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Satan's Allies and Activities



Spiritual Warfare - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg delves into the activities of Satan and his allies, exploring their opposition to God and their war against him. He offers various interpretations of scripture concerning Satan and his demons, and suggests that fallen angels may be among those who fell from God's grace. Gregg also discusses the idea of spiritual warfare, explaining that the opposition to the Kingdom of God comes not only from demonic powers, but also from governments animated by these powers. Throughout the discussion, he emphasizes the importance of seeking the whole truth and avoiding deception.

Transcript

In our last session, we discussed the various options, the theories, about the origin of Satan, and we did not talk about the origin of demons, or in fact, we didn't talk about demons very much at all. And I might take this session to talk a little bit more about the activity of Satan. I don't want us to focus too much on the devil, but it's rather difficult to have a series on spiritual warfare and not focus at least a little bit on the devil, without him becoming the primary focus of our Christian walk.

There are times, nonetheless, where it is necessary for us to focus on subject matter, unpleasant or otherwise, that the Bible actually says some things about. I really believe that the Christian's focus should never be on the devil, and our focus should be on Jesus. It is as we are looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, that we walk the Christian life the way we should.

At the same time, if we were not supposed to know anything about the devil, I suppose the Bible would have told us nothing. And so I assume that the information that is given is there for our learning, like everything else in the scripture, and so we'll take a little more time to look at what the Bible says on this subject. I'll mainly be talking in this session, I think, about the devil's activities.

We talked about the origin of Satan last time, and now I want to talk about the activities that Satan is involved in, because his activities define the opposition that we are at war

against. And I should begin probably by introducing the biblical topic of demons. In a later session, we will actually look carefully at the subject of demon possession, but that's not what I'll be talking about at the moment.

Demon possession is one aspect of demonic activity and, of course, presents certain challenges of a certain aspect of spiritual warfare. But I must say that just as there is some obscurity in the scripture as to the origin of Satan, there is also obscurity with reference to the origin of demons. The standard and traditional view is that the demons today were angels in some far-off yesterday, that they were once angels of God, and, of course, on the traditional view, they sided with Satan, a third of the angels sided with Satan in his rebellion against God, and they fell at the same time he did and became what are now demons.

This is, of course, a possibility. I will have to say, though, that the Bible is not as clear on this as we could wish. I will say that there are angels that are associated with Satan in scripture.

We find this, for example, in Jesus' statement in Matthew chapter 25. At the end of the parable of the sheep and the goats, in Matthew 25, verse 41, Jesus said to those who were designated in this parable as the goats who were not saved, he says, Then he will say also to those on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. So the devil has angels.

Now, this is not the same thing as saying that we're looking here at fallen angels, that is, the devil's angels might be former angels of God or they might never have been angels of God. We don't know. Now, I will establish scripturally that there are angels who were angels of God but are no longer, who fell, who sinned, and these may well be the same beings that are referred to now as the devil's angels.

In fact, it's a fairly natural inference, although it's not certainly declared in scripture, so we could have that as a tentative theory that the angels that sinned are the angels who are now the devil's angels. But we have to remember also that the word angels in the Greek means messengers, merely. And to speak of the devil and his angeloi, his angels or his messengers, might not tell us as much as seems on the surface to tell us about whether there are angels that belong to the devil, because, as I say, the word angels can mean simply messengers, and we know that Satan has many messengers in the world, human messengers as well.

So, when Jesus said that the lake of fire or the everlasting fire is prepared for the devil and his angels, at least the Greek word could suggest the devil and his messengers and could refer to human messengers, but I don't think it is likely, because among those that were sent there, the goats in this parable, would be some who were and some who were not specifically messengers of Satan. They would have all, in every case, neglected to be God's messengers, but not everybody is really a messenger at all. There are some

people whose career is teaching falsehood and spreading lies, and we could certainly call such people messengers of Satan.

But there are also people who are lost equally, but don't teach anything. They're not messengers of anything in particular, and I would say that the goats in this parable would seem to be someone other than the messengers of Satan. The devil and his angels are who the lake of fire was made for, but these goats end up going there as well, because they have lost all opportunity to go to heaven.

And I can't be dogmatic about this, but I think that the angels of Satan that are mentioned here are probably not human, but are probably of the angelic order, even as God's angels are, and they may well be. I'm going to even suggest the probability that they may be the fallen angels, to which I have alluded and the Bible speaks also of. In Revelation 12, verse 4, which we looked at in one of our earlier sessions, we also had reference to the devil's angels, although the devil was called in that place the dragon.

In Revelation 12, verse 7, it says, Now, here it's probable, again, that we have supernatural beings, these angels. I said last time that we talked about this passage, that this warfare between Michael and the dragon, I personally associate with spiritual activity in the heavenlies during the lifetime of Jesus, during his ministry in particular. There are several things in the chapter that I pointed out previously that I think would suggest that identification, that time frame.

And it is not impossible to suggest that the dragon's angels could have been humans, could have been the Pharisees and the chief priests and so forth who fought against the truth that Jesus was teaching. But since the venue of the battle is seen in heaven, it seems to me more probable that these angels of the dragon are not human, but they are superhuman, of an angelic order. Additionally, we have two places in scripture, and they are very parallel to each other, 2 Peter and Jude.

2 Peter chapter 2 is universally recognized as being parallel in material and in thought and in many cases in expression to the book of Jude, which is a single chapter long. Both of these places speak of angels who were apparently once good angels and are now bad angels. In 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 4 it says, For if 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.

And it is a long sentence, it gives some more and, and, and, and then finally verse 9 says, Then the Lord knows how to deliver. Now it says in verse 4, God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell. The word hell there in the Greek New Testament is the word Tartarus, and it so happens that this is the only place in the New Testament where the word Tartarus appears.

Usually if you find the word hell in the English Bible, it is translating either the word

Hades or Gehenna, most commonly in the New Testament, and Sheol in the Old Testament. But here the only time in the Bible we have the word Tartarus, and therefore since it appears only here, we don't know for sure if it is to be identified with any of the other places that have different Greek names than Tartarus. Tartarus could well be a reference to the abyss.

We don't know for sure that it is, but we know that the demons begged Jesus not to send them to what they called the Abyssos in the Greek, or the Abyss, as we anglicize that word. Apparently a place of incarceration for demons. In the book of Revelation, in chapter 9, we see an angel come down from heaven with a key to the Abyss, the Abyssos.

And when he opens the Abyss, out come the creatures that are described in Revelation as locusts with scorpion tails and so forth. There are various opinions as to what these are, or represent. I think many persons, I believe myself, that they represent demonic powers.

And when the Abyss is opened, out come this horde of demonic powers, demonic beings. And therefore it would appear that the Abyss, which is mentioned both in the Gospels and in Revelation, seems to be the incarceration place of fallen angels, or of demons if they are the fallen angels. Here we have reference to fallen angels who sinned and are now consigned to someplace called Tartarus.

We don't know for sure, but this might be the same as the Abyss in Revelation. And then we have Jude, which is of course the last book in the Bible except for Revelation. And verse 6, it says, Now, this tells us essentially the same thing that 2 Peter 2, verse 4 told us, that certain angels sinned.

Jude tells us they did not keep to their proper domain. They overstretched themselves. They went into an abode that was not theirs.

These are probably, though we can't be sure, the angels that are also referred to as the devil's angels or the dragon's angels. Because they are angels and they are not God's angels. But they were.

They were angels who were good and they sinned and they didn't keep to their proper domain. Now, exactly what their sin may have been is nowhere declared in Scripture. The assumption, of course, traditionally is that these were angels and they participated with Satan or Lucifer in a rebellion in heaven before even the creation of Adam and Eve.

This may be the truth, this may be the case, but we don't know this to be the case. It doesn't say so anywhere in Scripture. It does not say that any of the angels staged a rebellion against God and sought to overthrow Him, which is the traditional view.

It simply says they sinned. Now, if a person wished to, they could argue, well, all sin is a

rebellion against God and all sin is an effort to overthrow God and so forth. Well, in one sense that is true, but not in the sense that sometimes we traditionally think of a war conducted by Lucifer and a third of the angels actually waging war with God directly in order to usurp His position.

Perhaps all sin in principle is like that, but that's not exactly the same scenario that we often picture. All we're told in Judah is that they didn't keep to their proper domain. The Jews, before the time of Christ, believed that these angels sinned in Genesis chapter 6, where we read that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were attractive to look upon and they took wives of them.

And this is seen as not a good thing. But it is not certain at all, Bible scholars are not unanimous on the question of whether the sons of God in Genesis 6 are supposed to be angels or not. They may be people.

And therefore, the sons of God in Genesis 6 might have nothing to do with this particular event of the angels sinning, but it might. I mean, there are Christians, many, who believe that that is what this is referring to. All we can say is that there is no clear designation elsewhere in Scripture of the rebellion of angels, except we are told that there are some who did rebel.

Now, one thing that's a matter of interest is that both of the passages that tell us that some angels have fallen or some angels have sinned, both of them tell us that they are consigned to chains. In Tartarus, or in chains under darkness, awaiting judgment of the great day. Now, if they are chained, then is it proper or possible to identify them with the demons? Now, traditionally, when we read of demons, and we do quite frequently in the New Testament, though not anywhere near as frequently in the Old, in the New Testament, demons are very prominent, and yet, if we ask who are these demons, where do they come from? We are often told, well, they are the fallen angels, they are the ones who fell with Satan.

Well, this is maybe possible, it might even be probable, I don't know, but it is not stated in Scripture. There is no place in Scripture that identifies the demons with the fallen angels. It's simply an association of convenience for theologians to say, well, we know there are some fallen angels, we know there are demons, so why don't we just say they are the same beings, maybe they are.

Well, maybe they are, but we are told that the fallen angels are consigned in chains under darkness in Tartarus, which suggests to our minds that the demons who are active in the world today may not be those same beings who fell, because it's hard for us to imagine how demons who are active in the world could be described as being bound in Tartarus. On the other hand, if their binding, if the binding of demons is figurative, even as Jesus spoke figuratively of having bound the strong man, Jesus indicated he had bound Satan, but Satan was not inactive, Satan had activity that he was still involved in

even after that point in time, yet Jesus said he had bound the strong man, it is clear that if the devil, the strong man, could figuratively be said to be bound, that does mean something, it doesn't maybe mean literally with a real chain and really in a pit, but it does mean something. It would mean at least that Satan has been relegated to an impotence with reference to Christ and the gospel and the gospel mission, that Satan cannot resist it.

That's what Jesus was saying when he said no man can enter into a strong man's house and plunder it, unless he first binds the strong man and then he will plunder his house, and Jesus was saying that he, Jesus, had done just that in Satan's house, had bound him and was plundering his house. Binding in that case means rendering the man incapable of resisting. And if the same idea that Jesus applied to binding Satan, if that's what is meant by Peter and by Jude about the angels that fell are bound in chains, it could be just as figurative as Jesus' words, in which case the demons which are alive and well and at large and loose and active in the world, that they are the same ones who are said to be bound, but they are not bound in an absolute or literal sense, they are bound in the same sense that Satan is bound.

That is to say that ever since Jesus came and commissioned his disciples and gave them authority and so forth, that this has rendered both Satan and the demonic powers incapable of effective resistance to the gospel mission. It's as if they've been tied up, it's as if they've been bound, it's as if they're impotent and powerless. And so there is always that possibility.

But if we take the statements that say that the fallen angels are bound in chains, if we take that some more literally, then we would have reason to question whether the demons who are at large today are the same beings as the angels who are said to be bound in Tartarus. And we may not be able to ever answer that question finally. I will say this, if the demons are not fallen angels, there are not very many theories that make sense as to who they are.

Who are the demons? Where do they come from? Now, I told you in a previous class that the idea that a third of the angels fell, that idea is taken from a single verse in Revelation 12, and it's verse 4, where it says that the dragon, his tail, drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Now, to say that his tail drew a third of the stars of heaven to the earth has been taken by traditional interpreters to mean that a third of the angels fell with Satan. On the other hand, those who think such things usually associate that with some very ancient event prior to the creation of man, and yet, as I pointed out before, Revelation 12 is not talking about events that occurred before the creation of man.

The time frame is much later than that. But what does it mean that he cast a third of the stars to the ground? What are stars in the book of Revelation? Well, that's not the easiest

thing in the world. We have in chapter 1 of Revelation Jesus holding the seven stars in his right hand, and in Revelation 1.20, we are told that the seven stars are the seven angels of the seven churches.

Now, that might solve the problem for some people. Oh, I get it. Stars are angels in Revelation.

But it gets more complex than that. No one knows for sure what is meant by the seven angels of the seven churches, and the vast majority of evangelical commentators seem to believe that angels in that place should be understood as messengers generally, human messengers. This is not anything that is held unanimously, but it is very widely, probably the majority of commentators believe that the seven angels of the seven churches are human messengers, perhaps pastors or bishops of the seven churches.

If that is true, then the angels there are human, and the stars which represent the seven angels are human beings. If we accept this possibility, then it is possible that the third of the stars that are cast down are not angelic beings, but human beings that are cast down by the dragon's tail. There is further confirmation of this theory in Daniel, because the language of Revelation often echoes deliberately the language of Daniel.

Sometimes it's a direct quote almost from Daniel. In Daniel chapter 8, we have this image of stars being cast down to the ground also, and apparently Revelation is simply echoing this passage in Daniel. However, the setting is different in Daniel, but the imagery is the same.

In Daniel 8, verses 9 and 10, it says, And out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. That's Israel. And it grew up to the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host, that is some of the host of heaven, which would ordinarily be understood to mean the stars, and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them.

Now here this little horn cast down some of the stars to the ground and trampled them. Now one thing is clear, these stars were not confederate with the little horn. They were not his allies.

They were people or individuals that he trampled upon. The idea of stars being, some of the stars being cast to the ground comes from this passage in Daniel, and is simply echoed in Revelation 12. And it is clear, or maybe it's not clear to all, but it's clear to me, it seems, that when the book of Revelation speaks of stars being cast to the ground, it's probably using the imagery exactly the way Daniel is using it.

Well what is Daniel talking about? Well in this case, scholars happen to be in agreement, all of them, on what Daniel is talking about. The context makes it unquestionable what this particular passage in Daniel is about. There's not very many things in Daniel that

everyone would agree about, but this is one of them.

And that is that the little horn in Daniel 8 is Antiochus Epiphanes. The Greco-Syrian dictator who sacrificed a sow in the Jewish temple in 168 B.C. He was a great persecutor of the Jews, and what is known historically about this man is that he particularly targeted devout Jews, the Hasidim, who were trying to remain loyal to the law, and he actually killed them. He actually killed them on Sabbath when they wouldn't lift a sword to defend themselves.

He made it a capital offense to own a copy of the Torah, the Scriptures, to circumcise their children, to keep Sabbath, to do any of these Jewish things was made a capital offense, and he killed great numbers of devout Jews. It seems unlikely that this statement that the little horn cast down some of the stars of heaven means anything other than that he cast down many godly men and trampled upon them. He persecuted the saints.

He persecuted the devout Jews. This assumes that the stars, therefore, refers to godly people, that the little horn cast down like stars from heaven and trampled upon them. There's further confirmation that stars represent godly people in another chapter in Daniel.

In Daniel chapter 12, in verse 3, in Daniel 12, 3, we read, Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. That is, those who turn people to righteousness are likened to stars in Daniel. When Antiochus cast down some of the stars, it refers to persons, godly persons who turned others to righteousness.

Those were afflicted and tormented and trampled down by Antiochus' epiphanies. This is historically known, and that is, I think, indisputably the meaning of Daniel's words. Well, since Revelation takes the exact same image and says the dragon took some of the stars and cast them to the earth, rather than understanding these stars to be angels who were confederate with Lucifer in his rebellion against God, it seems more likely that these stars are godly people that the devil, through his persecutions, casts down and tramples upon, even as in Daniel 8.10, Antiochus did in his day.

Now, I don't believe that Revelation is talking about the same event that Daniel is talking about, but he uses the same image for a similar event. And we won't bother right now trying to identify the exact event that Revelation is talking about, but I would say that it is more likely that the third of the stars that are cast down in Revelation 12.4 are humans, not angels. And therefore, the one verse in all of Scripture upon which the theory is based, that a third of the angels fell, turns out not to be a verse about angels at all.

I guess you're starting to realize that an awful lot of things are taught as doctrine, which

are traditions of men in the Church, for which the biblical support is extremely scant. Now, if demons are fallen angels, and I'm going to proceed with the assumption that that is probably the case. That is the traditional view, and I don't really know of any other view that makes more sense, and I will not pretend to be 100% certain.

Then we will just consider that to be a likelihood in our teaching. It doesn't matter a great deal. There are a couple of other theories.

One theory is that the demons today are the spirits of the wicked pre-Adamic generation that some people postulate existed in the gap of the gap theory of Genesis. You will recall I mentioned some people believe that when God made the heavens and the earth, he didn't make it formless and void, it became formless and void. But before it became formless and void, there was a whole society under Lucifer of pre-Adamic humanoids.

And that these were spiritual people like we are, but they were wicked, and God had to judge them. And the assumption is then that the spirits of this wicked pre-Adamic race still haunt this world as the demons today. That's maybe an intriguing theory, but it rests entirely, 100%, on speculation.

Not one verse of scripture can be brought forward to support it. And therefore, if it's true, it is a truth that God has kept secret and has never told anyone about. Not in scripture anyway.

Another theory is that the demons are the spirits of wicked men, not of a pre-Adamic race, but of this human race. That there are certain people who in their lifetime bind themselves over, sell their soul, as it were, to the devil. And that after they die, the devil lays claim on their soul and presses them into service.

And uses their spirits to afflict other people as his servants and so forth. And so this is a theory that I've heard some Christians put forward, though again, there's really no way to establish this from scripture. The fact is, there's no way to establish beyond question any theory from scripture about the origin of demons, who they are.

But since we do know from scripture that there are fallen angels, and we do not know that the spirits of wicked people ever are allowed to haunt the world or are pressed into Satan's continuing service after death or anything like that, we don't have any scripture that supports those notions that I'm aware of. I would say the theory that the demons are fallen angels is probably as good as any. Now I would like to suggest that the demons are more directly a problem to us than the devil himself.

I don't want to profess to understand the spiritual realm better than I do. Many people would like you to think that they've got a real clear inside line on the spiritual realm and they know all about it. I will not make that pretense.

I cannot claim to know anything about the spiritual realm except what the Bible says,

and much of what it says is vague. Much of what it says is not as clear as some teachers would like to pretend that it is. And I won't pretend.

I do not fully understand the nature of the demonic kingdom. There is, however, suggestion made, most teachers seem to believe that Paul is insinuating in Ephesians chapter 6, that there are various ranks in the demonic realm. I will have to admit that this verse may or may not teach that.

Many people think it does, and I cannot disprove it. But I'm not 100% sure that it does. But in Ephesians 6 and 12, where Paul says, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, he then tells us what we do wrestle against.

Our battle is against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, and against spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. Now, the most common theory about this is that these represent four different ranks in the demonic army, as it were. Satan has a chief over the army named Beelzebub.

I want to just talk about Beelzebub a moment here. Jesus was accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, who was called by the Pharisees the Prince of Demons. Jesus, when he responded, said, well, if Satan casts out Satan, then his kingdom cannot stand.

What's interesting is what they claimed was that by Beelzebub, Jesus was casting out demons, and Beelzebub is the Prince of Demons. Jesus said, well, then if Satan is casting out Satan, and you realize that Jesus is equating Beelzebub with Satan, he's also equating demons with Satan. I mean, in that proposition, Beelzebub is casting out demons, and Jesus restates that proposition as Satan casting out Satan.

I believe Satan is a personal being, but apparently those who do his bidding, whether as chiefs, principalities, or whatever they may be, or garden variety demons, they apparently represent Satan's interests and Satan's activities so closely. They're so closely identified with him that Jesus can simply refer to demons as Satan. And he did so refer to it.

If you're not familiar with the passage, it's in Matthew 12, around verse 27, I think it would be, around there. But Beelzebub actually is a name that the Pharisees introduced. Jesus never actually introduced it, and we don't know whether there really is such a person.

The Pharisees didn't exactly have an inside line on spiritual reality either. They had traditions. Beelzebub is actually a Greek form of a pagan god mentioned a few times in the Old Testament named Beelzebub.

Beelzebub literally means Lord of the Flies. And that Hebrew form, Beelzebub, actually was a corruption of a pagan deity's name, Beelzebub. I don't remember what Zebul

means, but Beel means Lord, and Zebul was the other.

And there were pagans who worshipped this deity called Beelzebul. The Jews, out of contempt for that deity, gave it the nickname Beelzebub, which means Lord of the Flies. And Beelzebub was, in Greek, Beelzebub.

And that is, therefore, the name of a pagan deity corrupted deliberately out of disdain by the Jews in their reference to it. And in apparently rabbinic tradition, Beelzebub was elevated, in their thinking, to the Prince of Demons, because that's what the Pharisees said when they accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons. Now, whether there actually is such a Beelzebub who is the Prince of Demons or not, the Bible does not affirm it.

It is simply the teaching of the Pharisees. And we know that Jesus did not wish to affirm everything the Pharisees said. But Jesus did not take them to task on it either, not on that particular point.

He didn't raise questions as to whether Beelzebub was the Prince of Demons. He did, of course, indicate that their whole logic was wrong. That if the Prince of Demons was operating through Jesus to cast out other demons, then this is a case of Satan casting out Satan.

And therefore, Jesus seems to associate all demonic activity with satanic activity. Casting out demons is casting out Satan. Not necessarily casting out the personal devil, Satan, but his network, his organization.

Demons are part of it. And when people say, well, the devil tempted me today, there are some Christians who are very peculiar in particular. And they say, listen, the devil didn't tempt you.

You may have been tempted by one of his henchmen, a demon or something like that, one of his agents. But not the devil, because the devil probably doesn't even know you exist. He's not everywhere at once, etc., etc.

Well, okay, technically that's true. The devil is certainly not omnipotent and omnipresent and all those things that God is. However, it is not wrong to speak of you having activity of warfare directly with the devil.

Because the demons are the extension of his activity. And for you to have conflict with demons is to have conflict with the devil. Well, it's very probable that, I mean, depending on how we understand who the devil is and where he is, it may be that you'll never have any direct contact with Satan himself.

But you might. It may be that he acts through the demonic powers in such a personal way that their activity is his activity. You know, Jesus, when he was at Caesarea Philippi,

he called Peter Satan.

You remember that? Peter tried to persuade Jesus not to be crucified, not to acquiesce to that fate. And Jesus spoke to Peter in Matthew 16 and verse 23. He said, Get behind me, Satan.

Now, was Satan actually in Peter? I mean, Satan himself? I don't think so. We know that Satan later entered Judas, although that too might have been a demon. I'm not saying even that Peter was demonized here.

I'm saying that Peter, in becoming the mouthpiece for Satan, was as good as Satan himself in this particular case. It's as if Satan himself were speaking. And Jesus addressed Satan, although the mouthpiece of Satan happened to be, or the agent of Satan in this case, happened to be Peter.

Now, if Jesus can say that to a human agent of Satan and call him Satan, then presumably a demonic agent of Satan could be called Satan also. We're not saying that Satan is a corporate entity made up of demons necessarily. I'm suggesting that Satan is an individual spirit, but in Ephesians we're told that he is the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience.

And probably in the demons of disobedience as well. Ephesians 2 speaks of Satan in this way. In Ephesians 2, verse 2, it says, It says that the prince of this world, he does not use the name Satan, but I think all agree that he's referring here to Satan, the prince of this world.

It says that Satan, or the prince of this world, is the spirit that is working in the sons of disobedience. Now this itself doesn't even necessarily mean demon-possessed people. Just everybody.

Everybody who's activated or animated by a spirit of disobedience is animated by Satan. Satan is that spirit who's working in and through the children of disobedience. Therefore, though we do speak of Satan as an individual, personal being, it is not inappropriate to speak of demons, or even on occasion, apparently, even people, as agents of Satan or as Satan himself, by extension of the idea.

And when people say, well, Satan's not everywhere at once, that's true. Satan, the individual, is not everywhere at once like God is, but he is in a sense almost everywhere at once, wherever he has agents, wherever his network is, wherever there are demons, wherever there are sons of disobedience, Satan is there. Satan is at work there, in them.

And so, although Satan cannot, like God, be omnipresent, he apparently is capable of virtual omnipresence through his agents. And it is not biblically incorrect to say that you have had an encounter with Satan, if in fact what you've had an encounter with was a demon, because they are part of his network. But look back at Ephesians 6 for a

moment.

I want to talk about these principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places, or in the heavenlies. This, as I say, most teachers on spiritual warfare that I've read, or on demonology, have suggested that we have here four ranks of demons, just like an army has various officers of varying ranks and there's a chain of command. Many people think that Paul is here revealing something like four links in a chain of command, and that the lowest ranks are the principalities, and above them are the powers, and then above those are the rulers of the darkness of this age, and the highest ranking demons are the spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

Now, this is a theory only, and it seems to me not even the most likely theory on this verse. It occurs to me at least two other theories are equally probable. One is that whether Paul is aware of ranks in the demonic realm or not, he is not trying to necessarily reveal to us the inner workings of the satanic organization and the ranks of his deputies and lieutenants and so forth.

But rather that it is at least possible, and this is not even my preferred theory, but I'm offering this as yet another possibility, that all these things could just be synonymous, that he may be just elaborating. We're dealing with demons, and I'm talking about principalities, I'm talking about powers, I'm talking about the spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, I'm talking about the rulers of the darkness of the world. And by these expressions, just elaborating on one category, demons, not that these are all different kinds or ranks of demons, but they're just different expressions to refer to demons.

Now, there's even another possibility, and I personally kind of am inclined toward it, though I have to admit it to be a theory merely also, and that is that he's got two categories in mind here, what we're wrestling against. Principalities and powers being one category, and rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places is another category. I'll give you my reasons for this, though I don't want to say that this is the final word or that my reasons are adequate to prove the point.

The expression principalities and powers is used more than one way in scripture, it's used frequently in Ephesians, and in some cases it's not clear exactly what he means by principalities and powers. He does say that Jesus is far above every principality and power and so forth, I don't have here a list of all the places in Ephesians where he says these things. But there are times when he speaks of principalities and powers, there's other times when he speaks of principalities and powers in heavenly places.

For example, in Ephesians 3.10, I know this is one of them, to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies, or in the heavenly places. Now, principalities and powers in the heavenly places certainly must be spiritual beings in the heavenly realm. But when the

term principalities and powers is not linked with heavenly places, it can mean earthly rulers, earthly institutional governments.

We know this because Paul uses the exact same expression that way in Titus 3.1. Now, the new King James, in order to avoid confusion, has not translated these Greek words identically, but I think the King James does. Titus 3.1 says, remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work. Now, Paul's referring to earthly rulers and authorities, but the words rulers and authorities in the Greek are the exact same words as translated principalities and powers elsewhere.

Now, notice he doesn't say rulers and authorities or principalities and powers in heavenly places. We're not supposed to be subject to them. But principalities and powers simply means rulers and authorities.

And in this case, very obviously means political rulers and political authorities. Now, the question then is, in Ephesians 6.12, when he says we wrestle against principalities and powers, does he mean spiritual principalities and powers in heavenly places? Or does he just mean political structures, political rulers? Paul could mean either one, because Paul, although he told Christians to be subject to the laws of the land, he saw himself as an advocate of another king, one Jesus. And while it's not the case that Jesus is seeking to establish an alternative political government and to overthrow the physical rulers of the world right now, that's not what Jesus is doing, yet it is the case, according to Scripture, that the rulers and the kings of this earth have set themselves against the Lord and against his anointed and are in rebellion against him.

And it's obvious, especially in cases where rulers and dictators set themselves against God's anointed so that they forbid Christianity to be expressed, they require worship of the emperor or some other equivalent substitution of the state for God. This is certainly what is meant when we read of the beast in Revelation. Whoever the beast might be or have been, I think all will agree that the beast is a political entity in Revelation 13, and that it is a political ruler or entity or organization or government of some kind, and that it is a satanically animated organization or person who is in rulership, and it makes war against the saints.

The beast in Revelation 13 is at war against the saints. Spiritual warfare, that is a part of the Christian spiritual warfare, is against the beast. Now, when I talk about spiritual warfare, I don't mean physical warfare against political powers.

But Paul could very possibly be saying that we're not struggling against individual people and unbelievers and bad guys, but we are struggling against whole political structures. We are struggling against rulers and authorities who are seeking to usurp the place of God, even seeking to require us to bow down to the emperor, even seeking to forbid us from worshipping Jesus Christ. We are advocates of another king, one Jesus, and another kingdom.

And this kingdom is at odds with the claims of earthly kings, and our struggle to advance the kingdom of God in many respects will put us at odds with principalities and powers, that is, of an earthly sort. It would not be the first time that the gospel has been challenged by earthly kings, and earthly kings have been challenged by the gospel. And there is certainly conflict at times.

Paul would not necessarily be saying that all governments are set at all times against the gospel. But in his day, it was the case in many cases. Many places that he went, he was actually imprisoned when he wrote this.

Imprisoned by Roman authority. And we do believe that the outcome of spiritual warfare in the end will be, as it describes in Revelation 11, that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. That the kingdoms of this world are set against God, but they will become the kingdoms of God.

They will be conquered. Jesus is seen with a sword, which is his word, coming out of his mouth in Revelation 19, striking the nations and conquering them as he rides forth on his white horse. Now, the image, therefore, of the nations and their kings and their governments being at odds with the Messiah is a theme in Old and New Testament.

And Paul was certainly acquainted with it. On one hand, we are to be subject to principalities and powers. We are to be subject to governments.

On the other hand, we are supposed to realize that they are usurpers of God's authority. We do not set ourselves against their laws in general, and we don't seek to stage an overthrow or revolt against them. But we are quietly going about our business of taking captives for Jesus Christ, bringing every thought into captivity of Jesus Christ through our spiritual weapons.

Eventually, this puts us at odds with the claims of rulers over the souls and loyalties of men. Now, I do not say this is the necessary way to understand Paul's words, but when he says we are wrestling against principalities and powers, he may very well mean the same thing that he means in Titus 3.1, when he uses the same expression, principalities and powers, which is, in that case, a reference to earthly governments. But then when he moves on to talk about the rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies, there we have a spiritual set of enemies.

In fact, Paul might even be understanding it that the spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies and the rulers of the darkness of this age, which are indeed demonic powers, are the ones who are animating the earthly principalities and powers to persecute the saints. That is exactly what Revelation depicts in the beast. The beast is simply the embodiment of Satan.

But it is a political embodiment of Satan to make war against the saints and to persecute

them. Now, there are therefore several possibilities, and I don't know that we even have to understand which is the right one, but I'm saying that many, perhaps most, Christian teachers suggest that these four categories, principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies, that some think these are all four designations for demonic powers, possibly even four ranks in Satan's hierarchy. But I'm not sure.

Paul certainly doesn't say that. I mean, it's not clear at all. And I think it's even possible that Paul sees us involved in a warfare against demonic powers, but that warfare often takes the form of political government persecuting the church.

This does not mean that, I mean, if Paul does mean that, that doesn't mean that our warfare against governments is of a political sort. It's not that we go out and become activists in the political sense, or take up arms, or join the militia, or something like that. That is not the warfare we're involved in.

But we are involved in a warfare against the kings and rulers of this world and their loyal subjects who are set against the Lord and against his anointed. The claims of the Messiah are not political merely, but they have a political aspect. He claims total loyalty.

Jesus claims total loyalty of his subjects. And when a person becomes totally loyal to the Messiah, that means that the loyalty they used to give to their nation has got to be renegotiated. And while it is true that as I am domiciled in the United States as an ambassador for Christ of his kingdom, I keep the laws, just like I would keep the laws of Spain if I were an ambassador of America domiciled in Spain.

I would keep the laws. But my loyalty would be to my nation. And the Christian has a loyalty not to the domiciled nation that he lives in, but the nation that commissioned him, which is the kingdom of God.

And where there is opposition to the kingdom of God coming from the government of the domiciled nation where we live, then our loyalty is very clearly to God and to his kingdom and not to the nation. And there are certainly times Paul was living in such a time, and we may be even now in such a time in this country, when the political rulers were deliberately setting themselves against the Lord and against his Messiah, even as Psalm chapter 2 describes rulers doing. So Paul might even have been thinking of principalities and powers in the sense of earthly principalities and powers, earthly political structures and governments that oppose God.

But he goes further and says it is not just these structures, it is in the heavenlies there is something going on here. There are spiritual rulers of the darkness of this world. There are spiritual wickedness, hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies.

So that if this theory, if this interpretation is correct, and I'll just plainly say this is a

theory that I personally favor, then Paul is suggesting that we are involved in a spiritual battle with spiritual methods, not physical or political methods. There are spiritual methods, preaching the gospel, intercessory prayer, spiritual activity. But this, A, is dealing with demonic powers, and B, with the governments that are animated by demonic powers, that are seeking to destroy or prevent or inhibit the kingdom of God in its advance.

We are not going to always be on friendly terms with the government if we are loyal to another king, one Jesus. Now, we therefore don't know whether there are ranks of demons, but there may be. There certainly appear to be demons of greater and of lesser potency or power.

As you read of the encounters with demons that Jesus had, or that the apostles had, or for that matter, that people have today, especially with demon-possessed persons, there are cases, both in Scripture and in Christian biography and experience, there are cases where demons are quite wimpy, where they can't even stand to hear the name of Jesus. If someone mentions the name of Jesus, or the blood of Jesus, or speaks something from the Scriptures, the demons are terrified, they're tormented. In many cases, they'll leave just at the simple mention of the name of Jesus.

But there are demons that don't do that quite as easily. In most cases, Jesus cast out demons with the Word. But in one case, where it was legion, we read that Jesus had told the demons to leave the man, but they kept trying to negotiate.

It was after Jesus told them to leave the man that they said, Well, could we go into this herd of swine over here? And notice, they didn't just leave instantly. They tried to negotiate a settlement with him, and he actually allowed it. It's interesting.

There are times, as I say, when demons seem to be absolutely intolerant of the name of Jesus. In some cases, other demons I've encountered myself seem to be able to curse the name of Jesus, and mock the name of Jesus. Not forever, and not for long.

But sometimes there are demons that are more fierce, or more potent, or whatever. Possibly, and I have to say only possibly because I don't know, these represent different strengths or ranks of demons. There could be different ranks.

There are possibly some that are just really wimpy, really low-ranking demons. Easy to handle. And others that are a little more stubborn, seemingly to have a little more authority, or a little more resistance, and maybe they are higher ranking.

I don't want to suggest too many images that are extra-scriptural, that are outside the Bible. And so I'm trying to be very cautious about these suggestions that may be true. Now, we know then that the devil works through demons.

And we don't know very much about the organization. We don't know very much about

his army. There is the possibility there are ranks of demons.

It is probable also that demons differ from one another in strength, or in boldness, in tenacity. We do not know for sure whether there are a whole hierarchy of what are today frequently called territorial spirits. There are many people who believe that there are an elaborate hierarchy of territorial spirits.

That there be, as Daniel was made aware in Daniel chapter 10, there was a prince over Persia, a demonic prince over Persia. In the same passage in Daniel, it goes on to talk about a prince over Grecia. And therefore it sounds as if different kingdoms, earthly kingdoms, might have different demonic princes associated with them.

Now this is entirely possible. However, it does not follow that we can safely extrapolate from there that every nation has its own demonic prince over it. And then down from there, a whole hierarchy which extends to every neighborhood has a demonic principality.

Every city has a demonic principality over it. Every house has a principality over it. There are, in fact, people who believe that.

They believe that there are demons assigned, for example, to America. And there are demons assigned to California. There are subordinate demons under the American demon, the California demon, and then a different demon over San Francisco.

And maybe a very special demon who is given charge of Haight-Ashbury District or something. Or the Tenderloin or something. There may be such a hierarchy, but we do not have the Scripture's testimony on this.

And that makes it impossible for us to be certain. Now many people feel that dealing with demons involves us in identifying these territorial spirits over these localities. Finding out what they are, naming them, speaking directly to them, binding them, and so forth.

I just must confess we don't find any evidence of this in Scripture. We don't find any example of this kind of spiritual warfare in the Bible. Once again, I'm not sure that it is impossible to do those things or that it would be altogether ineffective.

I'm simply saying, if it were necessary, I think God would have told us in Scripture. I believe in Scripture we have all things given to us necessary for life and godliness. And while there may be additional things that might get some results, I feel that we are safe if we restrict our activity to those things which are modeled or taught in Scripture.

I think that the things that are modeled and taught in Scripture, if followed, will be adequate to win the victory if we would just do them faithfully. What's often the case is that Christians are looking for newfangled methodologies of spiritual warfare. And there

are certainly fads that come through now and then.

Okay, now this is how we deal with demons these days. This is how we deal with this kind of demons. And there are books written and seminars held and great conferences and so forth about how to activate this new style of spiritual warfare.

And in many cases, the people who are operating these realms are not doing very well in following the biblical pattern of spiritual warfare. They're not doing what the Bible actually says to do, but they're doing other things hoping that they'll work better. I am an advocate of doing what the Bible says because I believe God gave us this as our operations manual.

And I believe that our strategy, I believe our methodology, I believe our objectives are all laid out for us in Scripture. And I don't really think that we need to go beyond Scripture to get essential information on spiritual warfare. Now, let me talk to you about what the devil's up to principally.

And when I say Satan, realize that my expression can include the demons, since Jesus used the term that way. If I say Satan, I want to go on record that I'm not necessarily always speaking about the personal devil. I may be speaking about his hosts, his demonic network.

What the devil is up to, more than any other thing, is deception. I'm not really sure if the devil's really into anything other than deception. There may be some other activities that he's up to that are besides deception, but the Bible certainly indicates that deception is his principal one.

Now, there are Christians who think that the devil's primary interest is to make you sick, physically sick. There are people who think the devil's primary interest is to take away your money, or to make you have a bad day, or to make you depressed, or anxious, or whatever. Now, I will not deny that some of these things I suppose the devil might have an interest in.

If so, the Bible doesn't tell us so. I'm not sure that the devil of this particular theology I just described is the devil of the Bible. The devil of the Bible is a deceiver.

In fact, I personally think the people who feel the way I just described about the devil have fallen into some of his deceptions. It's a shame. They're focusing so much, doing so much to identify the activity of the devil.

And at the very moment they do so, they are subject to his deception, because they are often getting their information from elsewhere than the Bible. The Bible does not indicate that the devil has any interest whatsoever in keeping you poor. As a matter of fact, Jesus indicated that the rich are going to have a harder time getting into the kingdom of heaven than the poor are.

It seems like if the devil's interested in anything, he'd be wanting to make people rich, so that they'd have a harder time getting into the kingdom. Likewise, we do not read that the devil is particularly looking for ways to make a person sick. Now, Paul's thorn in the flesh, if it was a sickness, is described as a messenger of Satan.

I can accept that. I can accept the fact that there were people who were demonized that Jesus encountered, who had physical handicaps resulting from demonization. I will not deny that physical symptoms and physical problems can result from demonic attack.

I accept this, but the Bible does not portray Satan as the being who's going out there trying to ruin your day and give you a sore throat and a headache and cancer. He is out there trying to destroy your soul. That is his principal concern, and the way to destroy your soul is through various activities all related to deception.

You see, Jesus said that his disciples would know the truth and the truth would make them free. When further questioned on his meaning, this is in John chapter 8 that he said this, Now, when the Jews responded and said, well, we're Abraham's seed, we've never been in bondage to anyone, how can you say you will be made free? Jesus' answer to them in verse 34, John 8, 34 was, Most assuredly I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. Now, he's obviously explaining what he means by they should be made free.

They're a slave. They need to be made free from what? Of sin. And those who follow his words will know the truth and the truth will make them free from what? From their sin bondage.

Now, sin is what alienates people from God. Sin is what destroys the soul. Sin is what damns people.

The devil is far more interested in getting you to sin than getting you to have a sore throat. I'm astonished how many people out there equate sickness and sin as if these things were equal concerns to God and to the devil. As if the atonement of Christ was equally concerned with the eradication of sin and the eradication of sickness.

There are people who soberly suggest this. As if being sick was in any sense on a level parallel to being sinful. Sin will destroy you for all eternity.

Sickness, what can it do to you? At the very worst, it can kill you, I guess, but that's not to die is gain for the Christian. I don't see how that would be a particular horrible thing. I know you can suffer a long time with sickness.

That's not very fun. But then what's interesting to me is that most people who believe that God doesn't want you sick and that the devil does, they'll draw the line at persecution. They'll say, well, but God may allow you to be persecuted.

God may want you to be persecuted because that's for Jesus' sake and there's benefit. I

mean, even the Word of Faith people who think Christians should never be sick, they usually don't go so far. Some do, but most don't go so far as to say you should never be persecuted.

I mean, the Bible says those who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. So most of the Word of Faith people I know say, well, yeah, you can suffer persecution, but you shouldn't have to suffer sickness. God doesn't want you to suffer sickness.

I say, well, I don't understand why you draw the line there. Suffering is suffering. I'm really not sure that suffering sickness is any worse than suffering persecution.

As a matter of fact, I had rather suffer a headache or indigestion or even the amputation of a gangrenous leg than to have bamboo shoots driven under my fingernails and be tortured for 14 years in prison. To tell you the truth, some sickness is a lot more desirable than some persecution is. And yet they say, well, the devil wants you sick, but God wants you to be persecuted for your growth and for your loyalty to Him and so forth.

I think they're making divisions in suffering that the Bible doesn't make. Suffering is suffering. Trials are trials, and God uses them, God has use for them.

The devil may indeed be interested in bringing trials, both of persecution and suffering of other kinds too, up to and including sickness. But these things he would only do in order to try to persuade us to sin. It's not as if the devil hopes to gain some great advantage over God by making our lives painful.

Unless by doing so, he leads us to the deception. The deception that God is not worthy to be served anymore because it's so painful to follow Him. The deception that God doesn't love us anymore.

This is what God was trying to get to Job about. Job was faithful to God, but God had been mighty good to Job. And the devil said, well, hey, anyone will be faithful to you if you're that good to them, but let me touch them.

Skin for skin, all that a man has will he give for his life, Satan said. Let me destroy his life, then he'll curse you. Now, Satan's interest was not just to make Job miserable.

He was to make Job miserable so that Job might be induced to give up his loyalty to God. That Job might begin to have second thoughts about whether God is a good God. Whether God rewards righteousness.

Whether God is just. And we know that Job began to have some questions about those things. He had moments of heroic faith during his sufferings, but he also had moments of shaky faith.

And it's almost as if Satan almost got the victory in some moments. But he didn't, and

Job came through with flying colors. But, yeah, all kinds of suffering were brought on Job, but not for any purpose other than to get him to doubt God.

To get him to be deceived about whether God is a good God or not. The devil may use anything that's in his power to do to get you to be deceived, but deception is his interest. It says in John chapter 8, which we were looking at a moment ago, where Jesus said, The truth will make you free.

It's also in that same chapter he tells us what the devil's primary interest is. In John chapter 8, verse 44, he says, You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there's no truth in him.

When he speaks a lie, he speaks from himself, or from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. Now, the devil, he doesn't have any truth in him. He is a liar.

He's the father of lying. And, therefore, Jesus identifies Satan principally as one involved in deception and lying. Look over at 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 9 and 10, Paul describes the activity of the man of sin, whoever that may be.

And he says, The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Now, the lawless one, whoever that is, comes through the working of Satan. Well, what does he do? Make people sick? Make people poor? Well, if he does, we don't read of it, but in all likelihood, since he comes with signs and wonders, he probably makes people well.

In all likelihood, he probably heals people. That's the kinds of signs and wonders that get people's loyalty and attention in a positive sense. But his signs and wonders that he does are for one purpose, for deception.

He comes in the power of Satan, and what he does is characteristic of what Satan does. With all power, signs, and lying wonders, with all unrighteous deception. Now, it says that those who fall prey to him, at the end of verse 10, are those who did not receive the love of the truth.

Truth is the defense. Jesus said, the truth will make you free. There is a battle in the spiritual realm.

That spiritual realm has a portion of its battlefield in your own spirit. Your spirit, your mind, your inner person, is part of that spiritual realm that is up for grabs, that is fought over. It is a battle for the mind.

Basically, to the degree that your mind and your spirit embrace deception, you are captive. On the other hand, to the degree that you embrace God's truth, you are released, or free, from that captivity. It's clear that not every misbelief, or not every belief in error, is going to do equal harm.

If you believe the wrong things about whether the earth is flat or round, you will be mistaken, and it will limit you in some respects, and you're operating in reality, but it will not be damning. You can believe the earth is flat, and if it turns out that it's really round, you won't go to hell over that. You will be limited, though.

The truth will make you freer. All truth makes you more free. Truth is simply the acknowledgement of reality, and you have to live in reality.

If you have a misconception of reality, you're not going to be able to operate in the real world quite as readily as if you understand it. But spiritual reality is much more important to understand correctly. Even some spiritual truths are more important than others.

If a person believes that the devil wants you poor, well, that may or may not be a true statement, but if it happens to be wrong, you probably won't go to hell for believing it. But if you believe that Jesus is not the Son of God, if you believe Jesus did not die for your sins and did not rise again, that deception will send you to hell. I mean, there are truths.

There's certainly a hierarchy of truths. The most important truths are absolutely essential for salvation. But that doesn't mean that the truths that are not essential for salvation are not important.

To the degree that we embrace error, to that degree we are limited in functioning in the spiritual realm as God desires for us to function. And the devil doesn't mind telling a lie by telling the truth. Did you know the devil can tell a lie by telling the truth? So can you, by the way.

You know how to tell a statement that's technically true, but it's spoken in a context or in a way or with a smirk or whatever, in such a way as to give the impression that it's not true. Or actually to be not true, to actually give the wrong impression. We see this in the Garden of Eden, when Eve said, Well, we're not allowed to eat of any of the trees, or we are allowed to eat of any of the trees except this one, and if we eat of that, we'll die that day.

And Satan said, No, you won't die. God knows that in the day you eat of it, you'll be like God, knowing good and evil. Was that true or false? It was true.

The devil did not lie to her. He told her the truth. And yet she said that she was deceived.

In fact, even the New Testament says the woman was deceived. Well, how could she have been deceived? The devil told her truth. The devil didn't lie to her.

He said, You will not surely die on that day. Well, it's true. She didn't.

She lived many years beyond that time, had many children. He said, You'll be like God, knowing good and evil. Your eyes will be open.

That was true. It happened. Even God acknowledged this later in the same chapter.

But she was deceived. How is this? She was deceived because the devil told her part of the truth and didn't give her the whole truth. I think it's very significant that you can be deceived by simply having part of the truth.

The whole truth was that you will not die today physically. But there's another side he didn't tell you. You will die spiritually, and you will certainly ultimately die physically as well.

The whole truth was that although you will be more like God in this respect of knowing good and evil, you'll be less like God in more important respects, like in terms of holiness. You will be less like God in character if you make this decision. But the devil didn't tell that part of the truth.

The part he told was true, but it was irrelevant. He told a truth that was represented as if it was all the truth, when in fact the more important, more essential truth was omitted from his comment, so that by telling the part of the truth he did, he actually affected a deception. And what this means, of course, to us is that we need to be concerned about the whole truth.

Having part of the truth is not good enough. The woman was deceived by hearing part of the truth. The devil won't always lie to you, but he will always try to prevent you from knowing all the truth.

Because if he obscures from you an essential part of what the truth is, even if he's told you something that is in itself true, then he has deceived you. And it is knowing the whole truth that will make you wholly free. Those who do not receive the love of the truth, those who are satisfied with a little bit of truth or none at all, those people fall prey to the deceptive works of the man of sin and of Satan.

But those who receive the love of truth will be always hungry for more, always wanting all of it, all of it that's available. And this is the difference between those who fall prey to Satan's devices and those who do not. Some people love the truth more than everything.

Other people love something else more. And those who do not receive the love of the truth fall prey. We read in Revelation 12, 9 that the dragon is that old serpent called

Satan the devil who deceives the whole world.

That's the activity of Satan. When one activity of Satan is singled out for disclosure in Revelation 12, 9, it says he is the one who deceives the whole world. So we see that Jesus said Satan is the father of lies.

There's no truth in him. When he deceives, he's doing what he does best. He speaks from himself when he lies because he's the father of lies.

The working of Satan is with deceitful lying signs and wonders. And he is the spirit that deceives the whole world. This is what Satan is doing.

Now, deception takes many forms and accomplishes various things. We find that the world is full of false religions. It's interesting that people who aren't Christians aren't necessarily irreligious.

There are people who are extremely religious but are not Christians. This apparently is part of the devil's plan, that there be a religiosity of a wrong sort. Not just atheism.

It's not so simple as, well, we've got Christians over here and we've got atheists over there and that's all there is. No, we have very devout cultists. We have very devout Buddhists.

We have very devout Hindus. Very devout Muslims. Very devout Jews.

Well, Paul said on this point in 1 Timothy 4.1, 1 Timothy 4.1, Paul said, And now the spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits, there's that deception of the devil, and doctrines of demons. That is doctrines that are inspired by demons. Doctrines are religious views, religious beliefs.

Now, putting aside the fact that he mentions the latter times here, certainly whatever he meant by the latter times, he would not deny that he was living in times where there were many people embracing doctrines of demons. I mean, Paul lived in a time where there were many people worshipping idols. And their doctrines of their religions were false and demonic.

And they offered sacrifices to demons and not to God, the scripture says. Well, false religions are one of the ways that Satan deceives. Because there is a religious nature in man.

There is a spiritual side of man. There are many who seek to satisfy it without religion. And so they seek it through perhaps drugs or alcohol or relationships and sex or maybe just abundance of material things or whatever.

There's all kinds of, we could say, secular ways that man seeks to numb his religious thirst. But many people find that those things do not adequately numb it. And they still

find there's a spiritual dimension remaining hollow inside.

The devil cannot conceal this from everybody. But if he can move into that void and fill it with some religious counterfeit, a spiritual experience or a belief about spiritual things, a world view, that satisfies at the moment, then he's very happy to do so. He's even happy to have religions that profess to be Christian embraced by lost people in 2 Corinthians 11.

2 Corinthians 11, verses 3 and 4. Paul said, But I fear, lest somehow as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it. He's afraid that they'll be a little too receptive, a little too tolerant of false doctrines because someone may be coming talking about Jesus, preaching a gospel, offering a spirit.

But he says it could be a different Jesus, a different spirit, a different gospel. And he says, This is Satan corrupting your minds, just as the serpent deceived Eve. You see, the devil's not always afraid of the name of Jesus.

He has a whole bunch of cults that revere the name of Jesus. Actually, the Muslims revere the name of Jesus. They don't revere it as highly as they revere Muhammad, but they do revere Jesus as a prophet.

There are a few Jews. Most are not of this category, but some Jews think highly of Jesus as a person. They don't receive him as their Messiah.

There are Hindus. There are Krishnas. There are Baha'i faith people, New Agers, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Christian scientists.

All of these are false religions, but all of them think very well of Jesus. You talk about Jesus, they love to talk about Jesus. They think very highly of Jesus.

Not highly enough, though. The Jesus of their theology is different than the Jesus of the Bible. He is not God.

He is not the Savior. He is not the one who gave his life a ransom for all, apart from whom no one can come to the Father. That Jesus in the Bible is not in their theology.

They have a Jesus, but it is another Jesus. It is interesting the extent to which Satan will go to keep people from knowing the truth. On the one hand, he probably would just love to keep everyone wrapped up in total secularism, total materialism, denying all spirituality, denying the validity of any religion.

But since he can't manage to deceive people quite so thoroughly as that all the time,

and there are people who realize that material things and sensuality and stuff don't really fill the void, he has the false religions. On the one hand, he's got enormously large numbers of people under religions that do not acknowledge Christ at all. Buddhism, Hinduism.

And then he's got religions that, just in case, people cannot be deceived into thinking Jesus was nobody. Just in case people cannot be kept in the dark about Jesus being a great person and an important person, he's got religions that make Jesus a great person, but less than who he really is. I mean, Satan has everything in the smorgasbord of ideas out there.

He's got something for everyone, except Christianity, except for total commitment to the Jesus of the Bible, because that commitment brings people out of darkness into light. He is the light of the world. And those who follow him shall not walk in darkness, he said, but shall have the light of life.

That's not what the devil wants. The truth makes people free. And so false religions are very important to the devil.

This points out something very important for us. We need to realize that the devil isn't even that interested in making people behave badly. It's not that God wants to make serial killers out of everybody.

I mean, Satan. It's not that Satan wants to make serial killers out of everybody, or pimps, or dictators, or whatever. He doesn't mind making a good Mormon out of a person, a person who never cheats on his wife, a person who doesn't use pornography, a person who raises his children conscientiously, a person who goes to religious services on a regular basis, but simply denies the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's not so much that the devil gets a great deal out of making people bad. Some people, he considers it to his best advantage to make them evil. Other people, he gets an advantage over by making them good.

But not good enough, because they don't receive Christ, and in setting about to seek righteousness, they reject the righteousness of Christ. And that's what false religions are for. But then the devil also is involved in tempting to sin, and I believe that every temptation involves deception.

I don't believe that any person sins without being deceived. Some are more prone to sin than others, but that's because they live in deception as a habitual state of mind. They live in darkness, and therefore it's very easy to get them to sin, because sin is quite consistent with their worldview.

But when you come to a person like a Christian, whose worldview is against sin, where we believe in holiness, we believe that righteousness is better than self-centeredness

and so forth, it takes special kinds of deceptions. But I don't believe a Christian ever sins without being deceived at some level. Later in a different lecture, we'll talk about the specific kinds of deceptions that the devil uses to get Christians to sin.

But I believe that when a person sins, at that moment, they are seeing reality out of focus. They are forgetting eternal issues and seeking immediate gratification at the expense of things far more important and long-lasting. A person cannot have that state of mind without being described as deceived at the moment.

The devil is called the tempter. In 1 Thessalonians 3, 5, Paul says, For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. Satan is a tempter, but this is not another activity additional to deception.

This is just part of the activity of deception. Deceiving you into thinking that sin will be more gratifying than righteousness. Deceiving you into thinking that if you sin, you will not smart for it, you will not sorrow for it, you will not suffer too much for it.

This is all deception. If you were not persuaded of these things momentarily, you would not sin. Temptation really consists in these kinds of deceptions.

So there is a false religiousness, a false righteousness, that is a kind of deception that Satan uses. There is also temptation to sin, which he uses. Another kind of thing that Satan uses, a final kind of deception, is false accusation and condemnation.

This he uses principally on Christians, because any accusation he makes against non-Christians is true. But when he makes accusations against your conscience, when you are in fact clean before God, when you are actually paid up, in the sense that you are prayed up, and you have confessed your sins, and there is no offense between you and God, the devil nonetheless tries to deceive you into thinking there are still barriers there. The devil has a lot to gain from keeping you feeling guilty, because a feeling of guilt results in a sense of alienation from God.

A sense of alienation will prevent you from praying, or from praying faithfully and effectively. And prayer is a very great damaging thing to Satan. So he has a lot to be gained by keeping you sensing a vague sense of guilt and condemnation, even when none exists between you and God.

This is a form of temptation. He is called the accuser of the brethren in Revelation 12.11. His accusations against the believer are a form of deception. That is Revelation 12.10. So these are the things the devil is principally interested in.

Deception. He does it through false religious ideas. He does it through temptation, tempting you and deceiving you into thinking that temptation to sin, or that sin will be more pleasurable than hurtful, and the consequences will be minimal if they exist at all.

And he deceives you, or seeks to deceive you in the area of accusation and condemnation, because he has a lot of advantage to gain by making you feel guilty and alienated from God. Well, we'll stop there, having basically defined the devil's activities. We're going to talk about the methodology and goals of spiritual warfare when we come back next time.

We'll take a break at this point and resume our consideration after that.