

**Neighbor's Spiritual/Relational Landscape**

**My Spiritual/Relational Landscape**

# Footholds & Strongholds

## A Personal Inventory Checklist

Adapted from material used in the *Living Free* course.

The following checklist is not a list of sins, per se, but rather a list of possible entry points *for* and possible symptoms *of* spiritual attacks or footholds. This list facilitates a quick check for things that need to be repented of, renounced, replaced or healed. Job provides an example of introspection in the midst of the spiritual battle in his discourse in Job 31.

### Possible Demonic Entry Points:

#### **Religious Background Or Involvement**

- Religion based on works-righteousness
- Legalism (Excessive external do's/don'ts)
- Mormon
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- Christian Science/Scientology
- Unitarian, Dianetics
- Freemasonry, Lodges
- Far Eastern (Buddhist, Shinto, Hindu, Confucian, Tao)
- Islam
- Voodoo/Santeria/Ras Tafari
- Pagan or New Age Idolatry (Job 31.26-28)
- Spiritual Abuse

#### **Sexual Sins or Wounds**

- Pornography
- Premarital sex
- Rape
- Homosexuality
- Adultery (Job 31.9-12)
- Lust (Job 31.1)
- Lesbianism
- Molestation
- Narcissism
- Exhibitionism (self)
- Strip shows
- Prostitution
- Abortion

#### **Occult Involvement**

- Fortune telling/psychic
- Tarot cards
- Palm reading
- Seances
- Astrology, horoscopes
- Numerology
- Table tipping
- Rune stones
- White or black magic, spells
- Role playing games (Dungeons Dragons, magic, etc.)
- Native American Shamanism
- Levitation
- Ouija board
- Yoga, martial arts
- Astral projection (out-of-body exp.)
- Transcendental meditation
- Automatic writing
- Charms, Fetishes, crystals
- Satanism
- Wicca
- Hypnotism
- Auras
- U.F.O.'s

*Continued next page...*

**Possible Symptoms Of A Foothold:**

***Spiritual Resistance To:***

- Bible Reading
- Prayer
- Church attendance
- Witnessing
- Confession, transparency, humility (Job 31.33,34)

***Addictions, Substance Abuse***

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Prescriptions
- Gambling/lottery
- Pornography (Internet or other)
- Money/greed (Job 31.24-26)
- TV/Videos
- Ungodly music/rap
- Shopping
- Video or computer games
- Food

***Possible Charismatic Counterfeits***

- Untested exercise of vocal gifts
- Slain in the spirit
- Spiritual laughter
- Holy Ghost Glue
- Spiritual animal noises

***Mental & Emotional Issues***

- Incest
- Confusion, inability to concentrate
- Hallucinations or delusions
- Schizophrenia
- Hearing voices in the mind
- Depression (including post-partum)
- Bipolar disorder/manic depression
- Paranoia/feelings of persecution
- Bestiality
- Hypochondria
- Feelings of inferiority
- Panic attacks
- Compulsive or obsessive behavior
- Accident prone
- Anorexia/bulimia
- Lasting trauma

***Relational Difficulties***

- Bitterness
- Gloating (Job 31.29,30)
- Emotional
- Frigidity
- Memory blackouts
- Divorced/separated
- Impotence
- Attempted/thoughts of suicide
- Family-of-origin issues
- In-law conflicts
- Abuse from parents (emotional/physical)
- Mistreatment of employees (Job 31.13-15)
- Callousness toward the poor (Job 31.16-23)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

***Behavioral Characteristics***

- Moodiness
- Bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness
- Procrastination
- Rebellion, disobedience
- Anger, rage
- Anxiety, worry
- Fear, doubt
- Controlling, manipulating
- Lying, deceit
- Cursing, swearing
- Jealousy, envy
- Coveting others' possessions
- Distrust
- Pride, self-righteousness
- Impatience, irritability
- Critical spirit
- Gossip
- Daydreaming, fantasizing
- Nightmares, night terrors
- Stealing
- Laziness
- Self-pity
- Insecurity/low self-esteem
- Shame, guilt, regret
- Rejection, abandonment
- Arrogance
- Hatred
- Fighting, quarreling
- Belittling others
- Hypocrisy

**Possible Symptoms of A Spiritual Foothold (continued):**

**Physical Problems with a Possible Spiritual Element**

- Hyperactivity (ADD, ADHD)
- Stress, tension
- Fatigue, exhaustion
- Diabetes, hypoglycemia
- Asthma
- AIDS
- Cancer
- Allergies, hay fever
- Unusual Menstrual problems
- Sudden sleepiness
- Insomnia
- Headaches, migraines
- Seizures, epilepsy
- Arthritis, pain
- Chronic back pain
- Dizziness, blackouts
- Forgetfulness
- Venereal disease
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Fybromyalgia
- Tinnitus
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*REMEMBER: Physical difficulties or illness often have nothing to do with personal sin or demonic attack. Nevertheless, if we are pursuing healing for some physical condition, it behooves us to examine our circumstances for a possible spiritual element to the problem (2Chronicles 16.12).*

**Miscellaneous Issues**

- Emotional scars from war
- Financial problems
- Slavery (background)
- Racism/prejudice/minority

**Personal Prayer Notes**

Satan desires to grab hold of the believer and drag him down, hindering him in any way possible from the forward march of faith. *But holiness eliminates handles.*

# Can A Christian Be Demon Possessed?

The Short Answer: NO

The Longer Answer:

The question, “Can a Christian be demon possessed?” is problematic. First of all, the Greek NT does not use the word “possession” in association with demons. The NIV and other versions have done us a disservice by using the word “possession” to translate the two Greek verbs used by the NT in connection with demonization: *echo*, meaning simply “to have,” and *daimonizomai*, a generic word meaning “demonize.” Neither of these words have any inherent connotation of “ownership” which the word *possession* connotes to us. Furthermore, in the New Testament, it is always the human subject who “has” (*echo*) a demon, not the other way around. A literal translation of Mark 3.22, for example, where the NIV renders “He is possessed by Beelzebub!” is actually, “He possesses (!) Beelzebub.” The fact is that both *echo* and *daimonizomai* are used in a very generic way simply to indicate that a person has some negative, personal association with an evil spirit.

Secondly, asking this question with the word *Christian* may be limiting. For many of us, *Christian* means a believer during this present age, someone who has come to faith since the time of Christ. This connotation of *Christian* tends to limit our consideration of data to the NT, and may subtly encourage the misconception that demonization is a new phenomenon that appeared in the time of Christ and is not addressed in the OT.

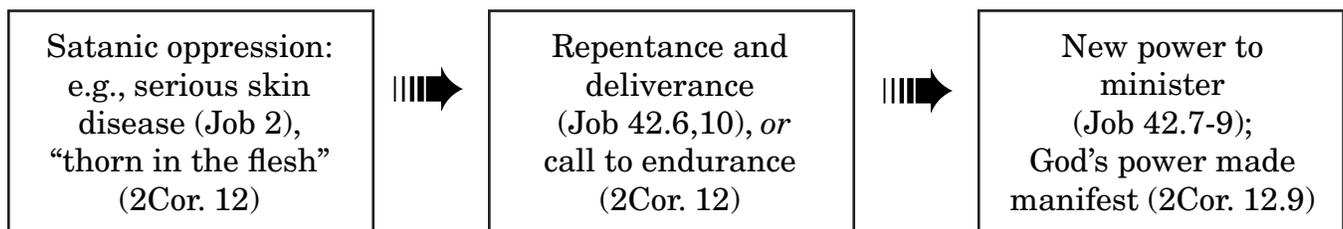
**THEREFORE, THE BETTER QUESTION IS:**

“CAN A BELIEVER BE DEMONIZED?”

In other words, can a believer, a child of God in any age, be in any way chronically oppressed by an evil spirit?

The Answer: **JOB 2; 2 CORINTHIANS 12**

The Solution: **Repentance or Personal Call To Endurance**



## What I Learned From The Ouija Board

### My Teenage Brush with the Occult

It was in 1970 that my friends introduced me to the Ouija Board at a youth group activity in our church basement. The youth group kids explained to me how a heart-shaped pointer would move across this mysteriously decorated board, pointing to letters and numbers to spell the answers to questions we would ask. I warily accepted their invitation to try the Ouija, but watched for the joke I fully expected them to play on me. Sure enough, as I sat across the board from one of my church friends, both of us lightly resting our fingertips on the plastic, felt-footed pointer, I could tell my friend was gently pushing it around the board. The plastic piece slid around to different letters of the alphabet, spelling out an answer to the corny question I had asked. “You’re moving the pointer!” I accused.

“No, I’m not, you are!” my friend retorted.

*Well, I thought, they’ve already agreed among themselves to pull my leg with this thing.* I didn’t stay at it long—it was obvious that the other person was moving the pointer. My friends would not let it rest though. They continued insisting to me that nobody was moving the pointer; the crazy thing did it by itself. To my stubborn refusal to believe, the owner of the board finally said to me, “Look, take the board home and experiment with it yourself, and see if you can figure it out.”

The offer to loan me the Ouija Board took things in a different direction. I thought of myself as a scientist. I was only a High Schooler, but I’d taken all the science and math courses available and planned to pursue a college degree and a career in biology. I was devoted to the scientific method. To me, testing was believing. Not only that, I did have an interest in parapsychology. The

prophecies of Edgar Cayce and the “revelations” of Jeanne Dixon fascinated me. I wanted to know if there really was another dimension where incorporeal beings lived and communed with one another. Here was an opportunity to apply the scientific method to a mysterious game and see if I could find any direct evidence for the supernatural.

A day or two later, I went up to my attic bedroom, pulled the Ouija Board and pointer out of its Parker Brothers game box and sat down with it on my lap. I set my fingertips lightly on the edge of the pointer, and asked a simple question. To my surprise, the pointer began to move. The strange thing about it was that it still felt as if my friend was moving the pointer from the opposite side of the board—but I was alone. Warming to the experiment, I asked a series of random questions. Sure enough, the pointer zipped all over the board, spelling out words that formed rational if occasionally mysterious answers to my questions. The Ouija seemed to work on its own power! I had to know what that power was.

I had a dual hypothesis: I decided that the power of the Ouija Board originated either from some invisible being outside of myself or from the subconscious workings of my own mind. To test my hypothesis, I went up to my room each afternoon when I got home from school, and sat down with the Ouija Board, notepad and pencil beside me, and asked question after question. I tried to formulate questions that would test the mental and predictive abilities of whatever power was behind the Ouija Board, and I carefully recorded and tried to analyze the answers



given. I very quickly discovered that I did not have to ask my questions orally; I had only to think a question and the Ouija Board pointer would begin to move in response.

I'd followed this routine for only a few days when my experiment took on a new dimension. I forget the question I asked, but the Ouija Board gave a particularly enigmatic answer, and I sat on the edge of my bed wondering what it could mean. As I sat with notepad in hand, my pencil tip still resting on the paper, the pencil began to move in my hand, seemingly of its own accord, scribbling lines on the notepad. Beads of perspiration popped out in the palm of my hand, but I did not fling the pencil away. I had only just recently read about this phenomenon, called "automatic handwriting," in a book by Ruth Montgomery. Spirit guides supposedly communicated with willing participants by controlling a writing utensil in their hand. Who or what was controlling the pencil in my hand was still an open question as far as I was concerned, but it did feel as if it were somebody else. While my fingers still supported the pencil, it felt as though the pencil was directing the muscles of my hand rather than vice-versa. At first the pencil just scribbled, but I gathered my wits and thought a question. Sure enough, the pencil wrote out an answer longhand in one, continuous line! Then it went back to scribbling.

*Who are you? I asked, what do you want?*

"I want to draw," came the answer. I'd had enough for that session and put everything away.

The next afternoon, I got out a large sheet of drawing paper, laid it flat on my desk, and picked up a pencil. I held the pencil lightly in my hand and spoke to it with my mind. The pencil began to race across the paper doodling and pausing in its play only to respond to my questions. In a single continuous line it drew a passable picture of a guitar, but then as if in childish frustration it drew the strings in over-long gashes across the page. I laid down

a fresh sheet of paper and asked questions more insistently. I soon re-established the rhythm of questions and answers that I had experienced with the Ouija Board, only now, the answers were written out longhand on the paper.

One or two days into the automatic writing routine I was stunned by an incredible piece of artwork. The pencil began to move purposefully across the large, blank sheet of drawing paper in wide curving lines. I had no idea what the "power" was drawing, if anything at all, but as the continuous line began to describe a defined shape, I could see it would be some kind of portrait. Suddenly, my mouth dropped in astonishment. Before my unsuspecting eyes, the curving lines resolved into a perfect caricature of President Richard Nixon. The finished drawing was of professional quality, done with a harmonious and relaxed execution, in one continuous line.

The Nixon drawing had definite implications for my Ouija Board experiment. Up to the moment when that picture materialized before my amazed eyes, I had leaned toward the "mind game" side of the hypothesis—the idea that the whole Ouija Board and automatic writing thing originated from somewhere down deep in my own subconscious. The problem was that I had never drawn like that before. Now, as I record the experience, I can look back on years of dabbling in art, learning some skills, and even teaching art to my daughters. At that time, however, I had never taken an art class and never drawn anything but stick figures and simple happy faces. The pencil in my hand had done something I knew *I* could not do. Perhaps if I had studied Plato back then, I would have wondered if I were expressing some innate talent I had been born with and only "forgotten." Perhaps some psychologist could have explained the Nixon drawing, but at the time I could not and it made me suspect strongly that I was dealing with an entity outside of myself.

could confide in at the time, but I did have one or two fellows that I excitedly shared my experiments with. I also mentioned what was going on to my mother and to my sister, Erlinda. Erlinda worried enough about my dabblings that she sent me a little book on spiritualism. I've forgotten the title and author, but it was a Christian book and the most important thing it did for me was to direct me to the 18th chapter of Deuteronomy. In that chapter of the Bible, I found a reference to communication with "familiar spirits." The Bible recognized such a phenomenon as real, but condemned it unequivocally as something abominable in God's sight. That scared me, and I purposed to bring my experiment to a definite conclusion.

I had only been experiencing automatic writing for a week when I went upstairs and laid a clean sheet of drawing paper on my desk one more time. I had become convinced that I was dealing with an entity outside of myself. The only question that remained for me was whether this entity was a good spirit from God, or some kind of evil spirit. I sat down and rested the tip of my pencil lightly on the paper.

*I need to know if you are a good spirit or an evil spirit,* I naively said in my mind to the writing entity. The pencil began to write swiftly, racing back to the left hand side of the paper as it came to the end of each line. "I'm a good spirit, of course," it wrote.

*I'm not so sure,* I thought, *I think you might be an evil spirit, and I need to stop doing this stuff.* The pencil began to race across the paper. I felt its emotion, although the only sound was the thin scraping of graphite against paper. The words poured from the pencil tip: "Don't stop whatever you do—we're almost ready to go to the typewriter—I'm going to speak to you through the typewriter—I have many things to teach you—you will become a great prophet to the world—whatever you do don't stop."

*All right,* I said in my mind, *I'll have to put you to a test.*

"Fine," the pencil replied, "just don't stop talking with me."

*Okay,* I said, *if you're a good spirit from God, you should be able to tell me something that it would be impossible for me to know on my own.*

"Yes, that's right," wrote the pencil.

*Well then,* I continued, *I just heard my mother come in from work downstairs; can you tell me how much money is in her coin purse right now?*

"Certainly," wrote the pencil.

*Good,* I said, *then tell me how much money is in her coin purse and I'll go down and count it right now.*

"Two dollars and eighty-six cents," wrote the pencil.

I bounded down the stairs, found where mom had set her purse on the bed, and checked her coin purse. She had money in it, but the amount was no where close to \$2.86. Annoyed, I went back upstairs and took the pencil in my hand. *That's it,* I thought to the entity, *you lied to me and a spirit from God wouldn't do that. I think you're an evil spirit, and I need to quit this stuff.*

Once again the pencil raced across the paper: "No, don't stop, don't put the pencil down—I was just joking—come on, give me another chance, whatever you do, don't stop."

*All right,* I said, *one more chance, but then that's it.* I asked some easily verifiable question about what I would find on the seat of mom's car or in the glove compartment or something like that. The pencil answered confidently, and I went out to the garage to check. Once again, the spirit behind the pencil had lied to me.

Back at my desk, I took the pencil up and said, *You lied to me again. You must be an evil spirit and so this is good-bye.*

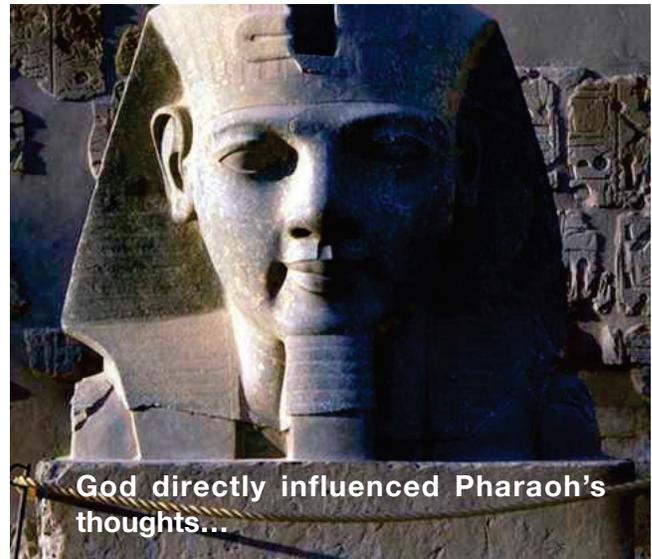
The pencil fairly flew across the paper: "No, no, don't stop—we're going to go to the typewriter—I have so much to teach you so that you can teach it to the world—whatever you do, don't put the pencil down yet—don't

stop!” The evil spirit could sense my growing resolve. “Don’t stop, give me another chance—you can take a joke—don’t put the pencil down, whatever you do, don’t stop—don’t stop!—don’t stop!” I slapped the pencil down flat on the desk and took a deep breath. My experiment was over.

I never tried automatic writing again after that day, but for the rest of the school year, if I happened to be holding a pencil in a relaxed position on my school desk, the muscles in my right hand would begin to twitch as though the pencil wanted to start writing on its own again, and I would have to put the pencil down, reach over with my left hand and press my right hand down flat on the desk until the feeling passed.

**I** did not know Jesus Christ when I had my encounter with the Ouija Board and automatic writing. I had grown up in the church but the gospel had not yet penetrated. I knew snatches from the Bible, but I had never read through the Bible for myself. I believed that God existed but it was a blind faith. I knew of no empirical evidence for the supernatural world—until my encounter with the Ouija. **The greatest thing that this experience did for me was give me an unshakable belief in the spiritual realm. It followed logically in my mind that if evil, lying spirits existed, just as claimed in the Bible, the Bible must also be true when it speaks of angels and God. I did not immediately begin to study the Bible, but later when pressed to seek answers for my teenage fears and struggles, I turned to the Bible with a confidence that it spoke of things that were real.**

As I have shared this story over the last twenty years and contemplated the grave, spiritual danger that I had been in, further insights have come to me regarding the spiritual battle that we all fight. **Perhaps the most important realization is that the human mind is not a closed system.** In other words, the human mind is



constantly penetrated unawares by thoughts that originate from without. Ideas dawn in our minds that we take as our own when in reality God or Satan has whispered them into our minds. We have overwhelming testimony to this truth in Scripture: God directly influenced Pharaoh’s thoughts in the book of Exodus, for example, and in John 13.2 we read of the devil putting it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. It behooves us all to saturate our minds with God’s words from Scripture so that we can easily distinguish between thoughts that come from Him and thoughts that come from the enemy. Otherwise, what we inwardly embrace as our own wonderful idea, may turn out to be a subtle temptation from the evil one.

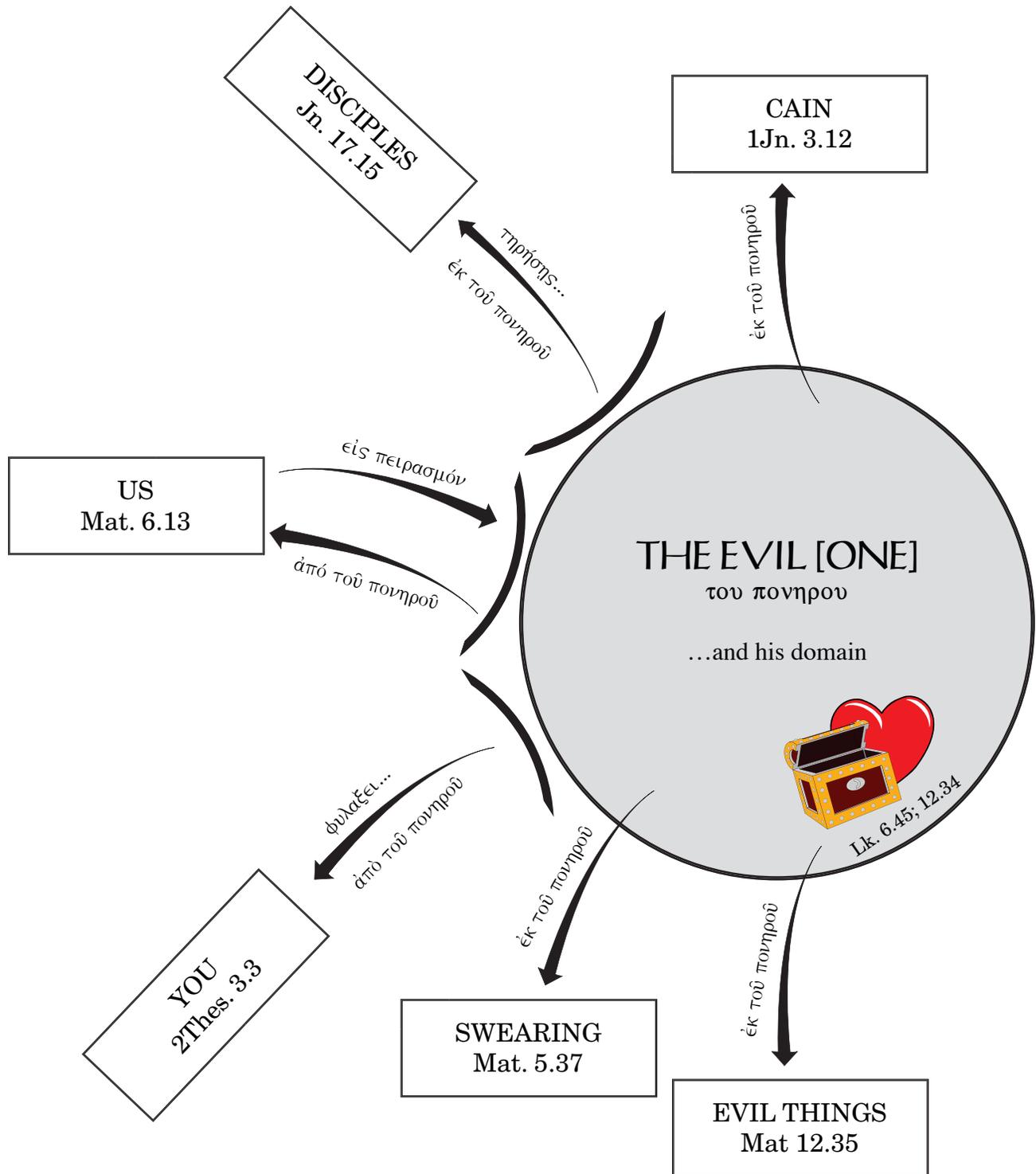
I kept the papers, the picture of Nixon and the other drawings for many years after I had become a Christian, even after Kaaren and I were married. It was while we were living in our first house in Parkland that I finally decided that I could not keep anything remotely connected with the demonic in our home. I burned all the papers and drawings in our back yard. Needless to say, I had long ago returned the Ouija Board to its owner and encouraged him to destroy it. Occultic games are not games.

*Roderick A. Giaciano*

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# PHYSICS OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM

## PART 1A: SPIRITUAL DOMAINS ARE FIRST MORAL, THEN SPATIAL



The Lord's prayer is not so much that we would be protected when Satan attacks us, but that we would be kept from wandering into his domain!

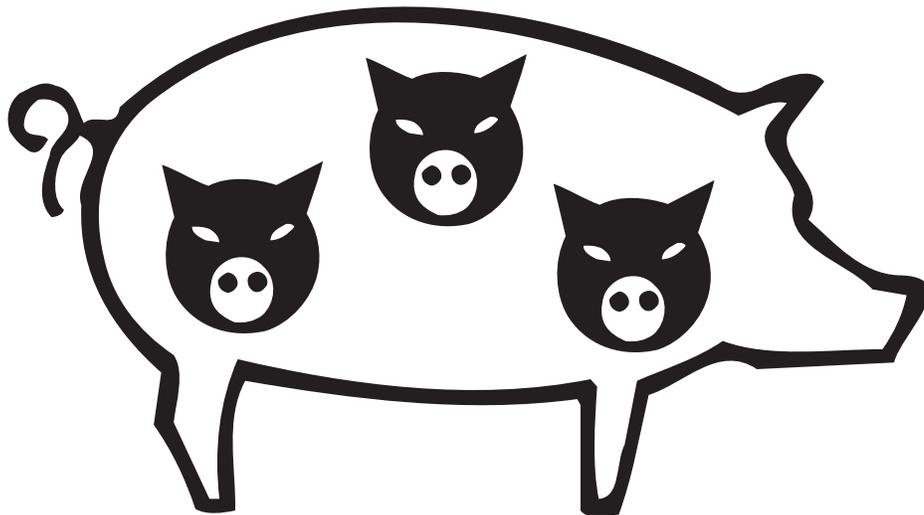
## PHYSICS OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM

### PART 1B: SPIRITS INHABIT MORAL SPACE.

Sacred space is created by the divine presence (Exodus 3.5; Josh. 5.15), even within a person (Rom. 15.16). Evil spirits prefer immoral or amoral space to sacred space. Human beings create defiled or immoral space (GK *topos*, in Eph. 4.27) by their thoughts and actions (Num. 335.33; Psalm 106.38; Isaiah 24.5; Jer. 3.2,9), particularly by murder, adultery and the overt dedication of space or objects to pagan deities.

Understanding that spirits inhabit “moral” rather than “physical” space helps explain various phenomena like:

- ***Why demons “hitchhike.”***
- ***Why angels and demons are able to enter our dreams.***
- ***Why demons eschew wandering away from a human host.***
- ***Why the demons begged to be sent into swine.***
- ***Why evil spirits attach themselves to certain buildings.***
- ***Why God would have us confess the sins of our ancestors (Lev. 26.40).***
- ***Contrasting multiple personalities.***



Our goal is to be a sanctifying presence, i.e., to create sacred moral space by thanksgiving, prayer and the declaration of God’s truth. See: John 17.17; Eph. 5.26; 1Tim. 4.5; 1Cor. 7.14.

## PHYSICS OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM

### PART 1C: OUR MINDS ARE A MORAL/SPIRITUAL DOMAIN



As I have shared this story over the last twenty years...further insights have come to me regarding the spiritual battle that we all fight. **Perhaps the most important realization is that the human mind is not a closed system.** In other words, the human mind is constantly penetrated un-awares by thoughts that originate from without. Ideas dawn in our minds that we take as our own when in reality God or Satan has whispered them into our minds. We have overwhelming testimony to this truth in Scripture: God directly influenced Pharaoh's thoughts in the book of Exodus, for example, and in John 13.2 we read of the devil putting it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. It behooves us all to saturate our minds with God's words from Scripture so that we can easily distinguish between thoughts that come from Him and thoughts that come from the enemy.

—*What I Learned From The Ouija Board*, p. C-8

It has now been demonstrated that ALS patients, with electrodes on their scalp? can control a computer screen by manipulating brain waves called slow cortical potentials. Using a "thought translation device," these patients can "amplify and dampen their brain waves in a way that allows them to select letters on a video screen and spell out messages." "For the first time," says one of the researchers, "we have shown that it is possible to communicate with nothing but one's own brain and to escape, at least verbally, the locked-in state."

This provides exciting possibilities for fully paralyzed people— even those with feeding tubes and respirators— not only to spell out letters on the computer screen, but also to turn on and off the lights, run electronic equipment, and even "think" directions to their own wheelchairs. Taking it one step further, the possibility exists of going wireless: "If the electronics are sensitive enough, they might be able to grab brain waves out of the air."

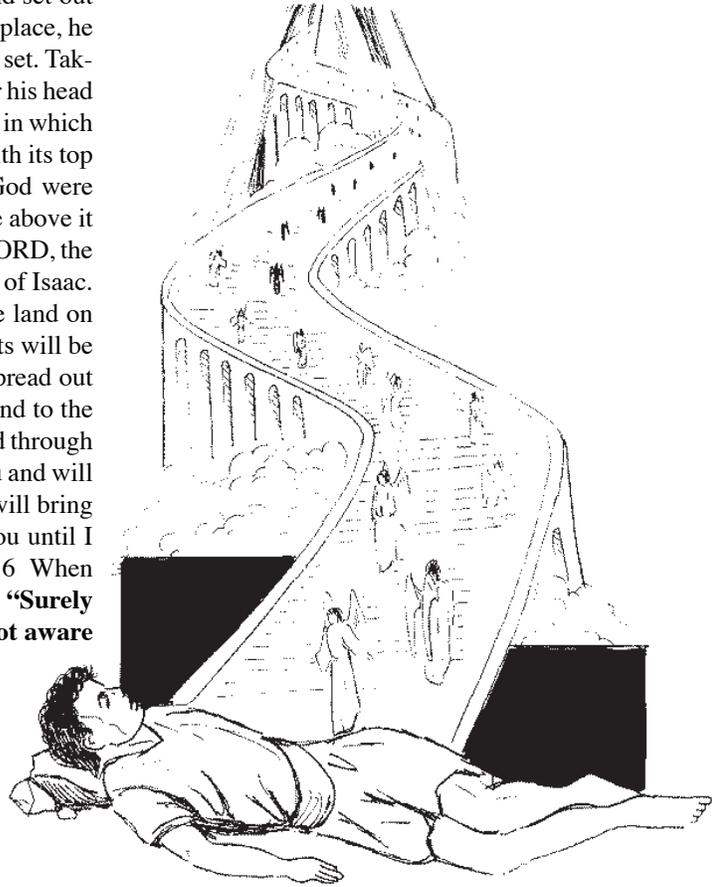
Still, ...we act as if we naively assume our thoughts are private and thus exempt from God's monitoring. I don't believe it for a minute. If we speak words, He hears. If we merely think silent thoughts, He hears just as clearly. We can't hide inside our craniums, so it is no use pretending about it. ...If in the process of "thinking," we generate electrical signals, and if in some general form these electrical signals can penetrate the skull and be picked up on the scalp and even in the air beyond the scalp, then it is certainly possible for God [or other spirits] to intercept such thoughts at any point in the process.

—Richard A. Swenson, M. D.; *More Than Meets The Eye*, pp. 42,43.

## PHYSICS OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM

### PART 1D: OUR DREAMS ARE A MORAL/SPIRITUAL DOMAIN

Gen. 28.10-16: Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." 16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."



**W**hen we see an angel in a dream, do we see a mental representation of an angel, or do we see the actual angel? The language of Matthew (1.20; 2.13,19) implies that angels actually enter the "moral space" of our dreams. At the very least, Scripture indicates that God and angelic beings can manipulate the thoughts and images of our dreams. It behooves us then to recognize that any given dream *could be* a spiritual event. If we awake with a sense that God has directed one of our dreams, we will want to note down the essence of the dream and then consider whether God is indeed speaking to us through it. On the other hand, should we be awakened by a dream that seems to have filled the whole room with an atmosphere of evil, we should respond with warfare prayer.

# PHYSICS OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM

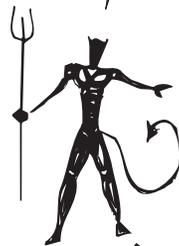
## PART 2: AUTHORITY STRUCTURE

Heb. 1.4-6: So he became... superior to the angels... And... God... says, "Let all God's angels worship him."



Heb. 1.14: Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

Matt. 18.10: "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."



1John 5.19: ...the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Eph. 6.12: ...our struggle is... against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Eph. 1.20-23: ...Christ... far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Eph. 2.6: And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...



PHYSICS OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM  
PART 3: GOD'S PRIORITIES IN THE PRESENT AGE

1.  
SANCTIFICATION OF THE REDEEMED,  
AND DIVINE SELF-DISCLOSURE  
THROUGH THE CHURCH  
(Rom. 8.29; Eph. 3.10-11)

2.  
BINDING OF EVIL  
(Job 1.9-12; Mark 3.27; Rev. 20.1-3)

God's main business is not ensuring that you and I get parking spaces close to the mall entrance or that the bed sheets in the color we want are—miracle!—on sale this week.

His main business is making you and me holy.

— Mark Buchanan in *Your God Is Too Safe*, p. 33

# Hugging The Fire

Knowing The Living God As An Intimate Friend  
Roderick A. Graciano



As he sat at our dinner table, I recently asked a 19-year-old Christian whether he had ever heard God speak to him. Without hesitation he emphatically replied, Yes! The week before he had so distinctly heard an answer to a personal question that he had looked over his shoulder to see who was speaking. To my surprise, this young man then proceeded to express how he does not believe that God speaks except in Scripture, for such was his theological training. He resisted my own testimony of an occasion when God spoke directly to me. “So,” I asked, “are you saying that God spoke to you in a direct and personal way, but that you are

having trouble valuing that experience because of your training?”

“Oh, I value [the experience],” he said, “I just have a hard time accepting that God really speaks that way.”

“Hold on,” I said, “regardless of your theology, haven’t you ever wished for a God who was that close and personal, a God who would speak to you directly like He did last week?”

“Oh, forever!” the young man replied. “I’ve longed for that kind of God.”

## ***The Relational Y In The Road***

If we long for an up close and personal God, why do we resist letting Him out from between the covers of the Bible? Since we were all created for intimacy with God, why do we fear it? It’s no mystery really; it has to do with the pain that all intimacy brings. With people, we come to a Y in the relational road after we’ve been wounded emotionally a few times. At this Y we can choose the painful path of deepening relationship, or we can opt for the safer, more comfortable road of relational distance. The same alternatives face us in our relationship with God. We can draw near to the Consuming Fire (Heb. 12.29) and exult in His self-disclosure while our fleshliness burns away, or we can keep Him at arm’s length and comfortably long

for “something more.” Historically, some of the professing people of God have always travelled each of the two roads. Some have taken the path toward intimacy with God, while others in the same culture have chosen the road of professing to worship God while maintaining relational distance from Him.

### ***Taming The Consuming Fire***

Walking this latter road has often taken the form of a dispensational<sup>1</sup> anti-supernaturalism. In other words, some religious people have defended their more academic approach to God with the doctrine that God no longer relates to humans in direct, supernatural ways as He did in other eras. In their dispensational view, spiritual gifts and the dramatic interventions of the Holy Spirit have ceased. This cessationist belief has sometimes led to a compensatory emphasis upon ritual, theological study or doctrinal debate. In this way, religious people have tamed the Consuming Fire and made Him into the God of history and theology—*the God of the Book*. The God of the Book is a comfortable God; we can discuss His will endlessly without ever inviting Him to the meeting.

The Sadducees of old worshipped this tamed God. They believed in God, but not in an interventional God. Like the Deists of a more recent time, they believed that “God helps them that help themselves.” *The Jewish Encyclopedia* explains that the Sadducees did not share “the Messianic hopes of the Pharisees, who committed the future into the hand of God,” but rather “took the people’s destiny into their own hands, fighting or negotiating with the heathen nations just as they thought best, while having as their aim their own temporary welfare and worldly success.”<sup>2</sup> The Sadducees did not believe in divine providence, the immortality of the soul nor in angels or demons (Acts 23.8), but they did believe in the written Scriptures and they loved philosophical debates.<sup>3</sup> No wonder the Sadducees had a problem with the Christ who invaded human history, silenced their debates (Mat. 22.34) and in a very concrete fashion shut down their temple market! The Sadducees were not looking for that kind of a relationship with God.

### ***God of History or Present Son?***

Neither were some of the Italian Jews who received the Epistle to the Hebrews. This is what the puzzling exhortation of Hebrews 6.4-7 is all about:

Hebr. 6:4-6: It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Many modern readers of these verses have asked: How it is possible that “Christians” who have “shared in the Holy Spirit” (v. 4) can then “fall away” without hope of repentance (v. 6)?

The answer is that the exhortation of Hebrews 6 is not to Christians who had *personally* and *individually* experienced the redemptive work of the Spirit. It is to attendees in a Messianic Jewish Synagogue who had *corporately* witnessed the Spirit's work in their midst. These individuals within the synagogue assembly had been intellectually enlightened by the testimony of Jesus' messiahship, and had *corporately* witnessed spiritual gifts and the blessings of the Gospel in the lives of their peers. Now, however, a time of persecution (Heb. 10.32-34) tempted them to turn away from the living God (Heb. 3.12), rejecting the evidence of their *corporate* experience in favor of temporal safety. These Jewish people had, after all, become used to the God of the Book who, according to a popular belief, had been silent for 400 years! Supposedly, God had not spoken to their ancestors in any direct way since the prophet Malachi's ministry in the 5th century BC. Now these 1st-century Hebrews were being asked to believe that their God had suddenly "spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe" (Heb. 1.2). This was not a call to worship "the God of history" nor even "the God of the Book," but a call to embrace "the Living God" into whose hands it *is* a frightening thing to fall (Heb. 10.30,31). This Living God, in the person of His Son, cares nothing for endless discussion of elementary truths (Heb. 5.11-6.2), but commands immediate obedience, faith and holiness. This was not the kind of God that some of the Hebrews in this synagogue had bargained for.

### ***Not In Our House Please!***

Nor was He the kind of God that the Gentiles of Gadara were interested in. Jesus healed two homicidal demoniacs near there who had been so violent that their presence had effectively closed a public road (Mat. 8.28-34). One would think that the community would welcome the man who had delivered them from such a public menace—but no. The "whole town" pleaded with Jesus to leave their region. This reaction had always puzzled me until recently. About a year ago, two demonized individuals were dramatically delivered in a church near Tacoma. Such encounters had never occurred nor been looked for in this church before, but two phenomena have followed in their wake: (1) others with demonic problems have gone



to this church seeking help, and (2) long-time members have left the church. Some acquaintances of mine who have left the church have been straightforward about their reason: they disapprove of the "new doctrinal emphasis" on demons. I suspect, however, that our problem as American evangelicals is not so much with demons as with the One who casts them out. Ironically, a missionary friend in a Mediterranean country has just sent me a thrilling e-mail, reporting the very same kind of deliverances from demonization occurring in her little

native church as in the local church here. We rejoice to hear of such victories from our missionaries. The question is, why do we Americans condone the casting out of demons “on the mission field,” but condemn their being cast out in our own churches? Apparently we have realized, like the Gadarenes, that if Jesus begins to drive out demons in our own back yard, He may also drive out the swine in our lives that we’ve grown fond of.

### ***The Secret of the Lord***

It’s true that if we embrace the Living God He will drive a herd of pet sins out of our lives, and this sanctifying process is not comfortable. However, the benefits outweigh the requisite growing pains. Psalm 25.14 puts it beautifully: “The LORD confides in those who fear him” (NIV). The prerequisite for this promise is to fear the LORD, which involves confession (Psalm 25.6,11), humility (v. 9) and obedience (v. 10). The promised benefit is that the LORD will *confide* in you. What does that mean? Comparing translations reveals the nuances of this clause:

The *secret* of the LORD is for those who fear Him...(NASB)

The *friendship* of the LORD is for those who fear Him... (NRS)

In the Hebrew text of Psalm 25.14, the word translated *confide*, *secret* or *friendship* is the noun סֹד (pronounced *sod* like in soda). It “signifies being closely pressed together for the purpose of secret communication and converse, confidential communion or being together.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, the benefit of embracing the Living God, in spite of the awful discomfort involved, is the privilege of *hearing His voice* in intimate communion! The intimate God that my young friend (at the beginning of this article) longs for is not disavowed by Scripture, but proclaimed from Genesis to Revelation. God has not gone mute nor on vacation. He is ready to come near to us if we will only come near to Him *on His terms* (James 4.8). If we will stop telling God what He can and cannot do in our dispensation and in our city, He will draw us into the intimate friendship we’ve dreamed of.

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<sup>1</sup> I do not here refer to the theological and eschatological system of Dispensationalism *per se*, but only to the idea that God relates to His people differently in different and distinct chronological periods.

<sup>2</sup> *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, p. 631.

<sup>3</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1.4.

<sup>4</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Psalms*.



By Roderick A. Graciano

### A Proverbial Observation

King Solomon took a spiritual principle he had learned from his own family's history, and preserved it in a pithy saying. The translators of King James put Solomon's proverb this way:

Where there is no vision, the people perish:  
but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.  
(Prov. 29.18 KJV)

Let's examine this verse closely, beginning with the first phrase: "Where there is no vision..." Interestingly, this vision Solomon spoke of had nothing to do with corporate goal-setting. He was not thinking of an aspiration or an inspired objective, but rather of a prophetic vision. The Hebrew noun is *chazon* (pronounce the *ch* as in *Bach*), and the Old Testament uses it frequently and uniformly to mean a prophetic revelation, as in Isaiah 1.1: "The *vision* concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw..." Hence, the NIV translates the beginning of Prov. 29.18, "Where there is no revelation..." and the NRS translates, "Where there is no prophecy..."

The next phrase in the King James translation needs tweaking. The words, "the people *perish* [Heb. *parah*]," are better handled by newer translations that render them: "the people *cast off restraint*." Solomon used *parah*, the Hebrew verb in this clause, in other Proverbs to express the act of ignoring *counsel* or *discipline* (Prov. 1.25; 8.33; 13.18; 15.32), i.e., the act of casting off moral restraint and accountability. *Parah* actually roots back into the idea of letting one's hair grow wild. Picture a head of hair in tangled disarray. This is how Solomon pictured a community without prophetic revelation; he saw its people running wild, morally out of control and in spiritual disarray (like the Israelites in Exodus 32.25 where again *parah* is used).

Thankfully, the second half of Proverbs 29.18 provides the solution to this spiritual disarray: "but he that keepeth the *law* [Heb. *torah*], happy is he." The translations of this clause are essentially correct, but they tend to miss the point that the third-person pronoun (usually translated *he*) refers back to "the people," or more correctly, "a people," in the first line. Here's how I would translate this proverb:

Where there is no prophetic vision, a people casts off restraint,  
but a people keeping the Law  
—happy is that people!

We see that Solomon, with his wonderful observational powers, had crystallized into words the important synergy between prophetic ministry and the biblical law. He recognized that simple possession of the Scriptures (*Torah*) will never keep the people of God in spiritual order for long. A prophetic voice (*chazon*) is also required to regularly call a people back to Scripture, and urge them forward in the orderly pursuit of biblical holiness. When this synergy occurs, a people (whether a nation or a smaller community) experiences true happiness. In short, prophetic ministry is like a hairbrush that takes the snarls out of a morally confused community and helps restore it to an orderly obedience to Scripture.

Let me pause here to define what I mean by *prophecy*. The Bible provides abundant information about prophecy, but the present article hasn't the room for a thorough word study. Permit me, therefore, to share my own working definition, which I believe is supported by the biblical data: Prophecy is the gift of *disclosing the thoughts of God, as prompted spontaneously by the Holy Spirit*. Within the scope of this definition of prophecy, there have always existed two orders of prophetic revelation. Revelation of the *first order* is that kind which:

- (1) is recorded as Scripture,
- (2) has wide application,
- (3) requires the obedience of God's people, and
- (4) is often appropriately introduced with the phrase "thus saith the Lord."

Such revelation was last given through the apostles of Jesus Christ and preserved as the New Testament, and we can rightly call it *authoritative*. The second order of prophecy is that kind which:

- (1) was given both through "canonical prophets"<sup>1</sup> as well as through people whose words were rarely preserved,<sup>2</sup>
- (2) is usually addressed to a narrower audience,<sup>3</sup>
- (3) is often less directive than revelation of the first order,<sup>4</sup> and
- (4) is always subordinate to revelation of the first order, i.e., subject to testing and correction by the Scriptures (1Cor. 14.29,37).

Our present interest lies in this prophecy of the second order, which we can appropriately call *subordinate prophecy*. While this kind of prophecy does not have the authority of a first-order revelation, it does come as a gift of the Spirit, and thus has a supernatural element to it. Subordinate prophecy may involve all kinds of declarations, even of a predictive nature at times, but in this article I focus particularly on that kind of declaration intended to *disclose the thoughts of God* for the sake of restoring spiritual order to a community.

### National Level

2 Kings 17.13 summarizes this historical work of the Prophets who called their communities back to *Torah* and spiritual order:

The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets."

1 Kings 18 records a great example of prophetic ministry thus restoring a people to *Torah*. This chapter describes Israel in spiritual disarray, at a time when some people followed the

LORD and many others followed Baal or other false deities. Based on a revelation from God, the prophet Elijah summoned the religious leaders of the nation to a showdown on Mount Carmel. By a prophetic act, Elijah successfully “brushed” the prophets of Baal out of the community. The Lord used Elijah’s prophetic voice to turn the people’s “hearts back again” into the straight and untangled way.

### Congregational Level

In New Testament times we see the straightening and ordering ministry of *chazon* (prophetic vision) in the church of Ephesus. The Ephesians had received the Gospel under the ministries of Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila, and Paul. The first Christians emerging from the Ephesian synagogue knew the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul disciplined these Christians for a period of two years “in the lecture hall of Tyrannus” (Acts 19.9), and later wrote a powerful epistle to them. Timothy labored in Ephesus, publicly reading and teaching the Scriptures (1Tim. 4.13; 2 Tim. 4.2). If possession of the Scriptures were sufficient by itself to keep a congregation on track, the Ephesian church would have remained in good order. However, by the final decade of the first century, this Scripture-rich church had lost its first love. What was required? A prophetic revelation (*chazon*) to reveal the spiritual deception that had crept up on them. The Holy Spirit, speaking through the prophet John, exhorted the Ephesians to return to the straight path of genuine love for Christ and one another (Rev. 2.1-7).

### Individual Level

Of course such prophetic ministry to a corporate body, and the outworking of Solomon’s principle, must ultimately make its impact on the personal level. For the prophetic “hairbrush” to brush the snarls out of a congregation, it must bring spiritually off-track *individuals* back into line by repentance. Paul envisioned this work as one of the functions of the New Testament gift of prophecy. In 1 Corinthians 14.22-25, Paul explained how a prophetic revelation in a church service could arrest an unbelieving or spiritually ignorant person, causing him to “be convinced by all that he is a sinner.” As a result of such a prophecy, Paul continued, “the secrets of his heart will be laid bare, so he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, ‘God is really among you!’” Apparently, in a congregation made up of individuals at diverse levels of spiritual health and maturity, God uses *chazon*, prophetic revelation, as a means to keep the people from “casting off restraint.”

No wonder people in biblical times considered prophecy a great blessing, and no wonder they saw the *lack* of it as a curse! As Wayne Grudem writes,

The existence of prophecy among the people of Israel was a great blessing, for it indicated that God cared about them enough, even in their sins, to speak personally to them. While God was giving prophecies, he still had a relationship with them. On the other hand, the cessation of prophecy was a sign that God had withdrawn his favour from people who had strayed far from him (1 Sam. 3:1; 28:6; Lam. 2:9; Is. 29:10; Hos. 9:7; Mic. 3:7). The extensive outpouring of the gift of prophecy at the inception of the new covenant was thus an indication of God’s abundant favour towards the new covenant church (Acts 2:16-18), and a functioning gift of prophecy is a sign of God’s blessing on a church (1 Cor. 14:22).<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, the gift of prophecy is *the church’s hairbrush*, given to help brush a congregation into a unified path of obedience to the Scriptures. In our day when the moral behavior of church people is often indistinguishable from that of the society at large, it behooves us to recognize the prophetic gift as a blessing and give the church’s hairbrush its proper place in our public ministries.

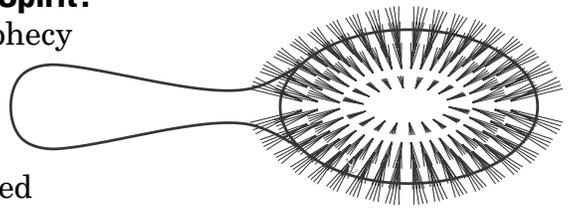
### Why Do We Need Prophecy When We Each Have The Spirit?

Some will object that we don't need the gift of prophecy today, since we all have the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit convicts us directly without the need of some "prophet." Indeed, we have all experienced the Spirit's direct conviction, but by this logic, we don't need teachers or counselors either, since the Spirit is able to teach and counsel us without the aid of others (1John 2.27). Such reasoning reveals an individualistic and particularly Western approach to Christianity. The biblical portrait of Christianity in the early (and eastern) church is a much more corporate picture. Paul emphasized that the temple of the Holy Spirit is the *corporate* church body. "For *we* are the temple of the living God, as God has said: 'I will live with *them* and walk among *them*, and I will be *their* God, and *they* will be my people'" (2 Cor. 6.16, emphasis added). The Spirit delights to work in the corporate body of the assembled church. God delights to "walk among" the gathered congregation. The Spirit of God is perfectly capable of ministering to us directly (and does), but He often chooses to minister to us through the spiritual gifts of other believers.

With regard to the gift of prophecy, God knows when it is more effective—for whatever reason—to speak to us from without rather than from within. Solomon observed that even a man after God's own heart, like his own father King David, needed the external voice of the prophet bringing a corrective *chazon*. Inspired often by the Holy Spirit, King David knew God and God's *Torah*. Nevertheless, there were times in David's life when he resisted the inner work of the Spirit and rationalized even the grossest of sins. At such a juncture, the Spirit of God would work through a prophet like Nathan to break through David's blindness and rationalization with a prophetic message (2 Sam. 12.1-25). If a man like David occasionally needed a prophetic revelation to keep him from casting off spiritual accountability, how much more must we need it?

### Haven't Some Gifts Like Prophecy Passed Away?

Unfortunately, opponents raise additional objections to exercising prophecy in the church today. They usually undergird their objections with the doctrine that *some* spiritual gifts have passed away. Those who hold to this cessationism cannot teach that *all* spiritual gifts have passed away, for to do so would call into question their own gift of teaching, since gifts like teaching, serving, and giving are listed *with* prophesying in passages like Romans 12.4-7. But how can theologians chop up the New Testament lists of spiritual gifts and say that some have passed away and others haven't? This debate certainly has its complexities, but in the end, unpopular spiritual gifts can only be dismissed by building a theological construct to support a preconceived idea. Let us take note: there is no scripture that teaches that any spiritual gifts will pass away before the perfecting of the body of Christ at His coming (1 Cor. 13.8-11; Eph. 4.11-13). While many have taught that some spiritual gifts passed away at the completion of the New Testament canon, the New Testament itself teaches no such thing. It does teach that spiritual gifts will pass away, but not "until we *all* reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the *whole* measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4.13, emphasis added). All the spiritual gifts were given for the building up and maturing of the church and will operate until that work is done. The prophecy of Joel, quoted by Peter in Acts 2, and the Book of Revelation confirm that charismatic phenomena including prophecy will occur up until "the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord" (Acts 2.20).



## What About The Abuses!

While we ask how theologians can teach the cessation of some gifts, we should answer the more important question of *why* they have felt compelled to teach this. The answer is that throughout church history, even when men of stature like Augustine or Luther taught the cessation of spiritual gifts, it was *not* because of something they found in Scripture. Instead, cessationism has always been born from *subjective experience*. Early in their careers, both Augustine and Luther taught the cessation of gifts like healing, because they had not personally experienced it. Happily, both men changed their views later in life, based on their subsequent experiences of the miraculous. When it comes to the gift of prophecy in contemporary Christianity, it is not so much lack of experience as the overabundance of *bad experiences* that has negatively biased the church. False prophecy has hurt so many people that entire denominations have been tempted to bar this particular gift from their corporate life. However, false teaching has hurt countless people too, and the church is not about to outlaw teaching! As Gordon Fee and other godly counselors urge us, “the antidote for abuse is proper use.”<sup>6</sup> We cannot let counterfeit prophecies intimidate us and discourage us from practicing the real thing, any more than we can let the phenomenon of counterfeit money keep us from using real cash. We cannot afford the consequences of surrendering these assets.

## Consequences Of Neglecting the Gift of Prophecy

### Lack of Holiness

If we quench the Spirit by avoiding prophecy in our church life (1Thess. 5.19-22), we risk various consequences. First of all, the prophecy-poor church may fall short in purity and holiness. Many sins go unexposed in the church without prophecy, even as Solomon’s proverb implies. Indeed, this connection between prophecy and purity reveals a deeper reason why churches, both non-charismatic *and* charismatic, have eschewed *genuine* prophecy in their midst. Oracular pronouncements of peace, prosperity, prestige, fertility and romance are fine, but when prophecy begins to expose our personal sins, we do exactly what the woman at the well did. When Jesus surfaced the problem of her husband-hopping, the Samaritan woman said, “Sir, I can see that you are a prophet” (John 4.19). She was not yet ready to embrace Christ’s prophetic agenda, though, and quickly redirected the conversation onto a doctrinal issue that had nothing to do with her personal life. In like manner, when the Spirit of prophecy uses someone to address our secret sins, we often divert the discussion onto a doctrinal issue, perhaps onto the question of whether prophecy is valid for today. However, our problem in *these* situations is *not* with the continuance or discontinuance of prophecy, any more than the Samaritan woman’s problem was with the proper locale of worship. Instead, as independent-minded Americans (or Samaritans), we simply resent anyone invading our privacy and pressing us to change! When the prophetic hairbrush yanks at the snarls of our souls, it irritates us so much that we want to hurl the brush away. Nevertheless, we need prophecy to guide people into deeper holiness, and when it does its purifying work, lasting benefit follows.

The ministry of Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, illustrates how the prophetic hairbrush might do this work in a church similar to those of today. In chapter 51 of Spurgeon’s *Autobiography*, the great man wrote:

While preaching in the hall, on one occasion, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd, and said, “There is a man sitting there, who is a shoemaker; he keeps his shop open

on Sundays, it was open last Sabbath morning, he took ninepence, and there was fourpence profit out of it; his soul is sold to Satan for fourpence!” A city missionary, when going his rounds, met with this man, and seeing that he was reading one of my sermons, he asked the question, “Do you know Mr. Spurgeon?” “Yes,” replied the man, “I have every reason to know him, I have been to hear him; and, under his preaching, by God’s grace I have become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Shall I tell you how it happened? I went to the Music Hall, and took my seat in the middle of the place; Mr. Spurgeon looked at me as if he knew me, and in his sermon he pointed to me, and told the congregation that I was a shoemaker, and that I kept my shop open on Sundays; and I did, sir. I should not have minded that; but he also said that I took ninepence the Sunday before, and that there was fourpence profit out of it. I did take ninepence that day, and fourpence was just the profit; but how he should know that, I could not tell. Then it struck me that it was God who had spoken to my soul through him, so I shut up my shop the next Sunday. At first, I was afraid to go again to hear him, lest he should tell the people more about me; but afterwards I went, and the Lord met with me, and saved my soul.”

I could tell as many as a dozen similar cases in which I pointed at somebody in the hall without having the slightest knowledge of the person, or any idea that what I said was right, except that I believed I was moved by the Spirit to say it; and so striking has been my description, that the persons have gone away, and said to their friends, “Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; beyond a doubt, he must have been sent of God to my soul, or else he could not have described me so exactly.” And not only so, but I have known many instances in which the thoughts of men have been revealed from the pulpit. I have sometimes seen persons nudge their neighbors with their elbow, because they had got a smart hit, and they have been heard to say, when they were going out, “The preacher told us just what we said to one another when we went in at the door.”

### **Lack of Healings**

Closely related to a lack of holiness in the church is the lack of healings. In James 5.13-18, the Scripture teaches that *some* sickness is related to sin in the life of the ill person or his community. “Therefore confess your sins to each other,” James writes, “and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” A prophetic voice in the congregation can help identify specific sins and thus serve as an aid to confession and repentance. Without prophetic insight, church elders sometimes never get to the heart of the issue between God and the ailing subject.

Furthermore, the lack of prophetic insight often hinders church elders from discerning a basis for the “prayer of faith,”<sup>8</sup> whether or not there is sin involved with the illness. The first dramatic healing that Kaaren and I experienced early in our marriage was the restoration of one of her molars. We had sought the Lord about how to take care of a cracked cusp since we had no money for a dental crown. As I prepared for church one Sunday, the Spirit spoke to me and said, “This is the day, take your oil to church.” That day, as the church elders anointed Kaaren with oil and prayed, God instantly healed her and brought physical relief to her tooth. I have often prayed for sick people since then *without* any leading from the Lord, and the results have been generally disappointing.

### **Loss of Encouragement**

Lack of holiness and infrequent repentance and healing certainly bring malaise to a congregation. A prophetic ministry combats these lacks and provides encouragement in other ways. “You can all prophesy one by one,” writes Paul, “so that all may learn and all be *encouraged*” (1 Cor. 14:30-31). During the last eighteen months, a pastor I know has suffered some deep

losses in the church he shepherds, but he has confessed to receiving great encouragement and strengthening from the Lord through prophecies that predicted *specific* trials before they occurred!<sup>9</sup> An interesting aspect of the Spirit's prophetic ministry to this pastor is that it has come primarily through women.

### **Lost Voice For Women In the Church**

Many churches have lost out on a great deal of encouragement and correction from the Lord because they have made no place for the prophetic voice of women. The first-century church had women who prophesied (Acts 21.9; 1 Cor. 11.5),<sup>10</sup> but we have often marginalized spirit-led women in the modern church. I am convinced that God will hold us accountable for this, in fact that He already has, for we have suffered from a lack of strategic direction that God would have given to us had we been willing to receive guidance and correction from *women* prompted by the Spirit.



### **Conclusion**

It behooves every congregation, then, to reconsider the place of prophecy in their church life. Some of our congregations need to reexamine their cessationist position *or practice*, and ask again whether Scripture truly warrants their stance. If, on the contrary, the New Testament urges us to pursue this gift (1Cor. 14.1, 39; 1Thes 5.20), then we must not disobey for fear of abuses, but begin to identify and train the prophetically gifted, providing opportunities for them to contribute in public ministries. Other congregations, who already encourage the gift of prophecy in their midst, need to sharpen their discipline of testing the spirits (1Thes. 5.21; 1John 4.1), and maintain vigilance in providing *accountability* for their prophets (1Cor. 14.29). Dear friends, we have long prayed for revival. Is it possible that one reason revival delays is that we have mishandled the church's hairbrush?

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- <sup>1</sup> The prophetic words of Samuel "came to all Israel" (1Sam. 3.19; 4.1), yet none of those words were recorded as Scripture, from the time of the vision against Eli's house (1Sam. 3) until the gathering at Mizpah (1Sam 7).
  - <sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 2.3-5 records an instance of revelation given to the anonymous prophets of both Bethel and Jericho. These men did not write Scripture, but God had revealed to them that it was the day of Elijah's departure.
  - <sup>3</sup> E.g., the revelations Paul shared with the ship's crew in Acts 27.
  - <sup>4</sup> E.g., the prophetic warnings to Paul of trouble in Jerusalem (Acts 21.3-15). These were not the directive, "thus-saith-the-Lord," kind of prophecy. Paul felt free to go forward in spite of the revelations.
  - <sup>5</sup> *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press) 2000.
  - <sup>6</sup> Gordon Fee quoted in *Your Sons & Daughters Shall Prophesy*, by Ernest B. Gentile, p. 240.
  - <sup>7</sup> I do not intend this excerpt as a comment on the issue of Sabbath-keeping but only as a testimony of how prophetic utterance brought a man to repentance who had neglected his spiritual life for the pursuit of material gain.
  - <sup>8</sup> The "prayer of faith" for healing as taught in James 5 can only be prayed when God has somehow indicated His will to heal the specific person in view—just as Elijah could not pray for rain until God revealed His will to send rain (cf. 1John 5.14,15).
  - <sup>9</sup> Cf. the prophecy to the church of Smyrna in Revelation 2.10.
  - <sup>10</sup> This presents a question for those who have redefined prophecy as "inspired preaching." If prophecy and preaching are essentially synonymous, should we not allow women to preach since they prophesied in the early church?



# Wisdom From Warfare

By Roderick A. Graciano and Don Bell

Don Bell served as an officer in the marines in the Viet Nam war. He found Christ in 1979, and now serves the Lord and runs a successful accounting business. The following are highlights from conversations I've had with Don about the parallels between military and spiritual warfare:

**Rod:** Don, Christ tells us to “watch and pray”<sup>1</sup> so that we will not enter into temptation. What can military warfare teach us about defending ourselves in the spiritual realm?

**Don:** When troops win an objective, taking a hill for example, the temptation is to celebrate, rest, sit with wounded, become disorganized. A wise enemy, however, knows that because of this “winners’ temptation” it is the time of the victor’s greatest vulnerability. If the enemy is able, he will organize an immediate counterattack and try to catch the temporary victors in their state of disorganization. The wise victor, therefore, will create a “Hasty Defense” rather than assume his victory is permanent. A “Hasty Defense” involves extending the perimeter of the captured area, digging fox holes and bunkers, in short: taking every defensive measure that is immediately possible.

**Rod:** God’s people were so often defeated right after major victories, like in the backsliding during the Exodus or at the battle of Ai. The temptation to lower our guard after victory certainly comes in spiritual warfare too. Some of my greatest temptations have come after wonderful breakthroughs in prayer or after completing a successful ministry. So, a critical time to “watch and pray” is after such victories.

**Don:** Right, and we need to keep strengthening ourselves in between battles by receiving ministry from fellow-soldiers. We need to go beyond the “Hasty Defense” to what we called a “Prepared Defense.” Around an artillery installation, for example, a “Prepared Defense” involves laying mines, and stringing row after row of concertina wire to slow the enemy’s advance. It also involves placing forward observers in front of the position to provide early warning of the enemy’s approach.

**Rod:** Interesting! The forward observers make me think of those godly individuals who can warn the church early-on of creeping compromise. The concertina wire, and other defenses meant to slow the enemy, provide an analogy of pastors and teachers and of sound doctrine that enables God’s people to “no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.”<sup>2</sup>

Don, what about commitment? Commitment is always such a struggle for us.

**Don:** Well, in battle there’s the concept of a “Line of Departure,” or “L.D.” The “Line of Departure” in a military mission is a foreknown, geographical point-of-no-return. Once troops cross that line, they cannot scrub the mission without jeopardizing other units that are coordinating

with them. Such a lack of follow-through would cause unacceptable casualties.

**Rod:** Okay, we have those “Lines of Departure” or “Lines of Commitment” in our spiritual lives too. Public commitment to Christ in baptism is a “Line of Departure,” like crossing the Red Sea was for the Israelites.<sup>3</sup> It’s better to never profess Christ than, once having joined the Christian community, to reject Him, for that “subject[s] him to public disgrace.”<sup>4</sup>

Marriage is the next most important “L. D.” most of us will cross. Breaking up is always hard, even if you’ve only been dating. Breaking up an engagement is more heartbreaking, but ending the relationship *after marriage* brings grave consequences to many, and obscures the testimony of Christ’s love for the church.<sup>5</sup>

Another example is the commitments we make to serve in our local church. Faithfulness to complete our term as a Sunday School teacher or nursery worker blesses our church and prepares us for further ministry. On the other hand, if we drop the ball in what we said we’d do, we become burdensome to the body. Satan love’s to turn us back after we’ve crossed our spiritual “Lines of Departure,” but the wise Christian will make commitments only after carefully pursuing godly counsel from the scriptures and fellow believers.

Is there anything in military warfare that illustrates prayer?

**Don:** There’s the principle of “Laying Down a Base of Fire.” In an offensive skirmish, a platoon may send out one its three squads to flank an enemy, while the other two squads remain dug-in but engage the enemy in a steady stream of fire. This “Base of Fire” diverts the enemy’s attention, making it possible for the flanking squad to get near enough to deal a decisive blow. Without the squads remaining behind to lay down the base of fire, the flanking squad could never get close enough to strike the enemy.

**Rod:** Sounds like all the old westerns we’ve seen. “I’ll cover you, Matt, while you run around the stable, and come at ’em from behind!”

**Don:** Right. To me, “Laying Down a Base of Fire,” describes the relationship of prayer warriors to missionaries and evangelists. Though Paul was in chains when he wrote to the Colossians, he was still hoping to make a decisive strike in the spiritual realm, so he said, “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ...that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.”<sup>6</sup> He wrote similarly to the Thessalonians, “Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.”<sup>7</sup> The implication of scripture is that the missionary or evangelist will never make a successful penetration with the gospel if the way has not been opened by prayer warriors “Laying Down a Base of Fire,” and overwhelming the enemy in the spiritual realm.

**Rod:** You know, Don, we Christians all too often fight one another instead of sending that barrage against the enemy. It’s unbelievable sometimes how we do the enemy’s work for him.

**Don:** One of the saddest phenomena of war is that of “Casualties From Friendly Fire.” They can occur when troops radio incorrect coordinates in attempting to gain artillery support, or they can result from the confusion inherent in a stiff, night-time fire fight. Communication breakdown of one form or another with other believers causes many of the casualties among Christians as well. We can ill afford “Casualties From Friendly Fire” in the Christian community, so it behooves us to know the facts and speak the truth in love.

**Rod:** By the way, why do soldiers constantly march around their boot camps in the movies. We don't march in battle anymore like we did in our Revolutionary War, right?

**Don:** I used to wonder about that too. The marching routine is called "Close Order Drill" and it trains men to respond instinctively to orders and to work together as a group. In the utter chaos of battle, soldiers have no time for reflection or arguments with their leaders: they must respond to situations instinctively, based on their training, and obey commands without questioning. Those trained instincts make the difference between life and death, and by the way, "Close Order Drill" continues on beyond boot camp to become part of garrison life. That training never stops because in battle, it's important that even retreats be carried out in an orderly fashion. In a fierce fire fight in which the enemy is getting the upper hand, the instinct is to panic. Panic always leads to overwhelming casualties and does not allow an opportunity to consolidate for a counter-attack. The more severe the battle, the more critical orderliness and discipline become.

**Rod:** Wow! As Christians we tend to lose our sense of urgency with regard to the spiritual disciplines until the spiritual battle *is* severe. If my marriage, my finances and my health are in good shape, why pray, why study the Bible? But surprise attacks come in the spiritual realm, just as surely as in military warfare. They can come in the form of a sudden temptation, and then we have to respond instinctively to the Spirit's inner prompting. It's imperative that we have that foundation of spiritual discipline.

You know, Don, talking about warfare reminds me of my father's stories of beach landings in the South Pacific, World War II. Dad described how officers would explain the odds of surviving a given beach landing, and then ask for volunteers. Sometimes the odds would be 1 in 10 of surviving a landing, but Dad said there would always be plenty of volunteers. "How did men find the courage to volunteer when they only had one chance in ten of making it alive," I asked.

"I don't think it was special courage," Dad replied, "it's just that every man knew he would be that one who would make it."

**Don:** Soldiers really don't think they're going to die. I've noticed that we civilians have the same feeling, especially during our teenage years. I speculate that it has to do with the vestige of God's image in each one of us which is the image of the Eternal. The fact is that none of us *will* die, but we will only slough off our bodies. The essential us, our souls and spirits will live on, whether we are believers or not. It seems to me that the real issue is not death, but the judgment that comes after. That is why we keep reaching out with the gospel.

**Rod:** Amen! Any closing thoughts, Don?

**Don:** Just that winning a battle requires the coordination of the whole fighting unit. You can't be off doing your own thing. Lone Rangers don't last long in warfare. We all have to work together, submitting to one another and to our leaders.

**Rod:** What makes an effective leader, Don?

**Don:** Men will follow an officer to the death if they know he's competent and that he cares about them. Our Leader *is* competent: He knows the end from the beginning. And as for knowing he cares, there can be no greater proof of that than the cross. Jesus Christ: let's follow Him, even if it is to the death.

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- <sup>1</sup> Matthew 26.41
  - <sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4.11-14
  - <sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 10.1,2
  - <sup>4</sup> Hebrew 6.4-6
  - <sup>5</sup> Ephesians 5.25
  - <sup>6</sup> Luke 16.10
  - <sup>7</sup> Colossians 4.2-4
  - <sup>8</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3.1