***Satan's Efforts against Believers

Colossians 1:1-2

COL-68***

Our subject is "Prayer for the Colossians," segment number four in Colossians 1:9-14.

Pastor-teachers are always on the lookout for believers who show promise of great spiritual potential in spiritual growth and in divine good service: people who are mature folks; and, people who are children. A pastor-teacher has an eye for people with potential. I've noticed that we currently have a crop, particularly of little boys. And if you've had occasion to be associated with some of them, and you have any spiritual discernment, we have an enormous potential in little boys that I hope I'm around to take to summer camp, let alone to do a lot of teaching. They have a discernment; they have a personality; they have a winsomeness; they have an openness; they have parents who are directing them to the mind of Christ; and, they have, I sense, enormous personal potential. And my eyes are on that pack of little boys, and where they're going, because if Berean ministry's congregation does its job, they're going to grow up to be tremendous kids and tremendous men someday.

Christians who grasp the divinely provided system for learning spiritual things (the grace system of perception), and for storing doctrine in the human spirit are the kind of people that the pastor-teacher is looking for. These are the people who have positive volition toward what they hear. We're looking for Christians who, therefore, are capable of building a strong spiritual maturity structure in the soul, to contain the super-grace blessings of God to them, so that their cup is running over. We're not looking for men and women who are wimps, who don't know their role before God in God's order of things. We're looking for men who have capacity to take on spiritual authority. We're looking for women who are capable of encouraging those men to do their job of spiritual authority and spiritual leadership. And we are looking for Christians who demonstrate the Holy Spirit-given capacity, above all, of mental attitude love, because that tells us that they're maintaining their temporal fellowship with God. And because the Father is in touch with them, they're filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

This is what was true of the Colossian believers that was such a joy to the apostle Paul. He looked upon these people, from the reports given to him by Epaphras, and he knew that these people had great potential. They had an enormous spiritual potential.

So, we look for people who can enter into the deep things of the Holy Spirit, and make an impact for Jesus Christ on the world. We're not looking for the mere shallow, religious, emotional type. And, in time, when people degenerate, from perhaps a quality position in spiritual things, the only place you can go from a knowledge of the Word of God, and functioning upon that in your soul is to emotionalism. And that type of person does not hang around Berean church very long. No matter how much they have liked it before, and no matter how much they have been here in the past, when they go on that slippery slope of finding something other than God's thinking as being foremost in their life, then they very quickly become disoriented, and they lose their way.

We are looking for people who are able to appreciate the deep things of the Spirit of God – Christians, in other words, whose eyes are on Jesus Christ, not on people; not on circumstances; and, not on things. Therefore, they are stable people. They're consistent. And they are energetic in the things of the Lord. There's nothing so tiresome as a Christian whose eyes are on himself, or whose eyes are on people, or whose eyes are on circumstances.

One of the great advantages of age, as we learned in our last study of creationism, was that, in the early centuries of the human race when people lived for hundreds and hundreds of years, they accumulated enormous discernment and enormous insight. Well, in a matter a number of decades, you can go quite a long way towards getting discernment and evaluation of people. And the occupational hazard is that you get very tired of the whiny wimpish people who are preoccupied with what somebody thinks of them; what somebody has said about them; with their circumstances in life; the hardships they're going through; or, the financial situation that they must deal with: the things that they don't have; or, the things that they would like to have.

All of these are the sorry things that characterize the unbeliever, and should have no place with Christians. And I must confess: it becomes very hard to be patient and act with graciousness to people who ought to have grown up beyond that. What we're looking for is Christians who live their lives for the glory of God, not for personal exaltation. Therefore, there's no jealousy, and there's no envy, and there's no self-pity among them. These are Christians who humbly store treasures of eternal rewards in heaven through their voluntary, determined exercise of their spiritual gifts in serving the Father. And I said, "determined spiritual gifts exercised." This is somebody who isn't going to come into something say, "Ah, I can't exercise my spiritual gift now. I've got to wait until some circumstances become better, and until something improves." They are never justifying the deactivation of their spiritual gifts. That's the kind of people a pastor-teacher looks for. They are not those deactivating their spiritual capacities just because they fell on hard times. They pursue their mission because they always make room for God. And if you're that kind of a person, you're not going to be brought down because you've run into some problems along the way. You will never fall into the trap of making the good thing you do substitute for the best thing that you should have. And that's the problem with Christians. The good thing causes them to lose the best. And when you get disoriented to what the priority is of the best, you'll soon be doing the good, pleased as punch with yourself, and paying the price of losing the best forever.

What we're looking for are spiritual Christians who have great discernment so that they're capable of seeing the shallowness and the uselessness of church programs which only serve to undermine personal stability in the Word of God, and to make believers vulnerable to their sin natures to the world and to Satan. This is the practice of church organization – programs that substitute for the Word of God.

One lady this week was telling me that she used to attend a very large church here in Irving which is well known in our circle. And they used to run, when she was there, revival meetings. And that's kind of standard operating procedure in that circle. But one of the things they would do at the service then, was to line up a bunch of microphones along the front. And people would walk down the aisle, and they'd step up to the microphone to confess to someone something that they had of an ill feeling; an attitude; or, something that shouldn't have been done, and to request their kindness and forgiveness. I mean it's like putting up a microphone here, and standing up, and I thought to myself, "I just wish they'd do that again. I'd love to go to a service like that?"

Can you imagine what a time you could have walking up there, and you shuffle, and you look down, and you look pained, and you say, "Mrs. Jones, I'm sorry I called to your inordinately large feet, and I want you to forgive me. And I'll never focus my eyes on your feet when I talk to you again." Now, just think of all the things you could confess to people. You could have a ball, and thus expose the ludicrousness of such an ungodly act. But the pews are full, and the offering plates are all flooding over with money, and people are being made fools of.

We are entering, in Colossians 1:9-10, probably one of the most important areas of Scripture for the Christian life, because there are two words there that are undoubtedly the most important words of the Christian life. And they are the whole problem. These are the two words people don't know about. They don't know how to relate them. They know how to join them together. Consequently, they don't know how to rise to being in the image of Christ. Now, don't bother looking. You're not going to find them that quickly. And it's going to take some explanation and connection for you to understand. You already have a good background in it.

However, it is this simple little statement of these two passages such that Paul says, "This is a great congregation here in Colossae. You have great power and great potential, and you're on track. Now I'm praying to God that you'll not be deviated from that, because what I want you to do "bing" as a result of "bing." And with those two words, he puts together what the whole Christian life is about that makes one Christian a real member of the royal family, and makes another Christian down the street a fool in the eyes of God and man.

So, what we are looking for is people who have the capacity to know that when they're in the good thing, and not to think that when they go to someplace that makes them vulnerable to the sin natures of the world and to the devil, that that's the better place.

When people of such spiritual quality are found by a pastor-teacher and by us all, we all, quite properly, pray for their divine protection against reversionism as Paul did for the Colossians. Satan and his demons are always on the prowl to bring down a quality Christian. The Bible is very clear about that: "He walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Who do you think he's out to find? It's not his people. He's already got them. He's pussyfooting around to try to knock some Christian into an evil condition. He's trying to bring down a potential soldier of Christ. And Satan and his demons are always on the prowl. Therefore, we must pray for one another, and for people that we see coming that are serving God in a great way, and have great spiritual potential. You have to pray for them. The devil is going to bring circumstances into their life that'll make them substitute the good for the best.

You're going to have to pray for them – that they understand that you can be a manager at a nice restaurant, accumulating a lot of financial reserves. And your eyes are perhaps centered on building up the fulfillment of the American dream and in comes some wacko having an argument with his girlfriend, and when you, as the manager, asks them to knock it off, the guy pulls out a gun, and suddenly, you're dead. And you lie there dead, and where's your accumulation of material things that you had your focus on? You ended up with the good at the cost of the best. You went out into eternity with all that you accumulated sitting here, instead of taking it with you.

Christians love to burn their hands when they get involved and be part of other peoples' problems, pulling out the chestnuts of other Christians who are offbeat and off-center, and who are feisty and determined. These Christians do not have the discernment to say, "I will not become part of your problem. If you have a problem, you deal with it through the Word of God, and through the appropriate people involved, and with God Himself. But I will not let you bring me in to become part of your problem. In fact, I resent your talking to me. The very fact that you would dare bring me into your little problem that you have, in which I suspect that you're the one that's off-base – that tells me that you think I'm the kind of a guy that you can sink your hook into. And I consider that an insult, because I know that there are some people you wouldn't dare have the nerve to go up and sound off to in this way."

This tells us a lot about people and about ourselves. This business of being a capable Christian, with the two qualities that we're going to look at in these verses is absolutely essential to functioning in the Christian life. And you're going to learn it eventually here, but you won't learn it in the big churches all around you. Isn't that strange?

So, when we find people who have that kind of capacity, to know how to deal with people; circumstances; and, things, you better believe it that you should pray for them, because Satan is constantly seeking to cause believers to stop serving the Lord with their spiritual gifts, and to drop off to something else. He's always going to do whatever he can to make you stop functioning, and to trivialize your life. And I cannot consider it, as a pastor-teacher, anything but a sad tragedy to see a Christian with great spiritual gifts and potential neutralized by his lack of feeding upon the Word of God (upon sound doctrine), or his lack of personal discipline to direct his life; to do what is right; to be an example of integrity; and, to be separated from the world system of Satan.

There are some people that cannot even go into business unless it's with lowlife types. If they come into business with somebody's integrity, it makes them very nervous. They just have this natural propensity to be attached to the world.

Now, in all these things you may rightly properly raise the question: "What would Jesus do?" That is a legitimate question. What would Jesus do in this situation? What would Jesus do in respect to this person? What would Jesus do in respect to this financial matter? What would he do? And if you know anything at all about Him, you know exactly what he would do. And the more doctrine, then you know exactly how He would function.

**Satan Accuses Believers**

Now, the strategy of the devil toward believers (to bring them down), for which Paul never ceases to pray for these Colossians saints – that they do not fall short of what their potential is, and for which we should pray for one another, is a variety of things. First: one of the things that the devil does constantly is to accuse believers before God, and make you aware of the fact that he's doing it. He accuses you for your wrongdoings: for your evil; for your human good; and, for your sins. We have a variety of Scripture for that, and I think it's worth reading it. We start with the book of Job. Job 1:6: "Now there was a day when the sons of God (the angelic hosts) came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them."

Satan still has access to the throne room of God to accuse the believers. That access will cease, as you know, in the middle of the tribulation period, when he is cast out of heaven with his angels, following his great defeat by Michael and the angels of God. The day comes that they're reporting. Satan comes in with them. Job 1:7-12: "And the Lord said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' Then Satan answered and said, 'From roaming about on the earth, and walking around on it.'" He said, "I've just been cruising around here and there:" "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth – blameless and an upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil'" (and rich as Midas).

"Satan answered, 'Does Job fear You for nothing. Have you not put a hedge about him in his house, and all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he'll curse You to Your face.' Then the Lord said, 'Satan, behold all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.'" God said, "You can't kill him, but everything else you can do to him:" "So, Satan departed from the presence of the Lord."

Now this is what the devil is doing to this very day. He finds a Christian. That Christian is a big bump in the road for him. He manages to get divine approval, and he socks it to that believer. Job's suffering was enormous. And the devil is still trying to find quality Christians who will crumble under some physical disaster, and who will hold it against God in some way, and who will say, "That's it, I'm through operating my spiritual gift." Instead, they will fight back until they're back there, fully capable of doing what they've been called to do? And that was exactly, as you know, how the story unraveled. Job went through a lot of hard times, but he got it all back, and he shut the mouth of the devil. This is what Satan does. He accuses believers before God in order to discourage them.

Titus 2:3: "Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, not enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good." If older women do not act like this, then the devil accuses them. And he makes an issue of that.

2 Timothy 3:3: "Unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good." These are the things that men are capable of (that characterize people), and the devil has a field day calling attention to that.

Now the classic passage of this accusation principle is in Revelation 12:9-10: "And the great dragon Satan was thrown down, the serpent of all who is called the devil and Satan who deceives the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown with him." This is the mid-tribulation defeat: "And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down who accuses them before our God day and night."

So, this is the way with Satan: to create great, enormous misery for believers. And one of the ways he does it is by accusing them before God, day and night. The Old Testament prophet Zechariah 3:1-2 said, "Then he showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord (the pre-incarnate Christ), and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, Satan; indeed, the Lord Who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you. Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" Here is Joshua the high priest. Jesus Christ is standing there. Satan is standing by to start accusing Joshua. Is Joshua perfect? No, he is sinless positionally. He is saved, but he is not sinless in his experience. And the devil is there pointing: "Here's the guy who's the high priest. He stands. He proclaims religious matters. You see this imperfection?" And the Lord rebukes Satan and says, "This is the brand that was picked from the fire of the burning of hell – a brand that you are not. Nobody is ever going to pick you, Satan, from that burning lake of fire. But God has picked this man. So, where do you come off trying to accuse him when God has cleansed him?"

Fallen angels are around us all the time. And they see what Christians do, and they gather information for Satan to use against us. Satan is not omniscient. He has to have information given to him. Sometimes Satan is able to use Christians, in fact, in accusing other Christians. This is a violation of another Christian's priesthood – the butting into somebody else's business routine. And Satan loves to get Christians to violate other Christians' priesthood.

The name "Satan," as you know, means "slander." The name "devil" means "accuser," and that's what he does. He slanders and he accuses. God's answer to these satanic accusations against the believer is very simply stated in 1 John 2:2, no matter what the devil has to say against you, even if it's true, and even if it is something that legitimately he can put hold out against you. 1 John 2:2: "And He Himself (Jesus) is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." Jesus Christ has finished off sin. The sin issue has been settled. God is satisfied. So, the first way (the first approach) of Satan's strategy to undermine believers is to let them know, in one way or another, that he is accusing them before God the Father for their moral failures.

**Satan Isolates Believers from the Word of God**

The second way is to isolate believers from the Word of God – to isolate believers from true doctrine. Now, this is a great occupational hazard of the Christian life. And the sad part about this is that this is largely self-imposed by a Christian. Any Christian who is isolated from the Word of God – he does it to himself, by the church he picks; if he's a young person, by the church he is allowed to pick by his parents; or, by absence from a place where the Word is preached. This is what happened in Genesis 3:1: "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made, and he said to the woman, 'Indeed has God said you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" Here he is casting doubts upon what God has said. Now, that little thing created all the problem. Once Eve believed that God should be questioned in what He has said, that made the world, and what Satan thought, the substitute of information.

We'll begin our Sunday night youth club summer camps each week with one of the most splendid videos I have come across. I'm going to take the kids through a walk in the Garden of Eden; and through the awesome creation process of God; through the horrible nightmare of the confrontation with Satan; the destruction of the human race set in motion at that point; and, then walk through human history right up to the new Jerusalem. When we get through with that video, there's not going to be anybody there who doesn't understand the problem of what happened to the human race. It will be visual; it will be heard; and, it will be impacted on their souls such that they'll never forget it. It all began with casting doubts upon the Word of God.

**Satan Encourages False Techniques for Learning Doctrine**

What Satan does is that he encourages false techniques for learning doctrine. He says, "Why don't you get a little home study group? Sit in a circle in somebody's house – better yet, sit by their pool, and share your spiritual ignorance with one another. You can get a lot of kicks out of that, can't you? This sharing system is very popular, and it is not beyond churches to run Sunday school classes where there's nobody instructing, but people sharing what they don't understand. Or sometimes people think that somebody needs real personal instruction. Well, maybe sometimes they do. But they only need that if you don't have a local church that's doing its job. You don't have to have one-on-one instruction, because that violates the privacy of the priesthood of the believer. There are a variety of ways of ignoring God's divinely provided system of the local church for getting a knowledge of the Word of God.

Furthermore, here's what the devil does. He distracts people from concentrating, when they are in church, on being able to learn. Concentration must be developed. No matter where you are, you're going to be in a church, and somebody around you is going to distract you. Somebody's going to be chewing gum. They're going to yawn, and the stuff is going to fall out of their mouth right on the floor. And it's going to distract you, and you're going to lose a big point of doctrine because of somebody's gum bouncing off the floor. You have to learn to concentrate on the Word of Gad. You can't sit here and be making up the list of all the fun you're going to have at camp, or what you're going to buy at the grocery store the next time.

**Satan Gets Christians Entangled with the Details of Life**

Another way that Satan undermines to isolate you from doctrine is to get you entangled with the details of life. You're so running with all the things of life, so that have no time to study the Word of God. And yet the grace system of perception is necessary to enjoy the things that you accumulated from life. If you don't have spiritual capacity, you might as well not have those things, because you're not going to enjoy them. So, getting entangled with the details of life is one of his favorite techniques.

**Satan Encourages Mental Attitude Sins**

Also, he keeps you from the Word of God by a variety of metal attitudes sin which destroy your ability to comprehend spiritual phenomena. You lose your divine values and your divine standards, and you have no capacity for being able to learn the Word of God. You sit in church, and you hear the words, but your mind is not impacted with the truth of doctrine so that it's resonating down in your human spirit. It's just not there, because there are mental attitude sins that have short-circuited the learning system.

**Satan Encourages Emotionalism**

Then one of the worst things (one of the most powerful ways to keep you from the Word of God and from learning doctrine) is through emotionalism, which overrides the principles of doctrine. The filling of the Holy Spirit is not a matter of emotionalism. It is a matter of confession of your evil (sins) to the Father. But Satan easily distracts and distorts emotions so that they serve his capacity. When you're functioning on emotions, you have no objectivity. And you cannot enter the Word of God with subjectivity. It's not what *you* think. It's what *it* says and what *God* has declared. And emotional tirades, that preachers like to go through, are Satan's greatest provision for people to destroy themselves. There is nothing like attending a church service where the guy is pounding the pulpit, and yelling, and shouting, and screaming, and trying to get everybody highly emotional over something. That kills any progress in the Word of God. But if you spend a lifetime doing that, they'll build a big statue of you in some sanctuary and say, "Here he is – the great guy. He knocked us out with emotions. He left us spiritually poor. When we came to the crises of life, we collapsed. We couldn't handle it. But here's a great statue to him because he knew how to play our emotions." It takes vast doctrinal orientation for you not to be swayed by Satan through your emotions. Subjectivity in the Christian life (what you think, and how you feel about things) is the kiss of death. It has to be based upon what the word objectively declares.

**Satan Leads Believers Away from the Will of God**

Third way that Satan keeps us from the Word of God is to lead believers away from the will of God. His strategy to undermine believers is to lead you away from the will of God. First of all, God has the operational will (Galatians 5:7, James 4:7-8). Those verses deal with the question of: what does God want me to do with my life? Secondly, there's a geographic will. 1 Thessalonians 2:18 deals with that. The question there is: where does God want me to be, including what church does he want me to be in? What is my right church? And third is the mental will (Isaiah 55:7-9. Proverbs 23:7, 2 Corinthians 10:5). The question here is: what does God want me to think? Does He want me to think His thoughts or the world's thoughts? And if so: what are His thoughts? So, people are led away from the will of God: from His operational will; where they are to function; what they're to be doing; from the geographic will, where there to be functioning; and, from the mental will, how God wants them to think about things.

**Satan Destroys the Christian's Focus on Christ**

Finally, Satan deals with Christians by destroying their focus on Christ. What does he do? First of all, he causes Christians to get their eyes on themselves. That is one of his primary techniques, because we all have problems. We all have difficulties. And we all have sad moments, and eyes on the self is the easiest way for Satan to bring down a Christian. 1 Corinthians 1:10-11: "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I've been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you." Now, the only way you have quarrels in the local church is because somebody has his eyes on himself, and doesn't think that God is capable of resolving them. That's all. If God is capable in what He says He is, He's not going to need your help in resolving problems that you see, and that, even after you've made an effort of sounding off about it, they don't seem to be going anywhere. That's when you put it in the hands of God. If you really want to deal with somebody who is a real problem person, you should have learned by now that what you do is you quietly sit down before God and you say, "Lord, I'm taking Mr. So-and-so or Mrs. So-and-so. I believe that this is the problem with this person, and there's been a recalcitrant (there's been a persistence) of a problem that is destructive, and I am putting this person in Your hands for you to deal with." If you ever want to do something horrible to a person, just do that.

When Paul had this case of incest in the Corinthian church, and they kept thumbing their nose at him, and telling him that he wasn't up on things, he simply went to God and he said, "God, I take this man who is guilty of this terrible sin (an abomination in Your sight), but the society around him approves of it, and even his church says, 'Oh, it's okay. We don't want to upset anybody or be unkind.' I'm delivering this man into Your hands for You to deal with." And God handed him over for Satan's discipline. And the fur flu, and the man cracked up. What God did to him was so horrible as a result of that delivery in the hands of Satan that he got the message. And then Paul went back and said, "He has repented. He has changed his mind. And I want the rest of you to back off. And where you have isolated him by not inviting him to a meal and not being in fellowship with him, now you take him to your bosom. We do not want to destroy him by over sorrow. The understanding of correction has been brought about. Now you pick him up, and you go the other way.

Genesis 3:4-5: "And the serpent said to the woman, 'You surely shall not die, for God knows that in the day you eat from it (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, your eyes will be opened. You'll be like God, knowing good and evil.'" What was the devil doing to Eve? He was saying, "Don't look on God. Get your eyes on yourself. This is what you will be if you do this." You may add to that 1 Kings 19:10 and Matthew 26:31-35. These are all splendid examples of what happens when your eyes are on yourself.

**Satan Gets our Eyes on Material Things**

The second way that the devil destroys our focus on Christ is to get our eyes on material things. Certainly, Ananias and Sapphira, in the early New Testament, are a splendid example of what happens when a husband and wife (and unfortunately both of them) are oriented to material things in such a way that they reinforce each other's bad habit of greediness and focus on those things, such that the result is that you will lose your focus on Jesus Christ. What am I saying? I'm saying that you cannot live the Christian life with your focus on something that takes your focus from Christ. Hebrews 13:5-6: "Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have. For He himself has said, 'I'll never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.'" That is a material need that you have. That's logistical grace: "So, that we confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper. He's my supplier. I'll not be afraid. What shall man do to me?" That's a verse well-worth pondering.

**Satan Gets our Eyes on People**

And the third way he destroys our focus on the Lord is to get our eyes on people. Genesis 20:1-11 and 1 Corinthians 3 talk about that.

**Satan Causes us to be Afraid of Dying**

And the fifth way that Satan deals with bringing Christians down is to cause them to be afraid of dying. Hebrews 2:14-15: "Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He (Jesus) Himself, likewise, also partook of the same; that through death, He might render powerless him who had the power of death; that is, the devil; and might deliver those who, through fear of death, were subject to slavery all their lives." My goodness! That sounds like you can give an awful lot of money to the Lord, and you're still not going to starve. Some of you thought that if you didn't provide for your old age, you'd be in real trouble. That is not true if God told you that He'll take care of you. That is not true if He told you to do something else with what you had. You're not going to starve. The only way you'll starve is when you prepare for your old age. Then he'll cut it all out from you with one zip. And then you'll wonder: "How did this happen to me?" And I've had people say that to me: "Here I am. I've gone all these years. I'm up in my middle age. I've worked all my life, and all of a sudden this thing has happened to me. I've never been so bad off financially in all my life." Yep, that's how it happens. Get your focus right. Get your focus on the Lord. Get your focus on His care, and you won't fear death itself.

Now the thing that this ought to bring into focus for us, relative to the great tragedy of Christians who are not able to rise to the fullness of their spiritual heritage and capacity, and the strategies that the devil uses to keep you from rising to that level of a super-grace walk with God, is that you have to understand who the enemy is. And very often, Satan causes you to fight the wrong enemy. That's one of his favorite tricks – to get you to be fighting the wrong enemy.

Ephesians 6:12 says: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood." The reason that we should put on the Christian soldier's armor, which he has described in the previous verses, is that this armor is for spiritual combat. We don't put it on for physical combat because we Christians are not in warfare that is human. It is warfare which is inhuman. We are not fighting against flesh and blood. We don't use those weapons. We're fighting against the spiritual forces of darkness.

It says: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, and against powers, against the world forces of this darkness," and so on. The word "struggle" there is a word which means "to wrestle." And the idea there, it comes from a word actually in the Greek language which means "to vibrate." And if you've ever watched wrestlers, they do vibrate a lot, as they grab each other's greasy, sweaty bodies, and throw each other. They move back and forth, and there's a lot of vibrating, and that's an interesting fact – that that's a word that's used here in the Bible to describe that act: the wrestling and the vibrating of these people. And the word connotes a hand-to-hand contest between two, until one hurls the other down, and holds him pinned.

**Our Enemies are not Human**

In this context, it is used of Christians in a military type contest with a spiritual enemy – hand-to-hand combat with Satan himself, and Satan's demons. It is not hand-to-hand combat with people. A Christian is likely to become a spiritual casualty if he misunderstands who the enemy is. This is always what you want to do in warfare. Cause your enemy to be looking to the wrong place. Cause your enemy to be looking for the battle to be someplace where it isn't. Cause the enemy to be someplace that he thinks it's going to be, but where it isn't. And the devil does the same thing. He gets you focused on somebody: "This is the person that upsets me. This is the person that's irritated me. Here's my problem." No, that person is not your problem. Yes, they did mistreat you. Yes, they did abuse you. But that person is not your problem. The problem is a spiritual problem. It's a demonic problem. It's a problem of Satan. We are not in hand-to-hand combat against flesh and blood.

This connotes not a mere human enemy to be fought with by human weapons. Christians' foes in the spiritual warfare are far more formidable than people. Then he lists these enemies – various categories of demon spirits. And these are the real enemies in every area of our spiritual life. Do you have an enemy in your marriage? It's not your wife or your husband. It's the devil. It is the demonic world that has come in, and you are able to be brought down.

What Paul is going to be describe in Colossians 1:9-10 are the two most important words for the Christian life as the means for capacity to stand up against the world, and the devil, and the whole system of our sin natures. Without these, then you'll be open range in your marriage for lots of problems. This is the area of problems with your children.

In our junior department, the teachers alerted me that we have four little heroes. And one is a brand new kid, brought in. But people who have sin natures that are operating – they have a kind of a radar, such that they can find each other. They sense who is of their feather. And sure enough, this new kid is a problem kid. He's a disrupter. He's a horser-arounder. And three kids, who are regular kids with us, they spotted him right away, and they spotted each other, and they're sitting next to each other. But pretty soon, the teachers are reporting back to me, and I have to pull these guys out in the hall. And in my usual gentle way, I tell them what's going to happen if I have one more report of their disrupting the class of that teacher. We're not interested in their horsing around, and their carrying on a program. And I said, "Now, this boy is new. He doesn't know me. But the three of you know me. So, you better make it clear to him that if I speak to you again, it'll be a very regrettable time in your life. Now, I'm not going to tell your parents about this now. This is going to settle it."

But here I knew what the problem with these kids was – their sin nature. They could not rise to the solemnity of the moment of the dignity of what they were being taught. And I said, "These teachers have sacrificed a great deal of time and effort of their lives for your eternal blessing. And if you want to blow it, then I'm going to boot you out of this school. But I'm not going to let you take it away from the other children. My concern is always the children first. It is not the children who don't want what we have, but those who do." And I know that the problem was within those kids, because they were pliable to the sin nature.

If you have problems in your business; your religious life; your school; or, your social life, these things are all a reflection of what the demonic world is hitting us with.

So, in areas of conflict, the human is merely the instrument. So, try not to square off with people. Forget the people who express the issues, both true and false. Just leave those people to the Lord. Christians fight an invisible enemy. That enemy is ruthless. He is clever. Humans or mere patsies in the battle. And as much as possible, don't talk to the people. Don't deal with them. If they want to sound off to you, say, "There is the proper authority. This is the place to find the information you need. And you might want to talk it over with God." Don't get involved with pulling their chestnuts out of the fire, because you might not know everything you need to know, and you may not have the perspective. And suddenly, you bring your judgment down upon you that God is perhaps exercising upon them. Don't sympathize with a spiritually disoriented Christian who tries to enlist your support in attacking the local church ministry; the pastor-teacher; or, the people of the congregation. It's an insult that they feel free to talk to you, because I guarantee you that if they didn't think you were their kind, they wouldn't talk to you. So, realize that the people that are talking are speaking for forces that are beyond our grasp, that only God can deal with.

So, the apostle Paul recognized the great spiritual potential of the Colossian Christians: their pursuit of doctrine; their practice of holiness; and, their commitment to God's service as per their spiritual gift and their mission in life. Paul had great expectation, therefore, for the Colossian Christians, and he wanted to warn them not to spoil that. They're going to have a widespread influence on the pagan society of the Roman Empire. The Colossians have great spiritual influence and power, because of their super-grace maturity, which produces a Holy Spirit love for all people.

Intensive type praying for the Colossians is practiced by Paul because of his desire for them to evangelize the world that they move in. and to train believers in doctrine. He wants nothing to spoil the capacity of that church organization.

Positive volition to doctrine must always precede every powerful work of God, and all the spiritual victories in society. The only good that comes to society is from people who are well-oriented to the Word of God, and positive to it. Christians who therefore do not feed regularly on the Word of God, fall into revisionism. They're not a salt or a light to anybody. Society then goes into apostasy. It descends into great evils, and it descends into greater evils when it decides it wants to do something good (sin nature good).

Pastors are always, therefore, under great pressure to build an organization of abundant members and money. And you know what? You'll find members of the congregation who think that it's the pastor's business to build up the numbers and the money. It never occurs to them that it is not the job of the drill instructor to win the battle. It's his job to train the troops. But the troops do the battle. The troops provide the money. The troops provide the victories.

You have to understand how the system works, or Satan will get you exactly backwards. Positive volition comes from Christians who have the capacity to respond. And pastors, because they're under this pressure to provide the money and the members, what do they do? They go to programs. They open up a gymnasium for people to have a lot of fun. And boy, the crowds come in. And they, as pastors, don't want to be serious students of the Word of God, because that's very intensive; very draining; and, time consuming, so that they can be competent teachers of the Word of God. Yet, that's their only business. What they'd rather be is a ninny, in order to properly, respectfully subject themselves to the carnal element who are disoriented, instead of facing-off, as God's man, when it's necessary.

The pastor-teacher is tempted to make a name for himself rather than for the Lord Jesus. Pastor-teachers often seek self-promotion rather than teaching doctrine in anonymity, and letting the Holy Spirit build people in the faith, and create great service organizations as a result of what they have done. Because Bereans, who once were with us and were well-taught, have gone out from us, is one reason we have such an extensive summer camp this year. These people are missionaries. They're promoting the Word of God. They're sounding off for great relationships to Jesus Christ. And people say, "I want that for my child."

We have one family who is a fond supporter of Berean church. Jack Smith is Berean East. We have people who are Berean West, and they're part of our congregation. They hear everything you hear on tapes. And their funds come in by the thousands of dollars each month to this ministry, because this is where they belong. One family is going to spend hundreds of dollars just to transport themselves, and be a counselor, and have the children in our summer camp.

And I says, "Well, that's a big surprise, Lord. We have people close-at-hand that don't care for us." But then that's what happened to the king who made a great banquet, and everybody close-at-hand snubbed him, and didn't want to come. They went elsewhere. But Jesus said, "The king said, 'Fine. We'll bring all these people at distance, and we'll bring them in, and they shall be the ones who are blessed by the food I prepared for them." And these children are going to be fed magnificent spiritual food at Berean summer camp – and some of them, for the first time. And I guarantee you one thing about those first-timers – they're going to be sponges. They're going to absorb it. And they're going to grab hold of it. And I'm humbled by the stories that are already coming back of how delighted the parents are, and what they hope for their children.

Well, Berean Church made that possible. Who did? You did. The life of this congregation is the life blood. It's the temperament of the respect for the Word of God. That's what makes this possible. Why isn't this the way it is down the street with churches that have more money, and more capacity, and more members? Because it doesn't have the life to do it. It is only the life of the Word of God that gives a person the capacity to be almost godlike in performance. And you people have it.

The whole local church operation is designed by God to make this spiritual capacity in the angelic warfare possible. The object is for each Christian to build a spiritual maturity structure in his soul. And that's how you put on the whole armor of God. Satan therefore brings confusion and division into the local church ministry to undermine the pastor-teacher's teaching ministry, and his focus on equipping the troops. And if they succeed, it's a victory for Satan – not for these people. And if they're defeated, it's a victory for God, and for the people of God.

Heavenly Father, we want to thank You for the Word of God.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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