

Proclaiming the Gospel

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;
But unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (*1 Cor. 1.18*).

Edifying the Body of Christ (*Eph. 4.10-16*)

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The Wise Still Seek Him

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Conflict of Spirits?

What is happening in the churches and in their members today that there is no strong presence of the Holy Spirit in the services, that there is such apathy in the members, such discouragement, such indifference concerning the lost? Why do we not see the body of Christ burdened for those who know **not** the Lord Jesus Christ, for the lost and dying? **Conflict of Spirits!** Saints, the devil is on the rampage! He is in intense conflict with the Lord Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, thus with each one who loves and serves the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you encounter individuals, at times, who seem to rise up in anger against you with no apparent reason? You are earnestly serving Jesus Christ with all your heart, striving to keep your heart pure before the Lord; yet, so often you are confronted by someone with anger, hatred, false accusations; it seems that your every effort to do God's will is thwarted by Satan – often his working through other people, sometimes his attacking you directly with feelings of discouragement and hopelessness. Have you been tempted at times to "give up"? Remember that "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (I Jn 4.4); but, when the Holy Spirit is mighty in your life, know that Satan will come against you through anyone who gives him a foothold. Ephesians 4.27 is written to Christians, "Neither give place to the devil."

Know that Jesus also faced the onslaught of the enemy, not only during the forty days of fasting in the wilderness but also during His ministry before His crucifixion. Remember the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils (Mt 9.34; Mk 3.22). Also, the Pharisees came to Jesus to tempt Him, hoping to get something with which to accuse Him (Mt 19.3); and when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand, they took council together seeking a way to kill Him (Mt 12.14).

When Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man in the land of the Gadarenes, the demons, recognizing Jesus' authority and power over them, pleaded with Him not to torment them. Then Satan stirred the people of that country with such fear that rather than receive Jesus' ministry, they asked Him to leave their country (Lk 8.26-37).

Not only did Jesus face conflicting spirits from Satan, but His disciples also experienced Satan's attacks against them and the ministry. Everywhere they went,

Finally, my brethren, **be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.**

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

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].

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph 6.10-13).

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Co-laborers together for Jesus Christ

Come apart and rest (Mark 6.31)

Satan rose up against them. Some were beaten, thrown in prison, and martyred. Paul, “through a window in a basket was let down by the wall, and escaped [the governor’s] hands” (II Cor 11.33). Satan stood in rebellion against the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the followers of Jesus.

When Jesus sent out His disciples two by two to preach, heal the sick, and cast out devils (Luke 9.1-6), He told them, “And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them (Lk 9.5). Jesus knew that Satan would work in the hearts and minds of some and cause them to refuse to receive the Word of the Lord. Their carnal nature, emboldened by Satan, would conflict with the Spirit of the Lord. The Scripture says, “...the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom 8.7).

Satan knows that man is born in sin with a carnal nature that naturally resists the wooing of the Holy Spirit. Satan will magnify this tendency toward sin in an effort to prevent man from receiving Christ. Jesus knew there would be times when the disciples would not be received because of this conflict; the disciples were not to stay but to preach elsewhere, shaking the dust from their feet, thus placing the responsibility and guilt upon those who yielded to Satan and refused Jesus.

Bringing the picture closer to the day in which we live, we see Satan is still in conflict with the work of the Holy Spirit through the saints of God. Some are tortured and martyred for Jesus today. Most of us do not experience such drastic opposition as this – **yet** – but, other attacks from Satan are damaging to the ministry and to individuals who love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask many people who say they have repented of their sins and have asked Jesus Christ into their hearts to be **Lord** and Savior, “Are you living for Jesus daily?” To which most answer, “Oh, yes!” When asked if they read the Bible daily, some have answered, “Yes, my significant other/fiancé and I read the Bible before going to bed.” Satan uses society to come against the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Society says it is okay to live a sinful life, to live in direct disobedience to the Word of the Lord. This is conflict of spirits – lies of Satan. All who truly love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ will face conflict of spirits. Satan may whisper, “Everyone else does it; it is acceptable.”

Perhaps you are not tempted to yield to blatant sin. If Satan cannot destroy you with obvious sin, he will work to draw you away from the close relationship with Jesus that you once knew. Many churches are not preaching the Word with truth and power of the Holy Spirit.

Too many preachers do not want to offend people and have failed to preach a literal hell and preach against sin; and they have failed also to preach the life of righteousness in Christ that is required for spending eternity in a literal heaven. It is so easy for those who once walked in the Lord’s holiness to become lethargic, losing their love and zeal for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We who serve the Lord in the call He has placed on our lives do and will face opposing forces – spirits of hate, anger, ridicule, mockery that rise up within people who do not resist Satan and who allow their carnal nature to remain dominant, thus sadly and subtly being controlled by Satan. Sometimes this conflict is not outwardly obvious; but, one standing and preaching or teaching under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, empowered by the Holy Spirit in their life as well as when before a congregation, will sense it; and it can hinder the flow of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said that we are to abide in Him and He in us (Jn 15.1-11). Our reaching this place in Christ is vital to our survival in the days to come. We must fall in love with Jesus and love Him so much that we live in Him and He in us, that we meld with Him. The trend in “christianity” today is to move away from total surrender to God and move toward emphasis on “self” and that which makes one comfortable, that which excites and gives a feel-good boost in “praise and worship.”

Saints, the Bible does not teach this. The Bible teaches us to surrender ourselves fully to Jesus Christ and live in His righteousness. It teaches us to rejoice in persecution, rejoice that we are “counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5.41).

The Apostle Paul has much to say about dying to the carnal nature and living in Christ Jesus with His nature operating in and through us. Galatians 5.24, 25 tells us, “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Read Col 3.1-17.)

God’s Word does not offer us an easy life. Jesus tells us to abide in Him and He in us (Jn 15.4, 5). He continues in verses 18-20 to tell us to expect persecution. A life surrendered to Jesus, walking with Jesus, walking in the Spirit (Rom 8), is worth it all!

Do not be surprised to find that as you seek to come closer and closer to Jesus, you experience more and more the power of the enemy rising up like an impenetrable wall to stop the progress of your growth and/or the flow of the ministry of the Holy Spirit through you.

Is there a hunger in you, a longing to really know Jesus? The Apostle Paul cried out for that special place of “knowing” Jesus: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Phil 3.10).

We must allow the Holy Spirit to defeat in us all conflicting spirits from Satan. We must not allow anything to hinder us from reaching that position in Jesus to which He calls us.

It will not be an easy road. But, oh, the glory of His presence! Oh! The glory to walk with the One Who died for us and is risen from the dead that we might live eternally with Him! Such mercy! Such love! What strength He gives us!