

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."
(1.PET 5:8-9).

If you are a member of the body of Christ, get ready to face a mad devil. You may not want to think about it or even accept it - but if you have determined to follow Jesus with all your heart, satan has marked you for destruction. And he's going to flood your life with troubles of all kinds.

The apostle Peter warns, ***"The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."*** (1.PET 4:7). He is saying, in other words, "This is no time for lightness. You have to get sober-minded about spiritual matters. It is an issue of life and death."

Why the need to be so serious? The end of time is near - and our enemy has turned up the heat. He is stalking us like a lion, hiding in the grass, waiting for an opportunity to pounce. He wants to devour us - to utterly destroy our faith in Christ.

Some Christians say we shouldn't even talk about the devil, that we're better off just ignoring him. Others try to reason him out of existence. Liberal theologians, for example, argue that there is no devil, no hell, no heaven.

But the enemy of our souls is not simply going to go away. Few biblical figures have been identified so clearly and extensively. He is described as Lucifer, satan, devil, deceiver, hinderer, wicked one, usurper, imposter, accuser, devourer, god of this world, ruler of darkness, old serpent. These emphatic descriptions tell me the devil is real. And we know

Satan Seeks To Devour You

from scripture that he wields a very real power. Even now he is at work on the earth - in our nations, cities, churches, homes and individual lives. And we dare not be ignorant of his methods and strategies of warfare against us.

The Apostle John Tells Us That Throughout History the Devil Has Declared War Three Times.

Revelation 12 describes three instances when satan has declared war:

1. He first declared war against Almighty God Himself. John writes:

"There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (REV 12:7-9).

This passage recalls the moment in heaven when satan rose up in rebellion against God's supreme authority. At the time he was known as Lucifer, an angel who had great authority. But Lucifer wanted to be as God. So, enlisting a third of the angels, he led an uprising against the Almighty.

But God cast Lucifer out of heaven, along with the other rebellious angels. All of heaven rejoiced in the victory. The devil lost that war, as well as his place in heaven.

2. A defeated satan then declared his second war - this one against

God's son, Jesus Christ. John writes:

"There appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travelling in birth, and pained to be delivered."

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." (REV 12:1-4).

Satan knew an incredible church was about to be born out of the Old Testament remnant. It would be a glorious body, clothed with the sun of righteousness. So the devil declared war once again, reasoning that now he could do battle on his territory, the earth.

This passage suggests that satan knew he couldn't get to the child in Mary's womb. So he determined to destroy Christ as soon as he was born. He gathered all his demonic forces around Bethlehem, sending spirits of deception to blind the scribes, priests and Pharisees. Then his own spirit entered King Herod, possessing him. If satan couldn't kill Christ Himself, he would have a man standing by, ready to do it for him.

But the Lord's armies of heavenly angels stood guard over the child, so that satan couldn't touch Him. The devil would have to wait

another thirty years to try to devour Christ.

He saw his next chance at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, when the Holy Ghost declared Him to be the Messiah. At that point, satan led Christ into the wilderness to be tempted. Yet Jesus defeated him in that battle also. God protected His Son again, sending angels to minister to Him in His time of physical weakness.

The devil would try one last time to devour Christ. This time he moved forces into place to try to kill Jesus by crucifixion and cast Him into the grave. He sent demonic spirits to incite a mob, entering the bodies of priests, soldiers, political leaders and false witnesses. At last, satan thought, he had his hour of power. Now he would wage an all-out war.

Yet you know the rest of the story: Resurrection day was satan's most humbling defeat. When Jesus ascended to heaven, He was out of the devil's reach forever. *"...her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."* (REV 12:5). All of hell was shaken because satan had lost again. Even using all of his power, he still could not defeat the son of God.

3. The devil declared his third and final war on the seed of Christ. This means he is at war with every true believer on earth. John writes: *"When the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child."* (REV 12:13). *"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."* (REV 12:17).

Satan has turned his wrath on the church of Jesus Christ. And he has reserved his worst rage for believers who keep God's commands and trust in Him.

The devil knows this war is his last chance, because only a short time remains before Christ returns for his bride: *"...he knoweth that he hath but a short time."* (REV 12:12). Therefore, satan's war against the church is the most intense of all. He wants to gain back the ground he lost to Christ - so he'll stop at nothing to destroy the faith of His bride. That means he's going to use all of his weapons against us - all subtleties, deceits and devices.

I Have Prayed Diligently For a Revelation About the Horrendous Spiritual War We Face With Our Adversary.

When I was a young preacher, I didn't give much thought to spiritual warfare. I thought anyone who walked in victory shouldn't have any problems at all against the devil. To me, it was simply a matter of resisting him. But soon I found a roaring lion pouncing on my weaknesses with all his might - and I felt helpless to do battle with him.

All too often I see the devil doing the same thing to other sincere Christians. I know multitudes of godly servants - people pure in heart, walking in grace - who have suddenly been overwhelmed by demonic floods of confusion and despair.

Such Christians can labor diligently for the Lord for years. Then, one day, satan injects accusing thoughts into their minds. And overnight they are overcome with awful troubles - unexpected temptations, covetousness, depression. Their trials are so deep, strange and mysterious, these saints have no idea where they came from.

I believe there is only one explanation: Their troubles are a demonic onslaught. Time after time I have seen this happen to Christians who are growing by leaps and bounds. At the very peak of their spiritual growth, satan puts an old seduction in their path. It may be an old lust - something they thought they had overcome years before. But now, after years of living in victory, they're walking a tightrope - teetering on the brink of a lustful indulgence that could lead them back into terrible bondage.

I received a heart-wrenching letter some time ago from a dear senior pastor. He wrote, "I'm sixty-five years old, and the people in my congregation know me as man of prayer. But now, out of nowhere, evil thoughts have begun to plague me. A lust has come upon me that I have never experienced in my life.

"I have not succumbed to the temptation. But I have been in a constant tailspin for months. I know it is an attack from the enemy. He wants to destroy the ministry God has allowed to prosper here. Please pray for me." This, I believe, was satan's attempt to devour that dear saint of God.

Christian marriages are now under attack like never before. A couple can love each other for years and then suddenly get mired in a horrible struggle they don't understand. One minute a faithful spouse says, "I love my mate" - but the next she shouts, "I can't stand that man. I don't even want to be around him." What can this be but a satanic attempt to devour and destroy a godly marriage?

Day after day, these couples grow more discouraged, tempted and despairing. And soon satan floods them with other accusing thoughts: "You're a failure as a parent. You can't do anything right. And you don't know God intimately. You're a phoney, a hypocrite. You aren't what people think you are. You are a poor example of what a Christian mate ought to be."

Beloved, what is happening in that relationship can't be diagnosed by a counselor, pastor or psychologist. No one can fathom the destructive spirit that has gripped that marriage. Why? It is supernatural, demonic - an attack straight from hell. Satan is on the attack against every home where Jesus is Lord. And he won't rest until he exhausts every device to devour and bring ruin and chaos.

All of these trials, troubles and temptations are known as the devil's flood. John writes, *"The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, [that she might be] swallowed up [by the flood] which the dragon cast out of his mouth."* (REV 12:15-16). Isaiah also warns that satan will bring a flood against all who *"fear the name of the LORD... the enemy shall come in like a flood..."* (ISA 59:19).

I have experienced this flood. And multitudes of believers are being caught up in it right now. They're being flooded with persecutions, physical attacks, mental harassment, fiery temptations and lusts out of hell, friends turning against them as enemies. Satan has aimed an all-out, last-days assault meant to sweep us away in utter despair.

Why Does the Devil Flood the Righteous With Such Ferocity?

The key to understanding how satan operates against the church is found in the word rebellion. Simply put, rebellion means going against the rule and authority of God's Word. When Lucifer de-

clared war on God, he was rebelling against the Word of the Almighty.

You must understand - God's Word is His power. Through it, He spoke the worlds into being. And through it, the sun, moon and stars are kept in place. His Word brought all things into being and continues to produce life. And by His Word, God pulls down kings and raises up nations. Through it, He blesses and saves, judges and destroys.

Satan's aim is always to tempt God's people to rebel against His Word. He planted thoughts of rebellion in Adam and Eve, causing them to reason, "I know what God said. But I'm going to act according to my own will." Those thoughts caused humanity's fall.

Satan also succeeded in planting seeds of rebellion in God's chosen nation, Israel. The Psalmist says Israel was *"a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God."* (PSALM 78:8). Scripture also says of Israel, *"Ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God..."* (DEUT 1:26).

Please note - God revealed His Word very clearly to all of these people. And yet they all rebelled against it. Why? They were seduced by the wicked one.

Satan will also try to tempt you to rebel against God's Word. He knows he can't get to you through blatant temptations. So he'll inject subtle seductions into your mind by flooding your life with pain, trials, struggles. And he'll try to block God's blessings in your life, just as he hindered Paul in his ministry.

Many have fallen prey to satan's subtle seductions. The Psalmist says such believers, *"...sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High."* (PSALM 107:10-11).

The Devil Looks for a Single Area in Our Lives We Have Not Submitted to God's Word.

Satan isn't interested in turning you into a reprobate. All he wants is for you to rebel in just one area of your life. That will allow him enough room to gain a foothold.

Right now, he has his principalities and powers on alert to provide him with intelligence reports on our lives. These demonic entities read our actions and hear our conversation. And when they pick up on a fleshly weakness in us, they aim all their hellish temptations at that weak area.

Jesus told His disciples, *"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."* (JN 14:30). He was saying, in essence, "When satan comes at me, he can't find any place where he can get a foothold. I am totally under the authority of My Father."

Likewise, satan cannot enter the body or spirit of any believer whose life is totally submitted to God's Word. He has to be given a place in order to gain a foothold. And that happens only when a person holds back "part of the price." Let me explain.

In Acts 5 a couple named Ananias and Sapphira sold a portion of their land and gave the proceeds to the new church in Jerusalem. Yet, when they laid the amount at Peter's feet, the apostle was perplexed. He asked them, *"Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?"* (ACTS 5:3). As soon as Peter spoke these words to the couple, they fell down dead on the spot.

What is the lesson God wanted to teach the church through this? I don't believe it had anything to do with the physical piece of land Ananias and Sapphira owned. Rather, it had to do with the inner territory of their hearts.

This couple believed they could be 95 percent obedient to God but remain safely disobedient in one small area. They had heard God's pure Word preached - but they rebelled against what they knew to be true. They convinced themselves, "We can serve the Lord yet hold onto this one thing." That was a lie to the Holy Ghost.

So, the part of the price they held back had nothing to do with money, but a small bit of ground of covetousness in their hearts. It was a patch just big enough to give satan a stronghold. And with their one stubborn disobedience, they allowed the enemy to fill their hearts.

This is why Paul warns, *"Neither give place to the devil."* (EPH 4:27). The example of Ananias and Sapphira is clear: The price of an overcoming life is no small matter. It means subjecting our lives wholly to God's Word, with no more dark places, hidden lusts or rebellion. Do not give satan one inch of ground. That's all he needs to gain entrance and establish a power base.

I Want to Give You Four Examples of How Satan Can Claim Ground in Our Lives.

1. The author of Hebrews tells us: *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."* (HEB 10:25).

You may be a truly wonderful person - kind, considerate and giving. But if you read this word from Hebrews and willfully ignore it, you give satan ground. If you spend week after week lying in bed on Sunday mornings instead of going to God's house to be provoked to righteousness, you have given the deceiver a place in your heart. Like Ananias and Sapphira, you are holding back part of the price.

The very next verse describes the judgment we incur for neglecting a single area of God's Word: *"If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."* (HEB 10:26-27).

2. Jesus tells us, *"If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* (MATT 6:14-15).

Christ is warning us, "You may be obedient in every other area in your life - pious, devout and faithful. But if you hold onto unforgiveness toward anyone, then your own sins are piling up against you, unforgiven by the Father."

Holding onto unforgiveness makes you a greater debtor than the one who has sinned against you. That person may have already repented and been forgiven by the Lord. But if you hold onto your hurt, you're demanding a price from him that

Jesus has already paid. And you can't demand that of anyone.

Yet the real danger of unforgiveness is that you open your heart to satanic intrusion. The enemy stakes that little piece of ground, sets up shop and begins his work of devouring you. And you have allowed it to happen by holding back part of the price.

3. James tells us, *"If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."* (JAMES 3:14-16).

Note who James is addressing here. In verse 13 he says, *"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?"* He is telling us, "You may have great spiritual wisdom and knowledge. But if there is bitterness in your home, strife in your heart, envy at your workplace - don't think you are spiritual at all. You are under a lying delusion."

When James speaks of strife and bitterness, he is talking about arguing and faultfinding. And he says all of it is devilish, sensual, works of evil. In short, anyone who holds onto bitterness causes strife - and worse, he opens his heart to demonic possession.

Do you know people whose bitterness has led to satanic possession? Over time, their outer person begins to manifest the darkness they have held inside. Eventually their body begins to break down, becoming diseased and shriveled, and they suffer mental imbalances. Whenever the devil is given such ground, he works utter destruction.

So, go ahead - hold your grudge. Keep your bitterness. Continue stirring up strife. If you do, you will be in total rebellion against God and His Word. And you'll open yourself up to satan. You will become spiritually blind and hardened in heart.

On the other hand, if you are spiritual - willingly obedient to God's Word - then no matter how injured you are, you'll show the peaceable wisdom of gentleness by forgiving.

4. On a recent trip to Jerusalem, I saw a powerful example of how satan can get a demonic foothold in even the smallest patch of ground. As I looked down over the holy city from the Mount of Olives, I saw the land where the Muslim Dome of the Rock Temple sits. That tiny piece of ground is perhaps only part of an acre.

Yet somehow satan got his hands on it and built a temple to himself. And now it has become the abomination of desolation, as mentioned in scripture. The devil has managed to focus his powers in the very midst of God's once-chosen people, Israel. And it all happened because he got just a small foothold. This is a vivid picture of what satan does when he gains even the smallest piece of ground.

What Kind of Defense Do We Have Against the Devourer?

If you ask any Christian how to do battle with the devil, he'll probably recite James 4:7: *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* But what does James mean by resist? How do we resist satan's power?

John gives us the answer in Revelation 12: *"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony..."* (REV 12:11). When you hear the roar of the lion - when the flood crashes in, and you're overwhelmed - simply run to the Holy of Holies. By faith, enter into the very presence of God on His throne - because the Lamb has made a way for you, through His Blood.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for

us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." (HEB 10:19-20).

When you are alone with God in prayer, you are totally immune to the devil's devices. So run to His throne by faith, call on Him, and stand on the power of Christ's Blood.

John then writes, *"To the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time..."* (REV 12:14). I believe the two eagle's wings mentioned here are the Old and New Testaments of God's Word. He has given them to us to carry us to a place of nourishment, so that when the devil comes against us, we are able to fly over him on the wings of God's Word.

The apostle Paul also uses the word nourish, writing, *"...nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine..."* (1.TIM 4:6). The Greek word for nourished here means "educated". Paul is talking about being educated in the scriptures, knowledgeable of God's Word.

Jesus is our example here. When he resisted temptation with God's Word, the devil fled. Why? The truth exposed satan, putting him to shame. And Hebrews says that all who have trusted in God's Word *"...through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions..."* (HEB 11:33). We muzzle the powers of hell by standing on God's Word.

So, when you hear the lion's roar, fall on your face before the Father. And immerse yourself in His Word. His eagle's wings will carry you above every overwhelming flood of temptation.

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