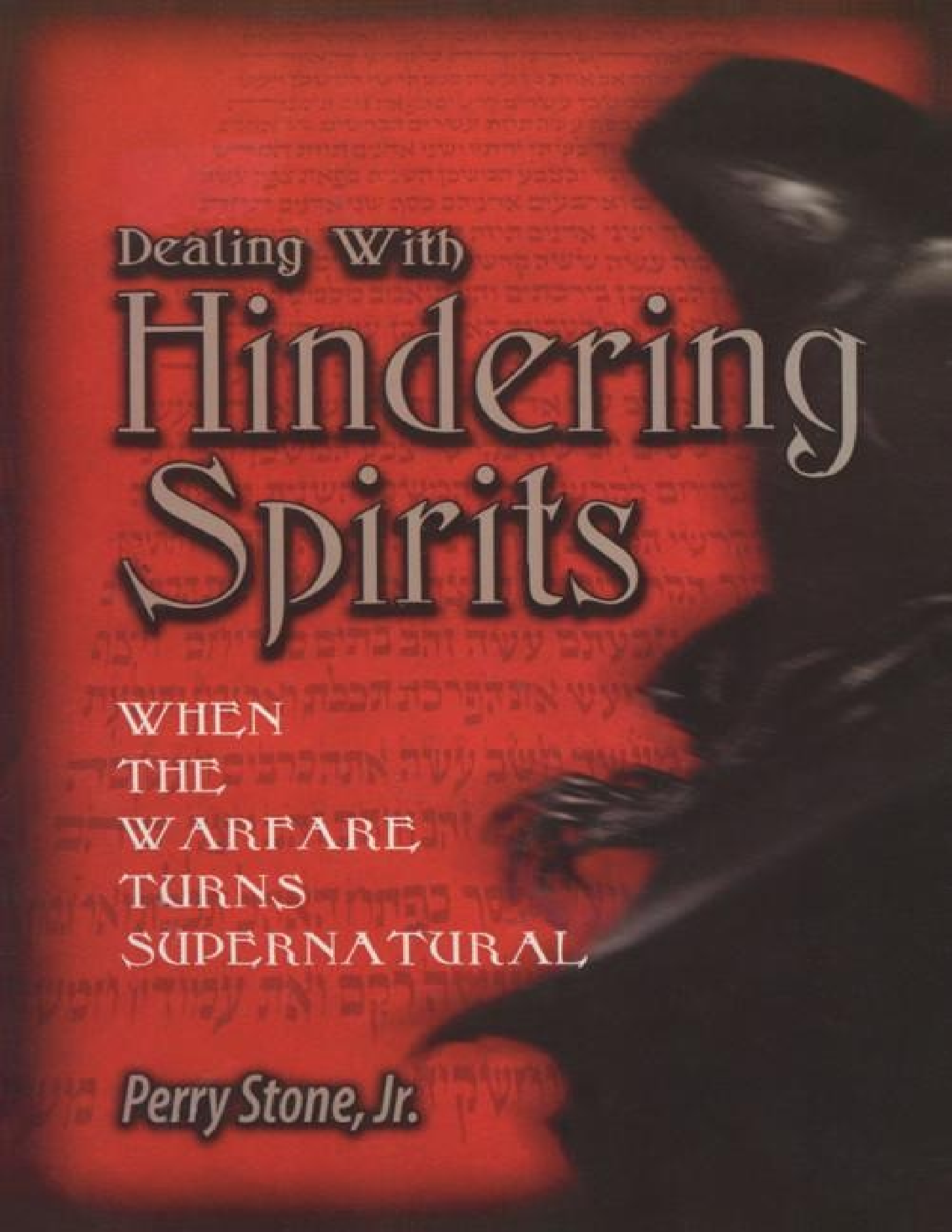

Dealing With
Hindering
Spirits
WHEN
THE
WARFARE
TURNS
SUPERNATURAL
Perry Stone, Jr.

EALING WITH HINDERING SPIRITS

When the Warfare Becomes Supernatural

By Perry Stone, Jr.

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Twenty-Five Years of Memories

A HINDERING SPIRIT

An evil spirit sent for the purpose of hindering your God-given assignment by creating distractions, strange trials, and abnormal hindrances, thus making your work trying, tiring, and difficult.

Introduction

Without proper instruction from seasoned ministers, I could have been overwhelmed and possibly may have aborted God's assignment for me before the age of nineteen. The reason: I was spending extended seasons fasting and hours at a time praying and studying. No one had informed me that this lifestyle would eventually tap into both sides of the spirit world: the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

I was certainly familiar with the spiritual realm. Having a lineage of four generations of ministers in our family, including a father who prayed intensely, it was never strange to hear Dad speak of a dream, a vision, or a special visitation from the Holy Spirit. However, Dad was a "man of God"

and this was expected of him. But being eighteen years of age, I was often referred to as a "kid preacher," and the last thing I expected was a six-month mental onslaught from the kingdom of darkness, with which I was quite unfamiliar.

At that time I encountered the supernatural side of spiritual warfare.

After six months of torment, I eventually received several revelations from the Lord that I have taught the body of Christ for over twenty-four years.

Recently, while pouring over stacks of old sermon notes and spiritual nuggets scratched on pieces of paper, I came across several pages marked

"dealing with hindering spirits." As my eyes ran across the pages, the Holy Spirit impressed me to place the spiritual truths and Scriptures learned from this experience in printed form, thus enabling more people to have a spiritual tool in their hands to help them deal with sudden supernatural attacks.

I have also included a number of very personal stories that I have never shared in public. I felt it was time to include this information for your benefit. This is my testimony of victory over a very real enemy.

You will discover that a hindering spirit targeted one of the great apostles in the New Testament. It was his revelation that would eventually help me overcome

these conflicts and live a life free from tormenting attacks. May these truths help you and be a source of strength in your personal life.

God Bless You,

Perry Stone, Jr.

Founder and President, Voice of Evangelism, Inc.

Cleveland, Tennessee

Chapter 1

Tapping into the Spirit World

"Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days."

Daniel 10:12-13

At a young age, I knew that I was called into the ministry. From my mid-teens, my social life and my desires seemed different from those of the average teenager. In school, my peers were excited about ball games, weekend parties, or some new drug they tried during spring break. I was sixteen years of age, wearing dark polyester pants and carrying a large Dake's Annotated Bible under my arm. I was not attempting to be different or stand out like a sore thumb. My heart's desires were simply different. I never once dated a girl from a public school, because we didn't have anything in common. My friends were Christians I had met at various churches. To be honest, it was very lonely.

In 1976, my life changed during an unscheduled act of God. It was unscheduled on my calendar, but prearranged on the Lord's! Three older men and I were enjoying cake and coffee at the church parsonage in Salem, Virginia, where my father served as pastor. Dad has always had a way of stirring your faith when he shares the powerful answers to prayer and the miracles he experienced throughout his ministry. The four of us sat spellbound as Dad related faith-building answers to prayer and miracles of healing he had witnessed. Suddenly

our stomachs were no longer hungry, but our spirits were. A strong desire to touch God's Presence overwhelmed us. I stood and said, "I believe the Lord would have us go to the church and pray." It was just before 11:00 p.m. on a Sunday night but, without hesitation, Wayne, Carlton, Ted, and I raced across the parking lot to the church. We fell on our faces in the sanctuary and began to pray. Minutes turned into hours. At 3:00 in the morning, the awesome Presence of God filled the entire church. My hair stood on end and God's anointing, like warm oil, poured over me. I stood up and stepped out a side door of the sanctuary, looking up at the stars on that clear night. I felt an inner nudge saying, "I have called you to preach." I stepped back into the church and, at 3:30 in the morning, announced to my three friends, "I believe the Lord just called me to preach the Gospel."

Previously, I thought anyone "called" into ministry would receive a visitation from an angel with a booming voice, speaking the King James English, saying, "Yea, the Lord doth call thee into His vineyard." That night, there were no visible angels, no burning bushes, no rainbows, and no audible voices. It was just a still small inner voice, similar to what we read about in 1 Kings 19:11-

God's Call Attracts the Enemy's Attention

It was settled in my heart that I would preach the Gospel. It was not because the path behind me included three ministers in the family, but because the path before me was a pre-determined destiny. Yet, instead of a smoothly paved path, I immediately encountered thorns, roadblocks, and spiritual hindrances. In retrospect, I could see that it was the pattern of people in the Bible. The conflict always precedes the conquest!

Often, the greatest battles precede the greatest blessings. Before David was crowned king of Zion, he experienced the battle at Ziklag (1 Samuel chapter 30). Before Christ began His public ministry, He was tested by Satan for forty days (Luke 4:2). Satan attempted to kill the Hebrew male children before their deliverer ascended to his position (Exodus 1:22).

Herod slew the infants under two years of age in and around Bethlehem, attempting to snuff out the life of a future king of the Jews (Matthew chapter 2).

When you are on the edge of your purpose, the ledge upon which you stand will

begin to shake. You will either stand still or run away from your destiny. The battle for God's will in your life begins early; with some, it begins at the moment of their birth.

The Attempt by a Midwife

Parents need to understand that the spiritual battle for their children begins early. I am uncertain how much the adversary knows about your future, but it seems the spirit realm is made aware of certain destinies God has planned. As a result, the enemy engages assignments to stop the purposes of God.

An example is a child born in 1933. His family lived in a log cabin in Johnny Cake Hollow, not far from Bartley, West Virginia. The cabin was about two and a half miles from the main road. Early on the morning of February 11, 1933, William H. Stone's wife, Nalva, went into labor.

William set out to walk eight miles one way through the snow to find a doctor. After searching out a doctor, he discovered that the doctor worked for a competitive coal mine and was obligated to deliver a baby whose father worked for another coal company. William walked another seven miles through two feet of snow and found a doctor with a model-T Ford.

They drove to the bottom of the hollow and a neighbor, Grover Hatfield, met them with a horse. The doctor rode the horse to the top of the mountain. William Stone later confessed he almost froze to death walking a total of seventeen miles to get a doctor.

As they approached the house, Nalva, who one hour prior had just delivered a baby boy, was standing at the door screaming to her husband,

"William, grab her...she has the baby... someone grab her...she has the baby!" To their shock, the midwife, who had assisted in delivering the baby, had the newborn wrapped in a blanket and was headed out into the freezing cold.

William and the doctor grabbed the woman and had to wrestle the child out of her arms. The midwife was saying, "This is my baby. The Lord has given me this baby!" It is uncertain—what made the midwife mentally snap when the little boy was born. If William and the doctor had arrived ten minutes later, the midwife would have disappeared with the 5-pound bundle.

Wrapped in the blanket that cold winter day was a baby named Fred Stone who, many years later, would become my biological father. Dad has said he believed the enemy placed a fiery dart in the mind of the midwife in an attempt to abort God's sovereign plan for both our ministries.

This story reminds me of how Pharaoh instructed the Egyptian midwives to allow the Hebrew women to deliver their children on the birthing stools and, if the baby was a male child, it was to be killed (Exodus 1:16). After Moses' birth, his mother prepared a small ark made of reeds and placed her newborn son into the dangerous waters of the Nile River (Exodus 2:3). Satan's plan to disrupt the prophetic destiny of Israel failed when Pharaoh's daughter found Moses and raised him in the palace of the king of Egypt (Exodus 2:5-10). Divine purpose is able to preserve you if you will find shelter in the ark of God's Presence.

A Car Accident in 1961

Mom remembers the details and Dad has told the story on numerous occasions. I was two years of age and Dad, Mom and I, along with two young men from a local church, were in the car. It was near Thanksgiving and Dad was preaching a revival in Parsons, West Virginia. That morning we were traveling in a 1960 Comet headed from Parsons to Elkins, West Virginia. Dad remembers me standing up in the middle of the front seat, looking out the window. Dad said to Mom, "Juanita, sit this child down. If I suddenly put on the brakes he'll go through the windshield." (That was before the days of seat belts, air bags, and child safety seats.) Shortly after sitting me down, Dad crested a hill and noticed a car that appeared to be stopped, yet there were no brake lights. Driving fifty-five miles per hour, Dad was going to pass the car when, suddenly, a large truck topped the hill, blocking his ability to pass. Dad's only option was to slam on his brakes, crashing into the man's car.

Moments after the initial impact, Mom came to her senses. She noticed a hole where her head had broken the windshield. Her jaw was broken, along with other injuries. Dad's head also had broken the windshield, and he bent the steering wheel as though it were a rubber tube. The young men were slightly injured when their hands were thrust through the vinyl cover of the front seat.

Mom said that when she searched for me she found me lying on the floor below the front seat. Blood was coming from my nose and I was cut due to the shattered windshield. She felt panic and fear, when suddenly I began to cry. Days

earlier, a woman had bought me a new pair of shoes and the impact had knocked a shoe off my foot. At age two, I was lying in the middle of a car wreck crying for my shoe!

In the 1960's, cars were made like tanks. Even so, we do not give the automobile credit for sparing our lives. Only the hand of the Lord could have prevented a premature death.

Several years ago, Dad said about the accident, "Perry, I believe that somehow the enemy knew there would be a worldwide ministry and this was an early attempt to stop the plan of the Lord before it ever began."

How Does the Enemy Know These Things?

Can the kingdom of darkness actually be aware of certain Plans of God for a person's future? Does the Lord, at times, inform the enemy of His purposes? Are the conversations of angels in the heavenly realm tapped into by spirits in the kingdom of darkness? These are difficult questions to answer. However, after years of ministry, I do believe the kingdom of darkness picks up on plans and purposes that are publicly discussed or made known.

Jesus was aware of this prior to His crucifixion. The Bible tells us that if the princes of the world would have known that Christ's death and resurrection would have led to their defeat, they would have never crucified the Lord (1 Corinthians 2:8). Perhaps this is why Jesus only revealed bits and pieces of God's plan. Toward the time of His death, He told His disciples, *"From henceforth I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me"* (John 14:30). Jesus was not going to expose God's ultimate plan of defeat to His enemy; therefore, He would conquer by silence.

Jesus lived in Nazareth from His early childhood through the age of about thirty (Luke 3:23). During His public baptism, the Father announced, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"*

(Matthew 3:17). Immediately following this announcement, the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil for forty days (Luke 4:2). God announced that Jesus was His Son, and Satan challenged Christ's position with His Father. Three times Satan demanded proof that Jesus was the Son of God. Forty-two months later, men were at the foot of the cross still challenging Jesus, questioning if He was God's Son (Matthew 27:40). Once the Father proclaimed

Jesus as His Son, the conflict began and did not end, even in His death.

Paul gave a prophecy over his spiritual son Timothy and appointed him pastor of the great church at Ephesus. Some estimate the church had over 100,000 members. After a short time, elders in the church began to intimidate the young pastor by saying that Timothy was too young to pastor such a congregation. Paul told Timothy that he should not rebuke the elders and that God didn't give him the spirit of fear (1 Timothy 5:1; 2 Timothy 1:7). He also gave him this instruction:

"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare."

1 Timothy 1:18

Through the Apostle Paul, Timothy received anointed prophetic instruction relating to God's will. Paul instructed him to remember the prophecies and not allow the enemy to steal the assignment God had given him. This is called going to war with the Word.

For years, people have told me that when they began to publicly declare God's plans for their lives, it seemed the attacks of hell broke out against them. Early in my ministry, I noticed that when young men publicly stated that God had called them into the ministry, they would often face severe opposition and strange warfare within a few weeks.

Many times this led down an untraveled road of discouragement and frustration, causing the young men to doubt God's calling. Some eventually made a shipwreck of their faith because they were unable to handle the conflicts.

It Really Doesn't Matter

In reality, it really doesn't matter if the adversary is aware of your assignment. If you are called of the Lord, God will not revoke His calling:

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

Romans 11:29

Life consists of conflicts, and spiritual callings attract spiritual attacks.

You and I will always be fighting something, whether it's others' opinions, bad attitudes, hindrances, bad spirits, spiritual opposition, or persecution.

This is why we must *"endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"*

(2 Timothy 2:3).

Remember three things:

• If you have the attention of the enemy, you also have the attention of God.

• If God is with you, then who can be against you?

• A battle always precedes a breakthrough!

Chapter 2

Six Months of Torment

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

2 Timothy 1:7

I was totally unprepared for an experience I encountered at age eighteen. I assumed that fasting, long seasons of prayer, and study of the Scripture would somehow hedge me in and exempt me from certain attacks of the enemy. I reasoned that if my faith was strong and I was

"prayed up," then this alone would form a protective covering. Shortly after entering full time ministry, I tapped into a realm of the spirit world that I had only read about.

It began in a small mountain community in Weynoke, West Virginia. I had begun evangelistic ministry and was spending entire days fasting and hours at a time studying the Bible and other religious books. I was extremely burdened for the lost and hungry for God's Presence in the revivals. I became consumed with really knowing God and not just knowing about God.

One night in July of 1978, I returned from a revival service, went to my room

located in the church parsonage, and lay across the bed, exhausted. Within minutes, I felt a strange uneasy presence, like a dark vapor, slip into the room. At that instant, I was overcome with a dizzy sensation, as the walls appeared to be moving in toward me. All I could do was lie on my back and pray. The dark presence lingered for some time until, finally, I fell into a deep sleep. Even though at the time I thought the experience was strange, I soon brushed it off.

Several weeks later, I was ministering at my grandfather's church in Gorman, Maryland. My grandparents, John and Lucy Bava, lived in Davis, West Virginia, a small community in the northeastern part of the state.

Late one night I slipped into bed and thought I had landed in a bed full of bugs. It felt as though hundreds of small insects were crawling over my legs. I recall flinging back the covers and turning on the light, only to discover the sheets were white and spotless. I turned off the light and got back in bed, only to experience the same physical sensation. The second time was enough. I jumped from the bed, grabbed the pillow, and slept on the couch. I reasoned that this must be some strange phenomenon that would vanish. I was wrong.

The Dark Presence

Returning home to Salem, Virginia, I entrenched myself in study and prayer, often up to fifteen hours a day. My bedroom was my personal office and, after studying late one night, I turned off the light and fumbled my way to the lower bunk bed. Within a few moments, a negative dark presence entered the room. This time it felt almost tangible, as though I could reach out and touch it. I began to rebuke the presence saying, "I rebuke this presence in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." In an instant the presence lifted.

The following night, the same dark presence again veiled the atmosphere. I noticed that the presence did not depart upon my rebuke but, instead, seemed to linger until it slowly slipped into the darkness.

I was uncertain what this presence actually was. I had been a Christian since I was a child and had never encountered such a real, invisible presence. A mild feeling of fear would overtake me when this force was near. I knew I had spent ample time studying Scriptures relating to the supernatural realm of evil spirits, but I had little knowledge in personally dealing with an evil presence that seemingly came and went at will. This led me into a detailed, complex study of

the spirit world. I thought that arming myself with this information would shield me from whatever spirit this was. Instead, these unnatural visitations accelerated.

I will never forget the night the presence became a visible manifestation. One morning I was awakened by a loud buzzing noise in my ears. I became aware of the strange sensation that I was unable to speak or move. Immediately I heard deep male voices that were cursing me, using every conceivable form of profanity. I knew this was very real and that I was not imagining it. I had never read of such encounters and was unfamiliar with how to stop these intrusions. Unable to speak, my mind began to rebuke the evil spirits. The rebuke worked. My body was loosed and silence followed.

The Manifestation of an Evil Spirit

These strange attacks became more frequent. They included the buzzing noises, the helpless sensation of being paralyzed, and audible voices mocking, cursing the Bible, cursing Jesus Christ, and threatening me with physical harm. Let me emphasize, this was not my mind or an overworked imagination. It was real, very real. Eventually the attacks moved to a new level.

Late one night the evil presence came into the room and awakened me.

It was then that I saw for the first time what I was dealing with. The presence was covered with a dark shroud, similar to a long thick robe that might be worn by a satanist or a witch. The face was dark and a dark hood surrounded the head and covered part of the face. This physical manifestation blanketed me in the worst kind of fear I had ever experienced. Although the presence left after a few seconds, the fear froze my spirit. I turned on the light and was unable to sleep.

I began to think these attacks were seasonal and would shortly pass.

Again my reasoning was incorrect. These mental and spiritual invasions from another realm only increased in frequency and intensity. This tormenting force would often appear two or three times a week. Strange sounds, voices, footsteps, and physical manifestations became my unwanted visitors.

Why Was This Happening to Me?

As these troubling attacks persisted, there were several things I knew for a fact. I knew I was called to preach and no amount of intimidation would change my

mind. I knew I was living right and was not opening a door to Satan through sin. I knew that sooner or later, like Job, I would get some explanation for why this was happening.

These three facts did not change the questions that were haunting my mind but not being answered as the weeks turned into months. *Why was this happening to me when no one else I knew was having these experiences? What could be the purpose in the Lord allowing this to go on and on? Would this be something I would encounter for the rest of my life?*

It was the third question that troubled me the most. I became deceived into thinking that these demonic manifestations would be something I would encounter for all the days of my ministry. I began to believe this was my "thorn in the flesh" and the Lord was going to allow this spirit to follow me for some unknown reason. In fact, I began to expect these attacks on a regular basis. Needless to say, if you expect the enemy in your house, he will gladly show up!

A Possible Explanation

I recall going to my father, a seasoned man of God, and explaining what I was encountering. He discerned that it was a supernatural attack from a demonic spirit. He felt that because I was fasting and praying, the Lord was opening my eyes to the spirit world. This still did not answer the question: *What is the purpose? What am I supposed to learn from this?*

Five months after the initial attack, I was ministering in Blacksburg, Virginia for Pastor Jim Angle. Jim was a unique man of God whose ministry focused on deliverance and healing. I detailed the events and Jim looked at me and said, "Perry, the Lord has been boasting about your dedication to Him, as He did with Job. Satan has said to the Lord, 'Let me test Perry', and that is what is going on. You are being tested for a season."

Jim's observation put steel in my back and set my face as a flint to endure and eventually overcome these intrusions. I knew that the Bible taught spiritual authority over all powers of the enemy and revealed that, when Jesus rebuked Satan, the enemy departed from Him (Luke 4:13). I was fully aware of the Scriptures that promised spiritual power. Yet, I also knew, according to the Book of Job, that there are seasons when God allows a person to be tested.

Could the enemy frighten me away from fasting and praying for long seasons?

Would I back away from preaching on defeating the enemy and gaining victory in spiritual warfare? Was this a form of spiritual intimidation to make me say, "I don't want to be in the ministry if I have to deal with these tormenting spirits?"

The Roar of the Lion

I once read that the roar of a lion can be heard up to one mile away.

One researcher noted that the roar of a lion can actually paralyze some animals with fear. They literally cannot move because the roar is so intimidating. I realized that the supernatural voices, the cursing, and the other manifestations were the roar of the lion and his plan was to seize me with fear.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

I Peter 5:8

This was important because the enemy will gain the advantage if we remain ignorant of his devices and strategies (2 Corinthians 2:11). One day I came across one verse of Scripture that I seized in my spirit. It became my rope to hold on to:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

1 Corinthians 10:13

Deep inside I knew these tormenting manifestations could not last forever. God would make a way of escape. For six months I lived a life of mental torment while, at the same time, I was seeing great revivals in churches throughout the East Coast.

The Lord Came Into the Room

After several months, I found myself dreading the night. I often slept with a night-light or played Gospel music until I fell asleep. Finally the Christmas season arrived and Mom's relatives were staying with us in Salem, Virginia. My brother and I were sleeping downstairs in my room.

Our beds were opposite from one another. It was December 31, 1978, and I recall praying and asking the Lord to not allow one demonic spirit to manifest beginning the first of the year. A new year was coming and I was expecting a new anointing and a fresh touch from the Lord. Shortly after midnight, I went to sleep in peace for the first time in weeks.

Then, in the middle of the night, I was abruptly awakened by a hand violently jerking my right leg as if attempting to pull me out of the bed! I assumed my brother, Phillip, was pulling a prank on me. As I sat up, I could see the night-light and the digital clock, which read three o'clock in the morning. To the right I saw the outline of my brother lying in his bed.

Then something happened that is difficult to explain. Within three feet from my face, I saw the face of a handsome man. His features were perfect and his eyes were full of compassion. I thought an angel of the Lord had entered the room. Suddenly, the face became contorted with an evil stare followed by a hollow demonic laughter. This angel of light was no angel of God! It was the visible face of a fierce evil spirit that was literally laughing at me.

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

2 Corinthians 11:14

At that moment, something broke forth inside of me. Instead of panicking and wanting to hide under the covers, I began to scream out of my spirit (not with my mind), *"No! You will no longer torment me. I have had enough! No more!"* My inner man was rising up against this force. I realized later that it was the Holy Spirit within me that was rising up. As the Bible says, *"Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered..."* (Psalms 68:1).

At that instant, I heard a voice. The voice was from within but yet was audible to my spiritual ears. The Holy Spirit spoke to my spirit, saying,

"Son, as long as you live Satan will use what you see and what you hear against you. It is time that you stand on the only thing that can never be shaken or changed. Stand upon My Word!"

Instantly the shaking ceased and the image of this face of wickedness evaporated into thin air. A surge of peace and fresh anointing filled my spirit, and I felt as though a huge weight had been lifted. The atmosphere cleared and peace flooded

the room.

That was on January 1, 1979. Those particular series of attacks have never repeated themselves. Other spiritual battles would lie on my journey, but those demonic manifestations ceased following the revelation from the Holy Spirit.

The Lessons I Learned

When the Holy Spirit said, "Satan will use what you see and what you hear against you," I was reminded of Peter who stepped out of the boat and walked on water toward Jesus. What held Peter up? The Word. Jesus said one word to Peter: *"Come"* (Matthew 14:29). That one word held up a grown man on the water! Peter began observing the strong winds and noticed the waves were getting higher. When he lost faith in the Word, he began to fail.

After receiving this Word from the Lord, I realized that I was being moved by what I felt, saw, and heard. If the attendance in my revivals was good, I expected a great revival but, if the crowds were small, I anticipated little. If I felt good, I could minister effectively but, if I felt depressed, I was hindered. Months later, I read a statement by Smith Wigglesworth that summed up the lesson the Holy Spirit taught me. Smith once said, "I am not moved by what I see. I am not moved by what I feel. I am moved by what I believe!" The Lord knew I could never experience the level of growth He desired for me if I allowed myself to be moved by what I felt or didn't feel and what I saw or didn't see. God wanted me to rely upon the power of His Word! This is why I would often spend up to fifteen hours a day studying the Word.

In the Bible, Jesus was moved with compassion but never by circumstances (Matthew 9:36). If there was a lack of food, He multiplied a boy's lunch and fed a multitude (Matthew 15:34-38). Death did not intimidate him. Christ ruined funerals by raising the corpse from the dead (Luke 7:11-15).

The second great lesson I learned is that God will be faithful to deliver you, if you will be faithful to believe Him. It may not come in the manner or the time you expect, but faith and patience birth the blessings.

"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Hebrews 6:12

Through the experience I discovered three things:

• **God is not moved by your feelings, but by your faith.**

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Hebrews 11:6

Christ is touched by the feelings of our infirmities but He responds to our prayers of faith. He is moved by compassion when we are suffering or in need because He also suffered in the flesh. Yet, in every miracle of the New Testament, it was faith that released the power of God to minister to those in need.

• **God is not moved by your circumstances, but by His Word.**

"Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it."

Jeremiah 1:12

We often believe God must come on the scene and help us because the circumstances are killing us. God is only obligated to His Covenant (His Word), and He is attracted to anyone who knows, quotes, and believes the Words of the Covenant!

• **God will deliver you from the attack if you will remain steadfast.**

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

1 Corinthians 10:13

The Apostle Paul spoke of being delivered from the mouth of the lion:

"Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every

evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

2 Timothy 4:17-18

God may make a way of escape by bringing a person into your life who can assist you. God can also change the situation abruptly, thus bringing you out of your difficulty. Angels can assist in your deliverance.

Many examples can be given of how God will make a way where there is no way.

This experience and others that would follow gave me a valuable understanding of how the enemy operates. This experience would become a teaching tool I would share across the nation in order to help believers through their own supernatural conflicts.

Chapter 3

Demonic Spirits on Assignment

"Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us."

1 Thessalonians 2:18

After the Lord delivered me from those aggressive attacks of the enemy, I began to receive important weapons of war to deal with the enemy's strategies. Three years later, I encountered another level of warfare. Again, the Lord allowed an attack that would give me insight into the operation of the adversary and understanding that would eventually assist thousands of God's people.

The Five Week Revival

From 1980 through 1996, our local church revivals averaged three weeks—that's every night for three weeks! Occasionally, some revivals continued from five to eleven weeks. In 1981, during a five-week revival, I encountered a hindering spirit that attempted to damage my ministry for years to come.

In the early 1980's, the small Virginia community where I was preaching was still in the grips of a recession, and many factory employees had experienced layoffs. This type of setting made a community ripe for a revival. Our meeting, which had been scheduled for one week, was extended for thirty-five consecutive services. Extraordinary miracles occurred during the revival. In five weeks, hundreds of souls were converted to Christ or filled with the Holy Spirit. The excitement was spreading through several counties, and the 850-seat sanctuary was overflowing with people. The church had prepared a small apartment near the pastor's office in the back of the church to house their evangelists and guest speakers. I stayed in this apartment during the entire revival. It may seem spiritual to sleep in the back of a church but, when services conclude, the atmosphere is far different from what it is when the people are worshiping.

A Hindering Spirit

During the second week of the revival, at approximately three o'clock in the morning, I was awakened by the sound of someone shaking the outside door of the sanctuary, located about fifty feet from the apartment. I heard the door open and slam shut. I listened, as moments later, the door to the janitor's closet, located a few feet down the hall, was opened and slammed shut. By this time I was wondering who was in the church. I thought, "The janitor has chosen a strange time to clean the church!"

Within a few seconds, the door to the evangelist's apartment was turning. I was in my pajamas lying in bed and someone was entering the apartment without knocking. By this time I was indignant and a little frightened, especially since there was no phone in the apartment.

The door opened and I sat up thinking, "Perhaps the pastor is coming in to inform me something has happened to a loved one." The light from the bathroom across the hall would give me enough visibility to identify the unexpected visitor.

To my shock, I saw a creature in the form of a hunchbacked man walk past me in the hall. The face was wrapped in old gray rags, similar to an Egyptian mummy. Ragged clothing hung loosely around the four-foot frame of the creature. This demonic being was dragging two bags, seemingly filled with garbage, into the apartment.

As it passed and went toward the small kitchen, I had to pinch myself to see if I was dreaming. I was fully awake. Were my spiritual eyes being opened? Was this what some would call a vision? Whatever the explanation, this spirit was real and different from anything I had experienced. Within a minute, this wretched spirit walked back through the apartment, turned its head toward me and grinned. A cold chill ran down my spine and I pretended not to see it. Then it left the apartment through the door.

I lay in the bed with the covers held tightly and began praying under my breath. I could hear this spirit through the walls of the apartment as it entered the pastor's office. I could hear file cabinets and desk drawers opening. Finally, I heard this spirit walk up the steps into the pastor's council room, which was above the apartment, and then there was silence.

Let me add here that some who have never tapped into the spirit world would ridicule and mock the telling of such a strange personal experience.

For those who would mock this true event, I always say may the Almighty God alone be the judge.

I had no interest in opening the door or becoming a spiritual hero by challenging this being. In fact, I would have rather run out of the apartment and gone home with a family in the church! It took some time to go back to sleep. I awoke in the morning still dazed by the visitation and uncertain of what it all meant. I thought, "If I tell someone about this they will think I am a nut!"

The revival meeting continued. I was so overtaken by the Presence of God in the services that I paid little attention to the warning God allowed me to see as it related to this spirit. God was actually opening my eyes to something happening behind the scenes that I was unaware of.

The Attitude of the Leadership Changed

A few days following the incident, a strange attitude developed among the pastor and several of the members. I later learned that several families were upset with the crowds and the new people attending the meeting. A few thought the emotionalism of believers rejoicing, worshiping, and praying was too offensive. These carnal church members threatened to leave the church if the pastor did not close the meeting. From that moment on, the pastor seemed divided over the revival. He began talking about closing the revival, despite it being the greatest

revival in the church's history.

The altar services continued late into the night and, often, twenty to thirty people would remain in prayer in the sanctuary. Suddenly, instructions were given that everyone had to be out of the sanctuary and the doors locked by eleven o'clock.

After four and a half weeks, the pastor closed the revival on a Wednesday night. I sincerely felt it was not God's will and made the mistake of saying so. On Wednesday night, with the largest crowd yet and souls being saved and delivered, the pastor slipped out of the sanctuary and went home. His wife said he was sick, but he later said he had an emergency phone call.

I returned to Alabama the following morning.

The Garbage Was Spread

The following Sunday, the pastor ministered to a large crowd, many of whom had been converted or touched in the revival. He addressed the issue of closing the revival and then made several bizarre statements directed toward me. His message was being heard in the community over a live radio broadcast, and the confusion began. Several unsaved men told their wives, "I heard that preacher this morning and he seems jealous of Perry. I'm not letting you go back to a church with a preacher like that!"

The community began talking. Why was the revival closed when it was going so well? The pastor had told me that he and his wife had planned a brief vacation during Thanksgiving and the meeting was interfering with his plans. Yet, his wife would later confess that they were both afraid that I was popular with some of the members and that I would move back to Virginia and organize a ministry in the area, eventually affecting his church. It appeared to be the fear factor that led to the decision to close the meeting.

Two weeks after the meeting, I received a phone call in Alabama. It was a friend from the church where the conflict had developed. The man on the other end of the line said, "Perry, the state overseer had a meeting at our church today. They brought up your name from the beginning and indirectly attempted to pen blame on you for creating strife in the church.

Several people stood up in your defense and corrected the situation but, since you were not present in the meeting, I taped it for you." When I heard the tape, I

was shocked. The state overseer had allowed people to speak their minds and they certainly did. He permitted people to clap when they agreed or disagreed over something said. He allowed the meeting to get out of hand. This open church meeting itself did more damage to the congregation than anything else. People chose sides. They were either for or against the revival, for or against the pastor, for or against the evangelist. I had never heard anything like this before.

Several weeks later, I traveled to Virginia and sat down with the state overseer who had conducted the meeting. He was unaware that I had a tape of the entire meeting. My carnal instinct was to sue him for slander.

In my spirit, I attempted to handle things the Biblical way. I requested to meet with the pastor and correct any misunderstandings. I even offered to stand before the church and make a public apology if I had been in error in my attitude or comments. The overseer said, "Perry, you didn't do anything wrong. Let me handle this. The pastor is old and wants to pastor in the town where he has a house and retire there. Just let it pass."

I realized later I should have operated the Biblical way and gone directly to the pastor. I later learned this state overseer wanted a larger state and, therefore, did not want a controversy connected to his name.

During the revival the pastor told me that, when the congregational vote was taken in April, he did not expect to be voted back into this church as pastor. He was considering a pastorate in a city where he had a home and, in fact, he did move to that city. Yet, when asked why he left the church, I was penned as the culprit. Some ministers had enough common sense to ask, "How can a twenty-two year old kid create a problem in a church that is fifty years old and do it in thirty-five services? Others noted that, months later, the attendance was the same and what they were hearing didn't add up to the evidence.

It was then that I realized what I had seen. A hindering spirit had spread his "garbage" throughout the church! But the damage had been done. Ministers who were once friends would walk the other way when they saw me at church conventions. Some later admitted they were hoping something would happen to me in order to stop the momentum of the ministry. Some commented, "He's getting too big, too fast and God is just bringing him down." Ministers repeated unfounded rumors, such as "Perry hit the pastor and publicly said he was starting a church." Another said,

"Perry split the church, took half the people, and started a church." Still someone else said, "Perry has been banned from preaching in the area."

All of these rumors were outright lies. The mental suffering this time was different. It wasn't a fear of the spirit world. It was the torment of hearing stories that were lies and having no way to stop them from spreading.

I discovered that in a church denomination, gossip spreads faster than it does in the secular news media. I was a fourth generation minister and God was giving astonishing revivals in many cities. I thought that somewhere, someone of influence in the denomination would come to my aid and at least ask me a few questions, but nobody did. Years later I would learn that the leading denominational leaders assumed I would

"blow over", so they didn't bother wasting their time trying to heal the situation. I had prayed, fasted, and spent long hours studying to bring the Word, but for a brief time, I considered quitting.

The old, ancient-looking spirit had been assigned to attack the revival, the pastor, myself, and the church. It came first to the apartment, then to the pastor's office and, finally, to the council room. God was attempting to forewarn me, but I was twenty-two years of age and did not have experience in discerning the tactics of the enemy.

For several years I wondered, "How did this spirit gain such access into the church and into this situation? Both fear and jealousy were in operation and both can open a door to demonic activity. I knew there was something more to this than anyone was aware of. It would be ten years before I would receive an answer to this question.

An Assignment by a Satanist

Ten years later, I was conducting a regional revival not far from where the hindering spirit had set in motion one of the worst conflicts of my ministry. A young man, the son of a man converted to Christ in the revival ten years earlier, called me from a hospital. He had been injured in a serious accident and asked me to pray for him. We ministered to him and the following day he was present in the church service.

While sitting in a restaurant after the service with my wife Pam, our ministry

prayer leader Bea Ogle, and myself, this young man began to give us information that would finally explain the situation that had occurred. He said, "Ten years ago I was converted in your revival but, when I saw the attitude of some so-called Christians, I quit attending church and eventually became involved in satanism." He began to give me information that was later confirmed by a detective in the area who questioned me after hearing that this young man had spoken with me.

The young man began, "Perry, when you were in that long revival ten years ago, the son of a nationally known satanic priest was working on campus at a local university to recruit young people. I was lured in through curiosity. While I was involved in this, I learned that when you were in the area years ago conducting that long revival, this man heard of the spiritual results of your meeting and came one night, stood outside, and brought curses to you and the church. He could not personally curse you, but he commanded a spirit to hinder and bring confusion to the meeting in order to close it down."

I wasn't sure whether to believe him or not until he said, "The satanist directed a certain type of spirit that was about four feet tall and looked like an Egyptian mummy to cause rumors to be spread about you and the revival in order to bring confusion." I almost fell off my seat. I had never publicly told anyone in that area the story of the spirit I saw in the apartment!

The young man continued, "Do you remember during the revival a certain man (he named a member of the church) coming by to see the pastor during the day?" I confirmed that I did recall seeing this man. I recalled that he would come to the church in the afternoon, and he and the pastor would go into the pastor's office and close the door. He continued,

"This man sang in the choir, yet he was having an affair on his wife. He became involved in the occult. He was told that he could have whatever he wanted (and he happened to want the occult group leader's wife) if he would spread rumors and create confusion in the meeting. This church member was meeting with the pastor and telling him lies in order to cause the pastor to shut down the meeting. This is why the pastor wanted to close the revival. He thought this man knew something that he really didn't. It was a set up all the time!"

This young man revealed other facts and bits of information that I knew he could have had no knowledge of through any other source. It was obvious that the

pastor had listened to a hypocritical church member who worked a night shift job and was driving through the parking lot late at night while many were still praying in the church.

Years later, I returned to the same church where the satanic assignment had unfolded. I publicly apologized for not informing them of the spirit I had seen years before and told the church everything that had happened.

That night hundreds wept before God and a supernatural healing began.

The saddest part of the entire event is that when contention and confusion broke out among certain people, nobody stood up and said,

"Wait a minute. This is the enemy attempting to work among us." Instead, it became a battle of flesh and blood, of opinions and personalities. This also shows that if the enemy goes undetected and is not exposed, he will gain the advantage by default.

Some may ask, "Why didn't you share what happened with the church at the time it happened?" As I considered doing so, I thought, "Why do this? I have no idea what it means and some folks will never believe it."

There were some in the church that didn't accept the work of the Holy Spirit, and I was certain they wouldn't discern the strategy of some evil spirit.

That spirit would have been limited in its weapons if people had not allowed themselves to fall prey to gossip, slander, and personal opinions.

As in the time of King Saul, when Saul became jealous over David, the jealousy opened a door to an evil spirit that, from time to time, tormented Saul (1 Samuel 16:14; 18:10; 19:9). Saul made twenty-one attempts on David's life and became the tool through which this evil entity worked.

Even believers can yield to the wrong spirits. Peter once rebuked Christ, telling him that he would not suffer. Jesus said, *"Get thee behind me Satan"* (Matthew 16:23). Peter was not Satan, but was speaking contrary to the divine will of God. Ananias and Sapphira were members of the early church and were told that Satan had filled their hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3).

Our spirit is born again, but our mind must continually be renewed (Ephesians

4:23). Otherwise, our carnal minds could yield to the fiery darts of the enemy, and we could play into the plans of the adversary.

The Plans Eventually Backfired

This spirit motivated the carnal minds of certain people to slander and criticize our ministry. Those who didn't investigate the facts accepted the rumors as truth and our ministry suffered for a season. During this time, a minister named Raymond Culpepper, Jr. met me at a restaurant in Alabama. He said, "Perry, don't dwell on this. Keep on ministering and the Lord will avenge you. It just may be that the Lord has allowed this, knowing the great ministry you will have and, like Paul, God has allowed it so you will not become exalted in your own eyes."

During this humiliating time, I humbled myself before God as a broken young man. Less than forty-five days later, I began a revival in Daisy, Tennessee that continued for eight weeks. Hundreds accepted Christ and were baptized in the Holy Spirit. The next revival continued for two weeks in Montgomery, Alabama. Following this revival, I married my wife Pam and, two days later, we began a revival in Gastonia, North Carolina that continued for three weeks. It was during this great revival that we met a young man named Jentezen Franklin who was starting his ministry. Jentezen, who is now a wonderful friend of ours, pastors Free Chapel Worship Center in Gainesville, Georgia, one of America's greatest churches.

The entire plan eventually backfired. I came out of the fire a better person and continued to experience God's favor in the revivals. Perhaps it was possible that, as a young man having record breaking results and large crowds, my heart could have become proud and the Lord allowed the hindering spirit to keep me trusting in him. After all, Satan would have no opening without the permission of God.

We would be stunned if we only knew the number of churches that have been attacked by spirits, yet the people think it is a battle with the board members, or the carnal church members, or the pastor. Spirits are usually invisible and, therefore, not easily detected. They are crafty and sly in their approach.

One man in the Bible knew what it was like to deal with a strong hindering spirit. It was this example that gave me the determination to press on.

Chapter 4

The Thorn in the Flesh

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

The Scriptures are filled with examples of men and women who overcame extreme adversity as they ran the race of faith. Hebrews chapter 11, often called the hall of faith, lists the names of faithful saints of old whose determination and commitment to God was stronger than all opposition. But no man in Scripture understood the struggle of dealing with a hindering spirit more than the Apostle Paul did. The spirit assigned to him became a thorn in the flesh.

The Apostle Paul was an excellent choice to lead the first century Gentile church. Born in the city of Tarsus, Italy, Paul was highly educated and could speak several languages fluently. As a youth, he trained under noted Rabbi Gamaliel. He became an influential Pharisee and, after the birth of the Christian church, became Judaism's most outspoken activist against the new heretical sect of the Nazarenes. Saul, as he was named before his conversion, prided himself on arresting and persecuting Christians (Acts chapter 9).

His conversion on the road to Damascus created a great controversy.

His Jewish colleagues were both baffled and angry, and the Christian leaders were both happy and skeptical. Some assumed the conversion was a trap to gain entrance into the church leadership, thus compiling a list of names for future arrests. Look at the attitude of Ananias, the man sent by the Holy Spirit to pray for Saul after his conversion:

"Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil

he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name."

Acts 9:13-14

The conversion of Saul was an astonishing victory for the church and a great blow to the kingdom of darkness. The man the adversary had used to murder prominent Christians was now leading the people he once persecuted! It seems the very wicked spirits that motivated Paul to persecute the Christians may have turned against Paul himself after his conversion.

Thrust Into the Conflict

Within days of his conversion, Saul (renamed Paul) was thrust into a conflict. His life was threatened and he barely escaped over the wall of a city in a basket (Acts 9:24-25). From that moment until the conclusion of Paul's ministry, he was abused, beaten, arrested, and harassed for the sake of the Gospel. The words of Christ were fulfilled, that Paul would *"suffer great things for the sake of Christ"* (Acts 9:16).

After several years of ministry, Paul revealed to the church at Corinth that a messenger of Satan was harassing him. This messenger had become Paul's "thorn in the flesh." Paul wrote: *"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."*

2 Corinthians 12:7

Scholars have promoted various theories as to what this thorn in the flesh was. Some have taught that Paul had an eye disease and encountered a difficult time writing his epistles in prison. Others teach that Paul had an unconverted wife that was his thorn in the flesh. Some have contended that Paul's thorn was his height, or that he was hunchbacked.

These are all man-made theories. Paul was blinded on the road to Damascus but was healed when prayed for in Acts 9:17. Paul may have had a wife at one time since he was a Pharisee but, years later, when he wrote 1 Corinthians 7:8, he was unmarried. He could not have been hunchbacked or a dwarf and been a Pharisee (Leviticus 21:20). Those who believe Paul's thorn was a physical ailment note

that he called this messenger a thorn in the "flesh." The assumption is that it was a problem that affected his physical body. The only other place in Scripture where a thorn in the flesh is referenced is when Joshua and Israel possessed the Promised Land. God warned Israel that, if they didn't defeat their enemies, they would become thorns:

"But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell."

Numbers 33:55

"Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you."

Joshua 23:13

"Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you."

Judges 2:3

The words "thorn in the flesh" are similar to the phrases relating to the surrounding nations that would create confusion and discomfort for the Hebrews when they possessed the land. The phrase "thorn in the flesh"

would be similar to saying "pain in the neck." The person making such a statement does not have a sore neck; it is simply an expression of nuisance, annoyance, or trouble.

Paul was saying that this messenger of Satan was a pain in the neck! A careful word study from Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 12:7 will open the door of understanding to what this thorn in the flesh actually was.

A Demonic Messenger

Paul said there was a "messenger of Satan." The Greek word used here is "angelos," which is found over 180 times in the New Testament. In most cases

the word is translated as *angel,* but seven times it is translated as *messenger.* It is the same Greek word used in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 where Christ is addressing the pastors of the seven churches saying,

"Unto the angel of the church at Sardis" , and so forth (Revelation 2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18). In these passages, the angel was a human messenger.

Paul's messenger was an angel of Satan. According to Scripture, Satan has an organized kingdom consisting of principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12). This messenger was assigned from Satan to attack Paul, or to buffet him.

The word buffet is a Greek word meaning *to keep slapping or deal blow after blow.* One might picture a man in a ring boxing with an opponent, continually clipping him with a blow strong enough to knock him off balance. Paul was basically saying, "When I think I am standing up and doing well, I am suddenly knocked down again. I pick myself up and think I am making progress, when suddenly I am hit again."

In 2 Corinthians chapter 11, prior to Paul revealing this thorn in the flesh, he listed a series of obstacles he consistently encountered that slowed down his ministry and caused him great pain, both physically and emotionally:

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

2 Corinthians 1:23-28

The list includes twenty-two different trials and difficulties Paul encountered during his ministry. No apostle in the New Testament had a list like this! The Book of Acts gives the direct references to many of Paul's attacks and hindrances he experienced:

• Acts 9: His life was threatened and he escaped over the wall in a basket.

• Acts 13: The Jews rejected Paul's message and he was accused of blasphemy.

• Acts 14: Paul was dragged outside the city of Lystra and stoned.

• Acts 15: A strong contention arose between Paul and Barnabus that caused a division.

• Acts 16: Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten, and placed in prison.

• Acts 17: Paul's preaching caused an uproar at Thessalonica.

• Acts 18: Paul's message was rejected at Corinth. He was arrested and stood trial.

• Acts 19: A riot broke out at Ephesus after idol worshipers were converted to Christ.

• Acts 21: A riot broke out in the city and Paul was arrested.

• Acts 22: Paul had to go to court for preaching the Gospel.

• Acts 23: A group of zealous religious Jews sought to kill Paul.

• Acts 27: While on his way to Rome, Paul was in a severe shipwreck, yet survived.

• Acts 28: Paul was bitten by a deadly viper, yet miraculously survived.

A strong demonic spirit was assigned to Paul to create adverse circumstances against his ministry. Note, also, why the Lord permitted this entity to work against Paul. The apostle wrote:

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

2 Corinthians 12:7

Paul received an "abundance of revelations." Scholars note that this powerful

apostle of faith records in the Bible seven major revelations that were revealed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ. Shortly after Paul's conversion, he departed Damascus under a death threat and went into the desert of Arabia (possibly Mount Sinai). There he received the revelations that he recorded in his fourteen epistles of the New Testament (Galatians 1:17; 4:25). Paul received the revelation of the catching away, known as the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18), the mystery of the resurrection (1

Corinthians chapter 15), and the mystery of how the Gentiles were grafted into the covenant (Romans chapter 11).

Being a mere mortal, it would have been easy for Paul to become lifted up in pride. After all, who else in the Bible wrote fourteen books? Who else received the New Testament revelations Paul received? It was the abundance of the revelations that the enemy hated. Satan hates for us to have the eyes of our understanding opened through the revelation of God's Word, because the revelation can change your situation!

When God announced at the Jordan River that Jesus was His Son, immediately Satan tempted Jesus for forty days and challenged His position as the Son of God (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 4:3). Peter received a revelation and confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, and Peter became a target of Satan (Matthew 16:16; Luke 22:31).

Do you recall when you heard a message revealing how God could change your life? What about a revelation of God's healing power or the power of the Holy Spirit? Remember when you first felt the Presence of God and how it impacted your life? The adversary recognizes the power of the revelation. Once our understanding is enlightened, we are no longer a pushover for the kingdom of darkness. Instead of being threatened by the enemy, we become a threat to the enemy!

Paul understood the reason for this: battling this spirit kept him before God's presence continually. It is difficult for a person to be lifted up in pride when they are continually being harassed. This messenger of Satan used people as his voice and his weapon to distract and hinder the ministry of Paul.

Evil Spirits Work Through People

From Acts chapters 9 through 28, we read where Paul was arrested, beaten, and

severely persecuted. In each instance Satan used people to cause the insurrections against him. Evil spirits work through people.

Without the voice, hands, and feet of a human being, an evil spirit is limited in what it can accomplish. Satan has always used people to oppose the work of the Gospel. My greatest opposition in ministry has come from the words and actions of people. These include but are not limited to:

• a breakdown in communication that has led to misunderstandings

• half-truths and lies being repeated as facts that birthed rumors

• people influencing others not to attend revivals or be involved in our ministry

• circumstances rising up that cannot be controlled or dealt with in the natural

I cannot count the number of times a report has surfaced where I allegedly said something in a message that was never said. For example, in the early 1980's, I preached on the ashes of the red heifer. The message was a prophetic word revealing how the religious Jews would need the ashes of a red heifer (Numbers chapter 19) to purify the future temple, and a temple could not be built until the procedure from Numbers chapter 19 was followed. At the time, I was only one of two people speaking on the subject in the United States.

On one occasion, I was ministering in a large church and the pastor was unable to attend the service. A few weeks later, I learned he had informed several pastor friends that I was preaching heresy, and he alleged that I had said in his church that Jesus could not come until a red heifer was burnt in Israel. I knew this was not a true statement because I did not believe that. I asked for a tape of the service, which revealed that nothing of that kind was said. Yet, because of this man's influence, several ministers stopped using me for revivals. It was a pity they never contacted me personally to see what I said or what I believed before they convicted me based on another man's personal remarks.

The hindering spirit made matters difficult for Paul as he ministered from city to city. His revivals often turned into riots and his public appearances often landed him in jail. This spirit motivated the ungodly and the religious crowds to rise up against Paul, because Paul's ministry was damaging Satan's kingdom. Since Satan could not stop him, he attempted to hinder him or slow him down, thus affecting the momentum of his ministry.

Although the hindering spirit motivated people to attack and persecute Paul, he knew that God was still in control and the plans of God would move on schedule. Persecution is designed to run you away from the Word (Matthew 13:21). Strong believers will run to the Word and not from the Word in times of attack.

The Church in Northern Virginia

My father is a man who is very sensitive to the Holy Spirit. At age sixty-eight, he still spends extended time in prayer and fasting. Those who know him best see him as a very humble, pure-hearted man of faith whom God has used in marvelous ways throughout almost fifty years of ministry.

Occasionally, the Holy Spirit will open up his eyes to the spirit realm.

During the early 1970's, we lived in Arlington, Virginia where Dad pastored the Filmore Avenue Church of God. Dad assumed the pastorate with about fifteen people and began to see growth almost immediately.

After several years of pastoring, Dad encountered a strange spiritual opposition in the church. It was difficult to explain but could be felt in the services. Dad went into a time of prayer and fasting, asking God to remove this invisible barricade that seemed to veil the atmosphere like a heavy blanket.

One evening, while alone in deep prayer at the church, Dad was seeking God for His divine intervention. Suddenly he heard a noise coming from the back of the church. As he turned to look, he saw something very large in the right hand corner of the church, near the top of the sanctuary. He saw a large angelic being with a sword drawn in its hands extending it over the sanctuary. A great fear of the Lord came over him and he knew God was going to bring deliverance.

The following Sunday as Dad ministered, he asked the congregation to stand and begin to bind the hindrances of the enemy. I was sitting on the second row and vividly remember what followed. In the midst of the prayer, there was a noise that sounded like a huge bird flapping its wings.

It was so real that men on the front row opened their eyes and looked around. This flapping noise continued for a moment and then began to fade, as it seemed to ascend out of the building through the roof of the sanctuary. Suddenly, the glory of the Lord began to fall on the congregation, and it was as though a

mighty whirlwind blew into the building.

Dad believes the angel of the Lord brought a breakthrough by literally removing some form of spiritual opposition. The Biblical precedent for this is in Daniel chapter 10. The answer to Daniel's prayers was being hindered in the upper atmosphere by an evil spirit called the prince of Persia. This principality spirit was eventually restrained by the power of an archangel named Michael. This warring angel bound the power of this satanic prince, releasing the angel of God to bring Daniel a much-needed revelation from heaven.

There is a serious conflict both on earth and in heaven. The kingdom of God, mobilized by a host of angels, is waging war for the souls of mankind with a dark kingdom whose spirits will attempt to stop all progress of the Gospel by using every weapon imaginable. I have personally experienced the influence of a hindering spirit; first bringing fear, then confusion, then persecution. Persecution for the Word of God's sake. Persecution for preaching truths that others won't touch for fear of being labeled controversial.

The Enemy Plays Into God's Plans

In the early church, Satan created great persecution to hinder the Gospel. Instead of hindering the message, the messengers were "scattered abroad" as the Gospel of Christ spread from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and finally, to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). This scattering enabled the messengers to carry the Gospel to the remote places of the world (Acts 17:6). The plot of the enemy actually backfired.

The Scripture speaks of a couple in the early church named Aquila and Priscilla. A great persecution in Rome caused them to depart the city and come to Israel (Acts 18:1 -2). During their stay they met a highly educated man named Apollos. This precious couple took Apollos into their home and taught him the way of truth more perfectly (Acts 18:26). Later, Apollos became one of the three most popular ministers in the early church (1 Corinthians 1:12).

These instances illustrate how God can turn the table on the plans of the enemy. When Joseph's brothers threw him in a pit and sold him to a band of Ishmaelites, they were unaware of a greater purpose God had for Joseph. Seventeen years later, these sons of Jacob stood in Egypt during a famine purchasing food from none other than Joseph, whom they did not recognize (Genesis 42:3-5). When

they learned who he was, they were fearful that Joseph would either kill them for revenge or make them slaves. Joseph told them:

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

Genesis 50:20

The reaction of God's people to persecution, opposition, and spiritual attacks will assist in determining the final outcome, of the conflicts. At times God allows the trouble to come to keep us in complete dependence upon Him. I have personally lived out this fact for many years. I was first made aware of the journey I would take shortly after my wife and I were married.

Chapter 5

The Dream of the Four Doors

"In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction."

Job 33:15-16

Pam and I were married on Friday, April 2, 1982 in Northport, Alabama. Two days later we began a revival in Gastonia, North Carolina at the Lynwood Church of God that continued for three weeks. Before introducing me each night, the pastor would say, "This is a honeymoon revival!" One night, during the first week of that meeting, I experienced a dream that has remained true to this day. The dream revealed the hindrances that would come against our ministry and, most of all, the reason they would be permitted.

In a deep sleep, I was carried into a large square room with four doors.

I was told I could choose to walk through any one of the four doors. As I approached the doors, they opened before me and I caught a brief glimpse of what lay behind them.

Behind the first door was a group of college students. They seemed to be

distracted from their studies and were caught up in foolishness and partying. I knew this door represented a certain Christian college I could attend but, for some reason, I was compelled not to walk through the door.

I then moved toward the second door.

Behind this second door I saw ministers dressed in black suits.

Standing around in small circles were moral and spiritual men, several of whom I knew to be executive leaders in the denomination I was associated with. I knew this door represented denominational politics. If I chose this door, certain key officials would help push me up the denomination ladder. The eyes of my understanding were opened to realize that, if I depended upon man, I would displease God. If I depended upon God, I would do His will. I closed this door.

To this day I cannot recall what was behind the third door, but I remember closing it almost immediately. Only one door remained.

As I walked to the fourth and final door, I noticed that a large sign marked "persecution" hung boldly over the entrance. I thought, "I certainly don't want this door but it is the only one left to walk through." The moment I stepped across the threshold, I ascended a set of stairs. I saw the skyline of a major city with the buildings silhouetted in the background.

Rising from the silhouette was a large being dressed in black. It had a large sword in its right hand and, suddenly, it lunged toward me with great speed. I felt helpless and defenseless, having no weapon in my hand. A sword was handed to me and a voice instructed, "Take this sword and cut off the hand of the enemy." With one swipe of the silver sword, I severed one hand from this being, and its hand and sword fell to the ground.

Immediately, after defeating the first enemy, another wicked creature lurched from out of the darkness. He, too, was armed. I maintained my ground and swung the silver sword with such force that the dark figure retreated. After each victory, there was another battle. With every battle, there was a victory by using the sword.

Tired of the Conflict

I recall becoming weary during the fighting. I knew this was why the word

persecution was carved on the door. I also knew the sword of the spirit was the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). The only weapon that would defeat the persecution and harassment would be the Scriptures. As the feeling of weariness came over me, a precious yet strong voice behind me said, "Blessed is he who is skilled with the sword. It will keep him from falling."

It was then that I understood the purpose of the fourth door. The sword is the Word of God. The only way to remain standing during the conflict is to be skilled in the Word, to be rooted and grounded in what I know to be truth. By selecting persecution, it causes one to maintain a humble spirit before the Lord. It keeps one continually dependent upon God's power and not upon one's own ability. This was the lesson I learned by reading the words of Paul. A messenger of Satan buffeted him, and Paul was hindered but not defeated:

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

Often people look at where a minister or a ministry is today, without having any knowledge of the price that has been paid to bring the ministry to that point. No one, except the closest inner circle, is fully aware of the long hours, weariness, fasting, personal financial sacrifices, long hours of travel and, yes, persecution for the Word's sake that a ministry must endure to be rewarded for being faithful.

I have often said that it must be great to work from nine to five and then go home. It must be wonderful to have Saturday and Sunday free to spend the day with your family, sitting in church on Sunday and receiving ministry. It must be great to never stay in smoke-filled hotels where the mattresses give you a backache for a week. It must be wonderful not to drag luggage around every week and spend hours in airports dealing with security and delays.

Traveling, flying, staying in hotels, and working every weekend are all part of the price an evangelist pays to stay in the harvest field. Persecution also comes with the territory. Persecution from without (by the world) is expected and understandable, but persecution from within (the church) is quite an adjustment.

Yet, persecution from within and from without brings a greater dependency upon the Holy Spirit. The length and power of the sword is dependent upon the amount of Word you have hidden in your spirit. We overcome Satan *"by the*

blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony..." (Revelation 12:11). Your testimony is the words you have to say when you have passed the test.

I am still being tested and still discovering how to pass the test. You must know the answers to the challenging questions and decisions in life.

Those answers are found in the Word of God.

Chapter 6

When God Allows a Hindering Spirit

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

2 Corinthians 12:9

Persecution in Paul's day consisted of religious Jews running him out of the synagogues, accusing him of preaching heresy. His evangelistic campaigns usually led to his arrest and lodging in a one-star Roman prison, equipped with the latest chains and fetters, including a prison guard who took pleasure in watching prisoners get the beating of their lives. On one occasion, Paul was dragged to the edge of the city and stoned by an angry mob (Acts 14:19). He couldn't even get on a ship without a storm tearing the boat to pieces (Acts 27:38-44). Once, while collecting firewood, a poisonous serpent bit him on the hand. Paul simply shook it off and the snake roasted to ashes in the fire (Acts 28:3-5). Paul was able to overcome every area of opposition, persecution, and hindrance. The spirit assigned to Paul could wear him down but couldn't wear him out.

Often, nationally known ministers must deal with opposition from the press, the secular television media, and former staff workers with a personal vendetta. These jabs, innuendoes, and verbal accusations are one-sided swords in the hands of their enemies, attempting to wound their integrity. After all, if you can wound their integrity, you can wound the ministry.

Consider Christ's ministry. He was accused of false miracles and of casting out demons by the power of a demon (Matthew 12:24). The self-righteous religious

Pharisees attempted to disrupt the flow of Christ's ministry by sitting on the front row of the synagogue, questioning His motives and criticizing His doctrine. On one occasion, Jesus preached a message about His blood and His body. The entire church walked out on Him, with the exception of His twelve disciples (John 6:50-66). Those disciples who were full of the Word of God and had heard the words of life were transformed and remained steadfast with Christ. Those who were shallow fell away and followed him no more. They were offended by one message they didn't understand!

There is danger in thrusting a person into a public position or into the ministry too early. Often they are not seasoned to handle the test and the opposition. The Bible calls this type of person a novice. We might call him a rookie and, as you know, a rookie does not have the experience of a veteran.

"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

1 Timothy 3:6

Asking God for Relief

After Paul expounded upon the twenty-two types of assaults and hindrances he encountered, then explained that a messenger of Satan was assigned to him, he also revealed a special prayer he prayed that was not answered in the manner he expected. He asked God to remove this messenger of Satan from his life:

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me."

2 Corinthians 12:8

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

2 Corinthians 12:9

The word grace refers to the unmerited favor of God. The Lord revealed to Paul that His favor would be a part of his life, despite the demonic spirit that was working against him. Consider the number of times that Paul was near death and the Lord delivered him from it:

• Paul's life was being threatened in Damascus, yet he escaped (Acts 9:25).

• Paul was beaten and arrested, but an earthquake set him free (Acts 16:26).

• Paul was in a shipwreck, but he and the entire crew escaped death (Acts 27:44).

• Paul was bitten by a viper, yet felt no harm (Acts 28:5).

Throughout Paul's ministry, the Lord helped him and gave him a way of escape. At times the trouble concluded in a citywide revival that turned the community to God (Acts chapter 16). On another occasion, the enemy's attack led to the conversion of a jailer and his family (Acts 16:31). These are examples of God's grace being sufficient for all things.

The Grace Factor in Your Life

The grace factor will be revealed in three areas of your life:

• grace for the race

• grace for the place

• grace for the case

Grace for the race is grace for your mission. Grace for the place is grace for your position. Grace for the case is grace for your condition. The grace of God enables you to go places others cannot, do things others will not, and experience things others have not.

I know of missionaries who travel to uncharted territory, driving ten hours one way and making their own roads as they go. There are no decent accommodations for a good night's rest. The water is full of bacteria and the wrong food could be deadly. Yet, joyfully they travel the world, flying long hours on unsafe planes to take the Gospel to the unreached. How do they do it? They have a grace for the race. Everyone can run the race, but not to the same place or at the same pace. Everyone who runs the race can have a level of special grace. These same missionaries tell me, "Perry, there is no way we could keep your schedule and do what you are doing."

I tell them, "You are called to travel those uncharted waters and I am just

burdened. Therefore I will support you while you go!"

God also gives you grace for the place. I am not a pastor; I am an evangelist and a teacher. Many of my pastor friends have told me they once attempted to evangelize and it was a terrible experience. Yet, I still enjoy traveling, preaching, and meeting new people. If I had to minister at the same place each week, I would become very restless. Yet, a pastor who is called to the position of a pastor enjoys watching your children grow, marrying and burying your loved ones, and eating at your house on Sunday. They have a grace for the position to which God has called them.

There is grace for the case or the condition you are in. You will never know how much you can take until you are forced into a situation of dealing with adversity. The Bible says that He will not allow us to suffer above that which we are able, but will make a way of escape that we may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13). God does not always deliver us before trouble begins. At times, He delivers us in the midst of the fire (Daniel 3:13-26).

When we need more grace, God is able to extend more favor and grace to us in the form of long suffering and mercy.

"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

James 4:6-7

Despite the physical, emotional, and verbal abuse that overwhelmed Paul's ministry, he wrote these encouraging words:

"Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."

2 Timothy 4:17

When the Thorn Was Removed

I once thought it was unfair for this chosen servant of God to struggle throughout his ministry with this thorn in the flesh. He was hindered at every turn,

misunderstood when he preached, and had either a revival or a riot in every city in which he ministered. Then, while studying the Book of Acts, I noticed it concluded with Paul in Rome, Italy. An unusual statement is made relating to Paul's ministry in Rome:

"And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

Acts 28:30

For two years, Paul enjoyed a house with servants and received visitors without any restraint. A version of this passage directly from the Greek reads:

"Speaking...about the Lord Jesus Christ with all outspokeness unhinderedly."

According to this verse, Paul spent two years speaking and teaching with boldness and was unhindered in the process. Paul was a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5); yet, much of his persecution and resistance came from other Jews in the region of Asia. When Paul, who was a Roman citizen, entered Rome, Italy, he was not subjected to the severe persecution. Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire, and Rome seldom persecuted its own citizens. God allowed Paul to experience relief for two years from this hindering spirit.

Seasons of Relief

The Bible speaks of "times of refreshing in the presence of the Lord."

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

Acts 3:19

Because of God's grace, He allows seasons of refreshing and relief in our lives. He will not allow nonstop battles to hit us without times of great miracles and answers to prayer. According to *W.E Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words,* one of the meanings of the word refresh is *to give intermission from labor.* The word in Acts 3:19 means *to obtain relief.* In 2 Timothy 1:16, the word means *to make cool.* Just when you are feeling the heat in the fiery furnace,

the Lord makes things cool!

When you can't take any more of the labor pains, the Lord gives an intermission from the labor.

Despite times of opposition, the Lord's grace is sufficient to bring us through and continue the spiritual results. True Gospel ministry is not a celebration or a party, but a battle for souls. We cannot expect smooth sailing on the ship of our destiny but will, indeed, encounter contrary winds designed to fill the boat with waves and sink the ship. Yet, the storm calmer, Jesus Christ, will arise in times of desperation and speak these words, " *Peace be still"* (Mark 4:39).

When my wife gave birth to our son and daughter, I was honored to be in the birthing room both times. I saw Pam grip the rails of the bed, grunt in pain, and breathe a certain way to help relieve the labor pains. After the birth of our son I asked her, "How did you endure the intense pain of labor?" She replied, "I didn't concentrate on the pain. I concentrated on the fact that I would have a brief time of relief that would follow."

When the enemy is on the warpath, we often spend too much time concentrating on the attack. Our conversation with others is filled with statements such as, "The enemy is really working overtime...I am getting tired of all these attacks of the devil....It seems I go from one battle to another." Our concentration could be on the battle, but should be on the grace!

Look at what the enemy is *not* able to do:

• He cannot bring a major attack without the permission of the Lord (Job 1:12).

• He can plan the attack but cannot determine the final outcome (Job 42:10).

• He is limited as to the level of attack he can bring (Job 2:6).

During the times of my worst spiritual battles, my greatest comfort was in knowing that God knew about this conflict long before it ever manifested. If He knew about the conflict before it unfolded, then He has planned the day and time when I will encounter the victory! It is my job to remain faithful to the Word and not back down from the truth.

Growing Pains

As children grow from childhood to adulthood, they experience growing pains. As the physical growth spurt hits, the children find that their movements become a little awkward and perhaps their voice begins to change. They begin to feel changes in their emotions that are new to them. For those who have long ago gone through the changes, we sometimes pay little attention to the adjustments and the emotional roller coaster the child is experiencing.

The believer also experiences growing pains. After salvation, some need deliverance from tempers, from unclean habits, from emotional ties with past friends. Deep inside they feel a dull thud, a slight pain as their flesh begins to war against their spirit. Those of us who have been converted since childhood often forget what it feels like to go "cold turkey," separating from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Often when a convert gains a victory, there will be another hurdle to jump or another mountain to climb. We must understand that there are various levels of spiritual growth and various levels of spiritual attack that we will encounter as we run this race. I call these, "new levels, new devils."

Chapter 7

New Levels, New Devils

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Ephesians 6:12

New transitions occur with each new position. Every level of progression in Christ introduces a different level of conflict. Often, military personnel will move up through the ranks from a lower position to one of great authority. Years of faithful service and victories in battle create the open door of promotion. The promotions require more responsibility. Years ago, pastor Tony Scott said, "Perry, with every new level you will encounter a new devil." Not one that is new in age, but one that is new in your personal conflict.

These new attacks by spirits you have never encountered will attempt to challenge your new dimension in Christ. Just as all military personnel are not of

equal rank, neither are all spirits of equal levels of authority.

Ephesians 6:12 classifies the spirit rebels of the kingdom of darkness as:

• principalities

• powers

• rulers of the darkness of this world

• wicked spirits in heavenly places

Lesser spirits can be easily dealt with by casting them out. Stronger prince spirits, such as the one Daniel encountered that is recorded in Daniel chapter 10, have more authority to control a nation. These are dealt with directly by angels of the Lord. Throughout the years, major ministries have often challenged these very strong prince spirits in Satan's realm, only to experience a severe, almost destructive attack in their personal lives or ministries. Some Christians are bold to rail against the stronger satanic prince spirits, yet the Bible makes it clear not to do so. When Michael the archangel was wrestling with Satan over the body of Moses, the Bible says:

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

Jude 1:9

Even Michael the archangel, who personally has fought the stronger spirits (Daniel 10:13), would not verbally rail against Satan. This may be because both Michael and Satan are angels of the same rank in the spirit realm. Therefore, Michael rebuked Satan in the name of the Lord and not by his own authority.

While we are given power over all the powers of the enemy (Luke 10:19) and power to cast out spirits in Jesus' name (Mark 16:17), we must not misuse or abuse spiritual authority. There are some ranks of spirits that will not even depart from a sick person unless the believer has spent time praying and fasting to remove any unbelief before the act of deliverance (Matthew 17:20-21).

If we must pray and fast in order to exercise true spiritual authority, imagine the

amount of prayer and fasting required to break the strongholds over an entire nation. In Revelation chapter 12, Satan initiates a battle in the heavens. The conflict involves Michael and his angels warring against Satan and his angels. The authority given to Michael enables him and his angelic army to thrust Satan and his angels out of their position of authority in the heavens. Satan then takes up headquarters on the earth (Revelation 12:12).

In the Bible, angels always dealt with the highest ranking prince spirits in Satan's kingdom. I have known of ministries that would begin to publicly challenge the prince over their city and, within weeks, divorce, sickness, and terrible crisis were falling over the church like a blanket. Not enough fasting and prayer went before their challenge.

Spiritual maturity must accompany spiritual authority. Think about the many intercessors who will load up in a van, head to a major city, and spend hours demanding and commanding the prince over the city to "come down." Yet, back home, they have a house full of unsaved family members, a husband who thinks they have lost their mind, and personal conflicts that are never resolved. What good does it do you to engage in a battle over the nation when the battle at home is destroying your family?

This is why Paul wrote that spiritual leaders must be able to direct their personal matters in order to be effective in the house of God (1 Timothy 3:5).

In dealing with the stronger spirits, we must have experience gained from former battles. The military does not thrust a novice onto the front line of battle, and neither should the believer expect sudden results and great victories from someone who has neither the wisdom nor the experience in dealing with the spirit world. The seven sons of Sceva attempted to cast out spirits without true authority. They commanded the evil spirits to come out in the "name of Jesus whom Paul preached." The demon possessed man overpowered them and tore their clothes off, and this rookie exorcist team ran through the street naked (Acts 19:13-16).

These seven men were wounded by their attempt to tackle something far bigger than they were. They assumed that their authority was in the words they were saying when, in reality, true authority comes out of a pure relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Spirit Over Bulgaria

After the fall of Communism, I traveled with my friend Floyd Lawhon to Bulgaria. That nation, once tied in the throes of a radical atheistic government, was now enjoying a season of freedom to hear the Gospel.

About this time I also traveled with a young Romanian (from America) to minister in Romania. After service one evening, an older woman came to me and began to share a vision the Lord had given her while I was preaching. I knew this woman wasn't fabricating because, for forty years, the Christians in those countries had to depend upon prayer and the revelations of the Holy Spirit to survive. The old woman took my hand and said (through my translator), "Tonight I want to warn you. Your preaching has shaken up the strongholds of a number of spirits in America. The lesser spirits cannot deal with you and have gone to a much stronger spirit seeking its assistance to stop you. This spirit has set out to destroy you. You must be on guard."

That was not the type of word anyone wants to hear. I was thinking,

"Oh no, now what am I going to have to deal with?" Two nights later, in another city miles away, another saint of God came to me following the service with the same revelation. She said, "This strong spirit is going to try to dirty your hands in order to shut your mouth." By this time I knew the Lord was sending me a warning from halfway around the world.

In the last city in which I ministered, another woman came to me with an almost identical warning. (These women were from three different cities and did not know one another.) This time she said, "While in deep prayer, I overheard the conversation of a strong principality spirit as he was laying out a strategy against you." She gave me a third warning. By then I was thinking, *"In the mouths of two or three witnesses shall every word be established"* (Matthew 18:16). I said nothing about these three warnings but hid what was said in my heart.

The Prophecy from the Devil

A short time later, I received a phone call at home from a former minister who experienced an attack from the enemy that had caused him to lose his ministry. During the conversation he asked if I would come and pray for him. I did not know he was under a heavy bondage of alcohol and was being tormented by an evil spirit. When I walked into the apartment, I sensed a strong tension in the

atmosphere. This tension began to manifest, as this man would move from a normal conversation to one of yelling and occasionally cursing.

After about forty-five minutes, his voice changed and another voice spoke through him. The demon spoke directly to me in the form of a satanic prophecy. The demon bragged that, in a certain number of years, I would fall into the same trap as this minister. In other words, the same spirit that attacked this minister would also come against me and destroy my ministry. I would later learn that the demonic spirit had targeted me at the same age the minister was when he came under attack!

I discerned what was going on. I stood up, took my right hand, and grabbed the man by the collar. I said, "I'm not talking to the evil spirit but to this man. When you want help, I'll be there for you. But I am not going to sit here and listen to a devil make predictions about me!" I walked out the door. (Thank God, the man was later delivered and has been restored to a powerful ministry.)

As I drove toward home, I was gripped by a sudden fear. I thought, "I am a target. Something bad is going to happen." The feeling I had would be similar to walking down a long dark path in the woods, knowing that a sniper was waiting at some point to fire a gun at your head. Then I began to laugh. I thought out loud, "The enemy sure is stupid! He gave me a time frame in which he was going to attack me. I'll be on guard and have my prayer partners begin to intercede. He should have kept his mouth shut!"

As one man said, "Give the enemy enough rope and he will hang himself." I began to ask people to pray for me, without giving them the details of the warnings. I did not wish to confess any fear or anxiety regarding a "prophecy" from the enemy.

About Twelve Months Later

The sudden attack did manifest twelve months later. Pam and I were close friends with a ministry couple. She was very anointed and used by the Lord. We discovered that there was a family crisis that arose and the enemy came against the woman in a very sly manner. She had fallen into a sin and was so overwhelmed she was unable to recover (at that time) from the snare of the enemy. The situation was emotionally devastating to us.

Within days, I began to encounter a mental assault and a depression that I have

never been through before. I lost all desire to preach, to minister, to read the Bible, and to pray. I felt as though I wanted to just get in a car and drive away. I still loved my wife and my little boy, who meant more to me than anything. Some would call this feeling burnout, and others would say I was just worn out. At first I thought it would pass in a few days, then in a few weeks, but the weeks turned into two months. A feeling similar to hopelessness and despair settled over me.

I began to write music, hoping this would help me. It did for a brief period of time, but the darkness and oppression continued. I could not put my finger on it. Was this an attack similar to Job's, where the enemy had asked to bring an attack to see what my response would be? Was I opening a door? Was it a season of attack planned against ministries? During this time, my wife knew something was wrong, but she, too, was unable to detect the root.

Things continued to deteriorate for three months. It was during this time that I, along with a group of individuals from a local church, traveled to Sofia, Bulgaria to minister. Late one night, I awoke to see a strange and fearful creature standing about two feet from the right side of my bed. It was tall with a wrinkled complexion and wiry gray hair. In my spirit, I knew it was a strong prince spirit that was ruling the city. It was then that I recalled the warnings of the women from Romania twelve months earlier.

My mind began to race and I thought, "This is it. This must be the warning I was given in Romania."

I recalled the fallen minister that I prayed for and the voice of an evil spirit that spoke through him. This former minister's father had suffered severe depression and, many years ago, was found dead in his car with a gunshot wound to the head. His son, the fallen minister, was so depressed the night I prayed for him that he later confessed that he had a gun and was about to kill himself before I prayed for him. He was the same age of his father when the attack came against him. I realized that I was nearing the same age of both him and his father when the claw of the adversary began to clamp down on my mind. This was a satanic strategy planned years in advance.

The depression did not leave. I attempted to rebuke it away and it remained. I was too embarrassed to tell anyone, even my own wife. I thought, "I've had to fight battles before and I'll just have to fight this one through also." This was

incorrect reasoning. Even Moses had Aaron and Hur to hold up his hands until the battle was over (Exodus 17:12). The deliverance began the night I made a decision to publicly reveal the secret attack of Satan.

Now He Can't Hide

It was the month of July and we were conducting a tent revival in Anniston, Alabama. I was able to preach at night with a measure of the anointing, but during the day I was miserable. One night, with over 700 people present, I felt something had to be done. I was ready to go for broke. I stopped ministering and said, "Tonight I need to tell you folks something. I have been going through a terrible mental hell and depression for several months. I need your prayers." That night, there were several close friends and ministry partners present. I gave an altar call to minister to people and, instead, they encircled *me.* They said, "You are not leaving this tent until we pray for you. We are not allowing the enemy to take you down and out with this type of spiritual attack."

Suddenly, one grabbed the bottle of anointing oil. Another one grabbed my Bible and notebook. In a flash, hands were all over my head. I must confess I have never liked for anyone, not even Pam, to mess up my hair before or during a service. Oil went flying everywhere. They were pulling on my suit coat. They were jumping in the sawdust and praying so loud that I could barely understand what they were saying. Suddenly, something broke. A small surge of the joy of the Lord seemed to float by and lock into my spirit. I began to laugh. It was very funny. There I stood with sawdust all over my pants where my friends had shouted up a dust storm. My hair was spiked and soaked in oil. My tie was oily and my suit coat was twisted halfway off my arm. I looked like I had just walked through a Texas tornado! For the first time, I sensed a twinge of relief.

Most of all, I felt hope. An inner witness in my spirit said that God was going to reverse the plan of the enemy and a prophecy of the devil!

It was then that a dear faithful friend of the ministry came over to me, pointed her finger in my face, and said, "You did it. He can't hide now." I asked her, "Who can't hide?" She said, "The enemy. As long as we never expose what he is doing he will work in the darkness. But when we expose him to the light, he has nowhere to hide!"

Then it suddenly became clear. That's it! Satan hides in the darkness and God

lives in the light. I had tried to fight this struggle alone, thinking the Lord and I could handle it. All the time, I needed the prayers of others.

It was a new level of attack. I needed for my wife to know how I felt. It wasn't that I was too proud to tell anyone, I just thought it would eventually pass and the war would be over. But some victories do not come that easily.

Looking Back to Evaluate

In retrospect, I believe I understand what happened. For many years, I ministered only in America and had experience dealing with the spirits in our nation. I was familiar with dealing with lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). When I began to step into former Communist nations, I was entering the realm of ancient prince spirits that had worked through atheistic governments and leaders. The level of warfare was very different from what I was accustomed to. It would be similar to training men to fight in a desert war, then suddenly thrusting them into a nation covered with snow. Their knowledge of the terrain is geared toward one conflict and now they are engaged in another.

Someone may ask, "Aren't all spirits the same?" Not according to Jesus. On one occasion, the disciples failed to deliver a demon possessed boy. Jesus said, *"This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting "*

(Matthew 17:21). Jesus often encountered people possessed with a spirit, but Mary Magdalene had seven spirits expelled from her (Luke 8:2). The man of Gadera was controlled by two thousands spirits that made him violent and dangerous (Mark 5:13). Those with only one evil spirit often became weak and passed out when Jesus prayed (Mark 9:26). On the other hand, the man of Gadera had such supernatural strength that he could break chains of iron and fetters in half with his power (Mark 5:4).

All Christians are not on the same level spiritually. Christ could cast out evil spirits and, on one occasion, his disciples failed to do so (Mark 9:28-29). The same is true with the spirit world. Angels are not all on the same level of authority. In Daniel chapter 10, one angel of the Lord was unable to break through the restraining power of an evil prince spirit called the prince of Persia, but Michael the archangel came to the scene and immediately put the evil spirit in its place (Daniel 10: 1-13).

This is why, when we enter a new level in God, there will be new devils to encounter. At times, they will use people to hinder and resist our efforts. On other occasions, they will create circumstances to block our efforts. When I conducted our first campmeeting in Pigeon Forge, twenty-seven things broke down, went wrong, or were damaged as we prepared for the meeting. I said, "I will never do this meeting again if this is what we have to go through." That meeting has now become our main event that we plan every October. I learned that, if the battle is great, the blessing will be greater!

We must use our full arsenal of weapons: the Word of God, the name of Jesus, and the power of the blood of the Lamb. We must also understand the importance of not keeping in the dark what needs to be placed in the light.

A Covenant with Your Spouse or Close Friends Every believer needs to have a spiritual covering. This covering is often found in your spouse or in close personal friends in whom you can place complete confidence. Personally, there are several minister friends with whom I have a covenant. We share personal insights with one another, intercede for one another, and share any form of attack we are seeing with one another. These are men who will not betray a trust, but will hold up my hands until the battle is over.

Forming a covenant with your spouse is a great hedge against mental attacks. If you are married to a wonderful helpmate, such as I am, she or he should be your best friend and your most trusted confidant. To allow mental or spiritual battles to wreak confusion upon you, without telling your most trusted helper, is not a sign of your inner strength.

A Covenant of Covering

Form a covenant that you will always be open with each other and always cover each other's back from the unexpected arrows that may be hurled toward you. After years of ministry and seasons of spiritual warfare, I can tell you that this important covenant of covering cannot be underestimated. David and Jonathan had a covenant of covering. Saul was the king of Israel. David was his son-in-law and Jonathan was his son.

Jonathan made a covenant of covering with David to protect him from his own father, King Saul:

"Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own

soul."

1 Samuel 18:3

On one particular occasion, Jonathan warned David not to come into the palace because Saul was planning to kill him (1 Samuel 19:1-18). This covenant of covering gave David an edge against Saul's strategies. A covenant of covering with a close friend or with your spouse will give you an advantage against the secret plans of the enemy.

A true friend will look at you when you are wrong and tell you that you are wrong. They will see you having a pity party and tell you to straighten up. They will be a guard and a covering for you. Once my wife had a dream of a huge tarantula with a knife in its heart. It held no danger to us. In the distance, another large tarantula was slowly creeping toward us. Pam knew we must deal with this second spider. Shortly after this dream, someone came to me asking if I would help her write music and prepare for a music project. Pam discerned that this person was the warning in the dream. I trusted her judgment and immediately informed the person that I was not available to assist. Years later, we learned that this woman had become involved in an affair on her husband, whom she divorced.

Pam believes the enemy was attempting to set a snare for me, but the Lord gave her a warning that we responded to. Warnings do little, however, if we do not pay attention to them.

That day in Alabama when I publicly asked for prayer, the friends who were present were prayer warriors and people that Pam and I knew personally. They prayed for us consistently, and some had been in our home on various occasions. This is why I trusted them enough to share this need with them. Just to stand before a church and share your burden with the unburdened is a waste of energy. Those who respect you the most also love and care about you the most. These precious souls will help form a covering for you.

This is why I always travel with my wife, my father, or a male ministry team worker. I trust myself, but it is not wise for a minister to be alone in most situations, even in a church setting. The partner becomes "a spiritual covering and will witness all the activities of the ministry so nobody can make a false accusation.

The covenant of covering can help deny a hindering spirit the room in which to operate.

Chapter 8

Dealing with the Enemy

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

2 Corinthians 2:11

A close friend of mine attended four years of Bible school, and the first church he pastored had fifteen members. He later commented, "In three months I had to unlearn most of what I was taught in school. It worked in the book, but not in real life!"

You will find plenty of books that tell you how to deal with certain conflicts. Some instruction is effective; some is not. The Bible, however, gives you the battle instructions that have been proven throughout 6,000

years of history.

Experience is also a great teacher. Personal testimonies reflect victories won through experience. Those who have been on the front line can help those who are headed to the front line. After twenty-five years of having encountered seemingly every type of conflict throughout my ministry, I have developed a list of things I do and don't do when dealing with the enemy. These come from both Scripture and experience.

• **Don't make Satan appear bigger than God.**

Too often, Christians see this conflict as God and Satan on opposite ends of a tug of war. Both are pulling with full strength. At times, God gains the advantage and at other times Satan wins. This is not the view given in the Bible:

"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

Colossians 2:15

The show was over at the resurrection. Satan was defeated at the cross and was triumphed over at the resurrection. All of your battles can end in a victory. Even death, for a believer, has lost its sting (1 Corinthians 15:55).

One of the purposes of the Holy Spirit is to enlarge your vision of the ability of God. In Acts chapter 10, the Bible says that when Cornelius and his family were filled with the Holy Spirit, they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God (Acts 10:46). Praying in the Holy Spirit enlarges God's ability in the eyes of your spirit. Satan has never been as big as God and never will be.

• **Don't exaggerate Satan's ability.**

Christians have preconceived ideas based on the battle experiences of others. One such idea is, "I must be careful getting too close to God because the closer I get to God, the greater the battle with the enemy."

Others believe that, if they dig deeper into the Word, more conflict will follow. Some have been healed, yet are reluctant to testify because they fear the sickness will come back upon them. These fears are often based upon someone's negative experience and not upon the promises of God.

The Scripture says that we overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11). The Bible says that, if we submit ourselves before God and resist the devil, he will flee from us (James 4:7). When Christ defeated Satan on the mountain of temptation, He quoted Scriptures from the Book of Deuteronomy (Matthew 4:1-10). Fear of a conflict should never cause us to exaggerate the ability of the enemy.

• **Don't attempt to explain why a battle has come.**

When Job lost his family, his possessions, and his health, three close friends came to help him mourn his losses. Instead of praying with Job, they each presented their case as to why the trouble came. One confessed that Job needed to be humbled. Another felt that Job was filled with pride and the attack was a result of Job's arrogance. Still another assumed that Job was bound by some hidden sin that God was exposing through his sufferings. In the end, all three friends were wrong. God rebuked them:

"And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath."

Job 42:7

Once Job's trial was reversed and he received a double blessing, the writer of Job realized that Satan had set a target against Job. It was not a result of Job's sin, pride or ego, but simply a trial of his faith (1 Peter 1:7).

Rather than wasting energy asking "why" and "what if" when a battle breaks out, concentrate instead on the seasons of refreshing and the way of escape. We are in a spiritual, supernatural conflict, the end result of which will determine the eternal destinies of humanity. If you are going to obey God, expect nothing more than a battle and expect nothing less than a victory.

• **Don't entertain the thoughts that the enemy is inserting in your mind.**

The adversary operates in the realm of thoughts, and these thoughts can become the fiery darts of the enemy. You must immediately resist the stinking thinking that often accompanies hindrances and opposition. When wrong imaginations enter your mind, you have only a few seconds to cast them down before they begin to build a stronghold (2 Corinthian 10:5).

The renewing of the mind must occur the moment the darts of unbelief, doubt, fear, or unforgiveness enter the zone of your imagination.

You can't keep the enemy from knocking, but you can keep him from coming through the door!

• **Don't let the devil's belief be greater than yours.**

The devil often has more belief than some Christians do. Satan believes there is a God (James 2:19), that Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 5:7), that hell exists (Luke 8:31), that his time is short (Revelation 12:12), and that Jesus will one day return (Revelation 12:12). In reality, Satan believes, but he is lost. Some Christians deny the existence of demons, the existence of hell, and the return of Christ. It is sad when Satan and his minions have more belief in Scripture than some Christians!

Never let the enemy out-believe you. He believes you will not make it.

He believes you will fall and not get up. He believes he can make you sick and you will never recover. Don't believe it! Your faith in God must be stronger than your faith in the attacks of the enemy.

Years ago, people were praying for a woman with cancer. The healing breakthrough never came and the prayer seemed hindered. The Holy Spirit impressed me that the woman had exalted the name of the disease (cancer) above the name of Jesus. According to Philippians 2:9, the name of Jesus has been exalted above every other name in the eyes of God.

Unfortunately, in the eyes of people, His name has not always been exalted above every other name. If your faith in the disease is greater than your faith in Jesus, then the disease will win the battle.

• **Not Every Attack is Caused by a Spirit.**

I've known Christians who were "demon chasers." Everything was caused by a spirit. If they got a cold, if the heat went off at the house, or if the lights went out in a storm, it was caused by a demon. Friend, the enemy has more to do than play with the light switch and attack the heater.

This is where we need true spiritual discernment to detect the attacks of the enemy. Some attacks are caused by a hindering spirit, but many are simply the result of unwise personal choices or our inability to control our flesh.

Many personal choices have later come back to bite the one making the choice.

• **Don't become fearful of future conflicts.**

Years ago I heard a man say, "God has touched me, but I won't testify to it. If I do, the enemy will cause me more trouble." We need to stop worrying about the next storm.

Daniel was not afraid that a prayer meeting would always lead him to the lion's den. The three Hebrew children didn't have a fiery furnace ministry. They experienced the furnace of fire one time. During the six-month attack at age eighteen, I began to believe this would go on for the rest of my life. The enemy is a deceiver and a liar (John 8:44). No conflict lasts forever.

Chapter 9

Discerning the Conflict

"To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues."

1 Corinthians 12:10

My father once said that, before a believer begins to ask the Lord to use them in one of the nine gifts of the Spirit, they should first pray for wisdom. Operating a spiritual gift without wisdom is like giving your young teenager the keys to your car without ever giving them any training.

Sooner or later, both the teenager and the unwise person will make a wreck of things. A believer who enters the arena of the spirit world should first pray for the discerning of spirits.

The reason is simple: Not every negative circumstance, bad situation, or spiritual battle is caused by a spirit. I caution you to be careful not to become a "demon chaser." At age eighteen, I began to talk about evil spirits so much that I was opening a door for them without realizing it. My mother was the secretary to Floyd Lawhon, the Church of God Evangelism Director in Virginia. Rev. Lawhon was a seasoned minister with a long resume of experience in ministry. Mom said to him, "Please talk to Perry. He's spending too much time talking about demons and I'm concerned." It wasn't that the subject fascinated me. I was simply trying to understand the voices and apparitions I was seeing. One day Rev. Lawhon came to me and said, "Perry, you are spending too much time talking 81

about demons. If you talk about demons they will show up. Talk more about Jesus. If you talk about Jesus, then he will show up."

Discernment is necessary to remain balanced.

Discerning What?

Paul spoke of the discerning of spirits. The word spirits is plural because there are three realms of discernment necessary: 1. Discerning the spirit of God

2. Discerning the spirit of man

3. Discerning the spirit of Satan

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

1 Corinthians 2:11-12

Some Christians will attend a church service and comment that something that occurred during the service was not "of God." Often, they are not discerning the spirits but, instead, are giving their own opinion. If something is contrary to their religious traditions, they assume it cannot be

"of God." One man told me, "That revival across town is not of God." I asked him how he knew. He replied, "If it was of God, it would have started in our church!" This is not discernment; it is spiritual ignorance.

Discerning the things of the Spirit of God means being able to hear and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit and separate His voice from your own voice.

I have always tried to make this distinction in our revivals. When I knew I was hearing from the Holy Spirit, I would say, "The Lord has directed me to do this." If I simply felt something in my own spirit, I would make the distinction by saying, "I feel in my spirit that we should do this." God should never take the blame when someone mistakes his or her own zeal for a Word from God.

We must be able to discern the spirit of man. It is important to be able to discern a person's true motives and to see into the hearts of those with whom we surround ourselves. People have married out of God's will because they did not take the time to discern the spirits and listen to what the Lord was saying about the person to whom they were engaged.

Sometimes people don't want to hear because they are afraid they will receive a Word from God they won't like.

Finally, we must discern the presence of Satan and evil and, as I've mentioned, don't blame everything on an evil spirit. These excesses bring more attention to the enemy than to God and His kingdom.

Discerning Demonic Possession

One of the areas where great caution must be exercised is that of demonic possession. When a person is demonically possessed, the evil spirit takes complete control of the spirit, mind, and body. An example is recorded in Mark 5:1-9:

"And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off he ran and worshiped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit."

This tormented man was possessed by 2,000 unclean spirits. Here were the signs of demonic control:

• The man was tormented in his mind.

• The man was dwelling among the dead (the tombs).

• The man was cutting himself (attempting to harm himself or take his life).

• The man had supernatural strength to break iron chains and wooden fetters.

• The man could not be tamed, or brought under control.

• The man was continually screaming in torment.

Today, he would have been placed in a psychiatric facility, given heavy medication, and guarded for a suicide watch. His physical actions of screaming, cutting himself, staying up day and night, and being unable to rest were signs of another force living inside his body. Jesus knew it was a strong spirit and asked its name. The demon called itself Legion. In Christ's day, a Roman legion was 6,000 foot soldiers. There were up to 2,000 spirits in this man; therefore, the demon took the name Legion, or *many* (Mark 5:9).

Those who believe they are dealing with demonic possession today are often dealing more with someone who is oppressed or vexed by a spirit, and not with real demonic possession. In a revival years ago, I saw a crowd gathering over a young girl. She was crying and screaming as the people were attempting to cast a spirit out of her. I entered the circle and discerned that something was wrong. I told the folks to back away from her and not to touch her. I whispered in her ear and said, "Are you a Christian?" She said, "Yes." I asked, "What are you doing?" She replied,

"They told me I had a devil." I said, "Do you?" She said, "No preacher, but I am so afraid that I'm crying and they think it's a spirit tormenting me." I said, "Stand up and begin to praise the Lord." She did and began to rejoice.

Discernment enables a person to detect the source behind the conflict.

A strong spiritual struggle can be the result of: 1. Self-invited conflicts created by bad decisions; 2. Uninvited conflicts created by people who work in opposition; or 3. Hindering spirits capitalizing upon bad decisions or conflicts created by people.

Never blame a bad decision on the devil. Be thankful when you've made the right choices and admit it when you didn't.

Remember that not everyone is going to like you. Even though you may do everything in your power to be accepted, at some point, someone's personality is going to clash with yours. For example, sometimes a jealous co-worker can make life miserable for you. King Saul was jealous of David and, on one occasion, attempted to pin him to the wall with a javelin. David escaped, but the jealousy opened a door to an evil sprit that attacked and tormented King Saul. His only relief came when David played a harp in the palace. It is possible to encounter a spirit through someone who opposes you. Again, this takes

discernment to determine if it is a spirit or simply the flesh.

As we saw with the Apostle Paul, the enemy will use both carnal people and certain circumstances as an opening to work against you.

Chapter 10

What I Have Learned

The Christian life is a life of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17). It is also a race that will award a prize to those who can cross the finish line (Hebrews 12:1-2). This walk is also a conflict in which we must be armed with the armor of God (Ephesians 6:12-18).

Here is what I've learned:

• **Satan's kingdom does not have more power, but it has plenty of experience.**

The enemy is a seasoned warrior, having deceived one third of the angels of God to follow him (Revelation 12:4). For 6,000 years, he has tested every known weapon and strategy against some of God's choice servants.

• **Satan's kingdom does not have more power, but it is well organized.**

If Christians are preaching from the same Bible, then why are there so many denominations that do not agree or get along very well with each other? We claim to have the power, but the adversary is better organized.

The kingdom of Satan is united in opposing the kingdom of God.

• **Satan*'s* kingdom can initiate an attack, but it cannot determine the outcome.**

This is an important fact. God never reveals to the enemy the final outcome of your conflict. The enemy can plan and present an attack against you, but he cannot determine when or how the Lord is going to bring you out.

I have also discovered the power that is multiplied when two or three agree. The

strongest battles against demonic powers that I encountered occurred between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two. I saw a drastic change after I was married to Pam. I wondered why, then I recalled the following Scriptures:

"And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Ecclesiastes 4:12

"How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up."

Deuteronomy 32:30

Pam and I had entered a marriage covenant. We were two people, but had become one flesh and one spirit. The level of our spiritual authority was multiplied ten times after we were married. That multiplication gave us more authority over the powers of the enemy. Instead of one praying, there were two. Instead of one fasting, there were two. Jesus sent his disciples forth two by two because "two shall withstand him" (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

In Conclusion

For the first time in print, I have shared with you a number of personal stories and testimonies. I have done this for two reasons: 1. To help you see that even ministers who carry a call of God on their lives experience the same testings that other people experience; and 2. To help you gain insight into how the enemy works and how you can overcome him with spiritual weapons.

As you grow in the grace and the knowledge of God, you will learn by example, by experience, and by using the Word of God, how to handle each new trial and test that will come. We have the knowledge. We have 88

the spiritual weapons. All we need is the patience to outlast the trial of the enemy. Through Christ, we can have whatever we need to be an overcomer!



I was about this age at the time of the car accident in 1961



Age 18, spending time in prayer behind the Roanoke, Virginia campground..



The early revivals continued for many weeks, often with overflow crowds.



Revival meeting in Romania. It was in Romania that the three women gave Perry the prophetic warnings.



Reverend Jim Angle (right) was a great encouragement during my early ministry.



This was the revival where the hindering spirit manifested.



It was during a tent revival that the ministry partners prayed and Perry received the breakthrough.



The four-week revival in Tuscaloosa, Alabama where Perry & Pam met.



Pam & Perry's first year anniversary.



One of the first state camp meetings where we ministered in 1986.



The resource material is now around the world!



On the set of Manna Fest with Joe Van Koevering.



Changed hearts are what the ministry is all about!

To Our Friends and Partners

This book is dedicated to our many friends and partners who have stood with us throughout our ministry. Those of you who have been with us since the early years will recall some of the experiences I have shared in this book. The knowledge we have gained from a variety of spiritual experiences becomes a part of the teaching material that has helped thousands of people.

This year, as we celebrate our twenty-fifth year of full time ministry, our love and appreciation goes out to those of you who have stood with us in prayer and

with financial support. Our prayer is that the Lord will richly bless you, keep you safe, direct your steps, and give you favor.

The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:

The LORD make His face to shine upon

thee, and be gracious unto thee:

The LORD lift up His countenance upon

thee, and give thee peace.

(Numbers 6:24-26)

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