

Satan's Domain: the Realm of Darkness

Many Christians debate whether the devil is on the earth or  in hell; can he dwell in Christians or only in the world? The fact is, the devil is in darkness. Wherever there is spiritual darkness, there the devil will be.

For most, the term *spiritual warfare* introduces a new but not necessarily welcomed dimension in their Christian experience. The thought of facing **evil spirits** in battle is an unsettling concept, especially since we came to Jesus as lost sheep, not warriors. Ultimately, some of us may never actually initiate **spiritual warfare**, but all of us must face the fact that the devil has initiated warfare against us. Therefore, it is essential to our basic well-being that we discern the areas of our nature that are unguarded and open to satanic assault.

Jude tells us, "And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day" (1:6, NASB).

When Satan rebelled against God, he was placed under eternal judgment in what the Bible calls "pits" (2 Pet. 2:4) or "bonds" of darkness. The devil and the fallen angels with him have been

relegated to live in darkness. This darkness does not simply refer to areas void of visible light. The eternal darkness to which this Scripture refers is essentially a *moral* darkness, which ultimately degrades into literal darkness. However, its cause is not simply the absence of light; it is the absence of God, who is light.

It is vital to recognize that this darkness to which Satan has been banished is not limited to areas outside of humanity. Unlike those who do not know Jesus, however, we have been delivered out of the domain or “authority” of darkness (see Col. 1:13). We are not trapped in darkness if we have been born of light. But if we *accommodate* darkness through tolerance of sin, we leave ourselves vulnerable to satanic assault. For wherever there is willful disobedience to the **Word of God**, there is **spiritual darkness** and the potential for **demonic activity**.

Thus Jesus warned, “Therefore take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness” (Luke 11:35, KJV). There is a light in you. “The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord” (Prov. 20:27). Your spirit, illuminated by the Spirit of Christ, becomes the “lamp of the Lord” through which He searches your heart.

There is indeed a holy radiance surrounding a true **Spirit-filled Christian**. But when you harbor sin, the “light which is in thee” is “darkness.” Satan has a legal access, given to him by God, to dwell in the domain of darkness. Thus, we must grasp this

point: *The devil can traffic in any area of darkness, even the darkness that still exists in a Christian's heart.*

God's Thresher

An example of Satan having access to the carnal side of human nature is seen in Peter's denial of Jesus. It is obvious that Peter failed. What we do not readily see, however, is what was occurring in the invisible world of the spirit.

Jesus predicted accurately that Peter would deny Him three times.

Anyone looking at Peter's actions that night might have simply concluded his denial was a manifestation of fear. Yet, Peter was not fearful by nature. This was the disciple who, a few hours earlier, drew a sword against the multitudes who had come to arrest Jesus. No, human fear did not cause Peter to deny the Lord. Peter's denial was satanically induced.

Jesus had warned the apostle, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31–32, NASB).

Behind the scenes, Satan had demanded and received permission to sift Peter like wheat. Satan had access to an area of darkness in Peter's heart.

How did Satan cause Peter's fall? After eating the Passover, Jesus told His disciples that one of them was going to betray Him.

Scripture continues, "They began to discuss among themselves which one of them ... was going to do this thing" (Luke 22:23).

This was a very somber time. Yet, during this terrible moment, "There arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was ... greatest" (Luke 22:24). They went from an attitude of shock and dismay to an argument concerning who among them was the greatest!

Evidently Peter, the water-walker, who was also the boldest and most outspoken of the apostles, prevailed. We can imagine that Peter's high visibility among the disciples left him with an air of superiority, which was fanned by Satan into an attitude of presumption and boasting. Peter, being lifted up by pride, was being set up for a fall.

Pride caused Satan's fall, and pride was the very same darkness manipulated by Satan to cause Peter's fall. Lucifer, from experience, knew well the judgment of God against religious pride and envy. He knew personally that pride goes "before a fall" (Prov. 16:18, KJV). Satan did not have a right to indiscriminately assault and destroy Peter. He had to secure permission from Peter's Lord before he could come against the young apostle. But the fact is, the

devil demanded permission to sift Peter, and he received it.

Submit to God

The trip wire that Satan used to cause Peter's fall was the disciple's own sin of pride. *Let us recognize before we do warfare that the areas we hide in darkness are the very areas of our future defeat.* Often the battles we face will not cease until we discover and repent for the darkness that is within us. If we will be effective in spiritual warfare, we must be discerning of our own hearts; we must walk humbly with our God. Our first course of action must be, "Submit ... to God." Then, as we "resist the devil ... he will flee" (James 4:7, NASB).

Satan will never be given permission to destroy the saints. Rather, he is limited to sifting us "like wheat." The good news is that God knows there is wheat inside each of us. The outcome of this type of satanic assault, which is allowed through the **permissive will of God**, is to cleanse the soul of pride and produce greater meekness and transparency in our lives. It may feel terrible, but God causes it to work for good.

Our husk-like outer nature must die to facilitate the breaking forth of the wheat-like nature of the new creation man. Both the chaff and the husk were necessary; they provided protection for us from the harsh elements of this life. But before God can truly use us, in one way or another we will

pass
through a time of threshing.

Peter's husk nature was presumptuous and proud. His initial successes had made him ambitious and self-oriented. God can never entrust His kingdom to anyone who has not been broken of pride, for pride is the armor of darkness itself. So, when Satan demanded permission to assault Peter, Jesus said in effect, *You can sift him, but you cannot destroy him.* The warfare against Peter was devastating but measured. It served the purpose of God.

Peter was ignorant of the areas of darkness within him, and his ignorance left him open to attack. But the Lord would ask each of us, "Do you know the areas where you are vulnerable to satanic assault?" Jesus would have us not be ignorant of our need. In fact, when He reveals the sin in our hearts, it is so He might destroy the works of the devil. Thus, we should realize that *the greatest defense we can have against the devil is to maintain an honest heart before God.*

When the **Holy Spirit** shows us an area that needs repentance, we must overcome the instinct to defend ourselves. We must silence the little lawyer who steps out from a dark closet in our minds, pleading, "My client is not so bad." Your "defense attorney" will defend you until the day you die—and if you listen to him you will never see what is wrong in you nor face what needs to

change. For you to succeed in warfare, your self-preservation instincts must be submitted to the Lord Jesus, for Christ alone is your true advocate.

We cannot engage in **spiritual battle** without embracing this knowledge. Indeed, James 4:6 says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." *God is opposed to the proud.* That is a very important verse. If God is opposed to the proud, and we are too proud to humble ourselves and admit when we are wrong, then God is opposed to us.

James continues in verse 7, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." When we see this verse, it is usually all by itself as a monument to spiritual warfare. However, it is in the context of repentance, humility and possessing a clean heart that we find Satan fleeing from us.

We must go beyond a vague submission to God; we must submit the exact area of our personal battle to Him. When we come against the power of the devil, it must be from a heart in submission to Jesus.

It is vital that you know, understand and apply this principle for your future success in **spiritual warfare**. That principle is this: *Victory begins with the name of Jesus on your lips, but it will not be consummated until the nature of Jesus*

is in

your heart. This rule applies to every facet of **spiritual warfare**.

Indeed, Satan will be allowed to come against the area of your weakness until you realize God's only answer is to become Christlike. As you begin to appropriate not just the name of Jesus but His nature as well, the adversary will withdraw. Satan will not continue to assault you if the circumstances he designed to destroy you are now working to perfect you.

The outcome of Peter's experience was that after **Pentecost**, when God used him to heal a lame man, a more humble Peter spoke to the gathering crowd. He asked, "Why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?" (Acts 3:12). Peter's victory over pride and the devil began with the name of Jesus on his lips, and it was consummated by the nature of Jesus in his heart. The darkness in Peter was displaced with light; the pride in Peter was replaced with Christ.

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