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“You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant...”

Deuteronomy 8:17-18

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Spiritual Warfare

A Cosmic Battle Over Your Soul between God and Satan

Part I, What You Need to Know About Satan and his “Schemes”

By Robert C. Benson, President

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him... Then the dragon was enraged at the woman [The Church, also referred to in the Bible as the body of Jesus Christ] and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring — those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus [true Christians].” Revelation 12:7-9, 17

You are in the middle of a cosmic war over your soul, a real-life melodrama, and the cast of characters are God and His forces of good, Satan (also known as the devil) and his forces of evil, and mankind. Sound weird? I used to think so too. It would be an understatement to say that I used to be “naive” concerning this topic. As a matter of fact, for the first twenty eight years of my Christian life I am convinced that I thought of Satan (the devil) as a character in a story book. **Millions of Christians are very naïve and grossly uninformed that when they become a Christian they change sides in this cosmic war, moving from Satan’s side (the enemy) to God’s side (the body of Christ).**

I would bet money that most of you believe that every thought in your mind comes from your brain. However, in John 10 the Lord Jesus Christ makes it crystal clear that is not the case: **“He (Jesus Christ) calls his own sheep by name...and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger (Satan); in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice...”** The fact is that both Jesus Christ (through the Spirit of God) and Satan (through his forces of darkness) are communicating with you in your mind. Sound weird again? If we can communicate with each other wireless through cell phones, do you really think God and his enemy can’t communicate with us?

The fact is, Satan can plant thoughts in your mind in such a way that you may fail to discern their origin. Therefore, if you want to survive this war and overcome Satan, you are going to need knowledge concerning the enemy, knowledge concerning your Kingdom resources to fight the war, and understanding of how to use them! Why? Because whether you know it or not, all of mankind is engaged in three separate struggles with: 1) The World; 2) The Flesh; and (3) Satan. In the last issue entitled *Real Christianity – Why You Should Consider It*, we explained the struggle with “the flesh” (also known as “the sinful nature”) and God’s provision for rendering it powerless. If you are not familiar with these teachings you can read the article at www.ABAdvisors.com. If you don’t know or believe these things, then Satan is already winning the war with you.

The purpose of this article is to educate you on Satan and his “schemes” to stop your spiritual growth and the advancement of the Kingdom of God on earth. **And for those who desire to build and lead a Kingdom business you had better know the enemy and how to defend yourself against Satan or he will make your life miserable.**

This is the fourth issue of a new and separate ABA newsletter, *The Spirit Led Business*TM, providing insight on building a Kingdom Business – a company whose intentional objective is to help advance the Kingdom of God and is led by a person who in turn is led by the Spirit of God. If you are offended by these articles, you can unsubscribe from this newsletter below. However, if you are adventurous and interested in knowing more about the amazing journey of walking with God, stick around for a few months and decide for yourself what you think.

A. Situational Analysis

As a Member of God’s family, Satan is at War With You

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 6:12

As discussed in the previous newsletter, when you believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, invite Him into your life to live, rescue you from your “sinful nature,” forgive you for sinning (breaking God’s Commandments), and ask Him to be the Lord of your life, you are “born again.” That is, you are literally born into God’s family in the spiritual realm. Prior to becoming a child of God, Satan and his forces of evil were trying to stop you from believing in Christ by making you question the need for Him, stop you from believing in Him, and/or stop you from putting your trust in him. After you become a child of God, Satan and the forces of evil are trying to keep you from obeying Him, keep you from maturing (growing up) spiritually, and/or keep you from working at building the Kingdom of God on earth (referred to in Christianity as The Great Commission, Matthew 28:16-20.)

Pastor Shafer Parker, Jr. at Hawkwood Baptist Fellowship reminds Christians *“that we believe in a personal God. That is, we believe God can be known in the same way we know one another. He hears us when we pray and he cares about what we have to say. He thinks of us individually and has plans for each one of us.”* See Psalm 139:13-16 and Isaiah 41:9-13.

Then Pastor Parker discusses one of the most profound insights into reality I have ever encountered: *“The Bible also teaches that a personality lies behind the evil in this world. The devil is as real as God, although he is not the same as God...he, like us and like all the angels, is a created being, dependent on God for his continued existence. But for all that, never forget he is also a personal being. He communicates with us, after a fashion...he can develop special strategies for individuals. There are people in which he takes special interest. And he is constantly seeking out those whom he can devour, metaphorically speaking.”* See John 10, Ephesians 6:10-16, and 1 Peter 5:8-11 to support Parker’s comments. My observation after being a Christian for over 50 years is that most Christians, like I used to, treat Satan as a character in a story book - a character in a fairy tale, not a real being that is and has been personally interacting in their life. As I look back over my life, I now see how Satan has used a series of strategies to keep me from becoming a child of God, derail my spiritual growth after I became one, and undermine my desire to help build the Kingdom of God throughout my entire life. Try looking back over your own life as I discuss Satan’s schemes.

Satan hates God and is at war with him. The children of God (referred to in the Bible as *“the body of Christ”*) is God’s presence on earth. Therefore, it stands to reason that if you are a member of God’s family, Satan is at war with you! Why? Because God’s children are *“the Body of Christ”* - God on earth! The Lord Jesus Christ makes this sobering reality clear, *“The thief (the devil) comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full...I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...”* (From John 10). But, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled,”* the Bible teaches that God’s children can ***“be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power”*** by putting *“on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”* So, why do we need to *“be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power?”*

B. “Be Strong in the Lord and in His Mighty Power” You Must Use God’s Strength to Stand Against Satan!

“...be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.” Ephesians 6:10

Pastor Parker says there are three key reasons you need to *“take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”*

1. ***“Because we need God’s strength to achieve His objectives.”*** His objectives are our spiritual growth, the outcome of which is summarized in Galatians 5:22-26, His Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, and *“to achieve God’s objectives for our individual lives”* (Psalm 139:13-16).
2. ***“We need His strength to defend ourselves against Satan,”*** including his external attacks {because as the *“ruler of this world (John 14:30),”* Satan would have us believe our battle is against people (Ephesians. 6:12)} and his internal attacks summarized in Luke 4:1-13 below.
3. ***“We need to know how to wield His strength during times of especially intense attacks”***, as instructed in 1 Peter 5:8-11 *“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering.”*

Why do we need strength to defend ourselves against Satan? Because apart from the power of God’s weapons Satan is much too powerful for us to defeat. As the *“ruler of this world (John 14:30)”* and *“the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4),”* Satan is extremely capable of tricking, pressuring and manipulating us into distrusting God, becoming a slave to *“the sinful nature”*

and conforming us to the plan he has for our eternal separation from God.

Following are ten critical reasons we need God's strength:

1. To accomplish His objectives, including the Great Commission.
2. To attain the fruit of the Spirit character qualities outlined in Galatians 5: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
3. To possess the courage to resist Satan's external attacks such as peer pressure, need for approval, need for acceptance, threats on our life, need for employment, need for family, being politically correct, world authorities and "intellectuals" constantly calling evil, good and good, evil etc. The devil's list of schemes to derail our spiritual growth and the advancement of the Kingdom on earth seems almost endless.
4. To defend against Satan's internal attacks against the mind, John 10:5
5. To draw on Christ's resurrection power, Ephesians 1:19-20.
6. To do "good works," Ephesians 2:10
7. For God to glorify Himself through us, Ephesians 3:10.
8. To stand in grace, Ephesians 3:12.
9. To stand during times of intense attacks, Ephesians 3:13. and
10. Because "*all things are possible with God*" (Mark 10:27).

Although the Apostle Paul makes it very clear that our battle is not against humans, that is who we always blame and are always frustrated and angry with. Of course the devil likes it when we war against each other – nations, families, churches, husbands/wives, parents/children, male/females, races, friends etc. Why? Because Satan wants to "destroy" any form of relationship that is a threat to his survival.

Satan and his forces of evil are very powerful and can't be defeated by methods used to war against humans. The war against the forces of evil requires spiritual weapons containing the power of God to defeat Satan and his forces of evil. But "*Do not let your hearts be troubled*" The Armor of God is more powerful! "*The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*" (2 Corinthians 10:4).

So, what are the Devil's schemes to keep us from "standing strong" and to war against each other?

C. Schemes of the Devil

Satan Has Strategies to Keep You from Growing and Building the Kingdom

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." Ephesians 6:11 ***"The thief (the devil) comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I (Jesus Christ) have come that they (Christ's followers) may have life, and have it to the full."*** John 10:10

A scheme is a plot, a strategy, to outwit you! And since the Bible says schemes, the devil has several. **Following are Satan's core strategies:**

1. **He lies to you by questioning God's truth.** (Genesis 3:1)
2. **He lies (sometimes mixing lies with truth) to persuade you to disobey God.** (Genesis 3:4-7)
3. **He exploits your weaknesses** by tempting you with "*the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life*" (1 John 2:16 NRSV).

Consider how the devil tempted Christ:

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’ Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man does not live on bread alone.”’ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, ‘I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.’ Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.”’ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down from here. For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’ Jesus answered, ‘It says: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:1-13).

Note that the devil (Satan) even used Scripture to try to trick Christ. And note that Christ **ALWAYS** used the Word of God (a Spiritual Weapon) to defend himself against the devil’s temptations.

All spiritual battles take place in your mind. *“He (Jesus Christ) calls his own sheep by name...and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger (Satan); in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice...” (John 10:3-5).* The challenge for you is to discern which voice to listen to and to believe (trust) the word of God, instead of Satan’s lies and temptations (to manipulate your feelings).

Following are some of Satan’s key schemes to defeat you:

1. **He lies concerning just about everything, attempting to make his lies appear as reality.** *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).* *“And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).*
2. **He wants you to disobey God** (because ALL of God’s blessings and rewards are tied to obedience, see Genesis 2:15-17, Deuteronomy 28 and 30, Psalm 92, and John 14, including the following *“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.”* There are many other promises in Scripture dependent on being obedient.
3. **He uses Scripture to try to manipulate you.** See Luke 4:1-13 above.
4. **He lies about God**, leading people to believe there are competing gods. However, there is only one God, *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3).* *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).*
5. **He lies about the path to God**, leading people to believe there are multiple ways to be united in fellowship with God. There is only one path to God as seen in 1 Timothy 2:5 above and Jesus speaking in John 14:6 *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

6. **He mixes truth and lies to confuse and tempt** as he did in the beginning with Eve in Genesis 3:4 *“You will not surely die...For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”* As it turns out Adam and Eve’s eyes were opened to know good and evil (however, God knew this was bad for them). But, Adam and Eve did die – both physically and spiritually, creating a monumental problem for all of mankind. See our last issue of *The Spirit Led Business*.
7. **Another clue to his schemes is his name, Satan, which means adversary or diabolos, translated devil, which means accuser.** He uses accusations, creating false guilt to keep us down. Of course if he fails at that, he will lie about us to keep us down:
 - a. With non-Christians, Satan will battle to keep their soul by making them feel like they are not “good enough” yet to come to God, or use lies about God so people will distrust Him and manipulate people to put off inviting Christ into their life, putting all people on a mission impossible (a person can only become “good enough” through the power of God’s Spirit in them, which only happens when they put their faith in Christ and invite Him into his/her life).
 - b. With Christians, Satan will make us feel inadequate or a failure in our Christian walk, discouraging us from growing spiritually and/or diminishing or eliminating our Kingdom effectiveness:
 - i. Satan does his best to find something he can make us feel guilty about because he knows a Christian who feels guilty is discouraged and ineffective.
 - ii. Satan uses accusations to destroy relationships, trust, and unity in The Church, the Body of Christ.
 - iii. Satan will jump at any opportunity from our slip-ups to overwhelm us with guilt and focus on them instead of Christ’s redeeming work of grace at the cross.
8. **Unless we keep our “eyes on Jesus” everyday, Satan will lead us down the garden path** for as long as it takes for us to:
 - a. Believe we can sin without consequences because of God’s Grace; and/or
 - b. Become a slave to the “sinful nature” again.
9. **Satan uses fear to manipulate us.** *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV). *“But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved”* (Hebrews 10:39). *“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love”* (1 John 4:16-18).
10. **If all else fails, he will try to overwhelm you,** *“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail”* (Luke 22:31-32). Satan will use “flaming arrows” with temptations to attack your “infirmities” (your weaknesses in the flesh), such as addictions of all kinds including alcohol, drugs, food, tobacco, sex, homosexuality, money, people, things, activity, power, etc.
11. **Satan will use rationalization, especially in business, to move you out from under the protection of God** by violating the principles of Psalm 15, **“LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the LORD, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.”**

Pastor Shafer Parker discusses what it means to be found standing when the battles are over:

1. **“All battles are spiritual battles.** Moses, Joshua, David, Jesus, all their battles were won first in the realm of the Spirit...On the other hand, some of history’s losers include Esau, Lot’s wife and daughters, Joseph’s brothers, King Saul, or David’s son Absalom..., the rich man who wanted to build bigger barns.”
2. **“All battles are won or lost on the battlefield of the soul.** ...From heaven’s point of view, instant defeat accompanies any compromise against righteousness, no matter how small.”
3. **“In every battle the real prize is the maintenance of your soul.** *‘What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?’* (Matthew 16:26).”
4. **“There is no victory apart from a willingness to be emptied.** ...How about Job? He was a winner in the cosmic struggle whose battle was won the moment he could say, *‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised’* (Job 1:21).”
5. **“All victorious battles are fought by a combination of prayer, faith, scripture and action.** ...Strategy has little to do with it, unless you are strategizing how best to glorify God.” *“For the battle is the Lord’s, and he will deliver you into our hand.”* (1 Samuel 17:47b NET).
6. **“All outcomes are decided by heaven’s standards, not earths.”** *“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil”* (Ecclesiastes 12:14).
7. **“No winner is finally declared until God releases His ruling on Judgment Day.”** *“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. ...And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ...If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire”* (Revelation 20:11-15).

I know this is “heavy stuff,” but *“Do not let your hearts be troubled”* John 14:1). For *“the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world”* (1 John 4:4).

D. Spiritual Weapons

You Have Spiritual Weapons With Divine Power to Defeat Satan

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

In summary fashion, Pastor Shafer Parker, Jr. at Hawkwood Baptist Fellowship says, *“When you believed in Jesus, you received eternal life. Yours sins were forgiven. God became your father in the fullest sense of the term. Heaven became your home and your ultimate destination. The Holy Spirit of God took up residence in you heart and become your ever-present companion (and counselor). The people of God become your forever family, along with God the Father and Christ the Son.”*

Parker continues with a warning, *“But along with those benefits, you also got noticed by the enemy. You see, if you belong to Jesus, the devil hates you and singles you out for his particular attention. ...when a man or woman is truly born again, Satan knows he can never have that soul. But he also knows that the best way to preserve the souls he still has is to make certain that as many Christians as possible remain as ineffective as possible.”*

A friend in business once said, *“I would like to have a Bible study in my business, but I don’t know if I can deal with the spiritual warfare.”* Yes, the more serious we are about helping Christ build his Church, the more Satan will try to battle against us. **But always remember** that *“...the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”* (1 John 4:4-5), and that *“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:4).

To battle Satan, the Apostle Paul instructs Christians to *“put on the full armor of God, so... you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand”* (on its divine power).

If you don’t have a Bible, you can go online to www.bible.org and click on Net Bible. Then click on Online NETBible and go to the upper left corner where it says Display Bible. Scroll to John and click on Go. And if you want someone to talk to about the things in this letter, call us at ABA!

In the next issue of *The Spirit Led Business™*, Part II on Spiritual Warfare, I will provide insights on how to use the Armor of God to take your stand against the devil (Satan) and his forces of evil.

Note: All Bible verses are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

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