

The ACCUSER



"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Revelation 12:11

David Alsobrook

THE ACCUSER

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Authorized King James Version of the Holy Bible.

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Chapter 1

Satan's Three Most Common Roles

Satan's Diverse Roles of Attack

Our opponent, shrewd and subtle as he is (Genesis 3:1), is not confined to one role or method of attack. A survey of the Scriptures reveals many kinds of operations against the people of God. If they successfully defeated the adversary in one of his schemes, he would come against them at a later time with another tactic. Jesus exhorted His followers to be "wise as serpents"; Matthew 10:16 shows that serpents do have a substantial level of intelligence.

As I studied the Word to find out more about the enemy of whom Paul said we are not to be ignorant (I Corinthians 2:11), I slowly became aware that Satan has three primary roles of attack against the believer. If one method does not succeed against a Christian, often another form of attack will succeed. These three primary roles are: (1) The Tempter; (2) The Deceiver; (3) The Accuser.

The Tempter

The first time we see Satan approaching mankind he comes to our first parents in the role of the tempter. The serpent tempted Eve with, "**Yea, hath God said...?**" (Genesis 3:1). It was in this role that our Lord Jesus encountered him in their first recorded confrontation. "**And when *the tempter* came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God ...**" (Matthew 4:3). Evidently the early

Christians were aware of this term, tempter, and this tactic also, for Paul wrote: **"For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means *the tempter* have tempted you, and our labour be in vain"** (I Thessalonians 3:5).

Although the tempter's attacks are very real and sometimes successful in defeating a believer, temptation is the devil's *first* method of attack and actually the *weakest* of the three primary roles he uses in assaulting the Christian. Jesus easily overcame this role with single quotations of solitary sentences from the book of Deuteronomy. He did not use a lot of Scripture when the tempter came against Him. Single stabs with the Sword of the Spirit defeated all three areas of temptation the devil brought against Jesus.

The Deceiver

Far more believers are harmed by the adversary when he comes as the deceiver than they are when he comes as the tempter. This is a higher realm of attack and much more subtle than the previous one. Paul was referring to this second method in II Corinthians 11:14-15 when, after shocking them with the fact that many of their apostles were actually false, he said, **"And no marvel [surprise]; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."**

Paul taught that even as false ministers appeared as true ministers, so also Satan can masquerade himself as a true angel of God. God is light and His angels are angels of light. Satan, in his actual state, is an angel of darkness. He is, however, able to disguise himself as an angel of

light. The King James is a little obscure and misleading in the phrase "... **transformed into an angel of light.**" The word "transformed" is better rendered "disguised," as more recent versions point out. I do not believe Satan can actually *change himself into* an angel of light. I most definitely believe that Satan can and does *disguise himself* as an angel of light.

The purpose of coming to a person in the role of the deceiver is to trick that individual into accepting the false for the true. I personally know not a few ministers who have been deceived into great errors. Some of these men have seared their consciences with moral error after "a revelation from God" convinced them that we should have concubines today. Others have not brought as great shame as this upon the name of Christ, but have made their ministries invalid through teaching twists of Scripture. The deceiver delights in distorting the truth of the Word, and he showed this in Matthew 4:6 when he twisted the clear meaning of Psalm 91:11-12. Our Saviour was not fooled by this trick. Even Satan can haphazardly quote (usually he misquotes) the Scripture.

What then is our safeguard against this form of attack? After I sought the Lord earnestly along this line, He showed me: A believer overcomes the tempter with simple confessions of God's Word. Jesus used only one sentence of Scripture to rebuke the tempter. On the other hand, a believer can overcome the deceiver only by studying the *whole counsel* of God's Word and rightly dividing the Word by interpreting Scripture with Scripture.

I have come to the conclusion that each Christian must work out his/her own salvation and not rely entirely upon the experience of others. Every person has his/her own set of problems and areas of weakness to overcome. He that sat upon the throne said, "**He that overcometh shall**

inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:7). The deceiver delights in taking a part of the Word and emphasizing it to the exclusion of other Scripture. Fortunately, many of us stay balanced in the Word sufficiently enough that the deceiver's appearance as an angel of light does not fool us.

Most of you reading these words have known the presence of the tempter and the approach of the deceiver. When the enemy came to you in that first role, you were well aware of the temptation. When he came to you in the second role, as a deceiver you were soon aware of that attack, although it probably was harder to discern than the former approach.

We now come to the devil's third, and I think, strongest form of attack. "The devil" is the Greek word *diabolos* and means, "One who prosecutes as in a court room; a slanderer." "Satan" primarily means "adversary" and secondarily means "accuser—one who resists." This role as the accuser is probably the hardest to discern and overcome. Often we unknowingly become tools through whom the accuser can work.

When Satan appears as the tempter, his presence is very obvious. When he comes as a deceiver, his presence is usually not quite as obvious. However, when he comes as the *accuser*, we sometimes not only fail to discern Satan's voice, we may even mistake it for the voice of God! At that point we are deceived and most likely will yield to the temptation to pass carnal judgment on a fellow believer. Thus, we are snared by all three roles of attack: tempter, deceiver, and accuser.

How the Accuser Operates

We have found three ways that Satan operates as the

accuser:

- 1) Satan accuses the believer to God, and accuses God to the believer.

After Satan accused Job to God, he accused God to Job (through Job's wife). **"Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?"** (Job 1:9). Twice the devil told God, **"Job will curse You to Your face"** (see Job 1:11; 2:5). Then we see that the devil used Job's last living family member to accuse God to Job: **"Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die"** (Job 2:9).

- 2) Satan accuses other Christians to a believer.

Sadly, we often fail to discern this. We look upon a brother in the Lord and immediately judge him by the eye. This is what Jesus referred to as "an evil eye," which is grouped along with adultery, fornication, murder, etc. (see Mark 7:19-24). This operation accounts for the great amount of suspicion, distrust, faultfinding, and criticism which exists within the body of Christ.

- 3) Satan accuses a believer to himself.

Even after a believer exercises true repentance over a sin and sincerely asks the Lord to forgive him, the accuser will attack with condemnation and guilt. Often I pray with Christians who have lived with guilt and burdens of condemnation for years and years. How happy I am to show them it is Satan who condemns them and not God.

Throughout the rest of this book we will refer to overcoming these three attacks of the accuser in a more applicable way. They will be referred to as follows:

- 1) Overcoming Satan when he accuses me to God and God to me.
- 2) Overcoming Satan when he accuses others to me,

and me to others.

- 3) Overcoming Satan when he accuses me to myself.

Chapter 2

Overcoming Satan When He Accuses Me to God

I want to share on overcoming Satan, the accuser—who accuses me to God. Turn to Revelation 12:7-11:

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceived the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

The eleventh verse is well known since it is often repeated. We understand that the "him" who is overcome by the blood and the word of testimony is Satan or the devil, but we are likely to overlook the role in which he is portrayed in this verse—that of the accuser.

We read in the book of Revelation what John sees as a great war taking place in heaven. Some theologians teach that this Scripture has already been fulfilled. Those who interpret the book of Revelation solely on a spiritual plane

believe that this was completed when Jesus sprinkled His blood in the holy of holies after His resurrection.

Having studied the Revelation from many points of view, I believe that chapter 12 is yet future. John sees a time coming when Satan will no longer be allowed to accuse the brethren before God.

This book was given to John in the year A.D. 96. Jesus was crucified in the year A.D. 33, and in Revelation 1:1, over sixty years later, the Bible says,

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."

In other words, the book of Revelation concerns *things that are to come to pass*, and that was more than sixty years *after* Jesus had completed His work at Calvary.

Some persons say the war between Satan and Michael took place at Calvary. If so, then why do the brethren overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb in Revelation 12? It is evident they overcame the accuser after he had been cast down to earth. It is evident in verse 11 that **"they loved not their lives unto death,"** and no disciple was martyred until *after* the sufferings of Christ had long been accomplished. So it couldn't have taken place just at Calvary. True, Calvary provided the accuser's defeat for us, but it hasn't yet come into effect. Michael and his angels have yet to war against Satan and his angels and cast them down from the heavenlies. We need to understand that Satan STILL has access to God.

"But, brother, isn't it true that Jesus in Luke 10:17-18, when the seventy returned again with rejoicing, saying, 'Even the demons are subject unto us through thy name,' that Jesus replied, 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven'?"

Satan was cast out of heaven in the past. He was cast out of heaven long before Calvary, when heaven was still his abode. From what I can understand, though, he has not yet been cast out of his *access* to God. He has been cast out of his *abode* with Him.

Luke 10:18 validates Satan's loss of abode: **"I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,"** which occurred before man ever drew the breath of life.

The Accuser Has Access to the Throne

Job, chapter 1 – this book was written AFTER man was created and AFTER Satan had lost his abode there. Verse 6:

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and SATAN [when you see that word it means "adversary"] came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the EARTH [proving that he was not on the earth when he was saying these words], and from walking up and down in it."

I Peter 5:8 tells us he still does this, **"... your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."**

This scene described in the book of Job was not on earth. This was in heaven, a familiar place to the devil. He had lived there for eons and eons. In all likelihood he was even made (created) there and later assigned to rule over the earth before the creation of man.

Satan comes to God, who asks him, "Where do you come from?"

"From going to and fro in the earth," Satan replies.

Now this is after the fall of the anointed cherub, after the creation of man, after the time Jesus referred to when He said, "I beheld Satan fall like lightning from heaven." Yet, whom is Satan standing before in Job 1 and 2? He is standing before Yahweh whose **"throne is in the heavens"** (Psalm 103:19). This perplexed me for some time.

Satan was not in the earth, he was before God. God didn't come down to earth and say, "You sons of God, you created angels, present yourselves before Me; and, Satan, come, also."

My problem was that Revelation 21:27 relates that no one may enter into the holy city who works abomination, or makes a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. How can he, then, enter into heaven and stand before God? Then I recalled the words: **"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God"** (Romans 14:12). And I saw it!

Satan has to give account of himself to God. Evidently this is something he does regularly, or periodically. In Job 1:6 we read, **"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them."** Now look in Job 2:1, **"AGAIN there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present HIMSELF before the Lord."** So we see from these verses that Satan is coming to present himself before God and to give an account of his recent actions on earth.

God's purpose in allowing Satan's entrance into heaven is to permit his rendering an account of his deeds, not to fellowship with the adversary. And while Satan is reciting his activities, the slanderer takes advantage of the occasion to throw stones at the saints. Another common name for Satan is "the devil." Recall that the Greek word

for "the devil" is *diabolos*, which means "prosecutor, slanderer, and accuser." Standing before the Judge of all the earth to render an account of recent activities, *diabolos* takes advantage of the occasion to slander God's servants.

Observe Job 1:7: **"And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou?"** After he answered the Lord Jehovah, **"From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it";** the Lord said to Satan, **"Hast thou considered [set your heart to] my servant Job?"** (You get on the enemy's target list when you serve the Lord!) Job was an upright man, one who feared God and eschewed (avoided) evil, so it should come as no surprise that Satan had a whole book about him!

Jesus Christ, the Sinless One, was inspected by the evil one. Jesus said, **"Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"** (John 14:30). Perhaps we could paraphrase it: "The ruler of this age is coming to inspect Me, but he has no claim on Me."

I'm so glad that when Satan inspected Jesus, he could not find one legal ground of evidence with which to accuse Him to the Father. Had Satan been able to find such ground, there would not have been an advocate for Jesus, and He would not have been a Lamb without spot or blemish. Thus we would be hopeless and helpless.

When Satan accuses me to God he appeals to the legal holiness of God the Father. If at all possible, he will relate an actual fault in my life; if not possible, he will unjustly slander me before the Throne. Were it not for our Advocate at the Father's *right* hand, our adversary would gain the *upper* hand. God, because He demands holiness, would have to blot us out. Thank God for an Advocate who is in the Father's favor!

In II Corinthians 2:10-11, Paul says he is not ignorant of Satan's devices. **"To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."** The word "devices" means "war plans" or "war strategies." In a warfare the adversaries seek to spy out the weaknesses in each other. Satan, the adversary, examines us to discover our personal weaknesses and to accuse us before God. Also, he seeks to discover our weaknesses so that he may better attack us.

Concerning Job, Satan answered God with a tone of mean insinuation in his voice. **"Then Satan answered the LORD and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?"** His words implied that Job only served God because of the material blessings the Lord showered upon him.

God told the adversary that he could smite everything Job had except his life. In Job 2 we find that only Job's wife is left; his children are dead. Satan spared Job's wife because they were one flesh, and Satan had to obey and recognize that union.

So, Satan decides: *if I can't get at Job directly, I can do it indirectly through his wife.* **"Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die"** (2:9). This is why in Matthew 16:23, when Peter was speaking to Jesus, the Master identified the source of inspiration through which Peter responded as being Satan. Satan accused God to Job through his wife's "advice."

After Satan accuses me to God, *he accuses God to me.* We see this in Genesis 3:12; after Adam had sinned, he accused God, that is, he blamed his sinning on God. **"... The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."** Directly he was blaming his

wife, but indirectly he was blaming God. *"The reason I'm in all this trouble, Lord, is because of the woman that YOU gave me. If YOU hadn't put me in this situation, I'd never have had this happen in the first place"* (paraphrased).

Many Christians are bitter toward God. Suppose God answers ninety-seven prayers. Seemingly, three prayers don't obtain any answer. Satan says, "Ah, look at God, He didn't fulfill His Word." Satan accuses God to His people as well as accusing His people to God.

After Satan accused Job to God, he began to give God a list about Job. In Job 1:10 are given five specific areas about which Satan knew much. We have no reason to think that the tempter has altered his methods of "believer inspection" over the millennia.

Satan inspects five things about Job and YOU:

- 1) *Satan had inspected Job's conduct. **"Hast not thou made an hedge about him?"*** He knew all about Job and his personal life. He had studied his habits. He'd heard what words he spoke. He'd seen what he was like around the house. He knew how he conducted himself twenty-four hours a day. This thought is amplified in Psalm 119:23. **"Princes (principalities) also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes."**
- 2) *Satan had learned all about Job's family.* He knew Job's interpersonal relationships and **"all that he hath on every side"** (Job 1:10).
- 3) *Satan had made a detailed study of Job's possessions.* He knew how much silver and gold Job had, how many sheep, how many oxen, how many servants, etc.
- 4) *Satan had watched Job's labor. **"Thou hast blessed***

the work of his hands."

Satan knows what you are like on the job. He knows how you respond to pressure at work. He is on the job when you are on the job!

In the body of Christ, the phrase, "the work of your hands" denotes your ministry, and Satan knows all about the work of your hands. He is forever trying to tie your hands and get you bound up so you can't swing the sword, plow the field, sow the seed, and reap the harvest.

- 5) *Satan had observed Job's social influence. "His substance is increased in the land"* (Job 1:10). The word "substance" is more like "social influence." His social influence is increased in the land. Many times when the tempter overcomes Christians, it is relatively easy for them to get back into fellowship with God—that's not the hard part—but their testimony has been tarnished; the name of Christ has been marred. Restoring their influence with man takes much longer.

These then are the five areas that Satan inspected in Job. He inspects us, too, so that he can find something in our lives to throw in God's face.

The Accuser is Muzzled by the Advocate

In the book of Zechariah, chapter 3, we see a glimpse of what we are talking about.

Zechariah prophesied during the post-exilic period after Israel had come out of the land of Babylon, where the Israelites had been in captivity, in confusion and in bondage for seventy years. Now that they were back in Israel, God was blessing and prospering them.

Haggai, too, spoke to Israel near this time. His word to

them was: **"You dwell in cieled houses, but the house of God lies waste."** Decades previously Nebuchadnezzar's armies had come and led them away as captives. They had desecrated into a pile of rubble that beautiful temple built by Solomon.

Now, over a hundred years later, they are back in the land and have cieled houses to dwell in; but the temple is still a mound of ruin. God begins to challenge them to consider their ways and to rebuild His house.

Zerubbabel is the chief architect and master craftsman. God has a word for him: **"... Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts"** (Zechariah 4:6). From the book of Nehemiah we know they were trying to rebuild the wall with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. Zerubbabel was to learn that the rebuilding of the temple was "not by might, nor by power...." The words "might" and "power" refer to weapons and armies in the Hebrew.

Before the temple could be rebuilt, the priestly order as well as the craftsmen had to be right. The spiritual leadership in the priesthood had to be functioning properly, and God corrected both the priestly order in Zechariah 3 and the manual labor in Zechariah 4. He spoke to both realms of authority (spiritual and natural) through the prophetic ministry of Zechariah.

Joshua was a literal man who was living during that period. (This isn't the same Joshua who trained under Moses and led Israel into the land of promise.) It fell to his lot to be the high priest of Israel at this time. In chapter 3 of the book of Zechariah, the prophet gives a specific word for Joshua, the high priest.

"And he shewed me...." The prophet is speaking here of the angel who has come and has been dealing with him up

to this time. "... *Joshua the high priest.*" This is a vision in which Zechariah saw a literal man.

With the high priest there were two supernatural personalities present: the angel of the LORD, and Satan. The angel of the LORD as his advocate and Satan at "... *his right hand to resist him.*" Resist means "to accuse, condemn." The New American Standard Version reads "accuse him."

Here was Joshua, who was high priest of Israel, and in Zechariah's vision God showed him what was hindering the temple from being rebuilt. From the spiritual standpoint, the high priest was under the influence of the accuser. The chief reason was he had allowed his garments to spoil. Zechariah sees the angel of Yahweh standing there and Satan standing at Joshua's right hand to resist and accuse him.

"... *Satan standing at his right hand.*" The right side is our Godward side. Satan was standing at Joshua's right hand to resist his work for God. This is why Satan accuses us, that he might resist our efforts in the Kingdom.

The two beings in Zechariah's vision were the angel of the LORD and Satan. The angel of the LORD in the Old Testament was in all likelihood a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. I had prepared several pages of reasons why, but have omitted that study until a future time. Many authorities, as you probably know, agree.

"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD [this is Jesus], and Satan standing at his right hand to resist [accuse] him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD [Yahweh] rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee is not this [referring to Joshua the high priest] a brand plucked out of the fire?"

In other words, "Isn't Joshua a burning branch that's been snatched out of the fire before being totally consumed?"

Many times the enemy condemns and accuses you with, "You haven't done this yet." "You haven't done that yet." "You haven't attained to this yet," etc. Don't yield to the accuser and be unnecessarily hard on yourself. When Jesus intercedes for you, He refers to you as a "brand plucked out of the fire." In other words, a few years ago you were in the fire of judgment and just a step from hell. So what that you are still smoldering a little? You were only recently plucked from the fire. Don't expect too much too soon.

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel" (Zechariah 3:3). These filthy garments that Joshua was clothed with provided the legal grounds for Satan's judicial argument against him. It is as though Satan has been saying, "God, You shouldn't allow this man to be your high priest. Look at his filthy garments. Look at this in his life. Look at the other in his life."

Satan condemns and accuses us before God at this very hour, pointing out various things in our lives. Although in our Christian life we have come out of many, many things in which we used to be entangled, we should remember still that our Father is so holy that He cannot behold or look upon any evil. He cannot look upon iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13), and with even so much as an evil thought, He couldn't accept you with favor in His presence. None of us is able to stand before God. No matter how much God has done in our lives or how great was the pit from which we came, there are still things in our lives that demand God's judgment.

Joshua was clothed with filthy garments. Joshua

wasn't an ungodly man. He was like the rest of us, still falling short of the glory of God. And Satan was finding this as his legal ground. Most of what he said about Job was false. Most of what he said about Joshua was true. Yet, God vindicated both of these servants. When "the angel of the LORD" rebuked, that was the end of Satan in the vision. There wasn't a continual battle.

One word from "the angel of the LORD," and Satan disappears from the passage.

In verse 4 we read, **"And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying [there may have been other angels standing there], Take away the filthy garments from him."** As Jesus, our Advocate, intercedes for us asking the Father to have mercy upon us for our sins and failures, the Father accepts His intercessory ministry in our behalf and gives us undeserved kindness. However, our Advocate doesn't stop with legal pardon. He goes on to change us.

The angel said, "Take away the filthy garments from him." He said later during His incarnation to Mary and Martha after Lazarus had come out of the tomb by His power, "Loose him from his grave clothes and let him go." Now He is saying to these angels that are in the presence of Joshua, "Take away the filthy garments from him." This is sanctification—being made into the image of likeness of God.

A beautiful picture is painted in Zechariah 3 of something wonderful in the believer's life. **"I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment,"** or "I'll make your present life different." That's what Jesus says to you today.

There is a difference between our **STANDING** and our **STATE**. Our *standing* before God is holy in Christ. Our

state may not be quite so good as our standing (to put it mildly).

What God does in the act of justification is to make our **STANDING** completely righteous. The perfect righteousness of Christ is reckoned to our account.

Our **STATE** is less than perfect. God wants to root us out of this present evil age. He wants to bring our **STATE** into perfection. He wants the disciple to be as His Master. The Father wants us to go on unto perfection. He wants us to lay aside every evil weight and anything that hinders us in our earthly course of perfection (maturity, completeness in Christ).

In verse 2 Jesus (the special "angel") is rebuking Satan on the basis of His righteousness (not Joshua's), and now in verse 4 Jesus is actually effecting a change in Joshua's life. **"Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."** Only the Son of God could say that!

In verse 5, Zechariah speaks out in this vision. **"And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head."** In Exodus 28:36-38, a mitre is described as a turban with a gold plate in front of it that would very much resemble a crown. In fact, sometimes a mitre is taken to mean crown. This gold plate had engraved on it: **HOLINESS TO THE LORD**. That speaks of the crown. Zechariah was saying, "Don't only clothe him with new garments. Also place a crown on his head." The authority of priesthood is represented in the mitre.

"So they set a fair mitre upon his head" (Zechariah 3:5), and he took on the appearance of a king with this turban, this crown with its gold plate set upon his head. The priestly garments first; the priestly mitre second.

The mitre is set upon his head to picture kingly

authority. The high priest's ephod picture Joshua's serving capacity. In Revelation 1:5-6 we read: **"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God."** Kings to exercise authority, and priests to offer sacrifices.

"And the angel of the Lord stood by" (Zechariah 3:5). He was approving the act by His very presence in front of Joshua as the change of raiment and the fair mitre were placed on him. The angel of the Lord was so much as saying, "I am approving this. I am condoning this."

"And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua," that is, after He cleansed and anointed him, He admonished Joshua.

Now Joshua is clean; he has a fair crown on his head; his garments are white. Now he is given a charge, a responsibility: **"Thus saith the LORD of hosts: If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house"** (Zechariah 3:7). "Judge" means to deliver—the book of Judges means the *Book of Deliverers*. Samson judged Israel for forty years; Samuel judged Israel for forty years; Deborah judged Israel; that is, they DELIVERED Israel. Israel would fall into bondage but later repent and then have to be DELIVERED from their enemies.

"Judge my house"—so God's house needed to be delivered, the temple needed to be cleansed. Jesus wants to cleanse the temple as much in our day as when He entered the outer court of the temple while on earth. That is a mere shadow of what He wants to do now. He wants to enter into the temple, drive out the money changers and all the thieves and robbers. He wants to deliver His house, but He is going to do it through people who walk in His ways, and keep His charge.

"If thou wilt walk in my ways"—personal obedience to God.

"If thou wilt keep my charge"—fulfill your temple responsibility as priest—then you will judge and deliver His house.

"And shalt also keep my courts"—entrusted with an expansion of authority from the inner court to the outer court.

"And I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by"—this heavenly vision—I'll give you a place here in the temple of God. So this speaks of Joshua's eternal inheritance in the heavenly temple. Jesus promised, **"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God"** (Revelation 3:12).

We have seen a bit of the work of our adversary by looking at this Scripture.

Jesus, Our Intercessor

When studying Jesus and His high priestly intercession for us as given in Hebrews, chapter 7, I was amazed to find no Scripture that implied that Jesus was now praying for the world. One Scripture said He did "make intercession for the transgressors." Isaiah, chapter 53, speaks of this but was referring to Christ on the cross where He said, **"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"** (Luke 23:34).

All of the Scriptures show Jesus praying for "them," which refers to believers, as portrayed in these Scriptures:

"Making intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

"Who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).

"I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me" (John 17:9).

I wondered why Jesus was not praying for the world. After all, the church is in better shape than the world. But the Lord impressed upon me: I'm just going to pray for you. When you are where you ought to be, you are going to take care of the world. I pray for the church. When it gets where it should be, the reaching of the world will be a simple thing.

The reaching of the world for Christ is simple. But it is the perfecting of the church which is so hard. That is why Jesus said no man knew the hour of His return, not even the angels, not even the Son, but only the Father. The reason for this is the church will have a great part in bringing back the King. **"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"** (Matthew 24:14). We haven't done our job yet. That is why Jesus is praying for us: "Wake them up, Father!"

The whole of Hebrews 7 is a study of Jesus, who after the order of Melchizedek*, is our high priest and is continuing to pray for us. He has an unchangeable priesthood in heaven at the Father's right hand. Jesus has been busier since He rose from the dead than He was when He ministered here on earth. While on earth He slept many nights, sometimes He prayed all night; but in heaven, as far as we know, He has prayed continuously for nearly 2,000 years. And we think we have done something when we pray an hour or two!

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever

* We have an entire book on Melchizedek and the things he represents.

liveth to make *intercession for them*" (Hebrews 7:25). He makes intercession for us and that is why we are saved to the uttermost.

The word "intercede" means more than just to pray for someone. It means "to stand in the place of another."

We sometimes pray in proxy for people. I've not seen the word "proxy" in the Bible. However, as we understand that word, it means "to intercede." To stand in for someone. Jesus, who has a perfect standing, who is at the highest position God ever gave anyone, is standing in your place before the Father for our failures, our weaknesses, and our sins. There is nothing I can do, or cannot do, to affect this advocacy in my behalf.

I have two advocates, two intercessors. One of them I have nothing to do with concerning His intercessory ministry, and the other everything.

First, Jesus is my paraclete. I John 2:1-2 tells us,

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins."

The word "advocate" is "paraclete" in the original. Jesus said in John 14:16, **"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another COMFORTER"** (paraclete, another intercessor, another helper, another Strengthener, another to stand by, another advocate, another counselor, another comforter).

"Another" [Greek: *allos*] means "another just like Jesus." Jesus is my advocate. The same comforter, just like Jesus. *I'll pray the Father to give you another comforter just like Me, the Holy Spirit.*

To fill the role of an intercessor, one must be possessed

by the Spirit of Christ.

At times I've asked people to remember me in prayer. Later, I'd ask them if they prayed for me, and they'd answer, "Well, yes," or "We whispered your name." Paul besought Rome to **"strive together with me in your prayers to God for me"** (Romans 15:30). This speaks of warfare and rarely do believers war in the Spirit for each other. We make Jesus do all the work!

Some anointed preacher might help you, praying in your behalf, but there is Someone greater who has you on His prayer list. And He calls to the Father in your behalf night and day; and whenever Satan accuses you, He tells him to be silent and He pleads your case. He prays for the needs in your life.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is your ADVOCATE (paraclete) and ministers those things to your life where there is a hindrance to their taking place. This is the Holy Spirit's ministry. But He cannot intercede for me unless I yield and let Him do it through me (Romans 8:26). The only exception would be that He use another believer to intercede for me by the Spirit.

Christ intercedes for His church without our cooperation. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us only as we do cooperate.

Satan Accused Simon and Demanded to Have Him

Jesus is interceding for us right now, but He gave us an example of what He was going to do before He left the earth. Luke 22:31-32 tells us: **"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee."** Satan has desired to have me. When? When he goes to

God and says, "Look at this, look at that. You shouldn't have anything to do with David Alsobrook. Look at how he sometimes becomes angry at his wife. Look at his wavering; look at how he doubts You and doesn't stand on Your Word. Hear how he judges that brother. See how he worries." These are all terrible things in the sight of God. But Jesus has prayed for me.

No matter what you are going through, know that Luke 22:31-32 is operating in your behalf. **"I have prayed for thee."** He prayed for Peter before the battle! Do you know that Jesus always gets His prayers answered!

When Satan came and inspected Jesus, he could not find one thing but purity. **"For the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"** (John 14:30).

Jesus wasn't the only one inspected that night. All the disciples were. Judas certainly was. In Peter especially, Satan had his target. Peter, more than any other of the disciples, was a target, for the keys of the Kingdom had been given to him (Matthew 16:19). He used those keys to open the door for the salvation of the Jews on the day of Pentecost. Ten years later he used those keys to open the door of salvation for the Gentiles through the house of Cornelius. Satan had his gun on Peter. That's why you see Peter stumble so badly—he was in a place of high favor. He was the only disciple who ever walked on water, the only disciple who had the keys to the Kingdom given to him. And he was always a third part of that special circle: Peter, James and John. He had a special place in the Kingdom of God. Likewise, Satan had a special aim for him.

It was unusual for Jesus to call Peter, "Simon, Simon" (Luke 22:31), because since renaming him, Jesus often called this Galilean fisherman PETER. Peter means ROCK.

Jesus named him ROCK. What does Simon mean? A reed. Jesus found this reed who was so easily bent by the blowing winds of temptation, overcome by so many fleshly habits, given to a sailor's tongue, and He said, "I'm going to make you a ROCK."

True enough, this man, Simon, had been a reed sometimes, but a rock many times, too. Because he has this special place, he is an example for Christians. When you read his epistles, he sometimes refers to himself as "Simon Peter." The reason is, he learned a great lesson. He learned he was reed (Simon) AND that he was rock (Peter).

We have much teaching on "the rock." That is, what are in our reborn spirit. All of us are reed and rock. Before Jesus came along, we were all reed. In our flesh dwells no good thing. We are just all flesh. When Jesus came into our life, II Corinthians 5:17 went into effect, and old things passed away. Jesus comes into our spirits and we become an heir of God and joint heir with Christ (Romans 8:17). We now have all power over the enemy (Luke 10:19), and we are a new creation.

Peter forgot that he was still Simon. When talking to Jesus he sounded like the ROCK: "I'm ready to go with you both into prison and to death." Other "rock" speeches may sound like: "Lord, I'm just going to stand for my healing, even if I can't see well without glasses." "Lord, I'm not going to eat another bite of food for forty days." "Lord, I'll never rebel against You again in any way." The rock nature really means these promises, but the reed nature pulls us down if we don't properly deal with it.

We have viewed Peter's speech, "Lord, I'm ready to go with you both into prison and to death" as being solely the boast of pride. Actually, there was a great element of love. This was his realization of God's ability, why he walked

on the water with Jesus; he knew the ability of Jesus. He'd seen the glory of Jesus with Moses and Elijah on the mountain. He knew the power of Jesus to deliver the demonized son in the valley.

In John 13:37-38, Jesus is talking to Peter. He tells him, **"You are going to deny Me three times...."** **"I will lay down my life for Your sake,"** is Peter's reply. **"You are going to deny Me,"** Jesus tells him. In the English versions the chapter ends here. It is highly possible that the division here is in the wrong place and that the rest of the passage through John 14:4 is spoken to Peter specifically. In that case, Jesus goes on to say to Peter: **"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.... I go and prepare a place for you."** You see, it was Peter's heart that was troubled. "What do you mean I'm going to deny You!"

"That's all right, son, I'm going to take care of it. You'll make a mess out of it, but I've already prayed for you and soon I'm going to receive you unto Myself." Jesus comforted Peter. Still, it is interesting that in all references to Peter's denial, Jesus forewarned him with the name "Simon."

"Simon, Simon—reed, reed." "Hey, Reed...." And Peter remembers three years before.

"Oh, what are You calling me? Call me Peter. Don't You remember what You named me? I am more than a conqueror. My name is Peter (Rock)."

Paul was a rock, too, but he still realized he had that reed nature to contend with, for in Romans 7:18 he said, **"I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."** The secret lies in bringing the flesh into the subjection of the Spirit. That is the secret of Jesus' victory over the enemy!

Peter needed to bring that flesh into subjection; he was sleeping when he should have been praying. Often I hear "rocks" say, "Who needs to pray? I've got faith!"

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan [the adversary] hath desired [Greek: demanded] to have you." Evidently, Jesus meant that Satan had gone to God and accused Peter before Him. Evidently the Father alerted Jesus about this through the Holy Spirit, and Jesus then interceded in Simon's behalf before the event ever occurred. "But I have prayed for thee." Not, "I will," but "I HAVE."

"... That he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). Simon, he found chaff in you. That reed nature is still there, and he desired to have you. **"BUT I HAVE PRAYED FOR THEE, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."**

Jesus knows all about those times when you are going to stumble, just as He knew ahead of time that Peter would fall.

When the Lord saved you, He knew of every time when you'd deny Him. He knew of every time when you would yield to the tempter. He knew, and He prayed for you before those things occurred. He saw other things that would sting and bruise you, but because He continues to uphold you before the Father, interceding in your behalf, you are changed into His image.

The Lord knows of every time that you are going to fail Him. You may say, "That's it. It is over. Period." But with the Lord, it is only a comma. Jesus knew that Peter would deny Him, but it was only going to be a "comma" and not a "period" in Peter's relationship with the Lord. Hallelujah! That is why Jesus is continually interceding for us.

The Blood of Sprinkling

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem... and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:22-24). *The New International Version* reads, **"the blood of sprinkling that speaks a better word than Abel's blood spoke."**

The "blood of sprinkling" is important. The blood of the atonement lamb which was offered once a year (Yom Kippur) in the nation of Israel (Leviticus 16), was sprinkled on the mercy seat in the holy of holies where the high priest went on the Day of Atonement. Jesus, as our high priest in heaven, shed His blood once at Calvary.

"The blood of sprinkling" refers to the blood on the mercy seat. That means you have come to the blood on the mercy seat.

Chapters 9 and 10 of Hebrews clearly describe how the high priest under the law went into the tabernacle made with hands, but Jesus entered into the heavenly temple, not with blood of bulls and goats, but with His own blood to appear in the presence of God FOR US.

Jesus is now appearing in the presence of God FOR US, in our behalf, as our advocate, a real representative and attorney.

"The blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Shed blood speaks! In Genesis 4:10, when God called to Cain, He said, **"The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."** He wasn't speaking figuratively. God can hear the sound of shed blood. It cries to God. Abel's blood cried out: Vengeance! Vengeance! Judgment! And so God placed

judgment on Cain, a mark of banishment and exile. He was sent away to the land of Nod for the murder of his brother.*

Now the "blood of sprinkling," which is the blood of Jesus on the mercy seat in heaven, speaks "better things than that of Abel." It speaks a better word than the blood of Abel spoke. It doesn't cry out for vengeance; it cries out for mercy. We overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our vocal agreement here on earth; and when the devil accuses us to God in heaven, Jesus overcomes the devil by His blood on the mercy seat. It is His testimony concerning the blood and our acceptance of it that overcomes the devil.

Satan may say, "Look at Your servant—this, that and the other." If some of it is true, God cannot say, "That's absolutely wrong." Satan appeals to the legal holiness of God that demands judgment for sin. Then, in the heavenly courtroom, the Judge (God) turns to the Attorney (Jesus) after the Prosecutor (the devil) has made his case and asks, "What do You have to say?"

"I shed My blood for David, and David accepts My blood," answers the Attorney.

"Is that all You have to say?"

"Yes, that is all I have to say."

"Case dismissed," declares the Judge.

In the Old Testament, in the holy of holies, the ark of the covenant had the mercy seat on top of it, and in between were the cherubim. God said that He dwelt or abode "over the mercy seat."

So in front of God the Father is the blood of Jesus. I

* For a more detailed study of Cain and Abel, see chapter 2 of *The Precious Blood*, entitled "Why God Accepted Abel and Rejected Cain."

Peter 1:18-19 tells us, "**Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things ... but with the precious blood of Christ....**" Now if I was not redeemed with corruptible things, and I was redeemed by the blood, then what is that blood? Incorruptible! Not capable of death! That blood on the mercy seat is just as living as that which flowed in Jesus' veins. It talks. It says, "Mercy. Mercy." It speaks a better word.

Satan is muzzled before the Father. He is left without a word to say.

The Father of Mercy and God of all Comfort is His legal role of justice. I'm reminded of a great hymn written by Charles Wesley:

The Father hears Him pray, His dear Anointed One;

He cannot turn away the presence of His Son.

His Spirit answers to the Blood, His Spirit answers to the Blood.

And tells me I am born of God.

Five bleeding wounds He bears, Received on Calvary.

They pour effectual prayers; They strongly plead for me.

"Forgive him, oh, forgive," they cry. "Forgive him, Oh, forgive," they cry.

"Let not that ransomed sinner die."

"Who is he that condemneth?" (Romans 8:34). It is Christ who intercedes for us at the Father's right hand. He makes intercession for us. He stands in our place. The Father looks at us in Him, and Jesus says, "I shed My blood and He accepts My blood." As long as we are under that blood covering, then we have this continual, perfect, and wonderful salvation. Jesus intercedes for us on the basis of the blood.

Jesus overcomes the accuser in Heaven by the blood of the Lamb and the word of His (Jesus') testimony. For *us* Jesus overcomes the accuser in Heaven. Every time Satan accuses us before the Father, Jesus is our legal advocate and technical representative before the Father's right hand. He pleads the merits of His blood. The Father continues His acceptance of us even with all our faults and failures, our sins and shortcomings, because of the perfect righteousness of Jesus and because we truly do desire to be pleasing to Him. Every hour that Satan accuses the saints before God, he is cast down by Jesus at the Father's right hand.

In summary of this chapter, I'd like to remind you that the enemy's three primary roles of attack against you are: 1) Tempter; 2) the Deceiver; 3) the Accuser.

Announce the following liberation decree to your soul:

"Through the blood of the Lamb and the word of my testimony I can overcome the tempter, the deceiver, and the accuser."

Say with determination in your heart:

"I'm not going to let the tempter overcome me. I'm not going to let the deceiver overcome me. I'm not going to let the accuser overcome me."

Chapter 3

Overcoming Satan When He Accuses Others to Me

Now let's study how to overcome the accuser when he accuses the brethren to you and to me. Note the wording of the Scripture in Revelation 12:10-11:

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Many Christians become ineffective when Satan comes against them in the role of the accuser of the brethren. In this function he accuses the brethren to the brethren. When he accuses us before God, Jesus overcomes that for us every time, perfectly. God would that we overcome Satan in that same degree when he accuses others to us. We must learn to recognize Satan's activities when he accuses the brethren to us, and we must learn how to overcome him when he uses our mouth as a tool to accuse others.

Much of the schism and discord in the church today is due to the work of the accuser of the brethren. At times we unwittingly become a tool of the accuser and voice his very words. The greatest hindrance to unity in the church today is not diversity of doctrine and affiliation or

differences of creed, but the discord among the brethren. Satan fights the unity of the church. When the church becomes unified and in full stature as a mature man, then all men will know that we are Jesus' disciples by the LOVE we have one for another.

How subtly the accuser works to fill our minds with accusations about others. Often we think these are our own thoughts, not realizing that the accuser is whispering in our ear. Sometimes we have thought the accuser's suggestions about our brothers were insights from God and have called this process the "gift of discernment." (Know this: there is no such gift as "discernment." However, there is a gift of "discernings of spirits.")

The word *diabolos* from which we get the word "devil," means one who prosecutes as in a courtroom. Another meaning is "slanderer." Satan primarily means "adversary," but secondarily means "accuser." This is his very nature. To accuse is Satan's highest role of attack against the church. He is so subtle we often don't even realize his attacks.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; ... variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions ..." (Galatians 5:19-20). "Seditions" means division or factions. The "works of the flesh" can only come about in the church through the believer. Many times in ignorance we yield to the accuser of the brethren, permitting him to use us as a tool to accomplish "seditions."

The spirit of condemnation has such an inroad into the body of Christ. One reason for this is that the voice of the accuser often comes from the pulpit. God's people have been served heavy yokes and bondages.

The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 5:15, **"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not**

consumed one of another." All of the biting and devouring going on in the body of Christ is consuming it from within. The preachers are the most guilty. In some ministerial fellowships there is little fellowship but much backbiting and devouring. One brother comes against the other or slanders the name of a more popular preacher.

Mark 7:20-23 tells us in the words of Jesus,

"That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an EVIL EYE, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

What is an EVIL EYE? To look at a person and immediately think evil. We look at them to discover what is wrong with them. We desire to see what wrong they reflect.

An EVIL EYE is in operation when a person who has no merit for his judgment looks upon someone and instantly judges from the outward appearance. In II Corinthians 5:12 Paul talked about **"them which glory in appearance, and not in heart."** This is what the Bible calls an "evil eye." It is looking upon someone with evil suspicion. The accused have done nothing and said nothing. Nothing firsthand is known about the person. This is an evil eye. This defiles not only the individual who has the evil eye, but often the whole body. Suspicion is very contagious.

In one church a person said to me, "I have the gift of discernment. I discern a very bad spirit about you." After a while I realized she didn't have a revelation from the Lord, just a plain old suspicion, which is an evil eye. An evil eye is a spiritual operation, but one that does not come from

the Holy Spirit. Its source is the accuser of the brethren.

In Proverbs 6:16-18 Solomon said, **"These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him."** He is saying that God hates six specific sins but the seventh is in a class all by itself. Mind you, the Lord hates all seven things, but the seventh in the list is a special abomination before God. In that list He talks about pride, murder, lying, wickedness ... but the seventh thing, the greatest abomination to God, is **"HE THAT SOWETH DISCORD AMONG THE BRETHREN."** It is hard to believe that God hates discord sowing in the church more than He despises murder in the world. Yet a man full of wisdom said such is the case.

Judge Righteous Judgment

The Apostle Paul reproved those who gloried in appearance and not in heart. **"That ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.... Wherefore henceforth know we no man AFTER THE FLESH ..."** (II Corinthians 5:12, 16). We are not to know a man, a minister or a brother in the Lord, after the flesh, after the natural or the outward order of things. Often we evaluate a ministry and its effectiveness by outward growth, or by its numerical size, or by monetary growth, or by some other facet of outward natural things, the car the minister drives, the kind of clothes he wears, etc. We tend to judge ministerial success from the natural standpoint. Just because the ministry has flourished does not mean it is necessarily of God.

Bigness does not necessarily denote godliness, although commercial success is one of the end-time signs in the church. Paul said to Timothy that financial accretion during the latter times would become very popular and that godliness would be a means to gain (I

Timothy 6:5). The more financial accretion a brother amasses in the ministry today, the more godly he is considered to be. By the same token, we should not judge the effectiveness of someone's ministry by the natural appearance. We should learn how to judge righteous judgment.

Recently I heard a brother say, "Satan isn't fighting unity." "What do you mean?" I asked. He replied, "Satan has the Christians doing it for him."

True, it is Satan behind the Christians who are devouring one another. We need to look to the Word and let the Word show us where we have allowed the accuser of the brethren to use us to aid his work.

John 7:24 states, **"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."** If you judge by appearance it is the outward, the god of this world, who could be influencing your judgment. JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT. Know no man after the flesh. Don't judge a minister or brother by the flesh.

A lady I know was telling me about an extremely obese preacher and what a great blessing she received from his ministry. I said to her, "Sister, you know there is bound to be something wrong because of his outward appearance." I'll never forget what she said.

"Yes, but I've learned not to evaluate that man's spirit after the outward appearance. I know that in his personal life there must be something that is not as it should be, but I've learned not to judge after a man's flesh. I've learned to receive in the Spirit what God has for me in his ministry." She was judging righteous judgment. How slow we are to perceive spiritual things, but not so with Jesus.

Usually when someone asks me to discern something, in the Spirit it takes me awhile to get the understanding.

I told a prophet that I was having sinus problems. Immediately he replied, "This came on you when you were twelve," and proceeded to tell me other things. He had no way of knowing that when I was in the sixth grade I had an attack with sinus, was hospitalized and missed twenty-nine days of one semester of school. This brother had such "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," it didn't take him long to receive revelation about my condition.

My flow of revelation is not that quick, and I need to learn to judge not after the sight of my eyes. The Lord is having to teach me along this line.

A few years ago we were in a grocery store, and we noticed a man with a huge cigar sticking out of his mouth. It was so big it made his mouth look out of shape, and it slurred his speech. He was talking to my wife's father, who is a beautiful Christian and who has known this man for some time. You could hear him through his mumbling talking about Jesus, about healings, and about people receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And I thought, "Yeah, uh huh...." Very quickly this pharisaical attitude welled up in me. Dianne and her father were able to rejoice and praise the Lord with him. And I was there with "You know how these Methodists are. If people have a smoking habit, they better get set free. That's just a terrible ungodly thing!" And the Lord put His finger on me right in the store. If I judge someone in my heart, I need to repent of that criticism. He that sows discord among the brethren is of the seventh abomination. It is the thing God hates most: destroying the body of Christ, being used of the accuser of the brethren to accuse others. How many times we do this.

It is nothing more than Satan talking through us.

Today this man has laid aside his huge cigars, and his words are understandably clearer when he talks about Jesus to almost everyone who comes in his store. He has been instrumental in leading many Methodists in the western Kentucky area to a deeper knowledge of the Lord. I know a lot of other Christians who never had an outward habit to conquer but who have also told very few people about the Lord.

We say, "Yes, this brother is given to this, or that. He needs this or he needs that. He sure is shallow." And all the time we think we are dealing in a spiritual realm, when actually we are looking to the natural. If we are going to become perfect and mature, we are going to have to be blind to the natural appearance. We are not to judge by outward appearance but judge righteous judgment.

"What about this man's ministry?" I'm frequently asked. If I reply, "Well, I heard one thing about him," I might put a derogatory light upon the man. Even though I don't realize it, I may have put him in a negative category.

One thing I've learned is that every preacher has an off night. I used to say, "I'll go hear any brother once." Now I say, "I'll go hear any brother two or three times before I form an opinion."

Several years ago I went to hear a well-known evangelist. To me, at the time, pride and arrogance were pouring forth. I went away praying, "Oh, God, how can You be in that? I can't see God at all in this. I can't see why others see so much in this preacher." My peace was gone; and between the Lord and me, my prayer life wasn't flowing. For several days afterward every time I praised the Lord, it was empty and hollow-sounding. The Lord said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." I repented and got my heart right toward the brother and

went to another meeting.

God was able to allow me to properly evaluate the man's ministry. I got my heart pure toward God and was able to overlook the outward things, leaving them for God to deal with; and did I see God! I was thrilled and saw God do some great works. I learned something important about preachers: there is none who is all wheat. We are all a mixture. There is nothing in our ministries today that is all good or all evil. (There are false prophets, of course, but I am speaking of those who are serving the Lord.) We are to prove all things, to hold fast that part which is good, and to abstain from all appearance of evil — all the chaff.

A brother came to me, "I just love your tapes. I've heard thirty or forty. But on this one I disagreed so much I've not been able to listen to any more of your tapes." It was such a minor thing he disagreed with, I was surprised at his strong reaction.

I replied, "Brother, you need to realize I'm just a man like yourself. My teaching has some parts of God and some parts of me; and you'll just have to learn how to weigh, to evaluate, and to judge with righteous judgment. But don't let the accuser of the brethren throw me out just because of one little thing."

Ephesians 4:32 tells us: **"Be ye kind one to another."** The word "kind" is the same word used in Matthew 11:30 when Jesus said, **"My yoke is *easy*."** It should be easy to be yoked one to another.

I have heard some say, "That particular minister has nothing." And I go to hear him with a preconceived notion and judgment that I have not evaluated from sitting under his ministry. I've learned that sometimes that very same brother I've heard so much bad about will minister to me in such a beautiful way. I'm learning slowly, but surely, to

judge with righteous judgment.

Let's check in John's Gospel where Jesus did judge with righteous judgment.

"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus DID NOT COMMIT HIMSELF UNTO THEM, because HE KNEW ALL MEN, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:23-25).

Every time you say, "What about so and so? What about that sister? What did you feel about her?" think of this verse. Jesus was not this way. He **"needed not that any should testify of man."** He didn't need anyone to tell Him what another person was like. You would never hear Jesus ask any questions such as: "Peter, have you noticed anything strange about John lately? There is something about John; he doesn't have the victory lately. I was just wondering." Jesus needed no one to testify of man, for He knew what was in man. He did not need any person to give evidence about another person.

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (II Chronicles 16:9). We know that His eyes are always upon the righteous, according to Psalm 34:15, and yet He still has to look over all the earth to find those whose heart is perfect toward Him. God judges heart attitudes, and we need to judge with a righteous judgment.

We need to judge with a righteous judgment a brother or a sister who stumbles in sin. When a minister stumbles, immediately you hear all the other ministers talking about him. Be careful what kind of judgment you render, for God is going to let you be judged by the same measure of

judgment. When we hear something bad about a brother, how quick we are to evaluate, to surmise, and to formulate our opinion about him, even before we take it to God in prayer. We are so quick to judge after the sight of the eye. God wants us to use righteous judgment and not to be used by the accuser of the brethren.

I've heard some dreadful things about ministers. I'd think that they truly were bad and that those brothers had better repent. After some years of travel, I heard that I had a Cadillac back home, that I owned two homes, and that I did all kinds of terrible things. I'd never even owned a car, let alone a Cadillac. I didn't even have a home, let alone two homes. I said, "God, those are dreadful things people are saying. They are lies." The Lord let me ride along for a while as I was praying about this. Then, suddenly I remembered, "Oh, did you hear about brother so and so? Why he does this, and he does that and the other." Somebody saw him somewhere do something or other. The Lord reminded me that I had been quick to believe that report. I repented.

We grow up learning how to assess and judge in the natural, and it's hard for us to learn how to judge in the spiritual. One example of this truth is found in Acts 9, but let me preface my remarks about the treatment of Saul.

We often think of the New Testament church as being perfect. IT WAS FAR FROM PERFECTION. In Acts 9 is an example of Satan's accusing a brother to the brethren and causing suspicion—an evil eye—and rejection of the brother. If it hadn't been for one man (Barnabas) who knew how to judge with a righteous judgment, Saul might have been permanently bruised.

Acts 9 is all about Saul, a hotheaded zealot. Jesus apprehended him on the road to Damascus with a

dazzling light.

Jesus appeared to Ananias and told him to **"go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for the one called Saul of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth."** Was he willing to go? No, he immediately began to give God a news report: "Lord, haven't You heard what terrible things this man has done to Your saints in Jerusalem?" Ananias argued with the Lord. But the Lord said to him, "Go thy way." He wasn't given much explanation, just **"GO THY WAY,"** and then the Lord told him of the things that Saul must suffer. That day Saul became a vibrant believer.

"And when Saul was come to Jerusalem [headquarters, for the Gospel was first preached where the outpouring at Pentecost had occurred], he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). The Scripture doesn't say, "When PAUL was come...." It says, "When SAUL was come...." He was still unrecognized. It is hard for me to picture Christians who never quoted Paul, but such was the case.

Let us use our imaginations concerning the young convert's attempt to join the disciples:

"Oh, but I've repented! I had a dazzling light out on the road."

"Were any of the brothers with you when that happened?"

"No, I wasn't a Christian then, so I certainly wouldn't be with Christians when that happened."

"The Scripture says out of the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

"Oh, but come on. I've repented. I'm sorry for all the

havoc I wrought, and I have been forgiven for having thrown your relatives in jail."

Imagine all he had to overcome!

There was no forgiveness or trust toward this new brother. They had relatives and friends who were in jail because of Saul's work against them. We see in them the accusation of Satan. If there was anything Satan did not want, it was for Saul to become a functioning part of the church. He wanted to do everything he could to keep Saul away. Satan went around whispering in their ears: "He's not a believer!" "Don't listen to him." "Don't believe him." "This is the man who is spying out the church." "He's the ringleader." "Be careful, don't get too friendly with him." Whisper. Whisper. The whisperings of Satan caused the brethren to be afraid of Saul.

Saul didn't get many hugs when he went to Jerusalem. I know how he felt. I imagine he got some hugs like ones I've received! I go to a new place and feel conspicuous. Then here come the elders. Oh, yes, they want to hug you. (I'd rather just stick with the old fashioned handshake.) Praise God for the elders! In five seconds they expect me to give a rundown of all my background. They give me a scrutinizing gaze from the top of my head to the soles of my feet and ask, "Are you married?" "Do you have your bills paid back home?" They question me like interrogating detectives instead of praying for me before the meeting. I feel like an ox going to the slaughter, or like a lamb before the shearers. Their line of thinking seems to be that no one can or should cast out devils in Jesus' name and not follow them.

Can you picture yourself in Saul's place? "They were all afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple." And don't you know he would have finished it all if he

had said, "I'm going to preach before kings. Thousands of Gentiles will be saved through my preaching."

"But Barnabas...." Thank God for Barnabas who overcame the accuser's lies to his ears, by the merit of Jesus' blood for that new disciple. **"But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and how he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem"** (Acts 9:27-28). This dear brother knew to judge not by outward appearance. He did not judge according to Saul's past. He knew to judge with righteous judgment.

I was asked to teach in this certain city and a brother said about me: "Well, I don't know about him. I don't agree with him on everything. I had a check about him in a certain area at one time." Another Christian looked at him and commented, "Brother, I've had several checks about you all along."

It is so easy to look for something negative. We go to meetings to see what we can find wrong with that brother or sister. "He's good in some ways, but...." Romans 14:4 asks, **"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."**

Concerning Christian brothers and sisters—all of them are another man's servant. They are servants of the Lord Jesus. And who am I to sit in judgment on them? They will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, so who am I to judge another man's servant?

In Romans 14:10 the question is asked, **"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?"** How frequently we are guilty of asking

others, "Did you hear that preacher? Is he all right?" Often the answer is, "Well ... I guess he's all right." This answer sets him at nought immediately.

A certain popular minister is very silly—acting in the pulpit.

I've wondered about him and once asked a very well-known teacher, "Brother so and so, what do you think about him?" The man looked at me and commented, "He is God's problem!"

This is correct, for the man does not have to stand and give an account to you or to me. The pastor, of course, must use wisdom and spiritual discernment in asking guest speakers to fill his pulpit.

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Romans 14:13).

There are some people we would rather not sit by in church. We wouldn't say it, but it is true. There are some people we prefer to avoid.

Jesus was free with everyone. He could sit down with the publican or with the magistrate. He could freely socialize with the greatest to the least.

We have to repent of judging the wrong way, because we have been yielding to the accuser. The only way we are going to overcome is by the blood and by the word of our testimony. We need to ask for the blood to cleanse us and then to confess the merits of Jesus' blood for our brother and sister. When Satan comes with: "Look at that brother; look at that sister," we should say, "they accept the blood of Jesus, and they are righteous because of the blood."

There are some who are weaker in the faith than

others, who have obvious spots in their garments; and we turn from them when we could minister to them and restore them. The Christian army is the only army that kicks its wounded.

In earthly wars when a soldier's fellow comrade is shot down, he will risk life and limb right out on the battlefield to pick up his friend and carry him to safety. But let the brother on the front line of spiritual battle drop his shield one way or the other, allowing a fiery dart to hit him, and often his brethren will run out to him and say, "Why did you let the devil do that to you?" and give him a sharp kick in his already-hurting side.

Let a man of God fall one way or the other, and, oh, you'll hear righteous indignation all over America pounding on that man. All the many years he may have served God, all the many trials and secret burdens he may have carried for the cause of Christ are forgotten. That one tragedy is remembered. Long after God's forgiven and forgotten it, people remember. We bite each other like cannibals.

"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Galatians 5:15). Don't judge, lest you be judged. Judge with the wrong kind of judgment, and it will come right back to you. In fact, that may be the only reason most of us want to stop judging the wrong way; we don't like being judged the wrong way!

Try the Spirits

What are you to judge when a prophet comes your way? Most people try his doctrine.

"Therefore knowing no man after the flesh." People knew Jesus of Nazareth by His appearance, by His

mannerisms, and by His physical traits for a few brief years. We know Him thus no more; we know Him in the Spirit. We don't know Him in the natural; we know Jesus by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. That is also how we are to know a brother or sister.

I was in an area and a pastor came to the meeting. After the meeting we went to eat and fellowship. Soon I found it was going to be a question-and-answer time. It wasn't a time for fellowship at all. It was a time for finding out what kind of doctrine I believed. I John 4:1-4 makes it very clear that we are not to try a person's doctrine. **"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but TRY THE SPIRITS whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world"** (verse 1). TRY THE SPIRIT. Don't judge after the natural, for no guest preacher is stupid enough to say, "I don't believe Jesus was born of a virgin."

A false teacher will have all the right answers at first, slowly introducing heresy as he gains the people's confidence. Jesus taught that outwardly a wolf appears to be a sheep. No, TRY THE SPIRITS, whether they be of God. You cannot very well do that unless you are in the right spirit yourself. **"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment"** (John 7:24).

If we are to be able to overcome the accuser when he accuses others to us, we must remember some good questions Paul gave us in Romans 14:10: **"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?"** If we say about a brother, "Well, he doesn't have much," we are setting him at nought.

A good principle to follow: **"Let us not therefore judge one another any more"** (verse 13). "Judge" means in this sense "to condemn." We *are* to judge in the sense of

evaluation, weighing those who labor among us. Paul said, "**He that is spiritual judgeth all things**" (I Corinthians 2:15). In a spiritual sense we *are* to weigh, but we are *not* to condemn with an evil eye.

If you have been guilty of judging, of letting the accuser of the brethren use you by whispering in your ear, overcome him by the blood of Jesus. Don't look for the bad in your brother or sister; look for the good.

When people come to me with a negative attitude, if I'm not walking in the Spirit; I will react negatively. But when people come with a positive attitude, "Brother, I believe Jesus Christ is in you" (II Corinthians 13:5), or "I came to see Jesus," they draw something good right out of me. It is so beautiful when people can get a word from the Lord.

I've been in meetings when whole crowds have been swayed by the accuser of the brethren because of the negative binding attitudes. Some have come looking only for the bad.

Sometimes we say, "I feel a check about him." We can feel that about any brother. There will always be something with which we don't agree, or with which we are not in harmony. So, instead of looking at that with which we don't agree, we must start looking for Jesus Christ in that person. We need to bring a good report about the brethren and say, "Brother, Jesus Christ is in you, the hope of glory; and I know that you have areas in your soul the Lord is working on and ironing out, but I'm believing to see Jesus Christ in you."

We are too quick to judge, saying, "Shape up or ship out." Let us not therefore judge one another any more. Judge a righteous judgment.

Believers are not to be in wrangling arguments. **Him**

that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" (Romans 14:1). **"... If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this to you"** (Philippians 3:15). Let us walk by the same rule; let's all walk in harmony, Paul is saying. Learn to yield not to the accuser of the brethren when he accuses the brothers to us.

Subtle voices also come to us; we have to learn how to deal with the accuser of the brethren who is a whisperer of lies. Let me give you an example:

I'm driving down the highway. Suddenly the thought comes to me: "You know, Brother so and so wasn't very responsive to you the last time you were there." (Maybe he didn't go out of his way to show kindness.) "You really ought to be careful about that man." Satan whispered that in my ear.

If I don't discern that that voice is coming from Satan and cast it down, what is going to happen? Satan is going to go to that brother miles away with: "You know, Brother Alsobrook really didn't have quite enough love toward you, did he?" When we come together the next time, a wall will exist between us. There will be a reserve. My brother-in-law, Jim Maloney, refers to these inward reservations as "heart measles."

No preacher has not had the accuser of the brethren work overtime on his behalf around other ministers, around other Christians, around other fellowships, and has not known what it is to go with every eye on him.

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more." This doesn't mean that we are not to evaluate others properly in the Spirit. The word "judge" in Romans 14:30 means in a sense of condemning our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to "judge" each other in the sense that we ascertain a need and minister to it (see Galatians 6:1-2).

Judge NOT According to Appearance

Two passages in Isaiah speak of how Jesus would judge and how He would not judge. To follow the example Jesus set forth is a wise principle.

Isaiah 42:19 records some strange words about the Servant Yahweh was going to send: **"Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?"** Is it not strange that the Lord's servant is to be blind? The Lord's messenger is to be deaf? Think of it: the messenger that God would send would be blind and deaf!

"Who is blind as he that is perfect." In verse 18 we read: **"Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see."** That is exactly what Jesus did. The deaf heard and the blind saw. Yet the Word says of Him that although He opened the ears of the deaf and opened the eyes of the blind, He is both blind and deaf. We know that this cannot be a blindness and a deafness concerning His physical eyes and ears for verse 20 reads: **"Seeing many things, but thou observest not [seeing many things but paying little regard to them]; opening the ears, but he heareth not."**

"He who is perfect is blind."

The prophecy stated of Jesus, "He who is sent by God is deaf." He opened the ears of the deaf and caused the blind to see, but He is blind and deaf. He sees many things but doesn't observe them. He opens the ears, but He hears not. This paradox is one of those holy riddles we sometimes find in the Word of God.

Let us see how He is blind.

Turn to Isaiah, chapter 11. The first few verses in this chapter deal with the first coming of Jesus, and the last several verses deal with the Second Coming. Verse one is

one of the messianic promises of Jesus, the Branch that would grow out of Jesse's root. Verse two reads, **"And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."** Here are seven spirits of God. John 3:36 states that Jesus had the Spirit without measure; this means not only in quantity but also in all operations.

- 1) The Spirit of the LORD (Yahweh—the Father) shall rest upon him.
- 2) The spirit of wisdom.
- 3) The spirit of understanding.
- 4) The spirit of counsel.
- 5) The spirit of might.
- 6) The spirit of knowledge.
- 7) The spirit of the fear of the Lord.

We read in the Book of Revelation (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6) of the seven spirits of God, or the sevenfold Holy Spirit.

Jesus had the Spirit of the Lord; the Dove rested upon Him so that He could heal the bruised and deliver the oppressed (Luke 4:18).

He had the spirit of wisdom and understanding so that He would know how to answer the questions of the scribes and the Pharisees.

He used the spirit of counsel and might in His prophetic ministry.

Later we'll see how He used the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

Isaiah 11:3, **"And shall make him of quick understanding (to perceive or to smell) in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes."**

(WHO IS BLIND BUT MY SERVANT? WHO IS BLIND AS HE THAT IS PERFECT?) How would Jesus be blind? **"He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes."** (Oh, yes, His physical eyes will be quite able to see, but He won't make decisions by what He sees.) How is He deaf? ***"Neither reprove after the hearing of his ears,"*** that is, He won't render a decision by what His ears hear. ***"But with righteousness shall he judge...."***

We have already mentioned that John's Gospel told how Jesus judged: **"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."** "Appearance" means don't judge after the sight of your eyes, but judge righteous judgment. Isaiah 11:3 and 4 fit in so beautifully with John 7:24.

"But with righteousness shall he judge (deliver) the poor."

The problem is that the accuser gets us to sit in judgment. We are guilty of this because we walk according to the appearance.

Let us take one more example from the Gospel of John which shows how Jesus practiced the fulfillment of the prophecies given in Isaiah.

Jesus' methods of judging are portrayed in John, chapter 2 and chapter 8. Isaiah clearly taught that the Messiah would not judge after the sight of His eyes nor reprove after the hearing of His ears, but with righteousness would He judge. A quick perception (scent), a quick knowing in the fear of the Lord.

John 2:23-24: **"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them because he knew all men."** This is strange indeed. He is at Jerusalem at the

passover on a feast day and has an outstanding meeting. Many people believe in Him when they see the miracles He does. (If He had had a magazine, it would have been the meeting of the month!) From the natural eye it appears to be an outstanding success. He is so wonderfully received. Many are believing—many seeing tremendous miracles—a great time, yet Jesus shows no elation over the meeting. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them." It must have seemed strange to His disciples. Jesus was not carried away with all of this because "he knew all men and needed not that any should testify of man: *for he knew what was in man.*" Jesus did not need anyone to tell Him what another person was like.

The narrative in John 2:25 ends the chapter, but no chapter division should occur there. The words following are actually an example of Jesus' knowing what was in man. **"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews...."** This man is really somebody. This is a teacher's teacher, a preacher's preacher. This is the elite of the spiritual hobnob of Jerusalem. And yet Jesus said, **"Nicodemus, you need to be born again."** Jesus knew what was in him. How did He know what was in man? Because the knowledge of the Lord was upon Him, the quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. He didn't judge by the sight of His eyes.

Jesus did not judge "after the hearing of his ears." Possibly some said of Nicodemus, "He's one of our most spiritual persons in all of Israel." But Jesus judged with righteousness. He saw the inward spirit of the man, and it was quite dead.

Another example is found in John, chapter 8, fulfilling the prophecy, **"He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears."**

"Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not.*" He doesn't make a decision by what His ears hear. He sees many things and pays no attention to them. "As though he heard them not." He opens deaf ears and yet doesn't hear with His own ears.

Some theologians, who are not as smart as they assume they are, purport the idea that this incident was a setup. According to this view the woman wasn't actually an adulteress, but an actress. The Pharisees were hoping to embarrass Christ by putting Him into a position where He would pass judgment for adultery on an innocent individual. The people would then know He was not a true prophet and His ministry would be permanently discredited. However, if one accepts the Word of God as his standard this woman surely was the adulteress the Pharisees said she was because Jesus exhorted her to **"sin no more"** (verse 11), after all her judges had left the scene.

The truth is the Pharisees showed their bigotry, hypocrisy, and partiality in that they only brought the woman, and not the man also. **"Master, she was taken in adultery, in the very act."** Well, what did they do with the man? They didn't bring him. Moses taught that both parties were to be stoned. Yet, these scribes and Pharisees brought only the woman.

Notice that Jesus was at the temple (verse 2), and many people were around Him. The people at the temple knew the law of Moses. These people were conditioned only by the Law. Jesus couldn't explain the soon-to-come new covenant and the grace of God. In fact, Jesus couldn't even explain grace and the new covenant to His closest disciples. He said in John 16:12, **"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."** Since all men were so firmly entrenched in the belief that one must be circumcised to be saved, it took the Holy Spirit ten years after Pentecost to teach them that a Gentile could be saved without that rite. Jesus, therefore, could not explain to these people the purpose for which He was sent. These people walked by the Word, and the Word then was only the Old Testament; and it said irrevocably that an adulterer and adulteress are to be stoned to death without mercy.

Jesus was sent by the Father not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17). He was sent not to reveal the law of God, but the grace of God (John 1:17). He was between a rock and a hard place. If He had said, "Don't stone her," then those present would have said, "This man is a false prophet, for it is written...." He would have been opposing the law of Moses and would have been in disrepute by the people. If Jesus had said, "Stone her," then He would have been compromising His conviction and thwarting the purpose of His mission; for the Father sent Him not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He didn't come to destroy, He came to save those which were lost (Luke 19:10). At one time when the disciples said to Him, "They won't receive You here, do You want us to command fire to come down?" He

answered, "You don't even know what spirit you are of."

"Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, AS THOUGH HE HEARD THEM NOT." I believe He was writing various Scriptures on the ground, about the Lord's mercy and love.

In verse 7 Jesus gave the perfect answer. **"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."** That is to say, "the sinner shall be stoned. *But the sinner must be stoned by sinless stone-throwers.*

That even sounded good according to the law of Moses. Now doesn't that make sense? If you are going to stone a sinner, you, as stone-throwers, should be sinless. In saying this, He doesn't refute the law of Moses, nor does He compromise His mission. The "spirit of wisdom and understanding" was upon Him.

The Pharisees were men who were not ready to admit their own sins. Usually they said in effect to Jesus, "We see, we are not blind. We are of God, You are of the devil," etc. But here Jesus did something. In verse 7 He said, "Sinless stone-throwers, stone the sinner," and **"again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst"** (verse 9).

"They went out one by one." Why didn't they all go out together? "Beginning at the eldest, even unto the last"—beginning with the oldest Pharisee and ending with the

youngest Pharisee.

He must have gotten the attention of the oldest Pharisee. Quite possibly when He stooped down and wrote in the sand in classical Hebrew, so that no one standing around could read it but the educated Pharisee, He wrote His chief, most grievous sin. And being convicted by what he had heard—"he that is without sin let him cast the first stone"—and being convicted by what he saw—his own pet sin, his greatest failure before God—he was convicted by his own conscience and went out first.

Then Jesus looked at the next in line. He's the next super righteous. He's the one who, if asked, "Are you righteous?" would reply, "Oh, am I righteous! I fast twice a week, I give tithes of everything I own." Jesus caught his attention and wrote his sin on the ground. Being convicted by what he had heard and by what he had read, he went out also. Perhaps Jesus wrote the name of someone that Pharisee had sinned against. Only that Pharisee understood what the name "Micah" meant as the strange prophet wrote it in the earth.

Those now leaving were the same men who were dragging the woman through the street a short time before, they who would not relax their grip on her wrists as they hauled her before Jesus. Jesus kept on writing on the ground until they all left. They went out one by one, beginning with the oldest to the youngest. What He wrote—every man knew He had no way of knowing—was revealed to Him by God. He couldn't condone sin, but the sin within their hearts was as great as the sin within her acts, and if one should be stoned, all should be stoned. Jesus didn't need any man to tell Him what a person was like, for He knows what is in man. He doesn't judge according to the appearance, He judges righteous

judgment.

Then **"when Jesus lifted himself up, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more"** (verses 10-11).

"Where are those thine accusers?" We become accusers, instruments of the accuser of the brethren, whenever we judge after the flesh. We know man after the flesh instead of knowing him by the Spirit. Jesus did not know a person after the flesh; He knew a person by the Spirit.

In II Corinthians 5:16 Paul spoke to the Corinthian church, who were guilty of glorying in appearance and not in heart. They were guilty of thinking they were the super church with super apostles that would come through. They were super-duper wonder workers. They gloried in man. Paul said, **"Your glorying is not good."** They might have said, "Have you been in so and so's meeting?" "Have you heard this man?" Then to other ministers who were truly ministers of God, they might have paid little regard. Even of Paul himself they said, "He writes pretty good letters, but his personal presence is weak. He is unimpressive. He's not even a good speaker."

In response Paul said, **"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."** That's why there are no original paintings of Christ today. God knew we would copy after the flesh; whereas He wants to form Christ within our souls. All the things we know about Jesus today are what we've learned about Him by the Spirit and the Word. Paul taught us that in the very same way that we know Jesus, by the Spirit, we are to know every man among us.

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

The attitude many Christians seem to have is: "Am I my brother's keeper?" This is the Cain spirit and a wrong attitude. It robs. We are not to look only after ourselves, but we are to look after our brother also. We are to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. If a brother is not an overcomer, are we to kick him? That is what the accuser wants us to do. If the brother stumbles in some outward sin, we find many Saints who will kick him.

There is a way to identify a fault in a brother or sister which is not in a sense of condemnation. In Zechariah 3, the angel of the Lord said to Joshua that if he would keep God's ways, he would deliver His house. **"If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge [deliver] my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by"** (3:7). The Lord wants us to DELIVER His house. He wants us to be able to judge with righteous judgment. He that is spiritual judges all things (I Corinthians 2:15). We are to judge without a sense of condemnation or retaliation. We are to judge on a one-to-one basis. If our brother trespasses against us, are we first to call our best Christian friend and tell all about it? No. We are first to go to the trespasser and tell the fault to the trespasser ALONE (Matthew 18). This is the correct way. This keeps the slanderer from accusing the body of Christ.

God grant that when a brother or sister resists you in a particular truth, you won't let the accuser of the brethren build within you a wall of defensiveness against him or her.

Three things greatly hinder the power of God in the church. They grieve Christ and quench the moving of His healing power. These hindrances are given in Isaiah 58:6-9.

Israel asked, "Why have we fasted and Thou seest not?" God then gives three reasons why they were not receiving the healing power: 1) the yoke of not letting the oppressed go free (legalism); 2) putting forth of the finger (criticism, faultfinding); and 3) speaking vanities (insincerity in speech). All of these hindrances are the influence of the accuser.

The third hindrance mentioned is "speaking vanities," or insincere speech, or speaking words that we don't mean. Put these away and then "shall your healing break forth speedily, and your light shall come quickly."

Sadly, we are quick to judge the wrong way, and slow to judge the right way. A right way to judge does exist. Matthew 7:1 tells us in these very familiar words: **"Judge not, that ye be not judged."** Sometimes the Word says, "don't judge," and sometimes it says "judge." This is not a contradiction, but a contradistinction. Note Paul's admonition in I Corinthians 2:15: **"But he that is spiritual judgeth [discerns] ALL THINGS, yet he himself is judged of no man."** That is, he weighs all things, he judges all things. Note also the wording: **"HE THAT IS SPIRITUAL judges all things."**

There are shades of meaning in the word "judge." One of the most common meanings is "to deliver." All the judges that God raised up in the Old Testament were literally "the deliverers."

Believers are to "judge" or "deliver" a brother or sister. In Matthew 7:1 the meaning here is that we are not to sit in judgment, but we are to deliver. The wrong way to judge would be to sit in judgment. There will come a time when we will sit in judgment, we will even judge the angels, but until that time we judge no one. We are not to sit in judgment before the time (see I Corinthians 4:5).

The Matthew 7 Scripture is usually read only through verse 4: **"Judge not, that ye be not judged ... and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote [a sliver] that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam [the pole] that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye?"** The sad thing is that we often stop here when we read this Scripture. We need to read verse 5. If we don't, we will think God does not want us to behold a fault in a brother. In fact, if we even mention in the right spirit that a particular brother may need prayer about something, someone may be quick to say, "Judge not!"

If we don't read the total context of these verses, we are left with the misconception that it is wrong to ever evaluate another person, that it is out of order to ever weigh them; because as surely as we find a mote in his eye, we will have a beam in our eye. Therefore, we could conclude that we are not ever to be concerned about our brother's splinter in his eye. We may think we are doing our brother a service by ignoring the sliver in his eye.

Jesus teaches us the proper way to judge. **"Thou hypocrite [play actor], FIRST cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and THEN shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye"** (verse 5). This passage was opened to me in the following event.

I had been preaching in a small church in Texas. Some carpentry had been going on in the back of the building, and a brother got something in his eye. It was so painful to him. It was only a small splinter, but it felt like a huge rock. People tried to help and he'd say, "Oh, no, don't bother me. Just leave me alone." It was a natural reaction because of the pain.

I ran to him and pulled out my hankie and said, "Brother, let me help you."

"No, no!"

"Yes, let me help you," I spoke with authority because that splinter needed to be removed. I opened his eye, and there it was. The splinter wasn't large, but it was dangerous to be in his eye. I couldn't see it too clearly. I was concerned about what might happen if I accidentally pushed it in deeper. We brought him under the light, and I then could see the splinter clearly. It stuck to the hankie, and I pulled it away. He was so relieved. He grabbed and hugged me, saying, "Thanks!" While the splinter was in his eye, he didn't want me to bother with it, but when it was out he was very grateful.

Now you are doing your brother a disservice if he is overtaken in a fault, and you do not restore him. His spiritual eyesight will be impaired if the sliver in his eye is not removed. But if you don't deal with the "timber of self" in your own life, you won't be able to see clearly to remove the speck. In fact, you may even impair his eyesight and cause spiritual damage because you will push that splinter further into the eye.

In order to see clearly we must be able to judge with righteous judgment, which we can do after we've first judged ourselves. This is what Paul said in Galatians 6:1: **"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself (as Jesus said, "first cast the beam out of your own eye"), lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."** JESUS WANTS US TO TAKE THE MOTE OUT OF OUR BROTHER'S EYE. But He doesn't want us to sit in judgment, or we'll only grind the splinter into the eye.

Judge Not... But Judge

There is a way we are NEVER to judge, and there is a way we are ALWAYS to judge. He that is spiritual judges ALL THINGS (I Corinthians 2:15). We are always to judge that way. That is why Paul said, **"You which are spiritual restore such an one."** For only those who are spiritual are able to judge the right way. John 7:24 tells us, **"JUDGE NOT according to the appearance, BUT JUDGE righteous judgment."** This is out of the Master's mouth. There is no discrepancy or contradiction here.

In II Corinthians 5:12, Paul was rebuking those who gloried in appearance and not in heart. We often think, *carnal Christians like the Corinthians would glory in appearance, but no spiritual man of God could fall into such a mistake.*

Let us look in I Samuel. Now here is a spiritual man, Samuel. This man had heard God's voice since childhood. He had received the revelation of God since his childhood. He had judged Israel for forty years, and no record of disobedience or rebellion against God exists in all of Samuel's life. He was a very godly man.

King Saul had been deposed in God's eyes (I Samuel 16). He was still king but God had refused him. The Lord sent Samuel to the house of Jesse to choose Saul's successor from Jesse's sons. Samuel went; they offered sacrifice; and then Samuel said, "Jesse, get all of your boys together" (verse 5). Seven of his sons were present. He had eight sons, but he didn't bother to get the youngest. One of the older sons perhaps would be a successor to King Saul but surely not the youngest.

They had been worshipping God, offering sacrifices. The prophet Samuel should be "in the Spirit." **"And it**

came to pass, when they were come, that he [Samuel] looked on Eliab [the oldest son], and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him." This was Samuel's decision. *This is the successor for King Saul. This is the next king of Israel. The Lord's anointed.*

"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him." Even godly people can still judge after the appearance—the way we are NEVER to judge. Even godly Samuel, when he looked at Eliab, who was so handsome and strong to look upon, said, "Surely this is the successor for King Saul. This is the Lord's anointed before Him."

God had to rebuke experienced Samuel. "Don't look on his countenance, nor his stature, I refused him. For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (paraphrased).

This, too, is how the accuser comes in. I'm not referring only to the physical appearance of a man, but also to the way a situation can appear. You may hear a story about some minister; the way it appears, you should just jump all over him, but you don't know the full story. You need to pray for God to give you the ability to discern and see what the motives and intents were. Because, while God sees our outward actions, *He weighs our actions* by our attitude. He judges our methods by our motives. God begins His inspection in the heart. **"... For the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed"** (I Samuel 2:3).

None of the seven sons of Jesse was chosen by the Lord. **"And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children?"** None of these was Saul's successor.

Jesse replied, **"There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep."** So the youngster was called for.

Along came David. He was ruddy in complexion, and somewhat good to look upon. This was the Lord's anointed. God had to point out to Samuel not to judge by outward appearance. Even a very mature man of God can miss it by judging according to his eyes or his ears. Pray with me:

"Lord, teach us to overcome fault-finding, grudging, repeating hearsay; and even if we are repeating what is true, teach us not to repeat it unless it will do good for the Kingdom.

"Lord, teach us to practice Philippians 4:8: 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'

"I repent of repeating hearsay.

"I repent of gossiping.

"I repent of judgmentalism, faultfinding, and criticism.

"I repent of every way that I have yielded to Satan to use me to sow discord among the brethren. I will no longer tear down my brother or my sister with my tongue. I purpose that the adder's poison will not be in my lips.

"I ask forgiveness where I have judged with carnal judgment.

"I ask forgiveness for judging men after the flesh, for glorying after the outward appearance.

"I ask for the ability to judge a righteous judgment, that I will not need any man to testify about a man; that I will have true discernment and know what is in man; that I will judge the

heart attitude and only in the sense to deliver Your house, for You alone are their judge; that I shall not judge by the sight of my eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of my ears; that my eyes be blind and my ears deaf concerning outward judgment; that I will judge after the Spirit, and walk in love to the upbuilding of the body of Christ; that I will never again be a tool of the accuser of the brethren.

"Thank You, Lord."

Chapter 4

Overcoming Satan When He Accuses Me to Myself

Conviction and Condemnation

Matthew 18:18 is a well-known verse. **"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."** The Greek verb tenses are the reverse of the English tenses in the King James Version. A more accurate reading is: *Whatsoever you bind on earth has been bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth has already been loosed in heaven, or by heaven.* Let us look at this verse in the light of overcoming the accuser.

The accuser is overcome in heaven whenever he assaults God's people. We can overcome him here on earth because he has already been overcome in heaven. We can bind the accuser when he comes to us with condemnation, with inferiority, or with anything else. We can overcome him on earth because he has been overcome in heaven. We can loose ourselves from the accuser's influence here on earth because we have already been loosed by heaven.

We are to overcome the accuser when he accuses us to ourselves. We need to know the difference between conviction and condemnation. Romans 8:1 reminds us, **"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."**

As long as you abide in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation. There is CONVICTION, but there is no CONDEMNATION. An illustration follows. When Joshua the high priest was clothed with filthy garments, Satan resisted and accused him (as discussed in chapter 2). The angel of the Lord overcame the devil's condemnation in Joshua's behalf; but after He cleansed him and put a new change of garments upon him and a fair crown on his head, then the angel of the Lord protested to Joshua concerning his responsibilities. That is the picture of CONVICTION.

There are very definite CONVICTIONS for those who are in Christ Jesus. There is no CONDEMNATION to those who abide in Christ.

I am not under CONDEMNATION. I have passed from death to life. I shall not see condemnatory judgment so long as I abide in Christ.

Conviction can make you quite miserable; the chastening of the Lord can be a truly sobering thing.

Condemnation hinders you from approaching God, whereas conviction will cause you to flee to Him.

Condemnation can hinder your fellowship with God, whereas conviction will actually aid you in walking with Him.

Condemnation looks at your failures as grounds for your having no rights to the fellowship of God, whereas conviction looks at your failures and sins as hindrances to your fellowship with God. Conviction teaches removal of those sins and will greatly aid you in your fellowship with the Father.

Many of God's people are experiencing the condemnation of the accuser of the brethren. They are

being accused by the tormentor and are mistaking it for the conviction of the Comforter. There are vast differences between condemnation and conviction.

How can I ascertain whether or not I am being convicted by the Lord or condemned by the devil? One great difference is: CONDEMNATION is a general, all-around putting-down of the child of God. It comes to you in a general sense. "You are just generally a poor Christian. You don't pray enough, read the Word enough, fast enough, or witness enough. You don't have enough love. You don't have enough joy. You don't have enough peace. Look at you, see how those around you do so much better in their walk with God!"

I've prayed for people and asked them, "What's the problem?"

"I don't know, I'm just bad all over."

This is what condemnation does: it is an accusation implying that you are just an all-around good-for-nothing; you are the sorriest Christian that ever took the name of Jesus. "Who are you to raise your hands, and who are you to prophesy when there are other people more spiritual and closer to God than you?" "Who do you think you are to be used of God?" That is the voice of the accuser.

CONVICTION is very specific.

To follow this line of thought, go to the Old Testament to Psalm 139:23-24: **"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."** I appreciate my background and what I was taught, but I was under such condemnation, as were most of the people around me. One of our first steps in seeking revival was to gather around the altar. The evangelist would exhort us to "search our hearts." When we

desperately want to serve the Lord, we tend to look inward; but the inward look is not always the right one.

When you "search your heart" you will find all kinds of things that will burden you, weigh you down, and bring you low. In fact, you will just want to quit praying. You will get to the point of saying, "It's impossible. I'll never be what God wants me to be if that is the way it is." You will throw in the towel.

This was brought to me so forcefully one day when I was reading this Psalm. I realized I had been doing the Holy Spirit's job. In my early Christian life one of the things I would do at the close of the day was endeavor to check where I might have failed God. I would go over the conversations of the day and question, "Did I really operate in love towards those people?" And the devil would say, "No, you really didn't. You didn't have nearly the love you should have had toward that brother. You didn't say what you should have said to that sister," etc.

Then the Lord reproved me with, "How dare you take My place? You are doing My job. It is My job to keep you in line."

When the shepherd is tending a flock of sheep, whose job is it to keep the sheep in line? The Lord is my shepherd and His rod and His staff comfort me. When I go a bit crooked, He puts His rod over and gently nudges me back in line. He puts it around my neck, but He doesn't jerk my neck out of place. The psalmist David didn't say, "Thy rod and Thy staff they torment me." My Shepherd gently takes me and by His Word and by His Holy Spirit instructs me in the way that I should go.

David said, **"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."**

That is to say, "God, YOU do the searching. YOU do the looking. YOU see if there is any wicked way in me."

Now when I come to the close of the day, I'm learning to just open myself up to the Spirit of the Lord, "Lord, You search me, You know me. I'm going to leave all the searching up to You." This then opens my soul for divine correction, for the Holy Spirit is faithful. When I have stepped out of bounds, it is clear; and when I confess that, no sense of guilt comes, just peace and cleansing. And I'm growing closer to the Lord rather than hanging my head. I've turned the searching over to Him.

Jeremiah 17:10 tells us, **"I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins."** We tend to become too inward in our Christian experience. We are like the land of Canaan, which is a land of many giants, many walls, many cities. Thirteen years ago when I was saved, I thought that all the old things had passed away and that all things had become new. I thought that was meant for my spirit, soul, and body and didn't realize that it was just in the spiritual realm (II Corinthians 5:17). Then when something bad came up in my soulish realm, I thought that I needed to be born again all over again. What I needed was deliverance and sanctification. I praise God that He did not answer my request to reveal to me, immediately and entirely, everything in my soulish nature that was needing cleansing and correction.

One evening I got before the Lord and said, "Lord, I have two or three hours that I'm going to give to You. Will You please tell me anything that is wrong with my life, and let's get rid of it right now." It must be because of our American way of life that we want "instant everything."

A lady came to me for prayer. "I want everything the Lord has for me, right now!" "Sister," I said, "I can't pray

for you."

"Why not? I want it all. If there is anything wrong, I want to get rid of it right now." I knew where she was coming from. Instant coffee, instant potatoes. Instant ... instant. We want instant perfection.

It takes many years to grow a tree. It took many years to conquer and possess the land of Canaan. God said, "I didn't give you all the land of Canaan at one time, **'Thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee'**" (Deuteronomy 7:22). We have to learn how to go in and *conquer* and then *reign*, and then to go in and *conquer* something else and *reign*. You don't just go in and conquer, for you have to learn how to reign over each area that you conquer; otherwise the wild beasts will come again. The Lord said to CONQUER and then REIGN. Don't permit the enemy to point out other walled cities in your life and sidetrack you from REIGNING over one area where God has given you deliverance and victory.

The Holy Spirit convicts in specific areas in which He wants to deal. The time that I asked the Lord to show me everything that was wrong in my life and to take care of that night, He did show me one particular area of fault in my life. I stayed with Him several hours dealing with it, and when the time was over, the area still wasn't completely gone. The Lord said, "Don't be impatient. I never get in a hurry. I take just as long as I need to do a work in you. Just rest in Me. Let Me do My work in you."

Many times I see Spirit-baptized Christians who open themselves to the accuser because they are just rushing right in with: "I want everything God has for me right now; I want to overcome everything." If they have one

little area in their life that doesn't match up, they run for deliverance. We tend to look at deliverance as a means to instant, total perfection. It is not. It is just getting rid of a few giants.

There will be more giants later.

"I want to get rid of anything else that I have so I won't have any more demonic problems," a lady said to me. I understood her plight. I said, "Sister, praise the Lord, there are things in your life that would make you feel just like giving up if God were to reveal their enormity." God is gracious.

At one point, I thought I was entirely clean; then God showed me terrible pollution. "Oh God, I didn't know that was there!" But He knew it all along, and in His merciful kindness He showed me just enough for the two of us to learn how to conquer and reign over one city at a time. City by city, stronghold by stronghold, here a little, and there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept. Stone upon stone.

Condemnation = Guilt – Conviction = Peace

A second difference between condemnation and conviction is this. When Satan condemns you and you yield to that voice and you confess it to God (for you think it is the Holy Spirit, and you think the Lord is convicting you of something), rather than experiencing relief and peace over what you have confessed, you experience guilt. And more voices begin to speak to you: "You really shouldn't have done that." "You really did that," and you reply, "I know, I know." A vicious cycle begins of confessing that sin over and over, over and over. With each confession of it, you get deeper and deeper into condemnation. Rather than coming out of guilt into peace,

you get laden with more and more guilt.

When the enemy is condemning you and you are tricked into confessing something over and over to God, you are actually sinning. That is the reason you become more and more laden with guilt. You are calling God a liar. You may be sincere and very well-meaning, but Satan has taken introspection and twisted it, and he has you operating in unbelief. Romans 14:23 tells us, **"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."** By repeatedly confessing a sin, you are telling God something He doesn't know. He forgets when He forgives. Since you are not operating out of faith, the confession is a sin, and hence the guilt keeps coming back.

During conviction by the Holy Spirit that true voice doesn't go away. David said, **"When I kept silence [about my sin], my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long"** (Psalm 32:3). God's voice didn't go away. It was persistent, very specific. When sin is confessed, God changes the drought into the moisture of the rain. In other words, great peace and great relief and release come when the yielding is to the true conviction of the Holy Spirit. That "still small voice" will be known for it does not come with condemning undertones. It comes in a yearning, beseeching tone with, **"Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways"** (Ezekiel 33:11). That is the gracious voice of conviction.

We should praise God for this convicting power in our lives. It is this power that corrects us. God is correcting us when we're beginning to go to the right or to the left. We need to stay on the straight and narrow. If we begin to veer, this gentle voice is heard. The Scripture says, **"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it"** (Isaiah 30:21).

Condemnation = Burden – Conviction = Cleansing

A third difference: when Satan condemns the child of God, he does so to rob him of his effectiveness; he does so to kill, to destroy, to burden. When the Holy Spirit convicts, He does so to cleanse, to release, to deliver and to set free.

There is a vast difference in the purpose of conviction and of condemnation.

I was praying because Satan was continually bringing up my past failures. They would fill me with such regret, with such a sense of shame and remorsefulness. I thought it was good to feel that way, a sign of my repentance. But it was filling me with condemnation, and I was losing faith for God to meet my needs. I did not realize it was the voice of the accuser.

"You remember the time you failed God?" Satan would taunt.

"Remember the time you did that to that brother?"

"What about the time you lost your temper?"

"Do you remember the time you yielded to that spirit?"

When these accusations came, I would say, "Yes," and he'd lay it on me. Talk about a burden! A burden of condemnation was upon me.

As I continued praying, the Lord said, "You have yet to realize that when you confess the sin to Me, I not only cleanse and change you, but also I deal with that sin and change it. I so change that sin that Satan can never point to it again because it has been dealt with and destroyed." In the Old Testament the sin offering was burned and reduced to ashes. God said, "That's all that is left of your

sin." When as a Christian we accept the atoning blood, confess a sin and repent of it, then in the sight of God that sin is no longer; it is reduced to ashes.

When Satan says, "Look at that sin," we can answer, "All I see is a heap of ashes."

"Don't you remember when you did this or that?"

"No, all I can see is a heap of ashes!" My sin is reduced to ashes!

Ways in Which God Deals With Our Sin

It was easy to say, "Before I got saved, I did this and that." I'd be talking about the most horrible sin and feel no condemnation whatever because all that happened before I got saved. Then some little things that were sins, would bother me continually after I got saved. It was easy to forgive myself for the things I did BEFORE I was saved, but it was so much harder for me to learn to accept God's forgiveness for the things I did AFTER I received Christ.

Many Christians today are looking for an easy way, looking for an excuse to continue to entertain the fleshly life. The message of holiness, which a lukewarm church needs to hear, ought to be preached often. But I am addressing these remarks to people who are sincerely wanting to serve the Lord. They are aware that there are areas in their lives that they have not overcome.

Perhaps you are one of the individuals reading this book whose greatest need is comfort. **"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.... Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem"** (Isaiah 40:1-2). If you are endeavoring to serve the Lord, and Satan brings to you little and big things, pointing them out to you after you have repented, haranguing you, I want to comfort you with these words.

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for MINE OWN SAKE, and WILL NOT remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25). That is to say, *it is none of your goodness that will effect your forgiveness, but it is I, even I, just because I am who I am.* In showing us His reason for forgiving us, God bases His forgiveness on the merit of His goodness alone. Just because He is who He is, God said, "I blot out thy transgression." For whose sake? Not for our sake, but for HIS SAKE. Remember David's famous line: **"He restoreth my soul for HIS NAME'S SAKE"**? God does it for His honor. He blots out our transgressions for HIS OWN SAKE. *I have called you by My name, you are Mine, and I'm blotting out your transgression for My honor.* It was this very concept that helped me overcome condemnation. His Holy Spirit continued to tell me, *I came to you by My free grace. I cleansed you and robed you in My righteousness. I did that for you when you were lost and undone, how much more will I do it for you now that I've called you by My name!*

That is why David, when he was blessing the Lord, said, **"Bless the Lord, O my soul... who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases"** (Psalm 103:2-3). The Lord heals all the diseases of the soul. He forgives all the iniquities of the soul. The transgression itself is blotted out, and the blotting out substance, praise God, is the precious blood.

We overcome the accuser by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. We confess the merits of Jesus' blood right back in the face of Satan when he comes to condemn us. We say, "Praise God, it is written; my transgressions are blotted out." God has blotted out that sin. Not only has He cleansed and purged me, but that sin isn't what it used to be—it has been blotted out.

In Isaiah 44:22 we read some examples in nature to help us see what God does to our sins. The first to consider is that of a FOG.

"I have blotted out, AS A THICK CLOUD, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me." That's *conviction*. That is the beauty of the Lord—no matter how we transgress or how we fail God, inwardly or outwardly, iniquity or outward transgression. God's call to us is always: RETURN TO ME. RETURN TO ME. *Condemnation*: the voice of the accuser says, "You are not worthy to go to God. Look what you've done," but, God said, "Forget about those transgressions. I have blotted them out. Keep coming to Me. Just keep returning to Me."

When we were first married, my wife and I would have a little spat during the adjustment period. When we first had problems, I'd go to someone and ask, "How long does this adjustment period last?"

"Oh," they would say, "the FIRST year is the hardest."

After we got through the first year, we were still having some of these difficulties, inadequacies, etc.

"Well," people would tell us, "It's the first THREE YEARS."

I went to someone the other day and they said, "The first FIVE years of marriage are really the adjusting time, the molding time."

If it is the first year—it is the first year; if it is the third year—it is the first three years, and if it is the fifth year—it is always the first five years. Then I look at people who have been married many years, and they, too, are still adjusting!

People have a tendency to look at Dianne and me and see how we are loving and worshipping the Lord and say,

"Oh, you are so beautiful."

I had a young brother come to me saying, "When I see you and your wife, I just pray God will give me a helpmate, such a wonderful wife."

I said, "Brother, He will, and it is glorious, glorious, glorious!"

It was hard for me whenever we'd have a little argument, to go to a service and lift my hands in the worship of God. Yet, here was Dianne so freely getting into the worship. I'd look at her and think: "Well, who are you to be worshipping the Lord like that?"

We must learn to overcome things because that is why the Lord said: RETURN TO ME. When you do have a transgression or failure, RETURN TO ME! That is what Dianne was doing: she was always returning to the Lord. I was always standing afar off, hanging my head. "Who am I to come to you, Lord? Your Word says live at peace one with another and I haven't done it." I was in condemnation.

The Lord said, "View your transgression after you give it to Me as you would something that was on the other side of a thick fog, a thick cloud." Well, I've started doing that and it is quite hard to see through a fog!

Yet Satan will tap us on the shoulder and say, "Hey, can you see way back there through that fog?" "Well ... yes." And we gaze right back, trying to lift that fog that God said to forget.

In Isaiah 43:25 God shows us another aspect of forgiveness. He chooses to forgive our sins, then tells us, **"Thou shalt not be forgotten"** (Isaiah 44:21). God deals with us as with children. He willingly forgives our sins. When He forgives He forgets our sins, but still remembers

us. That is the grace of God. It is not so much that God cannot recall our sins, but that He has willingly chosen to forget them forever (Hebrews 10:15-17).

Many of us have been taught that according to the new covenant, God will forgive you; but He is still going to reward you after your iniquities. Psalm 103:10 specifically tells us, **"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."** God does *not* reward us according to our iniquities. (Iniquities are the sins within us—the inward sins.)

God gives us another example in nature that will help us to realize how great His forgiveness is toward His children. This Scripture is found in Psalm 103:12. **"AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."**

The Holy Spirit said something here that undoubtedly David did not know when he wrote these words, that is, east and west are an immeasurable distance one from another, whereas north and south are a measurable distance. The Holy Spirit said "east and west." Picture your hand as the globe of the earth. There is a North and a South Pole, and an equator. If I say I am going to go south, after I cross the South Pole and come up on the other side of my hand, then what direction am I going? North. When I cross the North Pole the same thing happens, from there on I'm going south. The poles determine that. Had David been speaking from his own mind, it would have been easy for him to say, "As far as the north is from the south, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." But the Holy Spirit knew that north and south do meet at the poles, but east and west do not. You can go north only halfway around the world. You can go south only halfway around the world. But you can go east all the way around the world and when you get back to where you began, you

are still going east. You can go west all the way around the world; so long as you don't change your course, you are still going west. So, **"as far as the east is from the west"** — an immeasurable distance — **"so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."** Not our transgressions *from God*, but our transgressions *from us*. My sins are an immeasurable distance from me!

When I confess sin and repent of it, how dare I let Satan even bring to me the remembrance of that sin, for that sin is as far from me as the east is from the west!

In Micah 7:18-19 we are given another comparison of God's forgiveness to help us realize we can be overcomers.

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA."

In Micah's day they did not have submarines; they could only go a few feet under the surface of the ocean. Even in our day, the measurement of ocean depths has been changed a number of times.

Not too far under the ocean surface, light disappears, and it is very dark. Mile after mile it is dark, dark, dark.

The next time the devil says, "Look at your past," you can tell him, "I can't see; it is eight miles deep. It is too far down for me." Don't endeavor to gaze into your regrettable past. Don't try to gaze at your former sins. They are in the depths of the sea. So we overcome Satan with the Word of God.

In Isaiah 38 we find another picture of what God does with our sins. When King Hezekiah was approached by

Isaiah with the words, **"Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live,"** the king turned his face toward the wall and began to pray to the Lord. The Lord speaks to the prophet Isaiah and again sends him to King Hezekiah with another message: "Go back and tell him that he will have fifteen years added to his life."

Hezekiah praised God for the answer of extended life and wrote a short psalm of praise for his deliverance. Notice what he said about his sins:

"Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back."

The picture here is God taking a sin and slinging it behind His back with the same mighty arm that flung the planets and stars across the sky. With that same outstretched hand, that mighty hand of deliverance, God has taken all our sins and flung them behind His back.

"Well," you ask, "what is so significant about His flinging my sins behind His back?"

Numbers 23:19: **"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"** To repent means to look in the other direction. God takes my sins and flings them, or casts them behind His back never to look upon them ever again! He is never going to turn around and look at them. They are behind His back, not before His face.

I don't have to argue with Satan, and I don't have to please him. When he comes with "You are a dirty, most rotten Christian," I don't have to say, "But ... but ... but...." Let him think what he wishes. I'll never have to give an account to him. I do not have to please him. I do not have

to answer to him. I can be completely silent to his accusations. I confess the merits of Jesus' blood because it is Christ who died, and I'll appear before His judgment seat. It is God who gave Jesus for me, and I'll give an account of myself to God and to Him alone.

When I realize what God does to sin, how He blots it out, removes it from me as far as the east is from the west, plunges it into the depths of the sea, and flings it behind His back, then I should never ever again let the adversary whisper condemnation in my ear over some regrettable thing that I have repented of. Instead, I should look to the merit of Jesus and overcome the accuser by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of my testimony.

Divorce and Remarriage

Sometimes situations occur in people's lives that they cannot change, situations like divorce and remarriage. I meet many Christians who are under condemnation over a mistake they made in the past which is now impossible to correct.

The Bible does not give us many grounds for divorce. I find only two legitimate reasons in the New Testament: adultery and desertion. The adultery has to be a repeated event and not a single act. God requires of you to forgive from your heart that unfaithful partner if he or she sincerely confesses, and then to forget the adultery. (If the adulterers continued on in adultery, according to the law, they were to be stoned to death.) Desertion is named in I Corinthians 7:15: **"If the unbelieving depart, let him depart"** (if he deserts the Christian partner). **"...A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace."**

As we travel we meet many who have not had

sufficient grounds for divorce, and yet they are now divorced and remarried. Some segments of the church absolutely close any area of responsibility to those in second marriages, even such responsibilities as serving as janitor or cutting the grass. These same governmental structures, however, will accept the tithes and offerings of such "second-class Christians." They can come sit in the pew, but they cannot serve God within that framework. And these groups feel justified in what they are doing!

Some people come to me asking, "What about this?"

Satan uses this tactic continually. In some cases unfaithfulness (a Scriptural ground for divorce) took place on the part of the Christian! The unfaithfulness is sometimes a cause of the divorce, or sometimes because of pressures that are not apparent. In some instances the whole prior failure occurred before Jesus came into the picture, and sometimes the parties, or one of them is a Christian at the time of the dissolution. Some people point to the book of Ezra, chapter 9, and say that the only solution is for the husband and wife to separate, even though this would cause great pain. Some teach that all unsaved people are in marriages unrecognized by God. I have sought the Lord for answers on this subject, and I believe He has given me a word.

I cannot accept the ever-popular view that heathen marriages are not joined by God. King Herod, who was by no means a righteous person, heard from John the Baptist, **"It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife"** (Mark 6:18), so God does recognize the marriages of those who are unsaved. God recognized the adultery that Herod was in with the wife of his brother Philip.

We are far too lenient on the subject of divorce and remarriage. When you see preachers leave their wives for

their secretaries, it needs to be severely and publicly denounced. I presently know several ministers who have sought divorce in recent months and very quickly have remarried. In my opinion, they have, in several cases, sinned greatly against God. I am not condoning such action. If I were a pastor I would not have such a man in my pulpit.

I am not addressing the problem of those who, as Christians, divorce each other and marry other partners on the flimsy grounds of "incompatibility." That is unscriptural nonsense.

I am primarily speaking to those who, *before* they were enlightened, entangled themselves in marital difficulties and now find themselves willing and eager to serve God, but bound by feelings of hopeless despair over their past. For example, one divorced man and divorced woman met and later married and had a child. They later were baptized in the Spirit and subsequently came under the teaching that God wanted them to separate. They were greatly bothered by the condemnation that was upon them.

Let us look to the Word to see what God says about it. In II Kings, chapter 5, is the story of Naaman. It has nothing to do with divorce or remarriage. It has to do with idolatry. Naaman, captain of the Syrian army, was a leper who had gone to all the physicians in the land of Syria. He said, "I need help." His maid said, "**A prophet lives in Israel. Go, let him pray for you, and you'll get healed of that leprosy.**" (Leprosy was a fatal disease.) He went to the land of Israel, but Elisha, the prophet, didn't even go out to meet him.

Naaman had heard of this prophet and had it all worked out in his mind. "I thought he would surely come

to meet me, strike over the place and decree saying, 'Your leprosy is gone.' I thought it was going to be like the snap of a finger. Instead he didn't even come out to meet me. He sent a messenger with the instructions: 'Go dip in the River Jordan seven times.' " He did, and his flesh came back again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean (II Kings 5:14). AND THE HEART OF NAAMAN was changed.

Naaman had been an idolater. None of his Syrian gods had been able to remove the leprosy. But Yahweh, the God of Israel, was able to cleanse his flesh. Naaman was filled with tremendous praise unto God. So much so that he converted to Hebraism in his heart. "And he turned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant."

Elisha answered, "As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none." Naaman urged him to take it; but Elisha refused. Elisha wanted Naaman to realize that he could not pay for the blessing of God, that it was a grace provision of God, and that he had not earned it in any way.

"And Naaman said, shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD" (verse 17). Naaman was converted to the true God. He changed his religion. He would no longer go back to his king in the land of Syria and offer a sacrifice to any idol. He was saying, in essence, "I am never again going to offer any sacrifice to any idol. I am through with idolatry. I want to serve the Lord GOD. Would it be all right with Him if I take two mules' burden of earth from the land of Israel? I

want the dirt of Israel. I'm going to take these loads of dirt back to my country and build an altar there to Yahweh."

Because of his healing Naaman was convinced that there was no other god but the God of Israel. He had tried all the other gods. Now he said, "I'm going to serve the Lord."

Then he remembered. Oh, no, this is an *impossible situation*.

Naaman is now going to ask Elisha to give him permission to do something for which, under the law, he could be put to death. For him this is an impossible situation. In the natural there is no way out. "In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing" (verse 18).

Naaman is troubled. He is saying, "I really believe in the God of Israel and I love the Lord. He is the one who healed me. Rimmon never did a thing for me. But my master requires me to go with him when he worships. When I go with him to the house of Rimmon and he leans on my hand, I have to bow down before the idol—forgive me" (paraphrased). Deuteronomy 18 says these persons should be put to death if they do such a thing.

Now what is Elisha going to do?

"No, Naaman, you can't do that! It says in the Word so and so." But God knows that sometimes there are *impossible situations*.

Listen to this inspired answer of Elisha in verse 19: "***And he said unto him, GO IN PEACE.***" Elisha's true advice to Naaman would have been condemned according

to the letter of the law.

Some people find themselves in second marriages when they begin their walk with God. Because of their desire to serve the Lord, they are willing to do anything. They think of leaving each other and the heartache. Little children now have come along the way.

An impossible situation? Something happened that from your heart you did not want, but something which, according to the natural and according to the legal limits of life, you must do. How much better is it to rest in Elisha's decree: "Go in peace."

"Elisha, are you a true prophet? You've told Naaman to go in peace. Moses taught to bow down before an idol was an abomination. Are you sure your advice to Naaman is correct?" one may well have asked.

"Yes, that's right. Go in peace," Elisha may have responded.

For couples who find themselves under condemnation and can't go back and unscramble the egg: "Go in peace."

Forget the Past

When Satan condemns you and accuses you before God, ask these questions:

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" (Romans 8:31-34).

When you are under condemnation you need to ask yourself: WHERE IS THAT CONDEMNATION COMING

FROM?

Who is he that condemneth? It is not Christ. **"It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"** (Romans 8:34).

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." So if it's not God and not Christ, then who is he that condemneth? It is Satan, our adversary.

In my earlier Christian life, I'd say, "There are several things that I need to do to get to the place I really want to be spiritually. I need to pray more. I need to study more. I need to learn the Word better. I need to become a better witness."

I've met Christians who say, "I have six or seven things to take care of; then I feel I'll be in the place God wants me to be."

The Apostle Paul said he only had to do ONE THING. **"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: BUT THIS ONE THING I DO, *forgetting* those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before"** (Philippians 3:12-13). The things which are behind are the only things you can forget. Actually Paul does more than one thing—"I follow after, I count not, forgetting those things, reaching forth, pressing toward the mark"—but he doesn't even count those as things he has to do. Those things just naturally happen. But one thing he has to consciously practice: forgetting.

We need to learn to forget the regrettable past. Forget

and let the past be put behind you.

Jesus said, **"Remember Lot's wife"** (Luke 17:32). What Lot's wife did was to look back at Sodom. Sodom is a picture of the regrettable past. She couldn't forget Sodom. She had to look back and crystalized into a pillar of salt. Jesus tells us to remember her; He used her as an example. You will not progress in your Christian life if you continue to look at your past.

Jesus gives us another admonition: **"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"** (Luke 9:62). We are not fit for the Kingdom or for the work of the ministry if we keep looking back. Let the past be the past.

One sister was being prayed for and the Lord said to me: *"She's condemned over the things of her past."* I spoke to her and she began to weep. We rebuked that thing; it came out and she began to rejoice and to praise God. It is so rewarding to see God's people set free from the accuser of the brethren. To be set free from those condemning, accusing spirits that point a finger at us.

All of us are overcome at some time by condemnation, or at least condemnation comes against us. Our only merit to overcoming is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. You'll never measure up enough to please Satan. He will always be saying, "You could have done this. You could have done that. You should have done the other." You can rely on the merit of the righteousness of Jesus' blood and overcome by your confession of faith. Join with me in prayer.

"Father, I come to You in the mighty name of Jesus.

"I realize that Satan has come to me in the role of the accuser of the brethren. He accuses me to myself. At times I have been deceived into thinking that it is the voice of Your

Overcoming Satan When He Accuses Me to Myself

Spirit, whereas I now understand that the former things are forgotten, and it is Satan who brings my past back to me.

"In the mighty name of Jesus, I reject condemnation. I resist the accuser of the brethren. I will no longer allow him to accuse me to myself. I bind his condemning tactics in Jesus' name and will confess the merits of Jesus' blood against his lies. I surrender my will to You, Lord, and believe Your Word of promise.

"I purpose in my heart to put a watch over my mouth to keep my tongue from speaking evil accusations against my brethren. I will not bite and devour, but will bless and deliver through words seasoned with grace.

"Thank You, Jesus, for Your advocacy at the Father's right hand in my behalf."

— Amen and Amen

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About the Author



Sharing his testimony with host Roger Holloway

David Alsobrook is a living testimony to God's great grace. Although he was raised in a minister's home he rebelled against the church's teachings in his early teens. He became involved in all forms of sin embracing the hippy tradition of the late 60's.

Through active involvement in Transcendental Meditation a strong spirit of suicide obsessed his mind in the Summer and Fall of '69 until in his despair he called on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was born again on November 30, 1969, and read the Bible from cover to cover four times the first six months.

As a result of intensive study of the Word of God he was led into a conviction of the reality of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit for today. At the age of 17 he began traveling the country sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and teaching the Word of God without partiality to man's traditions.

God has confirmed His Word through supernatural

signs and wonders on many occasions. David teaches the Kingdom of God on a wide variety of subjects. Dianne, his wife, assists him in ministering to people's needs. They are the happy parents of two lovely children and make their home in Paducah, Kentucky.

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