OVERCOMING THE SPIRIT OF STRONG DELUSION

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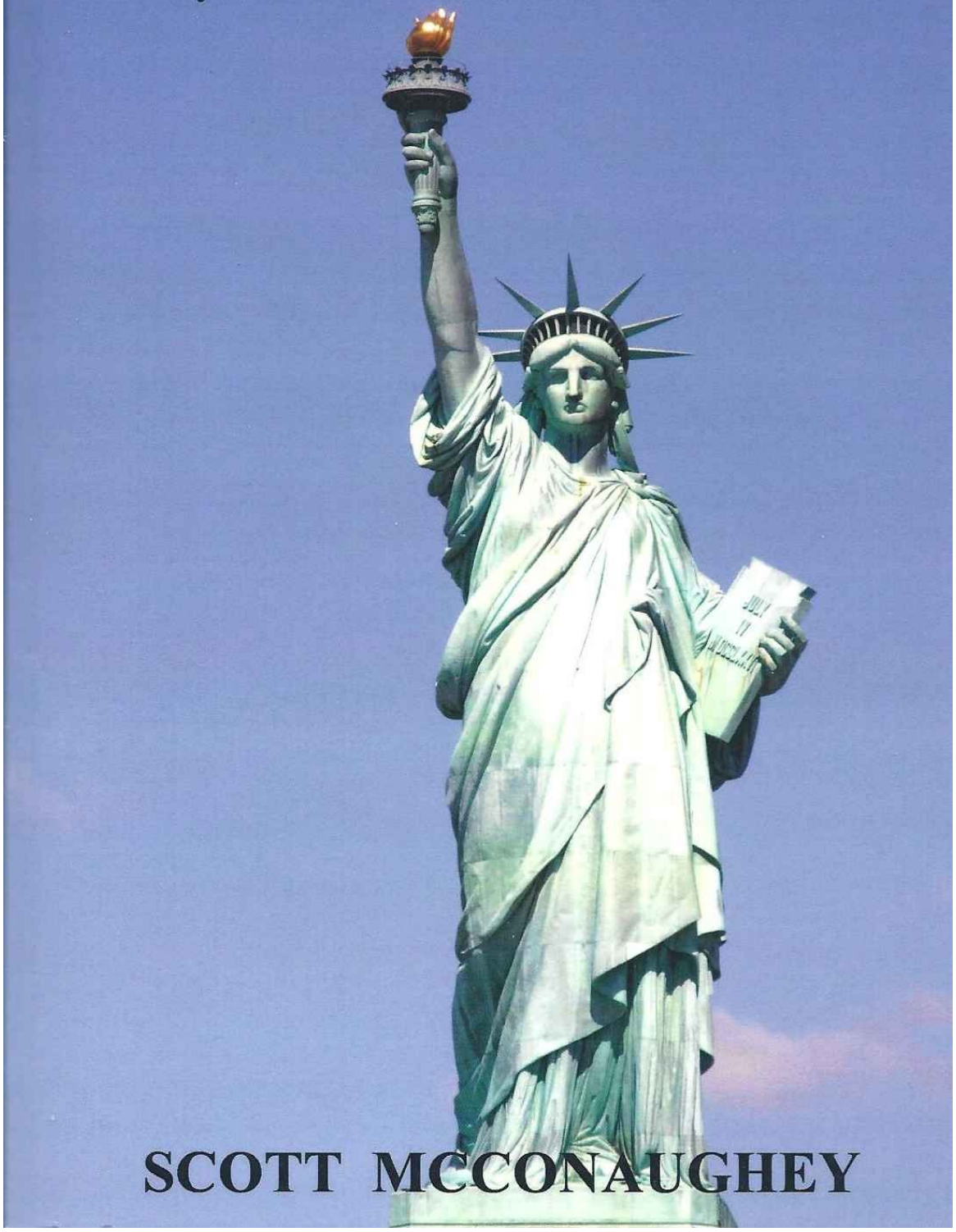

SCOTT MCCONAUGHEY

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By Scott McConaughey

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INTRODUCTION

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. And for this reason <u>God will send them strong delusion</u>, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. II Thessalonians 2:9-12 (underlining mine)

God is going to send a strong delusion on the earth to harden the hearts of those who persistently refuse to receive the love of the truth and who take pleasure in unrighteousness. This will hasten the end time judgments of God and result in the great falling away, the rise of the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation and the visible return of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

God is calling many of His watchmen to sound the alarm and warn people of the lateness of the hour and equip them to overcome this spirit as it floods the earth. The Bible tells us that many will fall away from the faith and will be swept into the grand deception[1]. The Spirit of God wants each of us to understand the times and seasons and be prepared to overcome and walk in truth.

This book is written as a prophetic warning and will give you clear instruction so that you can be ready to stand and overcome in these last days. There are extended passages of scripture included to equip you. Please read them carefully. Your eternal destiny may depend on them.

Personal Testimony

God's grace touched my life as I was converted to Christ in 1974. Since then, with His help, I have sought with all my heart to be faithful to Him and discover the knowledge of His truth in the Bible. In my early Christian years, several groups approached me and asked me to be a part of their fellowship. All of them turned out to be cults of one sort or another. Consequently, I earnestly studied the Bible to discover truth and protect myself from deception.

In order to accurately handle the word of God, an individual needs to walk in close relationship to the Holy Spirit and receive His revelation, interpretation and applications in the context of a solid

[1] II Thessalonians 2:3

Christian community. God has called His leaders to be devoted to prayer and the ministry of the word[2].

In the fall of 2008, the Lord spoke to me from Daniel 9 to fast and prayerfully seek Him in a special way for more revelation and understanding of what is happening on earth. During that forty-day season, I was given about 30 prophetic dreams that began showing me how the powerful spirit of strong delusion is working in these last days.

The general theme of those dreams related to how Satan was loosing a flood of deception, treachery, betrayal and murder on earth. A few of the dreams included the enemy trying to cause me to fear my own wife. While my wife Glenda would never do any of the things I dreamed, the Lord was showing me how the spirit of strong delusion would tempt a person to believe evil about a loved one. Let me give you an example.

In one of the dreams, I saw what looked like my wife approaching me with a large hypodermic needle. I knew in the dream that this needle was full of deadly poison and that if I allowed her to inject it into me, I would certainly die. In the natural, while still dreaming, I jumped out of bed and began yelling at my wife not to touch me. Glenda woke up startled and said, "You're having a bad dream again. Wake up!"

I yelled back at her something foolish like, "Don't talk to me like that. You're trying to kill me!" After that, while standing in the middle of the bedroom, I awoke and felt quite foolish once again. Intercessors have a good laugh over some of my crazier dreams. Since I had many other alarming dreams like this one, I earnestly sought the Lord for the interpretation and application.

The same morning that I had the dream stated above, I was scheduled to preach in our church service and had been waiting on the Lord for His message. As I prayed, the Lord released more revelation about the spirit of strong delusion and how it was working locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. I preached the warning message and then the Lord told me to write this book. I have struggled greatly to complete this task.

In the fall of 2008, America was choosing its next president along with many senators and congressmen. As mentioned earlier, the Holy Spirit had me fasting and praying in order to see in the spirit realm some things about this election. What I saw was the spirit of strong delusion sweeping over many in America's electorate and influencing

[2] Acts 6:4

them to make choices of candidates who call evil good and good evil. It was extremely alarming to say the least.

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Isaiah 5:20

Two key political issues illustrate this truth. The murder of unborn children (abortion) and homosexuality are evil according to the word of God. The enemy puts a spin on words and politicians talk about a woman's right to choose and gay rights as a liberty that is good. Those who oppose the policy of abortion and gays are often considered evil, backwards and homophobic.

The spirit of strong delusion causes individuals who believe those lies of Satan to be tenaciously convinced that their view is the truth. They call evil good and good evil because they earnestly believe the lies of Satan are the truth. This spirit influenced the first century Pharisees to be convinced that Jesus was evil and they rose up to murder Him thinking that would be good for the nation. This spirit is going after religious leaders today and we must all be aware of how it works in preparation to overcome it.

Deceived by What We Believe is True

We have all been deceived at various times in our lives. Sometimes, we have earnestly believed our deceptions and taught them to others. I once was taught and believed that the healing gifts of the Spirit died off with the last apostles[3]. Consequently, in the first twenty years of my ministry I only saw two people healed in answer to prayer. During the last fourteen years of ministry, where I have believed that God still heals and releases the gift of the Spirit to heal, I have seen many hundreds healed through prayer and laying on of hands.

Satan is a liar and the father of all lies[4]. He is releasing a flood of lies on earth at all times to deceive people. In these last days, because of the extreme rebellion of man, God is not only allowing this deception, He is authorizing a greater release of the delusion to accomplish His end time purposes.

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[3] The doctrine of cessationism is still currently held by portions of the Church. It teaches that most of the gifts of the Spirit were only used for establishing the Church and have now ceased to function. It also says the offices of Apostle and Prophet have ceased. This false doctrine illustrates the power of strong delusion. Many Christian leaders sincerely and earnestly believe it is true as I once did.

[4] John 8:44

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the discerning of spirits which enables us to perceive by revelation the root motivation or source of a message, action, behavior pattern or influence. When James and John wanted to call fire down on a Samaritan village, Jesus recognized they were of the wrong spirit[5]. When Peter declared that Jesus was the Christ, he was commended as having received revelation from the Father. Moments latter, Peter moved in the opposite spirit and tried to talk Jesus out of going to the cross. Jesus rebuked Peter as speaking from Satan[6].

The spirit of strong delusion works on those whose hearts have allowed some ground of pride and self will to remain. If you daily humble yourself before God, die to self and love the truth of God, He will open your eyes to see by His Spirit so that you will not be deceived.

Walk in Truth

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. III John 4

The beloved disciple John accurately expressed the heart of the Father in this classic verse. God's greatest joy is watching His children embrace and walk in His truth. When we walk in truth, God reveals more truth or light to us and so we can walk in His light.

Satan's primary goal is to get us to walk in his sinister lies. When we walk in deception based on his lies, we are living in a darkened state of being. The end result of continually walking in darkness is eternal separation from God's love and eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire. It's extremely important to walk in truth!

God blessed Glenda and me with six amazing children. We raised them to walk with God. We rejoice in how God is using them to spread salt and light as they have been scattered throughout North America and in various parts of the world. There is no greater joy than to see them following Jesus with all their heart.

On the other hand, if one of our children begins to walk in some level of error and deception, there may be no greater grief to our hearts. Our heavenly Father grieves when we walk into darkness. At times we may come out from His perfect protection due to rebellion and stubbornness.

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[5] Luke 9:54-56
[6] Matthew 16:16-23

God has been faithful to give us warning dreams and revelation when one of our children were about to be assaulted or make a wrong choice. Unfortunately, some times children don't listen to the warnings of the Lord and they choose to do what they want to do. This has caused parents considerable grief and the impacts of rebellion can be devastating. Glenda and I were involved in over twenty years of inner-city ministry. We worked with many families crushed by the grief that comes when parents walk in deception and rebellion. Their children repeat the cycle as the iniquity of one generation flows to the next and the grief tends to compound greatly[7].

God's heart is that His children walk in truth at all times. God is warning us now to take heed that no one deceives us. God is exhorting us to hold fast to His truth and come out of sin because the spirit of strong delusion is already sweeping the earth and starting to carry many away from true faith in God.

Live by the Spirit, Crucify the Flesh

For <u>if you live according to the flesh you will die</u>; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Romans 8:13,14 (underlining mine)

Our flesh always desires to rebel against our heavenly Father and His word[8]. The power of the cross by God's Spirit is available to enable us to choose to die to self and live to God[9]. When we call on Jesus to help us and embrace Him and His cross, we choose to daily crucify the flesh and its evil passions.

Satan told Eve long ago that if she acted in the flesh and ate of the forbidden fruit that she would not die. He lied then and he lies today telling Christians that we will not die if we live by the flesh. God's word, stated above, is clear about this. **"If you live according to the flesh you will die".** The Holy Spirit will help us put to death the deeds of the body including its passions and lustful appetites if we will walk with Him and talk with Him.

True sonship before God is walking with the Holy Spirit, walking in truth and walking in light. Those who are lukewarm and try to be a Christian and walk in the world become double minded. After God fully releases strong delusion on the earth, He will spit all the luke-warm out of His mouth and they will fall away from true faith in Him

[7] Exodus 34:7
[8] Galatians 5:17
[9] Romans 6:1-14

and be lost in a flood of deception[10]. Those days have begun beloved and the great falling away is at hand. Studying and obeying God's word in this book will help you be equipped to become more than a conqueror in Christ.

[10] Revelation 3:16

CHAPTER 1 – ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1

God created the natural realm time that we live in now. God lives in an eternal realm that transcends time. God has always existed and will always exist. He is eternal. Before God created time, He developed a perfectly wise plan to demonstrate His great grace and love on earth to beings created in His image.

During the ages of history on earth since the days of Adam and Eve, God has been working out His plan through various covenants with man in order to accomplish His ultimate purposes. We understand that before our earth time began, God created many spiritual beings including Lucifer. Lucifer rebelled against God and determined to establish his own thrown and exalt himself above God and bring worship to himself[11].

God expelled Lucifer from heaven and we know him now as Satan or the devil. Satan persuaded up to one third of the angelic beings to follow him in his plan to usurp the throne of God[12]. They were all cast down out of heaven and placed into the earth realm until the final judgment.

God determined to reveal His grace and glory to all His created beings through an incredible real-life drama on earth in the war of good against evil. God and His angels are at war with Satan and His followers. We know that God will ultimately win. Mankind was created in the image of God and given the responsibility to steward the earth, to be fruitful, multiply and subdue the earth. As stewards, each individual will be held responsible by the Lord who owns the earth and the fullness therein[13]. Mankind is in the middle of the war and the battle rages for the heart affections of every person.

Because of deception and rebellion, Adam and Eve fell from obedience to God and forfeited the authority over the earth to Satan and his hordes. Mankind disintegrated in a moral freefall that resulted in God's judgment by flood. Noah and his family were saved by the Ark and God established a covenant with Noah.

Centuries later God called Abram out of Ur of Chaldea and led him to become the father of faith and the father of the nation to be called

[11] Isaiah 14:13-15
[12] Revelation 12:4
[13] Psalm 24:1,2

Israel. God made covenants with Abraham and his descendents and began establishing His words and Law through Moses and the prophets that followed. Israel was in bondage in Egypt 400 years and was led out by God's mighty hand. Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land where warfare was needed to take possession of what God promised.

The nation of Israel went through periods of following God and then falling away until an anointed Judge was raised up. God's people have always been prone to falling away from righteousness over time. Kings were raised up and some were good, but most were evil. David was God's favorite king and God made a special covenant with him as well. Prophets spoke and some of their words were recorded in the scriptures. After hundreds of years, the nation of Israel as a whole became extremely religious and controlling. God used foreign nations to judge Israel including the Roman Empire that occupied Israel during an extremely dark season. When darkness covers the earth, God sends His brightest light[14].

At the fullness of God's time, He sent His only begotten Son to the darkened earth as fully man and fully God incarnate. Jesus Christ appeared as a bright light and fulfilled all of God's law and laid down His life as a perfect sacrifice making a new covenant with mankind who believes in Him. Jesus descended into hell and took back the keys of authority over the planet that Satan had stolen from man. Jesus now gives those keys to those who believe in Him and obey His voice[15]. We now have authority from God to overcome the enemy and begin to restore all things[16].

We are presently living in the last days of the New Covenant in God's grace. The New Covenant is God's promise to work with mankind based on faith in the finished work of Christ. God's New Covenant promises include, salvation, healing, deliverance, prosperity, authority and power by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Under the New Covenant, believers are born again and become a part of the body of Christ.

The kingdom age will soon arise where the Lord Jesus will rule over the earth from Jerusalem for one thousand years. The transitional period between the two ages will be characterized by a series of shaking judgments on earth culminating in a seven year time period known as The Great Tribulation. At the end of this time, Jesus Christ will return visibly to earth, defeat his enemies and take leadership

[14] Isaiah 60:1-3
[15] Matthew 16:19; Revelation 1:18
[16] Matthew 17:11

over the earth as the ruling King of Kings in Jerusalem. His kingdom age will last about 1,000 years in total.

Eternal Life or Eternal Death

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15

At the end of the kingdom age, there will be a final judgment for all mankind and all of Satan's servants. There are only two possible outcomes for all created spiritual beings including humans. One outcome is eternal life in heaven forever with God, His pure hosts and redeemed humanity. The other outcome is eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire with Satan and all of his followers and all lost peoples of the earth time.

Meanwhile, Satan is still trying to build a throne on earth so that he can be worshipped by God's created beings. Satan will ultimately accomplish his evil goal for a brief time through the agency of a man fully possessed known as the Antichrist who will rule the world briefly during The Great Tribulation.

At the same time God is forming a bride worthy of His Son's love and sacrifice. God is releasing His fire to purify the Bride and give her grace to make herself ready for Jesus. The Bride will be graced to be married to Jesus for all eternity. She will reign and rule with Him. There are many other people who lived on earth that will be in heaven that are not a part of the Bride including faithful Old Testament believers.

God has given us His word in the book we call the Holy Bible. In it, God reveals what He has done, what He is doing and what He plans to do. Most people on earth may not believe or read the Bible, but that does not make it any less true. God's word tells us who God is, what He is up to and how He works in relationship to mankind.

Since He has exalted His word above all His Name[17], the Lord has bound Himself to work in the earth realm exactly according to what He has said. God tells us today that He has provided a way in Christ Jesus for all mankind to be saved from eternal damnation. That way is through believing in the finished work of His Son Jesus on the cross. Those who believe in Jesus will turn away from wickedness (repent) and will demonstrate their faith by walking with Jesus (obedience) by the leading of the Holy Spirit who is given to us to enable us to know God and follow His will.

Saved by Grace Through Faith

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10

God's kingdom on earth is built on faith in what God says in His word as well as His prophetic voice by the Spirit. We are saved through faith in what Jesus did for us. If we reject faith in God's word and the work of Jesus, then there is no other way provided for us to escape the judgment of God. If we refuse to listen to the Holy Spirit's voice, we may start using our own minds to create doctrines of the Bible that will bind us up in religious pride like the Pharisees of Jesus' day.

The Lord will judge every created being in perfect justice and righteousness. We don't understand how God will righteously judge all the peoples from all the ages, but we do know it is His job and not ours to judge. It is our job to choose whose voice to believe. There are really only two choices. We can choose life by following God's voice or choose death by following Satan's voice. It really is that simple!

Satan knows that most people would not choose death if they understood the eternal implications for their choice, so he craftily plans deception and confusion to deceive them into following his lying voice. The extreme everlasting trauma and grief that hits unbelievers who die in sin is devastating in every way. They have lived their lives believing lies and not believing in God and understanding the accountability of living on earth. I feel the fear of God even as I write this. I hope and pray that you do also.

[17] Psalm 138:2

There are many people who think they are saved because they attend church or do some good things. Many who think they will go to heaven are not saved[18]. The Bible talks about a great falling away from the faith in the end days. I believe the Bible teaches us that a person who once decided to make good choices and believed in God can willfully and persistently choose to make bad choices over time and rebel against God unto a point where they will not go to heaven when they die[19]. God certainly will not cast them out of His hand, but they can willfully run from Him and rebel against Him unto death. What a sobering reality for some who knew the truth and yet continually resisted and ran from it.

God knows the heart of every person on earth and loves all of His created children. However, God is not going to operate in relationship to mankind different than His holy word declares. Therefore, when God talks about everlasting judgment in a horrific place of torment, He is not going to make exceptions a few million years from now because His heart is full of mercy.

God's heart is full of mercy and always will be, but He simply cannot violate His own word and remain holy. The Bible tells us that He is also a God of wrath[20]! He has provided a clear choice for us all. He has demonstrated His mercy and grace by sending Jesus to suffer on our behalf. God has the ability to see deeply into each of our hearts and He knows who will choose Him and who will not.

Believers in Christ are responsible for telling the good news of Christ to other people on earth so that they might be saved. If we don't obey the Lord and minister His word, some who would have responded may never hear the gospel and be saved. It is an overwhelming responsibility for believers to be faithful to walk in the Spirit and obey the voice of God.

God is examining your heart at all times. Are you willing to completely surrender to Him and obey His voice in all things? Will you be able to overcome persecution and trials in the last days by God's grace? Will you allow idols to remain in your heart or will you pursue the baptism of holy fire so you can be cleansed of all hidden sins?

If you say yes continually to the Holy Spirit and the word of God, you will not be deceived and carried away by the spirit of strong delusion that even now is being released upon the earth. If you say no to God

[18] Matthew 7:22,23
[19] Hebrews 6:4-6; Revelation 3:5
[20] Revelation 6:16,17; 19:15

and persist in being lukewarm and rebelling against His word, you are already in extreme danger of falling away from faith into a lost condition. If you are reading this book and continue to do so, I trust you are choosing to follow Jesus and are willing to rescue others from the deceiver.

Do Not Refuse Him Who Speaks

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire. Hebrews 12:25-29

God is speaking to you right now through His word. Do not refuse to examine your life and earnestly pursue thorough repentance and the cleansing Jesus provides as we confess our sins. God is an all consuming fire. Ask Him to baptize you in holy fire and cleanse your body, soul and spirit[21]. He is more eager to do this work than you are to ask Him.

And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years". Genesis 6:3

God's Spirit is continuously working to bring you and I into agreement and fellowship with His holy will. God has been speaking to you about areas of your life where He wants you to repent and change by His grace. He has been calling you to come out from among Babylon and the influences of the ways of this world. Now is the time to obey God and repent and renounce all the ways of the world, the flesh and the devil. Today is the day of salvation. God will not always strive with you. Do not be deceived by the enemy or your own pride. Humble yourself before God and cry out to Him with your heart! In Jesus' name, I exhort you and myself to pursue complete repentance and faith in God and walk yoked with Jesus today and forever[22]. Your

[21] Luke 3:16
[22] Matthew 11:28-30

eternal destiny is everything to you! Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life?

PRAYER FOR SALVATION

Father in heaven, I want to be certain that my name is written in the Book of Life. I recognize the darkness on earth and the wickedness of my own flesh. I repent and renounce all of my sins and turn from the ways of this world system ruled by Satan. I choose to believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ who died for my sins and rose again and I set my heart to walk with Him. I ask You to forgive me for all of my sins and fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Help me walk with You each day and keep me from falling away. In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen

CHAPTER 2 – THE DECIEVER

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 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. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." John 8:42-47

Jesus rebuked the most religious leaders of all times who studied the Old Testament scriptures diligently and told them that they were of their father the devil. They claimed to know God and serve Him, but when God incarnate stood before them, their hearts were so blinded by religious pride that they hated Him and plotted to murder Him. Satan filled their minds with lies. He is a liar and the father of lies. He can deceive religious leaders and common people alike. He continues to deceive by leading people to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. His strategy is seen in the Garden of Eden.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. Genesis 3:1-7

Satan spoke through a serpent and tempted Eve to disobey God's word. This passage teaches us many things. First of all, don't

dialogue with Satan. Use the word of God against him and tell him to go as Jesus did[23]. Satan tries to bring doubt upon God's word, "Has God indeed said". There are many prophetic promises and principles in the word of God that the Spirit has spoken to you. Over time, when things have not happened as fast as you had hoped, a serpent can come in and start speaking doubt to your mind and twist the scriptures.

"You shall not eat of <u>every</u> tree of the garden?" Satan assaults the goodness of God and tries to confuse us to the truth by mixing lies with truth. There was only one tree that God said not to eat from. Satan brought doubt about God's voice in the first place and misquoted what God had said by including all the trees of the garden. Once Eve began the dialogue with Satan she was on her way into his deception. Today we dialogue with Satan by rationalizing in our minds rather than going to God and asking Him directly or by simply obeying His written word.

Eve got caught up in the confusion and misquoted God's word saying she could not touch the tree that was now, in Eve's mind, in the midst of the garden. The forbidden tree became the center of her focus. Trying not to sin should not be the center of our focus. Seeking to love Jesus with all our hearts and walk in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit must be our daily goal.

Satan lied to Eve saying that she would not surely die. He lied and said her eyes would be opened and she would become like God knowing good and evil. There was partial truth in these statements, but partial truth mixed with the impurity of a lie is still a lie. Adam and Eve did not die instantly in the natural, but death began working in them and spiritually they were disrobed of God's anointed covering. Their rationalistic eyes were opened and they experienced shame and fear for the first time.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil represents the philosophy we now call secular humanism. In other words, man decides what is "good" and what is "evil". In this way, as Satan said, we can become like God who declares in His word what is good and what is evil. When man begins to eat from this evil tree, he begins to change God's standards on what is good and evil. This may be called moral relativism or situational ethics. No matter what you call it, it is part of a sinful deception to rebel against God.

For example, many are deceived into calling abortion, the murder of an unborn child, a "woman's right to choose". Fallen man with their

[23] Matthew 4:1-11

eyes “open” say that homosexuality, which is an abomination in God’s word[24], is the way a person was born and is perfectly acceptable behavior.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the boastful pride of life are seen in this verse[25]. Satan’s strategy never changes. He tries to get us into seeing, desiring and then rationalizing so we will choose sin. Adam was not deceived, but he rebelled against God and transgressed[26]. Adam was held accountable for the fall of mankind.

Satan is Able to Blind Minds

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 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. II Corinthians 4:3,4

Satan is able to cause spiritual and mental blindness through various ways on billions of individuals. We do not want to underestimate the power of his influence. Eighty percent or more of the world’s population have believed Satan’s lies through various religions and philosophies of life and are completely lost at this time. All of us have believed some of Satan’s lies and earnest believers must work hard to overcome them and allow their minds to be renewed by God’s living word[27].

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should <u>deceive the nations</u> no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. Revelation 20:1-3 (underlining mine)

[24] Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 6:9
[25] See also I John 2:15,16
[26] Romans 5:14
[27] Romans 12:2

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out <u>to deceive the nations</u> which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:7-10 (underlining mine)

Even though it only takes one angel from God to bind Satan with a chain for 1,000 years, when he is loosed for just a short time during the tangible reign of Christ on earth as King of Kings, he can deceive all the nations into rebelling against God again. The evil dragon does this by spewing forth a continual flood of lies from his wicked mouth[28]. Do not underestimate the deceptive power of your enemy!

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 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. II Corinthians 11:2-4

We have to maintain a daily simple devotion to Christ and His word or Satan can deceive us as he did Eve. God exhorts us to stay pure and focused on the Bridegroom. As the flood of Satan's lies continually increase, we need this exhortation more than ever before.

The carnal fallen flesh of all mankind wants to rebel against the Holy Spirit and the word of God. We must embrace the cross of Christ and let the flesh be crucified daily so that we can live in the life of God.

[28] Revelation 12:13-17

CHAPTER 3 – FALSE PROPHETS

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.
Matthew 24:24,25

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Matthew 7:15-20

Jesus warns us to look out for false prophets who appear to be Christians and are able to walk in miraculous power. They are extremely skilled in deceiving people to gain their trust and money. False prophets influence people to follow the voice of the stranger. False prophets are usually greedy, proud, sensual, sensational and use flattery to manipulate people. They often exaggerate about what miracles they have done and try to draw attention to themselves rather than to the cross of Christ.

We are called to only follow the voice of the Good Shepherd. We have to look for the good fruit of the Holy Spirit's character development and the fruit of their ministries to accurately discern the source of their spiritual flow.

One prophet told me in glorious terms about the miracles God did though his hands at a certain church. I was invited to minister at that same church briefly after. I asked the pastor about the claims and he told me that no one was healed. He was extremely concerned about the false claims.

A few months later, my wife and I invited the young prophet to our home for dinner. We spoke for several hours in a loving atmosphere and were able to bring some correction. He seemed to receive it well, but we still need to look for good fruit over time.

Many ambitious ministers are insecure and look to find approval in achievement and recognition. If they earnestly contend for more power anointing, God may give them some special gift, but their character may not be prepared to bare the pressure that anointing brings. If they don't become secure in God's love and develop Christ-

like character, their selfish ambition opens a door to the spirit of strong delusion.

The Fruit of the Spirit

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Galatians 5:22-26

God does not want us to be deceived. The Holy Spirit helps us discern truth and guides us as the Good Shepherd to keep us safe. God is infinitely wiser than Satan and is super abundantly adequate to enable us to overcome all that is false. The following biblical passages are included without commentary to further equip you to discern false prophets and their characteristics. Please read them carefully.

Characteristics of False Prophets

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

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 did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) -- then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness

and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.

But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." II Peter 2:1-22

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. II Tim 3:12-15

For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.
Romans 16:18-19

For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD. Jeremiah 29:8,9

Jesus, The Good Shepherd, Will Keep you In Truth

To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly".

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd".

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take

it again. This command I have received from My Father." John 10:3-18

True prophets, like our Lord Jesus Christ, genuinely care for the sheep and will lay down their lives for the sheep. Strangers, false prophets, want to fleece the sheep and have the sheep lay down their lives for them. They are robbers and thieves and we will not follow them!

CHAPTER 4 – THE GREAT FALLING AWAY

"Take this book of the law and place it beside the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you. For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the Lord; how much more, then, after my death? Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and <u>evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord</u>, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands". Deuteronomy 31:26-29 (underlining mine)

Over 3,400 years ago, Moses prophesied that a great falling away of God's people would happen in the latter days! Moses understood the tendency of man is to wander away from faith and obedience to the word of God.

For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. Isaiah 60:2

Great darkness shall cover the earth. Most of humanity believes lies of Satan. There are hundreds of religious and philosophical systems being taught by various leaders. We have been lied to by politicians, businessmen, religious leaders, educators and family members. The more we believe those lies the more we fall into darkness. The good news is that in the midst of this darkness, the Lord will arise over those whose hearts are wholly given to Him and they shall be a great light in the midst of this deep darkness.

God's Spirit contends with all mankind to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God does not want any to perish but all to come to repentance. He contends with Christians to walk in agreement and fellowship with Himself. God has provided everything we need to walk with Him in daily victory. We have the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, the infinite power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the living word of God, the full armor of God, the power of prayer and prophetic decrees. We also need to be in the fellowship of His body of believers and submit to mature leadership.

Since God has given us everything we need in Christ to be fully equipped as overcomers, we simply have to believe and walk yoked

with Jesus every day, doing those good works that God has graced us to do in partnership with Him to advance His kingdom.

As it was in the Days of Noah

Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. Genesis 6:1-8

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But <u>as the days of Noah were</u>, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.
Matthew 24:36-44 (underlining mine)

As Jesus said, the last days will be similar to the days of Noah. The spirit of strong delusion will sweep most of humanity into a continuous pursuit of carnal pleasure including sexual immorality, extreme eating, drinking and various idolatrous addictions. The sons

of God in Noah's day beheld the daughters of man, lusted after them and went into them.

We are the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Many of us today have looked upon the sensual images of the daughters of man and have lusted over them and gone into them in our hearts. Jesus said that lusting in the heart was equal to adultery. There are many forms of idolatry where we may commit spiritual adultery as well. Everyone struggles with the idolatry of exalting self above God at times. Selfishness and self centered behavior have become a viral plague in our day. Jesus talked about a wicked and perverse generation in His day. He wondered if anyone would have persevering faith in the last days[29].

We must get on the ark of God in Christ through continual faith, embracing the cross daily, dying to self and living to God by His Spirit. We must get deliverance from loving this world system and its ways. The Lord is coming at a time no one expects. When you die, your time has come. It may be unexpectedly as in an accident or some calamity. Now is the time to get ready. Many are going to fall away from walking with God because of their lust for the things of this world including the love of money.

The Falling Away Comes Before Jesus Returns

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless <u>the falling away comes first</u>, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and

[29] Luke 18:8

with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason <u>God will send them strong delusion</u>, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. II Thessalonians 2:1-12 (underlining mine)

The great falling away will take place before Jesus returns. The Holy Spirit is restraining the spirit of lawlessness on earth. When that restraining influence is taken away lawlessness will be unchecked. What exactly is that restraining influence?

I believe that the restraining force of God is the pure Bride of Christ full of Holy Spirit oil watching and waiting in prayer and interceding on earth. When she is taken away, the grace of her intercession lifts and the restraining power against sin is removed. It will be a terrible time to be left behind. I personally lean towards the teaching that the Bride of Christ is a special part of the body of Christ.

Jesus told us above that two would be in the field and one would be taken and one would be left behind. He taught the parable of the ten virgins waiting for the Bridegroom. Five were wise with oil in their lamps and five were foolish and did not get to go in at the appointed time. The pure intercessory Bride keeps her lamps full of oil, full of the Holy Spirit[30]. When the Bridegroom returns for her at the time of the rapture, she is ready.

The foolish virgins are shut out of the wedding feast because they are not ready. My sense is that this points to the Bride going with Jesus in the rapture and the body of Christ remaining during parts of The Great Tribulation. The Bible teaches us that many Christians are martyred during The Great Tribulation as they hold fast to Jesus [31]. The obvious implication is that many Christians are living on earth during that time and have not been raptured away from the challenges.

Are you a wise virgin with your vessel full of the oil of the Holy Spirit? Will you be ready when the Bridegoom comes suddenly? Will you be raptured with the Bride or will you be left behind as the Body of Christ as a witness and suffer? Prophets are always saying, “Get ready, get ready, get ready!” It’s time to get ready for the coming of the Lord is at hand!

[30] Matthew 25:1-13
[31] Revelation 7:13-15

The lost that remain behind after the rapture can still be saved by calling on the Name of Jesus, but most will not repent of their evil works. It will be a horrible time period and unless those days were shortened by God's direct intervention, all mankind would perish[32].

As the Spirit is removed from striving with mankind to repent, God fully releases the enemy to bring strong delusion on the earth. This hastens and accelerates God's ability to judge the earth. It is similar to when God hardened Pharaohs' heart in the days of Moses. Pharaoh would not listen to God and let His people go. God knew Pharaoh's heart that he would not listen or obey so God further hardened Pharaoh's heart to speed up the process[33]. Then the Antichrist will arise and lead the world into his captivity. God is offering to give all mankind the gift of loving the truth, but few are willing to receive it because they prefer to take pleasure in unrighteousness and become addicted to sin in some manner.

God Sent a Lying Spirit

Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.' Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you." I Kings 22:19-23

When God had finally come to the place where He would judge Ahab for his wicked rulership, the Lord held counsel in heaven as to how to accomplish the task. God determined to have Ahab fall in battle at Ramoth Gilead and asked who would persuade Ahab to go up to battle. A spirit stood before God and said that it would convince Ahab by being a lying spirit in the mouths of his prophets. God knew that Ahab would listen to his false prophets and sent the spirit to accomplish the mission.

In these last days, God is also going to bring judgment upon the whole earth. We have previously noted that "**God will send them strong**

[32] Mark 13:20
[33] Exodus 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8

delusion, that they should believe the lie". God's ways are higher than our ways[34]. We may not understand all the implications of God using angels or devils to accomplish His will, but we recognize that God is sovereign and He can accomplish His purposes on earth and still stay true to His word.

Characteristics of the Last Days

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many (*Therefore do not go after them***). And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places (***and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven***). All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.**

(They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls).

And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe

[34] Isaiah 55:9

to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
Matthew 24:4-14 (*Selections from Luke 21:8-24 in italics*)

The last days described above are already happening. There is much to come, but it will come at an accelerated pace in the years ahead. The Spirit of God is urging God's people to beware of the leaven of compromise that can work in a sinful unbelieving heart. Remember the Pharisees, Sadducees, elders and Chief Priests of Jesus' first coming were nearly all fallen away. Only a few, like Nicodemus came to Jesus and believed in Him.

These passages teach us that the last days will be extremely full of religious darkness and great wars on the earth. During the twentieth century, evil dictators and communists leaders murdered over 130,000,000 of their own people[35]. World wars killed many millions more. More civilians died in those wars than soldiers. The wars and rumors of wars have already taken place. Kingdoms and nations have risen up against others. We are seeing the great pestilence of AIDS sweeping the world killing millions and millions.

In my lifetime, I have known many Christians who got offended with the Church and left in bitterness. I have seen dedicated Christians turn away from God and start living an abandoned life of homosexuality. Radical Islam is rising up as an ugly beast to destroy Christians and democratic countries. We are living in the last days!

God is Faithful to Provide a Way of Escape

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. I Corinthians 10:12,13

God is faithful! In the midst of the worst of the times throughout history, God always provides a way of escape from every temptation and trial. We must cry out to Him and seek His face with diligence in order to find that way.

[35] List of genocides: www.wikipedia.org .

Glenda and I went through a series of extremely difficult trials that lasted several years. We experienced many challenges and had tremendous spiritual warfare. It was a tumultuous time that caused us to cry out to God in ways deeper than ever before. We prayed the above verse often and we agree, God is faithful and He always provided a way of escape. We have to become more intense and deliberate in seeking and following the Lord as the storms increase on earth. Peter sums up the exhortation about the last days as follows:

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. II Peter 3:17,18

God is faithful! God is far greater than the devil. He who is in you is far greater than he that is in the world. If we cling to Christ and walk closely with Him, we will be enabled to overcome and will not be carried away by the flood of strong delusion that has begun. We have to maintain our faith in God's ability to keep us. But we can not keep any of our sin and impurity and survive the days ahead. We have to embrace the fire of God or the fire of hell. The choice is up to us. Choose life!

CHAPTER 5 – THE SPIRIT OF ADULTERY

You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. Matthew 5:27-30

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James 4:4

Jesus taught us that lust in the eye was adultery of the heart. James challenges us all that friendship with this world is a form of adultery. All forms of idolatry, placing something or someone ahead of God, are part of the spirit of adultery. All longing for fellowship with this world instead of God is a form of spiritual adultery.

The spirit of adultery and the spirit of this world are one and the same. They work together with the spirit of strong delusion. The enemy is constantly trying to move us from a pure and simple devotion to Christ to one that is diluted and mixed. James flowed in pure devotion with holy violence. He saw the idolatrous mixture in the Church of his generation and confronted them. The church of our generation needs to receive the rebuke of James and repent of friendship with this world.

Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve

Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, <u>choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve</u>, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.
Joshua 24:14,15

The ultimate question for these last days comes down to Joshua's challenge to the nation of Israel at the end of the Promised Land conquest. Who will you choose to serve today? The human heart is prone to wander and attach its affection to false gods such as

entertainment, recognition, achievement, unrighteous pleasure and self-centered pursuits to name but a few.

Will you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? The great falling away that we've discussed will happen to those who are double minded. They love God with only a part of their heart. They also love the world.

We are betrothed to Christ as His bride. In Hebrew culture, the betrothed bride was as good as married and was required to remain a pure virgin. In God's culture, we are to remain pure in our affection towards Christ and make our selves ready for the wedding day.

The spirit of adultery is not primarily related towards cheating on ones spouse. It is related to our walk with God. Satan wants to turn our hearts into subtle mixture in our heart affections to dilute our devotion.

Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. I Corinthians 5:6,7

A little mixture in our heart affections allows the leaven of sin to begin to permeate the temple of God which we are in Christ. Satan can see the idols of the hearts of mankind. He can see through you and assign appropriate spirits to manipulate and assault you in the area of idolatry that you are prone towards.

The spirit of strong delusion seeks to bring confusion about the main issue. The main issue is heart focus. If the heart focuses purely on loving God and serving Him, God is pleased. If the heart has mixture, the heart maintains an idol and gives place for the enemy, under last day's pressure, to cause a falling away. A little idolatry will eventually influence the whole person.

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter. When we seek comfort in something other than God, we make that thing or person more important than God and consequently an idol. God is pure pleasure. When we seek counterfeit pleasure in this world, it becomes an idol. Knowing God is pure achievement. When we seek recognition, the praise of men, for achievements in this world, it becomes an idol.

Eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is idolatry because it is the choice to exalt self in the place of God. It is a

manifestation of pride because we decide what we think is good and evil rather than allowing God's word and Spirit to reveal what is good and evil.

Religion is counterfeit devotion. It is ultimate hypocrisy because it pretends to be real when it is rooted in fear and seeks to maintain control, mentally ascend to the word of God and develops doctrines of demons. Religion says it loves God with all its heart, but like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, it is all about self-righteous rule.

If any of us choose to maintain an idol in our hearts, it will eventually allow the spirit of strong delusion to move us away from true faith and obedience to God by His Spirit. John told us clearly, **"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." (I John 5:21)**

Apostolic Devotion to Prayer and the Word

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Acts 6:4

The apostles of the 1st generation Church got it right by continually devoting themselves to prayer and the word by the Spirit in community. We are an apostolic generation and every believer has to maintain a pure and simple devotion to prayer and the word.

Prayer includes praise, worship, petitions, intercession, watching, waiting, visions, dreams, prophecy, decrees, warfare, tongues and interpretation of tongues. All the dimensions of the Holy Spirit and the angelic realm of God are included in prayer.

The ministry of the word is crucial to establishing the foundations of a growing church and equipping the saints to do the works of service[36]. The word of God contains the revelation of God's covenants and is full of His wisdom, revelation and true knowledge of what is good and evil. God's word, properly understood and applied, is the infallible rule of life and faith. God's word is the lamp unto our feet and the light to guide our way with Christ. The Bible has living word power to transform hungry hearts into the likeness of Christ.

Prayer and the word. Intense devotion to prayer individually and in community along with diligent Bible study and teaching are the call of the Spirit to the apostles and prophets, the forerunners, of this hour.

[36] II Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 4:12

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." Hebrews 3:12-15

CHAPTER 6 - THE SPIRIT THAT SUPPRESSES THE TRUTH

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who <u>suppress the truth</u> in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man -- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who <u>exchanged the truth of God for the lie</u>, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. Romans 1:18-32 (underlining mine)

This passage accurately describes the progression of sin when man turns from inner convictions and the knowledge of God to living by the evil tree of The Knowledge of Good and Evil. Satan uses the same

pattern to deceive us as he did in the Garden of Eden. He seeks to suppress (cover up) the truth and exchange it for a lie. This is how the spirit of strong delusion operates on carnal minds.

It tries to bring us into small sin and then lead us into increased sin until we have a debased mind and are servants of hell. Paul saw the disintegration of the culture when he wrote to the Romans in the first century. Times have not gotten better, they are getting worse!

In the Garden of Eden, Satan suppressed the truth and exchanged it for a lie with Eve when he said, "Did God really say?" and "You shall surely not die"[37].

While visiting my daughter Mary, who was attending the extremely liberal University of California at Berkeley in 2007, I had a profound experience that helped me understand the spirit of strong delusion. We do not have TV service in our home and I rarely have access to television. Mary's new apartment included a television with cable connection. The NBA playoffs were on and I tuned in to watch the game. Since I was to sleep on an air mattress in the room that had the television, I channel flipped to see what was on after the game. I ended up watching too much television and observed some sensual and demonic television programs as I flipped channels.

When I finally started falling asleep, I was suddenly awakened by the presence of a gigantic demonic entity in the room. It was a large female spirit that stood in mid air over the foot of my bed just staring at me. It was dressed like the Statue of Liberty. I was terrified and I prayed fervently against it calling on the mercy of God and it left.

The next day while reflecting upon this encounter, the Lord enabled me to discern this spirit and how it works. He showed me the passage in Romans quoted above and revealed that this powerful spirit seeks to rule over the brilliant minds at Berkeley to suppress the truth and exchange it for a lie. It counterfeits the Statue of Liberty by promoting rebellion against God's word and calling it freedom, hope and enlightenment. It welcomes the masses into its gateway of deception.

Berkeley is across the bay from San Francisco. This beautiful area has been lusted over by Satan, and he has built a stronghold there that promotes secular humanistic ideals including the radical homosexual agenda. This spirit is assaulting young people all over America by suppressing the truth and feeding lies about human sexuality, decency, purity and many other Biblical values. A great

[37] Genesis 3:1-6

deal of this assault comes through television, movies, the internet and popular culture.

The Bible teaches us that we have to wrestle with principalities and powers with the full armor of God on in the power of the Spirit to overcome. The spirit that God allowed me to encounter was a powerful principality that flows in strong delusion. As I wrestled through the slime of this being over the next few days, I was assaulted in the area of lust of the eyes and felt tremendous pressure to take the "liberty" to view pornography online.

The soul realm of a human is complex. We can be doing well in 95% of our soul and have 5% still influenced by demons. There may be old doors that were once opened to the enemy as there was in my life. I viewed Playboy magazines as an unsaved teenager and some addiction formed. When I got saved at age 20, the Lord set me free, but I would struggle from time to time in certain situations.

God has been continuously helping me gain victory through repentance and faith in the cleansing blood of Jesus. He is teaching me how the enemy works and how to overcome his subtle schemes. Without the power of God helping us, none of us can stand against Satan's flood of evil when he brings really strong pressure. Fortunately, God's power is available to help us[38]!

The river of God's spirit is increasing from ankle deep to over your head as Ezekiel saw in his vision[39]. The counterfeit river of Satan's deceptive spirits are also developing into a powerful river. Years ago, I could watch certain movies that had ankle deep power to pull me into sin. I could watch the movie and easily shake off the bad scene or two without falling into sin. The power of the movie industry and the strength of the demonic river today is such that I cannot step into watching the same old movies or new movies without it starting to activate my flesh and try to capture me in a waterslide towards sin.

The river of sin available is now over our heads. Don't take a step towards that slippery bank because you can easily slide into its influence and come under its power. If your flesh is not crucified daily and you are not filled with the Holy Spirit, the enemy can bring pressure to bear to knock you off your feet and you can be swept into sin.

Our flesh is addicted to sin like a hard core alcoholic. Our flesh wants another drink and if left uncrucified just one day it will start to long

[38] I Corinthians 8:9
[39] Ezekiel 47:3-6

for a drink of the spirit of this world in some fashion. For me, worldly television and carnal movies were the main tempting wine. For you it may be something completely different.

Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart. Hosea 4:11

Most entertainment products are wine to our flesh. If we drink them, we start to get a desire to drink more and become drunk with the pleasure of this world. Worldly pursuits lead us into captivity. Abandoning ourselves to Jesus lead us to freedom.

The spirit that suppresses the truth will put pressure on an individual in an area of their soul to temporarily suppress the truth and exchange it with a lie such as, “it’s ok to look at some entertainment pictures” or a certain show. The enticing beauty of Hollywood stars is a powerful magnet that tries to pull individuals into lust and idolatry if possible. Many stars are idolized in the hearts and minds of many fans. Some movie stars have powerful principalities influencing them and a host of demons working on the adoring public to bring them into bondage.

A dream was given to me that enabled me to understand another part of how this spirit works. In the dream, I was chosen to be a contestant in a game show. The audience was full of laughter and enthusiasm so I chose to go along with the host who was leading me around a stage. After a few steps, I was aware that I was coming under a hypnotic trance but decided to be a “good sport” and go along with it.

As we completed a circuit around the stage I was unaware of some potted plants on stands in front of me. I walked right into them and dirt was spilled on me and the floor. At that point I woke up.

Whatever areas we struggle with from time to time, the enemy wants us to be a “good sport” and go along with the game and have some fun. When we allow ourselves to be led into the show, the enemy has the power to temporarily blind our minds and in a sense put us under a spell like hypnotism. By the time this pattern runs its course, we end up bumping into some dirt and some gets on us and some gets on the floor. We wake up in conviction after we have made a mess of things and ask God to forgive us. We have to go through another cleansing process.

There are deep root issues in all of us that must be burned out by the fire of God’s holy presence. The fire brings up issues including generational curses, emotional healing needs, bondages and

addictions. Even though we may maintain the outward appearance of a godly life, the Lord is going deep in all of us to cleanse the inner man. He plans to purge out all the sin from our lives and He is well able to do it if we simply allow Him. He is the finisher and perfecter of our faith.

And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy -- everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, <u>by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning</u>, then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain. Isaiah 4:3-6 (underlining mine)

God is baptizing His people with holy fire right now. Embrace His fire and earnestly run to Him. A lot of hidden junk may manifest, but God will give grace to set you free and you will experience His joy renewed once again. Then God is going to cover you with His glory and you will be a great light to this dark world. He will use you mightily in the last days if you simply choose to embrace His fire and let Him finish the work!

Prayer for Baptism in God's Holy Fire

Father, I humbly come before you in the Name of Jesus. I recognize that I have some deep issues that need to be burned all the way out of me. (Confess those issues before God). I repent of all love for this world system and taking pleasure in unrighteousness.

John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire and thoroughly cleanse the threshing floor. I ask you Jesus to baptize me in Your holy cleansing fire! I cry out to you to go deep into my being and deliver me from every root cause of sin, rebellion, deception and iniquity.. Let your spirit of burning cleanse me from all residue of filth that remains. I want to perfect holiness in fear of you. Lord God almighty, deliver me from all evil in the perfect Name of Jesus. Amen

CHAPTER 7 – BUILD YOUR HOUSE UPON THE ROCK

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Matthew 7:24-29

Major storms are coming and we each need to be prepared to withstand them. Jesus taught us that there was only one way to make it through the impending storms. Build the house of your life upon the rock of His words. We need to diligently study God's word with the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. We need to hear His prophetic voice and follow Him as our Good Shepherd.

Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left. Isaiah 30:21

God's prophetic voice by His Spirit is going to be poured out on all flesh in these last days. Dreams, visions and encounters will be given to all peoples, nations and tongues. Because of the extraordinary heightened amount of revelation, God's judgment will be released quickly on those who refuse to repent. No matter how great the revelations or how fierce the judgments, most will refuse to repent[40].

Natural disasters, viral plagues, nuclear and chemical warfare, economic depression and spiritual darkness are storms that will assail individuals and the Earth in the last days. In order to be prepared to weather these storms and remain standing in Christ, we must hear the sayings of Jesus, the word of God, and we must apply them accurately to our lives. We all need to study the Bible, listen to solid Christ-centered teaching and learn from anointed teachers in the body of Christ.

It sounds so basic, but we must ever be devoted to prayerfully reading, studying and meditating on the word of God so that we can

[40] Revelation 9:20,21; 16:9,11

do according to all that is written in it as directed by the Holy Spirit. There are good books, CD's, DVD's and internet sites available to help you grow. Being part of a strong local church is vital as well.

Submit to Biblical Elders

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble." Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. I Peter 5:5,6

Peter gave us several key principles in this passage to help us overcome the spirit of strong delusion. First of all, we must learn to be submissive to spiritual elders in true humility. That means that every believer needs to be a part of a local church that has biblical elders operating in their function. As you pray, God will direct you to the place you should go. It may be difficult to find a solid church in some regions of the world, but we should all seek the Lord as to where we can choose to submit joyfully to proper authority.

One of the primary ways the spirit of strong delusion works is to move through the doorway of pride and influence believers to be rebellious, insubmissive and critical towards church leadership. If you find yourself getting a bad attitude and judgmental thoughts towards your pastor, that is a sure sign that the enemy is working on you to get into agreement with the accuser of the brethren.

Submission to godly authority can be a humbling experience. Proud people don't want to submit to anyone. Submission is primarily an inner attitude of trust. We have to be able to trust our leaders and at times, we must confess our faults to one another in order to experience deliverance and healing[41]. We can not talk to everyone about our issues. Immature and unbelieving people will not be equipped to help us.

We all need leadership and guidance. We should pray and cast all our anxiety upon Christ, but when there is an ongoing struggle with sin, it is vital to go to elders and submit to confession and prayer. They are required to cover your sins and not talk about them. We all have issues we need to deal with. Elders are to pray stuff off you and help you get complete healing.

[41] James 5:16

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." I Peter 4:7-9

One of the ways we can stay on fire for God is through fervent love for the brethren. Since love covers a multitude of sins, we don't judge our brethren who struggle, we cover them with watchful prayers. Satan is the accuser of the brethren. When we get critical and speak out against a brother, we are being used by Satan. Anyone you feel critical towards is the person you are supposed to love and intercede for by the power of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 8 – OVERCOMING THE SPIRIT OF STRONG DELUSION

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.
I John 4:1-5 (underlining mine)

The Spirit of God is infinite in power, wisdom, full of grace, mercy, love and is given to us to provide, protect and help us every day in every way. We must walk in fellowship with Him and not grieve Him through sin or unbelief.

If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever -- the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. John 14:15-18

A basic principle to overcome in the Christian life is to walk in the opposite spirit of the spirit that is attacking. Overcoming the spirit of strong delusion requires that we walk in the Spirit of truth that comes from the Father. Walking in agreement with the Spirit of God should be our primary goal every day of our lives.

But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning. John 15:26,27

The Spirit of truth testifies of what is from Jesus and what is from the spirit of error. God has put His Spirit within us to bear witness of the truth. The witness of the Spirit of God will warn us of error or sin by making us feel uncomfortable deep within. Some describe this as a "gut feeling".

We recently prayed for a woman who received a "free treatment" from a therapist who caused further harm to her injured body. I

asked her if the Lord had given her any warning and she said that she felt very apprehensive (gut check) but went along with it because of the therapist's persuasion. We led her to repent of going through the red light of the Holy Spirit and God began to bring healing and deliverance.

One anointed Christian was standing in a tourist line to visit an ancient temple in Asia. She heard the Lord quietly say, "Don't go in there." She was with friends and did not heed the counsel. Afterward, stomach sickness plagued her for years as the demonic assault in that temple was tremendous and the Lord had warned her clearly. Even though she repented many times, it took years to recover from this horrendous assault. We often learn the hard ways to obey the still small voice of the Lord and our conscience.

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. John 16:13,14

The Holy Spirit is the key Person who will guide you into all truth. He will tell us of things to come. We have to develop an extremely close personal walk with the Holy Spirit through extended seasons and regular times of prayer. You may be able to come up with a lot of valid sounding excuses why you don't pray enough or don't have time, but that is not going to help you stand against the spirit of strong delusion. Only walking with God the Holy Spirit will help you.

We Reap What We Sow

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Galatians 6:7-9

This simple verse is so often ignored by those of us under the influence of the spirit of strong delusion. Some how, we rationalize that we will not reap what we sow. Examine your life and ask God to help you stop sowing to the flesh. We each have to cry out to God for holy fire and humble ourselves to receive grace to embrace the cross and die to our flesh daily. We need to sow to the Spirit of God through consistent devotion to prayer and the study of God's word.

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. Galatians 6:14,15

Paul was crucified to the world's influence by embracing the cross daily. We have been crucified with Christ and our flesh man was put to death with Him. We have been recreated and reborn by the Spirit so that we can walk in newness of life. The Lord requires us to believe this, reckon ourselves dead to the power of sin and walk in the power of God to overcome. We can do it with His help and the help of Christian community.

Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame. I Corinthians 15:33,34

When the fire dims in us, we can easily slip back into immaturity and get bored with our lives. People who get bored almost always end up in trouble with bad company whether real or in cyber space. When we stop pressing in and ascending God's holy hill, we can easily fellowship with the world in some fashion. It affects us! We need to awake to the full pursuit of righteousness and avoid sin at all cost.

When we fall into sin, we feel shame and embarrassment. It is a common pattern to hide as Adam and Eve did after falling into sin. We don't want to tell anyone and ask for help and that is prideful, but it is a part of how the spirit of strong delusion works.

God has helped me be vulnerable over the years and ask for a lot of prayer on the pathway to the highway of holiness. There are ditches on both sides of that highway and I have driven into one of them nearly every time I get my eyes off Jesus. He is the highway. He is the way, truth and life. Walking yoked to Jesus every day is the game plan[42]. His way does not fluctuate and is not confusing. It is not heavy or burdensome. It is light and easy to follow Jesus compared to the yoke of bondage Satan wants us to wear.

Tend the Altar of Fire

And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning,

[42] Matthew 11:29,30

and lay the burnt offering in order on it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out. Leviticus 6:12,13

As New Testament priests, we need to daily tend the fire of our pure and holy devotion to Christ. If we let the fire go out, the enemy can come in and wreck havoc on our lives. The fire needs to be stirred by prayer, praise, worship, intensity, passion and fed by the word of God and fellowship with on fire saints.

Jesus demonstrated the fire of God in His life of devotion and intense zeal for the house of God[43]. We need to stay passionate and fiery in hot pursuit of God and His will in order to burn through all the wet weeds the devil throws at us. Keeping the fire going requires daily work and God will give you the grace to do it. The burning fire of God cleanses, heals, delivers, imparts and empowers us to run the race with endurance fixing our eyes on Jesus that author and finisher of our faith[44].

Come Out From Among Them and Perfect Holiness in the Fear of God

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty." Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. II Corinthians 6:14-7:1

God says that we can do a work of cleansing ourselves from all filthiness that touches our flesh and our spirit. There is work to be done in perfecting holiness and there is no clear formula. One of the keys is to cry out to God for grace and strength to be cleansed by the fire of His Spirit of judgment and burning. God's fire brings things to the surface and then we have the job of confessing it with repentance and pleading the blood of Jesus over it to cleanse us from the

[43] John 2:17
[44] Hebrews 12:1,2

unrighteousness[45]. We have to forsake patterns of sin and develop new habits of righteousness such as prayer, Bible study and worship.

Submit to God - Resist the Devil

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?
James 4:7-12

The book of James is like powerful medicine. It doesn't taste good on the tongue but we sure need a regular strong dose of it. James tells it like it is. We need to submit to God and do everything in our power to humble ourselves before Him.

The devil prowls about roaring with the intent to move us into fear and intimidation so that he can control us in some manner. We have to resist him continuously and build up our faith by praying in the Holy Spirit[46]. One of his basic strategies is to isolate us and keep us hiding from God and His people. Since he is the accuser of the brethren, he will constantly try to get you offended with the pastoral leadership or someone in the body of Christ.

We have to resist the devil being steadfast in the faith[47]. There is suffering in following the Lord but God is the God of all grace who will enable us to press through and overcome every trial and temptation. It is extremely hard at times but none of us have resisted sin to the point of shedding drops of blood like Jesus did[48]. We are called to fight the good fight of faith[49]. It is a holy war! It is a battle and God has given us the full armor we need to win[50]. One sure way to be swept away by the spirit of strong delusion is to stop fighting.

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[45] I John 1:9
[46] Jude 20
[47] I Peter 5:7-11
[48] Hebrews 12:4
[49] I Timothy 6:12
[50] Ephesians 6:10-18

One woman, we'll call Ginger, had a horrendous childhood and experienced many molestations. Ginger gave her life to Jesus and walked with Him triumphantly for years, got married and had several wonderful children. Her husband, we'll call Jack, loved her and was faithful to her. The enemy started tempting Ginger and flooding all kinds of things towards her mind. We prayed with her often and counseled her and taught her and she had times of powerful deliverance. God used her to minister to others in special ways as well.

Ginger finally gave into temptation and gave herself to another man. She felt guilty about it but did not want to truly repent over it. She readily confessed her sin, but she continued to long for this illicit relationship. Her faithful husband was in a major crisis and struggled to trust her. Jack sought God and stayed with his wife and tried to help her follow Jesus. We counseled him to seek the Lord and obey His voice. We continued to pray for Ginger.

One day, Ginger told us that she didn't want to fight it any longer. She had decided to just let go and yield to the flow of the evil river that was moving her away. I was shocked and felt strong dread as I heard her make this clear choice. Mental illness began to assault Ginger after that and she left our church and started going to bars and carousing with various men grieving the Spirit and causing all of her children to cry out to God on her behalf.

Jack struggled and left the church also. He stood in the gap for Ginger and stayed married to her. We were all amazed at his loyalty and perseverance under such an ordeal. The only reason Ginger may have survived is because of Jack's loving intercession. Ginger is not well today or walking closely with God but we all hold onto hope that God will rescue her before it is too late.

There are several other people I know who have given up the fight to resist the devil and walk with God. They have all gone into a moral freefall ending up in incredible bondage to sin and wickedness.

The enemy hates Christians and Jews more than all peoples. He especially hates those who have moved in the power of God and have done mighty exploits in the name of Jesus. Some believers hold back from running after God because they are afraid of the enemy and don't want any backlash. They become controlled by fear and fall under his delusion anyway. We really don't have any armor in the backside. We need to stand in the Spirit and the word of God and face the enemy in the power of God cloaked in humility. We can overcome and we need each other to do it.

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. I John 3:1-3

We are all going to meet Jesus one day. We should live every day with the understanding of The Judgment Day with a hope sealed by the Spirit that Jesus is our Redeemer. We should focus intensely on living every day in purity to make ourselves ready to meet Him. This is wisdom, the fear of the Lord, longing to please the Lord every day.

Walk in the Spirit

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Galatians 5:16-26

We must walk in the Spirit in order to overcome the spirit of strong delusion. We have to crucify the flesh daily. One of the special things the Lord led Glenda and I to do was to take communion every day in the morning and the evening. During this time, we pray, remember what Christ did for us and affirm that we embrace His cross, dying to self and living by the Spirit of God.

After years of suffering torment at night by demonic intrusion, this simple act of faith broke off 98% of those assaults. God had me study

the New Covenant blessings in Christ for quite some time and I wrote a book on it[51]. God has provided so much for us in the cross of Christ and we affirm it, believe it, declare it and pray it daily. There is power in the blood of Jesus!

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. I John 1:8-10

When taking communion, we examine ourselves and confess our sins before God. He promises to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Can we be real for a moment? There are issues deep inside of almost every person on earth that are going to stay hidden or permanently lodged until the power of God looses them. Taking communion and embracing the fire of God begins a work of cleansing. Most of us need a lot of cleansing every day. Even after walking with God for decades, I know that I sure do! Things that are so deeply embedded in our lives usually don't come out with one heart felt prayer.

Just as we are to keep on asking, seeking and knocking, we need to keep on confessing and calling on God for the grace to forsake sin. Never ever give up confessing and believing in the purifying power of the blood of Jesus!

My favorite sport is football. One of the great runners of all time was Walter Payton who ran for the Chicago bears. In the National Football League alone, Walter ran with a football for an official grand total of 16,726 yards which is over twelve miles. The most amazing accomplishment is that he was brutally knocked down and heavily tackled 3,838 times or every 4.4 yards on average.

The great ones in the Kingdom of God are not those who fall down or are knocked down, but the great ones are those who refuse to stay down. We must recognize that we are in a long challenging life battle. We may get knocked down every 4.4 yards, but by God's grace, we can get back up and run hard again and again. The Lord will reward you for overcoming the spirit of strong delusion. Let's keep getting up and running hard for God's glory!

[51] See my book, PERFECT LOVE, for detailed teaching on the New Covenant.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
to God our Savior,
who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion
and power, both now and forever. Amen.

Jude 24,25