

The logo features the words "Sword Play" in a stylized, serif font with a pinkish-red outline and a white fill. The text is positioned above a horizontal sword blade. The hilt of the sword, including the guard and pommel, is visible on the left side, rendered in a metallic, golden-brown color. The entire graphic is set against a light yellow background.

Sword Play

*Warfare Techniques
Against Uninvited Thoughts*

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Introduction

This booklet is being offered to help those who want to find peace and victory over uninvited thoughts.

You may have seen a bumper sticker or T-shirt which says something like: "I do what the voices in my head tell me to do." or "You're just jealous because the voices talk to me instead of you."

Although these slogans were meant to be funny there is a reality behind those voices which we can't afford to ignore.

There is no temptation that can come to you which is not common to all mankind. Everyone has had some form of uninvited attack on their mind from time to time.

Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence.

Psa. 42:5

How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Psa. 13:2

Our minds are like a radio which can be tuned to listen to good radio programs or worthless radio programs. This radio can sometimes be tuned to a good channel but still receive a signal from another station at the same time.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places].

Eph. 6:12



Thought Attacks

Here are some examples of thoughts which are "bleeding" over from another frequency so that we can't hear what we need to hear:

Thoughts of anger

"Don't let them treat you this way. They need to be taught a lesson. Better make them back off or they will use you for a doormat!"

Thoughts of guilt or shame

"How could you have done this? Now everyone knows what kind of person you are. You deserve to be punished for what you did. You were part of what happened so you are just as guilty as anyone else who was involved. Maybe you really wanted this to happen?"

Thoughts of bitterness or unforgiveness

"You should never forgive them for what they did. What you did doesn't matter compared to what they did."

Thoughts of fear

"Something is going to happen. There is no escape. God can't or won't help you. Quick ...run!"

Thoughts of regret

“Why did this have to happen? If only this would not have happened. God must be punishing you.”

Thoughts of unpardonable sin

“God will never forgive what you did. You went too far over the line.”

Thoughts of deception

“You know you can’t stop doing this no matter how hard you try. Did God really say you can’t do it? Maybe the Bible is true and Jesus is real but who cares?”

Thoughts of losing your Christianity

“You have had doubts about things you don’t understand in the Bible therefore you are not a Christian. You did some things that Christians don’t do, therefore you must not be a Christian. Maybe you just thought you were a Christian? You didn’t pray the right way to become a Christian.”

Thoughts of blackmail

“You better not tell anybody about this. If you tell anybody you will be exposed. You may be cut off from everybody. You may go to jail. Someone else will be hurt if you tell.”

Satanic thoughts

“I can give you power over other people. I can tell the future. God doesn’t want you, you belong to me.”

Thoughts of suicide

“Everybody would be better off if you were dead. God is finished with you. There is no hope for you.”



The Satanic Network

General MacArthur's strategy during World War II was to have advance knowledge of the enemy's plans and then to focus on the enemy leaders.

Since Satan has declared war on our minds, we need to see how his network of principalities and powers work against us.

He teaches my hands to make war, So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

Psalm 18:34

Background

When the devil was in heaven, he was called Lucifer (or light bearer) and he was a bright and shining one. 2 Cor. 11:14 reveals to us how the enemy comes as an angel of light. Many cults have been started by people who heard from an "angel." He was an archangel like Michael (Jude 1:9). He was very beautiful but when he fell he became the exact opposite.

He decided that he ought to take over Heaven. The Bible tells us that pride filled him and actually this was the first sin in the universe, the pride of Lucifer.

There are three ways that he was changed. He was the bright and shining one, but he became the prince of darkness. His name was changed from good to evil, his work was changed from good to evil, and his nature was changed from extremely good to extremely evil.

Satan's strategy is to offer a distorted mirror image of everything which God has to offer. His major weapon is lying or deception. We have a complete set of armor in Ephesians 6 while he has only one weapon.

Fallen Angels

Revelation 5:11 reveals that there are myriads of myriads of angels. In the Greek language, one myriad was equal to ten thousand. Myriads of myriads (one hundred million) was thought of as the largest number described by the Greeks and is the largest number in the Bible. We see that this is an uncountable number.

Just as Satan the archangel became proud and fell, these "under angels" had their names changed and their natures were also changed.

The Battle

The Bible says that there was warfare in Heaven. Revelation 12:4 talks about the dragon that drew down a third of the stars from Heaven with his tail and that's where we see that it was a third of the angels that fell with Lucifer.

The story is ongoing because the devil is still trying to recruit others to join his cause. Every act of rebellion is a covenant with Satan's cause. See 1 Sam. 15:23.

Satan and his fellow-rebels also have declared war on us.

This battle begins in the mind.



Disputed Territory

In keeping with the idea of warfare, it is very interesting to observe how demons conduct themselves as prisoners of war once they are exposed.

Demons will increase their deception by causing arguments or other events in order to get some payback for their loss of territory. We do not have to stand for this and should let these lying spirits know that they have no further rights in this area. If we are aggravated or tormented because of our stand for Christ we are being humbled and God gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

All we have to do is take back any territory which we have surrendered to Satan and he will flee. If we leave any foothold for him to stand

...lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

2 Cor. 2:11

Neither give place [ground, topology] to the devil.

Eph. 4:27

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:7

Once we take back ground from the demonic world we should not leave any leftover territory laying around which will give the enemy occasion to harass us. We are now free to clean the whole house and should not neglect to clean out the front and back yards as well.

We must learn to discern what to do when we are dealing with a territorial issue. As long as a demon is claiming territory which has been given to him there will be no way to dislodge him until that territory is taken back.

Note how the demons viewed their territory as so important that they wanted to at least be in the vicinity, even if in the bodies of some pigs.

So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that we may enter them."

Mark 5:12



Temptation versus Deception

We need to understand that these spirits are masters of deception and that we are unable to expose them until we cry out to the Lord for wisdom.

If somebody is tempted to do wrong, and falls into that temptation, then all they need to do is to repent of that sin and ask God to forgive them and then to return to the Lord. That is always the case with sin (1 John 1:9).

Confession is not the answer to deception. If a person is deceived, they do not even know what is wrong. How can they repent of this? Deception and temptation are not exactly the same thing.

Notice an example of the difference:

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

1 Timothy 2:14

Adam knew what the serpent was saying was wrong and did it anyway. The Hebrew Bible says that he was standing right next to Eve when this scene played out. So we see one person being deceived and the other one receiving a wrong thought and acting on it intentionally.

If a person is deceived, they don't even really know what is wrong. If they are deceived by someone else then the responsibility is shared by somebody else, in this case, the devil.

Temptation and deception are not exactly the same things. We need to thoroughly understand the difference between these two terms.

People have many thoughts enter their minds and they may think that all of these are their own thoughts. Many of these thoughts are completely off track and we eventually realize that we are being deceived.

Demonic Natures

Just like Satan, the fallen angels also had their names and natures changed.

For example, demons cannot understand the concept of goodness. They have no mercy, no compassion, no truth. Remember, they are the opposite of all these things. This will explain a lot of the bizarre behavior which certain people exhibit. It also explains the hidden agenda behind the doctrines of demons.

It is interesting that these angels became the exact opposite of what they once were.

We can recognize the names of the fallen angels in the Scriptures.

Angels of praise, who were created to praise God around the throne, became the exact opposite of praise which is a spirit of blasphemy.

An angel of love became a spirit of hate.

Of course, an angel of truth would become a lying spirit.

Angels of praise who were created to praise God around the throne become the exact opposite of praise which is the spirit of blasphemy.

As we examine Satan's kingdom and see into his methods, let's not forget that Satan has an opposite for everything God has and is.



Oppression versus Possession

We need to see the difference between oppression of the mind and demon possession. Oppression, continual aggravation of our thought life, does not mean ownership.

Demon possession is when an evil spirit actually enters into a person and lives within the person.

People do not become demon-possessed against their own will. Those who become demon-possessed have specifically desired the devil to possess them.

Another way to say this is that people become demon-possessed the same way that people become Christians. A person has to allow something to possess them and take ownership of them.

It is exactly like when a person repents of his sins and asks the Lord Jesus to save him and knows that God has placed His Holy Spirit within him.

In the same way, a heathen who worships the devil, and does not confess his sins, and begs the devil to possess him will become possessed of an evil spirit.

There is no need for a dramatic exorcism. What needs to be done is to take back any ground given to Satan and command him to leave. If there are still problems it is a matter of prayer, fasting and discernment (Matt. 17:21).

Spirit versus Attitude

The word "spirit" in English often is used to mean attitude. We may talk about someone and we say, "That person really has a hateful spirit" but what we mean is, "Don't they have a hateful attitude?" In other languages, the same word is not used for spirit and attitude.

Jesus said to the demoniac of Gadara, "What is your name?" The spirits inside of him said, "My name is Legion, for we are many." Legion is the Greek word for "many." (Luke 8:30)

As we notice the different activities of these spirits, we can see why they were named and that their name is associated with their activities. Their name indicates their nature. For example, a man that is possessed of an accusing spirit, will go around accusing people of things.

It doesn't matter to that spirit what he accuses people of. He might accuse them of standing on the street, or accuse them of having two hands. There are other spirits that condemn people. They are always condemning somebody or something.

The difference between influence and possession is that if a person is demon-possessed, then the demon inside of him can cause pressure to come upon his mind and take over his faculties and is able to speak through him and see through him and hear through him.

Seducing Spirit Thoughts

Here is the foundational Scripture on this topic:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

1 Timothy 4:1

Here we see a description of deceitful spirit activity in the latter times. As people give heed to seducing spirits, these seducing spirits will put thoughts into their minds.

We need to see into this and learn to take every thought captive if we are to succeed in helping ourselves and others.

A good place to start is to ask the Lord, "What lies have I been believing?" Many emotions can be described as "acting-out" under the cover of a lie which has become part of a person's belief system.

For example, a thought comes which says, "If people think you are good for nothing then you might as well act like it."

God says that we are very valuable to Him. Remember that Satan's favorite lie is, "Did God really say...?" (Gen. 3:1)

Insistent, forceful, painfully repetitive thoughts are not from God. He leads His sheep gently.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

John 10:27

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, *bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...*

2 Cor. 10:5

The idea here of "bringing into captivity" means taking every thought prisoner at the point of a sword. We should hold out our sword and say, "Halt! Who goes there?"

Three Kinds of Thoughts

There are three kinds of thoughts: thoughts from God, thoughts from Satan, and thoughts from our own minds.

Once we understand this we can train ourselves not to give consent to wrong thoughts and spend time with God thinking His thoughts. Those who haven't been taught these things will sometimes think that they are losing their minds.

People are deceived whenever they believe something which is not true. Why would we be forewarned of these things in the Scriptures if this is not a viable attack which we are to prepare for and overcome?

The Scriptures advise us to become aware of our weaknesses and be on guard as our enemy attempts to exploit them. There is a theory that Paul's thorn in the flesh was an accusing spirit which harassed him daily. Jesus was surely alluding to this kind of attack on Himself in John 14:30.

I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he (continues to have) nothing in Me.

John 14:30

John 14:30 literally says, "continues to have nothing in me." Thus, we see that the devil was continually aggravating Jesus -as he does to us! We are told this in order to prepare us for this kind of attack. We often forget that Satan did NOT stop trying to tempt Jesus after His experience in the desert.

Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

Luke 4:13

It is very important to replace attacking thoughts with Scripture in order to turn the attack back on the devil. The best offense is a good defense.

Going on the Offense: Using the Armor

God has given us a complete set of armor in Ephesians 6:11-18. The Bible says that we will not be able to stand against these attacks without this armor.

It's interesting to note how we are to put on this armor in a certain order. Let's take a look at how we can use this armor during an actual thought attack:



The Belt of Truth

We put on the belt truth first because any attack on our minds will include a lie. We have to know what is true before we can spot a lie.

First of all, we test the spirit behind an attacking thought.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1

... examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good...

1 Thess. 5:21

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

Philippians 4:8

How can we test a spirit?

By the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

Matthew 18:16

All we need to do is find two or three dependable witnesses (mature Christians, Bible verses) to confirm whether something is true.

If it can't be proven to be true, we reject that thought. This is how the belt is used.

Many cults and problems can be traced to people who listened to the twisting of Scripture by the enemy. 2 Peter 1:20 tells us that no verse stands on its own. We need the support of other Scriptures in order to prove the truth of something.

Here are some suggestions which can be used to discern the truth of anything we encounter that is not specifically alluded to in the Bible:

- Does this information contradict the Bible?
- What would be the result of acting on this information?
- Can we find any mature Christians who can confirm this information?
- What happens when we ask God to confirm this information in our spirit through prayer?⁴

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth so all that is needed is to test everything before we act on it. Otherwise, it would be a pretty miserable existence if we could not depend on our God to guide us.

Who in the Bible wore such a belt?

The Bereans were complemented by Paul because they checked out everything he said before they believed it.

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

Acts 17:11



Breastplate of Righteousness

We wear a suit of armor which shows Christ's righteousness not ours. We wear it because we know that we are unable to fight this battle without the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).

Actually we are wearing Christ's armor –not ours.

He put on righteousness like a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.

Isa. 59:17

This breastplate guards our hearts and it is made out of the materials of His love for us and our trust in Him.

But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

1 Thess. 5:8

We “put on” this piece of armor every time we remind ourselves that we are not standing in our own strength but in His.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves...

2 Cor. 4:7

Who in the Bible used the breastplate?

There was a man named Joshua whom God took from some kind of bad environment (it says he was plucked from the fire) and made him high priest over Israel.

The devil was angry and accused Joshua of being unworthy for such an important office. The Lord rebuked the devil and showed Joshua

that he was not chosen on his own merit but was going to stand in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

Zech. 3:3-4

Joshua knew that he didn't deserve to be used by God. He learned that he was not standing in his own goodness but was wearing robes which belonged to Christ.



Putting Your Shoes On

This weapon is not seen as a noun. The text literally says, "Shoeing your feet or putting your shoes on."

These shoes show that we are prepared to go and say what the Lord wants us to say at a moment's notice. If we are involved in helping others it will block out many of the thought attacks which would normally come against us while we are sitting around with nothing to do.

How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"
Isa. 52:7

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always [be] ready to [give] an answer to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear...

1 Peter 3:15

Who in the Bible was prepared to share the Gospel?

Philip was a man who was enthusiastic about telling others what Christ had done for him (Acts 8). He had prepared himself so that God was able to use him at a moment's notice. We learn from church history that Philip's family continued to be a valuable resource to people seeking the truth for many years.

We are told how to prepare ourselves to live a life of telling the truth to others:

Be diligent (study) to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Tim. 2:15



The Shield of Faith

Paul may have been thinking about the Roman guard who was chained to him in prison as he wrote this. The Roman soldiers carried shields which they could lock together for protection as a unit.

We need to "lock shields" with other Christians in order to have greater protection from the enemy.

Who in the Bible locked shields?

David had to dodge spears that were thrown at him by Saul. As Saul chased him around the countryside, David had to continually hide behind the Lord as his only defense. David wrote many Psalms which describe this chase and how it brought him to a place of total dependence on God (see Psa. 3:3).

David is an example of the feeling of hopelessness being transformed into genuine faith. He knew there was no hope for him unless God came through. David had nowhere else to turn. This happens to all of us eventually.

God loves it when we trust Him this way. The next time a difficult problem comes up, try this experiment and see what happens: make up your mind that you will do nothing about it. Retreat into the Word and prayer and demonstrate to God that if anything is going to be done it will have to be Him doing it because you have taken your hands off of the situation. God will honor your faith, just watch and see what happens. This is how you use the shield.

Faith is seeing the invisible hand of God shielding you when it doesn't look like it at all. Faith is the evidence of results that happen when you totally trust God alone. These results prove that your faith was real

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Heb. 11:1



The Helmet of Salvation

Satan constantly tries to make us doubt that we are Christians. He conveniently forgets to mention that many people were attacked by doubts in the Bible but they held onto the Lord and were vindicated later.

1 John 5:13 tells us that if we are born-again we have eternal life no matter what the devil says about us. The helmet is used to keep out the wrong thoughts and to keep the Lord's words in our head instead.

Who in the Bible wore this helmet?

Before he became a Christian, Paul was responsible for the deaths of other people. Later, he was the victim of false Christian plots against him and lies about his ministry. He felt unworthy to be a Christian. He had to constantly remind himself that it was Christ living in him that was the answer to his past and present problems.

There are many examples (Rom. 7, 1 Cor. 4, 2 Cor. 12) of Paul forcing himself to think properly about his true position in Christ, regardless of what was happening in his life.

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:11



The Sword of the Spirit

There are many places where God's Word is called a sword. It is used to go on the offense against attacking thoughts. We cannot defeat our enemy with our words but only with God's words.

We quote these words, we sing these words, we repeat them to ourselves and the enemy flees from us.

Who in the Bible used this sword?

Jesus was attacked in the desert (Matthew 4) and He answered each attack with a quote from the Bible. If we have not trained ourselves to do this we will be tempted to think that it can't do much good.

We must remember that this is an invisible battle and that evil spirits are repelled by God's Word whether we can see it happening or not. Later we will see examples of how God's words can be used to answer specific thought attacks.



The Weapon of All-Prayer

Most Christians are not taught how to pray. Prayer is a powerful weapon which we find ourselves driven to in times of crisis. All of a sudden we want to pray and to learn how to pray better.

If we follow these thoughts out to their logical conclusion we will find that the best thing we can do is to make it a daily habit to cry out to God each morning. We are instructed to pray all day long:

Pray without ceasing [like a hacking cough].

1 Thess. 5:17

Here are some guidelines for a prayer life which invites the Holy Spirit to participate in any problem-solving exercise:

- **Has anything like this ever happened in the Bible which can shed light on the problem?**
- **Which Bible character faced the same obstacle?**



There are no experts in prayer. None of the biographies of great Christians make any mention that they were satisfied with their prayer lives.

Prayer is the last remaining mystery to the Christian who thinks he has everything else figured out.

Prayer is one of those things that cannot be taught. We just have to do it the best way we can (based on familiarizing ourselves with all that the Bible has to say on the subject) and find out what works and what does not.

When our prayers seem to go unanswered we need to consider the possibility that they are working together for good to get us to quit trusting in ourselves.

The Lord's Prayer is the only pattern given in the Bible. Amy Carmichael's prayer may be the best that humans have come up with: "Lord give us what you want us to have."

The Holy Spirit knows what we need. He makes intercession for us according to the will of God.

Even our prayers are used by God to conform us to the image of Christ. We don't like things that are considered painful, but every Christian should desire to be conformed to the image of Christ.

We all want a better prayer life. Could it be that God sometimes allows a crisis to come into our lives to bring us to a new level of prayer?

Charles Spurgeon said, "He who prays without fervency does not pray at all." God always hears our prayers. The answer is on its way and don't forget that He is looking for consistency (Luke 18:1-8) and He may be waiting to see how much you really care about the outcome.

He may be saying, "... wait" or He may be saying, "No, this won't be good for you." He may just want to see how badly you want it or if you are using Him as an ATM machine. (James 4:3).

Do you care enough to dig in your heels and pray consistently? Does everything have to be resolved for you in the next ten minutes? If so, then you don't want a God, you want a butler.



Crying out to God

From certain quarters it has been taught that we do not need to know why things happen. In reality, we would not need a Bible or the guidance of the Holy Spirit if we did not need to know the "why" behind anything. We could just live a life of fatalistic determinism and dismiss every hard situation the way the Brahmins do.

Our God is a good God who wants us to ask Him about everything. In fact, He may have brought a conflict into our lives for the purpose of causing us to cry out.

It is when we desperately cry out for answers that we begin to see correlations between what is going on and Bible passages which become *rhemas* (i.e., the discovery of personal meaning) or equity (direct and balanced application of Scripture) relating to our situation (Proverbs 2:3-5).

Famous men and women of God throughout the ages have had to cry out to God for understanding. Why is it that often we don't feel the need to do this until there is no other alternative?

Any Christian who invests time in getting to know God will eventually discover that there are times when God intentionally allows a problem to become worse while doing nothing to help. Those who are patient have learned that what God is waiting for is the voice of his child crying out in desperation. This is a theme which can be traced all through the Scriptures.

The righteous [shriek] cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles.

Psalm 34:17

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba (Daddy), Father!"

Galatians 4:6

We can think of this as similar to a baby in a back room who is softly crying and maybe even playing at the same time. The parents will ignore this behavior unless the crying suddenly becomes intense. If the crying is mixed with extreme panic the parents will run into the room as fast as possible. God operates the same way. ¹

The Power of Crying Out says it this way, "To cry out with a loud voice for help -with the unleashing of emotion that often comes with it- can be a humbling experience."

"That's why we often resist it. We tend to be proud; we want people to think we're competent. We don't like to admit we have a problem, much less publicly acknowledge our need for outside help to resolve it."

We often seem to forget that it was in the process of crying out that we were saved. Pride is an attempt to taste what it is like to be a type of god.

Perhaps this is why Jesus prefaced the Sermon on the Mount with the importance of being poor in spirit? We often overlook the lengths that God will go to destroy our pride. Ultimately, we will learn to understand that when things are impossible there are no more questions to be asked.

The verdict we will arrive at is that only God can solve the obstacle we are facing and we will see that we have no choice but to stand by while we watch Him resolve it. This is the way of life which every serious Christian has learned to accept. It is only in this place that we learn that God pays special attention to those who have no other means of support.

Who in the Bible understood how to use this weapon?

Daniel's prayers were so powerful that arrangements were made to try to stop him from praying. God revealed to him that prayer is very important and that Satan fights powerfully to stop the answer from reaching us.

Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.

*"But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.
Daniel 10:12-13*

We see here how God showed Daniel that prayer is a major part of our warfare.

Examples of Thought-Attacks

Here are some real-life examples of people who were attacked but did not know how to use the armor:

Example 1 - A Spirit of False Guilt

The following story is an example of a Christian who received thoughts that came from outside of herself and then blamed herself for them. She began thinking that she was evil because of the thoughts that she was having.

She was an elderly lady who had been a pastor's wife for fifty years. She answered her front door one day and had a sudden attack of adulterous thoughts towards the delivery man who had rung the doorbell.

She went to a Christian counselor and broke down in tears while she told the story. She was told to confess her sin and all would be well. If ever there was some advice that would exacerbate a problem, this was it.

The devil wins and can keep tormenting this lady until she either believes herself to have a dirty mind, or maybe even that she is lost, or until she learns to reject those thoughts specifically as being from Satan and not her own thoughts.

Example 2 - A Spirit of Fear

Picture a woman at home alone at night. Her children are in bed and her husband is working late.

She gets the idea, "Maybe I can use this time while I am alone. I will get my Bible and pray."

She opens her Bible and she starts reading and getting ready to pray, and she hears a noise outside. Suddenly a thought enters her mind, "Somebody is trying to break into the house!"

Fear covers her with all of the news of women that have been attacked recently. A stream of such thoughts bombard her mind one after the other. She is terrified and so even though she knows she has locked the doors, she checks them again.

She runs and looks out the window to see if she can see anything and she cannot, so she turns the light off and thinks she can maybe see better if it is dark inside.

She does not see anybody, so she goes to bed. She asks the Lord to help her go to sleep and not be bothered about this.

Actually, the devil accomplished what he wanted to accomplish, he turned her away from reading her Bible and praying.

All those thoughts that she had were not her own thoughts. Fear attacks like this usually come when we are alone. If she is deceived into thinking that these are her own thoughts, then she would blame herself.

She may begin to think there is something wrong with her. If she says something to her husband about it, he may say, "That's crazy. Don't be worried about that kind of stuff."

He doesn't understand. The reason he doesn't understand, is because normally the devil does not attack men that way. If she goes to a counselor she will most likely be told that this is either her imagination or she will be misdiagnosed with some sort of phobia.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

2 Timothy 1:7

Who deserves the blame?

During all of this, the devil is to blame but stays safely out of the picture. There are plenty of documented cases of people who confessed thoughts like this to a counselor and were misunderstood or misdiagnosed.

This area of the battle is extremely important. Dennis Jernigan, the author of the popular Christian song, *You Are My All In All*, tells of how he sought help from his pastor during an attack of homosexual thoughts and was misdiagnosed and mistreated. He lost all hope and this drove him into a period of an immoral lifestyle.

All of this provides the perfect cover for Satan as he attacks the mind and the victim is now afraid to confess these thoughts for fear that they will be suspected of making up a story about demons up so that they can cover their secret sins.

Proverbs 3:24 tells us that if we seek wisdom our sleep will be free from fear. This is a tool we can use to defeat thoughts of fear.

Detecting Seducing Thought Attacks

Seducing spirit thoughts are overbearing and are not Christ-like. The Lord Jesus or the Holy Spirit would not continually accuse and berate God's children but would gently persuade them to victory.

Satan's thoughts often come in the form of an accusation.

...the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

Rev. 12:10

We see then that the real enemy is Satan and that the real born-again person living inside us does not naturally want to do the things that Satan suggests.

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:14

This passage suggests that sinful thoughts do not have to dominate us.

If we die daily and purpose to confess and forsake our sins then they will have no dominion over us. If we do not give consent to these thoughts, they are powerless. All we have to do is make a proclamation for the devil to hear, "I do not give consent to these thoughts. Lord Jesus help me!" (James 4:7)

Someone will say, "That is ridiculous, if we lived this way we would have to constantly be checking our thoughts to determine if they are infiltrated with thoughts from seducing spirits."

That is correct and to say otherwise goes against the Scriptures. The point is that we can be free from negative thoughts so that we can focus on positive ones. What is more positive than God's Word?

Those who deny that demons can suggest thoughts to humans will often struggle with this issue occurring in their own lives but will assume that it is due to natural causes.

Having clarified who our real enemy is we can enter into any situation knowing that it is a battle between Satan and Almighty God. We will be blind-sided if we assume all problems are due to natural causes.

When we refuse to accept Bible truth and replace it with our own "impression" of this subject, we are guiding ourselves. Our minds will experience torment if we have given ground to our enemy and attempt to resolve this by guiding ourselves:

Look, all you who kindle a fire, (to guide yourselves) Who encircle yourselves with sparks: Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled-- This you shall have from My hand: You shall lie down in torment.

Isaiah 50:11



Understanding the Real Battle

The Satanic realm camouflages itself in such a way as to appear all-knowing and proper. Thinking Satan's thoughts after him seems like the reasonable thing to do.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

Laying down our lives for others (letting our light shine) is the foundation which Jesus laid for us to begin to make inroads into the darkness of the world. In other words, we've got to do the unthinkable or the opposite of our natural instincts.

I will show you my faith by my works.

James 2:18

But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

And if you lend [to those] from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

Luke 6:32-35

In fact, Peter shows us the real secret of the Christian life: following in Christ's steps.

For this [is] commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

For what credit [is it] if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this [is] commendable before God.

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

1 Peter 2:19-21

Daily Discipline

Again, we are being asked to do the "impossible" if we intend to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Displaying the life and sufferings of Christ, then, is our assignment. Our text makes it clear that there is a certain amount of preparation which must take place. Here is a summary of this preparation:

Hebrews 12:11 says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time" this infers that it is self-evident that we need self-control or discipline if we are going to be disciples. Disciples are not content to just get their ticket punched for heaven, they want to get past the ABCs of Christianity.

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles (ABCs) of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God...

Hebrews 6:1

Jesus reminded us that loving the Lord is not a basis for excusing oneself from self-discipline.

But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?

Luke 6:46

The real issue is a matter of faith and trust. Will we trust the Lord in all things? We use the word "faith" when we are talking about something we can't see. Faith is displayed by taking some sort of action.

Let us not forget that obedience to God's Law was all that God asked during the old covenant. Weakness in faith was made up for by obedience. We can at least obey where we cannot understand.

But without faith [it is] impossible to please [Him], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and [that] He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Heb. 11:6

Of course, we learn that we cannot discipline ourselves using our own willpower.

I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

John 15:5

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Gal. 3:3

Take notice of the connection between Romans 6, 7 and 8. Romans 8:2 reveals how the law of the Spirit (Romans 8) of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin (Romans 6) and death (Romans 7).³



Self-Control

These laws all fit together so that we can see how we bring some of our troubles on ourselves. (Hebrews 4:10).

We are at the mercy of our enemy if we cast aside self-control.

Whoever [has] no rule over his own spirit [is like] a city broken down, without walls.

Prov. 25:28

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

1 Peter 5:8

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed [is] willing, but the flesh [is] weak."

Matthew 26:41

Are you out of Control?

We all experience a feeling of helplessness from time to time. Satan attempts to tell us that we are out of control. If we have trained ourselves to genuinely surrender our daily life to Christ then we are in the best place we can be. He is always in control and it therefore doesn't matter what our imagination is telling us.

Without this confidence of Christ-centered self-control, the rest of the fruits of the spirit cannot follow. Thus, self-control is the "crown jewel" of the Christian life.

If we do not see the need to discipline ourselves to prepare ourselves against attacks on our mind we will learn the hard way that our physical bodies will adjust themselves emotionally. Satan doesn't play fair and is waiting to exploit our health as well as our mind.

There are dozens of physical trends which are symptomatic of spiritual attacks. The "fight or flight" response can be initiated immediately when the pumping of adrenaline is combined with a thought attack. A drop in serotonin can manifest itself in erratic behavior.

These responses will overcome all logical thinking unless the mind has been trained to spot the attack and take authority over it.

Major Thought-Attack Categories

• Why are you having trouble?

Trouble is a normal part of the Christian life. There are plenty of Scriptures which teach this but it is not often presented to the church this way.

Paul listed his troubles many times and he considered this as everyday life for a Christian. The devil tries to convince us that trouble shows we are not a Christian.

The amount of trouble we would have then is not proportionate to the stage of our development in the Christian life.

Furthermore, trouble makes us able to understand other people's problems. David confessed that there was a time when he wasn't understanding other people's problems and was just thinking of his own (Psalm 73:1-13).

At some point God will show us how to use the problems we've had to help others who are going through the same thing (2 Cor. 1:4-6).

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

1 Peter 4:12

Trouble for a Christian is not strange. Satan contradicts this thought by saying that it is "strange" for us to have trouble and he does it in a way that sounds logical.

Remember, we have surrendered our lives as a living sacrifice and have no cause to complain when God checks to see if we really meant it.

Here are some ways we can strengthen ourselves as we endure:

- We can begin to see that when Christ suffers we suffer (Colossians 1:24).
- We can ask the Father to forgive those who are spiritually blind. Luke 23:24 is a good prayer for those who can't forgive the ones who wounded them.
- We can repent of any known rebellion against God which we are involved in. Demons are attracted to rebellion like flies to rotting garbage. Those who wonder why they are unable to think clearly will find that repentance breaks through to stop the enemy who is jamming the frequency. There is an instant communication breakthrough with headquarters when the channel is clear.

Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner (even a Christian) who repents.
Luke 15:10

- We need to train ourselves to see that Christ demonstrated for us how to endure unfairness (Hebrews 12:3).
- Be aware that God often speaks to us by placing Scriptures in our minds. Whenever the Word comes to our mind this is the confirmation (or witness) of the Holy Spirit to our spirit (1 John 5:9-10).

All these things help us to answer the devil's suggestion, "You have too much trouble, surely you are not a Christian." The truth is the opposite. Quite often it is the wicked who do not have trouble.

• Maybe you are not a Christian

Here are some Scriptures which can be used when Satan's suggests doubts about whether you are a Christian or not:

... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:9

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may [continue to] believe in the name of the Son of God.

1 John 5:13



Why does God allow pain?

Trial is necessary in order to prove something. Would you want to ride in an airplane that had never been tested? This means there is going to be pain.

If obeying God was always painless then the question would arise, "Would we do the right thing if pain was involved?" C.S. Lewis puts it this way, "Am I doing this for God's sake or only because I happen to like it?"²

God is moving us toward doing what is right, even if we encounter something which we are not specifically commanded to do.

True love and loyalty would do what is right even if it is not specifically commanded. The Pharisees missed this.

We obey His will because we love Him -not only because it is His will. We want what He wants.

This begs the question, "If God already knows how we will react during painful testing, then why is the test necessary?"

Although God knew that Abraham would pass the test in Genesis -still Abraham didn't know it. It is worthwhile for us to know this information about ourselves which we did not know.

After testing we can speak to our souls and say things like, "We made it! God's grace was sufficient! His promises are true! He didn't allow me to be tempted above that which I was able to handle.

We will find that we are better prepared for the next test and can face it with a confidence we never had before.



Sword-fighting techniques

• **Accepting discipline**

Just as the Psalmist asked the Lord why the wicked seemed to prosper (Psa. 94:3), we are tempted to wonder why God disciplines us.

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

Heb. 12:5

All we have to do if we want to determine how much we are worth to God is to look at the price that was paid to purchase us (1 Cor. 6:20). Let's review how He loves us:

As for the saints who [are] on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."

Psalm 16:3

The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet [you] with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.

Zeph. 3:17

This passage in Zephaniah has some alternate Hebrew translations; "He is speechless in His love over you" or "He will silently show you his love."

In the same way that we need hugs from each other once in awhile, we also need reassurance that God has not dealt with us according to our sins. These words should put to rest any notion that God punishes our sins with some sort of corresponding ratio of pain.

• **Dying to what we want**

The idea of death and sacrifice is not only found in Christianity. Something of the universal law of blood sacrifice is found even in primitive cultures. These people never question the outcome. They blindly go onward feeling that if they haven't been hit by lightning as of yet then they must be on the right track.

The idea of making our lives a sacrifice of death is foundational to the Christian's walk. This idea is usually not presented to new Christians but it should be. This means we could fight back when we are attacked but we choose to die to fighting and arguing.

Try it! You can afford to lose at least one fight every so often so it won't hurt you to try this: someone attacks you and you do nothing.

Wait and see what happens when you commit the outcome to God. If He doesn't do anything then you can say this doesn't work, but not until you've really tried it.

God loves it when we allow Him to prove that He will do what he says He will do.

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,

2 Cor. 1:8-9

The thinking of heathens is: "I kill chickens, You make it rain." For them, it seems to work for a span of time. We should not criticize their thought process until we can prove that ours is any different.

We all tend to do things until they do not work, this is why sin (slavery) is progressive.

Do you not know that to whom (anger, pride, etc.) you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin [leading] to death, or of obedience [leading] to righteousness?

Romans 6:16

We instinctively know that something valuable is going to have to die when nothing else is working. There are many things inside of us which need to die in order to bring life into troubling situations.

Think of this as a person in a casket at a funeral home. This person is no longer tempted to anger or pride or doing things their own way -they are dead to all those things.

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

John 12:24

The following passage should be taken as a creed for the Christian life:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

2 Cor. 4:7

[We are] hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; [we are] perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.

2 Cor. 4:7-12

Death to what we want is the answer where there is no known sin that can be pointed to as the cause of suffering. There has to be a death of something which is presently refusing to die. We cannot force the answer to be revealed. That which we can't see will become evident when we die to the outcome.

In *The Problem of Pain*, C.S. Lewis reminds us that we do not have a unique perspective. "The doctrine of death is not peculiar to Christianity... the Indian ascetic, mortifying his body on a bed of spikes, preaches the same lesson. The peculiarity of the Christian faith is not to teach this doctrine but to render it."

"Where other systems expose our total nature to death (as in Buddhist renunciation) Christianity demands only that we set right a misdirection of our nature."²

Of course, the devil will immediately suggest to us that these trials are strange.

"How strange that this should happen to you," he says. We are told in several places that part of the reason Christ came to earth was to show us the pattern of life and death that we must follow.

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

1 Peter 2:21

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various (interruptions)...

James 1:2

The theme of death is repeated in Scripture. If we want God's best we have to die to what we want.

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 Cor. 12:9

This line of thinking will take us at least to the point that the average native in the jungle has arrived at. The concept of the gods needing to be appeased is foreign to Christianity but the concept of something dying to take the place of something else is valid. Almighty God cannot be bought off with any amount of sacrifices. It is humbling to admit that we are inadequate to come up with something tangible which will satisfy Him.

Nothing less than genuine love and relationship will please Him. It is the same with us. We wouldn't want a friend who felt that he had bought our friendship and thus deserved to be considered in good standing. Such thinking is foreign to us until we are broken. Our God also knows that if the correction to our behavior is not thorough, we will just return to our old ways.

If another chance would cure us of our ways, God would grant it.

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

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

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned.

But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is [rightly] judged by no one.

For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:11-16

It should be evident that we are unable to discern spiritual things with our minds. The way to eternal life is the death of certain things in us. The way to become great is to become a servant.

We see then that most of the things we see as pathways to success are the opposite of how God sees them.

These things need to be looked into because the spiritual battle is fierce and we are continuously bombarded with misleading information.

We tend to fall back on the known when we face the unknown. Good, let it be that we fall back on what is known of Christ and His ways.

We have noticed that there have been those who seemed to be making progress and have prayed every prayer and made every commitment that can be thought of yet there is still something wrong.

There is no formula to extract from your local Christian televangelist. The Lord Jesus Christ must be personally invited to take control of the situation or there will be no solution.

He Who Answers a Matter Before Hearing It

A further illustration of how often we miss the root of a matter is demonstrated by Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Covey tells a story of a man and his children on a New York subway. The kids were grabbing newspapers of out people's hands and generally making life miserable for everybody. Finally, a man sitting

near the father asked, "Don't you think you ought to control your kids?"

The father snapped out of his reverie and replied, "I guess I should. We just left the hospital where their mother died." The mood of that subway car immediately changed and people began talking tenderly to the kids and offering to let them sit in their laps.

We see that our collection of wisdom is sometimes not enough if we jump to conclusions. We need unique wisdom for each battle that comes from walking daily in Scripture, talking back and forth with the Lord.

As Nee says, "We have to go through strict trainings and dealings. What is untouched in us will remain untouched in others. We can never expect to help others in the areas that we ourselves have not first learned the lessons. The more completely and thoroughly we have learned our lessons the more useful we will be to God's work."

"If we spare and save these things in ourselves, we will be unable to deal with them in others. A proud person cannot deal with a proud person."

"If we are a certain kind of person and are afraid of condemning that kind of illness in others, we will be unable to know whether or not others have a similar illness, much less help them. He cannot make others see what he has not seen himself." ³



Scripture Detective Work

How can we detect whether we are dealing in reality or not? This is something that cannot be detected with our minds. It becomes evident to us that we must rely on divine revelation.

When we fail to invite the Lord Himself into a conflict we take away all hope that we ever had of solving the problem.

The place to start is to get all the factual information we can and bring it before the Lord. The answer may become immediately evident as we see into something that they we are reminded of by the Holy Spirit or it may be revealed later.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Romans 8:16

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own [authority], but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

John 16:13

We are not entirely at the mercy of our imaginations when it comes to the revelation of God's will in a situation. It should not be forgotten that whenever we have a problem we are being humbled and God extends a special grace to us to enable us to understand things which we normally would not comprehend.

You have relieved me in [my] distress; Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.

Psalms 4:1

It goes without saying that anything presented as revelation must stand the scrutiny of Scripture. In fact, the Scriptures are the first place where we look for revelation.

It is a lost art but we must learn to use the Bible to diagnose a problem. When we see our options as doing things God's way versus self-will we are responding to revelation. The Lord Himself will confirm whether we are pursuing our own leadings or His own. Our leadings will eventually lead to a dead end but God's revelation will bring freedom.

For example, you may pray and ask for revelation and are reminded of a dirty secret which the devil is using as blackmail.

The devil often tells people that since they are unable to reveal what happened to them, then they are a part of the darkness which brought it about.

They may be hesitant to share their story but as soon as they do there is immediate freedom and many are heard to say, "It's gone! I'm free!"

But we have renounced the hidden things...

2 Cor. 4:2

In any case, while we are waiting on confirmation there are things that are already evident and can be worked on as a place to start. If there is selfishness or pride or anger the we train ourselves to drop these things as if they were snakes.

On the other side of the equation there are behaviors that cannot simply be avoided. Biting your tongue does not make you into a person who builds up others with uplifting words.

Choking back your pride does not mean you are now a humble person. Hiding your anger does not mean you are a truly patient and meek angel. This charade will fail the first time it is put to the test

.... and have no confidence in the flesh.

Phil. 3:3

There are things we need to put off and others we need to put on. Even in all this, permanent change will not come about until the Lord deals with a man. The form of these dealings is seen as discipline or trials which ultimately heal us of any dysfunctional behavior as we finally surrender to what is best for us.

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin...

1 Peter 4:1

...for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

2 Cor. 12:9

It is only when we see into this that we cease to resent God's dealing with us in painful ways.

I was mute, I did not open my mouth, Because it was You who did [it].

Psa. 39:9

Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Cor. 4:10-11

Any other response is in danger of agreement with Satan that we should become as gods.



Not blaming God

A favorite question of Bible critics is: "Why would a loving God allow evil? Even if He is not the author of evil, why does He not prevent it from happening? Either he is powerless to stop evil or does not care. I thought He was my friend and now He has let me down."

If God would have created us as robots there would have been no problem. There would be no possibility for evil and no possibility for genuine love. God was willing to create us with a free will because He desired our genuine love.

God is not the author of evil. Satan brought evil into the world just as Adam brought sin. We may as well ask, "Why do we have to have thorns? If God loved us He would have created a world with no thorns on the rose bushes." It is Adam's fault that there are thorns, not God's.

As far as God "allowing" terrible things to happen, once we see that He is not the author of evil then we can progress to see how He works all things together for good. A problem arises because we can see no good ever coming out of a bad situation.

Paul answers this as well:

What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.

Romans 9:22

Whether we are capable of understanding is not the question. The fact that God turns what Satan has done into ultimate good not only thwarts the devil but gives us hope in place of despair.

If we are ready to cooperate with God, He will help us to do the same thing. As a matter of fact this is our assignment on earth.

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:8

Boot Camp

We are soldiers in boot camp. The idea is for us to become polished and capable of handling any task assigned to us. The Lord must be able to depend on us to relate to others in a well-thought-out, compassionate way.

Army boot camps are intentionally designed to take away the known world from the new recruit. The Drill Sergeant knows that someday these soldiers will be in a foxhole and that their lives could depend on obeying orders without question. Their previous habits or responses will no longer help them.

It won't work if a soldier asks, "Why?" in the middle of a firefight. Hesitating to obey may cause injury or death for the soldier or his companions. Thus, the Drill Sergeant has to get the recruit out of his "comfort zone" and intentionally cause him to be disoriented so that he is forced to rely on someone besides himself.

It is during these times that we see that God has allowed us to become disoriented so that we have NO CHOICE but to cry out to Him.

This should be encouraging for those of us who are currently feeling disoriented. As long as God is on the throne of our lives it doesn't matter what we feel like emotionally. He is the pilot and we are the passengers.



No Fishing

Corrie Ten-Boom said that when God casts our sins away He puts up a sign that says, "No fishing." It is when we decide to go fishing that Satan preys upon our thoughts.

This "fishing" problem can become very painful if we fail to re-train our minds to detect the difference between our thoughts (fishing), God's thoughts (the Scriptures) and Satan's thoughts (accusations).

All day long (if we allow it) a tape recorder is attempting to play thoughts from Satan in our minds. Another problem is introduced when we discover that our minds have become trained in the art of accusing ourselves.

Once this practice is perfected, we will torture our own selves while Satan laughs from a safe distance. Those who are perceptive will see that at this point there will be no prayer or procedure which will solve the problem without precise discernment. If we command all evil spirits to be bound and sent to the pit but continue to harass our own minds, there will be no solution.

What we need is a renewed mind. It should be plain that ready-made spiritual formulas cannot achieve such a renewing. Only meditation or memorization of Scripture will get the job done.

The only way out of the circular reasoning that is associated with this type of thinking is to answer it with Scripture.

It is a fact of life that we are tempted to compartmentalize our problems. If one problem is solved then we are tempted to isolate ourselves inside the next one. This is a technique of self-preservation which is understandable until it becomes out of balance.

The enemy is the one who wants to isolate the sheep so he can pick them off more easily. Becoming isolated is a red flag that Satan is involved in a situation.

It is our task to ask God to open each compartment in order to keep the truth from being isolated.⁴



Taking up our Cross

A major step in our Christian experience is taken when we begin to realize that the battle belongs to the LORD –not to us!

He will continue to allow us to struggle with this until we completely surrender to the fact that "without Him, we can do nothing." (see John 15:5).

Do we still think that there is something we can do to change the situation? Are there some strings left for us to pull? We must intentionally not pull those strings. We must wait in the Word and in prayer, and see what the Lord does.

God wants us to see to the heart of who He is. Just as the Jews thought a set of rules was all they needed. We also are tempted to transform Christianity into a code of conduct.

God is more interested in who we are than what we believe we know theologically. He is more interested in how we live in the midst of our circumstances than He is in getting us out of our circumstances.

Case Study

John was an average father of a conservative Christian home. He was known as a leader in church and got along well with kids. He was surprised to find that a day would come when his own kids became teenagers and began to experiment with what the world had to offer.

For example, acid rock music was something that John had been delivered from and he saw it as a means of opening one's life to satanic influence (which it certainly can be). However, he failed to distinguish between curiosity and outright rebellion.

The ministry where John worked paid such low wages that a group of the staff had begun to collect food which was designated for the dumpster from local grocery stores. The loss of this job had resulted in the family having to ask for financial assistance.

As a result of these pressures and the growing amount of teenage resistance to the house rules, John began to lay down the law in a heavy-handed way.

First one, and then another, of his sons left home. John was baffled. He had taken them to some of the best counselors and ministers that he knew of. One of these counselors boasted that he had an almost one-hundred percent rate of restoring teenagers to their families. Another surprise was in store for John as the pressure began to build on his wife.

She ended up in a mental care hospice. John began to call everyone he knew in the ministry asking for help. The final straw came when

one by one, these pastors and friends told him that they could not help him. One of them told him bluntly that it was obvious he must have sin in his life and that "he was never to call here again."

One of John's closest friends quietly told him he was having second thoughts about allowing his kids to play with John's kids, "Just in case there was something going on which might rub off on them."

John confessed every sin he could think of while trying to contact his kids, calling various counselors and visiting his wife. Finally, one Christian counselor agreed to meet with him. He listened to John's story for approximately sixty seconds and began to launch into a diatribe.

"People like you are the worst cases I see. When are you people going to wake up? You are an absolute basket case!"

The psychiatrist at the hospice where his wife was staying was a Muslim who gave them an exit interview. He told the couple that he saw things like this all the time in Christian families and it was his observation that Muslims seem to honor the Prophet Jesus more than most Christians do.

This was the final red flag which grabbed John's attention. He began to see into the fact that a portion of this was a setup, an attack from Satan.

The Holy Spirit Himself began to heal John's anguished spirit by answering the attacking thoughts he was receiving with precise Scriptures. Here are some of the verses which begin to pop into his mind:

Satan

"God is angry with you and has turned His back on you because of your sins."

Holy Spirit

He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.

Psalm 103:10

Satan

"It's good for you to hate yourself. Look at what you've done to your family. Doesn't the Bible teach that Christians should hate themselves anyway?"

Holy Spirit

For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

1 John 3:20

Satan

"God is finished with you. You are disqualified for the ministry."

Holy Spirit

For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.

Romans 11:29

Satan

"How could you have done these things?"

Holy Spirit

Now if I do what I will not [to do], it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

Romans 7:20

Satan

"You used to think that you were friends with God but those days are over now."

Holy Spirit

For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Hebrews 13:5

If we are faithless, He remains faithful: He cannot deny himself.

2 Timothy 2:13

Satan

"Doesn't the Bible say somewhere that there are some sins which deserve death. Perhaps this is one of them?"

Holy Spirit

Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...

Job 13:15

All unrighteousness is sin: and there is sin not leading to death.

1 John 5:17

Satan

"So what if you are not perfect. This seems like the punishment doesn't fit the crime. Is it really fair for God to put you through all this even if you have made some mistakes?"

Holy Spirit

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him..."

Hebrews 12:5

Satan

"It looks like God has cast you off. It sure looks like He is holding something against you."

Holy Spirit

Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

Hebrews 10:17

Satan

"God is publicly exposing all of your sins. They have finally caught up with you."

Holy Spirit

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Satan

"Well, you certainly don't seem to have much in the way of family or friends left."

Holy Spirit

When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

Psalms 27:10

Satan

"Well, then if your sins are forgiven, God understands if you give in to your weaknesses from time to time."

Holy Spirit

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Romans 6:1

Satan

"Theoretically speaking, what if God was so disgusted with you that He sent you to hell?"

Holy Spirit

For You will not leave my soul in [hell], Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

Psalms 16:10

Satan

"You seem to be leading a pretty miserable existence. It doesn't look like you have much of a future, in any case."

Holy Spirit

The LORD will perfect [that which] concerns me; Your mercy, O LORD, [endures] forever; Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

Psalms 138:8

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete [it] until the day of Jesus Christ;

Philippians 1:6

By the time John was able to retrain his mind to think this way, there was nothing left for the devil to blackmail him with. Of course, the devil always tries to bargain his way out of anything so there will always be an ongoing fight.

... be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:2

John eventually was able to get control of these thoughts and use these "small" victories to rebuild his family. Yes, the progress was slow, but this family learned to avoid quick fixes and to walk by faith and not by sight.



Scripture Q & A

Jesus answered Satan with the words, "It is written." He was being an example to us of what to do when we are attacked. Here are some Bible answers to attacking thoughts:

"You don't need to be overly serious about the Bible. God still hears your prayers."

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

John 15:7

"God never said you had to read the Bible every day."

Blessed [are] those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

Matthew 5:6

"Why should you have to pray? God already knows what you need anyway."

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Matthew 7:7

"Why should you focus on confessing my sins? Why should others get away with the things they have done to you?"

Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Matthew 7:5

"What you did was nothing compared to what they did to you."

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Matthew 5:23-24

"Your failures in the Christian life are the reason that your friend or family member is living in sin."

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

James 1:14

"You should never forgive them for what they did."

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Matthew 5:7

The merciful man does good for his own soul, But [he who is] cruel troubles his own flesh.

Proverbs 11:17

Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

Rom. 2:1

"I've always been taught to stand up for my rights."

Blessed [are] the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

Matthew 5:5

"You've already messed up your life this badly, you might as well salvage what's left and go ahead and enjoy some of the things you've been missing out on."

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

Luke 9:24

"Your offender might hurt other people. You should warn others by telling them what this person did to you."

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

Matthew 18:15

"It doesn't matter what your parents say. You are old enough to know what's best for you."

For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

Matthew 15:4

"If your enemy has some bad luck it may be God's judging them for what they did to you and rightfully so."

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

Matthew 5:44

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;

Lest the LORD see [it], and it displease Him, And He turn away His wrath from him.

Proverbs 24:17-18

"I'd rather not get involved. The problem is mostly between them and not me."

Blessed [are] the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

Matthew 5:9

"I'm not ready to forgive yet. I'm not hurting anyone but myself."

But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:15

Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

Hebrews 12:15

"I will forgive them but I don't have to love them. I can't help hating them."

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 13:34-35

"When I talk to them like that, I'm just being up front about what's going on. I'm speaking the truth in love. It's called tough love"

Judge not, that you be not judged.

Matthew 7:1

"There are lots of Christians doing it. I think you can enjoy the things of the world and be as good of a Christian as anyone else is. God knows your heart."

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Luke 9:23

"You are making some progress but you are not ready to take the next step. Stay where you are for awhile. Maybe you'll be ready later."

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to [fulfill its] lusts.

Romans 13:14

"It's not realistic to expect everyone to witness or talk about their faith."

And he said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Matthew 4:19

Satan's all-time favorite poison dart...

"You have committed the unpardonable sin."

First of all, if you had you committed such a sin you would not care less about what God or anyone says about this. The fact that you are wondering whether or not this is true shows that you haven't.

In fact, seeking help on this shows that you want to please God's Spirit. This blasphemy is talking about those reject the witness in their spirit that the Word of God is the truth and that they need to admit their rebellion and surrender their lives to Him. If someone tramples on the blood of Christ after being shown this truth then they have blasphemed the Holy Spirit.

Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 10:29

Summary

If we are going to escape from the prison of hopelessness we will need a well-prepared escape plan.

1. **Take a spiritual inventory** which includes your family's spiritual history, possible demonic attacks and a list of people who have offended you. Renounce all claims to revenge.
2. Write emails or letters expressing gratefulness to those whom God has used in your life. **A spirit of gratefulness** is a powerful antidote to a spirit of bitterness or regret.
3. **Expose (confess, tell somebody) any hidden things** which need to be brought to the light.
4. **Get rid of any objects**, pictures, music, etc. in your home which the devil may use to claim territorial rights. Be careful of "good luck" objects and figurines with questionable origins.
5. **Take back any ground** which has been surrendered to Satan.
6. **Bind any spirits** which are coming against you and forbid them to interfere with your prayers.
7. If it seems like there is something else, **invite the Lord** to reveal the solution in prayer.
8. Look for **confirmation in Scripture** (and from people who are solid in the Scriptures) for anything that is revealed.
9. Do not allow your desperation for answers to tempt you to fast track this.
10. **Die to the situation.** You must get to the point where you are committed to trust the Lord regardless of whether the problem is resolved the way you expect.
11. Make a **proclamation** directed at Satan which states that you renounce and reject everything he has brought into your life. Make a commitment to dedicate yourself for God's purposes and plans. (Rev. 12:11)
12. Use Scripture to retrain your mind. **Make index cards with Scriptural answers to the specific attacks of Satan** which you are experiencing. Keep these cards handy and you will be armed for the next attack against your mind.

We understand that every man must be tested by fire. We know that we will someday face the ultimate crisis of our lives and that this crisis will attempt to define us forever.

If we hold fast to the proven things that have been revealed to us, and hold on lightly to our emotions and egos, we will find ourselves initiated into the circle of those who are faithful in both small things and large.

Then it is that God will prompt us to bring out of our treasure "things new and things old" which will bring us victory over uninvited thoughts.

Endnotes

1. Gothard, Bill, *The Power of Crying Out*, p. 22
2. Lewis, C.S., *The Problem of Pain*, p.98
3. Nee, Watchman, *The Normal Christian Life*, p. 45
4. International Center for Biblical Counseling Training Syllabus, <http://www.deeperwalkinternational.org/>

Resources

Overcoming the Adversary, Mark Bubeck, Moody Press

The Power of Crying Out, Institute in Basic Life Principles, www.iblp.org

Reclaiming Surrendered Ground, Jim Logan, Moody Press

Profile of Jimmy Gallagher

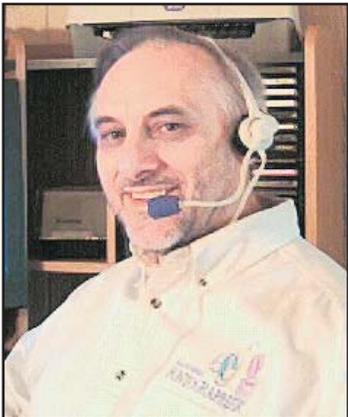
Jimmy gave his life to Christ in the midst of the Jesus Movement in 1969. Since that time he has been involved in many areas of ministry, including coffeehouses, street evangelism, Christian school administration, coaching, camp counselor, part-time missionary, and contributing editor to *Christian Computing Magazine*.

In 1986, Jimmy became the Vice President of *Kingdom Age Software* and was a part of the team which developed the world's first desktop computer Bible called *GodSpeed®*. He has a degree in Bible and a doctorate in Christian Counseling.

During a trip to the interior of Jamaica, Jimmy became convicted as a young man begged him to find a way to bring Bible training to those who want to serve in the ministry but have no chance of obtaining books or training materials.

The result was a seven year period of preparing a Bible curriculum known as the *Stop, Look, Listen Bible Study Series*. This material is available free of charge to anyone with an internet connection at:

www.stoplooklistenbible.com



We are members of the *FreedomNet* counseling network.

Free Christian counseling is available to those who are serious about overcoming the enemy at:

<http://www.yourfreedomnet.com>