turn our attention to what we can do about it.

The main activities and tactics of demons in our lives:

The demon or demons that have been allocated to you have got a job to do and higher ranking supervisors to report back to. Likewise, their supervisors are accountable to yet higher ones, all the way up to the top, as in any organization. Their aim is to destroy you, but if that can't be achieved, then at least to render you useless in God's service.

They want to stop you being effective or achieving anything for God and they will do whatever works best, given your character and personality, to undermine and obstruct you. We are all different and so they will use slightly different methods with each of us, or at least emphasise different things.

Nevertheless, there is a large amount of pattern and duplication. They use very similar methods most of the time with each of us. They also use the same tricks over and over again because they know it works, and also because they know most of us never learn from past experience. That's because most of us aren't even attempting to learn, as we see no need to learn, and also because most of us refuse to take advice and even recoil from it.

Indeed, most of us don't take demons seriously at all, even if we notionally believe in them in theory. Thus, even when their techniques are plain, we still don't see them and we don't learn anything from our defeats and errors. Let's change that from now on. Let's wake up and take a radical new approach.

Demons want to influence our minds and to plant ideas in our heads as if they were our own

Demons are interested in every part of us, i.e. our body, mind, emotions, will and spirit, i.e. our new man. They want to influence all of the above. They also want to make use of our old man, i.e. our flesh nature and get him revved up and working for them, as a traitor within our camp to trip us up and lead us astray.

However, if I had to single out one key part of us which the demons particularly want to target, it would be our minds. That is where the main battle is fought between the demon and us. It is a mental battle over who is going to have the greater influence over your thinking, you or the demon.

Demons therefore operate by preventing good, wholesome, biblical thoughts from forming in our minds, or by not letting them remain for long. But they also plant false, sinful, selfish, heretical ideas and thoughts into our minds as if they were our own thoughts:

²During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,

John 13:2 (ESV)

Here we see that the idea of betraying Jesus did not actually come from Judas at all. It was Satan's idea. He planted the thought into Judas' heart and mind and Judas adopted it as if it was his own. Indeed, I expect Judas never realised the idea had not been his own. When we die we will probably be shocked and appalled to find out how many of the thoughts which we assumed to be our own, were actually planted there by a demon.

When a demon speaks to you, it will sound like your own thought, in your own accent and tone of voice, not a voice from outside of you

We find it hard to believe that the things we assume to be our own thoughts actually come from a demon. One reason is they seem so internal. They sound like our own thoughts because what we “hear” mentally in our head will be *in our own tone of voice and accent*. Also, the thoughts will always be *in the first person*, speaking as “I”, not the second person “you”. So, if a demon wants to suggest a sin to you, he won't say “*Why don't you*?”

If he did you'd immediately know the thought came from *someone else* and was not your own, even if you were an unbeliever. You may not necessarily assume it to be a demon. You'd probably just think you were going mad but you would know it was not your own thought and would therefore reject it.

Therefore, the demon is astute enough to adopt the simple policy of always speaking into your mind *as if it was you thinking*. So, if a demon wanted to tempt you to overeat, it would say something like “*Mmmm – those biscuits look nice*”, as if it was something *you would think yourself*. And if it wanted you to steal from your workplace it might whisper into your mind “*They won't notice if I take that*”. The demon would never say “*.... if you take that*.”

Of course, the demon will hardly ever speak in an audible voice that you perceive via your ears. It doesn't speak in that sense. It just plants thoughts and it puts them into your mind, as a thought, from the inside, *not through your ears* which would indicate that it came from outside of you. Otherwise, you would recognise immediately that whoever said that, it wasn't you.

So, if a demon wanted to tempt you to steal a £20 note left on someone's desk it might say “*Nobody saw me come in. I'll take that*”. The thought is then in your mind and you will think it was your own idea. Given that our bodies are accustomed to doing what our minds tell them to do, you could be half way to stealing that £20 note before your conscience catches up and says “*No, I must leave it. That's stealing*”.

Your conscience might be strong enough to withstand that suggestion and win the battle. However, if it was, the demon would already know that and would have suggested something else, about which it knows your conscience is weaker or less well informed. Thus, it might tempt you to gossip instead by saying into your mind “*Who was that woman that X was with yesterday?*”

X might be a colleague, or perhaps someone at church. As that thought is whispered into your mind, you are likely to find yourself shortly afterwards voicing it out loud with your own mouth. You may then say it to someone else before you have the time to stop yourself or to realise it is slanderous gossip, which could do harm to X, especially if there's an innocent explanation.

Have you ever found yourself blurting out some comment which, immediately after you have said it, sounds cruel, harsh, dishonest, exaggerated, sarcastic or suggestive and you aren't even sure why you said it? You may well have voiced a planted demonic thought. The examples I have given above may not resonate with you, but just substitute some other thought instead that is more relevant to your personality.

The demons are inventive, creative and flexible. They know your nature and your ways and will plant whatever thoughts or feelings are best calculated to trip you up, harm you or entice you or to get you

intimidated, angry, resentful or whatever else *you* may have a weakness in. It is not “one size fits all” but will be tailored to fit your individual weaknesses and maximise the chances of tripping you up.

The demon will also speak into your feelings via your emotions, not only into your mind with planted thoughts

I mention feelings separately from thoughts because the demon will also seek to influence you via your emotions, not only your mind. That is especially true in the case of women and, in some ways, it is harder to counteract because thoughts can more easily be defined, examined and checked (though they rarely are). But feelings are more vaporous and intangible and are harder to define, examine or disprove.

So, whenever I refer to demons planting ideas in your head, remember that there can also be feelings planted via your emotions, not only thoughts planted via your mind. The demons know all about my “committee analogy” and will attack and undermine you via every part of yourself, not only your mind. So, they will whisper feelings into your emotions as well, if they think that will work better, not only thoughts into your mind. They are flexible and will come at you from every possible angle.

Whispering thoughts into our minds or planting feelings into our emotions are very similar techniques and they each need to be guarded against and dealt with in largely the same ways. So, whenever I speak of a demon planting a thought in your mind, be aware that the point being made is probably equally applicable to them planting a feeling of fear, resentment, suspicion etc into your emotions.

People who struggle with anxiety or dark thoughts, hypochondria, insecurity etc are prime candidates to have their strings pulled in this way by a demon. It might say into your mind (or your emotions) as you’re listening to a news item about some health scare “*I’ll probably get that*” (as we saw, the demon won’t say “you”).

Then you might have a sleepless night fretting about cancer or heart disease etc. while the demon keeps repeating the unsettling thought in your mind (or emotions), just as you were beginning to forget it and drift off to sleep. The same applies with unforgiveness and bitterness.

Have you ever had the experience of having eventually managed to forget some emotional wound that was inflicted on you but then the memory of it comes flooding back and you are reliving it again, and beginning to turn it over and over in your mind in an unhealthy, destructive way? Guess where the thought came from that sparked you off again and got you nursing the grudge that you had managed, with great effort, to stop dwelling on.

You can’t properly understand the problems you face if you don’t believe demons are involved in your life.

Strangely, some Christians will accept that *Satan* himself opposes them, even though he personally has never even heard of 99.9% of us, and will never come into contact with us. But they won’t believe that ordinary *demons* affect them, or affect anybody else either. Possibly they see demons as evoking a greater sense of shame or stigma.

Yet, for the vast majority of us, unless we are Presidents or Prime Ministers, it is actually demons, not Satan personally, we have to contend with, just as British and American troops never came into direct personal contact with Adolf Hitler in World War Two. Yet they did get to meet and fight against his *armies*, or at least some of the more junior individual soldiers within it.

Likewise, Satan rules over billions of demons, of varying levels and ranks. Most of the time he operates through them, and it is they who do the day to day work of opposing us, because Satan himself is not all-powerful, or all-knowing. Above all, he cannot be in more than one place at once.

Therefore, at a moment when Satan was in the White House, pulling the strings of his loyal servants, the corrupt homosexual Muslim, President Obama, or the paedophile fraudster, Joe Biden, he couldn't also be in your house, bothering you. That is impossible, even for Satan.

However, one or more of his demons certainly can be in your home on Satan's behalf, and they regularly are, though not necessarily 24 hours a day, because they do also come and go on other errands and are not necessarily continuously with you. Don't forget, demons also visit the heavenly places, though we have no information as to how often, or for how long, they go there. So, they may not always be with you, just as the demon which affected King Saul would come and go intermittently and was not always with him.

Nevertheless, your denominational traditions, the opinions of your pastor, your own unbelief and your cowardly wish to fit in with the sceptical views of others may cause you to accept the idea that demons cannot affect you. If you make that grave error, the demons will then run rings around you because you will not be taking any steps to watch out for them or to resist them, let alone cast them out. Why would you be if you are convinced they cannot do anything to you, or don't even exist?

How vigilantly would you look out for incoming Luftwaffe aircraft if you didn't believe they had any, or that the Luftwaffe itself even existed? Having said that, many Christians will accept, *theoretically*, that demons exist, and were active at some time in the *past*, and even that they may now affect *other people* who live *elsewhere*. But they won't accept that demons are operating:

- a) now, in this day and age
- b) in their own lives
- c) in the lives of the people they know
- d) in their own town, home, church, workplace, family or marriage

A sceptic may accept that Jesus and the apostles encountered demons and cast them out of people. But they think those demons have all moved away somewhere, or gone into early retirement, or are chained up in a prison, or that God no longer allows them to do anything. Therefore, they assume demons no longer bother anybody, or at least have nothing to do with them personally.

But if that was so, why did the disciples and apostle Paul continue to cast them out, even after Jesus had ascended? More to the point, why would Mark's gospel say in the very last chapter, when Jesus is looking ahead to the future, that *those who believe* will also cast out demons in His name?

Furthermore, if, as some people argue, all demons automatically leave a person at the moment of his conversion, what would be the point in Jesus mentioning casting them out? It would surely be

unnecessary even to speak of it as the problem would already have been solved by the person getting saved. And yet He did say we would cast out demons:

And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons;
Mark 16:17(a) (ESV)

Moreover, that statement clearly related to Jesus' *future* followers, not to the 12 apostles, nor even to the 70 disciples, because they had already been casting out demons, even while Jesus was still on the Earth. Therefore, it cannot be right to say that casting out demons is something only the 12 apostles or the 70 disciples were meant to do, and not something we should do today. That interpretation would make Jesus' words into nonsense.

He was referring to the future, not the (then) present and was saying the casting out of demons would be done by "*those who believe*". That group is obviously far bigger and wider than just His existing followers in AD 30. And there is absolutely nothing in the statement to suggest it is time limited in any way, such that it would only apply until the apostles died, or the end of the first century or any other arbitrary cut off date.

Remember, the people of the "first century" didn't think of themselves as being in the first century. They simply thought of themselves as being in the present day, just as we do. The dating system we use now didn't even start until after the fourth century when the false Catholic church began. So, the obsession people have with things ending at the end of the "first century" is totally misconceived.

You must get your beliefs about demons from the Bible, not from the world, or public opinion, or even from what your church teaches.

If demons have all ceased to exist, or gone away, or are no longer active, why would Jesus say His future followers will cast them out? What need would there be to do so at all in the future if the demons aren't there, or don't do anything? If Jesus knew demons were all going to cease their activities as soon as the first century ended, He would surely have said so and He would have told us to do something else instead of casting them out.

Thus, He obviously did not share the view held by most Christians, and most leaders, in today's churches. Therefore, I challenge people to face this issue head on and be honest with themselves as to *why* they are complacent about, or even oblivious to, the activities of demons. In particular they need to be challenged to prove, *from the Bible*, why they think resisting demonic activity and also the need for deliverance have ended as an issue for us.

They then need to cross-examine themselves rigorously as to *where* they are getting their beliefs from because it certainly isn't the Bible. Their sceptical approach mainly comes from absorbing the opinions and the unbelief of the people around them in churches, in particular from leaders whose theology has no place for demons. It certainly doesn't come from believing God's Word, taking it seriously, and at face value, and acting on it.

Part of the reason for the unbelief is that most of the activities of demons are not spectacular and do not involve dramatic or remarkable things, at least in the West. If they did come out into the open and show themselves or if they were to do obviously supernatural things which make their presence

unmistakable then far more of us would believe in them. But it does not suit their purposes, at least in the western world, for us to believe in them.

They want us to dismiss them as fairy tales and take no steps to resist them. They choose to hide themselves, to operate covertly, and to focus on quietly whispering thoughts into our minds and feelings into our emotions as if those were our own thoughts and feelings. Therefore, where I live, in the UK, the demons' policy is to promote scepticism and complacency and to undermine any church leader who takes them seriously and teaches the truth about them.

By contrast, in Africa and Asia, where people have been openly worshiping idols for thousands of years, the population have no doubt at all that demons exist, and are active in their lives. They have seen and heard them and have even been physically knocked about by them.

So, in Africa and Asia, the demons' preference is to be open and even visible. It suits them better in that context to make their presence felt, to create fear, and also to promote the occult, voodoo and witchcraft rather than encouraging complacency or unbelief.

Some of the main activities of demons in all of our lives, including your life

On the assumption that most readers live in the West, as I do, let us look briefly in the following chapters at some of the things demons do here. Most of it is so mundane and unremarkable as to be invisible because the demons' aim is *not* to be noticed or believed in.

The demons' main tactics are actually just to whisper into our minds and emotions almost continually to deceive, distract, discourage and demoralise us and also to create conflict and suspicion between us and other people. In addition, they want us to feel insecure, afraid, anxious, inadequate and bogged down. In each of these ways, they are able to keep multitudes of people from ever hearing, believing or responding to the Gospel.

However, with that minority who manage to withstand their influence and who are born again their policy changes. From then on it is to seek, by the same methods, to prevent them growing into mature disciples or being effective in sharing the Gospel with others. This whispering process does not only affect you individually. It also has a knock-on effect on the people you live and work with and it can harm, or even destroy, all kinds of relationships.

However, I would say the demons' main goal in the West is to undermine marriage and the family unit, because those two institutions are the foundation upon which God has chosen to build the whole of society. They do this by promoting ungodly perverted ideas about homosexuality, gender confusion and paedophilia plus radical feminism and hatred of men. These are pushed nationally and internationally to pervert people's minds, corrupt children and destroy the innocence that God wants parents to preserve.

However, they also operate at ground level within individual marriages. I have seen how effective the demons are in wrecking individual relationships, not only within families, but also in churches and workplaces. I have also seen demonic interference in my own marriage as well as with couples I have counselled. I look at that more closely in the chapter on marriage in my Book 5.

Indeed, I often say to couples that every conversation they have is four-way. One demon is whispering into the husband's mind and another demon is whispering into the wife's mind and especially into her emotions. Their aims are to ensure there is no effective communication and to cause the greatest possible misunderstanding, tension, conflict, unforgiveness, resentment and bitterness. They want your marriage to fail and your whole family to become dysfunctional or, if possible, to be destroyed.

How demons interfere with our thoughts and feelings so as to derail conversations and create and multiply conflict and misunderstanding

Even without the involvement of demons, conversation between spouses is already inefficient to begin with. The things we mean to say are not accurately heard, or properly understood, even at the best of times. For that reason it is necessary to work hard at communicating, not only in marriage, but everywhere else too. Things we say get mixed up and a lot of the message is altered or lost in transmission and either not heard at all, or not understood, or remembered wrongly.

So, the circumstances already favour the demons to begin with as they seek to intervene in your conversations. Even when you are alone, after a conversation is over, they continue to interfere with your own thoughts and feelings to create even more confusion as to what people said and meant and cause more offence to be taken. They do it to increase even further the difficulties of communicating. This problem of demonic interference in our conversations isn't easy to overcome. We have a real battle on our hands and we cannot afford to be complacent.

It is harder still to avoid these conflicts and misunderstandings if you don't know, or are not willing to believe, that many of your conversations, are *four-way*, *not two-way*, and that they involve demons seeking to sabotage your relationship with that person. But if you can see that demons are continually influencing your thoughts and feelings, and distorting what you say, feel and hear, and what your spouse says, feels and hears, then both of you will be better placed to resist their tactics and overcome them.

The demons' main weapon is their voice. They need to use you as their 'arms and legs' to do most of their dirty work for them.

The vast majority of us under-state the power demons have and therefore become complacent. A small minority go the other way and over-state it and therefore end up fearing them. In fact, we don't need to be afraid of demons at all, especially once we have woken up and begun to take them seriously and to resist them. Their main weapon is their voice so their aim is to get you to *damage yourself* and to damage others by believing what the demons say and then *acting upon their lies*.

So, this battle is mainly fought within our minds and emotions as the demon seeks to gain control over our thoughts and feelings. We then act upon their 'advice' and carry out their instructions which we wrongly imagine to be our own thoughts. Realising this is going on helps to make clear why apostle Paul tells us to "*take every thought captive*", and to be "*transformed by the renewing of your minds*".

Though our emotions are also a key target for the demons, our minds are the principal 'battlefield' where the warfare takes place. Therefore, it is over our thoughts that most of the battles are fought. That is such an obvious thing to say, but the vast majority of Christians still don't know it or act upon

it. We must therefore learn to examine our thoughts to see where they really come from and whether they are even our own thoughts at all.

Treat it as if you were a quality control inspector in a factory, examining every thought (and feeling), one by one, to consider whether it is true, where it came from and whether it can be relied upon. I expect you will need to attach a “Reject” sticker to at least 50% of them.

Then we must *impose* right thoughts on ourselves instead of accepting the demons’ whispers as if they were our own thoughts. If we do this, our lives will be transformed and we will start to win rather than lose. So, it is largely a mental battle and it must be seen as such, and fought as such, until your mind has been transformed to such an extent that the following things have become true of you:

- a) You have absorbed a large amount of the Bible and made God’s thoughts into your thoughts – but please note this is going to take a lot of work and discipline and it won’t happen overnight.
- b) You can therefore tell whether the thoughts in your head are in line with the Bible.
- c) If they aren’t, you can tell they must have come either from worldly people or your sinful flesh nature or, more likely, from a demon.
- d) You reject the ungodly thought and replace it with a biblical, wholesome thought instead. That is how thoughts are ‘taken captive’.

As you become more effective at examining your thoughts, recognising where they come from, and replacing lies with truth, you will seriously frustrate the demons’ purposes. If you don’t fall for their tricks and if you refuse to do as they suggest they are powerless because they have no physical bodies of their own. That is why they need to use your body and your voice to do their dirty work for them. If you refuse to be used in this way they become largely powerless.

The demons also seek to influence your emotions, not only your mind, especially if you are a woman.

I have focused primarily on our mind as the key battlefield where our war with the demons is fought. I believe that is a fair and accurate assessment, which is why it is so important to define, examine and check all our thoughts to see whether they really are ours, or are from a demon.

But the same is almost as important in relation to your emotions and feelings, especially for women. Therefore, those too need to be defined, examined and checked to see whether they are reasonable and justified or whether a demon has planted a false feeling into our emotions, in the same way as they plant false thoughts into our minds.

Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between thoughts and feelings. Nevertheless, it can be done, though you may have to work a little to figure out whether something you believe is a thought or a feeling. Do your best and, if in doubt, treat it as a thought. Then act in the same manner by defining it in clear words rather than allowing it to remain vague and nebulous.

Ideally, write it down on paper and then examine it carefully to see whether, under logical scrutiny in the cold light of day, that feeling (or thought) is true or false, warranted or unwarranted, fair or unfair, proportionate or disproportionate, biblical or unbiblical.

As I say, men will mainly be targeted in their minds because God has designed men to live primarily, but not exclusively, in and through their minds, not their emotions. With women it is the reverse so they operate more, but not exclusively, via their emotions. That is why a woman's emotions are so much closer to the surface and they cry easily or get visibly upset in situations where most men will remain silent, thoughtful and stoical.

The 'software' that God has installed into each of the genders is valid and both types of software are needed. (There are only two genders, by the way, not 57.) God made no mistakes at His factory when He was making women, or men, and He wants them to be exactly as He designed them.

I actually feel that a married couple, if they are godly, mature and biblical, have the best of all worlds because they have access to both of these very different modes of thinking and feeling. They are far better equipped, if they work together, fully using each of their respective strengths, rather than fighting each other. Then they are in a much better position to weigh up and assess any person, proposition or situation and decide whether it/they are valid, genuine and trustworthy.

I speak of such mature married couples who value the differences between them, pool their different aptitudes, and willingly cooperate, as being "*a full deck of cards*". They are much less likely to be deceived, exploited or abused by other people than they would be if they used only the man's mind or only the woman's feelings.

Each spouse, operating alone, is vulnerable to being deceived. But working together, in close cooperation, with each spouse respecting and highly valuing the other's input, they are far less likely to be deceived and more likely to make good decisions.

One standard problem which arises in marriage is that women will often speak of a problem or situation with the sole objective of "venting" or expressing *how they feel about it*. They are not seeking for a solution, or at least not yet, but just want to be heard, understood, sympathised with and comforted, without any mention of finding a "solution".

But most men don't know this and will jump straight in, seeking to find a solution, and not addressing the woman's need to be heard, sympathised with and comforted. Ironically, in doing that, the man is acting precisely in accordance with the way God designed him by using his mind constructively to find a practical, workable solution.

Moreover, he will actually do this as an expression of love, and care, seeking to help, because he has no idea that women are made so differently and that they don't want a solution, or at least not yet, not until they are satisfied that their feelings have been given the attention they need. So, he is doing the right thing, but at the wrong time, i.e. prematurely, before he has given his wife what she is looking for.

Many a woman has concluded therefore that her husband "*doesn't care about me*" or is "*so insensitive*". Some have been known to say "*All he cares about is fixing the problem, he doesn't care about me*". The husband will respond to this with bewilderment and incomprehension, having no idea what he did wrong or why trying to find a solution is such an "*unloving*" thing to do.

At the same time the wife will be angry, considering it obvious that what she needed was sympathy and comfort and she will blame the husband for not knowing that, even though she has never told him. In short, she misjudges the situation because she doesn't know that God designed men so very differently.

Yet, at the same time, she is angry because her husband doesn't understand women, which of course he probably doesn't. She is then likely to conclude (with the help of a whispering demon) *"If he loved me he would know what I need, without needing to be told, so he obviously doesn't love me."*

That very foolish and untrue conclusion is arrived at partly because of the way women think, or rather feel, and partly due to the demon whispering into her emotions and her mind to whip up more anger, resentment and bitterness – all over a problem which doesn't even exist.

At the same time, the husband's demon will whisper into his mind, and perhaps sometimes his emotions too, to say his wife is being *"ridiculous, unfair and hysterical"*. Of course, he wouldn't think that if he properly understood how God designed women. He would then realise that all she actually needs is for him to go to her, hold her in his arms, comfort her and show empathy and concern – with no mention of solutions or what action to take.

My wife and I figured all this out many years ago but, until then, when our IQs were much lower, we had some quite unnecessary fireworks and all because:

- a) neither of us realised that men and women think and feel very differently
- b) neither of us realised that demons were also getting involved whispering into both our minds and emotions to stir things up and get both of us more exasperated and revved up than we already were.

Nowadays, since my IQ has substantially increased, and is well into double figures, I try to take care to hold back on offering any solution or suggested action until I have given my wife a full opportunity to vent and give her the emotional support she needs. That has to come first and every husband needs to learn that.

I even make a joke of it sometimes and say *"I'm not going to be so unloving as to try to find a solution to help fix your problem – only a very unloving person would do that"* And my wife now smiles because her IQ has also risen, not just mine.

Demons are flexible and will therefore do whatever is most likely to deceive, undermine or tempt you, or those around you.

You might assume the main work of demons is done at a high level, seeking dramatic results by causing people to become murderers and terrorists. There are of course demons who will seek to do things like that, if the person they are working on is a likely candidate. But demons are realistic and are well aware most of us aren't going to be receptive to such things.

Therefore, they will seek to damage, deceive, discourage and distract each of us in whatever is the most opportune way of exploiting our own personal areas of weakness. We are all different and the demons know exactly how far to push each of us and what tricks we are most likely to fall for. Thus no demon has ever tried to tempt me into taking drugs or robbing banks.

Yet they have tried to undermine and discourage me in all sorts of other ways, especially in my marriage, family, work and ministry. Even at a very basic level, they want to hinder me by creating obstructions, delays, and other problems, often in the pettiest of ways. There is nothing too small or too trivial for them to get involved in, if it will slow you down, or tire you, or waste some of your time.

However, of all those things, their attack on marriage is probably the most strategic. That is why they focus on it so much. They have been immensely successful in attacking marriage, as is evidenced by the explosion of divorce since the 1960s. The collapse of marriage in the West has done incalculable harm to families and also to the nation but, above all, to the work of spreading the Gospel.

The apostles, and even the angel Gabriel, were demonically resisted. Therefore, why should you imagine you won't be?

Have you noticed how often the disciples were unable to understand what Jesus was saying, or how they were plagued by unbelief or fear? This was not entirely due to their own flesh, or the influence of the world, and it was certainly not due to them being stupid. They were all very capable men, even though they were working class.

At least in part, I believe their problems were due to demonic interference as demons will particularly target anyone who is effective in God's service or who wants to be effective. So, it was entirely to be expected that they would focus on undermining the apostles. They will focus on you too if your intention is to become a committed disciple and to do God's will.

But demons don't only operate by speaking to us. They can also take physical action when they want to, and if God allows it. For example, when the apostles were on Lake Galilee and a sudden storm blew up and seemed to be about to sink their boat it seems most likely that it was supernatural and was caused either by Satan himself or his demons.

In the same way, we know that the storm which destroyed Job's home, killing all who were inside, was directly caused by Satan. That incident alone shows what great power he has, when he is allowed to use it, and not only him personally. The demons who serve Satan also have great power, as we see with the actions of the '*prince of the Kingdom of Persia*'. He was not a human being but a powerful and senior demon, who was able to withstand the mighty angel Gabriel for 21 days:

¹² Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. ¹³ The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, ¹⁴ and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come."

Daniel 10:12-14 (ESV)

Not only with the apostles, but also with other great men, and even the angel Gabriel, God has plainly allowed Satan and also his demons to resist, delay, distract and discourage His servants. There is no getting away from the fact. Therefore, what conceivable basis could any of us have for assuming we would be immune to all of this and demons would not be allowed to affect us? You won't find any support for that notion in the Bible. The idea is widely believed but it is purely man-made and false.

How to tell whether it is your flesh or a demon which is tempting you to sin.

When a person is being tempted to sin the flesh and a demon operate in different ways, albeit that both are drawing you towards sin. The way the flesh operates is not in terms of a voice or a thought in your

mind suggesting that you sin or persuading you to do so. That is what a demon does, though of course, the “voice” you hear in your head will sound like your own voice, so you think it is you.

However, the way the flesh draws you towards sin is very different. It is not usually through any voice or words but rather through *cravings, urges, impulses and longings*. The flesh is what predisposes you towards sin in the first place, giving you the desire to sin, for example the desire to look lustfully at a woman or to gamble or smoke or become aggressive or engage in ‘road rage’ and so on.

All of those urges can be felt and can influence you *without any words ever being spoken*. They operate at an animal level and aren’t usually articulated in words. Therefore, if thoughts are arising in your mind that take the form of words, and if those verbally expressed thoughts are urging you to sin then what you are hearing is a demon speaking to you.

It won’t be your flesh because your flesh doesn’t generally “speak”. It feels and wants and desires and lusts and craves but it doesn’t often use words. Therefore, thoughts which take the form of words and are set out in sentences are probably coming either from your own mind or from a demon.

But if those thoughts are along the lines of seeking to induce you to sin then it probably isn’t your own mind doing it. It is far more likely to be the demon. Of course, that would be made obvious if the demon spoke in another voice, which sounds different from yours or if it spoke audibly so you heard it via your ears, not in your mind. But it won’t do that because its goal is to deceive you and that is best achieved by making you think these are your own thoughts.

Become aware of what the demons want you to think, feel, say and do. Then do the direct opposite.

It is essential to set about learning about demons’ aims, methods and tricks, so as to recognise how they are influencing you. You will get better at this as your knowledge increases and as you anticipate more accurately what they want in any given situation. Then you can try to make sure they don’t get it. For example, you may find in a crisis that your confidence and hope are reducing. Even as this is happening, it is possible for you to “*take every thought captive*” and say to yourself:

“In this situation, the demons’ aim is to get me to lose hope, become discouraged and give up. That being so, I will instead force myself to do the opposite. I will encourage myself and fill my own mind with hope. Then I will press ahead, absolutely determined to deny them what they seek, and not to let them influence my thoughts.”

The same applies where the demons want you to be afraid, to sin, to fall out with someone, or to have a row with your wife. In any such situation, a wise person will stop and remind himself of what the demons want and of how he is being led along by them. He will then resolve, even in the middle of a heated argument, *not to take the bait* and to do the opposite of whatever the demons want.

Even the wisest of people won’t always achieve this but they still try or at least they know they ought to be trying. Moreover, they do have their victories at least from time to time and, in the end, they begin to win regularly. So, reflect on what specific things the demons might be trying to do in your life and be vigilant to avoid letting them achieve any of their goals.

Everything the demons try to get you to think or believe can be resisted and overcome by ‘proclaiming’ ‘confessing’, or ‘declaring’ relevant parts of God’s Word.

As we have seen, proclamation means we declare, announce or ‘confess’ parts of God’s Word out loud with boldness, defiance and even aggression. To ‘confess’ means to “*say the same as*” what God says on any given topic. One reason why we need to do that is in order to cause our own speech, thoughts and beliefs to come into line with what God’s Word says. So, in part this is a defensive procedure to prevent ourselves being deceived and also to ‘undeceive’ ourselves where we have already believed and absorbed lies.

Much of the time, especially when we listen to demonic whispering, we end up thinking, believing and saying the *very opposite* of what God’s Word says. That is no coincidence. It is because the demons and the worldly people around us have influenced our thinking and trained us not to believe what God says and to accept instead whatever the unsaved world says.

In this way fear and unbelief can eventually become our settled habits or ‘default-settings’. That is why we need to make it our regular practice to counteract the demons’ influence and to re-programme our minds. The best way to do that is by proclaiming relevant portions of God’s Word whenever we face situations which undermine our faith or tempt us to unbelief or to doubt God’s promises or His character.

You could face an illness, even a serious one, and you might begin to doubt whether God will heal you or even whether you will survive. Your own flesh, plus the influence of the unbelieving world, will already draw you towards feeling fear, doubt and unbelief and to express those negative ideas out loud. Therefore, if you don’t actively seek to do the opposite, you are already likely to dwell on those gloomy, morbid thoughts.

That natural tendency will then be further compounded by the demons, who will seek to drag down the level of your hope and your faith even further, preferably to zero. In fact, what they ideally want is to get you to go “below zero”, such that you actually have a *confident expectation of getting ill*, or dying, or of your business collapsing and so on. From their perspective it would be great if they could get you to “*have faith for failure*”.

At such times, regardless of what you might actually think or feel, you could force yourself to proclaim out loud a verse such as this one below *and to keep on proclaiming it*. And when you do so, picture yourself as announcing these things into the heavenly places where the whole angelic and demonic realms are located, together with the Church, and with Jesus presiding. And as we saw above, make your confession/proclamation in the full expectation that Jesus “the High Priest of our confession”, will take it and present it to God the Father.

Say it to them as if you were making an impassioned speech in the House of Commons. What you are proclaiming will have influence there. And even if you don’t at present truly believe what you are proclaiming, as it hasn’t yet become real to you, continued practice and repetition will mean that it will eventually become what you really do believe, not merely what you are trying to believe:

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

And you could proclaim this:

⁸*The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me;.....*
Psalm 138:8(a) (ESV)

You might also proclaim this:

⁷*The angel of the Lord encamps*
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
Psalm 34:7 (ESV)

Or it could be that you are being attacked by the wicked. If so, proclaim this verse:

³*But you, O Lord, are a shield about me,*
my glory, and the lifter of my head.
Psalm 3:3 (ESV)

And also this:

²*The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,*
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
Psalm 18:2 (ESV)

Whether you are facing illness, danger, fear, financial insufficiency or whatever else, your initial aim is always the same. It is to train yourself to *make a right confession* instead of the wrong one you have probably been making up to that point. That means to *say the same as* whatever God says on that particular issue rather than your own opinion which you have previously espoused.

Therefore, when we confess our sins, we are just saying the same about our sins as God says about our sins and seeing them as He sees them. But confession covers far more subjects than just sin. We can equally ‘confess’ any part of God’s Word, and *say the same as He says on any issue*, not just our sin.

If we keep doing this then we are influencing our circumstances by what we are proclaiming into the heavenly places, which Jesus will then present to God the Father on our behalf. However, we are also gradually retraining our minds to come into line with what God’s Word says on all sorts of topics, such as God’s faithfulness, or His provision for us, or whether He can be trusted. Or it could be about assurance of salvation or whether He loves us, or has a plan for our lives.

The list is endless and on all these issues we need to believe and say *the same as God says about it*, not the lies the demons have told us or the junk we have picked up from other people. If we persist we will reach a stage where we not only say it but genuinely believe it and act upon it. It will eventually also become a habit.

We must therefore persist until we have reprogrammed ourselves with God’s Word in place of the negative, anxious, sceptical thoughts we previously had. That reprogramming process is a vital part of “*renewing our minds*”, “*taking every thought captive*” and also of *resisting the Devil* and his demons. In modern terms we might call it installing new software and changing our default settings, as on our computers.

Therefore, for all these reasons, and with all these objectives in mind, we need to make the proclamation of God's Word into a regular part of what we do each day. By so doing we make ourselves far harder for demons (or wicked people) to deceive or influence. Begin to see the proclamation of Scripture as a vital part of your armoury. Indeed, make it central to your whole way of life because it is, essentially, what wielding '*the sword of the Spirit*' is all about.

In cooperation with Jesus, the High Priest of our confession, you are influencing what happens in the heavenly places and the decisions that are made there. But you are also influencing yourself and changing what you believe deep down until you come to truly believe all of God's Word. It also means using God's Word like a knife or a sword to cut through and cancel out the lies that the demons and this sinful world continually pour into your mind.

Their aim is to get you to disbelieve God's Word and to doubt His character. Your job is to remind yourself that this is their aim and then to use proclamation to strengthen the very faith they are trying so hard to undermine. You must also set out to reinforce your trust in His character, so that you come to know for certain that He can be relied on and will never lie to you or let you down. To assist you in learning that God is trustworthy and to convince yourself of the benefits of trusting Him, you might choose to proclaim this passage from Jeremiah:

⁷ ***"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.***

⁸ ***He is like a tree planted by water,
that sends out its roots by the stream,
and does not fear when heat comes,
for its leaves remain green,
and is not anxious in the year of drought,
for it does not cease to bear fruit."***

Jeremiah 17:7-8 (RSV)

Let me add my own little character reference for God. I have known Him now for 43 years and, although He has allowed me to face some very difficult times and has let wicked people steal from me, lie about me and cause me a lot of grief, *He has always been with me* during every difficult time of my life, even when two crooks stole my business from me. (see below)

So, although my life hasn't been easy all the time and God has let me suffer many things, He Himself has *never been to blame for any of that* – not even once. I can assure you He is 100% trustworthy and has never ever mistreated me, forsaken me or let me down. All the problems I have got into in my life were either my own fault, or someone else's, but never His.

The very same is true in your life. The only question is whether you know it and are *convinced of it*. And if you aren't yet convinced of all that, such that you know it at the level of an *immovable, unshakeable fact*, then you need to take the necessary steps to ensure that you become convinced. If you are like most people then, at difficult times, you will be tempted to believe that God doesn't care about you, or has forgotten you, or is treating you unfairly.

I promise you He has never done any of those things and He never will. But don't take my word for that. Take His word for it by selecting several of the numerous promises, statements and assurances He makes and reciting them out loud until you know them and believe them.

All God's promises are true, but they need to become *true to you*, such that they *feel true*, and proclamation is one of the best ways to make that happen, so they cease to be just words on a page and become embedded in your mind, as if carved on stone.

In that way the *strongholds* or fortresses of lies, doubt, fear, distrust, unbelief and error the demons are seeking to build in your mind can be gradually torn down. In their place you can then build the right kind of strongholds of truth, faith, trust, hope and confidence.

Those are what God intends all of us to have, all the time, whatever may be happening. Apostle Paul refers to this process of destroying demonic strongholds and we need to take it seriously and put it into practice until the ungodly strongholds in our hearts and minds have been torn down:

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 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 10:3-5 (ESV)

Proclamation can also be used offensively in attack, to announce your faith and intentions to the heavenly places, as if making a bold, aggressive speech in the House of Commons

As we have seen, proclamation can be used to retrain your own mind and to 'undeceive' yourself by removing the entrenched lies which are so deeply embedded in your mind. It can also be used defensively to protect yourself from such lies and from various other demonic attacks upon you, including sickness and death. All of that is valid and vital. However, there are other ways in which we can use proclamation, in a bold, warlike aggressive manner to take the fight to the enemy and to defeat them.

This kind of proclamation will become very relevant when we get to my Book 9 concerning the ministry of deliverance. We will then start to look at how we can forgive others, renounce the occult and false religion, break curses over our lives and revoke the "tenancy agreements", as I put it, which we have granted to demons. We grant these "tenancy agreements" through our sins or our unforgiveness towards others or by our involvement in the occult, thereby entitling them to live and operate inside us.

There are numerous ways in which we can speak, whether it be to ourselves or to God, or to others or to enemies, or to a large audience and so on. In each of those situations you will agree we speak differently and adopt a different tone and mode of speech. So, the way we speak to our Dad over a cup of tea obviously differs from the way we might address a business committee or a public meeting.

Likewise, the way we speak to God the Father to tell Him we are sorry for a particular sin and that we repent of it is different from how we would speak to the heavenly places to announce that we are renouncing our past involvement in the occult and are cancelling every curse which that involvement brought upon us.

Therefore, in my Book 9, I will refer to different types, modes and tones of speech we need to engage in at different times and for different purposes. It could be supplicatory prayer where we ask God for things, or it could be praise or worship, or thanksgiving. Or it could be confession of our sins whereby

we bare our souls to God, tell Him what we have done, express our sorrow for it, promise to turn away from it, and seek His forgiveness.

Then there is proclamation where we get ourselves into the mindset to address the heavenly places, as if speaking to a packed House of Commons, and announce something for which we have faith or to refer to a stronghold which we seek to tear down. Or it could be to announce to all those who are listening that we hereby revoke, renounce, break or cancel whatever oath, idolatry, occult practice or false religion we have participated in.

As we go along, and especially in Book 9, I shall try to keep reminding us at each point what ‘mode of speech’ we need to be in, depending on whether we are asking for God’s help, or announcing our forgiveness of person A or revoking a wicked oath we made when we joined the Freemasons or renouncing our baptism into the Mormon ‘church’ or breaking a curse spoken over us by a parent, teacher or pastor or even a self imposed curse we spoke over ourselves.

But just be aware, and seek continually to remind yourself, that each of these scenarios require you to speak in a different way, with a different purpose and in a different tone. I have seen many times that people get confused and bewildered as they switch from one mode of speech to another.

They can get so muddled up they start giving commands to God or alternatively asking Him to do things which it is their own duty to do, such as renouncing their membership of a cult or their involvement in a séance, and so forth. *Those are not things for God to do but for us to do ourselves* though we can, of course, pray to Him beforehand (in supplication mode) to ask *for His help when we do it*.

Nevertheless, even though God is willing to help you to proclaim, He still wants the proclamation to *be made by you* and to come from you, *accompanied by your faith, not His*. It is perhaps a little like a job interview or asking your boss for a pay rise. Your Dad would be very willing to *advise you on how to do that*, what to say, and how to say it.

However, your Dad will not be willing to do the job interview *for you* or to ask for the pay rise on your behalf. Indeed, the people you are meant to be speaking to would not be impressed if you were to ask your Dad to speak for you. Therefore, my advice before you do any of these things is to pause for a moment and ask (or remind) yourself:

- a) what am I seeking to do here?
- b) to whom am I speaking?

So, you might be speaking to God, but you still need to ask yourself *why* you are speaking to Him and *what* you are seeking to do because, even in addressing Him, there are many different *ways* in which we can speak and tones which we might adopt. For example, we could be engaging in praise, worship, confession of sin, asking for help, reminding Him of His promises, or being a “watchman on the walls of Jerusalem” as we pray for His people the Jews and ally ourselves to them in prayer.

And there are many other ways too. So, to speak appropriately and not become hopelessly confused, we need to keep in mind at all times *to whom are we speaking, what are we doing and why*. Perhaps the things that confuse people the most are the various situations in which we are *not praying to God*, or indeed are *not praying at all*, because we are instead speaking to, or making announcements to, or even giving commands to, *the heavenly places*.

When we speak in those more combative ways and *are addressing the heavenly places, not God*, we adopt a very different tone of voice and become bold, assertive and even warlike. Of course, all of those things are utterly inappropriate when we are addressing God, to whom we would never give commands and who must always be addressed with reverence. But those things, and those tones of voice are absolutely right and proper when we are making a proclamation to the heavenly places.

It may take some time and practice for you to come to terms with those alternative modes of speech and tones of voice which are appropriate and even essential in one context but unthinkable in another. I have noticed that most people only know how to pray in ‘supplication mode’, i.e. where we ask God for things, which is perfectly valid in its right setting. However, many of them don’t know how to speak in any other mode.

So, as I discuss in my Book 9, when I ask people to start to go through their list of individuals to forgive, then instead of saying “*I hereby forgive person A for XYZ*”, they often start saying “*Lord, please help me to forgive person A for XYZ*”. Or they might get even more confused and ask God *to do it all for them* instead of doing it themselves, by praying “*Lord, please forgive person A for XYZ*”.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with starting by asking God for *help* in forgiving person A. It is just that that isn’t what is meant by you actually forgiving person A. It is something for *you to do*, not for God to do. He has either already done it if A is saved, or He never will do it if A never becomes a Christian. So, the declaration of forgiving someone is for *you to do* and for *you to say*, not something for God to say or do. And in saying it, you are making an *announcement, not a request*.

Do you see that? Grasping this point about what mode of speech you are in at any given moment changes everything. It enables you to really start to engage in all of this, rather than to flounder about in a bewildered state, not even knowing to whom you are talking, or why, or who is meant to be doing what’s needed, i.e. is it God, or yourself, or someone else?

An example of how I used proclamation in a warlike manner in a crisis situation

Please refer to my earlier books for various examples of proclamation when used in a particularly assertive, warlike mode. Such examples help to illustrate the point better than any amount of definitions and explanations. Let me give just two brief examples here, although I explain this more fully elsewhere.

The first example is when a close relative’s husband was at death’s door after an operation had gone badly wrong. It was about 3:00 am in the morning and the whole extended family was gathered around in a hospital waiting room while an emergency operation was being done to put right the previous unsuccessful operation which had gone horribly wrong.

At about 3:00 am, the surgeon came in to say the second operation was over and that X was “very poorly”, that everything was very precarious, that the next few hours were critical, and that we needed to prepare ourselves for bad news. I was not the only believer present, but none of the other believers, who were more distant relatives of X, had the faith or knowledge to handle this crisis. In addition, there were his whole immediate family all of whom were unsaved, as indeed was he.

I therefore felt very alarmed as I knew he could die in the next few hours, as an unsaved man, and go into a lost eternity as an unbeliever to face Hell and then the Lake of Fire. That thought filled me with

dread but also a holy anger because I felt sure the demons were involved in this and were seeking to take his life and indeed that they probably sabotaged the first operation which went so badly wrong.

His whole immediate family was despondent, shell shocked and clueless. None of them had any idea what to say or do and they had no hope in them whatsoever as they were utterly blind to all spiritual reality. And the three other believers who were present simply didn't have the maturity to know what to do. So, I was effectively alone, to all intents and purposes. But I felt a boldness rise up in me and a refusal to accept what the demons plainly had in store for X.

Therefore, I stood up, in a room full of people all but three of whom were unsaved and completely "unchurched" as well, knowing nothing at all about the Bible. I knew they all needed someone to take the lead and that it had to be me as nobody else could do it. I also knew that none of the unsaved family members would understand any of what I was doing and might well be offended. But I went ahead anyway, as I knew it was both vital and urgent and that there was no alternative as X's life was at stake.

I then got out my Bible and proclaimed out loud a number of passages about healing, about God's help in times of crisis, about His faithfulness and so forth. As I did this, I spoke it out *aggressively*, not plaintively or in an attitude of supplication. *I was not speaking to God*, or at least not after my initial supplicatory prayers. I was primarily speaking *to the heavenly places* and **announcing what I had faith for**.

I very assertively spoke life, health and blessing over X and commanded the demons to leave him alone and proclaimed that I had faith for X to survive and to be restored to us. It was a good impression of an impassioned speech to the House of Commons from a fiery back bencher. Anyway, it worked. An hour or so afterwards, the doctor returned and we were told that X was showing positive signs. He later recovered consciousness and was eventually able to leave hospital albeit that was not for some months.

My firm belief is I fought and won a battle for X's life that night and I fought it using the power of proclamation so as to achieve a change of policy in the heavenly places where matters such as this, including questions of whether a person lives or dies, are decided. I believe it was the demons' intention to end his life that night but I stood in their way and foiled their plans by the power of my proclamation which I believe Jesus heard and took to God the Father on my behalf as He could see that I had faith.

I believe I was also helped by being given the "gift of faith" which is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit apostle Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians. So, my proclamation that night was "turbo charged" in that sense and given added power. But the basic fact remains that the battle was fought and won *in the heavenly places*. And, on this occasion, it was done by one person acting alone. That illustrates the power we each have when we see ourselves in our full authority, which I will expand upon in Book 9.

An example of proclamation taking the form of my issuing a command to the heavenly places

The second example of how I have used proclamation is at a more mundane level. It involved a large amount of overpaid tax money which the Inland Revenue were supposed to return to me and which I needed urgently. I had recently set up my new law firm in 1999 and my tax position had changed drastically as I was no longer part of the previous large law firm. Therefore, I was owed a big tax refund and I needed it urgently or my new law firm could have been destroyed by lack of cash.

I rang the Inland Revenue (Internal Revenue) and asked for the refund to be expedited but I was told my file was in a long queue and it would take several weeks before it would even be looked at, let alone actioned. This telephone call took place during the working day and left me feeling very concerned as I simply could not afford to wait weeks for the refund. I needed it desperately.

So, of course, we prayed about it in the sense of supplication and asked God to intervene. But I believe the thing that really unlocked the situation on this occasion was not prayer but proclamation. That very evening, after it had closed, my wife and I went to the office of the Inland Revenue that was handling my case. We then stood on the pavement outside and proclaimed God's Word out loud.

Thankfully it was late, and dark, and nobody was around. I proclaimed Bible verses about God's provision and I did so in faith, believing God would provide for me. But what I also did was to go beyond that and to move into yet another alternative mode of speech whereby I *commanded* the Inland Revenue, in the name of Jesus, to release my money to me. I need to explain this because it is a separate sub category within the wider definition of proclamation.

Ordinarily, when one proclaims God's Word in faith, believing for a particular outcome or development to occur, one is operating at the level of asserting God's Word and speaking it out, aggressively and boldly, to the heavenly places. And I hasten to add that I had already done that, in addition to having already engaged in supplicatory prayer whereby I asked God for His help.

But now, at this point, as I stood on the pavement outside the front door of the Inland Revenue, I moved beyond that into yet another mode of speech. Or you could say I 'changed gear'; and began to issue *my own command* to the Inland Revenue. I spoke it out loud into the heavenly places, and of course I issued the command in Jesus' name. But it was, nevertheless, *my command*, using *my own authority that was vested in me*, arising out of *my status* as:

- a) a disciple of Jesus Christ and thus a member of the body of Christ and part of the Bride of Christ
- b) one who is entitled to wear Jesus' robe of righteousness
- c) an heir of God who has been adopted as a son
- d) one who is seated in the heavenly places alongside Jesus Christ, which means I have the right and authority to speak into that forum
- e) an ambassador of Jesus Christ – but you have to remember what an ambassador is. It means someone who is authorised to speak on behalf of a King and to represent that King when abroad in dealings with another country. Indeed, if that ambassador is accorded 'plenipotentiary' status then he is also authorised to negotiate treaties with the King of another country without needing to report back to obtain instructions or approval first. Therefore, when Paul says we are 'ambassadors' it is not a small or trivial statement. Neither is it poetry or flowery language. It means what it says.

Accordingly, I was operating in the status that the Bible says I have and wielding the powers implied by that status – indeed by all of those different aspects of our status, because our status and the authority that goes with it is multi-faceted and far ranging. Therefore, I stood by that doorway to the Inland Revenue's office and said words to this effect:

“By the power and authority vested in me as a servant and disciple of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and LORD of Lords and Name above all names, and in my capacity as an adopted son and heir and as

*an ambassador of Christ, **I command you**, in Jesus' name to release the money you are holding and return it to me."*

The amazing thing is that the very next day, in the late morning, only 3-4 working hours after the Inland Revenue had re-opened, and only 24 hours after the totally negative phone conversation the previous day, I received a call from the Inland revenue. *They rang me!* They launched straight in and said:

"We have reviewed your file and approved a full tax refund and the sum of £XYZ has just been sent to you."

Now, you might say that was just a pure coincidence. But I don't think so. Only 24 hours earlier they had told me without any shadow of a doubt that they wouldn't even look at my file for "several weeks", let alone action it. But now, only 24 hours later, and only 3-4 hours after their office re-opened, following my proclamations and command, they had not only looked at it but actioned it and paid it! And I had not been back in touch with them at all. Neither had I rung or written to anyone else.

The only things I did were to pray, proclaim and command. And I believe that released the blockage, and all obstructions in the heavenly places were bulldozed out of the way. The Inland Revenue staff must have come into work that morning feeling an inexplicable sense of urgency to deal with my file. I doubt if they had any idea why they felt that or why they were departing from their normal protocols and timetables. But I knew why.

Of course, I am not saying we should always be issuing commands in the heavenly places. This was a very special situation and was both urgent and crucial. I also believe God gave me a specific "gift of faith" to do this, which is one of the spiritual gifts Paul lists in 1 Corinthians. But what I am saying is that we should *sometimes* do this – when it is appropriate. Admittedly, that is not always, but neither is it never.

At any rate, what I have sought to do here is to explain and illustrate some of the different ways in which we can pray and proclaim – and even sometimes issue commands, and the different modes of speech we need to adopt and the different ways in which we need to think, while doing so.

So, please familiarise yourself with the theology of all this and seek to develop the mental agility and flexibility needed if you are to swap from one mode of speech to another when necessary. And please keep all of this in mind when we get to Book 9 and start to look at casting out demons.

Where we don't completely succeed against the demons' schemes, it is still worthwhile to continue to resist them, even if we can only reduce their influence.

No matter how hard you try, or how long you spend on it, I doubt if you will ever completely defeat the demons in your life or entirely withstand their influence. At any rate I have never managed it and I don't know anybody who has. Even the great apostle Paul himself never fully overcame the 'messenger of Satan' that was sent to buffet him. That powerful demon pursued Paul relentlessly throughout his entire ministry causing problems everywhere he went. So, we need to be pragmatic as well as ambitious in our battles against them.

We must, of course, resist them at every point and seek never to give them any opening. At the same time we must also be realistic about how much, or how often, we can succeed against them because

they are experienced and determined opponents. If you expect complete and permanent victories all the time you are going to be disappointed. You might even become so disillusioned as to give up the fight altogether which is exactly what they want you to do.

Even if you did manage to grow so much in maturity that you were able to consistently defeat the demons currently assigned to you that still wouldn't bring the battle to an end. They would simply respond to your string of victories by sending more senior demons to replace the junior ones. As the saying goes, "*New levels – new devils*". In other words, if a disciple begins as a 'private' but, through diligence, is promoted to corporal, sergeant, lieutenant, captain and so on, then new demonic opponents, of corresponding 'rank', will be reassigned to take over from the ones they have outgrown.

Therefore, even if, like Paul, you keep on maturing and reach a very high level, some demon of 'general' rank will be allocated to you. Therefore, however far or high you go, the Devil will never run out of more senior, more powerful demons to oppose you. Satan had a servant, the prince of Persia, who could even withstand the angel Gabriel for 21 days. Therefore, he will have no difficulty in finding plenty of demons who are a match for you, no matter how much you grow.

However, the answer to that is not to stop maturing. Keep growing as much, and as fast, as you can. Just be aware that the resistance to you will also keep on intensifying in response to whatever growth you achieve. But don't view that continual ramping up of the opposition as failure or as a reason to give up. It is actually a sign of your success and should be taken as a compliment. It means the demons see you as someone who is maturing and therefore a threat.

Wise people decide what their thoughts will be, and what they will *allow themselves to think*, rather than letting their thoughts form randomly

Radically changing your beliefs, attitudes, priorities and values will not be achieved overnight. It is a long-term project. Sadly, very few Christians pay any attention to this and many are not even aware they are supposed to. We all need to get rid of many of our thoughts, beliefs and speech patterns. The only question is which of these do we need to change because the particular lies we believe will be different for each of us.

Apostle Paul wants us to get a grip on our own thoughts and *decide* what we will, and will not, let ourselves think as opposed to just letting our thoughts form randomly of their own accord. Unless you monitor and regulate your own thoughts in this way you will end up adopting whatever ideas are suggested to you by the unbelieving world or whatever junk is whispered into your mind by demons.

If so, you will find you are consistently plagued with dark, negative thoughts plus lies, unbelief, fear and various unbiblical ideas. That is a certainty, because the world and all its warped values are pumped at you every day from the people you know and via the media.

As stated earlier, remember that although this applies primarily to our thoughts, which take place in our minds, we also need to have regard to our feelings which take place within our emotions. The demons are just as capable of whispering into your emotions as into your mind.

Therefore, you are under an equal duty to examine all your feelings and decide whether they are valid, where they came from, and whether you can allow yourself to continue to feel that way. So, if you feel anger towards person A, that doesn't automatically mean you are right to do so.

Indeed, you probably aren't. But the point is you need to check and examine and decide whether you can allow yourself to continue to feel that emotion just as much as you need to check and decide whether a particular thought can be allowed to be in your mind.

The demons who accompany all of us from the outside, even if we are extremely mature Christians, are continually seeking to control both our thinking and our feelings. They want to fill us with fear, doubt, unbelief, negativity, inferiority, pessimism, bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, guilt, shame, insecurity and much else besides. Each of these wrong beliefs or unhealthy attitudes can then turn into the *strongholds* referred to in 2 Corinthians 10:4 above.

What are 'strongholds', how are they formed in our minds, and how do demons make use of them?

Perhaps the best way to explain a '*stronghold*' is to think in terms of the demons building *fortresses* inside your mind. They can then defend and maintain those fortresses so as to undermine you and render you ineffective as a disciple. Imagine Warwick Castle which is a typical example of a medieval fortress or stronghold. Even a small group of men defending that would be hard to shift. They could use that castle to maintain control over the surrounding countryside, coming out in raiding parties at unexpected times.

Yet, if they are attacked they can quickly retreat back into it. They can then defend themselves within it for a very long time, even withstanding a sustained siege, by using food stores and water sources from within the castle. That is how a stronghold works and that is the metaphor Paul chose to use. It describes the way in which we ourselves, the world around us, and the demons who harass us, have caused a series of barricades, roadblocks or fortresses to be built up in our minds which keep us bogged down in false, unhealthy beliefs and wrong ways of thinking and feeling.

Yet most of us don't realise any of this is going on and won't accept it even if we are told of it. Let me give one example of a stronghold, although most of us have many of these. An elderly person I once knew had a profound commitment to the negative and was constantly saturated in pessimism, gloom and defeatism. It had become a deeply entrenched habit for her to think in those ways.

Everything that ever happened to her was put through a negative filter taking the basic facts and distorting them. This created in her mind a clear expectation of the road ahead being difficult and of the likelihood of defeat. She was also a convinced hypochondriac usually seeing herself as likely to get ill, and speaking gloomily of anybody else's medical situation. For that reason, if we ever had any sicknesses we learned not to tell her anything about it.

We knew she would only contaminate us with her own pessimism and undermine any faith for healing we might have had. Our wariness towards her might sound odd but it is really important, when you face a health issue, or any other hazard, that you should approach it with faith, hope and confidence and maintain a bold, even a defiant, confession. You certainly must not allow yourself to absorb the gloomy, defeatist, morbid thoughts of those around you.

If you hear other people's negative words or if the demons whisper them to you or if they arise out of your own mind due to your own habit of pessimism you must immediately reject it. Then replace that thought with a bold, confident, hopeful thought. You must then speak that positive thought out loud, *even if you don't truly feel it*. Make a proclamation and speak it boldly into the heavenly places so the whole spiritual realm can hear you.

Eventually, if you keep on speaking out loud in this way, even if you are saying things you don't actually yet believe, *but which you want to believe*, those will eventually become your actual thoughts and beliefs. In the meantime, if the negative thought keeps coming back, then keep on rejecting it, again and again, with persistence for as long as it takes.

Also, deliberately make it your practice to *rejoice* regularly, to *give thanks*, and to *expect good things* from God, even when the circumstances seem bleak, indeed even where they *are* bleak. Consider this passage from Habakkuk about how we should rejoice even in the midst of bad situations and circumstances:

*¹⁷ Though the fig tree should not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
¹⁹ God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer's;
he makes me tread on my high places.*
Habakkuk 3:17-19 (ESV)

When things seem to go wrong and even when they do actually go wrong you need to get a grip of your mind and launch into giving thanks, praising God and rejoicing in your future as a believer. If this does not come naturally or if you don't *feel* like doing it, then just do it anyway. This approach to life involves *choosing* to maintain a positive, hopeful, confident manner rather than just doing whatever you are used to or are in the mood for.

This strong, self-controlled mentality was typified by King Jehoshaphat of Judah. Note the admirable way in which he reacted and especially the calm way in which he chose to think and speak, when the southern Kingdom was under attack by the armies of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir. The attackers were all Arabs and came from what we now call Jordan. The account begins with an attack being planned by these three armies and with Jehoshaphat hearing of it. He saw their military build-up and he obviously felt afraid, as anybody would be:

¹ After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. ² Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi). ³ Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

2 Chronicles 20:1-3 (ESV)

Although his fear was real, and was based on true facts, Jehoshaphat's response to this crisis was not to panic. He did not *allow* his mind to run away with itself or to indulge in negative, fearful thoughts. Instead, he listened attentively to the prophet Jahaziel who gave a confident, positive prophetic message about how God would help them. He then *chose* to believe Jahaziel's words and to trust in God's character. Jehoshaphat himself then gave a bold message to the people, telling them not to fear. He also led the people in praising and worshipping God and in speaking boldly and confidently:

¹⁸ Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. ¹⁹ And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice. ²⁰ And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed." ²¹ And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, "Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever."

2 Chronicles 20:18-21 (ESV)

Look at what then happened as a result of the decision to sing and praise, rather than wallowing in fear, gloom or despair. It changed everything. God then moved in power to cause the Arab soldiers from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir to become so confused they began to fight against each other and destroy themselves:

²² And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. ²³ For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.

2 Chronicles 20:22-23 (ESV)

The result of the decision by Jehoshaphat, and also of the people of Judah, to sing and praise, and to think and speak with faith, was that they then received God's help. That is the natural consequence of maintaining a bold, faith-filled confession. However, there is more to it as well, even in every day life, in the natural, not just spiritually.

If your mind is operating on the basis of hope, confidence, trust and optimism rather than gloom, negativity and fear then you will inevitably think more clearly and make better decisions. That is because stress and panic cause a person's mind to seize up and to become unable to function. You will also be far more creative, imaginative and mentally resilient.

Thus, even at a natural level, not only in the spiritual realm or 'heavenly places', it makes sense to *decide* to think along those lines. Therefore, train yourself to do it that way rather than in the negative, fearful ways you may have grown used to. Unfortunately, those negative ways come naturally to us like well worn paths, and therefore that is how we will react automatically unless we force ourselves to think differently.

An analogy I sometimes use when explaining how we can stop thinking negatively or in unbelief and start to think confidently, positively and with faith and hope, is to picture a grass meadow across which

there is an existing well worn path. That footpath represents a long established mental habit which has become entrenched in your mind. So how do you get rid of the existing well worn and familiar footpath and replace it with a brand new one?

Picture the meadow in your mind and, instead of walking along the existing path, as you have always done, imagine walking through the long meadow grass, *where there is no path*, and gradually starting to create a new path by regularly walking back and forth across the meadow, always using the new path, despite it being hard to walk on because the grass is still long.

Gradually, over several weeks, your feet will begin to flatten and then to kill off the grass on the new path so that it becomes a recognisable footpath. But the grass on the old footpath will begin to grow back again until, eventually, you won't be able to tell that a path was ever there. That is how it must be done in our minds. We stop using the old negative "footpath" until it ceases to be a path at all.

And we carry on engaging in proclamation of God's Word plus praise and thanksgiving, until we wear out the "grass" so that a new healthy, wholesome attitude or set of beliefs and expectations is formed. Then you keep on using that "new path" which will be much easier to do after a while because it will eventually become just as visible and firmly entrenched as your previous negative way of thinking was.

How I once dealt with a devastating piece of news by reacting defiantly and giving thanks for our future success instead of despairing about the current crisis

In chapter 5 I tell the story of how, when I was 37, I was a one third equity partner in a law firm and caught the conveyancing partner forging an invoice in order to steal money from the firm. I challenged him about it and also went to the Senior Partner and he promised to support me in tackling the wrongdoer. So I called a meeting to raise the issue formally and that happened a couple of days later.

Sadly, by then, the conveyancing partner had somehow managed to blackmail the Senior Partner and he therefore changed sides. They both then brazenly denied the theft and refused to address it, even though the proof was undeniable. In the end, instead of the corrupt conveyancing partner being expelled from the firm, the two of them voted to expel me! Yet all I had done was to expose and report a fraud.

But there seemed at least to be a silver lining because my expulsion meant they were legally obliged to pay me £250,000 cash "forthwith". But they refused to pay anything at all and told a pack of lies to justify withholding my money. I then instructed a solicitor to act for me to force them to pay but my former partners kept on lying and used every procedural trick in the book to slow the case down.

This went on for about three months, during which I had set up a brand new law firm of my own from scratch. But I had also spent £20,000 already on legal fees, paying my specialist commercial lawyers to represent me. There then came a day when I had to face the fact that this case could run for two years or more and would devour all my cash.

That would then make it impossible for me to succeed in my new law firm, which also needed a lot of capital. I could have sued them OR I could establish my new law firm. But I hadn't got enough money to do both. So I made the agonising decision to abandon my case and use the little money I had left to pay for the needs of my new law firm, not for litigation costs.

My wife and I made that painful decision one evening at home and we both felt violated and traumatised by the whole experience. We could so easily have despaired, given up and lost all our confidence for the future of the new firm. However, from somewhere deep inside myself I felt a defiance rising up and a holy boldness. I believe God yet again gave me the gift of faith which is one of the spiritual gifts listed by Paul.

So, instead of weeping and wailing, I went to the fridge, got out a bottle of Champagne and said “*We are going to have a toast to our new business and to thank God for all the success it is going to have.*” We then proclaimed that the firm would be a great success and rejoiced over that, even though there was no sign of any success at that point. The boldness and faith which I now felt quickly spread to her.

Therefore, we celebrated the future success of the new firm, and gave thanks for it, even though it was still tiny at that stage and was operating on a shoestring budget. However, as we did this, reacting in exactly the opposite way to what the demons expected of us, something broke in the spiritual atmosphere and a radical shift took place in what Paul calls “*the heavenly places*”.

We stopped seeing ourselves as victims or defeated and saw ourselves as victors who were going to triumph in the future. And that is exactly what happened. A long series of miracles took place and God gave me many ideas for how to advertise in a completely new way and how to build the new firm.

Over the next 13 years my law firm grew exponentially and became many times bigger than the firm I had lost and vastly more profitable. Then, when I was 50 years old, I sold the business and retired to devote myself to teaching the Bible and writing books. Moreover, a very short time after I retired my two former partners who had stolen my capital both went into bankruptcy and their law firm collapsed! So God not only granted astonishing success to me but also poured out His judgment on them.

But I believe the whole of those 13 years of success flowed directly from my reaction that night when I got out the Champagne, proclaimed God’s Word and gave thanks for all the success we were going to have even though, at that point, there had only been a series of disasters. To any observer my wife and I would have sounded ridiculous, celebrating our future success in the midst of a devastating defeat and injustice.

But God didn’t see it that way. I believe His heart was touched by our faith and He responded to it miraculously. The demons also must have seen it as a dramatic turning point in the battle being fought over us in the heavenly places. Therefore, I believe they were very unhappy about the way we reacted. They had hoped we would just curl up and die rather than fight back in faith and defiance.

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 1Kings 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.

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:

³Consider 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.

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:

³²Judas 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.

CHAPTER 11

A CLOSER LOOK AT HOW TO RESIST DEMONS

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:7 (NIV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

Ephesians 1:3 (ESV)

There are times when God permits a demon to have access to your life to bring judgment on you

This isn't a nice point to make, but sometimes the reason a person is opposed by a demon, or by demonised humans, is because *God sent them to oppose the person*. What's more this applies to saved believers too, not just to the unsaved. At any rate, it applied to King Solomon who was clearly saved and who wrote three books of the Bible.

God raised up human adversaries to cause trouble for Solomon because He was angry that he had worshipped other gods that his idol worshipping foreign wives introduced him to. Although this opposition was human on that occasion rather than purely demonic, it demonstrates that there are times when God can become our opponent and intentionally resist us in order to judge us or teach us a lesson or to get us to wake up and realise where we are going wrong.

He does so through making use of either human beings or demons or both. In Solomon's case it happened to be human beings, i.e. kings and their armies, but the point is still the same. Solomon married foreign women who were heathens and idolators and he even worshipped their idols:

⁶ So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. ⁸ And so he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. ⁹ And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

1 Kings 11: 6-9 (RSV)

Therefore, God raised up human adversaries to oppose Solomon as a judgment upon him:

²³ God also raised up as an adversary to him, Rezon the son of Eli'ada, who had fled from his master Hadad-e'zer king of Zobah. ²⁴ And he gathered men about him and became leader of a marauding band, after the slaughter by David; and they went to Damascus, and dwelt there, and made him king in Damascus. ²⁵ He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon, doing mischief as Hadad did; and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.

1 Kings 11:23-25 (RSV)

You might argue that although God responded to King Solomon's sins in this way, He would never do it to you. Don't be so sure. I think He would and it would not be inconsistent with the Bible for Him

to do so. In all sorts of ways God has promised to bless right behaviour and to curse those who do wrong. For example, He says He will bless those who bless Israel and the Jews, and curse those who curse them.

He has also promised to exalt the humble and to humble the proud. Being exalted is a blessing and being humbled by God is a curse. He also promised in Zechariah 5:1-4 to send a curse on those who lie and steal. And nowhere does the Bible say that these curses only apply to unsaved unbelievers and don't apply to us. Therefore, take careful note of this and pay close attention.

And take it very seriously. Don't do anything which might provoke God to oppose you. Make sure you do all those things which He has promised to bless, not least supporting Israel. Strangely, an alarming number of Christians imagine they are at liberty to express all their opinions and to oppose and criticise Israel if they want to. Please take my advice. **Don't ever criticise Israel.**

Leave that to others as there is no shortage of foolish people volunteering for that job. Show some common sense. Focus instead on blessing and supporting Israel and the Jewish people worldwide. You will receive God's blessing for doing so and avoid making Him into your opponent. It isn't rocket science. It is just plain common sense. Therefore, do it.

There are times when it is 'evil's hour,' and God allows the powers of darkness to have their way in your life for a period or to be in charge of your country

Not only in your own personal life, but also in the life of your country, there will be times when God allows the demons to have their way, to succeed, to have victory over you and to come to power in your country. This even happened in Jesus' life when the time came for Him to die. Jesus spoke of this being their "hour" and He was referring not only to the men seeking to kill Him but also to Satan and the powers of darkness i.e. the demons who were behind it:

⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? ⁵³ When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

Luke 22:52-53 (RSV)

If such times come in your life, don't be discouraged or give up and don't speak as if God was letting you down or doing wrong. He isn't and He never will. But He will at times let the demons have their way, or appear to do so. I think He did it in my life when He allowed my former business partners to steal all my capital in 1999 and force me to leave our law firm and start a new business from scratch.

No matter what I did, I couldn't defeat them. Instead, they defeated me and took my money and I couldn't afford the legal costs to fight them. I wasn't wildly keen on the idea of God allowing this at the time but, as I look back, I can see that letting me be defeated, suffer and be humbled was good for me.

Indeed, without it I might never have gone into this ministry. I certainly couldn't have written Books 5 and 6 on wisdom and handling the wicked, had it not been for my painful and bruising experiences from 1999 onwards until at least 2012 and even beyond then.

We see it in the lives of nations too. Take Nazi Germany for example. From 1933 to 1945 God allowed Germany to fall under the power of a desperately wicked man who was full of demons. Perhaps even Satan himself was within him. For a time, Hitler had a charmed life and didn't put a foot wrong and was victorious in all he did, taking control of all of Western Europe.

But why did God allow it? My own personal opinion is God allowed it for one primary reason, which was to bring about the rebirth of the nation of Israel, after 1878 years in exile, i.e. from AD 70 to 1948. World War 2 was catastrophic and upwards of 60 million people died in it. You might wonder how on Earth God could be willing to let that scale of devastation happen just to bring Israel back to life as a nation state.

But I think He did. And, if I'm right it shows us how important Israel is, in case you think I am exaggerating about how much the Jewish people mean to Him. He knew anti semitism worldwide (not just in Germany) was so terrible the nations of the world would never have cooperated with allowing Israel's rebirth as a sovereign nation state had it not been for World War 2 which put America temporarily into a position of world leadership.

By the way, Great Britain could and should have established a Jewish State in 1922 when the League of Nations granted us the "Mandate" to govern the whole area after we had defeated the Turks and driven them out of the Holy Land in 1917. That was when the UK's Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, made the "*Balfour Declaration*" indicating that we supported the establishing of a homeland for the Jews. But we broke that promise and buckled to pressure from the Arabs, mainly for fear of losing access to oil.

Therefore, the Jews had no homeland during the 1930s to which they could have fled from the Nazis, and so the Holocaust happened. I personally believe that if Great Britain had kept its word in 1922 and looked after the Jews then God would have found us some other way to get oil. I think also that World War 2 would have been made unnecessary (from God's perspective) as a means of recreating the Jewish State. So, viewed in those terms, you could say it was the UK, not Germany, which made World War 2 necessary.

What is more, I suspect Great Britain would have avoided bankruptcy and kept its worldwide Empire of 60 countries. If so, we would possibly still have much of it today, as well as the peace it maintained and its effectiveness in suppressing the viciousness of Islam. However, because we betrayed the Jews I believe God brought His judgment upon the UK with:

- a) having to fight World War 2 with the loss of many British lives
- b) national bankruptcy
- c) the loss of the whole Empire within 20 years, having kept it in place for 400 years
- d) unleashing the movement of millions of Muslims to the UK and the West generally, which they had never managed to do in the previous 1300 years as we and other European nations had successfully fought many wars to keep them out.

I also personally believe God removed President Roosevelt who had done nothing to stop the Holocaust or even to speak of it, and who probably wouldn't have been a strong supporter of Israel's rebirth as a nation. God replaced him with Harry Truman, who was appointed as the new vice presidential running mate in 1944 at the last minute, just in time to take over when FDR died in April 1945. Unlike FDR,

Truman was a solid friend to the Jewish people, even defying the advice of his Secretary of State, George Marshall, who counselled against supporting Israel.

Due to Great Britain's failure to set up the Jewish State in 1922 when it had the perfect chance to do so, Israel's rebirth then required the much more painful route of World War 2 and the Holocaust. That (very briefly) created a feeling of sympathy towards the Jews, though it quickly disappeared again.

I suggest you reflect on how far God was willing to go in allowing an unprecedented amount of war, famine and devastation in order to produce the necessary circumstances to raise up His people the Jews. Then let that realisation influence your thinking on whether it's a good idea for you to be opposing Israel. Choose instead to bless and support them.

But let it also make you more realistic about what levels of suffering, stress and catastrophe He will allow to come into your personal life if He thinks it will draw you closer to Him and mature you as a disciple. God is willing to pay a very high price for the things He wants, as He showed when He gave up the life of His own Son to save us. So, don't imagine He wouldn't be willing to make you pay a high price in your life in order to become a mature disciple.

Consider also the position in the western world today and how far we have fallen into corruption, tyranny, depravity and even overt Satanism. In the UK most of our leaders (except for the Reform Party) are now traitors, crooks and liars. They actually work for the "World Economic Forum" and the rest of the "Global Elite" and the "Deep State", not for the British people.

Likewise, in the USA, God allowed the 2020 presidential election to be stolen in the most blatant way by the corrupt paedophile Satanist, Joe Biden. That said, Biden is actually just a puppet and he is owned and completely controlled by the homosexual Muslim, Barack Obama. However, the key point is *God allowed all this*. There is no getting away from that fact.

In my view the degeneration of the two major western democracies, the USA and UK into corrupt "banana republics" has been allowed by God in order to prepare the way for the rise to power of the antichrist ready for the Tribulation. If Satan had tried to raise up the antichrist in 1950 or 1850 or 1750 then the UK and subsequently the USA as well, would have opposed him, as they did with Hitler, and as Britain did with Napoleon of France and Philip of Spain, both of whom sought to dominate Europe.

But not now. The governments of both the USA and UK have been taken over by criminal gangs and so we are too weak, too corrupt and too blind to put up a substantial fight against Satan's plans. Indeed, we are ruled over at present by globalist traitors, many of whom are literally Satanists.

But all of this is hardly surprising when you remember that the Bible prophesies that it will happen, i.e. the coming of the Great Apostasy prior to the rise of the antichrist. God isn't going to go back on that or change His mind. The antichrist and Satan will assuredly be given their allotted time, and their opportunity to rule the whole world. God's Word says so.

Therefore, if God is willing to allow such massive things to happen worldwide, and to permit the undermining of great nations like the UK and USA, which were once so godly and so blessed, why would you imagine He won't allow painful things to happen in your personal life?

Our battle is primarily a defensive one and is against demons, not people – but there are exceptions where I am willing to pray and proclaim against an organisation or even a person

Our resistance against the Devil and his demons is not primarily, or even often, about us going on the offensive and bringing the attack to them. Neither is it about us trying to “*claim territory*” or “*win cities for God*” or drive out demons from a town or village. We have no power to claim cities or nations or to take them over, and God has never us asked to do it. None of that is seen anywhere in the Bible.

Our real battle, so far as demons are concerned, is *overwhelmingly a defensive one*. We are usually just commanded by God to *stand firm and to resist them*. We are not generally called upon to attack demons or to take the fight to them in an offensive sense. That said, there are exceptions to that general rule and so there is such a thing as praying and proclaiming in a warlike, aggressive manner. Indeed, there is even a time and a place for cursing something and speaking destruction or closure over it.

So, there are rare occasions when God does want us to go on the offensive and to pray against something, or even someone, and to do so aggressively. I recall an occasion when Derek Prince did exactly that in relation to a sex shop which had opened next door to his church. He felt a prompting that he needed to curse that sex shop and so he did. And shortly afterwards it burned down and was destroyed. Yet, the flames never touched his church. It was plainly supernatural.

Likewise, he came to hear in 1953 that Josef Stalin in the USSR was planning a holocaust of the Jews in Russia. So Derek Prince prayed against Stalin personally and, very shortly afterwards, Stalin suddenly dropped dead and the new holocaust was cancelled. I personally believe Stalin’s death occurred as a result of Derek Prince’s (and others) warlike prayers and proclamations. So, there is such a thing as this, on rare occasions, and I hope to say more about it elsewhere.

I am willing to pray against the corrupt tyrants taking over our governments and betraying the people

One example of how and with whom I would be willing to pray *against* a group, institution, or even a person, is the corrupt tyrants such as the “WEF”, or “Global Elite” or the “Deep State” as the Americans call them. Most governments, especially in the West, in particular the UK, USA and the EU, have been taken over by an international criminal gang of globalists, many of whom are Satanists. They are busily engaged in destroying everything the Christianised West used to stand for.

It was this same group which undermined and removed the godly Mrs Thatcher in 1990 because they knew she was an obstacle to their globalist aims and to the creation of a One World Government. They then replaced her with the series of mediocre globalist puppets we have had ever since. Their only purpose is to do whatever the WEF tells them to do, regardless of what we vote for.

In return for that, the politicians who do as they are told are each given millions in bribes using many billions of public money which is embezzled and redirected to them. How else could talentless nonentities like Obama, Biden, Zelensky, Tony Blair and even Jacinda Arden of New Zealand become multi millionaires in a very short space of time *while in public office on modest wages*?

The decline really gathered pace when the WEF installed the corrupt Muslim, Barack Obama, as president in 2008, with his husband Michael Robinson, also known as Michelle Obama. They are in

fact two homosexual men and their alleged “children” are obviously not theirs but were just borrowed for photo shoots from a married couple.

Likewise, the 2020 US presidential election was blatantly stolen by systematic voter fraud on an industrial scale. They used crooked vote counting software from a corrupt company called “Dominion” which has links to George Soros, a profoundly evil man who is part of the WEF.

President Trump also claimed that the Clintons were part of it, which they denied but I think we can safely choose to believe President Trump rather than the Clinton crime family whose political careers are littered with the dead bodies of people who have tried to expose them. Indeed, the long list of witnesses and whistleblowers who have supposedly committed suicide just before giving evidence against the Clintons is amazing. It even gave rise to the phrase that they were “*suicided*.”

That vote counting software was then encouraged to be used in many states by Barack Obama – to enable the Democrats to cheat in all subsequent elections. By the way, I don’t believe it is any coincidence that this corrupt vote counting software is called “Dominion”. You may recall from chapter 8 when we were looking at how Satan’s kingdom was organised into ranks that one of those ranks for senior demons (and also angels) was a “dominion”.

That reflects the tendency which Satanists have to give clues as to what they are and whom they work for. They aren’t ashamed to be Satanists. They are proud of it and can’t resist referring to it, even if only with hints. We see this rank and other ranks referred to in Colossians and, although the same rank structure applies to both angels and demons, we can safely assume they weren’t thinking of angels when they named the product “Dominion”:

¹⁶ for by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Colossians 1:16 (NASB)

Yet, many Americans, and almost all non Americans simply can’t see any of this cheating and refuse to believe it even when told. The Democrats, who are the servants of the WEF, used the crooked Dominion software to take electronic votes away from President Trump and transfer them to Biden (I refuse to call him “President” because he didn’t win).

They also used other forms of voter fraud, including casting votes for dead people and also literally printing off tens of thousands of fake ballot papers, *on all of which* they had put a cross against Biden’s name. They then delivered these boxes of votes in the middle of the night to various places where the counting of paper ballots was being done. This proved to be necessary at the last minute because the WEF had underestimated how massive the support for President Trump was so they needed to forge even more fake votes than they had expected to use.

I actually watched the electronic part of the cheating being done on slowed down videos which showed President Trump’s vote in each state jumping *downwards* by 20,000 or 40,000 at a time and on numerous occasions. These votes were then transferred each time to Biden’s tally until he had enough to “win”. That is why I say Biden is not the President and never was. He is a complete fraud. President Trump actually won in 2020 by a huge landslide but was robbed of it.

In November 2020, the American people failed in what I saw, in my personal opinion, as their civic duty to rise up in armed rebellion, as in 1776. They should have deposed the criminal gang who have taken over their country and forcibly reinstated President Trump. But they didn't. They stood by and did nothing, hoping someone else would give the lead, but nobody did.

Therefore, the criminals remained in place and have since then carried out a long series of corrupt actions to undermine and destroy America. By the way, the reason the WEF wants to destroy the USA (and UK) is that both those nations would, in the past, have resisted the rise to power of the antichrist and the creation of a One World Government. So, it was essential for them to destroy the USA and UK first.

They have also lied systematically about President Trump, falsely prosecuted him, and even attempted to assassinate him. Make no mistake. That shooting in Pennsylvania was not organised by a 20 year old "loner" who was "acting alone" as the media consistently tell us.

He was obviously instructed and assisted to do it by the Secret Service on the orders of the people who control Joe Biden. How else could he have got up onto the roof with a rifle and a range finder and, weirdest of all, *be allowed to stay there* for a long time even though many in the crowd were vigorously telling the Secret Service and police that he was there?

Moreover, during all of those minutes why did the Secret Service not *remove President Trump from the stage* before the shooting began? They could have removed him from the stage 20 times in the time available but they *chose to leave him there*, despite *knowing* there was a man with a rifle on a roof 130 yards away.

And why were no agents on that roof (and only that roof) in the first place, as is standard procedure? The Secret Service departed from their normal procedures and they then insulted our intelligence when questioned later by making the lame excuse that the roof had a "slope" which was a health and safety concern for their staff. Yet, other roofs with far steeper slopes were all manned.

That one section of roof was left unmanned on purpose and no valid reason for that can conceivably be given. The collusion with the shooter is obvious. There is no way all of that series of extraordinary events and omissions can have happened without being planned and authorised from the very top.

Indeed, perhaps the most sinister part of it was that that rally at Butler, Pennsylvania was the only Trump rally that the media chose to *broadcast live*. All his other rallies are routinely ignored or given only brief attention. But on that day, and *that day only*, they chose to broadcast it live.

I don't believe it was the TV companies' own idea. They had plainly been *told* to broadcast live on that day so that all of America's enemies could have the thrill of seeing President Trump being assassinated. In my view, the heads of the media companies must have been tipped off that something big was going to happen or they wouldn't have agreed to depart from their usual procedure and film it live.

That is how evil these people are. They are absolutely off the scale in their depravity. The assassination attempt was organised by the traitors whom the WEF had inserted into the Secret Service, the head of which, another nonentity, was appointed solely for being a "friend of Jill Biden". She would never

have risen anywhere near that rank under an honest President. But she was appointed because she was willing to do whatever the WEF told her to.

The conspirators behind it all have plainly also had the active assistance of senior members of the FBI ever since the shooting. They have been energetically involved in covering it up and obstructing any meaningful enquiry. I do hope that if President Trump can somehow overcome the voter fraud and get elected in 2024 he disbands the FBI (and CIA) and at least removes the senior ranks of the Secret Service. He then needs to start again with honest, patriotic men running all of them.

These traitors had all been expecting to be able to rejoice and celebrate President Trump's death. But they were shocked and bitterly disappointed by what even many Democrats accept was a miraculous divine intervention. Thankfully, God saved Mr Trump (who only became a Christian while he was President, just as Abraham Lincoln did in the Civil War).

Indeed, on the morning of the very day, 13 July when President Trump was shot at, I felt a profound burden to pray for his safety, so my wife and I prayed for him – with unusual vehemence and at unusual length. Then a few hours later, we heard of the failed attempt, which was obviously thwarted by God's personal intervention. Nothing else can explain it.

I feel privileged that I was one of the many people whom God alerted to pray that day and I know there were thousands of others all over the world who felt that same urgent prompting. My fervent wish is that God will continue to intervene to keep President Trump alive because the Deep State's only hope now is to kill him.

If he is elected, he will take them down, by force, and they know that perfectly well. So, they fully intend to take him down instead and will keep on trying to kill him. Therefore, the first point is that we must keep on praying for President Trump's safety and for the safety of his family and all his team of advisers.

When are we entitled to pray and proclaim against people?

But that now brings me to the key point which is that I personally feel entitled, even though I am British, to pray *against* the nest of snakes in America whom we refer to as the Deep State, the WEF or the Global Elite. I am perfectly willing, at the very least, to pray against them for failure, for them to make mistakes, and for their evil schemes to be thwarted and exposed. I also pray for whistleblowers to emerge and for co-conspirators to come forward seeking plea bargains and to give evidence against those above them in the criminal conspiracy.

But I personally am also willing to go further than that with such people whose level of evil is off the chart. I am also prepared to curse them and to pray and proclaim within the forum of the heavenly places that these vicious criminals will be brought to justice on this Earth before military tribunals on treason and murder charges.

Indeed, I am even willing to pray that God Himself would also *strike them dead* and bring them to an early judgment by Him, as He did with Josef Stalin. I emphasise that *this kind of prayer is not to be done in our ordinary daily lives*, but only against such exceptionally evil servants of Satan of the kind who seized power, by fraud, over the USA. By the way, it is equally applicable within the UK and the EU, both of which are now ruled by criminals just as bad as those in the USA.

Remember, also, by the way, that the Constitution of the USA, by the 2nd amendment, gives the American people the right to bear arms. That is a precious freedom which is denied to us in the UK and in most other countries. I bitterly regret that fact and envy the American people for the dignity they have through being able to bear arms.

But it is crucial to realise that the 2nd amendment was not put in place to ensure that Americans would always be free to shoot rabbits on their land. Its purpose is very clear indeed, and that is to enable the people to rise up and ***fight the government*** if tyrants should ever take it over, as the ‘Founding Fathers’ foresaw might happen. Well, they have now taken it over. That is exactly what the Deep State tyrants have done. Therefore, an American, if his conscience will permit him, is morally entitled in my view to go to war against this gang of amoral criminals and traitors.

The same applies in the UK and the EU, but the problem is our population are all unarmed, so we are largely powerless. All we can do is protest but even the right to do that is being taken away by our tyrannical Labour Government which is sending people to prison for speaking out against illegal immigration. These tyrants are truly evil and they mean to crush us.

Indeed, the Deep State intends the same outcome for the citizens of the USA by taking steps to confiscate all firearms which they fully intend to do, regardless of what the Constitution says. My advice to Americans therefore is do not hand over your weapons, no matter what laws are passed, as you would then be as powerless as we are.

By means of fraud, bribery, murder and blackmail, the Deep State criminals in the USA have completely taken over the Executive branch of government. They also control a large percentage of the Congress and the judiciary. Therefore, I see it like this – if citizens are entitled to use guns to defend America, as they clearly are under the Constitution, then they are even more entitled to pray and proclaim for God to strike these villains dead.

It is not only the law or the US Constitution which confers the right of self defence. The Bible also confirms it at Luke 22:36

However, if you don’t think the American Constitution has any relevance to what you are allowed to pray for, or against, let’s look instead at a little known verse, Luke 22:36. This verse is almost never preached on because, in my opinion, most pastors are afraid to be controversial and don’t want to be criticised. So, they ignore it, as they don’t know how to handle it and don’t want any trouble.

The statement in the verse is made on the night of Jesus’ betrayal and arrest and He tells His disciples to go out and ***buy swords***. The purpose of these swords was not so they could prune their roses or cut each other’s hair. They were meant to be used for ***self defence***. And remember, this is Jesus Himself speaking:

³⁶ ***And He said to them, “But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his cloak and buy one.***

Luke 22:36 (NASB)

You must be guided by your own conscience, and your interpretation of Scripture. However, I believe an American would be fully justified in using lethal force to defend President Trump, and his family

and staff, and to depose the criminals, traitors, embezzlers, Satanists, murderers and paedophiles who have taken over their country. And I would see Luke 22:36 as supporting that stance and, even more so, in justifying Christians in praying against those monsters. Please see my chapter on self defence in Book 6 for a fuller discussion of this.

By the way, in case you might imagine I am some kind of “hot head” who is saying extreme things due to having lost his temper, nothing could be more wrong. I am speaking entirely calmly after careful reflection and sober analysis of the facts and from the perspective of a former police officer and lawyer.

Everything I say is based on logic, reason and legal and biblical principles and is not an emotional outburst. If this was 1776 or even 1940, almost everyone would agree with me but our populations have been so brainwashed and so thoroughly trained to instantly comply without question that they have lost the ability to think for themselves and have become like sheep.

Nevertheless, the general position is that our spiritual warfare is primarily defensive, not offensive

However, leaving the exceptions to one side and returning to the general theme, most of the time our spiritual warfare is wholly defensive. It is quite different of course when it comes to the *spreading of the Gospel* itself. That is where we as Christians are commanded to go on the offensive. That is how we are really meant to “take territory”, by evangelising and making converts and turning them into mature disciples, not by fighting demons or taking geographical territory.

Our objective is to obey Jesus’ command and to bring the Gospel to all of mankind. Thus, if you want to see yourself as going on the offensive, think in terms of evangelism. Start telling men and women who live near you about the Gospel of Jesus Christ so they can be set free from their blindness and bondage to sin and be liberated from their present ruler, the Devil. That is how we are generally meant to go on the offensive, albeit with rare exceptions as discussed above when warlike prayers are needed and justified.

So, the real way we are to win “territory” is by leading men, women and children to believe the Gospel and be saved, and thereby to break free of Satan’s control and willingly come under the authority of Jesus Christ. That is how God’s Kingdom is advanced and Satan’s kingdom is reduced, i.e. one by one as each sinner repents and is saved. It is not about claiming “ownership” of cities or nations on God’s behalf or driving demons out of such places.

You may have heard people talk in that way. It was a very popular idea around about year 2000, but it is misconceived and futile. Above all, it is unbiblical. We have no power to do any of that and God has never asked us to do it. There are no examples in the Bible of the apostles throwing demons out of towns or cities or claiming those places for God. We can pray that God would do this, as supplicatory prayer, but we ourselves do not have the power to do it or to command it to be done.

Never mock or insult demons and do not speak of them light heartedly or make fun of them

Furthermore, we are not to insult or mock demons or to make fun of them in any light hearted way. To do so is foolish and dangerous and it puts us in a wrong frame of mind. It promotes pride in ourselves

and is likely to cause us to become complacent and over confident when we should be vigilant and wary.

Note how Archangel Michael was very careful and restrained in how he spoke to the Devil, despite Michael being way above us in rank. He knew that Satan, when he was Lucifer, had been not only a cherub but the most senior cherub and the closest to God's throne. So, Michael knew that despite his fall into sin, Satan was senior to him and that it would be wrong to revile or insult him:

⁹But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Jude 9

If that is how the Archangel Michael felt it best to operate, how much more should we be careful and avoid insults, boastful exuberance, joking and silliness when dealing with demons? On the contrary, we should be sober, serious and vigilant in all our dealings with them. We should be confident, but not over confident, such that we underestimate our enemy. We should be wary and watchful, but not afraid, knowing that the source of our confidence is not ourselves, but our position as disciples and ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

The biblical way to resist demons – Ephesians 6 and “the armour of God”

In accordance with the point that spiritual warfare is primarily defensive, not offensive, the main chapter in the Bible which deals with this issue is Ephesians 6. It speaks mainly in terms of armour, which is of course used primarily for defense, not attack. That passage gives practical advice about how to put on what is called the “*armour of God*” to protect us in various ways from demonic attack and sabotage:

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV)

The above passage is very well known and I have heard many sermons preached about it. Quite often, however, it is misunderstood and badly explained, as if the armour of God referred to were almost magical weapons that you might see in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* or *The Lord of the Rings*. That is not the case. The various forms of metaphorical armour are *neither magical nor mystical*.

Instead, this passage from Ephesians 6 is describing the ways in which we are protected from demonic attacks upon us by the *character traits* that are listed. In other words, if we can grow in maturity and in Christlike character, then those characteristics, as they are displayed day to day *in our behaviour and attitudes* will protect us from many of the tricks and schemes that demons use to trip us up.

I will look briefly at each character trait in turn. Note that apostle Paul uses each of the parts of the armour and equipment of a Roman soldier as metaphors to explain his points:

- a) **“The belt of truth”** – in a secondary sense this means the truth of the Gospel i.e. holding to the true Gospel, as opposed to the many false versions which are also around us. However, it primarily means *truth itself*, i.e. the solid habit of *speaking and acting truthfully in all that we do*. The Devil is a liar, as are the demons who serve him. So are the wicked people in this world with whom we have to deal. Indeed, even our own hearts are full of deception, in particular self-deception:

⁹ *The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately corrupt;
who can understand it?*
Jeremiah 17:9 (RSV)

Most of us therefore lie to each other and to ourselves daily unless we seek strenuously to avoid doing so. However, if we allow God to change us and to develop in us what the Bible calls “*the love of the truth*”, then we will begin to think, speak and act differently. The love of the truth means wanting to know the truth and then speaking it and acting upon it *even if it works to our disadvantage or proves us wrong or costs us money*.

Demons know all about our natural tendency to dishonesty. Therefore, they tempt us to lie so we will trip ourselves up, harm our reputations and reduce our credibility. It also creates further ‘knock on effects’ as our lies result in all sorts of other problems and consequences for us later. Let us all therefore seek to be like Nathanael, of whose honesty Jesus spoke so approvingly:

⁴⁷ *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Here is truly an Israelite, in whom there is no deceit!”*

John 1:47 (NASB)

Above all, lying displeases God and prevents us being effective for Him. Furthermore, as we know from Zechariah 5:1-4, *God sends a curse* upon all those who *lie and steal*. That includes Christians. At any rate, there is no reason to suppose it doesn’t.

¹ *Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a flying scroll!* ² *And he said to me, “What do you see?”* *I answered, “I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits, and its breadth ten cubits.”* ³ *Then he said to me, “This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land; for every one who steals shall be cut off henceforth according to it, and every one who swears falsely shall be cut off henceforth according to it.”* ⁴ *I will send it forth, says the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter the house of the thief, and the house of him who swears falsely by my name; and it shall abide in his house and consume it, both timber and stones.”*

Zechariah 5:1-4 (RSV)

Therefore, predictably, what the Devil wants is for each of us to develop and maintain *the habit of lying*. He wants it to be your natural reflex reaction whenever you face difficult circumstances or temptations. If so, that habit will trip you up, create ongoing problems in your life, destroy your reputation and render you ineffective. It will also rob you of many of the rewards you might otherwise have received, not only in this life, but at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

If, however, you wear the “*belt of truth*” i.e. develop the *consistent habit of truthfulness*, then you will not fall for it when a demon tempts you to lie. The ingrained habit, or characteristic, of truthfulness will protect you and prevent all the damaging consequences that would otherwise have resulted if they had been able to tempt you to lie. Above all, it will prevent curses coming upon you as a result of your lies or, if you prefer, it will prevent you from making God into your opponent.

Consider how different things would have been for all the MPs in the House of Commons if more of them had developed the habit of being truthful and straight in all their dealings. So many of them have been needlessly ruined by developing the habit of being just a little bit crooked here and a little bit dishonest there.

We saw this illustrated in the recent scandal in May 2024 when so many Conservative MPs, aided by *inside knowledge*, placed bets that the election would be on 4th July. The stupid ones placed the bets in their own names, by bank card, and so they were caught. But many more placed their bets anonymously using cash and so got away with it. That was sheer fraud and they all ought to go to prison for it, though they obviously won’t because too many of them did it and those in charge have no desire to expose them, possibly because they placed bets themselves.

They and many other MPs have bent some rules and stretched others and it has come back to haunt them. But there is nothing new or unique about this type of fraud. They have done it before, not least in the even bigger scandal some years ago about fiddling their expenses claims. It could all have been avoided simply by strengthening their consciences and learning to love the truth as a thing in itself. Then they would not have yielded to the temptation.

It would also have been easier for them to stay honest if they had reminded themselves that everything we ever say, think or do from the moment of our conversion onwards, if we are Christians, and from before then if we are unsaved, is *being recorded*. Therefore, it is going to be judged one day, either at the Judgment Seat of Christ or, far worse, at the Great White Throne. That sobering thought should help us to always tell the truth. If so, the very absence of lies will prevent all sorts of bad things from happening in our lives later on.

We would avoid trouble not only by what we do but what we *don’t do*. Of course, we will probably never know what those bad things were that didn’t happen – because they never happened. But God knows and we should take His word for it and act upon it by speaking and acting truthfully at all times, even if we never get to know what problems were prevented.

b) “**The breastplate of righteousness**” – The Roman soldiers, including the one whose job it was to stand guard over Paul, wore a metal breastplate. This covered the soldier’s chest and abdominal area, guarding his heart and vital organs. The meaning of the metaphor is that if we grow in maturity such that we learn to *live righteously* and make *godly choices* and have *right reactions* when under pressure, and if we avoid doing unrighteous things, then that way of living will prevent all kinds of problems and disasters in our lives.

For example, if we have learned to be faithful to our own wife, such that an affair with another woman is absolutely ruled out, then it will affect how we relate to other women. It will cause us to continually “transmit” signals to the women we meet that say *“I’m not interested in you in any improper way”*. Rest assured, those women will pick up those transmissions and keep their distance.

That in itself will prevent situations from ever starting that might otherwise have led, step by step, to flirting, improper conduct and even adultery. Sadly, many men (and women) are transmitting a very different kind of message, even Christians, and it leads to disaster for those who allow those signals to be sent and eventually yield to that temptation.

That’s just one example of how living righteously prevents problems from even getting started. It applies to many other situations too. For example, if you live righteously at your workplace people will soon notice and they will then exclude you from any sinful or crooked practices they might engage in. Sometimes, being excluded is an advantage and you can actually benefit from being left out of things.

A story from my police career may help to illustrate this principle. On my very first day at a police station after I had finished at the Regional Training Centre, I was assigned a “tutor constable”. For ten weeks I had to accompany him everywhere and he had to show me how to do the job.

On that first day, when we had only been together for about an hour, my tutor constable, an experienced officer who had previously been in the Army, turned to me and said *“Whatever I write in my pocket book, that is what you will write in yours”*.

I knew immediately what he meant. He was telling me that any evidence I gave must never be different from his evidence. He wanted to avoid me getting him into trouble by making sure we always presented an identical account of what happened.

I knew immediately in my spirit this was a crunch moment and that I could not sign a blank cheque like that by agreeing in advance to confirm in court anything he ever said. So, I replied, *“That’s fine, just as long as what we write is always true.”* He turned and looked at me with a face like thunder and was not impressed.

I then explained further that I was a committed Christian and could not tell any lies under any circumstances. This alarmed him greatly because he feared I would end up landing him in trouble by saying exactly what had happened, warts and all, and revealing precisely what had been said and done in situations where he might not have behaved properly.

So, when we went back to the station later that day he told the whole shift what I had said and they quickly told all the other three shifts so the whole station soon heard. Then, on my second day in the job I was basically shunned by all my colleagues. They avoided me because they had been told it was dangerous to be with me as I would “get people sacked”.

It was an extremely painful and bewildering ordeal and it continued for about four months until they got to know me better when the 1984 coal miners’ strike began and we were all sent out to the picket lines in packed carrier vans. Then they were forced to mix with me and they softened and changed their view of me.

But here's the point. My saying what I said created for me, quite unintentionally, a reputation throughout the entire station and even beyond there, to other stations, for being absolutely straight. Therefore, I found for the next three years that whenever I was on duty nothing improper ever happened in my presence. No prisoner was ever assaulted. No lies were ever told. No excessive force was ever used and all rules were fully observed.

It was almost as if I was the Superintendent. Nobody ever misbehaved when I was present, whereas things quite often happened on the other three shifts, or even on my shift *when I was not present*. I would come in to work after a day off to hear of bad things that had been done but which I never saw.

Therefore, in a roundabout way, I ended up achieving the very thing I had hoped for on day one which was to avoid ever being put in a situation where a fellow officer did wrong in my presence and I was then required to give evidence about it. I had dreaded being trapped in that tight corner where I had to choose between telling a lie in court or getting a colleague into trouble.

I really didn't want anybody to get into trouble, but I wasn't willing to lie either, whether in court or anywhere else. However, God used that painful incident and the notoriety it produced to create a solid protection for me which meant I never had to give evidence against any of my colleagues because they all behaved like angels when I was around.

So you see, my insistence on acting rightly and on letting it be known that I would do so, protected me, like armour. It kept me out of difficult situations by never allowing improper things to happen in the first place. Therefore, seek to develop the character trait of righteousness and to build a *reputation* for it.

Ask God to help you to become mature and to develop righteous habits and patterns of acting and to be known for it. You will probably be mocked, despised and even hated, especially if you are in a junior position at work. I can't deny that. But you will also avoid many heartaches and disasters that way and it will make it so much harder for a demon to trip you up.

Again, if you remind yourself every day that you will one day face God's judgment where the decision or situation you now face will be *replayed and judged publicly*, as if on a large TV screen, then it should help you to make the right choices, even where you feel tempted to do wrong.

c) “..... And with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace”

This part of the armour, from verse 15, is perhaps the least clear and the one for which the metaphor is hardest to explain. If you look at commentaries they have a lot to say about how stout, strong shoes are vital for a Roman soldier to enable him to go into battle. We can all see that and nobody would disagree. The issue for us, however, who are not Roman soldiers, is:

- i) What do our feet represent here in this metaphor or, to be more precise, the shoes that a soldier puts on? What do feet or shoes represent to us, rather than to soldiers?
- ii) What is the peace referred to in the verse and what has that peace got to do with the Gospel?
- iii) What exactly is apostle Paul telling us to do or what character trait is he telling us to acquire and develop?

Let me try to make it clear therefore, at least as I understand it. The point of the metaphor is that if we are to be protected from harm and made capable of taking part in the spiritual battles we face then we need the character trait of peace. That is to say that instead of being agitated, anxious, bewildered or troubled, we need to have our lives so ordered as to be at peace and to feel calm, relaxed, confident and unafraid, whatever issues, opposition or trouble we encounter.

The source of this peace, which Paul chooses to portray by the metaphor of a stout pair of shoes, is the Gospel itself. If we know the true Gospel, and believe it, and if we know without a shadow of a doubt that we are saved, forgiven, made righteous by Jesus' blood and facing an eternity with Him, no matter what people do to us here, then we will have peace.

We will have stability, assurance and serenity because we know who we are, what we are, and where we are going and that Jesus, our commanding officer, is going to be totally victorious. Jesus alluded to this victory and the peace it can give to us:

³³ ***I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.***"

John 16:33 (RSV)

I often say, especially since 2020, that I feel I am living in an insane asylum due to the crazy things that are now happening, and the deranged, corrupt, psychopathic people in charge of our governments, media, courts, police, hospitals, schools, universities and corporations. Moreover, they are getting worse.

I dread to think of what is going to happen to my beloved England in the decades ahead when, as seems inevitable, Islam takes over due to our corrupt politicians letting Muslim illegal immigrants enter the UK unhindered. They even put them in 4 star hotels and then grant them council houses while our own native homeless remain on the streets, including the veterans of our armed forces.

But when I feel such dread and apprehension, I remind myself that:

- i) I am saved and have eternal life and nobody can take that from me
- ii) My LORD and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is also the King of Israel, is going to return and when He does He will destroy all evil, including Islam, kill all His enemies and send the Devil and his demons to the abyss and then to the Lake of Fire.
- iii) Therefore, Islam, though vile, is purely temporary. So are the corrupt globalists in the WEF, the EU, and the governments of the world. They will all be destroyed by Jesus, never to be seen again.

Can you see how that absolute assurance of all things being put right in the future, when Jesus' Kingdom is set up, is capable of restoring your equilibrium and giving you a sense of peace and assurance? Please remember *the Gospel is not only about personal salvation* for each of us as individuals, vital though that is.

It is also about the fact that we have a King who is going to return *and set up His Kingdom* here, on this literal, physical planet Earth, not in Heaven. He will then rule the whole world from Jerusalem with perfect laws and perfect justice. I can't wait to see it. Therefore, the point we are to take from

this stout shoes metaphor is that we can, and should, develop this character trait of peace, serenity and calm assurance.

We can do so by knowing the Gospel, believing it, acting on it and reminding ourselves of it whenever we are induced to “take our eyes off the ball” and focus on our troubles, our opponents and all the evil that is in the world. I consider that a very worthwhile part of our armour and it liberates us to get on with the things God wants us to do, in particular sharing that very Gospel with the unsaved.

d) **“the shield of faith”** – one of the Devil’s favourite tricks is to get you to doubt God and His Word. Demons want your heart to be troubled by nagging “*unbelief*” instead of trusting God and taking Him at His word. If you are troubled by doubt and unbelief it will have a crippling effect on you and leave you weak and much less useful to God. You will shrink back from challenging circumstances and opportunities.

God wants you, and all His children, to be *bold, strong and confident*. He wants you to constantly and instinctively *trust Him and His Word*, and believe all His promises, as stated in the Bible. If you are like that, you will not fall victim to the demons when they seek to plant thoughts of doubt, unbelief and distrust in your heart. Also, you won’t suspect God’s motives and character or accuse Him of anything.

You will know He can be trusted, and that you can rely on His promises, even where you are bewildered, disorientated and dazed by problems you face and have no idea what’s going on or what the future holds. When you face those hard times, as you surely will, you may not know what’s going on, or what to do, but the one thing you will know is that *you can trust Him and His Word*:

*⁴ In God, whose word I praise,
In God I have put my trust;
I shall not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?
Psalm 56:4 (NASB)*

The demon assigned to you wants your relationship with God to be dysfunctional, as if God was some estranged, feckless, abusive parent who cannot be trusted or relied upon. Imagine the damaging effect it would have on your children’s relationship with you, or your relationship with your parents, if there was such mistrust, doubt and suspicion. It would be debilitating and very hurtful too.

Having faith in God, trusting Him completely, knowing His character, and believing His promises about how He will always be with us and provide for us etc, protects you from all that. Then, when the demon’s fiery arrows of lies and accusations fly at you, the shield of faith will stop them before they even get to you. If the demon whispers in your ear that God is not to be trusted or that He will abandon you or let you down, why not proclaim out loud the truth that the Bible tells us:

*⁸ The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.*

Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV)

*⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged,
for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*

Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

There are hundreds of verses such as these. Learn as many as you can by heart and speak them *out loud*, not just in your head. Or write them out on little cards which you can read from when you need to proclaim and rely on His promises. Say them as a confident proclamation of what you believe (or want to believe) if ever you are tempted to fear or to doubt God's goodness, faithfulness, provision or protection.

When a demon sees you doing that consistently they will choose to leave you alone. The last thing they want is to do things that backfire on them by prompting you to remind yourself and others of God's promises and His faithfulness rather than believing their lies about Him. On top of all that, remember that the universe God created is based on faith and operates on faith.

The need for faith is therefore central to so many things and has a huge bearing on how our lives work out and, above all, whether our prayers are answered and whether we turn out to be "overcomers". That is because all of that, and much more besides, is dependent on us having faith *in God Himself* and therefore *in His Word* such that we act upon it with confidence and rely on it without hesitating or needing to think about it.

Doing so brings success and victory. Not doing so brings failure and defeat. Therefore, "pick up the shield of faith" and raise it metaphorically whenever you need to by asserting out loud that you believe God, trust His Word and trust His character. And stubbornly refuse to listen to any voice, human or demonic, which says otherwise. Make it a central part of your character and habits such that you get to the stage where trusting God and defending His reputation is your automatic default setting.

e) **"the helmet of salvation"** – to get the correct meaning of this phrase you have to look elsewhere in the Bible. That happens often in Scripture as a phrase is used in a verse but is only defined or clarified somewhere else. This unusual phrase involving the helmet, which originally comes from Isaiah, is used by apostle Paul in Ephesians 6 but it is explained in his first letter to the Thessalonians:

⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:8-11 (NIV)

This thing therefore which Paul likens to a helmet to protect the head, or rather the mind, is the character trait of *hope*. Firstly, it means the hope of our own personal salvation. However, it also means hope generally in all contexts and settings, as we shall discuss further below.

What's more, Paul refers to hope repeatedly in other letters. Those verses emphasise the vital importance of maintaining our hope as a protection for our minds and reveal the many other benefits hope gives to us:

²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8:23-25 (RSV)

¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands-- ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 2:11-12 (RSV)

²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:27 (RSB)

¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, ¹⁸so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. ¹⁹We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchiz'edek.

Hebrews 6:17-20 (RSV)

So, the 'helmet' means hope generally, but also the hope of salvation and what then lies ahead of us for all eternity. Paul uses the metaphor of a helmet because hope is the main protection we have for our minds. The Devil wants to attack us in our minds by getting us to become plagued by anxiety, worry, pessimism, fear, apprehension, depression and despair, all of which occur primarily in the mind.

The Devil wants you to be weakened by a general sense of hopelessness, such that you are worn down and give up the fight, believing you can't win it. Yet, the reality is we have a tremendous basis for hope and optimism. If you are a real Christian you have salvation and face an eternity with God in the future. On top of that, you also have the privilege of serving Him now with every reason to expect at least some victories in the battles He asks you to fight.

Derek Prince once defined hope as "*the confident expectation of good*". Therefore, develop the habit of speaking about, and focusing upon, your hope as to what God is going to do in the future and what He has in store for you. Make the effort to dwell on those good, positive, wholesome things, even if you don't feel like it.

And refuse to dwell on the negative, gloomy, morbid thoughts the demons seek to plant in your mind, or that you see on the TV news. Better still, don't watch the news at all. Most of it is lies anyway, given that the entire media is owned by 6 huge corporations, all of which support the corrupt global elite and act as their propaganda outlets, all telling identical lies at the same time.

The need to maintain a strong attitude of hope is an ongoing lifelong battle, not just a brief one off skirmish. The demon assigned to you is determined to sap your strength and undermine your hope. You have to be determined to resist that. Therefore, resolve with your will that, no matter what happens, you are going to train yourself to become an optimistic, confident, trustful person who fully expects a bright future and to experience God's faithfulness.

Make it your goal to fill your mind with hope and to maintain it. Pursue that as a long term project. The more you do that, the more you will frustrate and overcome the demon who has been given the

task of rendering you useless and ineffective. Just refuse to cooperate or to be beaten, no matter what your circumstances are.

Remember, all it takes for the demon to defeat you is for you to *give up in despair and drop out of the battle*. Indeed, that is what many Christians do. But, if you refuse to do that, *no matter what*, then you will always stay in the fight. That one thing alone, refusing to give in, means you have won, simply because it means you *carry on*, which is precisely what the demon expects you *not* to do. He expects you to be like most other people and to give up the fight. But you must be determined not to.

f) **“the sword of the spirit** which is the Word of God” – have you noticed that all the other phrases had to do with defensive metaphors, i.e. belts, shields, helmets, breastplates, etc? Now, this sixth one is capable of being used in an *offensive* mode i.e. as a *weapon* rather than just defensive armour. This weapon which you are to wield is God’s Word, i.e. the Bible, and this is where proclamation comes in, as that is the main way to use Scripture as a weapon.

If you study and memorise God’s Word and store it in your mind, then you will be able to use it to reply immediately when a demon’s lies and temptations are fired at you. You can then use God’s Word to speak out loud to the heavenly places exactly what God says and to assert it aggressively, to show that you place your own personal reliance upon it and to let the whole angelic and demonic realms know exactly where you stand on any issue that you face.

Then, in any situation when you are faced with a false idea, a lie or a false teaching, you can make the appropriate response and assert the truth. That means *to say the same as what God says about it* and to apply His statements, promises and principles. That is what Jesus did when He was plagued by the Devil in the desert while He was on His 40 day fast.

Each time the Devil tried to tempt Him, He just calmly quoted from the Bible. The Devil was unable to defeat that and, in the end, he went away. We need to adopt that assertive approach not just because it works but also because it is inherently the right thing to do.

What does it mean to “stand”?

Firstly, let’s remind ourselves of what Paul says in Ephesians 6 when he lists all of the “armour of God”. I shall quote verses 13 and 14 again, this time in the RSV

¹³ Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

Ephesians 6:13-14 (RSV)

Note how the net effect of all this armour is it enables us to “stand” or “withstand”. Paul does not speak in lofty terms of it enabling us to do amazing things and to kill dragons and act like Superman. It is essentially about becoming able to stand, in the sense of *holding your ground* and resisting all that the demons can throw at you.

It reminds me of the 101st airborne division during the siege of Bastogne in December 1944 and January 1945 in the Battle of the Bulge when the Germans launched one huge final counter attack. Bastogne

was a small town but one through which several roads passed. So, it was a major crossroads and would have been of great value to the Germans if they could have taken it.

They could then have pushed on further and driven the Allies back. But the 101st airborne dug in and *held that town*, thereby denying it to the Germans. The US paratroopers never launched any attacks at that time or took any additional territory. They couldn't do so anyway in that situation as they were too few in number and had no tanks. Moreover, the weather was so bad they couldn't get air support either.

Their job was simply to “*hang on*” to “*hold the line*” and to deny Bastogne to the Germans. And they succeeded in that goal, which was a severe blow to the German advance. Likewise, in our own individual lives we are not often called upon to win territory or to capture towns or cities for God. Sometimes we are, but that is primarily done by preaching the Gospel, not by wearing the armour of God from Ephesians 6.

Most of the time, what God primarily wants each of us to do is to “*hold the line*”. That means to stand firm, not to give in, not to be defeated, not to be deceived, not to sin, not to lose heart, not to lie, not to despair and not to disbelieve. Have you noticed that most of these objectives are about *not doing things* rather than positively taking ground or doing anything spectacular. It is, as I said, primarily a defensive battle.

Our goal is not to give any ground to the enemy and above all, not to allow the demon assigned to you to capture any territory within you, in your heart, mind, body or emotions. Hold on to yourself and yield no ground to the demons. Don't let them capture any part of you or set up any strongholds within your life. This defensive theme is continued in two passages from 1 Peter and James:

⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. ⁸Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

1 Peter 5:6-9 (NIV)

⁴You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

James 4:4-10 (NIV)

We see from the two passages above that the key elements of the approach we must take are that we should:

- a) *humble* ourselves
- b) *reject* the values of this world system (which are Satan's values)

- c) *submit* ourselves to God
- d) having done those three things, we are then to *stand firm* and to simply *resist* whatever the Devil and his demons seek to do in you, to you or through you.

Note also that none of these steps involves anything magical, mystical or spectacular. And again they are, almost entirely, to do with our character, values, attitudes and decisions. Yet we are told above in James chapter 4 that when we do these things demons will “*flee from us*”. But why would they do that? What does it mean? And what doesn’t it mean?

Those people who go around trying to fight demons and “*throw them out of cities and nations*”, or trying to command them to “*go to the abyss*”, are largely wasting their time. Demons will not obey such instructions. They are free to remain active on this Earth until Jesus binds them at the start of His millennial kingdom. So, they are not going to leave early or go to the abyss just because you or I say so.

The thing that causes a demon to give up and go away is *the realisation that he is wasting his time* in trying to tempt, deceive, demoralise or derail you and that he is just banging his head against a brick wall and getting nowhere. When they realise that, they will voluntarily *give it up* – though only to regroup, rethink their approach and come back later to try some other scheme.

But when they do, just repeat the same defensive exercise and stand firm all over again. You will find that each time they try a new attack, even if it is a stronger one, your ability to resist will have risen at least as much, if not more than, the increased scale or intensity of their attack. That is because you are growing in maturity.

What does it mean to say that demons will “*flee from us*”?

Demons are pleased when believers try to do misguided, unbiblical, pretentious things in dealing with demons and when we focus on them excessively. They know you would then be wasting your time and failing to do the real tasks God has told you to do. When the Bible says demons flee from us, it does not mean the demon is frightened of us or that we can harm the demon. They aren’t afraid of us, and we can’t harm them.

The reason the demon would “flee” from us is because our obedience to those steps set out above makes us *effective* as Christians. It also makes us *more immune* to the demon’s tactics and methods. A humble person who rejects the world’s values, submits himself to God and is determined to stand firm and resist, is a very formidable opponent to a demon.

If we do all these things we become too difficult for them to deal with and they realise we cannot be overcome. We become like an immovable obstacle or roadblock in the demon's path and prevent him achieving his specific objectives. Demons are sensible and they don’t persist in wasting their time and effort doing unprofitable things which achieve nothing for them.

Therefore demons “flee from us” in the sense that *they give up the attack*, or at least that particular attack, and *withdraw*. That is to say they get frustrated and give up whatever trick they had been using up to that point. They will abandon their less successful tactics, recognising that they do not work on you, and even that they are counterproductive from their perspective.

They will therefore try some different method with you. What they will not do is to carry on using the same method against you when they can see it is clearly *not working*, especially if they can see it is actually back firing on them by causing you to become closer to God and to grow stronger as a believer.

The assumptions demons make about us, and which they rely on when dealing with us

Demons operate according to their own sinful nature and their selfish values and methods. So do most human beings. They therefore want and *expect you to do the same*. Indeed, they bank on it. Their techniques rely on you thinking, acting and reacting in the ways they expect you to. In other words, they expect you to think, act and react *like them*. They therefore rely on you being:

- a) **carnal and fleshly**, i.e. selfish, proud, hot tempered, lustful, greedy, etc.
- b) **worldly**, i.e. prone to operating according to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life.

If you are any or all of the above, then a demon can play you like a violin. They can accurately predict your reaction to any given situation or temptation. They can then easily tempt, deceive, demoralise or distract you by using your own sinful nature to catch you out or trip you up.

For example, if you are proud, the demon will rely on your pride to cause you to respond in the ways it wants you to when certain things are said or done. All the demon has to do is cause some human over whom they have influence to say or do something that will provoke your pride.

The demon can then confidently expect that you will deliver the goods by reacting badly. That's exactly what the demon wants you to do. The same logic is true if the demon seeks to rely upon your characteristics of envy, hatred, anger, greed, selfishness, lust, deviousness, and so on.

If they can safely rely on you to think as they do, to share their values, and act as they do, they can then confidently expect you *to react in the way they want you to*. You become predictable, and thus easy to manipulate. The demon has only to press the right "buttons" in you and he can operate you like a ventriloquist's dummy.

The importance of acting in the opposite way to what our flesh, or the world's values, would urge us to do

God deliberately emphasises the three things I set out earlier, namely humbling yourself, rejecting the world's values and submitting yourself to God. If you sincerely do those three things you are in a far better position to stand firm and resist the demons because you are no longer so likely to react sinfully in the ways the demons expect you to.

The person who has decided to humble himself, who is then faced with a temptation to be proud, will pause and say to himself something like: "*No, I am not going to react proudly. There is already too much pride in me and this person's criticism of me probably has some justification in it. I am going to learn from it, rather than lose my temper or hit back*".

Demons are surprised when you react in that humble, honest, self-controlled manner, because it is so alien to them, given the depraved nature of their own sinful minds and hearts. You could repeat that same sort of internal conversation for every other kind of temptation to sin.

If you have humbled yourself, rejected the world's values and submitted yourself to God, then you will find it much easier to recognise when you are being tempted to do something wrong, whatever it may be. The strings the demon seeks to pull in you and the buttons they want to press will no longer work, or will not work so well.

That must be tremendously frustrating for a demon, which is another reason why they will flee from you when you act in this way. It is like a dishonest cowboy builder who abandons a building site which is proving to be unprofitable and involves more effort than it is worth. Demons hate it when the "levers" and "buttons" do not work. And they won't keep on doing something that doesn't work or isn't worthwhile.

The works of the flesh or the acts of the sinful nature

As we saw in the earlier chapters, we must resolve to act and react in the opposite way from that which we experience from other people or from demons. If a person speaks to us proudly then we should pause, brace ourselves and respond with humility. It is disarming to the person who is being proud, but even more so to the demon within or alongside that person and to your own demon as well.

The demon who accompanies you is hoping to use that person's pride, in conjunction with your own pride, to trip you up. But that trick won't work if only one of the people in the situation is proud, or at least if only one is willing to manifest their pride. Likewise, if someone is being selfish towards us, we need to pause for a moment and consciously decide to respond unselfishly.

The same is true for every other form of sin or temptation. If you respond in the opposite way to the world's system and values and in the opposite way to how your own flesh nature suggests, then you will do right. And your unexpected response will throw the demons, and the human beings they inhabit, off their balance, as if it was a judo match.

In the King James Bible the things that our carnal nature causes us to think and do are referred to as "*the works of the flesh*". In the New International Version it is translated as "*the acts of the sinful nature*". Look again at this passage from Galatians where apostle Paul describes these traits or types of behaviour:

¹⁹The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21 (NIV)

Look at each of these words in turn. Hopefully you will accept that they accurately describe your true nature. That's what you and I are like deep down in our sinful nature or "*old man*". Therefore, regardless of how you feel, or what you want to do, decide *as an exercise of your will* to act consistently

in the opposite way. You must do that because these are the very character traits the demon is hoping to use to get you to react in the way it wants you to.

The fruit of the Spirit - how these character traits help us to resist demons

Now let's look at what apostle Paul lists as the opposite characteristics, i.e. those to which we are meant to aspire, and seek to develop. These are God's characteristics and traits, which the Holy Spirit wants to reproduce in us as we mature as Christians.

That is why these characteristics are known as "*the fruit of the Spirit*" because they aren't gifts. They are *grown in us* over time like apples in an orchard. It simply means that, as time goes by, the Holy Spirit will seek to grow these qualities in us, just as a tree gradually produces fruit, which tells you what kind of tree it is:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:22-24 (NASB)

You know a tree by its fruit. Likewise, people will know what we are by the type of fruit we produce, in particular in our character and, above all, in our reactions. If you deliberately choose to act and react in these godly ways when tempted, instead of doing what your flesh nature or the world's values suggest to you, then you will do the right things.

These attitudes and traits are only to be found in a person who has regularly humbled themselves, rejected the world's values and submitted themselves to God in one difficult situation after another, for a long period of time. It does not happen overnight.

We must purposefully set out to develop these traits known as the fruit of the Spirit and also ask God to help us to build these attitudes and character qualities in our lives. Then we will steadily become harder and harder for demons to deal with, even allowing for occasional mistakes, failures and setbacks. We will increasingly choose to react in ways which are not our natural fleshly reaction and in the opposite way from what the world would do.

Where there is conflict, or we are badly treated, then instead of responding with bitterness and rage and lashing out at people, saying further harmful things, we can forgive the other person, overlook the offence, remain calm, behave in a godly manner, and stop the rot spreading any further.

The importance of our reactions

Imagine a person does wrong to us, lies about us or insults us. Then let us say, for the purpose of this illustration, that "10 units of wrong" have been done to us. If we react well and don't add any more "wrongs" in return, then the overall wrongdoing has been kept at only 10 units in total. It doesn't get any bigger.

If, however, we lash out and “give as good as we get”, we will almost always find that we sin in our reaction. That means that now we have, perhaps, produced 20 further ‘units of wrong’ through the sinful way in which we reacted. So there are now 30 units of wrong in total.

What is more, our bad reaction will, probably, produce an equivalent carnal reaction in the other person, who will now, perhaps, bring forth a further 40 units of wrong in his response, bringing the running total up to 70 ‘units’. The chances are we will then react badly again and so the process goes on and on all because we reacted badly *to the initial provocation*.

If we had not done so, the total ‘units of wrongdoing’ would have remained at the initial 10 which came from the other person. No new or extra wrongs would have been done to add to those. That limitation of the damage is no small achievement and is one way in which we can make a real difference in the world. We can prevent harm and conflict escalating, just by the godly way we react at the start and by what we *don’t do*. By so doing, we limit what was done to being a single incident instead of a chain reaction

Before I became a Christian, my main sins were in my actions. I sinned in the things I did and the things I initiated. I sinned without anybody needing to provoke me or tempt me. Now, I believe my main sins are generally in my *reactions*. I am most prone to sin as a response when somebody provokes me or acts wrongly towards me, rather than me starting things.

Some people imagine that if we have been wronged then we are not blameworthy if we react in an equivalent way, as if we are entitled to do the same in return. That is not so. If someone lies about us we may not lie about them. If someone treats us unfairly we may not treat them unfairly. If someone acts proudly towards us that does not entitle us to act proudly in return.

The point is that although we frequently sin in our reactions, there is no justification for doing so. God views it as sin every bit as much as when we sin in our actions, i.e. when we start things. Therefore you will benefit if you focus carefully on regulating your reactions, and especially your temper.

Try to observe the way you feel, speak, think and act when under an unexpected stress or pressure. Once you start to study this you will see patterns emerging. Take for example a domestic argument with your husband or wife. No matter how mature you are, these will happen, though hopefully to an ever smaller extent. I have observed over the years that these flare ups used to follow very predictable patterns.

There would be some incident, intended or otherwise, which provoked a disagreement. It would then escalate, and continue to escalate, as both my wife and I reacted in the wrong way, taking turns to react badly, one after another, with pride, selfishness and lack of self-control. But remember that where any domestic row is in progress, it is highly likely that demons are involved and on both sides.

In fairness, one must emphasise again that the main cause, or at least the original cause, of that row is our own fleshly nature. Nevertheless, the demons can also play a significant part in egging us on to make it worse and more prolonged. Thus, imagine your wife has just said something unfair or unkind to you. At that moment you have a choice to make.

Your sinful flesh nature wants to hit back and respond in the same way by giving some equivalent rebuke, or at least giving her a piece of your mind. At the same time the demon is also egging you on

to do that, knowing that would go with the grain of your fleshly nature. Therefore the temptation the demon plants in your mind is likely to be yielded to.

If however at that moment you stop and say something along the lines of: *“No I am not going to react in the way my flesh nature and this demon want me to. I am going to stop this argument now, or at least I refuse to escalate it. I am going to humble myself, reject the world’s values, and submit myself to God.”*

Then, instead of giving your wife a sharp rebuke and telling her how unfair and wrong she is, simply say something like *“I am sorry for upsetting you. I was wrong to do what I did. My attitude was wrong and I would like to change.”* If you say anything along those lines, it may be the argument will suddenly stop.

Alternatively, it may not. Your wife’s own flesh nature is also at work and the demon assigned to her is equally as active as yours, and will seek to keep the argument going regardless. If, however, you can hold firm and resist the demon, and also crucify your own flesh by denying your sinful nature what it wants (the right to shout and lash out) then, sooner or later, you are going to put the fire out, or at least dampen it down.

I have found in this way that an argument that might have taken six hours to resolve can be shortened and resolved in six minutes. I would like to get it down to six seconds. I have not yet found a way to entirely avoid having any arguments. I don’t suppose I ever will prior to death. But there is an enormous benefit in shortening their length and frequency. And my wife and I now usually resolve things within minutes at most, never hours or even days as was the case when we were newly married nearly 40 years ago.

This applies not only to arguments and flash points in marriage, where all of this is at its most important, but also at work and in other relationships. It is well worth reducing the length, intensity and frequency of all disputes and rows, wherever they occur, even if you can’t stop them entirely.

Now you can begin to see why a demon may choose to leave you alone after a while if you keep reacting like this. If they see that when they try and tempt you to have a row, or to lash out, you instead humble yourself and seek reconciliation, they will soon recognise that you are only growing in maturity as a result of their interventions.

They will realise that their attacks upon you are therefore counterproductive from their perspective and are actually strengthening rather than weakening you. They will see that long before you do. And once they see that is happening they will be shrewd enough to stop attacking you in that way.

Unfortunately, they won’t then leave the country and emigrate. They will just turn their attention to attacking you in some other way. That is unavoidable. However, that is the reality, and we need to face it. Once you have risen to a new level of maturity, you will face a whole new set of battles. The process just keeps going on and on at an ever higher level until you die.

The fact that the demons call in “reinforcements” and attack you in new, bigger, more difficult ways is a good thing, not a bad thing, if you properly understand what is really going on and what God is seeking to achieve in terms of your maturity. It is like moving up to a new class each year at school, with harder things to do, increased levels of homework and less time in the playground.

That may be difficult for your child but ask yourself why you permit it, and even want it for them. You wouldn't want your child to remain in the infants' class forever, even if it was easier. Well, God sees it the same way with us.

Now perhaps you can see more clearly one of the reasons why God allows demons to operate in this world. If you realise that their attacks upon us can actually help to mature us, then it helps us to make sense of why God allows it and even to be thankful when we face such battles, even when they intensify after every victory we achieve.

The Biblical approach I've outlined above, i.e. (a) humble yourself, (b) reject the world's values and (c) submit yourself to God, will work no matter who you are and no matter what level of demonic activity or attack you are dealing with, whether mild or extreme, internal or external.

It is still the right approach to take, even if you are very heavily demonised through a lifetime's involvement in the occult, adultery, promiscuity, homosexuality and so forth. This is the method God gave us and it works. Of course, a person who has a demon on the *inside* also needs to have it cast out. But, until then, they should still resist it. It is just that to get total victory the demon must also be cast out.

Remember your own flesh (sinful nature) is your main enemy, even more so than demons

Although only some of us require the casting out of demons, we are all called to resist demons. However, the biggest enemy you will ever have is probably yourself. The Bible says more about our flesh than it says about demons. We saw earlier that the only way we can deal with our flesh is to crucify it. We cannot "cast out our flesh" as we can "cast out a demon". We are stuck with it.

All we can do is to keep on relentlessly crucifying the flesh by starving it, denying it and refusing to let it have its own way. This is the exact opposite of what modern psychology teaches, which promotes self-indulgence, pampering and endless focusing on self and on what we feel and want. In stark contrast to that, the Bible tells us to deny ourselves and humble ourselves.

If we do, we will gain victories over the flesh, and be in a far stronger position to face the secondary, but still important, battle against the demons who attack us. So, for every minute you give to thinking about how to resist demons, give five minutes to crucifying your own flesh i.e. denying and resisting your own sinful nature and all its wants, cravings and preoccupations.

The so called "*Jezebel spirit*" - is there such a thing?

There are many books on the subject of what is known as the "*Jezebel spirit*". This is a reference to Queen Jezebel in the northern kingdom of Israel who was the wife of King Ahab. She was an exceptionally wicked woman who was the daughter of a Sidonian king. Therefore, she was not Jewish. She was an idolater and practiced occult activities and, by her evil influence, she led her Jewish husband, King Ahab, into terrible sin which had a very harmful effect on the northern kingdom of Israel.

She operated through manipulation, domination and control. In other words she was practicing "witchcraft", because that is what witchcraft is really about. It is the attempt to dominate, manipulate

and control other people by a variety of means, some emotional or mental, and others spiritual. Whatever methods are used, they are all wicked because it is extremely important to God that every person should be completely free to make their own personal choices and should never be controlled, manipulated or dominated by any other person.

Many books have been written on the subject of the ‘Jezebel spirit’, but much of it is misleading and confused. The basic idea these people put forward is that there is a particular demon which is responsible for this kind of activity, all over the world. Therefore, according to their theory, whenever we come across a person who is manipulative, dominating or controlling or who is practicing witchcraft, then the “Jezebel spirit” is in operation in them, or they “*have the Jezebel spirit*”.

That way of thinking implies that there is a specialist demon or type of demon who is doing all of this worldwide. However, I feel sure that is not the case. ***All demons operate that way. That is their basic nature.*** Indeed, that is the way the whole world operates and it is the way our sinful flesh nature naturally operates. It is in line with our sinful nature to be dominating, manipulative and controlling. It is natural for demons, for you, and for other people. *It is also the way of the world.*

Thus, when we come across these things it is a misconception to think we can “*cast out the Jezebel spirit*” or “*bind the Jezebel spirit*”. We cannot do that because *there is no such thing*. Every demon we ever come across is operating in this way or trying to. It’s what they all do. It is not a particular super powered individual demon who does it all. Neither is it a sub group or specialist category of demons.

The way we deal with resisting demons is as I have explained in the preceding chapters and in this. We are to use all the usual methods i.e. (a) humble ourselves, (b) reject the world’s values, (c) submit ourselves to God, (d) crucify our flesh, (e) deny ourselves, (f) stand firm and so on. Then we are in a good position and are ready to resist the demons.

So, if we encounter these sinful characteristics and activities known as domination, manipulation and control, we need to respond as per (a) to (f) above. We must always resist these manipulative traits in ourselves and in others. That also means we must resist people, whoever they are, who seek to treat us in these ways, not just demons.

We must never allow ourselves to be dominated, manipulated or controlled by anyone. Whenever we see such traits being manifested in others we must resist it all strongly. If this is coming from other people, then they are acting in accordance with their own fleshly nature. But they are also acting in accordance with this world’s system.

Thirdly, they are acting in accordance with the promptings and temptations given to them by the demon who is influencing them. Your task, as you deal with such tactics from people, is to resist and not to cooperate. Do not submit to any of it. Always reject it. Never submit to it. And never imitate it.

What you cannot do is engage in any magical or mystical techniques or use special prayers or particular forms of words to deal with this so called ‘Jezebel spirit’. When up against witchcraft, just use the ordinary biblical methods as outlined above. And, of course, engage in prayer, praise, worship, thanksgiving and proclamation. However, what you must never do is to adopt or use any of these characteristics of witchcraft yourself.

Domination, manipulation and control can just as easily be found within you, not only within other people. Wherever you see it trying to emerge in your own life you have to beat it down and do the opposite of what your sinful habits, carnal tendencies or the influence of the world suggest to you. If not, then you are starting to operate in witchcraft and will make yourself a useful tool to the demon who is working in your life. They can then use you to harm other people or to damage a church.

Insofar as it is an expression of your own carnal nature then you need to crucify your flesh and deny it the opportunity to behave in these ways. If it is coming from the world and its values, then you need to reject those worldly values and refuse to be part of it.

So, if there is a project or task at your workplace which involves acting in a manipulative, dominating or controlling way on behalf of your company or church, refuse to do it. Explain to your boss or leader that you feel it is wrong and that you do not feel able to participate in that activity or operate in that way.

If the temptation to act in these ways is coming from a demon, which it very often is, then you need to resist that temptation and refuse to cooperate with it. In short, you put all three of these approaches into action, addressing the world, the flesh and the Devil, whenever you are tempted to operate in these controlling, manipulative or dominating ways.