

CHRISTIAN ANSWERS

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SPIRITUAL WARFARE



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THE GREAT WAR

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. -2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

- * Can Prayer Exorcise a City ?
- * Can Christians Be Demon Possessed ?
- * Can Christians Be Cursed ?
- * Will Mind Control Help You ?
- * Can Demons Make You Sin ?
- * Can You Have A Demon Lust ?
- * Can Pagan Objects Haunt You ?
- * Can You Inherit A Demon ?

YOU ARE AT WAR

Each Christian wants to live a life that is pleasing to God, yet each faces daily struggles and opposition in his or her walk with the Lord. The Bible teaches that life has a dimension that goes beyond the material, physical environment. This arena centers on the immaterial part of your being-the real you-and your relationship to God. In opposition to God is Satan and a vast army of immaterial, rational creatures that are subservient to him. They have all been sentenced to eternal condemnation in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41). Yet, that sentence has been postponed until the end of human history. Between the pronouncement of that verdict and the execution of the sentence lies the entire panorama of human history. Man was created to play a vital role in the resolution of this angelic rebellion. Man is the focal point. This is the essence of spiritual warfare.

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, then you, too, have to declare yourself to be a warrior in this cosmic conflict.

Perhaps you did not realize this; maybe you are not aware that the Bible teaches that Satan is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2) and the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4) and that before you were saved, Satan was at work in you as one of the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). Once you were saved, you became a significant soldier in the greatest war ever fought, a spiritual war fought between the power of God (light) and the forces of Satan (darkness). As we will discover in the following pages, the Bible clearly teaches all of these truths. In addition, the Bible teaches that each believer must learn how to fight in the battle. The Bible is our combat manual, and in it we find the vital instructions we need to combat Satan and his two great allies, the world system and the sin nature within man himself.

We are called not simply to be in the army but to be champions in Christ. At the moment of salvation, God graciously bestowed on us every spiritual blessing and asset we would ever need to be victorious in the conflict (Eph. 1:3). This our positional strength, "in Christ." We have the completed revelation of God, which supplies all of the information that we need, and the Spirit of God indwells, teaches, guides, fills, and illuminates our thinking to the truth of God's Word. In the power of Christ we stand. Just as the young David, untrained in the world's methods of warfare, became a champion for Israel against the mighty giant Goliath, so, too, must the believer today be a champion in Christ. David chose to enter the battle on the basis of divine resources, not human ability or technique. He is our model. To be victorious in spiritual warfare, we must not be seduced into using thinking or strategies that are influenced by non-biblical thinking. We must hold our ground on the provisions, promises, and power of God. The battle is the Lord's.

Unfortunately, contemporary teaching on the doctrine of spiritual warfare has caused Christians to focus almost exclusively on battles with Satan and demons. If this were truly the emphasis of Scripture, there would be no problem. However, because this is not the primary focus of Scripture but only one aspect of the teaching, then this overemphasis is misleading and even dangerous. It becomes dangerous when it causes Christians to focus on attacks and solutions in only one realm of spiritual warfare, leaving them vulnerable to attacks from the other two realms. The Bible

clearly addresses spiritual warfare as taking place simultaneously on three battlefronts: the world; the flesh; and the Devil.

Just as a football coach studies the game films of his opponent before the big game to discover his strategies and tactics, so Christians must know the strategies, tactics, and abilities of their enemies before they can effectively defeat them. In other words, we must understand the nature of warfare and who attacks us before we can accurately understand what we should be doing. By examining the lives of the great saints and the great spiritual battles of Scripture, we can see the strategies of the enemy and learn principles for avoiding the snares and assaults of the Devil, the traps of worldliness, and the drive of our own sinful nature.

Once we understand the spiritual war of which we are a part, then we must decide what we are to do. How can we live in the world and not be worldly? How can we have victory over the lusts of the flesh? And what does it mean to resist the Devil? We need biblical insight into how we will be attacked so that we will know what God has supplied for our protection.

Many Christians are losing the battle in spiritual warfare because they lack an adequate knowledge of God's Word. This ignorance has led some people into occult practices that are cleverly disguised as "neutral" self-help techniques. Others have one foot in the world and the other foot in the Bible; thus compromised, they cannot understand why biblical principles never seem to work for them. Defeat is commonplace because their lives are not established on truly biblical principles but rather on the shifting foundation of human experience.

As we have surveyed much of the contemporary literature written for Christians, we have discovered an extremely wide range of ideas, many of which are mutually contradictory. Both the issues and then solutions differ widely. We have read many fine-sounding discussions on spiritual warfare that did not have a biblical basis. Some people teach that Christians can be demon possessed whereas others teach that they cannot. On the other hand, if one view is true, then Christians must live one way and the solutions to the problem must lie in one

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"exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9)

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THE GOSPEL IN BRIEF

There is one, and only one, eternal, true, holy God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Matt 28:19). He created everything by His word. God has told us the truth about Himself in the word He has given us, the Bible, which He commands us to obey. God is compassionate and just to all. God is pure and Holy; sin is destroyed in His presence (Numbers 14:18). However, we have all sinned, falling short in the evil we do, and the good we fail to do. Yet our problem is not just what we do, but also who we are; we are selfish, corrupt, and estranged from God. Because God is just, He will punish sin impartially, yet God still bestows his love to all men. So our Savior, Jesus, the only begotten Son of God (the God-man, John 1:1,14), was graciously sent to suffer and die on the cross for our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness by the sacrifice of His body and blood. He was born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, and was physically raised from the dead and ascended into heaven. Jesus will physically return to judge the world. God commands everyone to repent and to believe in Him. God's Spirit lives in each of us who believe in Him to guide us into truth, convict us of our sins, and to work in us to sanctify us to live a more holy life, pleasing our Lord. God's children will dwell forever with God, and those who reject Jesus will suffer eternal torment. There is no other way for anyone to come to God except through Jesus (Jn. 14:6). Please do not depend on anyone else, your own efforts, your religion, but simply put your faith in Christ our Master. So as Rom. 10:9 says, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart the God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." You are urged not to despise God's mercy but call out to the Lord and trust ONLY in Him.

(See also Acts 10:36-43)

THOUGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR



Larry Wessels

Greetings to our readers. As usual, it has been awhile since anyone has heard from us. Last year we came out with exactly one newsletter and this year the quantity will be the same. Unfortunately, time and money severely limit the frequency of our mailings but at the same time I praise God that enough financial help comes in to allow us continued television production (TV editing costs \$50 an hour, with an average one hour video taking about 5 to 6 hours to edit). Consequently, however, there is simply not enough finance to support either Steve Morrison or myself so therefore we do ministry without wage and work regular full-time secular jobs (which obviously affects the amount of time we have for ministry), to support our families.

Never-the-less, I continue to praise God for the opportunities for ministry He has given us. This particular newsletter gives us the opportunity to explore the crucial doctrine of spiritual warfare which affects every Christian every day.

It is so often the case that people who claim to be Christian live their lives as if they did not know or are willfully ignorant of the fact that they are living in the midst of the greatest cosmic war of all time! They live their lives as if there was nothing going on between Satan and God, between evil and holiness, and that cosmic judgment by a righteous God against all evil is coming at the end of the ages. "Fear God, and keep His commandments" (Eccl. 12:13) is of little concern to many.

On the other hand, many Christians are carried over to the other extreme by seeing a demon behind every bush. They blame a demon or devil for every wicked act they commit even though it was really a result of their own sinful desires and thus they themselves are to blame not the demon.

I am excited to bring our readers the excellent work of Dr. Thomas Ice and Robert Dean, Jr. to the subject of spiritual warfare. Biblical accuracy is the only way to properly deal with this issue. We as Christians must deal with spiritual warfare on the basis of God's Word as found in the Bible and not on a bunch of man-made theories and interpretations based on subjective experiences. As the reader gets into Ice and Dean's material he will see what I am talking about although I would like to apologize at this point for the text size in this newsletter being so small (I wanted to jam as much material into this edition as was possible for obvious reasons).

I would also like to mention that our ministry has been blessed with a dear brother in the Lord named David Jaimes who is now (as funds permit) converting our cable TV programs into Spanish. David works for free and has so far converted three of the Thomas Ice "Spiritual Warfare" videos into Spanish for television broadcast. Texas has a large Spanish speaking community.

On something else, e-mail solicitation can be sent to webmaster at Biblequery.org. Blessings.

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN ANSWERS ?

Our ministry name is derived in part from Peter 3:15 which states, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (KJV). This is the goal of **Christian Answers** in an increasingly anti-Christian society here in America and throughout the world; giving answers and reasons why the Christian faith can be trusted and believed.

The Biblical commands to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12), to be "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17), to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), to "be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9), to "put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not" (Rev. 2:2), to "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matt. 7:15), to "examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21), "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25), to follow the example of Paul and Apollos who "vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ." (Acts 18:28). These are but a few of the marching orders for the call to ministry, discernment and evangelism.

The inerrant Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) whereby the gospel is preached, which is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16), is the weapon of our evangelism. As Hebrews 4:12 states, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow: it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." This is the evangelical missionary methodology of **Christian Answers**— to bring the Biblical perspective to a culture that is almost completely ignorant of it; to bring Christian truth, Christian answers to those who, as the prophet Isaiah said, have made "lies...and falsehood" their refuge (Isa. 28:15); to smash lies and falsehoods with the "hammer" of God's word (Jer. 23:29); see also Proverbs 30:5-6, Psalm 138:2b, Isaiah 40:8, John 5:39-47, 1 Cor. 14:37, and Acts 17:11.

Christian Answers utilizes all outreach that God allows us including television, radio, audio CDs, video DVDs, speaking engagements, and the printed page. The materials we have been able to produce have been used by churches, Bible teachers, Christian apologists, laymen and others as well as those seeking life in Christ.

We are not afraid to stand up for Jesus Christ in public forums or wherever the Lord leads. Of course this type of ministry is not for the faint of heart and very often leads to the same type of suffering and persecution that we find in the book of Acts. But as the old saying goes, "one life will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last," and as Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14), knowing this mortal life is short and God's eternity is only a moment away for all.

Our ministry is "exempt from federal income tax under section 501 (a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501 (c) (3) by the Internal Revenue Service". Donations to our ministry are tax deductible, therefore those who contribute will receive a donation receipt good on your US income tax. This applies to donations only, not sales. We are legally registered in the state of Texas.

direction. If the other view is true, then the problems and solutions offered by the first view are irrelevant. How can we find our way out of this maze?

We believe that the Bible is our highest authority, and only God has sufficient, infinite knowledge and understanding of both our enemies and our human nature to inform us accurately about spiritual conflict and what to do about it. The Christian must always be like the men and women of Berea who received the highest praise from the apostle Paul because they did not simply take his word but searched the Scripture daily to verify his teachings (Acts 17:11).

Many of the errors that have crept into the church, some of which have become very popular, are based on misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Scripture. Sometimes this happens because the writers have not taken into account the original languages of the Bible or have misused them. Therefore, it is important that we occasionally refer to the original Greek and Hebrew of Scripture to interpret more accurately God's Word.

At other times, error creeps in because we rely upon interpretations of experiences or personal testimony that might not be consistent with Scripture, especially in the area of Satan and demons and what they can do to Christians. Testimonies of missionaries working among pagan tribes where demonic activity abounds are used to support a particular line of teaching. How should these stories be evaluated, especially since some of these occurrences are used to support one position and others are used to support a contradictory position? Is appealing to these types of experiences a valid means to find truth?

Before we can ever hope to have victory over the sin and evil that are part of the universe, we must first understand the role of God's Word. Much of what is taught today contains testimonies of personal experiences or experiences of other people. We must find out how we are to regard such testimony, and we must continually seek to determine a true, biblical approach to spiritual warfare. Failure to do so is one reason that so many believers are impotent in the warfare. They have either lost the sure foundation of the Word of God or severely weakened it by relying upon interpretations of experiences that run contrary to what the Bible clearly teaches.

THE ONLY TRUE BASIS

The only trustworthy basis for knowledge about the supernatural is God's revelation. Because man is incapable of arriving at ultimate truth through his own resources, whether through reason or sense data, he must rely upon God's revelation. In Romans 1, Paul tells us that although human beings have a clear testimony of God in creation all around them, they reject that evidence because they are sinners: *"That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened"* (Rom. 1:19-21).

The effect of Adam's sin on the abilities of the human mind is extensive and must never be

underestimated when one is discussing the issue of knowing truth. The preceding passage from Romans 1 tells us that man's heart is darkened. Romans 3:11-12 says, *"There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one."* Paul stresses the effects of sin in Romans 8:7-8: *"The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*

God describes the effects of sin on man in a number of different ways: He says that the unsaved are in darkness, that Satan works within them, that they are blind and ignorant, that they willfully suppress the truth, and that they are enslaved to sin and unrighteousness. The only path out of this predicament is the lucid Word of God.

THE ONLY DELIVERER

The eighth chapter of the gospel of John tells us of a very important dialogue between Jesus and some of the Jewish leaders. In that exchange, He said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (v. 32). It is the Word of God that brings light into darkness and tells us everything we need to know about sin and Satan and how to be set free from them. Remember Psalm 119:130, *"The unfolding of Thy words give light; it gives understanding to the simple."*

Some Pharisees who were in the crowd objected to Christ's statement, claiming that because they were Abraham's offspring they did not need to be liberated. In fact, however, they were enslaved in at least four ways: They were in bondage of the Roman Empire, they were in bondage to the religious traditions of the Pharisees, they were in bondage to Satan, and they were in bondage to sin. Jesus stated that the only means of freedom was through Him: *"If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed"* (John 8:36).

The only source of deliverance from bondage is Jesus Christ. According to Colossians 1:13 all people are born in the domain of darkness. But through faith in Jesus Christ we are delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of Jesus Christ. If you have never taken the opportunity to put your faith alone in Christ alone, you, too, are enslaved to sin and Satan, and the only way you can be free is to trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.

TWO VITAL SECRETS

We must not overlook two critically important lessons. First, Satan's skill at deception was so clever that people with no sin nature and who enjoyed an incredibly close relationship with God were deceived. They were tricked because they allowed Satan to direct their thinking away from God's command and to entice them into dealing with him apart from the revealed Word of God. If we are to avoid the same snare, we who do have a sin nature must be even more armed with the Word of God and ensure that we are using it accurately. The superficial knowledge that most Christians have of God's Word makes them easy marks for Satan's deceptions.

Second, failure to rely solely on the sufficiency of God's word will always lead to disaster in spiritual warfare. God is a jealous God; He wants to be trusted alone. To rely on anything

alongside the Word of God is to destroy its power in our lives. That is one reason why so many Christians today lead such ineffective Christian lives and struggle so much with sin. They are merging biblical teachings with self-help techniques, psychology, unbiblical teachings about demons and sin, etc. Only by understanding what God has revealed in His Word about enemies facing us can we erect the defenses necessary to guard effectively against them.

THREE WORLDLY DESIRES

Many people today speak constantly about spiritual warfare. Often, their attention is focused exclusively on Satan and demons, even though spiritual warfare in the Bible is presented as a threefold operation against the world, the flesh, and the Devil. As a result of being so preoccupied with only one phase of battle, many Christians have suffered profound infiltration on the fronts of the world and the flesh.

If we want to be successful as Christians in avoiding worldliness, we must first understand its basic characteristics. First John 2:16 and James 3:15 are two crucial New Testament passages that tell us about the nature of this cosmic system.

In 1 John 2:16, the apostle John describes the totality of the world system, *"all that is in the world,"* as being composed of three parts: (1) *"the lust of flesh";* (2) *"lust of the eyes";* and (3) *"the boastful pride of life."*

The first component is *"the lust of the flesh,"* which refers to our evil desire to satisfy the impulses that stem from our fallen nature called "the flesh." "If it feels good, do it" a popular slogan generated by the world a number of years ago, accurately captures the idea behind the lust of flesh. The idea often used in commercial advertising is that we deserve all of the fine things in life which of course appeals to the lust of flesh.

Then we come to a somewhat similar phrase, *"the lust of the eyes."* This has to do with desire for things that we see, things which catch our eye. The emphasis is on external attractiveness without examining the underlying values. *"The lust of the eyes"* is associated with greed, envy, and covetousness. This type of greed is one of the major controlling principles in the world system.

"The boastful pride of life" is cited as the third controlling principle of this world system. It is the arrogant attitude by which people think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. It is the ambition to center one's life on self rather than on God.

All three of these characteristics originated with Satan in his fall, were passed down to Adam and Eve, and are daily the most imitated philosophy of life on the globe today. The central idea of the world's approach to life is selfishness, summarized in three words: passion, greed, and pride. The world system favors men who are alienated from God [who] have [as] their ambition in life the desire to please the longings of a nature corrupted by sin; to possess the things they see and can enjoy; to prevail over their fellow-men in power and prestige. These are Satan's rules for the game of life in this present world system.

In contrast, the believer is called to live a life of love toward God that makes transforming his thinking the highest priority (Rom. 12:1-2; John 14:15). The cosmic system hates God and all who are aligned with Him (John 15:19) because the principles of the world are diametrically opposed to those of the Christian. Thus, the apostle John

commands believers not to *"love the world, nor things in the world"* (1 John 2:15).

The apostle James contrasts the wisdom of the world with the wisdom from above in James 3:15-17. Again we see only two ways of thinking, the cosmic thinking of human viewpoint versus God's way of thinking, or divine viewpoint. The three terms employed in this description-**"earthly, natural, demonic"** (James 3:15)-should shake us up about many of our deeply cherished opinions. Here James clearly delineates that human-viewpoint thinking is not merely neutral, or wrong, but is specifically defined as "demonic." "Earthly wisdom" has to do with one's perspective. The wisdom of the world does not have a perspective beyond the horizon of this temporal environment. Neither a heavenly nor eternal perspective is found. It is time-bound. "Natural" refers to the nature of fallen man. For something in the Bible to be "natural" means that it is still in the fallen, un-regenerated state, not under the influence of the Spirit of God or the spiritual (1 Cor. 2:14). "Demonic" means just what it says, a wisdom consistent with Satan's program that attempts to control us by doctrines of demons. It is a so-called wisdom that rejects God's view as the source for proper living.

Let us bring the point home. What we have seen so far is that every human being is born a sinner, a citizen of Satan's domain, and is brainwashed to think according to Satan's cosmic system from birth. Despite the presence of many true and accurate concepts, the overall orientation of our thinking from birth is based on arrogance. Thus, the Bible classifies the thinking of every human being from birth as demonic-not a complimentary picture. For this reason, a transformation of the believer's thinking on the basis of detailed and extensive Bible teaching is a high priority. We must completely scrap our old mind set and way of thinking, not just exchange a few pieces of wrong data for a few pieces of correct information. We must renovate our entire frame of reference according to God's revealed Word. Romans 12:2 is not calling for simply learning Bible stories and biblical standards; it is calling for a radical overhaul of how we think as well as what we think.

"Worldliness" is fleshed out by: (1) pride and defiance, (2) man's so-called wisdom and knowledge, (3) the power to control and manipulate, and (4) money as security.

The system works by Satan ruling over all subjects under his domain, which includes both fallen angels and sinful mankind. John tells us that the scope of Satan's domain is the world: *"The whole world lies in the power of the evil one"* (1 John 5:19).

The fallen angels are Satan's foot soldiers, who do his bidding in the spiritual realm. They are an organized group described in Scripture as "rulers," "powers," "world forces of this darkness," and "spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

Those who do not know Christ as Savior are said to have been caught in *"the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will"* (2 Tim. 2:26). Every human being is at the beck and call of Satan, unless he or she has escaped his clutches by becoming a believer. Scripture describes unbelievers as those who walk *"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" (Eph. 2:2). All unbelievers are in bondage to Satan, making them his unwitting allies against God. He makes them dance in harmony to the tune of the world system.

This system operates similar to the way a radio station functions. Satan is the program director who selects the agenda for the station. The demons and fallen humanity produce the programming, which propagates and reinforces the agenda (false doctrine). The station then transmits the message over the air. However, you cannot pickup the station unless you have a receiver tuned to the right frequency. All of fallen humanity is tuned to radio station "WORLD" with the volume turned all the way up. The receiver is the flesh, which is attracted to Satan's frequency. All three aspects work in harmony: **the world, the flesh, and the Devil.**

The sin nature is sympathetic to the evil-nature of the world system, so the two are attracted. The main difference between the two is that the world system characterizes the corporate expression of Satan whereas the flesh embodies these same characteristics on a personal level. When someone becomes a believer in Jesus Christ, this alignment is broken but only by expelling cosmic thinking from the soul by saturating our minds with the teaching of Scripture.

THE FLESH WITHIN

In the New Testament, the word used most often to describe this sin nature is the flesh. The clear testimony of the New Testament is that the flesh, the rebel within, is the major and most influential enemy facing the Christian (cf. Rom. 7:14, 18; 8:1-17; Gal. 3:3; 5:13-21; Eph. 2:3). The twenty-one epistles in the New Testament were written to address the important issues confronting Christians in this age, the church age. One can reasonably expect that if anything is an important issue for the believer in this age, it will be given a comprehensive treatment in these letters; if something is not an issue, it will probably be ignored. *"Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence."* (2 Peter 1:3).

The silence of these letters in some areas speaks volumes. For example, demons (or evil spirits) are mentioned fewer than 15 times, and most of these instances simply relate to certain factual truths about demons. On the other hand, these same letters contain more than fifty references to the flesh as the primary enemy of the Christian (and flesh is only one term used to describe this sin nature). The New Testament perspective emphasizes that the major source of our problems stem from our own sin nature.

"Flesh" in the Scripture has three basic meanings. The first meaning is a reference to either a body or the basic material of a body (i.e., flesh and bone). The second sense focuses more on the limitations of man in contrast to the power and ability of God. The third sense is the one on which we are focusing: the sinful nature of man. Although flesh sometimes refers to the physical body, and in some passages to sensual sin, it is not restricted to that meaning but covers the entire realm of sin (Gal. 5:19-21).

When you and I were born, we were in bondage to sin, "the flesh" (Rom. 6:6, 17). We were enslaved by it so that everything we did was

marked by the flesh. Although some things that we did were relatively good, the Bible teaches that we could do nothing that was good in God's eyes. Isaiah 64:6 informs us that "all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment." Paul says the same in Romans 7:18, *"I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh."* What we learn from this fact is that, in the light of God's righteous standard, everything that is produced by man is evil and sinful.

WHAT IS SIN?

How does the Bible define sin? Too often, people think of sin and the works of the flesh as only the baser activities, but the Biblical concept of sin is much broader. Romans 14:23 says that *"whatever is not from faith is sin,"* meaning that any thought, word, or deed, no matter how noble, helpful, or religious, if it is not done in dependence upon God (the meaning of faith) by walking by means of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), it is done in dependence upon your own powers, and God calls that sin. That is exactly what Adam did in the garden: rather than depend upon God and what He said, he depended on his own ability to handle the situation himself. That is the essence of idolatry and self-worship.

The flesh produces not only the baser activities that we associate with sin but also man-made religion. In Philippians 3:3-4 Paul warns us from his own experience not to put any confidence in the flesh, for the flesh produces a false religion, a religion based on human ability. Paul certainly understood this phenomenon because for years he was caught up in pursuing the religious standards of the Pharisees and hoping that these good works would have value in God's eyes. The apostle Paul in Philippians 3:8 states that all of his good works as a Pharisee were no better than rubbish (literally "manure") in contrast to the true religion, which is based not on human works but on the finished work of Christ alone. Gal. 2:16, 21.

Besides producing evil works, the sin nature also produces works that often are thought of as good. The sin nature causes self-deception: *"the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"* (Jer. 17:9). Unsaved men excel at self-deception.

Paul emphasizes in Romans 8 the dangers of the mind controlled by the sin nature. Here we see a contrast between the person who is living "in" or "according to" the flesh and the person who is living "in" or "according to" the Spirit. Romans 8:9 clearly states that the person who is in the Spirit is a Christian: *"You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."* At the moment a person trusts Jesus Christ as his Savior, God does a number of things for him, one of which is to give him the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer. If a person does not have the Holy Spirit, then he is not a Christian; therefore, he is not "in the Spirit" but is still living according to the flesh.

The person who is in the flesh is in rebellion against God. He is not in a position of neutrality but-as harsh as it might sound-a position of hostility. Romans 8:7 tells us that *"the mind set on flesh is hostile toward God."* The result of this hostility is that the mind that is operating on the sin nature rebels against anything that God commands. People often overlook this

point. It is simple for us to think that some very nice people who seem to talk a lot about God and engage in "spiritual" activities do indeed have a desire to know God or perhaps even love God. But this is not what the Scripture says. No matter how moral, ethical, or religious a person might be, if they are walking according to the sin nature, believer or unbeliever, they are at enmity with God (they are hostile to God).

Operating on the sin nature is tantamount to operating on principles of the world system. Such affinity with the world system is antagonistic to God and condemned as such. So the believer who is saved but is not operating on the principles of God's word is at that point not only an enemy of God (James 4:4) but also living according to principles that are demonic (3:15).

Although Christians are liberated from their enslavement to sin, this does not mean that they never sin or that resisting sin is easy. The sin nature is still very much present and is still set on asserting itself. Man's propensity to evil and rebellion against God is just as much there after salvation as it is before salvation. It's just that after salvation he has a choice, whereas before salvation he had no choice. He was a slave to sin (Rom. 6:17), he was "being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit" (Eph. 4:22), he was spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1), and he was unable to perceive spiritual truth (1 Cor. 2:14). Before salvation, there was no choice; after salvation, however, we do have a choice. This is the power of the cross. The sin nature has power only if the believer chooses not to trust in God's Word and obey Him and, instead, places himself in a position of obedience to his past master.

This is where the central battle in the believer's spiritual life is taking place. The flesh is set against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh (Gal. 5:17). Peter tells us that these fleshly lusts wage war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11). It is not a battle that calls for demonic deliverance, exorcism, or any other sort of exoteric practice that holds forth the empty promise that there will be no more struggle with a particular temptation or habitual sin. This battle takes place in your own heart. Are you going to "consider yourselves to be dead to sin" (Rom. 6:11)? This means that you must believe that sin no longer has power over you, and then you must live in light of that fact. It means that you must master sin (Gen. 4:7), and through the power of God can do so. To accept any notion of the Christian life that teaches that you can have a one-time experience and never struggle with sin and the flesh again is to accept unbiblical fantasy.

The Spirit of God leads us through the Word of God. By learning God's Word, we give the Spirit the tools to renovate and transform our life. This process takes place in two ways. First, when we encounter temptation, the Holy Spirit recalls to our mind what the Bible teaches regarding that sin. When we choose to yield to the temptation and sin, we grieve the Spirit and shift from walking by the Spirit to walking according to the flesh. Second, the Spirit leads us through conviction, which takes place through our conscience to the degree that our conscience has been transformed by the new standards of God's Word. When we refuse to yield to temptation by applying what we have learned from the Word of God, spiritual growth takes place. We are now on the road to maturity,

increasingly able to "discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). If we sin, when we are convicted by the Spirit we should turn away from our sin and back to God. Part of this turning involves confessing our sin, which, according to 1 John 1:9, is to be a standard characteristic of the Christian life.

The secret to controlling the flesh is learning the Word of God-letting it transform our lives and then living in accordance with this new standard. This explains Paul's second use of "walk by the Spirit" in Galatians 5:25, where the Greek work for "walk" is *stoiceo*, not *peripateo*. *Stoiceo* means to "follow a path, to walk in the footsteps." The path that is laid out is the objective directions of the Word of God. Thus, we walk in moment-by-moment dependence, led by the Spirit down the path of God's Word.

Jesus' response to the attack of Satan (Matt. 4:1-11) serves as a prototype for how the believer is to handle such attacks. First, unlike Eve, at no time did Christ give in to the logic of Satan's temptations. Instead, Christ penetrated the deceptive approach of Satan because He knew the Scriptures and was able to counter with God's way of thinking. He accurately used the "living and active" Word of God (Heb. 4:12). Second, the nature of this encounter was not mystical but real. Third, the power that enabled Jesus to defeat the temptations was the truth inherent in the Scripture, not a metaphysical power or use of the Holy Spirit. Remember that Jesus is handling these temptations in His humanity, and thus setting the pattern and example for us. This encounter with Satan is not designed to provide credentials, as was the case with casting out demons.

BINDING AND LOOSING

Some years ago, we witnessed a "deliverance" service conducted by a well-known pioneer in the field. Many bizarre things happened at the service. Many of the demons had names, such as the demon of lust, gluttony, worry, gossip, and criticism. One demon was even named after a particular food.

The "deliverance" evangelist had a routine that he followed in casting demons from people. First, he found out a little about the individual. He then asked him what his problem was (he always assumed that it was caused by a demon rather than some other source). Then he spoke authoritatively to the demon and commanded the demon to manifest itself. Having done this, he usually carried on a conversation with the demon, often quite humorous, as he would insult, and finally command the demon to leave "in the name of Jesus" and "by the power of the blood of Christ." Some demons required several conversations before eventually departing. One of the things he always did when he was commanding them to depart was to bind them and send them to the "pit of hell."

The practice of binding Satan and/or the demons and evil spirits is not only something that some Christians do during public and private deliverance sessions but also is often a personal activity exercised regularly by an increasing number of Christians. Sometimes a person will pray that Satan will be bound from blinding a person to whom he or she is presenting the gospel in the belief that this will improve the likelihood of the listener's trusting Christ as his Savior. Or someone might pray that an upcoming

event would be protected from the influence of demonic powers by binding the demons from having influence in relation to that event. On other occasions, people attempt to bind Satan and his demons from certain geographical locations, such as a new house into which the person will be moving, a new church building, or a particular location in a city or neighborhood. Doing this, they believe, could improve the power and moving of God in the lives of believers as well as unbelievers.

MANDATE FOR BINDING?

The misinterpretation of three passages in Matthew is the primary basis for the popular "binding" teachings and practices. First, we will consider Matthew 12:29, in which Jesus said, "How can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property unless he first binds the strong man?" Christ made this statement as an illustration in His refutation of the Pharisee's assertion that *Jesus "casts out demons only by Beelzebub the ruler of demons"* (12:24). The Pharisees refused to admit, as many people were beginning to suggest, that Jesus was truly the Son of David (12:23), the promised Messiah of God. Therefore, they attributed His power to an alliance with Beelzebub, their only supernatural alternative in the universe. Christ's response affirmed His sovereignty over Satan. The illustration pointed out that one would have to control the strong man before his house could be robbed. The logic of Christ's argument is that Christ was not in league with Satan but was casting out demons by virtue of His inherent divine power. It would be wrong to conclude from this passage that Christ was laying down a universal pattern for believers to follow. Instead, this was a historic illustration of Christ's personal power over Satan.

Meanwhile, during the current age, Satan is "a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). The antidote for the believer is not to bind him but to "resist him, firm in your faith" (1 Peter 5:9 with James 4:7).

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:19).

"Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven (Matt. 18:18).

The focus of the passages is on the word bind (deo). How is this word used in context, and what does it mean? The word means of "to tie up by binding." The result is inactivity on the part of the one bound. Here, the word bind is used with its opposite, "loose." In these contexts, the idea of binding and loosing has the force of the judicial notation of "forbidding" and "permitting." Israel's religious leaders used this phrase in Christ's day to refer to what was forbidden (bound) and what was permitted (loosed). This is why our Lord told Peter that He would give him "the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19).

Peter was to become one of the apostles upon whom the Christian church would be founded (Eph. 2:20). Therefore, Peter and the apostles would be the human agent through whom an

trance into the kingdom of heaven would be denied or allowed, depending upon whether one's key matched the lock. The words "*shall be bound and shall be loosed*" as used in the Greek perfect tense means that the binding and loosing in heaven will precede the binding and loosing on earth.

A translation that brings out this aspect of the original Greek would read as follows: **"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, but whatever you bind on earth is that which shall already have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on earth is that which shall already have been loosed in the heavens."** **Peter was to bind things upon the earth, but only what had already been bound in heaven.** Peter was to set the standard on earth for entrance into the kingdom of heaven based upon the standard that God had already set in heaven—those who respond to the gospel of faith alone in Christ alone will be eternally secure in their salvation. Peter was to be a mediator of the Word of God between God and man, and that standard is what Peter stated in Matthew 16:16, namely, that Jesus was "*the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Whether a person believes in Christ as Lord and Savior or not will determine whether he is "bound" or "loosed" (destined for either heaven or hell, see John 3:18).

AFFIRMING GOD'S WILL

"Binding and loosing" are used in exactly the same way in Matthew 18:18, which is literally translated as follows: "*Truly I am telling you, whatever you may bind upon the earth shall be that which has already been bound in heaven; and whatever you may loose upon earth shall be that which has already been loosed in heaven.*" Jesus is saying that believers can have confidence that when they justly excommunicate someone on earth, they are fulfilling the will of God that has already been determined in heaven. This truth should give them confidence in what they are doing. So in this context binding and loosing carry the idea that corresponds to our modern judicial language of declaring someone guilty (binding) or innocent (loosing). The court decision does not make someone guilty or innocent but simply determines whether his past acts violate or conform to God's heavenly standard.

In both passages, neither word suggests anything similar to the contemporary notation of binding Satan or the demonic powers. Instead, these references refer to carrying out God's heavenly will upon earth as it has already been determined in heaven. In fact, the contemporary idea of binding and loosing has more in common with the methods related to the casting and removal of spells found in the occult than with anything related to biblical Christianity. Therefore, we as believers must be extremely careful when we adopt practices that are not mandated by the Scriptures. One scholar Friedrich Bushseh in commenting on these two passages has said: *A purely magical binding and loosing such as may be found elsewhere in Greek and Rabbinic Usage [passages outside of the Bible] is ruled out by the context. Jesus does not give to Peter and the other disciples any power to enchant or to free by magic. The customary meaning of the Rabbinic expressions is equally incontestable, namely, to declare forbidden or permitted, and thus to impose or remove an obligation, by a doctrinal decision.*

THE DEMONIC POWERS

Demon related material occurs on eleven occasions in the first three Gospels. Notice the following breakdown of this material (parallel passages in parentheses). Three general statements about casting out demons: (1) Matthew 4:24: "*...They brought to Him all who were ill, taken with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics, and He healed them*" (cf. Mark 3:11; Luke 6:18); (2) Matthew 8:16: "*When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill*" (cf. Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41); (3) Luke 7:21: "*At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He granted sight to many who were blind.*"

Eight specific incidents are also described: (1) Mark 1:23-28 (cf. Luke 4:33-37); (2) Matthew 8:28-34 (cf. Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-40); (3) Matthew 15:21-28 (cf. Mark 7:24-30); (4) Matthew 17:14-21 (cf. Luke 8:2); (5) Mark 9:14-29 (cf. Luke 9:37-45); (6) Matthew 12:22 (cf. Luke 11:14); (7) Luke 13:10-17; (8) Matthew 9:32-34. Two passages cover the disciples and the demonic: (1) Matthew 10:1-16 (cf. Mark 3:13-19; Luke 9:1); and (2) Mark 6:7, 13. One incident of teaching was related to the Pharisees' accusation that Christ's power came from Beelzebub (Matt. 12:43-45; cf. Mark 3:22-30; Luke 11:14-26).

One of the most significant observations we can make is that not a single one of the cases reveals someone who came to Jesus in order to be delivered of a demon! Each person was brought by someone else, except for the Gadarene. And in that instance he did not come to Jesus to be delivered, but "*he ran up and bowed down,*" indicating worship, and asked, "*what do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?*" Then he begged Jesus not to torment him. This man clearly was not coming for deliverance. If anything can be inferred from these examples, it is that demon-possessed people do not seek deliverance but rather are content in their state.

A second observation regards terminology. Never is it said that Jesus or the disciples exorcised a demon. The English exorcism is a transliteration from the Greek *ecorkizo*, which is always used of the magical, ritualistic attempts of the unbelievers to remove demons. In the biblical accounts, Jesus and the disciples only "cast out" (*ekballo*) demons—a vital distinction in methodology. The practices of modern deliverance practitioners, whether extremist or more moderate, have more in common with the exorcists of Jesus' day than with the disciples.

The scriptures contain no indication, mandate, or authorization for believers to pray away the influence of these demons or that it is even necessary to free a city, neighborhood, or nation from the influence of these demons as a precursor to evangelism. Once again, this view reflects a "devil-made-me-do-it" approach and subtly shifts responsibility for personal decisions away from the individual and onto some other entity or event.

THE APOSTLES AND THE DEMONIC

On three occasions the apostles are said to have been involved in the casting out of demons (Acts 8:5-8; 16:16-18; 19:11-12). None of these passages involves a debate over whether those delivered were Christians; everyone would agree that they

were not. The significance of these events is as signs that the apostles had the authority from their risen Head (Christ) to act and speak on His behalf, as was demonstrated by the fact that they had authority over Satan like their Master. Once the foundation of the church had been laid by the apostles (Eph. 2:20) and the boundary and nature of the gospel message was established, the norm for dealing with demon-possessed unbelievers had become the preaching of the gospel, not "magical" rituals.

OUR TRUE FOCUS

Because Christians cannot be demon possessed, they need not be delivered from demon possession. Satan can influence us from without, but God the Holy Spirit protects His children from internal reposition after salvation. **One of the tragedies of the contemporary deliverance ministries is that they are attempting something that is a complete waste of time—trying to deliver Christians from demons. The focus of the Christian should be on proper ethical conduct in accordance with God's Word, not on a metaphysical battle with Satan and his demons.**

Increasingly, Christians today seem to be getting caught up in preoccupation with Satan and the demonic powers. This distraction has caused them to forget that there is a three-front war going on— not just with the Devil, which is very real, but also with the world and the flesh. Many Christians have become so obsessed with Satan that they are being overrun on the other two fronts—the world and the flesh. In fact, many of the false teachings today about Satan and the demonic powers are really products of this world system. Also, some of the very people at the forefront of the deliverance ministries are being overwhelmed by the sin nature in many areas of their lives because they think that they are possessed by the Devil instead of their own lusts (a convenient blame-game switch).

Let the Bible tell us who our real enemy is, what our battle plan involves, and how to carry it out. Trust only Jesus Christ and His Word.

Those wishing to contact Dr. Thomas Ice can do so by writing: Dr. Ice, P.O. Box 1411, Arlington, TX 76094-1111.

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LETTERS FROM THE FRONTLINE



Dear Brother,

Thank you for sending me a copy of the *Christian Answers* newsletter. The articles on the "KJV-only Controversy" were excellent.

I would like to order some things from this volume but I no longer have that issue.

Could you please send me that volume on "KJV-only" again. It would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks much,
D. C.
Uniontown, PA

Dear Larry and Steve,

Thank you for your issue of the *Christian Debater Guide* about the "King James Only" movement. I had no idea just how deceived and deceiving these are who think that the KJV is the one true Word of God. I especially appreciate Gary Hudson's article and that he was KJV-only for a time, because it reminds me that our Lord can set His children free from any deception! Praise His Holy Name! May God continue to bless and use your ministry for His glory, and please add me to your mailing list.

Sincerely in Him,
D.J.
Round Rock, TX

Dear Mr. Larry Wessels,

WOW! And WOW! And WOW!.....I can't find any other words to express how I feel right now. My heart is still beating with such joy since receiving what you sent me. I feel so blessed. The tapes, the newsletters, the flyers, and booklets, all will be put to good (no, great!) use, here on this prison yard. There is so much

"junk" religion that enter into America's prisons, and instead of helping the men, it only confuses them more. I praise God for ministries and men like you who are more then willing to help teach and correct the false of today's teachings. Thank you, thank you, thank you! I promise I will keep you updated on the impact your tapes, flyers, newsletters, and booklets make on this yard. May God bless you.

Because He died and rose again,
A. G. T.
Lancaster, CA

Hello Steve,

Many thanks for sending me the latest ammunition for the kind of warfare we are involved in. I found your Islam concordance very helpful, and am planning to e-mail it to a Christian friend in Pakistan, who is involved in doing deeper research in Islam. From the look of it, it seems that the concordance may expand in the coming years. It might be a good idea to consider getting it published as it gets nearer to some saturation point!!!

In Christ,
Asif
From the web

I am Muslim but I am trying very hard to convert away from Islam but I do not know how. Can you please tell me how can I do it in Malaysia? If I can't, tell me where can I do it?

Anonymous from the web

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in Christ. Thank you for all your hard work. Regarding your Christian Answers

video entitled, "The Bible Translation Issue" with Doug Kutilek and Bob Ross and Doug's writings on this subject; these materials have helped me more than any other reference. May God bless you. In Christ (Hebrews 13:5),

Pastor J.B.
Bayonne, NJ

Steve,

You are a blessing. Thank you very much for everything. I have been e-mailing other sources but you actually took the time to respond to me. I thank you so much. I'll let you know how things went with my friend in the Jehovah's Witnesses. To God be all the Glory,

Gerardo
From the web

Dear Larry,

Have watched your "Unpopular Bible Doctrines" show on cable access TV several times. It is very good. I got the feeling that you had several more unpopular doctrines that you did not have time to discuss. If you have anything in writing on your website about this, I would certainly like to read it. Thank you,

J. K.
Austin, TX

Dearest Christian Answers,

Thanks a million for the newsletters! Yes I did receive them plus the super sweet note. Now I have loads of material to read plus an audio soundtrack to listen to! You guys are awesome !!! God bless you and your work. In Christ,

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"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." - II Corinthians 2:11

Inside This Issue: Topic: Spiritual Warfare

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page 7: Order Form
page 8: Letters from the Frontline

"exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict" (Titus1:9)