

Parson to Person
2 Corinthians 4 – Part 4
(Spiritual Warfare and the Believer)

Peter wrote that believers should *“[b]e sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world”* (1 Peter 5:8–9).

Many suggest that the Devil is as a toothless lion. However, they are wrong. Satan is a powerful foe. He is the enemy of God, God’s people, and the whole of God’s creation.

The Scriptures give examples of Satan’s power to attack, harm, influence, inflict, torment, oppress, and control. The sufferings of Job serve as an example of Satanic assault (see Job 1–2:8 and 42:10–17).

The enemy works in spiritual darkness and manifests his power and influence in the *“heavenly places”* (dimension of the spirit) through the soul (mind) and body. He is at work through a variety of deceptive and perverse activities. Make no mistake, the Devil is real—and is *“a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”* Therefore, we are told to *“resist him, steadfast in the faith.”*

Jesus said, *“the thief [the Devil] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10). Therefore, we are to recognize our victory in Jesus. For, *“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world”* (1 John 4:4b).

Limited Influence

As we have discovered, the believer is given weapons for warfare as the result of ongoing affliction and assault by the Devil and demons. However, we should note that Satan and his minions

are limited in their sphere of influence. Satan is not omnipotent, omniscient, nor omnipresent. Satan and demons are not permitted to exercise control over God's people—unless given permission (see Job 1:1–2:6, Ephesians 4:27). Satan and demons are never allowed to work unrestrained, and are limited to the darkness.

Demons?

The origin of demons is a subject of debate. Some suggest they are the disembodied spirits of the Nephilim (see Genesis 6:1–4). Others suggest that demons are the fallen angels who rebelled against the Lord early in creation history—obligating themselves to Satan (see Revelation 12:3–4). It is my belief that demons are the latter—fallen angels.

It seems that the angels who remain loyal to the Lord are allowed to manifest in a body and interact with mankind (see Hebrews 13:2). However, in contrast, it seems that God has disallowed the fallen angels to manifest this way. Therefore, they seek to traffic, control, or inhabit people or animals (see Luke 4:33–34 and Matthew 8:28–32).

Christians and Demon “Possession”

Church Age believers are baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, are filled with the Holy Spirit, and are sealed for climactic redemption by the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30). Believers are the possession of Jesus Christ and therefore cannot be “possessed” or owned by Satan or his minions.

Your Body and Spirit Belong to God

“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Your Mind—The Battleground

Believers can be manipulated by and give place to the enemy. This type of control comes through the mind (soul) through emotional and informational manipulation such as inappropriate fear, false doctrine, etc. Satan seeks to control through perversions of truth and outright lies. Therefore, a believer must be “*renewed in the spirit of your mind*” and give no “*place to the Devil*” (see Ephesians 4:11–32). Putting off false teachings, fleshly thought, and carnal behavior is commanded to every believer!

The Devil Works in the Dark

The realm of the Devil and fallen angels is *spiritual* darkness. Paul told the Ephesians that the battle is with “*the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (Ephesians 6:12). However, as children of God, we are not of the darkness and are referred to as the children of light. “*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light*” (Ephesians 5:8). God has “*delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love*” (Colossians 1:13).

The Devil and his demons have been “chained” to the areas of darkness. “*God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment*” (2 Peter 2:4). “*And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day*” (Jude 6).

Sin and Darkness

a. The Works of the Flesh

Believers who entertain evil thoughts, toy around with and/or practice the works of the flesh (Ephesians 5:11), and live with hidden/secret sin(s) are prone to enemy traffic. We are called to walk in the truth, confess our faults, and expose the darkness to light (see Psalm 32:5).

b. Guilt, Fear, Shame

Believers who lack a full understanding of God's forgiving and cleansing power may suffer fear, guilt, and/or shame. If or when this occurs, the believer is vulnerable to enemy traffic. We must grow in grace and truth in order to overcome the lying "voices" and manipulative accusations of the enemy. This is accomplished by the renewing of your mind through the power of the Holy Spirit, daily/regular time in the written word of God, and time spent with other strong believers.

c. Bitterness and Unforgiveness

Bitterness and unforgiveness is a fundamental entry point for the enemy. Therefore, *"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you"* (Ephesians 4:31–32).

d. Isolation

Believers who isolate and insulate themselves from others in the body of Christ create darkness in which Satan loves to traffic. *"A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment"* (Proverbs 18:1). We are called into fellowship with other believers and active engagement in a local church!

If you are not attending a solid, bible-teaching, Christ-exalting, local fellowship of believers, it is important that you look for and engage in a church home in your community.

Tearing Down Strongholds

Generally speaking, a stronghold is a place of protection. As such, the enemy's strongholds are areas of darkness.

Believers must tear down strongholds of darkness. *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:3–5)

The way the believer pulls down the strongholds of the enemy is by exposing the area of darkness to light. This is accomplished through confession of sin, cessation of sinful behavior, and exposure of sin to a faithful brother or sister. We are told to *“confess [our] trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that [we] may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”* (James 5:16).

Submit Yourself to God

We as believers will not overcome the enemy in or by our own strength. We must be delivered by the power of God. *“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7).

Those who intend to overcome the enemy and remain unsubmitted to God are deceiving themselves. If we are to live *“free indeed,”* we must know the truth and submit ourselves to it—to Him. *“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32).

I love you all,
Pastor Paul