

Stand Against The Wiles Of The Devil

'In the synagogue there was a man who was possessed by a demon and he cried out with a loud scream, "Ahh! Let us alone! What have You to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know Who You are – the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked him saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" When the demon had thrown the man down, it came out of him without injuring him. They were amazed and said, "What kind of talk is this? For with authority and power He commands the evil spirits and they come out?"' (Luke 4:33 to 36).

There are references to evil spirits scattered throughout the Bible, and the scriptures describe the actions and outcomes of the spirits. We know, of course that evil spirits cause havoc. They are part of the heavenly hosts who stand before God (Job 1:6; 2:1; 2 Chronicles 18:20). We can see by what the scriptures tell us, evil spirits can cause whatever mischief they choose. The Lord Himself in His sovereignty sometimes uses the devil and other evil beings for His own purposes and plans and when He has finished with the devil, he will be thrown into the lake of fire for all eternity (Revelation 20:10). The lake of fire was made for the devil and his angels, not for people (Matthew 25:41), but unfortunately there will be many people sent there because of their wickedness (Revelation 20:15).

When we study the following scriptures, we will see that the evil spirits were only given permission to attack the non-believers or the wicked, except in the case of Job but that was for a specific purpose. We humans cannot usually see evil spirits unless God opens our eyes into the spirit realm, but we can see the effects of the evil spirit within a person more frequently than we see the evil spirit itself. Evil spirits are under the complete control of God and cannot do anything unless God gives them direct permission (Job 1:12; 2:6; 2 Chronicles 18:21). While on earth, Jesus exercised total control over evil spirits and they knew exactly Who He was. The demons believe in God and shudder in terror (James 2:19). Once we are Holy Spirit-filled Christians, the evil spirits are subject to us (Luke 10:17 to 19) and we have authority and power over them (Mark 6:7). The evil spirits cannot attack born-again believers at will – they are subject to God and have to ask permission. The devil asked excessively to be allowed to attack the apostles but permission was denied (Luke 22:31). On the other hand, Paul the Holy Spirit-filled apostle had the authority to hand Hymenaeus and Alexander over to the devil to be taught not to blaspheme (1 Timothy 1:20). Jesus said if we refuse to forgive fellow believers, then He will hand us over to the tormentors (Matthew 18:34 & 35). The tormentors are evil spirits that bring torment. Certainly the devil noisily roams around looking for people to devour or destroy, but that does not mean he is allowed to devour them because the very next verse tells us to stand against him (1 Peter 5:8 & 9).

God sometimes uses evil spirits to bring judgement on the wicked. We read in the scriptures where God Himself called for an evil spirit; the evil spirit was obviously in the throne room of heaven because he spoke to God; the evil spirit chose his own actions and was given permission; and he was male. 'Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing at His right hand and His left. And the Lord said, "Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?" Then there came a spirit and stood before the Lord and said, "I will entice him." And the Lord said to him, "By what means?" And he said, "I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets." And the Lord said, "You shall entice him and also succeed. Go forth and do so." Now you see, the Lord put a lying spirit in the mouths of your prophets, and the Lord has spoken evil concerning you (Ahab)' (2 Chronicles 18:18 to 22).

We can see by that passage of scripture that the evil spirit had to ask permission, then it caused the mischief of its own choice, then it is stated that it was the Lord Who sent the lying spirit, as judgement on wicked Ahab, so new Christians take note: you do not need to be afraid of the devil. If we submit ourselves to God, resist the devil, he has to flee (James 4:7). In Job 1:6 to 22 then 2:1 to 7, (too much to include in this text) we see that the devil had to ask permission to attack Job, and it was granted but only in stages. The Lord held Job up as an example of righteous living then gave the devil permission to destroy his life, but was told not to kill him. Initially, poor Job did not know the devil was at work in his life or why those things happened, but after a while he did realise this fact and acknowledged it; 'God has delivered me to the evil

one' (Job 16:9 to 14). We have the benefit of knowing Job's story so we can be aware of why evil happens to us sometimes. The Bible states something profound we need to take notice of: Job's family comforted him after all the calamities that the Lord had brought upon him (Job 42:11). Yes, the Lord used the devil to do those things to Job. Occasionally, the Lord allows even the most righteous to be attacked so we can be purified by fire and made fit for the Kingdom of God (Isaiah 48:10; Titus 2:14), and sometimes evil spirits bring God's chastisement and discipline on Christians (Hebrews 12:3 to 15; Proverbs 3:11 & 12).

God initially created the devil as a beautiful anointed cherub who covered God's throne with music, not as the evil thing he is now. He was never an archangel. The scriptures explain the pride then the fall of the anointed cherub, who was rejected from heaven and named satan, which means the accuser or adversary (Isaiah 14:9 to 20; Ezekiel 28:13 to 19). The King James Version of the Bible names the anointed cherub as Lucifer, but some other translations do not name him. Many people believe that he was an archangel who took one third of the holy angels with him, and they became demons or evil spirits but that is not scriptural. The passages in Isaiah and Ezekiel do not mention any such thing. The verse some preachers use is found in Revelation 12:4, but to use that verse, is to take it out of the time frame and out of context. Lucifer was ejected from his high place in heaven thousands of years before the church was formed, and this verse in Revelation is talking about the dragon trying to destroy the Messiah (verse 5) then attack the new church. That happened only 2,000 years ago, but evil spirits were around long before that, as we see in the Old Testament. Also, most of the book of Revelation is still to unfold in the future, so why do preachers put Revelation far into the future then take one verse and place it far in the distant past before the earth was created? That is not logical. Most definitely angels are spirits, and evil spirits are most likely angels that have become evil through rebellion, although the Bible does not say that directly. It is one of those subjects that has to be assumed. There is a 'jigsaw puzzle' of scriptures, and when we fit the pieces together, we come up with that assumption. What we do know without a doubt is that they exist; they are evil; they must be dealt with and they will end up in the lake of fire along with the devil and rebellious people.

One group of the fallen angels that rebelled against God are already in chains awaiting judgement (2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6). It is obvious another group are free to have access to heaven and can talk to God. There does seem to be a distinction between the two groups; the rebellious angels in chains are called angels and the evil spirits that have access to heaven are called spirits, and one was called a lying spirit not a lying angel. Since the spirit said to God he would be a lying spirit in the people on earth, and since we can read in Job that the devil was among the angels, we can logically deduct that these evil beings and the devil can freely travel between heaven and earth and all over the earth, whereas, the fallen angels cannot move from their place in hell because they are in chains. Spirits are mentioned in the scriptures many times, but the angels that rebelled are only mentioned a few times.

So where did evil spirits come from? Most of the angels have remained pure and holy, but some have rebelled and have become wicked. We need to establish that angels and humans are very much alike in appearance. The angel Gabriel had the appearance of a man (Daniel 8:15). Some people dined with angels and they were so human-like, their hosts did not know they were entertaining angels (Hebrews 13:2). There were beings described as the sons of God, they took wives of all they desired and chose (lusted after them) and they were giants (Genesis 6:1, 2 & 4). Since they married 'the daughters of men' and had children with them, obviously they were not spirit-like but very human-like beings, able to reproduce. They were called mighty men not mighty spirits. They were wicked and were destroyed in the flood with every air-breathing creature. We know that because only Noah, his wife, three sons and three daughters-in-law survived to repopulate the earth along with the animals Noah rescued (Genesis 7:21 to 23). Three times the Lord stated that every air-breathing creature died in the flood, and when the Lord says the same thing three times, we can be absolutely sure He means what He says. Every single person on earth died and went to Hades. Thousands of years later, when Jesus died he went to those same people and preached the Gospel to them for three days (1 Peter 3:19 & 20 then 4:6).

Fast-forward from Noah to Job. Here, the holy angels are described as the sons of God and they presented themselves to God in heaven and the devil came among them (Job 1:6 and 2:1).

Yet in Genesis the 'sons of God' were wicked. If we put the two together, we can see that the wicked sons of God in Genesis were once holy angels, but when they left their place in heaven to go to earth and marry women, it was a sin so abominable to God, He sent them to hell in chains to await judgement. That sin of abominable wickedness – the coupling of lustful human-like angels with human women that produced the giants, brought about the flood that destroyed the population of the entire earth. It was the blending of two species that God will not tolerate. Hundreds of years later, the Hebrew people were instructed not to even make clothing out of a blend of wool and linen (Deuteronomy 22:11). We can only imagine how angry God would be at scientists that conduct 'research' by blending human DNA with animal DNA to make clones. We do have to make this point very clear; God does not mind in the least when people from different races marry because we are all of the same species – just born in different countries with varying amounts of melanin that varies our skin colour.

Here is another scripture that shows us God Himself sent an evil spirit. 'And God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem' (Judges 9:23). And again; 'The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him' (1 Samuel 16:14). Most people assume that evil spirits could never be sent from God but as we can see, they are all subject to God and can be sent from God. It stands to reason that since God uses evil spirits for His own purposes from time to time, that He has kept them out of chains for His purposes. 'The next day an evil spirit from God came violently or forcefully upon Saul and he raved madly in his house' (1 Samuel 18:10). People act differently when they are under the power of an evil spirit. They do not all act the same way, all the time. If we study the life of Saul we can see how evil spirits came and went. The bad temper and violence manifested by Saul was a result of the evil spirit. This is called a spirit of anger.

God became angry with Israel and stirred up David to number Israel and Judah (2 Samuel 24:1) ... The devil stirred up David to number Israel (1 Chronicles 21:1). This was the same situation where David was stirred up to number Israel. God used the devil for His own purpose. The Lord didn't use a spirit, He used the devil himself. Note also that the Lord speaks to the devil and the evil spirits without any malice or anger. He does not call them names. These evil beings have access to God now as they did back in the days of the Old Testament. The final judgement has not yet happened and until it does, the evil beings are free. It is true that God is pure and holy but He is able to do whatever He pleases (Psalm 115:3). He does not have to explain any of His reasons to us. He does not have to justify Himself to anyone. He owns everything, so in all righteousness, He can use whatever method He chooses to achieve His goals. Remember that God created everything for His own reasons, and humans are just a tiny portion of His overall eternal plan. The door of access these evil beings still have to God will close once the devil is cast out of heaven forever. Jesus said He witnessed the devil fall from heaven (Luke 10:18) although He did not say exactly when that happened.

God is totally just and righteous; He uses whatever He wants out of His own creation and whatever He does is right, simply because He owns everything and has a right to do whatever He chooses with whatever He has. We do not have the right to question His sovereignty. It is the Lord Who is the potter – we are just the clay and He can do whatever He chooses (Isaiah 45:8 to 13). He creates whatever He wants to, even though He does not have some elements within Him. For example, God does not have blood, but He created it. God is not made of wood, but He created it. God does not need air, but He created it. God is not made of chlorophyll, but He created it. God doesn't have feathers, but He created them. He has no darkness in Him, but He created the night hours. He created everything, and when the scriptures say God created everything and there is not one thing made that He did not make, then that is what took place. God made everything on earth and saw that it was good. He created the heavens and He created things that are invisible. 'All things were made and came into existence through Him; and without Him was not even one thing made that has come into being' (John 1:3). 'For it was in Him that all things were created, in heaven and on earth, things seen and things unseen, whether thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities; all things were created through Him and for Him' (Colossians 1:16). In Him all things consist. There is no sin in God, but if God didn't create the opportunity for sin, that too would not exist. God's direction to Adam (Genesis 2:17) backs that up. When God told Adam not to eat of the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, just by saying that, God created the opportunity for Adam to sin. If God had never mentioned the tree to Adam, there would have been no opening for disobedience and sin. It would not

have happened. It was not so much the act of eating the fruit that was the sin, although that was part of it, it was disobeying God's direct instruction. So for His own reasons, God created the opening and gave Adam the intelligence and thus the opportunity and the ability to sin. God created angels as perfect beings, just as He created man as a perfect being. Just as man is now wicked and needs redemption, so some spirits are now wicked, but for them there is no redemption. The reason for that is simple. Heaven is the most perfect place to be, and these angels rebelled while in heaven, in the presence of God, whereas mankind have not yet been to the Father. We have had so much suffering on earth, when we finally get to heaven, we will never, ever rebel because we know the consequences.

There are some interesting facts about spirits. Some rule over whole nations and kingdoms, some are individual, sometimes they group together, some run in families (familiar), some are very unusual like the spirit of deep sleep for example. There are evil spirits that cause deception, illnesses, chaos and death. In various Bible translations they are given a few different names such as; evil spirits, demons, unclean spirits, loathsome spirits, rulers of darkness, master spirits, forces of wickedness, legion, foul spirits or rulers in heavenly places but they are all the same thing. They are led by Satan who is known as the devil, the accuser, the enemy, the adversary, the beast, the dragon, the evil one, the destroyer, the prince of the power of the air and the father of lies. The way to deal with these evil beings is to cast them out, drive them out, resist them, overcome them, rebuke them and put on the whole armour of God. When Jesus rebuked an evil spirit, He always spoke to the spirit within the person, not to the person (Mark 1:23 to 25). Paul dealt with an evil spirit in a young girl (Acts 16:18). Note that Paul spoke to the evil spirit within the girl – not to the girl herself. We must be filled with the Holy Spirit and be close to the Lord before we try to deal with them or they could turn on us (Acts 19:13 to 16). Once people are delivered from evil spirits, they are often healed at the same time (Matthew 12:22; Acts 5:16). Sometimes when evil spirits are driven out of someone, and if that person does not commit themselves to God, then the evil spirits may return and the person is seven times worse off (Luke 11:24 to 26). The Lord Jesus commanded one evil spirit never to return to a child (Mark 9:25).

How do evil spirits get into our lives? The sin in mankind opens the door to evil spirits and sickness (John 5:14). Sin can bring a curse down the generations and can cause a woman to be barren. Idle words and word curses can bring curses upon children and we will have to give an account to God for what we say (Matthew 12:36 & 37; Matthew 27:25; James 3:9). These curses open the way for demonic attack. The names parents choose for their children can bring about a curse and death. People live up to their name. Parents need to be very mindful of what they name their children because as we repeatedly speak out the child's name, the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), hears what we say, and he carries the thought like an evil bird (Ecclesiastes 10:20), and so we bring about good or evil responses to that name. 'Let not my lord regard this foolish and wicked fellow Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal (foolish and wicked) is his name and folly is with him' (1 Samuel 25:25). Other examples of people living up to their names are Jacob (supplanter or usurper), Abraham (father of a multitude), Job (he cries), Moses (saved from water), Jesus (Saviour), David (beloved). Your child's name is important and needs to be carefully thought about, because they are repeatedly spoken out to the prince of the power of the air. What is a natural thing for humans (our names) is played out in the spiritual realm.

A ghost is not the soul of a human wandering around the earth. Before Jesus came and rose from the dead, when people died the scriptures say they 'slept with their fathers'. They could not roam around on earth. When non-believers die, they go to a place called Hades to await judgement and will rise again from death but only to be sent to the lake of fire (Daniel 12:2). They cannot roam around. Just as Stephen did, when a believer dies, Jesus immediately receives their spirit (Acts 7:59), so they don't roam around on earth either. It is the devil and evil spirits that walk to and fro on the earth (Job 1:7; 2:2; Luke 11:24). These evil spirits can inhabit buildings (Isaiah 13:21), they can enter animals (Mark 5:13) and especially dogs (Psalm 22:20), they can possess people, they have intellect and will and make choices, they vary in their wickedness, they need rest and they can travel around (Matthew 12:43 to 45). They cause sickness, disease, fever, physical deformities, mental sickness and they can speak (Mark 5:2 to 13; Acts 19:15). Evil spirits fight with God's holy angels (Daniel 10:13 & 20). They can cause people to self-harm (Mark 5:5; 9:22). They can give people supernatural strength (Mark 5:3 & 4;

Acts 19:16). They can draw people away from the Truth (Matthew 13:19; Mark 4:15). When people think they have seen a ghost, they have actually seen an evil spirit.

Some actions and outcomes of these horrid spirits are: a spirit of anger lodged in the heart of fools (Ecclesiastes 7:9), spirit of antichrist (1 John 4:3), spirit of pride (Ecclesiastes 7:8), spirit of error (Isaiah 29:24), spirit of perverseness (Isaiah 19:14), spirit of confusion (Isaiah 19:14), spirit of rumour or gossiping (Isaiah 37:7), spirit of lying and falsehood (2 Chronicles 18:21; Micah 2:11), spirit of infirmity or a demon of sickness (Luke 13:11), spirits of deafness and muteness (Mark 9:25), spirit of epilepsy (Luke 9:39), spirit of bitterness (Hebrews 12:15), haughty spirit (Proverbs 16:18), spirit of deep sleep or stupor or slumber (Isaiah 29:10; Romans 11:8), spirit of discouragement (Ezekiel 3:14), spirit of divination (fortune telling, witchcraft) (Acts 16:16), spirit of death, or the giving up of the spirit of life (Job 11:20), spirit of heaviness, which is depression (Isaiah 61:3), spirit of impurity (Zechariah 13:2), spirit of prostitution or harlotry; and that includes homosexuality (Hosea 4:12; 5:4), spirit of fear or terror (Job 4:14 & 15; 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:7), spirit of bondage (Romans 8:15), spirit of oppression (Acts 10:38), spirit of anguish (Job 7:11; Isaiah 65:14), spirit of jealousy (Numbers 5:14 & 30), spirit of sorrow (1 Samuel 1:15; Isaiah 65:14), seducing spirits and demons that teach false doctrines (1 Timothy 4:1), a 'different' spirit (2 Corinthians 11:4), spirit of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2), spirit of deceit (Psalm 32:2), spirit of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12), spirit of idolatry and loathsome spirits of demons (Revelation 16:13 & 14; 18:2), a foul spirit of a demon (Luke 4:33). Evil spirits can possess unsaved people, or completely overtake them; they cause insanity and violence but when they are cast out sanity is restored (Luke 8:27 to 35). For a good description of insanity and violence caused by an evil spirit, read 1 Samuel 16:14 to 23; 19:9 & 10. We are wrestling against evil 'master spirits' and forces of wickedness in the heavenly realm, that are the rulers of darkness (Ephesians 6:12) and sometimes they can only be cast out with prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29).

There is an earthly, demonic, unspiritual 'wisdom' that does not come from above and which causes confusion, and all sorts of evil and vile practices (James 3:15 & 16). There is a spirit of the 'world' which makes people act sinfully (1 Corinthians 2:12). There is a familiar, or a family spirit that is passed down through the generations, seducing people to become involved in witchcraft, which in turn will cause inherited diseases (1 Samuel 28:8; 1 Chronicles 10:13; Isaiah 19:3). The prince of demons is named Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24) which translates as the 'lord of the flies'. Tiny insects that have the power to destroy life transmit many terrible diseases. Three such insects are fleas that carry Bubonic Plague; mosquitos that cause malaria and Dengue Fever; and the Tsetse fly that causes sleeping sickness and death.

Whole nations can become under the control of evil spirits (Daniel 10:20). Some monarchies and leaders are very evil and God will cut off the spirit of those princes (Psalm 76:12). Evil spirits can influence governments (Revelation 16:14). There was a spirit over Assyria (Syria) (1 Chronicles 5:26), over the Philistines and the Arabians (2 Chronicles 21:16), over Medes (Jeremiah 51:11) and over Egypt (Isaiah 19:3).

People can have an evil spirit of unbelief within them that works to prevent that person from accepting salvation. Have you ever noticed how uncomfortable some people become when you talk about God the Father and/or especially Jesus – in the context of salvation? People will use the Lord's name in vain as an expletive, but if you try to bring Him into a conversation, everyone goes quiet or they become embarrassed and change the subject. Some people even become angry. They don't want to talk about Jesus because He makes them feel uncomfortable. Just hearing His name can make people squirm. His name reminds them that they are sinners, and as sinners, they will have to look at themselves and take responsibility for their actions, words and evil thoughts. Nobody likes being reminded we are all sinners; our hearts are basically evil and we need to depend on a Saviour to save us from our sins. Most people don't even like the word 'sin'. Another reason for their discomfort is this; if they have an unclean spirit lurking within, the spirit feels uneasy at the name of Jesus, causing the person to react. Have you ever tried to speak to a backslidden Christian about God? They will use all the excuses they can think of, to blame the Lord or the church for their present state, but they will not take responsibility for their own rebelliousness. We all need to be aware that Christians can loose their salvation if they turn away from God; so we must maintain our daily walk with Him. 'Yet now has Jesus the Messiah, reconciled you to God the Father in the body of His flesh through death; to present you holy, faultless and blameless in His Presence. And this will be so, provided that you continue to stay

in the faith, well-grounded and steadfast, not moving away from the hope of the Gospel, which has been preached to every person under heaven' (Colossians 1:22 & 23). These verses inform us that the Christians who move away from God, can lose their salvation and end up in hell. Not all who say, "Lord, Lord" will go to heaven (Matthew 7:21). Unbelief, the rebellious hearts of men along with the 'wiles' of God's enemy – the evil one who is the devil – stop many people coming into the Kingdom of God. Jesus said people love to do the works of the devil. The devil lies, deceives, cheats and will sometimes actually steal the Word of God out of people's hearts. 'The evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart' (Matthew 13:19). Jesus said the enemy is the father of lies. "You are of your father the devil, and it is your will to practice the lusts of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

The devil cannot force us to do anything. All he can do is lie, deceive, tempt and discourage. It is our will to do what is right or wrong. It is our choice to stand up against temptation to sin or give in to it. With the Lord's help He can keep us from falling into sin so we can stand before the Lord, faultless and justified (Jude 24), but we have to have the courage to take a stand for righteousness. Jesus said it is our will, whether to listen to the father of lies or not. We are responsible for our own thoughts, actions, speech and behaviour. We must not give attention to deception and turn away from the faith. The devil cannot snatch the Word of God out of our hearts if we maintain our close relationship with Him by praying, reading the Bible, worshipping Him, attending church, listening to Christian music and fellowshiping regularly with other Christians. These actions are all a matter of our own will. The evil one deceives those who inhabit the earth (Revelation 13:14); the evil one deceives the whole earth (Revelation 20:2) causing some to ...'turn away from the faith, giving attention to seducing spirits and doctrines that demons teach' (1 Timothy 4:1). False prophets will arise to deceive and lead astray even God's people if they can (Matthew 24:24). There are wicked men and impostors who 'will go on from bad to worse deceiving and leading astray others and being deceived themselves' (2 Timothy 3:13). We are told in very strong words not to listen to these people (1 Timothy 1:4), yet many Christians do listen to them. They will 'choose to satisfy their own liking and to foster the errors they hold, and will turn aside after hearing the truth and wander off into myths' (2 Timothy 4:3 & 4). As we have just read, the evil one deceives everyone on the earth and he does this by sometimes using wicked people (the children of the evil one); but it is our own will and choice to believe or ignore these people. We must not accept 'bad seeds' and not listen to lies and myths. The enemy himself can sow bad 'seed' called darnel. 'He Who sows good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed means the children of the Kingdom; the darnel is the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed it is the devil' (Matthew 13:37 to 39), but it is our will to accept or reject the truth of the Bible or myths.

One popular 'wile' is to deceive people into believing nonsense about the universe instead of believing in Jesus. Read a strong warning written by Apostle Paul. 'Let no one rob you by his so-called philosophy, foolish deceit, idle fancies and plain nonsense, following human tradition, crude notions of elemental teachings of the universe and disregarding the teachings of Jesus the Messiah' (Colossians 2:8). Some of those foolish nonsense's are things like categorising people into worldly groups, such as, choleric, sanguine, melancholic or some other such nonsense. There is 'earth mapping', 'colour co-ordinating' and other earthly, crude notions and non-scriptural rubbish that immature Christians go on with. These things must seriously irritate the Lord, for Him to write about them so harshly in the scriptures. Practicing this nonsense brings strong discipline from the Lord. If what we believe does not line up with the Bible; if it does not glorify God, then it would be better not to touch it, rather than annoy the Lord and bring strong discipline in the form of serious problems down upon ourselves.

To avoid being deceived we need to put on the whole armour of God. 'Put on the whole armour of God so that you may be able to stand up against all the wiles (strategies, deceits) of the devil. For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers of darkness; against the rulers of darkness and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. Therefore put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore; having tightened the Girdle of Truth around your waist and having put on the Breastplate of Righteousness; and having shod your feet in the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. Lift up over all the Shield of

Faith with which you can quench all the fiery missiles of the devil; and take the Helmet of Salvation and the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God' (Ephesians 6:11 to 17).

One more 'weapon' we can use to add to this collection of defensive armour is the Garment of Praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3). A spirit of heaviness is known in our day as depression. Depression cannot stay around if we are determined to fight it by praising and thanking the Lord for extended periods of time. The heaviness will lift off our head and if we do battle every day, eventually the evil spirit that causes the depression will leave entirely. The scripture says it is a spirit that causes the heaviness/depression. If the scriptures say it is a spirit, then it is a spirit, and since the Lord would never cause depression, then logically, it is an evil spirit. Remember; we are not battling with flesh and blood, but an evil force. It is also our will to choose whether or not to use the 'armour' God has given us. We can give in to depression or we can fight it. It is hard, but if we persevere, we will be set free. But first we need to subject ourselves to God; that is to give ourselves over to God the Father, through His Son Jesus; then we will have the power and authority to resist the devil. 'Be subject to God. Resist the devil – stand firm against him – and he will flee from you' (James 4:7). He will flee from us. This is not a maybe, a perhaps or might if we're lucky. The scripture says the devil will flee, run away, leave the scene or take flight. At the name of Jesus, demons will flee. At the name of Jesus, depression will flee. If we are subject to God, and therefore born of God, then we can claim the victory over depression. 'Whatever is born of God is victorious over the world; and this is the victory that conquers the world: your faith' (1 John 5:4).

'Let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall into sin. For no temptation (that entices us to sin) has overtaken you, that is not common to man (so no temptation has come our way that is beyond human resistance through the blood of Jesus). But God is faithful and He can be trusted not to let you be tempted (to sin) beyond your ability to resist. But with the temptation He will provide the way out so that you may be strong (to resist sin)' (1 Corinthians 10:12 & 13). Jesus was tempted to sin three times, but he never once gave in. He was able to resist temptation by quoting the Word of God (Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2) and we need to have the Word in our hearts so we can quote God's Word and resist temptation.

We have written these things for your information; solely to deal with the subject of deception and the wiles of the devil. We are not to gloat about the God-given authority we have over the devil. 'I have given you authority and power to trample upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power the enemy possesses and nothing shall in any way harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven' (Luke 10:19 & 20); nor are we permitted to call the devil names. 'When the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, argued about the body of Moses, he dared not bring an abusive condemnation against him, but simply said, "The Lord rebuke you"' (Jude 9).

When we read Matthew, Mark and Luke, we see that Jesus dealt with the devil when it was necessary, and occasionally Jesus and the Apostles taught about the devil in order to teach us. They did not bring him into every conversation as do many Christians today, nor did they blame him for their own bad behaviour as do Christians today. If a Christian sins – that sin will have a consequence – the result of which may not be evident, sometimes long after the person has repented. For example, if a young lady allows herself to be tempted to engage in sexual sin and she falls pregnant, that is not chastisement, but a consequence of her sin. If a young man chooses to drink alcohol and then drive a car, the consequence may be an accident or a heavy fine. When high profile Christians fall into sin, when they are caught in their sin, they always blame the devil for their own sin, which is incorrect. We all have to take responsibility for our own sin and confess it. Once it is confessed and forgiven, then the Lord can cover our sin with His blood, bury it and then we may not have to suffer the consequences of our foolishness. Sin is our choice and all the devil can do is tempt us, but we chose to do the sinning. Jesus said sin is our choice. Early Christians did not blame the devil for their 'fiery trials' as Christians do today, but accepted the trials as being a chastisement from the Lord to test their faith; not an attack from the devil (Hebrews 12:5 to 14; 1 Peter 1:6 & 7). Modern Christians need to learn the difference. 'Beloved, do not be amazed or bewildered at the fiery trial that has come upon you to test your quality, as though something strange were happening to you. Because you are sharing the sufferings of Jesus, rejoice, so that when His glory is revealed, you may also rejoice with triumph (1 Pet 4:12 & 13). The devil is there all right; he lies, deceives, cheats, steals,

destroys, causes contention, tempts and seduces but he cannot harm us (Luke 10:19); that is what the scripture says.

If we are going through a difficult trial, scripturally, it is the divine chastisement from the Lord to purify us! We need to leave the evil one in the realm where he should be left: under the blood of Jesus. We can resist him, ignore him, have victory over him and choose not to give him ground. It is God Who is in control, not the devil and Christians today constantly assume every little thing that goes wrong is an attack of the enemy. That attitude is wrong. We can't blame the devil if the Lord chastises us for sin. The Lord may use the devil, but the devil can't touch us without the Lord's expressed permission. It is completely wrong to think the devil can attack a Christian who is walking in line with God's will and purpose. We have nothing to fear from the devil because the Lord has given us power over all the power the enemy possesses! (Luke 10:19). Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we have already won the victory in this battle and all we need to do is lay hold of that fact and apply it to our lives.

Christians: You know that if you talk about the Lord, you invite the presence of the Lord. The same applies to evil. When you talk about the devil, you are inviting his evil presence into your conversation, into your home, into your lives and you are giving him unnecessary ground. He loves the attention! When you use your mouth to talk about the devil, you are giving him an opening to use your mouth to destroy! Why does he use your mouth to destroy? Because you let him; he never encourages or edifies. He only ever brings contention, listens to and acts on everything you say, like the evil bird or an evil creature with wings. 'A bird of the air will carry the voice, and a winged creature will tell the matter' (Ecclesiastes 10:20). 'She has become an abode for demons, a dungeon haunted by every loathsome spirit, an abode for every filthy and detestable bird' (Revelation 18:2). The devil ruins relationships between Christians. He wrecks marriages. Have you ever had a sudden furious argument with your spouse and wondered, "Where did that come from?" Or have you been listening to your children playing happily and all of a sudden they start fighting for no apparent reason? Have you had a close friendship with a fellow Christian, when for some inexplicable reason they take offence, or you are suddenly 'put off' them by something trivial? Who do you think causes these scenarios? The devil does, but how does he get into your homes and lives? When you repeatedly talk about him you are inviting him into your homes and lives, in exactly the same way, that if you talk about the Lord, you are inviting Him into your conversation, homes and lives. Why invite the devil in to do those nasty things? It is written, we have the mind of Jesus, so why let evil butt into the mind of Jesus? The more mature the Christian, the less they will bring the devil into their conversation because they have the mind of Jesus and they put the devil where he belongs: underfoot. The immature babes in the Lord are the ones who allow the devil to use them, who gloat about their power over evil and who talk about him all the time. We should not mention him because he's not worth mentioning. We should not open our life to him or our mouth for him. Above all; do not ever use your Christian mouth to do the devil's dirty work. If you want peace and harmony in your home, don't invite him in. If you want to encourage, don't talk about him. If you want to edify, don't talk about him. If you want to be delivered from evil, don't talk about him. Talk habitually about the Lord and think on good things and your speech will be edifying and not destructive. Destructive words from a Christian can cause deep hurt and could make a weak Christian fall away from God and out of heaven. Be careful your words don't cause someone to stumble. Don't let the devil use you. Make a conscious effort not to allow yourself to talk about the devil unless you have a purpose for doing so; such as casting out an evil spirit, or teaching about the evil one as we have done here. It is written: 'Greater is He Who is in you, than he that is in the world' (1 John 4:4).

Eventually, the devil and all evil beings will be sent to the lake of fire for all eternity and we will be free from them forever.

Amen and God bless you.

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