

Suffering Affliction: Conquering Our Unseen But Dangerous Enemy

DYG: Message Nineteen (070401AM)

While the crowds were singing praises to Jesus that first Palm Sunday—unseen and dangerous spiritual beings were at work. By Thursday evening of the Passion Week Satan himself had entered Judas to carry of the greatest crime of all—the unjust condemnation and execution of Christ. **Unseen but dangerous**...Every year millions of Americans buy and use millions of gallons of germ-killing, 99.7% effective, anti-bacterial substances—because we fear physical sickness and bodily disease **from unseen but dangerous germs**.

Yet at the same time many of those same Americans walk blithely through life surrounded by countless evil, soul-threatening, spiritual beings known as Satan and his demons that are also **unseen but dangerous**, but they take no precautions against them at all.

Rather than protect their lives spiritually from deadly spiritual infections, viruses, and contaminants—many people deliberately infect themselves with agents that cause spiritual sickness. Deadly spiritual influences through **unseen but dangerous** beings that should be avoided, yet they read them, listen to them, think about them, buy them, hoard them, store them, collect them, and meditate upon them regularly.

Are you aware that this morning Satan, the incredibly powerful, **unseen but dangerous** god of this world wants to poison your thoughts and emotions away from the purity of God's truth? The super-powerful, fallen angelic crown prince against whom not even Michael the archangel dared to face off, has focused his attacks upon us in two areas: our thoughts and our emotions.

If we stay unaware of Satan's **unseen but dangerous** plan, he will start using the unguarded pieces of life; each little area that we fail to guard, Satan grabs, reconfigures for evil against us and makes another base to attack us.

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There Is A War Swirling Within Us

In C. S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, Uncle Screwtape offers his nephew a little advice on the goal and strategy of Satan's attacks.

You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy. It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed, the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts¹.

How true. Don't yield any ground in your life to the Devil. Nothing in life is neutral, nothing in life is harmless. Everything in life is either for God or against Him. Everything is either promoting God's Glory or opposing it. Nothing is neutral when it comes to God; never forget that as you assess the daily patterns and habits of your life.

Pleas stand with me and listen to Paul's impassioned plea to all believers in 2 Corinthians 10:1-6:

Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. 2 But I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 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, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

This morning I urge you to re-examine what you are doing each day in life and why. **Hold up all** of your habits, desires, hobbies, spare time, recreation, sports, pursuits, collections, appetites, and all else **to the scrutiny of God's Word.**

To help us all to do that spiritual check-up, think with me through how God has revealed Satan and what that implies as to his attacks upon us. Here are the top dozen or so ways that Satan is at work against us as believers this morning...

1. Satan **the father of lies** (as he is revealed in John 8:44 "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 is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.) wants to **snatch** the Word of God from your mind. Do the pursuits

¹ Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, p. 56.

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and activities you have chosen help Satan snatch God's Word from your mind? Is it hard to read the Word after you watch certain movies? Is your music collection more precious than your Bible? Do you seem to NEVER get anything out of the Bible or church anymore? That is Satan the father of lies snatching God's Word from your mind!

2. Satan as ***the evil one*** (as he is revealed in Matthew 6:13 NASB 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil. one [For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.]') wants you to *think little-by-little* that sin is not so bad. Do the movies you watch, the TV shows you watch, the music you watch and listen to, the web explorations you make, the books and magazines you read make you think little-by-little that sin is really not that bad? That is Satan the evil one tampering with your thinking!
3. Satan ***the unholy one*** (as he is revealed in I John 2:13 'wicked one' I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.) wants *you to slowly learn to laugh* at sin on television and in the movies. Do you laugh at shows and movies where there is sexual innuendo, and God's absolute holiness and righteous standards are mocked? That is Satan the unholy one teaching you to laugh at sin!
4. Satan ***the deceiver*** (as he is revealed in II Corinthians 11:3 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.) wants to *destroy* your conscience bit-by-bit so it will no longer warn you. Did words that used to offend you no longer offend you? Do images that used to trouble your conscience as displeasing to God no longer trouble you? Do places you used to feel dishonored the Lord no longer feel that way? Do immoral, godless activities no longer make righteous indignation rise? Are you sitting in the gates of Sodom like Lot with evil just playing out in front of your eyes—without your righteous soul being vexed? That is Satan the deceiver destroying your conscience bit-by-bit!
5. Satan ***the tempter*** (as he is revealed in I Thessalonians 3:5 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.) wants to *entertain* you so often with sin so that you won't think sin is as evil as sin really is. Are your entertainers in music and movies all godless? If they become your heroes that you seek and enjoy their entertainment, God says that corrupts you (see *1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."*). That is Satan entertaining you with temptations that grieve God!
6. Satan ***the adversary of God*** (as he is revealed in Revelation 12:9 so the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.) wants to *drown* you in a sea of sin so that you become very tolerant of it. Are you slowly accepting defeat in some areas of your life because it is just too hard to obey the Lord, flee from sin, and seek to discipline your body, mind, and emotions because of the torrent of sin that is all around us each day? Are the thresholds of what is not to be tolerated in your life slowly diminishing and are small questionable areas in your life increasing? That is Satan the adversary drowning you!
7. Satan ***the one who shoots flaming darts*** (as he is revealed in Ephesians 6:16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.) wants to *fill* your mind with doubts, lies, immorality, and false doctrine. On any given day to you feel unable to stop thinking, imagining, and replaying thoughts that displease God? Does God feel distant as His Spirit is grieved by the doubts about His Word, His commandments and expectations of your behavior as His child? Is God's grace enabling you to say no to sin or are you deceived into thinking grace gives you a pass to continue in some besetting, habitual, secret sin? That is a flaming dart of Satan.

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8. Satan ***the murderer from the beginning*** (as he is revealed in John 8:44 “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 is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.) wants to ***addict you*** to violence, condition you to enjoying killing and bloodshed through games and movies. Do you love action packed movies that often feature people shot, blown up, and blasted away—as well as grisly, bloodied action heroes that get beaten, tortured and end up taking out whole armies of opponents? God says specifically for us not to enjoying looking upon gratuitous violence (see *Isaiah 33:15 He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, He who despises the gain of oppressions, Who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, And shuts his eyes from seeing evil*), Satan loves to kill and destroy. Who are you honoring by your movie watching and gaming—Satan or God? Beware of Satan the destroyer addicting you to violence.
9. Satan ***the devouring lion*** (as he is revealed in I Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.) wants to ***debilitate*** your will and get you to do things you shouldn’t do. Does the crowd you run with slowly get you further and further away from God? Do the places you find your self at with your friends slowly make you participate in more and more things that displease God? Is it harder and harder to say no to sin? That is Satan the lion devouring your will to obey God!
10. Satan ***the fallen, warped, and twisted one*** (as he is revealed in Isaiah 14:12 “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!) wants to ***twist*** your thinking by putting sinful ideas to appealing music. Have you ever compared the words or lyrics of the songs you like and listen to—with God's Word? Based on the lyrics of your music, would the Pure and Holy God of the Universe ever own that music, listen to that music, memorize that music? Are you slowly getting less and less offended by the suggestions, blatant sins, and foul language you hear in the background of your life through music? That is Satan the fallen, warped one twisting your thinking!
11. Satan ***the counterfeiter of truth*** (as he is revealed in II Corinthians 11:14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.) wants to ***confuse*** your emotions by corrupting your desires and drawing your affections to the wrong things. Whatever we love we look more like whoever or whatever it is. If we believe God's Word is the ultimate truth we are guided closer each day towards what God loves; if we are strangers to His truth then we are drawn further away from what pleases Him, glorifies Him, and magnifies Him. What is your source of truth God or Satan? There are only two sources of wisdom—above and below (James 3). Where is your coming from? Do you know how to test truth, verify truth, and confirm truth? Only God's Word is the unfailing source of all truth needed for pleasing God. If you are not being filled by God through His Word with His truth—then you are being filled with counterfeit truth, not from God, nor pleasing Him. Loving the world (anything that doesn’t please God) is the sure road to confusion, corruption, and emptiness. That is how Satan the counterfeiter confuses your emotions, desires, and affections.
12. Satan ***the original idolater and covetous one*** (as he is revealed in Isaiah 14:13-14 For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ [He coveted what wasn’t his but God’s.]) wants to get you ***drooling*** over stuff, to the neglect of your family life, church life, and spiritual life—in order to get it; and then he wants darken you with discouragement once you get it

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because you will only want more. Is there an endless list in your mind of things you wish you could get that others have? Like cars, houses, clothes, electronic gear, trips, money, and so on? Do you sit and try to find ways to get those things? Are you willing to sacrifice for them? Do you ever sacrifice time with God, time with the saints gathered at church, time in His Word, time in prayer—in order to get those things? Do the desires for those things sometimes push God right out of your thoughts? If your answer was YES to any of the above watch out, you may be covetous and an idolater. Idolatry is ANYTHING that takes God’s rightful place in the life of His children. If work, entertainment, money-making, pleasure-seeking, collection-gathering, body building, beauty-enhancing, and so on have begun to erode God’s place in your life that is idolatry. Satan the original idolater and covetous one wants to make you drool for something other than God so that you begin to slowly neglect God, neglect His Word, neglect His gathered people, neglect memorization of His Word, prayer and other disciplines of a godly life.

So there are the elements of the war swirling within us. Satan never sleeps, never stops stalking each of God’s children. Listen to how clearly the Bible explains the targets in our life that Satan directs those constant attacks towards.

The Targets of Satan’s Attack

1. ***Satan can fill our hearts as believers with a desire to misrepresent our devotion to God and be hypocritical.***

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?”

“The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was *energized by Satan* (Acts 5:3); and he knows how to lie to the minds and hearts of church members, even genuine Christians, and get them to follow his orders. Always remember that the spiritual armor (Eph. 6:10–18) was given to believers, not to unbelievers; and it is believers who are in danger of being used by Satan to accomplish his evil purposes.

Their sin was *motivated by pride*, and pride is a sin that God especially hates and judges (Prov. 8:13). While the church was praising God for the generous offering of Barnabas, Satan whispered to the couple, “You can also bask in this kind of glory! You can make others think that you are as spiritual as Barnabas!” Instead of resisting Satan’s approaches, they yielded to him and planned their strategy.

It is easy for us to condemn Ananias and Sapphira for their dishonesty, but we need to examine our own lives to see if our profession is backed up by our practice. Do we really mean everything we pray about in public? Do we sing the hymns and Gospel songs sincerely or routinely? “These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me” (Matt. 15:8, NIV). If God killed “religious deceivers” today, how many church members would be left?

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We must keep in mind that their sin was not in robbing God of money but in robbing Him of glory. God didn't demand they sell the property; and, having sold it, God didn't demand they give any of the money to the church (Acts 5:4). Their lust for recognition conceived sin in their hearts (Acts 5:4, 9), and that sin led to death (James 1:15)".²

- ❖ Beware of allowing Satan to make you proudly affirm a deeper spiritual sacrifice and devotion than what God knows is real in your heart. **Solution:** repent of half-hearted devotion right now and surrender completely to Jesus Christ!

2. ***Satan can lead us into destructive behavior, and can also cause bodily harm (as most clearly seen in Job's boils).***

1 Corinthians 5:5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

The man was delivered to Satan that his body might be afflicted, in order that his soul might be saved.

- ❖ Beware of the consequence engine. God is not mocked. We always reap what we have sown. **Solution:** repent and stop now, give your body back to God as a living sacrifice before God's chastening starts.

3. ***Satan uses temptations to inflame our lusts on all three levels.*** Peiradzo 39 x

*1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that **Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.***

Satan works as a co-conspirator with your flesh and mine. He has power to cause our flesh to be tempted. Temptation is our flesh longing to be satisfied: either by the **cravings of our bodies chasing pleasures** (lusts of flesh) or the **longing of our eyes chasing possessions** (lust of the eyes), or by the **boastings of our hearts and mouths chasing status** (pride of life) as I John 2:15-17 says.

- ❖ Beware of playing with temptation lest Satan catch you in his trap, especially in the realm of sexual temptation as noted here. **Solution:** repent of playing with temptation, ask Jesus to deliver you from all evil in your life and take the escape He makes for you as you cry out for help!

4. ***Satan uses his mind to overpower our minds and has a great advantage if our minds are not protected by captivity to Christ.***

2 Corinthians 2:11 "Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." [noema 'devices, schemes, mind' 3540].

² Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

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This and similar passages of the Word of God teach that Satan is a personal being; that he exerts great influence over people's minds; that although he is finite (and therefore not everywhere present), he nevertheless works on people's minds generally and not merely on those in any one place. His powers of intelligence and agency must, therefore, be unimaginable. No individual and no community can ever be sure that he is not plotting their destruction. ³

"Devices", along with the words for "take advantage" and "ignorant," strongly implies that Satan targets the believer's mind, but God has provided protection by unmasking Satan's schemes in Scripture, along with providing the counteracting truth⁴.

- ❖ Beware of Satan's accusations that make believers who have sinned feel their case is hopeless. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin so that we will confess it and turn to Christ for cleansing; but Satan accuses us of sin so that we will despair and give up. **Solution:** thank Jesus right now for becoming sin for you, bearing your sin away forever. Tell Him you believe and thank Him for your salvation He purchased.

5. ***Satan can trick believers who listen to his lies into losing their focus upon Christ.*** *panourgia* (3834) 5x craftiness, trickery

*2 Corinthians 11:3 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.*

Paul here compared the church in Corinth to **Eve**. Instead of resisting (cf. James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9) the devil's inducement to disobedience Eve listened and succumbed (Gen. 3:1-6). The serpent enticed her by his **craftiness** (*panourgia*, "trickery"; cf. 2 Cor. 4:2). If we like Eve listen to Satan's lies, we become guilty of disobedience to God and disloyalty to Christ; and are no longer single mindedly loving and obeying Him⁵.

Satan's focus is on the mind, he is a liar and tries to get us to listen to his lies, ponder them, and then believe them. Remember what he did with Eve in Genesis 3:1-5. First, he *questioned* God's word ("Yea, hath God said?"), then he *denied* God's word ("Ye shall not surely die!"), and then he *substituted his own lie* ("Ye shall be as gods").⁶

Note the following "mind war" Satan is capable of. This is the New Testament usage of the Greek work in v. 11 'noema'.

Satan blinds minds: *2 Corinthians 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

Satan corrupts minds: *2 Corinthians 11:3 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.*

³ Hodge, Charles, *2 Corinthians: The Crossway Classic Commentaries*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books) 1997.

⁴ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

⁵ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

⁶ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

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- ❖ Beware of allowing Satan to corrupt your mind. You have if you are not single-minded for Christ. Satan can corrupt your mind, his mind is super-powerful yours apart from Christ is no match. **Solution:** repent of any corruption as in any double-mindedness (living one way here, another way there, and so on—invites Satan’s corruption); and then ask for Christ’s ‘simplicity’ which means “single-mindedness”. Here are Christ’s desires for our minds.

Jesus wants to captivate your mind: *2 Corinthians 10:5 casting down arguments (NKJV) [speculations (NASB); arguments (NIV); imaginations (KJV)] and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (NKJV)*

Jesus wants to guard your mind: *Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

6. **Satan can appear to be a messenger from God (angel of light) when he and his servants masquerade themselves.** *metaschematizo (3345) 5x “transform, masquerade, changing the outward form”*

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Satan has a counterfeit gospel (Gal. 1:6–12) that involves a different savior and a different spirit. The *preachers* of this false gospel (and they are with us yet today) are described in 2 Corinthians 11:13–15. Instead of being empowered by the Spirit, these ministers are energized by Satan. Three times, Paul used the word *transform* in referring to their work (see 2 Cor. 11:13–15). This Greek word simply means “to disguise, to masquerade.” There is a change on the outside, but there is no change on the inside. Satan’s workers, like Satan himself, never appear in their true character; they always wear a disguise and hide behind a mask⁷.

7. **Satan can buffet God’s servants.** *kolaphidzo “with fist” (2852)*

2 Corinthians 12:7 And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself!

In the Bible the idea is often presented that bodily diseases are at times produced by the direct agency of Satan, so that they may be regarded as his messengers, sent by him.⁸

⁷ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

⁸ Hodge, Charles, *2 Corinthians: The Crossway Classic Commentaries*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books) 1997.

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“Thorn in the flesh” (lit. “a stake for the flesh”) was a demon or a physical illness. Of the 188 uses of the Gr. word, *angellos*, in the NT, at least 180 are in reference to angels. This angel was from Satan, and may even have been a demon afflicting Paul.

8. ***Satan looks for and uses landing places like anger, lying, pride, and lust.*** (5117) *topos* “any spot, place, or position”

Ephesians 4:27 nor give place to the devil.

Anger can give Satan great power over us, as it furnishes a motive to yield to his evil suggestions. With the article (**the devil**) this always means Satan, the great accuser, the prince of the demons or fallen angels, who is the great opposer of God and seducer of men, against whose schemes we are commanded to be constantly on our guard.

When anger begins to control the believer, rather than the believer being under Christ's control, the devil gets **a foothold** (lit., “a place”) an opportunity for leading that Christian into further sin.

According to Jesus, anger is the first step toward murder (Matt. 5:21–26), because anger gives the devil a foothold in our lives, and Satan is a murderer (John 8:44). Satan hates God and God's people, and when he finds a believer with the sparks of anger in his heart, he fans those sparks, adds fuel to the fire.

9. ***Satan uses a variety of hindrances to disrupt our ministry for God.*** *egkopto* “interrupts, cut into” (1465);

1 Thessalonians 2:18 For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan thwarted us.

Here Paul says that Satan was ‘thwarting’ him like one army hindering the advance of their enemies. The literal meaning of ‘hindered’ here that Paul used was for Satan “breaking up the road and putting up obstacles”.

Satan is always at work seeking to tear down the church that Christ promised to build (cf. Matt. 16:18). Throughout the Scriptures we find Satan present at the churches of Jerusalem (Acts 5:1–10), Smyrna (Rev. 2:9,10), Pergamum (Rev. 2:13), Thyatira (Rev. 2:24), Philadelphia (Rev. 3:9), Ephesus (1 Tim. 3:6,7), and Corinth (2 Cor. 2:1–11). And so you can be assured that he and his evil influences are presently arrayed against each of us in Christ's church this morning!

10. ***Satan is a master hunter and very skilled at using snares*** (3803) *pagis* 5x “snare, trap, noose” from *pegnumai* ‘to get stuck or fastened’

*1 Timothy 3:7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the **snare of the devil.***

*1 Timothy 6:9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and **a snare** and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

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*2 Timothy 2:26 and that they may come to their senses and escape **the snare of the devil**, having been taken captive by him to do his will.*

Paul uses a word translated *come to their senses* (2 Tim. 2:26) that describes a person snared by Satan as needing to come out of a drunken stupor. Satan snares people by getting them drunk with his lies, and them without the restraint of God's Word disobey the Lord. Serving God means we use the Bible to instruct them 'sober them up', for this is the only way they are rescued from Satan's captivity. Satan is a liar (John 8:44); and he captures people by his lying promises, as he did Eve (see Gen. 3; 2 Cor. 11:3).

11. **Satan has the capability to swallow up believers who do not resist his constant**. The word Peter uses is to drink down (*katapino*) and not eat down (*kataphago*) as we would equate with the lion metaphor.

*1 Peter 5:8-9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, **seeking whom he may devour**. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*

Our confidence in God's sovereign care does not mean that we can live carelessly. Satan's evil forces which come against us demand that we stay alert. Satan and his forces are always active, looking for opportunities to overwhelm the believer with temptation, persecution, and discouragement (cf. Pss. 22:13; 104:21; Ezek. 22:25). Satan does everything he can to drag the Christian out of fellowship with Christ and out of Christian service (cf. Job 1; Luke 22:3; John 13:27; 2 Cor. 4:3,4; Rev. 12). And he constantly accuses believers before God's throne, attempting to convince God to abandon them (Job 1:6-12; Rev. 12:10).

Resist him, steadfast in the faith. Just as we saw in James 4:7 we are to "resist" which means "to stand up against." The way to resist the devil is not with special formulas, or words directed at him and his demons, but by using the truth of God's Word to defeat his lies in our mind. When believers know sound doctrine and obey God's truth, Satan is withstood by the sword of God's Word (cf. Eph. 6:17). **the same sufferings.** Believers around the world are always going through similar trials brought on by the roaring lion who never stops trying to devour believers.⁹

Only hope is II Cor 10.4-5 bring minds into Christ's obedience!

The **weapons** Paul used were the proclaimed Word of God and prayer (Eph. 6:17-18), weapons with **divine power**. In dependence on God (1 Cor. 2:4-5) these weapons, frail by worldly standards, are able **to demolish** the **arguments and every pretension** of the gospel's foes. Neither the god of this Age (2 Cor. 4:4) nor his henchmen (11:15) could oppose **the knowledge** (or power) **of God** on which Paul relied.¹⁰

⁹ Adapted from John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

¹⁰ Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

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The word *warfare* in 2 Corinthians 10:4 means “campaign.” Paul was not simply fighting a little skirmish in Corinth; the attack of the enemy there was part of a large satanic campaign. The powers of hell are still trying to destroy the work of God (Matt. 16:18), and it is important that we not yield any ground to the enemy, not even one church!

Many believers today do not realize that the church is involved in warfare, and those who do understand the seriousness of the Christian battle do not always know how to fight the battle. They try to use human methods to defeat demonic forces, and these methods are doomed to fail. When Joshua and his army marched around Jericho for a week, the spectators thought they were mad. When the Jews trusted God and obeyed orders, they brought down the high walls and conquered the enemy (Josh. 6:1–20).

When I was pastoring in Chicago, I met weekly with three pastor friends, and together we united in “warfare praying.” We claimed God’s promise to cast down the wrong thinking that was keeping people from surrendering to God; and God did great things in the lives of many people for whom we interceded. Once the walls in the mind have been torn down, the door to the heart can be opened. 11

our warfare. The motif of the Christian life as warfare is a common one in the NT (cf. 6:7; Eph. 6:10–18; 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3, 4; 4:7). **strongholds.** The metaphor would have been readily understandable to the Corinthians since Corinth, like most ancient cities, had a fortress (on top of a hill S of the city) in which its residents could take refuge. The formidable spiritual strongholds manned by the forces of hell can be demolished only by spiritual weapons wielded by godly believers—singularly the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17), since only the truth of God’s Word can defeat satanic falsehoods. This is the true spiritual warfare. Believers are not instructed in the NT to assault demons or Satan (*see note on Jude 9*), but to assault error with the truth. That is our battle (cf. John 17:17; Heb. 4:12). **every thought into captivity.** This emphasizes the total destruction of the fortresses of human and satanic wisdom and the rescuing of those inside from the damning lies that had enslaved them¹².

¹¹ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

¹² John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

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