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### **Today's Darkness**

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As one surveys the Christian scene today it is apparent even to the casual observer that persons in the counseling as well as the theological world are not taking Satan seriously enough. As this new century has progressed it has become even more apparent that most others in the Christian world also do not take him seriously. One rarely sees an article in Christian periodicals on his role in the current moral state of society, or on the persecution of the Christian church all of which can be related to Satan's work if one is aware of his existence and his strategies.

Because we are ignoring him we are not building our spiritual immunity or doing spiritual warfare in the world. If one reads books on demonology or on spiritual warfare all authors emphasize his existence, but only one cites the failure to believe in Satan and his works and/or the refusal to seriously consider repudiating Satan and his works as a determinant in carrying out active warfare (Barnhouse 1956). It is indeed rare in most of the Christian world that people recognize his pervasive activity.

One example of the neglect can be found in our understanding of the war we are currently fighting in Iraq. There is, in the minds of the world, the American public and most of the media, a misunderstanding as to who we are really fighting there and elsewhere. They presume that we are fighting the residuals of the fallen government of Saddam Hussein, but they are dead wrong. We are fighting the god of Islam. If one carefully reads the news it is clear that no single Muslim country is involved. The terrorists are from Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Oman, Yemen, Kuwait, Morocco, Kenya, Algeria, Chechnya and even South Africa. All have been implicated in terrorism against the West. All are fanatical Muslims. Even though the governments of these countries are not accused in our fight against terrorism, it is their religion that foments it. Their populace, in general, are sympathetic to the terrorists and support them in their activities.

Islam is a terrorist religion. The author has commented elsewhere that Mohammed was a terrorist. He and his followers spread his religion by the sword beginning in Arabia, later in the Christian world and in the 10-40 Window. In a published timeline of his life, it was said that he began his terrorism by beheading 800 Jews after which he sold their wives and children into slavery (The Koran p 13). At a later date it was said that he put another tribe of Jews to the sword. In the Koran he tells his followers to chop off the hands and arms of

infidels and to put to the sword all who do not accept his religion (The Koran p 315). The sad thing is that their current religious leaders continue to teach Muslims that they are to propagate their religion by killing infidels. They especially consider Christians and Jews as infidels and will kill them even if they die in the process. They feel that they will be eternally rewarded. Their reward is special treatment in their "heaven." There they will sit on brocaded couches by sparkling streams of water and be served by "dark eyed khouris" (virgins) (Koran pp 110, 111). They do not mind dying to serve their master. This is why they are conducting their suicide bombings and waging guerilla warfare.

Why do they single us out? The answer is that the god of Islam wants the worship of all mankind. He gets it in Islam, but not in the Christian and Jewish world. In Christ's temptation by Satan he asked Jesus to worship him, but Jesus told him that we are to worship God alone (Matt. 4:10). Because many of us worship God alone and not Satan he wants us destroyed. Jesus said that Satan has always been a murderer and liar. He has not changed. Why do adherents to Islam murder and lie? They are followers of a murderer and liar (John 8:44). It is, therefore, conceivable that they should do exactly the same.

Jesus came to show the nature of the Father. He is love so Jesus first showed us how to love and then commanded us to love. Mohammed came to show the nature of his father. He is a murderer and a liar and Mohammed first showed his followers how to murder and lie then he commanded them to murder and lie.

Most people in Europe and America do not see the real nature of the conflict because it can only be spiritually discerned. Those of us who have the Spirit can discern the nature of the conflict because it is a spiritual battle. We truly are not fighting against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers and rulers in high places (Eph. 6:12). They are spiritual forces and have to be fought with spiritual warfare. On earth guns will never win it in the short term, but at the moment we have to use guns to control their murderous intentions and will have to continue to do so. Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and in time Iran, are as good places as any to start. Our fighting in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and in time Iran is necessary to contain the present fleshly attack on us, and we have no choice but to continue it. Even so, it will not end soon. The broad support of the attack on Christianity and Judaism will mean that it will go on and on and on as it has for the last 1400 years.

It is interesting that Satan is attacking the places where Christianity and Judaism are the strongest. He has focused on us, and that part of the third world where Christianity is flourishing, mainly Sudan and China. These are not the only places where he is trying to destroy them for he is active wherever these faiths exist. His followers murder pastors and church members, burn churches, and do everything they can to promote Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or communism.

Radical Hindus have targeted the Christian church in India and have killed missionaries and church members and burned churches. Buddhists have done the same in Sri Lanka. The Maoists in Columbia, Peru and in Nepal are all promoting communism by the sword. Christianity is the major threat to the spread of their ideologies so they go after it first. Communism has always made Christianity a target to be destroyed in their fight for political control. Since both are religions, a person cannot believe in God and communism at the same time. In communism the state is god.

Not only does Satan promote his agenda in terrorism, but he also promotes his murderous activity in the pro-choice movement. The evidence is in the statistic that 1,800,000 babies are murdered by abortion in the US every year. Heaven only knows how many are murdered in Russia, China, India, Europe and other countries in the world. To facilitate this he has convinced physicians that it is all right to perform them. He persuaded the AMA to change the Hippocratic oath so doctors do not swear to refrain from doing abortions. In the same way he promotes abortions through Planned Parenthood. They are the largest purveyor of abortions in the country. They have produced a curriculum for sex education and have been able to make it acceptable in schools all over the country. They teach that promiscuity is inevitable so we should teach our children to have "safe sex." With their approval we are finding that children are having sex as early as age 11. Their teaching has resulted in massive increases in illegitimate births (70% in blacks and 23% in whites). As well, sexually transmitted diseases have spread at alarming rates. The most deadly of these is AIDS, a disease that kills 100% of the people who contract it. The only effective control measure is abstinence, something that the bureaucrats at WHO and CDC, who are supposedly trying to control the epidemic, abhor. One of the sad commentaries on the church today is that many in the bureaucracies of some mainline denominations are pro-choice (murder), pro-promiscuity and pro-homosexuality.

Satan is a subtle adversary. He not only has many ways to destroy us but he also has ways to divert us from worshiping the one true God. Just as he did in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-4), he uses humanism in our society. Our schools and universities are promoting humanism and make being our own god attractive (Humanist Manifesto I, 1933). Its proponents appeal to our biological nature and make religion appear foolish. They make any belief in supernatural beings appear unscientific and, therefore, not acceptable. Our human nature is then unbridled and we make our own laws and as a result disobey God's laws (Fletcher, 1966). That is why Paul said that every man becomes a law unto himself without God. He cannot obey God's laws even if he tries (Romans 7 and 8:7).

He has also used theologians to destroy our faith in God. By sending men who have stated that the Bible has no real authority, he has undermined the very foundation of Christianity. Two German theologians, Bultmann and Fuchs, have

used historical criticism to refute the truth of the Word. This has been passed on to their students who have influenced an entire generation of ministers. These individuals then pass it on to their congregations. If God is a figment of our imagination it is only natural that they teach that Satan is also a figment of our imagination and need not be feared (Linneemann, 1990).

Satan also uses atheists. Those people who want to take God out of our public life, especially out of government are working for him. He is especially active in the ACLU whose leaders apparently are atheists since they are anti-Christian as far as church and state are concerned. They do defend the rights of Christians at times in cases of little importance. I believe that this is for cosmetic purposes.

Another of Satan's ploys is to destroy the traditional family. It is number one on the humanist agenda. If they can destroy the family they can then indoctrinate children with their ideology. The main thrust of this movement is to make homosexual marriage legal. If this happens it will then make marriage between one man and one woman an anachronism. Polygamy, group marriage, serial marriage (which we already have) and living together (which we already have) will be equally valid legal relationships. All of these are an abomination to God.

One of Satan's weapons used to destroy families is pornography. The enterprise each year is a multibillion dollar industry. Men get hooked on it in childhood and then carry their addiction into their marriages. In time this destroys their marriage since it is a form of adultery. Jesus condemned lust and that is what pornography stimulates. Where there is adultery in a marriage, whether in the flesh or in pornography, we find that 75% end in divorce.

And there is the homosexual activist movement. Homosexuals do not want to be stigmatized and desire access to sexual partners of their choice. This means "straights" as well as youths. It is a documented fact that almost all homosexuals have a relationship with a youth 15 years or younger at some time in their career. They are also pushing for the right to marry. Men and women were created in disjunction by God and when we are united in marriage we become one to form the nucleus of a family. Two men or two women cannot be joined together since they are created to be joined to a person of the opposite sex.

Pedophiliacs who prefer children as sexual partners are also active. They, through NAMBLA, are pushing to make pedophilia legal. Their motto is "sex before eight or its too late." It is conceivable that they might get their way in time.

Homosexual activists are tearing the church apart. They have made their greatest inroads in the Episcopal church where they succeeded in getting a homosexual appointed as a bishop, and have succeeded in getting numerous

homosexual priests appointed. Presbyterians, Methodists and Lutherans are continuing to vote down their proposals, but the United Church of Christ as well as the Disciples of Christ, have succumbed to the constant attacks by the proponents of homosexual rights and appointed homosexuals as ministers. The political strategy of the activists is to keep coming back, coming back, coming back until they wear down the opposition. Satan is persistent. Interestingly, the bureaucracies and seminaries of the mainline churches are infiltrated by liberal theologians who promote the homosexual agenda even though the members in the pews of these churches are against it. Satan is the prime mover of this movement. In the Catholic Church they have infiltrated the priesthood where they have seduced children and older teenagers scarring their souls for life. This brings ill repute on the church and causes people to distrust their leaders. Most of the populace want their leaders to be examples of Christian behavior, so when scandal such as has occurred in the Roman Catholic Church is rampant, the people cannot and do not trust their leaders.

Another area in which Satan is busy is in the gang culture. Satan has led gangs to organize as a religion. They have their symbols, flags, books of discipline, and their own laws of behavior. They worship money and sex. They accumulate money through drug sales and prostitution. They have leaders who are essentially apostles who teach them their rules of behavior and how to recruit new members. They defend their territories through murder and extortion. These gangs are most often affiliated nationwide. They are made up of all races and ethnic groups. They are organized much as the Mafia is. We speak of their psychological needs as etiologic, but it is true that Satan appeals to those needs in capturing them to be subjects in his kingdom. Their psychological needs are much the same as for any other group. They want an identity, recognition, a sense of belonging, discipline, love and money. This they can get in a gang. It is easy to recruit youth who have no religion, have not had a father, have received little love and suffered privation where they came from.

If we carefully meditate on the data above we should be appalled. It seems that Satan is in the process of escalating his activities while we sit purposeless and passionless, therefore, we must look at what is going on realistically and take action.

Many people these days wonder if we are in the end times. The answer is a tentative no. Jesus promised that there would be persecution of the church. He also said that there would be wars and rumors of wars until the real end times come. The Bible (the Revelation of Jesus) also says that Satan will not stop his nefarious activity and will even escalate it in the end times until Jesus returns and reigns over all. All of Jesus' prophecies have come true except for his second coming. Why can't we take Him seriously and fight the spiritual battle that we should?

As I have noted earlier spiritual warfare is not being conducted. The reason is that the Bible does not speak of it. There is only one scripture that implies that we should be armored to do battle with Satan. In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul makes it plain that we are soldiers of the Lord and that we need to be armored. He used the standard armor of a Roman soldier of his day as a basis for entreaty. He did, however, spiritualize it. He began with the belt which spiritually was the truth of the gospel. One commentator said that the belt kept the soldiers tunic out of the way and held his sword and dagger. The breastplate of righteousness protects our heart. Our righteousness is the righteousness that comes from having Jesus as our Lord and his presence in our lives, as well as his teachings, protect us from Satan's temptations. The shoes on our feet are to carry us into the world to proclaim the gospel. Jesus gave us orders to go into all the world and proclaim it. Without shoes we will not go far nor can we stand firm. The shield of faith protects us from Satan's efforts to lead us astray. Paul called them fiery arrows or darts. In Paul's day arrows whose tips were dipped in burning pitch were used to set wooden fortifications on fire and to incapacitate soldiers who could not fight if they were trying to put out the burning pitch on their armor or clothes. We are also to take the helmet of salvation that protects our mind from Satan's lies, and to use the sword of the Spirit which is used to defeat Satan's blandishments. If you remember, when Satan was tempting Christ with scripture, our Lord answered him with scripture.

Paul did say that our other primary weapon is prayer. In a like manner, Terry Law in his book, *The Power of Praise and Worship* (1985), says that one of our greatest weapons is (prayers of) praise. Satan who desires that we praise him is turned off and leaves us alone when we praise God. He cannot stand it. Worship is, however, an even more effective weapon. Worship is what Satan desires most. He wanted Jesus to worship him and Jesus made the point that we were to worship God alone. Satan is really turned off by our worship of the Most High God.

Equal to prayer is the Word of God. Most people do not do Bible study. The Word says that the Word of God is sharper than a double-edged sword and that it cuts through to where soul and spirit meet (Heb. 4:12). Jesus used scripture to deal with Satan when he tempted him. We need to know scripture so we too can use it as a weapon against Satan.

Another useful weapon that we have is the ability to bind and loose things in both heaven and on earth. Satan can do nothing without God's permission. When Jesus deputized us to bind and loose I feel certain that he was giving us power to control Satan and his activities. Our use of this power must be according to God's will. There are those who believe that we cannot bind anything on earth that has not been previously bound in Heaven. Careful reading of the scripture refutes this. "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in

heaven” (Matt. 16:19 KJV). Therefore, we must believe that we do have that power. Jesus made it plain that he deputized not only the apostles but also us to bind and loose.

Do we use these weapons? The answer is no. If the statistics of the old Gallup polls are still correct the average Christian only prays one minute a day and the average minister 3 minutes a day (Gallup, 1981) . The praise in most of our churches is at best desultory. Worship is not in Spirit and truth. We really do not appreciate the awesomeness of God so our worship is meaningless. How do I know this? The answer is that I have “worshiped” in these churches, and it is empty and hollow in most. Churches are usually social clubs where the members spend their time eating and socializing, but praise and worship is something they do only in name. Our greatest weapons are prayers of praise and worship. If we use them God will heal our land and protect us from Satan’s efforts to destroy us. We will then be able to deal with Islam in an effective way by evangelizing them. Only when they have their hearts changed will we have the power to overcome them and then be able to live with them.

In the same way most churchgoers do not use the sword of the Spirit. It is my experience that most people in the churches I have visited do not read their Bibles. They are, therefore, lacking their most potent weapon to fight against the devil.

Terry Tekyl (2004) has observed that our churches today are mostly people centered churches. They are supposed to be God centered. Worship is defined as reverence for a divine being. Reverence is profound, adoring, awed respect. This means that we have to experience the awe that comes when we come into his presence. It is also true that we do not experience awe in most worship services. Most people do not think that God is present and like the ancient Hebrews they do not want him there. They are afraid of Him. In contrast, people in the early church believed that when they worshiped the Lord was present. I am sure that they felt his presence. Most persons today are not aware of his presence. They do not even expect him to be there. He is thought of as being up in heaven and they have to go up to him if they are to encounter him. We do not! He is here and all we have to do is to open up our hearts and let Him out. We easily open up our hearts when we contemplate his holiness. God is perfect everything. He is creator, love, goodness, perfection, completeness, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. We cannot define the limits of his attributes. Paul summed it up in Ephesians 3:18, 19 when he said we could never know how high, wide, deep and long his love is. Since we are finite all we can do is experience a little bit of it, but when we do it is far beyond anything that we have experienced or imagined in our humanity. If we praise God for what he is we quickly transition into worship, for we cannot praise and thank him without wanting to worship him.

In spiritual warfare it is occasionally necessary to directly confront Satan. There are times when Satan possesses, oppresses, or obsesses people. Can he do this to a Christian? There are those who say he cannot, but people in the trenches, especially in the third world, say that he can (Montgomery 1976). I have to admit that I have only seen one person who was a real Christian who I thought was possessed. I have seen many more who were not Christians who were possessed. There are clear cut diagnostic criteria for demon possession. These were proposed by Nevius in the late 1800's and have been agreed upon by many since that time (Nevius, 1968). Space does not permit the enumeration of these criteria, but one of them, the hatred of Christ, makes it easy to make them reveal themselves. John said that no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit (1 John 4:1-3). They will usually reveal themselves when you ask the patient to repeat the phrase after you. Much of what is called demon possession today does not meet these criteria.

Oppression is the most common form of demonic activity (MacNutt 1995). Here there is a sense of blackness around the person. This may be localized to a geographical locale or may be a pervasive emotional state. One patient who was oppressed appeared depressed and was unable to carry out his ministerial duties. When it was discovered that he was oppressed, deliverance lifted his depression and he was healed.

Obsession is what we are seeing today in fanaticism. Not all of it is demonic in origin. There has to be a background on which fanaticism is grafted. There is, though, no question that fundamentalist religion is the stronghold that Satan exploits to create fanaticism. If its adherents have the idea that murder and terrorism is the way to be rewarded in their heaven, Satan does not have to do much persuading to turn them into fanatics. Satan also obsesses people with doubt about their salvation, doctrinal differences or their ability to measure up to God's requirements.

What do we do about his attacks? First of all, if we are going to do battle with him we need spiritual immunity. Spiritual immunity is gained by having a right relationship with God. This means that Jesus is our Lord and Savior and has endued us with the Holy Spirit. We maintain our relationship with Him by maintaining communication through regular prayer, Bible study, celebration of the Eucharist and worship. If we are growing in our relationship with the Lord we will have spiritual immunity. We then utilize the interventions that God gave us to do battle.

Satan is active in the world today in many ways. It is obvious that he is working in the Muslim world to foment terrorism. He has escalated his efforts in the Judeo-Christian world too. He desires that we should worship him and not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He uses murder and lies to gain his ends.



Terrorism and war are his first choices. He has continued his program of murder with the pro choice movement. His most potent weapon in our society is to declare that the Bible has no authority. This leads people to humanism that teaches them that they can be their own god. He has tried to destroy the family that God ordained by promoting homosexual marriage, adultery, living together and serial marriage. This destroys children who do not learn how to live life. On some occasions he uses direct intervention into people's lives with possession states, oppression, and obsession.

The church has not admitted that Satan is a problem. In many instances they have refused to believe he even exists. This gives him free reign to do as he pleases in the world. It is, therefore, necessary that we believe the Word and be involved in spiritual warfare. God has given us the weapons. They are: prayer, the Word of God, praise, worship, binding and loosing and deliverance to combat him. It is imperative that we arm ourselves and go into battle on all fronts.