Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

And Nothing But the Truth
Scripture: Matthew 12:27-29; 1 Peter 5:8; James 4:7
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God never intended His people to worship Him apart from the use of their minds. Real spirituality begins with a precise understanding of truth. Yet I see much of contemporary Christianity heading down the paths of mystical experience and fantasy.

That was illustrated in an article I once read in the *Los Angeles Times:*

PASADENA, Calif.-Under the militant banner of "spiritual warfare," a growing number of evangelical and charismatic Christian leaders are preparing broad assaults on what they call the cosmic powers of darkness. Fascinated with the notion that Satan commands a hierarchy of territorial demons, some mission agencies and big-church pastors are devising strategies for "breaking the strongholds" of those evil spirits alleged to be controlling cities and countries. Some proponents in the fledgling movement already claim focused prayer meetings ended the curse of the Bermuda Triangle, led to the 1985 downfall of guru Baghwan Shree Rajneesh and produced a two-week drop in crime and freeway traffic in Los Angeles for the 1984 Olympics. Fuller Seminary professor C. Peter Wagner, who has written extensively on the subject, led a so called summit meeting on cosmic-level spiritual warfare ... in Pasadena, Calif. Two dozen men and women took part, including a Texas couple who head a group called the "Generals of Intercession" and an Oregon man who conducts "spiritual-warfare bootcamps." In his opening remarks, Wagner said, "If you do not know what you are doing, and few ... have the necessary expertise, Satan will eat you for breakfast."
I am fearful that this type of mindset is just one example of how the church has fallen victim to the New Age Movement, a thinly veiled form of Hindu mysticism. It is belief in everything, and a belief in nothing-with no distinction between reality and fantasy.

Much of the professing church is in perfect harmony with the New Age movement's spirit of anti-intellectualism. For example, the Roman Catholic Church emphasizes ritual-a mechanical anti-intellectualism in which mystical ceremony replaces intelligent worship. Here Scripture becomes subservient to the church.

Liberal Protestants have emphasized social reform-a political anti-intellectualism produced by the despair of trying to find truth without submitting to the authority of Scripture as the standard for ruling the church.

Charismatics have long emphasized subjectivism-an experiential anti-intellectualism that is the product of weak theology and a careless handling of Scripture.

Those trends all contribute to a kind of mindless, mystical Christianity that is the antithesis of God's design for His church.

That's why I'm so concerned. A seminary professor claims that if we don't learn some mysterious techniques of spiritual warfare, Satan will eat us for breakfast! Is that true? The apostle Peter said, "Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). But the context is calling for sobriety and vigilance, not a mystical cosmic warfare strategy.

Some suggest all we need to do is bind Satan-just say, "Satan, I bind you," and he is caught. They cite Matthew 12:29, where Jesus says, "How can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."

But Jesus was dispelling the Pharisees' foolish accusation that He worked under Satan's power (vv. 27-28), not relating a scenario whereby believers could "bind" Satan. He used the illustration of a thief, who, planning to rob a strong man's house while the man was there, would first have to bind him or risk being arrested and beaten. Jesus' point was that He had demonstrated to the Pharisees and all Israel His power over Satan and the kingdom of evil. Only God has the power and authority to enter the very house of Satan, successfully bind him, and carry off his property. Even Paul was hindered by Satan (1 Thessalonians 2:18). Are we to assume he didn't know the correct formula?

There is no magic phrase or mantra we can say that will bind Satan, but God has not left us without a divine strategy for dealing with him. God's strategy centers on objective truth, not subjective experience. It begins with sound doctrine, not cabalistic technique. Yet ironically, those who talk most about warfare against Satan often minimize the importance of doctrine.

In Ephesians 6:11 Paul says, "Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." What is our armor? It consists of the belt of truthfulness (not merely knowing the truth, but being committed to it), the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace (confidence that we have made peace with God), the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation (confidence in our security in Christ), and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. None of those hints at any secret technique. Rather, they speak of clear understanding and a solid commitment to biblical truth and holiness.

When we resist Satan by taking our stand in the armor of God's truth, he flees. James 4:7 says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Peter said, "Resist him, *firm in the faith"* (1 Peter 5:9, emphasis added)-firm in the Christian faith, which is the revealed truth. This is objective truth, not some unseen cosmic force. Since Satan is a deceiver and a liar, we can successfully resist him only

by knowing and obeying the truth.

Paul said, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Again, we don't battle Satan with magic words and imaginary forces; we rely on the power of His truth as it brings even our thoughts captive to our Lord. That is genuine and ultimate victory over satanic forces.

No matter how Satan attacks, the solution is the same. We stand in the truth. We don't need to learn hidden strategies to fight Satan. God's truth is the supreme weapon against the father of lies (cf. John 8:44). Only when we know the truth and commit ourselves to obey it will we stand strong.

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