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Believers Armor: How the Christian Church in the United States can Survive and Overcome Spiritual Warfare

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

BELIEVERS ARMOR: HOW THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES
CAN SURVIVE AND OVERCOME SPIRITUAL WARFARE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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PORTLAND, OREGON

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Portland Seminary
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 19, 2020
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Global Perspectives

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To my Lord and Savior,
thank you for calling me to become an Armor of God-bearer

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ABSTRACT

This research seeks to discover why the Christian church in the United States has struggled to withstand the effects of spiritual warfare. Resisting Satan's evil schemes continues to be a personal need and spiritual challenge facing people in today's fast-paced digital world. Failing to resist Satan creates a severe problem for the Christian church. As a result, believers are unprepared to both understand and withstand the effects of spiritual warfare. The author, inspired by the Holy Spirit, created an artifact that has become a powerful ministry tool to address this challenge. The Armor of God challenge coin was fashioned from the Apostle Paul's Armor of God doctrine in Ephesians, which sets the biblical foundation for writing this dissertation. The author's primary focus is to help Christians become more aware of spiritual warfare and the critical importance of the Armor of God in winning the battles.

The thesis of this research intends to show how putting on Christ prepares believers for spiritual warfare. Putting on Christ as spiritual armor is a scriptural precept and a recommended Pauline solution that helps Christians both understand and withstand the devastating effects of demonic schemes, sexual temptations, and worldly enticements. Putting on Christ is an intentional choice of will and a personal act of faith and obedience that is a metaphorical and spiritual activity.

The expected outcomes from this investigation are to advance historical knowledge, increase post-modern awareness, and improve future ministry applications. These outcomes will help the Christian church in the United States survive and overcome the wiles of the devil. This study promotes contextually appropriate and biblically honoring methods to wear Christ as a personalized defense system. Standing firm in a

spiritual skirmish line and advancing the Gospel of Christ one step at a time is the paper's goal to overcoming evil principalities and powers.

Helping prepare, train, and equip ministry leaders in the Pauline art of spiritual warfare creates positive outcomes. The resulting opportunities for the Christian church in the United States include reclaiming its incarnational witness, restoring trust in the pulpit, preparing the body of Christ for spiritual warfare, and advancing the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM WITH SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Two thousand years ago, the apostle Paul determined problems were emerging inside the new Christian churches that he helped start in the Mediterranean region. Both Jew and Gentile—called Christians, because they believed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—began fighting among themselves. The newly planted Christian churches in Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth, and other regional Mediterranean cities struggled to preserve faith and unity as the body of Christ.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul began preaching, teaching, and writing to the churches to help them understand and withstand the trials and temptations facing them at every turn in their walk with the Lord. He helped describe and define what was happening to them, and he called it the wiles of the devil, better known as *spiritual warfare*.¹ For the rest of his life, Paul taught and fought against the schemes used by Satan and his fallen angels. He embarked on a Holy campaign to help the followers of Christ understand and withstand the hurtful schemes used by Satan. Paul's contribution unmasked evil principalities and dark powers that Satan uses to divide, disrupt, and destroy the Christian church.

Unfortunately, the Christian church in the United States seems to largely ignore Paul's spiritual warfare doctrines. Satan desensitizes Christian leaders to his reality. As a result, the Christian church is struggling in its ministry role and responsibility to prepare, train, and equip its members to defend against the destructive schemes of Satan. Despite Christ's victory at the cross, which overcame the curse of death and sin, Christian church

¹ Eph. 6:11.

leaders are failing to offer their members an adequate ministry response to the ever-present spiritual warfare threat. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to research, analyze, evaluate, and explore the cosmic problem that Paul calls spiritual warfare.

Field Research

Since 2003, after the author served and survived a ground and air war in the Middle East, he immersed himself in theological study, field research, and international travel to share and show others how to both understand and defend against the evil schemes of Satan. He observed and experienced the devastating effects of systematized evil, which left unchecked from viable defenses, will devastate and destroy everyone and everything in its path. Born out of God's inspiration and conviction to defend life and fight injustice, the author received a divine calling to identify, understand, and expose the enemy and then help others do the same. To fulfill his calling the author created and uses a powerful ministry tool called the Armor of God challenge coin. He uses the Armor of God challenge coin to help others understand their need to wear Christ as a personalized suit of armor that can withstand evil so they can live victorious lives and advance the Gospel of Christ until He returns for them. Since its creation the coin has been distributed to thousands of believers in multiple countries as a very effective tool to teach them about Spiritual Warfare and the Armor of God.

From 2017 to 2019, this student, as a Doctor of Ministry student at George Fox University, conducted seventy-five hours of field-research, including observations, surveys, interviews, and meetings. He studied ministry leaders to determine their effectiveness in preparing, training, and equipping their congregants, Sunday School

classes, growth groups, and youth ministry groups to resist Satan. He also researched the effectiveness of the Armor of God challenge coin as a ministry tool that helps Christians defend and overcome the schemes of the devil.²

The researcher's objective is to discover why the Christian church in Idaho is not adequately preparing its leaders and members with biblical solutions to understand and withstand the effects of spiritual warfare. He studied the Christian denomination churches in Idaho, where he attends and shares the Armor of God coin ministry. This two-year study evaluated the ability of Christian leaders to recognize and resist spiritual warfare. The research examined evil schemes like deceit, lust, and desire, that Satan and his demons used in their attempts to divide, disrupt, and destroy the Christian church in Idaho.

Research Summary

Thirty ministry leaders partook in a ten-question spiritual warfare survey using *Survey Monkey*, an online survey platform.³ The thirty-five participants are comprised of seminary professors, pastoral staff, Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed (AWANA) leaders, and lay leaders from a variety of Christian denominations. A summary of the survey follows:

² The Armor of God coin is a challenge coin that the author designed after the 2003 war. Challenge coins are a tradition in the military. They denote membership, allegiance, and survival of the last wartime conflict. The Armor of God coin ministry has been active in Idaho Christian Churches for fifteen years, with over five thousand coins shared in Idaho and around the world.

³ "Preparing the Church for Spiritual Warfare," Survey Monkey, accessed November 28, 2019, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/G3R37MJ>.

- Participants averaged 32 years as a Christian with 21 years of ministry experience, and each served in a congregation size of approximately 450 people.
- Ministry leaders say that their most significant challenges against training and equipping others for spiritual warfare come from their post-modern congregations who are predominantly unaware, complacent, and desensitized to the schemes of Satan.
- Training and preparation for spiritual warfare is an ongoing challenge for the survey participants. They cite formal and informal education, sermon preparation, Scripture memorization, topical Bible studies, and wearing the Armor of God as their primary means in training and preparation to understand and withstand the evil schemes of the devil.
- Most of the ministry leaders surveyed—90 percent—believe that wearing Christ as a personalized Armor of God is the best way for them and their congregants to survive the effects of spiritual warfare.

Study Limits

There are many religious books, scholarly articles, and popular works that describe forms of evil that exceed the focus of this author's research. For example, witchcraft, vampires, animal worship, demon possession, and references to the walking dead exceed the focus and scope of this investigation. Also, the popular idea that descendants of demonic beings and fallen angels are living in today's society goes beyond the emphasis of this research. To this point, the study focuses on exploring the

alarming increase in moral failures and desensitized responses toward spiritual warfare by the Christian church.

Expected Results

This study examines why the Christian church in the United States fails to effectively withstand the effects of spiritual warfare. There are increasing spiritual, physical, and emotional reasons why Christians must survive the demonic advance of evil throughout the world. If evil principalities and powers are sensing the return of Christ, this could be causing a global apprehension and increased promotion of evil in humankind. Is it possible that uncensored access to social media is one of Satan's tactics to control Christians during the digital age? Whether it is Satan's anticipation of Christ's return or his easy access to people's personal data on social media, Christians need help. They need help finding ways to resist and overcome the onslaught of evil in the world.

This researcher believes that there are opportunities, biblical and secular, that can help the Christian church prepare ministry leaders and members to understand and defend against spiritual warfare. The expected results from this investigation are to advance historical knowledge, increase new awareness, and improve future applications that help the Christian church survive and overcome the wiles of the devil. This study promotes proper context and scripture-honoring ways to wear Christ as an individual and group defense against spiritual warfare. Though the author presents his manner of "putting on the Armor of God, the findings of the research are meant to be descriptive rather than prescriptive towards inspiring the Christian Church to better acknowledge and understand

Spiritual warfare, and subsequently successfully engage Spiritual warfare with the Armor of God. Doing this will help the Christian church preserve their testimony, proclaim the Gospel, withstand evil, and achieve victory over the devil.

Need: Preparing for Spiritual Crisis

Whom do people call when they are in crisis or danger from physical assault, car accident, house fire, or natural disaster? When people need emergency help, they call Emergency-911 (E-911) and specially trained first-responders from the police, fire, and paramedic services rapidly respond. The national E-911 provides lifesaving, crime-stopping, and fire-suppressing rescue services free to anyone in emergency need who asks for help. When people call E-911, they connect to a computer-aided first-responder service. This service helps trace the incoming call, evaluate the threat, decide services needed, and send emergency help to the scene. The E-911 dispatcher remains on the call, continues to gather lifesaving information, and updates the first-responders until they arrive at the crisis incident scene. On arriving, they give the services needed to stop the threat, rescue the victims, deliver medical support, secure the scene from further danger, and find out what happened.

A 2015 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) survey reports that “60 percent of American adults” have never prepared for what to do if a disaster happens at home, work, church, or school.⁴ Further, fewer than 40 percent of those surveyed have

⁴ “Sixty Percent of Americans Not Practicing for Disaster,” FEMA, April 28, 2015, <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2015/04/28/sixty-percent-americans-not-practicing-disaster-fema-urges-everyone-prepare>.

developed an emergency plan and discussed it with members of their household.⁵ What should people do if there is an active shooter incident in their home, work, church, or school? The United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) describes an “Active Shooter” as someone actively killing or trying to kill people in a confined and populated environment.⁶ The National Safety Council (NSC), whose mission is to prevent “deaths at work, in homes and communities,” says to “Run, hide, or fight” if faced with an active shooter incident.⁷ The NSC recommends “staying calm and exercising one of the three options” to run, hide, or fight before the police arrive.⁸ DHS, FEMA, and the NSC urge people to prepare for emergency disasters, natural or human-caused. They report that if people make a simple survival plan, communicate the plan, practice the plan, and follow the plan, they will reduce their chances of injury or death during a disaster incident.

Whom do Christians call when they are in spiritual crisis or danger from spiritual assault, adversity, moral failure, or supernatural disaster? When Christians need emergency spiritual help, they call God-911⁹ (G-911), and specially trained and equipped guardian angels from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rapidly respond. The universal G-911 service provides soul-saving, injustice-stopping, and fiery dart-suppressing redemption services free to any Christian in spiritual need who prays for help. When Christians call G-911, they instantly connect to a Divinity-aided spiritual service. This

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ US Department of Homeland Security, *Active Shooter: How to Respond* (Washington, DC, October 2008), https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf.

⁷ “Assaults Fourth Leading Cause of Workplace Deaths,” National Safety Council, accessed December 30, 2019, <https://www.nsc.org/work-safety/safety-topics/workplace-violence>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ God-911 is an analogy, created by the researcher of this dissertation, to compare and contrast how people, whether they are in physical or spiritual need, are predisposed to call or pray for help.

service is all-knowing, all-present, and all-powerful. G-911 knows precisely where, when, and how to send emergency spiritual help to the scene. The G-911 dispatcher, known as the Holy Spirit, remains on the spiritual call, continues to gather spirit-saving information, and updates the guardian angels arriving at the spiritual crisis incident scene. On arriving, they give the divine services needed to stop evil, rescue victims from spiritual warfare, deliver supernatural support, secure the scene from principalities and powers, extend God's grace, and find out what happened.

A church leadership study on pastors in the United States, reported by Richard Krejcir, says 75 percent of those surveyed felt “unqualified and-or poorly trained by their seminaries to lead and manage the church.”¹⁰ Over 80 percent of the pastors report the Christian churches they lead cannot provide the training and discipleship needed for their members to survive a spiritual crisis.¹¹ Pastors and ministry leaders say their church congregants struggle from the effects of the uncensored Internet and social media addictions. Three independent ministry research studies from 2005 to 2009 confirm that Christian pastors are leaving the pulpit because of ministry burnout, conflict in the church, and moral failure.¹²

Pastors leave the church because they lack preparation to understand and withstand spiritual warfare in their personal and professional lives. This paper, leveraging Krejcir's study on pastors from 2007 and 2016, exposes evil principalities and powers

¹⁰ Richard J. Krejcir, *Statistics on Pastors: What is Going on with the Pastors in America?* (Pasadena, CA: Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development, 2007), 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

¹² James Flynn, “Firewall: Health Essentials for Ministers and Their Families,” *Christian Education Journal* 6, no. 2 (2009): 310.

hiding in plain sight, which induces, promotes, and contributes to pastoral failures.¹³

These survey results show some of the reasons pastors are leaving the ministry: 75 percent stressed, 78 percent dismissed because of church conflict, 63 percent dismissed twice, 38 percent divorced or divorcing, 41 percent marital anger problems, 50 percent pornography use, and 37 percent sexual misconduct with a parishioner.¹⁴ The implications to the Christian church in the United States is staggering. Flynn, commenting on Krejcir's surveys, says these statistics on pastors point to "forces of deformation" that "result in malformation that leads to failure under stress with devastating consequences."¹⁵ Specifically, these surveys provide "crash and burn" examples of how evil powers and demonic domains intentionally target, harass, and seduce pastors in their ministry and personal lives until they succumb, stumble, and fall.¹⁶

What should Christians do if there is an active spiritual attack incident happening in their home, work, church, or school? According to Chuck Lawless, false teachings, family breakups, hidden sins, moral failure, lies, and loneliness contribute to spiritual attacks.¹⁷ Clinton E. Arnold says about evil, "We must be willing to take seriously what the Bible takes seriously: the intense involvement in the life of a figure named Satan and his powers of darkness."¹⁸ When facing active spiritual attacks, Christians should

¹³ Richard J. Krejcir, *Statistics on Pastors: 2016 Update* (Pasadena, CA: Into Thy Word, 2016), 1.

¹⁴ Krejcir, *What is Going on*, 2.

¹⁵ Flynn, 309.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Chuck Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches that are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2002), 87.

¹⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, *The Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 1992), 11.

proclaim the Gospel, present personal holiness, and reflect Christ's incarnational presence.¹⁹ Arnold says, "The church visibly testifies to God's wisdom by its very existence."²⁰ The book of Ephesians, whose mission is to help keep the church Holy and pure, says, Prepare, Pray, and Persevere when faced with an active spiritual attack incident.²¹ The apostle Paul's teachings, adapted for the 21st century, agree that this three-step approach to spiritual survival is simple and easy to remember. Preparation is Paul's safety message to all Christians. He warns that spiritual disasters might originate from the battle with the flesh, the world, or the devil. The Bible provides Christians with a simple spiritual warfare survival plan. If believers in Christ communicate the plan, practice the plan, and follow the plan, they will reduce their chances of spiritual injury and moral failure during a spiritual attack incident.

When people face a physical crisis like an active shooter, they call E-911 and run, hide, and fight. They run from danger, hide behind physical barriers hoping the threat passes them by, and fight when necessary to ensure survival. In the same way, when Christians face a spiritual crisis like an active spiritual attack, they call G-911 and prepare, pray, and persevere. They prepare for the attack from evil sin and temptation, pray for strength and courage to withstand the assault, and persevere by standing firm until the Gospel of Christ overcomes the attack.

Preparing for a spiritual crisis is a lot like preparing for a physical crisis. First, in a physical crisis, it is essential to understand and recognize the threat. For example, if

¹⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of its Historical Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 170.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Eph. 6:10–18.

people do not believe in the accuracy of the hurricane warnings issued by the National Weather Service, then they will not seriously prepare for the storm approaching them. If they do not board up their windows, secure their personal belongings, pack their survival emergency kit, and gas the car for evacuation, they will not be ready when the storm hits. People in this example do not believe a real hurricane will threaten their lives. Desensitized to the threat, people ignore the warning and put their lives in danger.

Preparing for a spiritual crisis is similar. First, in a spiritual crisis, Christians must understand and recognize the threat from a real devil. If Christians do not believe in the truth of the spiritual warfare warnings issued by the Bible, then they will not seriously prepare for the spiritual storm approaching them. If they do not spiritually put on Christ as their defense, secure their Christian testimony, and pray for courage and strength to stand firm, they will not be ready when the evil schemes attack them.

Unfortunately, the 21st-century Christian church in the United States is not ready to withstand the influences of spiritual warfare. As discussed above, most pastors feel unqualified, poorly trained, stressed out, and too preoccupied with their spiritual battles to prepare, train, and equip their congregations with successful biblical solutions. There is an overwhelming need to help, show, guide, and challenge the Christian church to fulfill its ministry calling and responsibility to its members.

In summary, preparing for a spiritual crisis in the Christian church is an ever-present need, which, if ignored, has eternal results. Withstanding the storm of evil, displayed by Satan's principalities and powers, has been the greatest challenge to humankind since the first sin in the Garden of Eden. Today, evil hides in plain sight on insurance commercials, reality TV shows, social media, and inside the church walls.

Seeking the truth, exposing evil, and promoting solutions to recognize, resist, and overcome evil is the goal. Helping Christian church leaders and their members to understand and withstand spiritual warfare is the focus of this study. The next section provides a vignette about a wandering saint and his problem with spiritual warfare.

Spiritual Warfare Vignette: The Young Saint

The Young Saint vignette is an example of a young maturing believer in Christ who did not prepare for a spiritual crisis and spent many years recovering for a decision that took less than thirty seconds to make. The young saint grew up in a Christian family, asked Christ into his life at the age of twelve, was publicly baptized, and began growing his spirituality in the Lord. His parents took him to Sunday School and church, and he participated in church-sponsored youth camps and was a member of the Boy Scouts of America. This young saint dreamed he could fly, and at the age of fifteen, he went on his first ride in a small airplane that took off from a hayfield. He was so excited by flying that he enrolled in a pilot ground school the next week and paid for his private pilot training from the tips earned by bagging groceries in a military base exchange. During his undergraduate college years, he volunteered as a reserve police officer because he felt driven to help others and fight injustice.

One night while volunteering as an officer, he met death face-to-face on a snowy and icy road. He was the first-responder to a multiple-car accident where he tried his best to save lives by protecting the scene, administering first aid, and commencing resuscitation on a young boy who had no heartbeat. Sadly, multiple lives were lost as the young saint struggled to save a life inside the mangled wreckage. He heard broken glass,

smelled burning hot brakes, and felt warm blood between his fingers as his critically injured patient died and passed into eternity.

After the shift, the young saint was going to go home. After all, he was only a volunteer officer. However, the fulltime officers pleaded with him to join them for a social “debrief” at a local hotel lounge. It might have been his inexperience, or perhaps his overconfidence, or maybe some of both, but the young saint yielded to one of Satan’s evil schemes. The young saint did not realize that his thirty-second decision to join the team and have one “boilermaker,” a glass of beer with a shot of whiskey inside the glass of beer, during the critical incident debrief of his response to the accident scene would cripple his Christian walk with the Lord. It was such a spiritual turning point in his life that the young saint found himself trapped in a seemingly endless cycle of sin, guilt, and forgiveness that destroyed his Christian testimony and rendered him useless to help the advance of the Gospel of Christ.

Years passed while the young saint led two lives: one was trying to act like a Christian, and one was trying to fulfill his own selfish needs and desires. Neither life seemed to work. His Christian testimony suffered, and his walk with the Lord was a forgery, and he could not see the way forward. This monograph is just one of the spiritual warfare examples of the tricks and schemes used by Satan and his demons to confuse, distract, tempt, and trap Christians to voluntarily sin and fall out of a close relationship with Christ.

The young saint paid the price for not being adequately trained, prepared, or equipped to handle the temptation, deception, and strategies of the devil and the dark forces surrounding the world. Lawless and Lawless classify the young saint as a victim of

Satan's evil schemes of self-dependence and distraction from the truth.²² Spiritual warfare, as the young saint discovered, is a daily reality that all Christians face. Failing in spiritual warfare can disrupt, discourage, and destroy the witness of Christians. Like many other believers in the US-American church, he fell in battle instead of listening and relying on the tender loving cautions from the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Problem: Believers' Warfare

Believers' Warfare is what the Young Saint experienced, and Paul outlines it in the book of Ephesians: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."²³ Dr. Charles Stanley says that believers have three enemies or systems that control the world. He calls them the world system, the flesh, and the devil.²⁴

First, the world is an "anything of a physical nature that might hinder us in our walk with Christ or might tempt us to sin."²⁵ The devil and his demons are the masterminds behind everything. They organize, influence, and control the world's political systems, economy, and social media constructs that influence every aspect of life. Satan is the master at hiding in plain sight and counterfeits himself into every aspect of all world systems.

²² Lawless, 87.

²³ Eph. 6:12.

²⁴ Charles F. Stanley, *Overcoming the Enemy* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 3–5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

Stanley says that unless believers in Christ have a discerning spirit, they will not see the world order that is influencing them. That is why Christians suffer the consequences of not being prepared for Believers' Warfare.²⁶ Believers' Warfare is an intense form of spiritual warfare because the devil attacks Christians whose soul belongs to Christ. Unsaved people that do not believe in Christ experience spiritual warfare, but since they have no spiritual defense, they have little to no chance of spiritual survival against Satan and his horde of demonic fallen angels.

1 John 2 says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world."²⁷

In contrast to the world system, God's system is faith-oriented. God's system does not depend on his creation to fulfill His master plan for humankind. God's system is the opposite of Satan's world system. The world system rejects God and the believers who follow the God system and live in the world. Believers easily get caught up in the world system, and once they act, think, work, and live in the world system, they become stuck.

The young saint became stuck in the world system and was blinded from the truth and freedom only found in Christ. The world system causes believers to lose their focus on Christ by making small and subtle changes to what appears to be usual religious themes. When things do not look bad and bring pleasure, it is easy to fall into the world

²⁶ Charles Stanley, "The Believer's Warfare: The Enemy," July 26, 2019, *Daily Radio Program With Charles Stanley*, produced by In Touch Ministries, podcast, 01:55, <https://www.intouch.org/listen/featured/the-believers-warfare-the-enemy>.

²⁷ 1 John 2:15–16.

system's trap that uses imitation, deception, and confusion to draw believers away from God's system.

Second, the Flesh is another enemy that believers face daily. *The Flesh* is the invisible force that humankind inherited after the first sin and rebellion of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Since then, all humans born into the world have the Adamic nature of sin within them. In computer terminology, people sin against God because of their "programming." The sin nature of Adam is what Christians call a *fallen principle*. When a person receives Christ, their nature as a believer, eternally changes. However, until Christ returns and calls His faithful followers to meet Him in the clouds, the Adamic sin nature will remain alive and active in the world.²⁸ The Flesh enemy is a persistent supernatural troublemaker who will not quit, surrender, or give up without the temporary intervention of Christ as promised in James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."²⁹

Opposing the Flesh does not come easy to the Believer. These forces, desires, wants, and lusts come from unrelenting powers, schemes, and structures that influence people with temptations, desires, and wants that are counter to the sovereign will and purposes of God. The Flesh motivates people to sin and tries to meet their needs in ways that are not consistent with God's plan for His creation. The Flesh attacks the mind, will, and emotion of the Believer. Ultimately, Christians have two choices: surrender to the world and the flesh or resist them in the name and the power of Christ.

²⁸ 1 Thess. 4:13–17.

²⁹ James 4:7.

Third, and continuing with the Believer's warfare principle, Satan is an enemy to the Believer. His many names include Lucifer, Apollyon, Devil, Liar, Destroyer, Murderer, Deceiver, Angel of Light, and God of this World. He is a fallen angel from Heaven, the star of the morning, and the son of the dawn. He challenged God and said, "I will ascend into heaven and make myself like the most high God."³⁰

Ezekiel described Satan as a glorious, beautiful angel who became so full of pride and arrogance that he desired and determined that he was worthy and qualified to be a god.³¹ Satan copies everything God has done and tries to recreate it on the Earth. He has the freedom to travel back and forth into Heaven and not only rules the Earth but wages war with the angels in the heavenlies.³² He is the master of deception, and since he wants to be like God, he tries to build his earthly Kingdom like God's and infiltrates the church.

Further, Satan tries to copy the Christian faith and then creates division and disunity and breaks up religions and denominations so that the people of God are scattered, searching, seeking, and forever confused and frustrated about how to live the Christian life. Genesis tells about the origin of Satan as a prideful fallen angel who wanted to be like God, and Revelations foretells his final demise of being thrown into a lake of fire with the permanent separation from God. Satan, the devil, is a real created being who has supernatural power to control the world, within the restrained and permissive will of God.

³⁰ Isa. 14:12.

³¹ Ezek. 28:14-18.

³² Dan. 10:13.

Satan exists! The book of Matthew describes how Jesus talked to Satan, and the apostle Paul claims Satan is real. In the Believers' Warfare, a real Satan who controls the World Systems and directs the Flesh in ways that will tempt and deceive continually assaults Christians. Satan lures Christians to sin against God voluntarily. Satan will never stop trying to attack and destroy the Christians and their family, faith, church, business, and relationships. It is his nature to create chaos and havoc everywhere. He may have given up on the Christian soul when they gave their lives to Christ, but he never gives up on his strategy to create a believer's warfare seeking to destroy the Christian witness, testimony, and incarnational presence in the world. Just like in the Young Saint vignette, the devil tempts people with overconfidence and desire. Once the devil gains an evil stronghold of sin on the believer, he moves to destroy their Christian witness before others.³³ Satan seeks to damage the believers' relationship with God and transform their Christian testimony into a grand display of hypocrisy, which renders the believer null and void for the ministry.

The apostle Paul tells believers to stand firm against the schemes, snares, and tricks used by the devil.³⁴ Peter tells believers to be sober and watchful because Satan sneaks around like a "roaring lion" waiting to attack and devour a believer like the Young Saint, who intended just to have a social drink with his colleagues.³⁵ Paul encourages believers to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" rather than the

³³ 2 Cor. 10:4. Strongholds can be either good or evil. In this context, Paul describes the stronghold like a grip that Satan has on the believer.

³⁴ Eph. 6:13.

³⁵ 1 Pet. 5:8.

believers' perceived power.³⁶ To make a point about how dangerous Satan is, Stanley asked his congregation how many of them would voluntarily put their hand into a cage and pet a poisonous Cobra?³⁷ Not one hand raised. Everyone feared that being bit by a Cobra leads to agony and death. Stanley made his point with his congregation; Satan is dangerous like a poisonous Cobra.³⁸

In summary, the problem in the Believers' Warfare is threefold: the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*. These are the enemies of the believer who will do whatever it takes to kill the believer and destroy their testimony for Christ. Salvation in Christ provides the assurance and comfort for Christians that they are going to Heaven someday. There are two distinct views on salvation and sin: the doctrine of eternal security and the doctrine of conditional security. The doctrine of eternal security, or "once saved always saved," holds that believers in Christ as their Lord and Savior can never lose their faith nor leave their relationship with Christ in the family of God. Paul says, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."³⁹ The doctrine of conditional security holds that believers in Christ as their Lord and Savior can lose their faith and leave their relationship with Christ in the family of God. Paul says, "Now the Spirit expressly says

³⁶ Eph. 6:10.

³⁷ Stanley, "Believer's Warfare," 17:07.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 17:30.

³⁹ 1 Cor. 10:13. Pauline verses that support eternal security include Rom. 8:1, 8:35, 37–39, 1 Cor. 1:8–9, Eph. 1:13–14, Phil. 1:6, 2 Tim. 4:18.

that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.”⁴⁰

When comparing each approach to salvation and sin, Christians are at risk of suffering a significant loss if not adequately prepared and trained to engage in spiritual warfare. If they believe in eternal security and fail in spiritual warfare, they will suffer a lost witness on Earth and subsequently lost reward in Heaven. If they believe in conditional security and fail in spiritual warfare, they will suffer lost salvation on Earth and subsequently lost admittance into Heaven. In either case, it is in the believer’s best interest to find a solution that works for them. This author chooses to adopt Paul’s spiritual warfare practices and he “puts on” Christ as his whole Armor of God.⁴¹

Opportunity: Recognize, Resist, and Overcome Evil

Believing in Jesus Christ as one’s Lord and Savior comes with many supernatural perks like forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with the Creator, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, adoption into the family of God, and admission into Heaven. Not a bad return on the investment of one soul for sure. However, most new believers do not realize that when they asked Christ into their lives and agreed to become a new creation that it came with conditions. Yes, salvation comes with conditions like resisting temptation, loving one’s neighbor, supporting biblical truth, and serving in God’s army. Most believers, both new and experienced, tend to nod their heads “yes” and go along with the believer

⁴⁰ 1 Tim. 4:1. Pauline verses that support conditional security include Rom. 8:12–13, 11:19–21, 14:13–23, 16:17–20, 1 Cor. 3:16–17, 6:7–11, 8:9–13, 9:24–27, 10:7–8, 11–12, 15:1–2, 11:1–5, 13–15; Gal. 5:2–4, 16, 19–21, 6:7–10, 5:3–7; Col. 1:21–23; 1 Thess. 3:1–5; 1 Tim. 1:18–19, 4:13–16; and 2 Tim. 2:10–13.

⁴¹ Eph. 6:11.

notions of resisting evil, loving others, and supporting the body of Christ as part of their Christian responsibilities. However, most believers gasp in shock and disbelief when they find out their salvation involved a spiritual draft into service as Christian soldiers who must stand in a type of Christian skirmish line and battle the supernatural forces of evil.

This researcher holds that while the price for airfare on Christ's one-way ticket into Heaven is free, the seating upgrades come with the cost. Recognizing, resisting, and overcoming the forces of evil are examples of the obedient and faithful services believers strive to accomplish through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Standing firm against the schemes of Satan and his evil principalities and powers that are ruling the world is a divine requirement for faithful and courageous service. The researcher offers a theologically contextualized conclusion: there are no foxholes in Heaven.⁴² As such, believers on Earth will not receive a spiritual warzone exclusion or light-duty waiver for service behind the enemy lines in God's army.⁴³

Therefore, this paper claims that spiritual warfare is not an optional choice for the everyday Christian life. Instead, as a condition of salvation, Christians enlist into a lifetime of service in God's army. Standing firm in God's army means facing and fighting against evil and injustice while symbolically and spiritually wearing Christ as spiritual armor. This author argues that serving in God's army with other believers, directed by the Holy Spirit, empowered by Christ, and commissioned by God, is a

⁴² A "foxhole," contextualized militarily, is a hole in the ground that soldiers can use as shelter against enemy fire. Saying there are no foxholes in Heaven means that Christians do not have the option to crawl into a hole and avoid the spiritual battles raging around them. Instead, Christians are called to battle against evil, injustice, and the forces of evil.

⁴³ Just like there are no foxholes in Heaven to hide in, there are no exclusions, waivers, or exceptions to Christian service on Earth. All Christians are drafted into God's army. As such all Christian soldiers are ordered to put on the whole Armor of God, advance the Gospel of Christ, and stand firm against Satan's demonic terrorists.

necessary daily requirement to recognize, resist, overcome, and survive Satan's spiritual warfare schemes.

Thesis: Wearing Christ Prepares Believers for Spiritual Warfare

The thesis for this dissertation asserts that wearing Christ prepares believers for spiritual warfare. Furthermore, this thesis holds that putting on Christ as one's personalized suit of spiritual armor successfully prepares believers for spiritual warfare, resulting in increased understanding and improved defensive abilities to withstand the evil forces and schemes of the devil. Therefore, wearing Christ prepares the believer for spiritual battle. Wearing Christ as armor is the purposeful choice and free-will decision to combine one's faith in Christ with symbolism and create a unique and individualized armor bearer for God.

Believers' Warfare is a set of divine ideas and biblical doctrines that promote, empower, and challenge willing Christians to take the offensive against evil. By claiming God's promises, the believer can learn how to recognize, resist, and overcome evil in their lives. Once the believer becomes proficient in their self-defense, they can join forces and stand in the gap with other believers who are advancing God's Kingdom and pushing back evil all over the world. Caution: this doctrine presumes an intelligent waiver of risk, an obedient consent to the Holy Spirit's guidance, and faithful confidence in God's promises of victory. Knowing that God will provide His all-encompassing power, presence, and knowledge for the Believer to both understand and withstand the assaults of evil is a comforting peace and assurance that the Believers' Warfare doctrine provides.

The Way Forward: Not Limited to One Denomination

The problem with spiritual warfare has occupied and consumed not only the Idaho Christian Church but has also invaded the rest of the United States and the world. As such, this paper will expand its focus from Idaho to include the Christian churches in the United States. The author believes that spiritual warfare's need, problem, and opportunity is scalable. It adapts successfully to include a larger Christian audience who is suffering from the same problem of inadequate preparation for Christian leaders and church congregants to understand and withstand the evil schemes of the devil.

King Solomon said, "there is nothing new under the sun" over 2000 years ago.⁴⁴ However, this author's preliminary research concludes, like the TV sports announcer might say, that Satan has improved his game. It should not be surprising because Satan and his one-third of the angels have been watching and studying the effects of his evil schemes and strategies imposed on his human subjects. Satan continues to be the greatest threat to the world. He may be called the prince of this world, but he was sure a devil to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.⁴⁵ He was a threat to Christ in the desert during his forty days of isolation. He continues to be a weaponized form of evil that continuously threatens everyone and everything in the 21st century.

Some alternative viewpoints ask if Satan is just the same old devil that dates back to the beginning of the world, why focus on spiritual warfare? What is the use? This researcher believes that the spiritual warfare phenomenon continues to be a problem for the Christian church in the United States. Research shows that while the spiritual warfare

⁴⁴ Eccles. 1:9.

⁴⁵ Gen. 3:3.

phenomenon has been around for a long time, it continues to be the number one problem for all Christian churches and their members, whether they admit it or not.

Chapter 1 identified the need, problem, and opportunity that Christians need help defending themselves against Satan. Helping others understand and withstand the schemes of the devil is this dissertation's hallmark purpose. Guided by the Holy Spirit, this author's viewpoint proclaims that the Gospel exposes Satan as defeated by Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave. Satan may still be the same old adversary, but the warfare rules have changed for humanity, who now have access to freedom from sin. Believers in Christ have access to supernatural defense and victory from Satan's evil schemes, destruction, and death. Chapters 2 through 6 focus on reviewing the theological, historical, cultural, and modern aspects of spiritual warfare. The goal of this dissertation is to increase awareness and improve applications that provide practical solutions for the US-American church leaders, members, and future Christians to both understand and withstand the wiles of the devil. Believers' Warfare is a personal, powerful, and purposeful strategy for the Christians who properly prepare for spiritual battle. Finally, this paper will provide a 21st-century reminder to US-American church leaders and members to stand firm, resist Satan, and prepare others to do the same.

CHAPTER 2:
BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS SUPPORTING THE THESIS THAT
PUTTING ON CHRIST PREPARES BELIEVERS FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Chapter 1 presented the dissertation question asking why the Christian church in the United States is not able to withstand the effects of spiritual warfare. The research problem states that the Christian church is not adequately preparing congregants with the biblical solutions to understand and withstand the effects of spiritual warfare. Chapter 1 continued framing this dissertation's spiritual warfare phenomenon through an analysis of the need, problem, and opportunity facing the church and Christian leaders. Examples of immediate and eternal consequences for failing in Believers' Warfare highlight the need to continue researching the spiritual warfare problem.

Chapter 2 examines the biblical foundations supporting the research thesis that putting on Christ as one's spiritual armor prepares the believer and the Christian church in the United States to successfully understand and withstand the devil's schemes in spiritual warfare. The apostle Paul's "putting on Christ" appeal sets the stage for this study:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.¹

The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.²

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.³

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.⁴

Putting on Christ as spiritual armor is the scriptural basis and Pauline practice that prepares believers before they engage in spiritual warfare. Putting on Christ is both a metaphorical and spiritual activity. Believers begin by visualizing themselves, putting on pieces of armor that represent Christ. Almost instantly, the believer transcends their rational belief into a supernatural act of faith that physically, mentally, and spiritually joins the believer with Christ into a Christ-filled union, prepared and ready for spiritual warfare. Another way to put on Christ is described by the apostle John who tells how an indwelling with Christ can occur when Christ says, “In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”⁵

Surveying Scriptures, reflecting on spiritual warfare schemes, and examining theological approaches are key sections in Chapter 2. Also, a review of the conservative approach, whether evil brings glory to God, and the influence of spiritual warfare complete the overview for this chapter. Reviewing the biblical foundation that supports

¹ Eph. 6:10–18.

² Rom. 13:12.

³ Rom. 13:14.

⁴ 1 Thess. 5:8.

⁵ John 14:20.

the thesis of this paper promotes critical thinking and encourages discernment on God's Word.

Biblical Foundations

Peter warns, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."⁶ During the day, lions tend to lay around sleeping, eating, and watching for their next potential prey, which is trying to live and survive in their environment.⁷ However, at night, under cover of darkness, the lion prowls, stalks, and hunts for its next victim, pouncing on it for the kill. Peter compares Satan to the lion, which the 1st-century believers understood and rightly feared if they were traveling in lion country. Peter is trying to impress on the early church members that like the lion, Satan is always prowling around, and if they do not keep a watchful eye that they could be attacked and eaten without warning. Peter follows his warnings with encouragement and practical application to "Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings."⁸ Therefore, believers are not alone in their struggles against evil in the world. Because of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, people have a way to escape the sin and suffering they inherited from Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The next sections examine six illustrations of the spiritual warfare schemes used by Satan in the Old and New Testaments.

⁶ 1 Pet. 5:8.

⁷ The author lived in Africa and spent hours watching lions in their natural habitat from 2009 to 2011.

⁸ 1 Pet. 5:9.

Old Testament

The Old Testament has 929 chapters with 23,145 verses.⁹ The spiritual warfare schemes used against Adam and Eve, the Babylonians, and King David are reviewed as actual historical events involving real people being tempted and influenced by a real devil. Genesis chapter 3, chapter 11, and 2 Samuel chapter 11 provide the scriptural basis for each spiritual warfare example. While these events are thousands of years old, this paper, taking the literal interpretation of the Bible, believes they are an accurate account of how Satan used evil spiritual warfare schemes to try and influence people. The apostle Paul says, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”¹⁰

Garden of Eden Scheme

The first documented account of spiritual warfare, committed against a human being, was documented by Moses in the book of Genesis when Satan, animalized as a serpent, challenged Eve by saying, “Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’”¹¹ Eve responded correctly by telling Satan that she and Adam could eat from any tree in the garden except the tree from “the middle of the Garden, God has said,

⁹ “Chapters and Verses of the Bible,” *Wikipedia*, last modified December 27, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chapters_and_verses_of_the_Bible.

¹⁰ 2 Tim. 3:16.

¹¹ Gen. 3:1.

‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’¹² The Bible does not document any other human to animal conversations in the Garden of Eden, except the one between Satan and Eve. Taken literally, one can conclude that communicating between humans and God’s creation, at least in the beginning, was not an unusual event. The next intentional act of Satan was when he introduced lying, deception, trickery, mischaracterization of words, and treachery into human thinking and vocabulary. Satan used the first evil scheme against the first humans to walk the earth. Satan said, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”¹³

It is essential not to rush through these verses or understate the significant eternal life and death impact on future generations of humanity. It appeared to be a tragedy for God’s creation when the first pair of perfect humans, made in the image of God, fell prey to the lies and schemes of another created being, an angel. Called the “Morning Star,” the serpent in the Garden was the angel that rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven. Called Satan, he was the first of his kind to be referred to as a “fallen angel.”¹⁴ His pride and desire to be “like the Most High” was Satan’s critical transgression and an act of wickedness against a Holy God with all knowledge, power, and presence.¹⁵ As a result, Satan and one-third of the angels vacated heaven.¹⁶

¹² Gen. 3:3.

¹³ Gen. 3:4–5.

¹⁴ Isa. 14:12–14 documents how Satan’s pride to be like the “Most High” God created division in Heaven.

¹⁵ Ibid. God’s removal of Satan from Heaven is often referred to as the “fall of Satan,” describing his exile to the earth as a form of punishment.

¹⁶ Rev. 12:4 apocalyptically refers to Satan’s fall from heaven and how his dragon’s “tail swept

This story, what theologians call “the fall,” establishes the scriptural and historical foundation on how sin and death entered humanity. So, after Satan questioned God’s real intent and questioned Eve about her understanding that Satan’s scheme gained a fingerhold onto Eve, to her credit, Eve did not just grab the fruit without thinking about it. She applied some basic reasoning before she took from the Tree of Good and Evil. She considered that the fruit on this tree would meet her needs, both physically and emotionally. Also, the fruit was “good for food...a delight to the eyes...was desirable to make one wise.”¹⁷ In other words, if she ate the fruit, it would curb her hunger, give her pleasure, and give her knowledge. Eve may have thought, what is the problem with eating this fruit and who is the serpent?

Eve knew she was in God’s garden, which has always been a safe place for her. Eve was in the presence of a beautiful, believable, and coherent talking serpent. He was her neighbor in the Garden, he must know God personally, she might have imagined, or he would not be here. Also, the serpent made it sound like the whole threat of death thing was just a misunderstanding about God’s garden rules. So, after Eve considered all these things, she demonstrated God’s gift of free will and made a choice. Eve, alone in the Garden of Eden with Satan, unwittingly made a decision that would impact her husband Adam and all future generations of humanity. Some theologians might say that Satan was ready to “jump out of his skin” with excitement and anticipation while he patiently waited for Eve to decide what she would do next, detailed in the first book of the Bible. Moses recounted the events when he said, “she took from its fruit and ate; and she also

away a third of the stars of heaven,” which theologians translated as casting out one third of the angels from heaven with Satan.

¹⁷ Gen. 3:6.

gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”¹⁸ Eating the forbidden fruit is the first act of spiritual warfare against humans documented in the Bible.

After Adam and Eve ate the fruit, “The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked.”¹⁹ It seems that God designed humans in such a way that their eyes were closed, so to speak, from both good and evil. Most of this paper’s research focuses on the aspects of Christian eyes, not seeing evil. It is interesting, at this point in the scriptural review of foundations, that God keeps their eyes closed to the notion of good in the Garden. One might ask, is there one without the other? While this paper is not trying to engage in philosophical debates about good and evil, it is fair to evaluate the first sin critically. Did God shield Adam and Eve from understanding good as well as evil in the beginning? There will be an additional analysis of this question in later chapters regarding good and evil reflections at the fall of humanity.

Tower of Babel Scheme

Babylon was an ancient kingdom that multiplied along the Euphrates River in a region called Mesopotamia. Babylon, one of the largest cities of its day with nearly 200 thousand people, was located approximately fifty miles south of present-day Baghdad, Iraq.²⁰ Babylon comprised parts of present-day Iraq, Kuwait, and Syria. The Old Testament provides the history of Babylon and its biblical significance in spiritual warfare past, present, and future. The Babylonians, the descendants of Noah after the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Gen. 3:7.

²⁰ Tertius Chandler and Gerald Fox, *Three Thousand Years of Urban Growth* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 362, 380.

scriptural flood, came under the influence of a satanic scheme. This scheme, like other schemes Satan uses, focused on the peoples' lust for power, prestige, and desire to be like God and access His Holy places in Heaven.

This author believes that the Babylonians, en masse, were acting under the direct influence of Satan and were willing victims of his grand spiritual warfare scheme. Satan planted a small seed of lust into a few willing participants. Those seeds of lust grew, with Satan's help, and turned a community of one voice into a dangerous nation of many fame and fortune seekers who were determined to build what was being called the Tower of Babel, which would give people access to God and Heaven. The Babylonians said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we are dispersed over the face of the whole earth."²¹

God's justice for the Babylonians' arrogance and His protection for their ignorance was to break up their community of evil. Their conceit and desire to become famous among the other nations, alongside their exaggerated estimation for constructing a tower that would reach the throne of God, led to their eventual downfall as a nation. This author holds that the Tower of Babel scheme did not surprise God nor impede His sovereign plan. God did not send another flood. Instead, God extended grace and love for His creation and simply created diversity among the people by confusing their languages and causing them to disperse all over the world.²²

²¹ Gen. 11:4.

²² Gen. 11:7-8.

David Kinnaman, the president of the Barna Research Group, offers his reflections on what he calls a “Digital Babylon.”²³ He suggests that the biggest challenge to believers and their churches are three alarming trends, which are shaping and changing the North American culture. He cites “unlimited access, profound alienation and a crisis of authority” as the evil influences that are transforming the present culture into a digitized version of eschatological Babylon.²⁴ Kinnaman is not talking about the ancient Babylon, but the prophesized Babylon of the future.²⁵ His research shows that young adults, fifteen to twenty-three years old, spend twenty times more time using “screen-driven media than taking in spiritual content.”²⁶ Satan is still using the Tower of Babel scheme in the 21st century. However, instead of tempting people to build a tower of stones into the heavens, he is tempting them to build computers with microchips that provide god-like knowledge, power, and virtual access to heaven.

King David’s Infidelity Scheme

King David began his story as a young shepherd who gained God’s favor and Israel and Judah’s fame when he stood firm and killed a Philistine giant named Goliath in battle.²⁷ David, filled with the Spirit said to Goliath before they engaged in battle, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the

²³ David Kinnaman, “Digital Babylon: Our Accelerated, Complex Culture,” Barna, October 23, 2019, 1, <https://www.barna.com/category/faith-christianity>.

²⁴ Kinnaman.

²⁵ Rev. 17:1–18.

²⁶ Kinnaman, 1.

²⁷ 1 Sam. 17.

name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head.”²⁸ David did not wear real armor because it was too heavy, bulky, and did not fit him. However, David did wear spiritual armor. He wore the pre-incarnate Christ as his Armor of God and stood firm, holding his ground against the evil giant warrior claiming, “The battle is the Lord’s.”²⁹ David achieved both a physical and spiritual victory against an evil scheme when he was wearing Christ as his armor.

After serving successfully for forty years as the King over Israel and Judah, David was tested by the devil’s scheme of lust and desire when he saw a woman bathing while walking on his rooftop.³⁰ David sent for the woman named Bathsheba, which led him to acts of adultery, lying, and murder.³¹ David’s sin of lust was much like Chapter 1’s vignette of the Young Saint. Both men had desires to fulfill, and Satan presented just enough doubt and employed deceit to make each man believe it would be okay, just this once, to indulge themselves with the temptation Satan placed before them.

Both men made a willful decision that probably measured thirty seconds. Satan defeated both men with his spiritual warfare schemes. Both men spent years as spiritual warfare prisoners in their self-imposed purgatory suffering the consequences for a moment of pleasure. Nevertheless, Paul describes King David as a “man after God’s own

²⁸ 1 Sam. 17:45–46.

²⁹ 1 Sam. 17:47.

³⁰ 2 Sam. 11:2–5. The woman, Bathsheba was the wife Uriah, one of King David’s military commanders.

³¹ 2 Sam. 11:4, 15.

heart.”³² David’s fall from grace with Bathsheba, followed by his subsequent and hasty reconciliation and forgiveness with God provides believers with an encouraging biblical example to follow.

The previous three illustrations from the Old Testament examined Satan’s temptations and their influence upon Adam and Eve, the Babylonians, and King David. First, there was the Garden of Eden scheme. This was Satan’s chance to get even with God after being thrown out of Heaven. Satan used false promises, lies, and deceit. The scheme worked and Adam and Eve committed the first human sin against God. In the second scheme, Satan planted ideas of greatness, power, and a lust to be like God in the minds of the Babylonians. The scheme worked and their punishment for their sin was to confuse their languages, stop the building of the tower, and disperse them around the world. Last, Satan used the scheme of sexual lust and desire to capture the eyes and mind of King David. Again, Satan’s scheme worked and David’s consequences for his sin caused death, suffering, and struggle for him and his kingdom.

New Testament

The New Testament has 260 chapters with 7,957 verses and is approximately one-third the size of the Old Testament.³³ It contains many examples of how Satan, since the Garden of Eden scheme, continues to target, tempt, divide, and destroy people, families, cultures, and nations to fulfill his revenge desire against God. However, the New Testament provides hope. Satan’s long record of successful spiritual warfare schemes

³² Acts 13:22.

³³ “Chapters and Verses.”

against humankind is interrupted with a win that changed the cosmic course between good and evil. The next three examples report the schemes used against Jesus Christ, Judas Iscariot, and Peter.

The Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness Scheme

Jesus experienced spiritual warfare as the incarnate Son of God. This paper holds that Satan has maintained limited control and restricted access to harass and destroy humanity since defeating Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. As such, it is reasonable to believe that Jesus experienced moments of satanic and demonic harassment and testing as he matured into adulthood and began his ministry. The temptation of Christ is described in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke and occurred directly after being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River.³⁴ The Holy Spirit led Christ into the wilderness with God's predetermined intention to allow Satan to tempt His Son, Jesus Christ. The testing by Satan did not begin until Jesus had stayed in the wilderness for forty days and nights. The temptation of Jesus is another example showing how God controls and restrains evil, and only on limited and divinely purposeful reasons, permits Satan to act against humanity, and in this example, His only Son.

Satan used spiritual warfare schemes against Jesus three times:

1. "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."³⁵
2. "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down."³⁶

³⁴ Matt. 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; and Luke 4:1–13.

³⁵ Matt. 4:3.

3. “If you fall down and worship me.”³⁷

Three times Satan tempted Christ by challenging His deity as God, His faith in God, and His position with God. Jesus resisted Satan’s spiritual warfare attacks by using the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Satan’s wilderness scheme was to take advantage of the physically, mentally, and spiritually exhausted Jesus and then try to defeat him with temptations. Satan tempted him with bread from stones, care from angels, and power to rule kingdoms. All Jesus needed to do, to be in Satan’s favor and get out of the forty days in the wilderness was to turn stone into bread, trust that the angels would catch him, and give Satan a little worship. Instead, Jesus cited and followed the Deuteronomic command to fear, worship, and serve only the “Lord your God” and He did not give in to Satan’s temptation nor “go after other gods.”³⁸ Jesus overcame Satan’s schemes of spiritual warfare and established a pattern and practice for all believers in Christ to follow.

Judas Betrays Jesus for Thirty Pieces of Silver Scheme

Judas Iscariot was one of Jesus’s disciples, and he was the treasurer for the group and carried the moneybag to use for ministry needs when Jesus was preaching, teaching, and healing the people in the region. He was one of the original twelve disciples. However, he was secretly approached and cultivated by Satan to be a significant actor in a plot to expose and destroy Jesus’ ministry. Little did Judas know that his act of betrayal

³⁶ Matt. 4:5.

³⁷ Matt. 4:9.

³⁸ Jonathan Carl, “An Analysis and Critique of Neil T. Anderson’s Approach to Spiritual Warfare in Evangelism and Discipleship” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 269.

would lead to the death of Jesus.³⁹ There is also a supernatural twist to this spiritual warfare scheme because Jesus knew Judas would betray him. During the Last Supper, and after Jesus modeled servant leadership to His disciples by washing their feet, Jesus became troubled. While Jesus and the twelve disciples began the Passover meal in the upper room, he looked at the men whom he had invested the past three years of his life into with his preaching, teaching, and healing and said:

Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus’ side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.”⁴⁰

All four Gospels record the betrayal of Jesus.⁴¹ Satan’s well-devised scheme used Judah’s conflicted position as a disciple to show the High Priest’s soldiers where to find and arrest Jesus. Judas received thirty pieces of silver and was gaining great fame as he led the chief priests, elders, and a great crowd carrying torches into the Garden of Gethsemane to seize Jesus. The final act of betrayal was when Judas walked up to Jesus, surrounded by His disciples, and kissed him on the cheek.⁴²

The early church fathers like Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin offer differing opinions on the motivations behind Judas’ role in the betrayal of Jesus. There may always be questions asking why Judas betrayed Jesus. Nevertheless, Judas’ desire and lust for

³⁹ Matt. 26:14–16.

⁴⁰ John 13:21–27.

⁴¹ Matt. 26:14–16; Mark 14:10–11; Luke 22:3–6; and John 13:27.

⁴² Matt. 26:49.

wealth and fame fit a familiar pattern used by Satan. Despite the reason, Satan was successful in tempting Judas, and after Judas realized what he had done, he could not reconcile his betrayal of Jesus. After learning that Jesus faced crucifixion, Judas returned the thirty pieces of silver to the prosecution team of chief priests and elders. Afterward, Judas went out and committed suicide by hanging.⁴³

Peter Denies Jesus Three Times Scheme

Peter, named “the Rock” by Jesus and chosen to help build the 1st-century church, faced Satan’s spiritual warfare scheme to deny Jesus three times in front of Christ’s accusers. All four Gospels record Peter’s denial of Jesus.⁴⁴ Peter’s denial is another example of God’s control and restriction of Satan, who wants to cause division, distrust, and destroy the disciples’ trust and faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus foretelling Peter’s denial said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat.”⁴⁵ Being sifted, shaken until all the chaff, stems, and dirt are gone, and only the good seed remains, is a much better proposal than being killed. While Satan was not allowed to destroy Peter, he did manage to disgrace his testimony for Christ and damage his relationship with the other disciples.

Peter’s restoration to Christ and the other disciples after Christ’s trial, crucifixion, and resurrection is a significant turning point for Peter’s ministry and leadership with the disciples to advance God’s Kingdom and build Christ’s church. While he did fail the

⁴³ Matt. 27:5.

⁴⁴ Matt. 26:73–75; Mark 14:69–70; Luke 22:54–57; and John 18:13–27.

⁴⁵ Luke 22:31.

“Deny Jesus Thee Times Scheme,” God had a plan for how He could still use Peter despite succumbing to spiritual warfare. God used Peter’s denial to build his faith, confidence, and character that prepared him to lead the remaining eleven apostles and deliver the first large scale Christian call to salvation on the Day of Pentecost forty days after Jesus’ death and resurrection.⁴⁶ Yes, God had a plan for Peter and “three thousand souls” were saved after Peter gave the Pentecost message.⁴⁷

The examination of the three New Testament examples of Satan’s spiritual warfare schemes provide hope for humanity. First, because Jesus Christ successfully resisted Satan’s temptations in the desert, it proved that Satan could be resisted and overcome through the power of God and the promises of God claimed in Scripture. Next, despite Judas failing his temptations for power, popularity, and money God used his failures to prepare and move Jesus and the apostles forward in His sovereign plan for the redemption of humankind. Third, Peter failed his spiritual warfare scheme and denied Christ three times. Nevertheless, after he repented and waited for the Holy Spirit, as Jesus promised, God used him to grow the body of Christ and advance the Kingdom of God.

Reflections on Spiritual Warfare Schemes

So far, Chapter 2 has examined three Old Testament and three New Testament examples of spiritual warfare schemes. Out of the six real-life biblical examples, only one person, the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, successfully understood and withstood the spiritual warfare schemes brought against him by Satan and his demons. The other five

⁴⁶ Acts 2:14–36.

⁴⁷ Acts 2:37–41.

examples failed with defeat on the battlefield of life. The author will offer a summary of the six research examples and offer reflections on them individually and collectively.

1. Garden of Eden: Eve was tempted by Satan in the form of a talking serpent who used subtle questioning, half-truths, and enticements of fulfilled hunger, pleasure, and knowledge like God in exchange for eating the fruit from the Tree of Good and Evil.
2. Tower of Babel: The Babylonians were tempted by Satan, who placed envy, lust, and hubris in their community who desired worldly status, position, and a chance to be like God in exchange for building a tower and climbing it into the heavens.
3. King David: Satan tempted David with lust and sexual pleasure in exchange for taking and laying with another man's wife.
4. Christ in the Wilderness: Jesus was tempted by Satan with food, recognition, and world power in exchange for turning a stone into bread, jumping off a high point and being caught by angels, and paying homage and worship to Satan.
5. Judas Betrays Jesus: Satan tempted Judas with fame and fortune in exchange for leading the High Priest to Jesus and identifying him.
6. Peter Denies Jesus: Satan tempted Peter with pride and success in exchange for disregarding Jesus warning that he would "fall away because of me this night."⁴⁸

Spiritual warfare schemes come in many shapes, sizes, forms, and dimensions that are tailor-made for the victim. Satan's schemes appeal to needs, desires, fears, hopes, and

⁴⁸ Matt. 26:31.

dreams, to name a few areas where evil attacks. Satan works his schemes against individuals, couples, families, teams, organizations, communities, cultures, countries, and nations. Satan infiltrates systems, communications, structures, media, and information. Satan and his league of fallen angels have been watching humanity since the beginning. They cannot read minds, but they are very good at knowing the pattern and practice of all types of people and the situations they find themselves in. Satan knows the Bible and God's plan better than most ministry professionals.

Individually, every person in each of the six spiritual warfare scheme examples faced one or more temptations to fulfill their satanically suggested need. If they chose to fulfill that need, it led to sin and separation from their relationship with God, except David, who confessed his sin and restored his relationship with God. Christ in the Wilderness is the only example of successful resistance to the temptations of food, fame, and power by claiming God's Word. Christ's example confirms the veracity of Scripture, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."⁴⁹

Collectively, the preceding six examples of spiritual warfare schemes reveal the scripturally documented life experiences and spiritual struggles from Scripturally significant characters and communities. They played critical roles in God's sovereign plan of salvation, which is leading humankind towards eternity. The examples provide an encouraging theme that God was not surprised by the events or the free-will choices made by His creation or His Son. These Scriptural accounts confirm God's omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotent nature in each of the six documented spiritual warfare schemes where five ended in defeat, and one ended in victory.

⁴⁹ James 4:7.

Theological Approaches to Spiritual Warfare

Barna's 2018 primary research shows, with a 95 percent confidence level, that the Christian church in North America is feeling the weight of a digital Babylon bearing down on their congregants.⁵⁰ Therefore, knowing how the North American church views Paul's notion of principalities and powers is a key finding for developing an approach that advances the thesis of this paper—putting on Christ prepares believers for spiritual warfare.⁵¹ Paul and Peter describe principalities and powers, cosmic forces, invisible dominions, and heavenly authorities as satanic evils that manifest themselves in both the physical and spiritual dimensions. As such, all aspects of Christian living are being targeted by Satan and influenced by his numerous evil schemes and adaptable strategies that intend to disrupt, divide, and destroy the body of Christ.

The six examples of spiritual warfare schemes confirm that the threat of evil is real and that Satan and his demons are formidable enemies to the Christian faith. As such, further investigation into how principalities and powers influence spiritual warfare is warranted. Chapter 4 will expand on how principalities and powers influence evil in the world. Landon Coleman, in his dissertation on principalities and powers, suggests that there are three significant trends or approaches of theological thought when it comes to spiritual warfare: liberal, traditional, and conservative.⁵²

⁵⁰ Kinnaman, 1.

⁵¹ Col. 1:16, 2:15; Eph. 6:12; and 1 Pet. 3:22.

⁵² Landon Coleman, "Principalities and Powers: A Historical and Biblical Study with Strategic Application in North American Churches" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 2–3, in UMI 3411367.

First, Walter Wink is associated with the liberal Protestant approach. Wink's worldview is one of liberation theology. He does not take Satan, demons, or fallen angels seriously but instead interprets them as myth, superstitions, and a remnant of an ancient past for the uneducated and fearful.⁵³ As such, his approach desensitizes people to the existence of the spirit world, creates disbelief in a real devil, and a disbelief in consequences for sin in the world.

Second, C. Peter Wagner is the leader of the traditional spiritual warfare approach. Wagner understands principalities and powers as “personal, evil, spiritual beings” and refers to them as “territorial spirits.”⁵⁴ He calls his approach “strategic-level spiritual warfare” because Satan and his demons have the ability to hold “large numbers of humans” from all aspects of society in the form of “spiritual captivity.”⁵⁵ Wagner interprets Jesus' reference to, “binds the strong man” as a biblical notion to neutralize the demons that he calls territorial spirits.⁵⁶

Third, Clinton Arnold is the scholar most closely representing the conservative approach. Arnold's approach acknowledges evil, a real devil, and challenges Christians to turn to the Bible for their answers. Arnold strongly advises believers to “accept the worldview of the Bible at face value.”⁵⁷ He wrote:

⁵³ Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986), 172.

⁵⁴ Coleman, 7.

⁵⁵ C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996), 22.

⁵⁶ Ibid. See also Matt. 12:29 as a tool to bind demons and cast them out of the territorial locations where demonic activity persists.

⁵⁷ Clinton E. Arnold, *The Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 1992), 11.

Evil imposes itself upon us and those we love. And if we want help from the Bible for dealing with the problem of evil, we must be willing to take seriously what the Bible takes seriously: the intense involvement in the life of a figure named Satan and his powers of darkness. Far too long the Western church has given neither sufficient nor serious attention to this topic.⁵⁸

Arnold's statement coincides with this paper's research problem, that the Christian church in the United States is desensitized to the powers of darkness and fails to prepare their leaders and members for service in God's army to fight against the evil principalities and powers of Satan.

Arnold's conservative approach will guide this paper's academic and theological analysis of spiritual warfare. In addition, there is theological space to consider the conservative portions of Wagner's approach. These portions include examining strategic-level spiritual warfare concepts and territorial spirits, as supported by the prophet Daniel. He associated hostile angels with geographic names like the prince of Persia and Greece.⁵⁹ The conservative approach does not support Wagner's naming of, communicating with, and casting out demons as part of this research.

Conservative Approach to Spiritual Warfare

Like Arnold recommends, Christians should adopt the scriptural worldview if they want to endure and survive the never-ending conflict of spiritual warfare in their lives. He warns that the scriptural worldview "collides head-on with the modern worldview and its naturalistic assumptions."⁶⁰ The biblical foundation for spiritual

⁵⁸ Arnold, *Power of Darkness*, 11.

⁵⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare (Three Crucial Questions)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 147.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

warfare against humanity first began in the Garden of Eden. Moses records the temptation, human reasoning, free-will choice, and first sin.⁶¹ Two humans, destined to be the parents of the rest of humanity, created in the image and likeness of a Triune God, were exposed, tempted, and tested by a creature in the Garden of Eden. The Eden account, eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, was the first successful spiritual warfare scheme perpetrated against humankind. When sin entered creation, the impact was so profound that humankind was given a death sentence and exiled from their perfect home in the Garden of Eden. Eve and then Adam failed Satan's temptation, which severed their sinless relationship with God. One might ask why God allowed all of this to happen? Surely God knew everything about them from their beginning to their end, and they knew God, and God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Nevertheless, their innocence was gone once they ate the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Once they realized they were naked, they covered themselves in shame. Satan helped strip them of their perfect beginning and relationship with their creator God. Banished from their perfect home, they no longer walked with God in the garden and were cursed to struggle and endure hardship in the world. Adam and Eve were deceived, tempted, and tricked into the first sin. As a result, they gave up a "very good" life in exchange for a life of toil on a cursed ground where they would die and return to the dust of the earth.⁶²

⁶¹ Gen. 3.

⁶² Gen. 1:31. God surveyed his creation and described it as "very good." In Genesis 3:17, 19, God curses the ground because Satan defeated them with his evil scheme. Sentenced to a life of toil and sweat, the human will return to the ground and become dust.

Understanding and withstanding the evil schemes like the one used against Eve and continue to be weaponized and used against humankind today is the reason behind this paper's research into spiritual warfare. Why did the first humans, perfect in design, created by God on the sixth day of creation fail? God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."⁶³ One might pause and reflect on the marvelous moment for humankind when God chose them for something special, noble, and lasting. God said, "in Our image...Our likeness" were man and woman made.⁶⁴ The Trinity, God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three-in-one, were all present during creation. They created the heavens and the earth precisely the way they imagined. So, opponents to the conservative approach ask, why would God create human beings, in His image and likeness, and not give them a plan on what to do if approached and tempted by the serpent in the Garden of Eden? Could God not see the threat to His creation coming? Of course, the Trinity did see the threat. Nevertheless, God reigns, and His plan for humanity is sovereign. God says in Isaiah, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways."⁶⁵ To the believer engaged in spiritual warfare, God's thoughts and ways matter in the believer's heart, mind, and soul. Without that confidence, belief, and faith that God's armor protects the believer in spiritual battle, there would be little reason and motivation to go into battle against evil.

⁶³ Gen. 1:26.

⁶⁴ Gen. 1:26.

⁶⁵ Isa. 55:8-9.

Theologians continue to ask if God allowed Adam and Eve to sin, “For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.”⁶⁶ God so loved the world, that he gives humans the free will to choose how to respond to the Tempter and his evil schemes to disobey God. Yes, the Triune God allowed Satan to test humanity, which He also knew they would fail. Both must be true, or else the doctrine and attributes of an Omniscient God must be false. Chris Poblete, an editor for the *Blue Letter Bible*, says, “There are no secrets to Him...nothing that is outside the scope of His conception, understanding, or attention.”⁶⁷ God always has an all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful, and supreme purpose for everything, even though it might sometimes appear paradoxical to this research.⁶⁸

Does Evil Bring Glory to God

The testing of Job by Satan provides deeper insights into the relationship between God and Satan. While God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, the story of Job reveals another dynamic in the spiritual warfare schemes of Satan. While Satan’s goal is always nefarious, Job reveals how God sometimes chooses Satan to be the instrument of His will. Jerry Ressa, in contrast to popular notions about Satan, describes an alternate viewpoint about God’s use of evil in his dissertation. Ressa says, “Contrary to a vast reservoir of contemporary teaching on the subject of Satan and his strategies, this paper

⁶⁶ Ps. 5:4–5.

⁶⁷ Chris Poblete, “The Attributes of God: Omniscience,” *The Blue Letter Bible* (blog), September 28, 2011, <https://blogs.blueletterbible.org/blb/2011/09/28/the-attributes-of-god-omniscience/>.

⁶⁸ Ps. 33:6; Is. 46:10; and Jer. 23:23–24 are verses that describe how God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.

argues that Satan, his agents, and their resultant evil acts bring glory to God and salvation to humankind.”⁶⁹ This paper holds that Satan is under the complete control and restraint of God and that any of Satan’s actions come under the preview of an omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent God. Furthermore, Scripture does support documented instances, like the account of Job, where Satan is openly permitted to act against a servant of God. Ressa contends, “All evil on humankind and the environment, does indeed ultimately bring glory to God and salvation to humanity.”⁷⁰

This author agrees that Satan, on occasion, is permitted to act against humanity at various levels of severity, but is always controlled and restrained by God. He disagrees with Ressa’s position that all evil ultimately results in bringing God glory and salvation to humankind. This author holds the biblical position that God hates sin. While this author supports Paul’s thesis in Romans 8:28 that “all things work together for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purposes,” he does not believe all things and all evils, especially when Christians are not involved, equates to bringing glory to God. So, he challenges Ressa’s thesis that evil ultimately brings glory to God and salvation to humanity.⁷¹ If, according to Ressa, all evil finally brings glory to God, why did God create hell and the lake of fire for Satan, his fallen angels, and unsaved people who never choose Christ as their Lord and Savior? Does losing souls to Satan bring glory to God? Does spending eternity in separation from God bring Him glory?

⁶⁹ Jerry F. Ressa, “Satanic Influences in the American Christian Church in a Post-Modern Consumer Society” (DMin diss., Portland Seminary of George Fox University, 2018), <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/251>.

⁷⁰ Ressa, ix.

⁷¹ Ibid., 33.

The Influence of Spiritual Warfare

What role does spiritual warfare play in the US-American Christian church?

Andrew Monteith writes in his dissertation on spiritual warfare through an ethnographic examination that:

Spiritual warfare plays a significant role in Evangelical thought and practice and is a phenomenon that has hitherto remained mostly unanalyzed. The effects of spiritual warfare upon a specific community or individual are dependent upon two things: 1) Pneumatology, and 2) Eschatology.⁷²

Monteith asserts that if Christians believe the Holy Spirit empowers them, then their spiritual battle strategy is offensive. Conversely, if the Christian believes they are preparing for the end times when Christ returns for the church, then their spiritual battle strategy is mostly defensive. However, when both viewpoints combine, it creates a synergy that is observable through an ethnographic approach.⁷³ This paper supports Sarah Pink's notion that knowledge, understanding spiritual warfare, is the intentional process of exploring the "relationships" between visual, verbal, and other forms of knowledge.⁷⁴ This author's field-research on spiritual warfare supports this paper's thesis that putting on Christ prepares believers for spiritual warfare.

According to the Barna Research Group, spiritual warfare has increased the number of church dropouts by 5 percent from 59 to 64 percent since a 2011 study.⁷⁵

Kinnaman comments that faith, which once was at the center of US-American society, is

⁷² Andrew Monteith, "The Light and the Night: An Ethnographic Examination of Spiritual Warfare" (master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2010), 2–3, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Kinnaman, 1.

being “pushed to the margins,” and a once Christianized nation is becoming a “post-Christian society.”⁷⁶ Arnold says, “Spiritual warfare is not an isolatable compartment of church ministry or Christian experience. Spiritual warfare is an integral part of the entire Christian experience.”⁷⁷ Therefore, avoiding spiritual warfare is not an option for the Christian. That would be like a gardener avoiding weeds. The gardener’s duty is to tend to the weeds because they are a fact of life. Spiritual warfare, like recurring weeds, needs tending to or the weeds of temptation will overgrow and begin slowly choking out the spiritual testimony of a once healthy Christian witness.

Summary

Chapter 2 surveyed Scripture and reviewed primary sources to establish the scriptural foundations for a spiritual warfare claim that supports the following thesis: putting on Christ as spiritual armor prepares believers in the United States church to understand and withstand the devil’s schemes used in spiritual warfare. Six examples of evil spiritual warfare schemes, three from the Old Testament and three from the New Testament, were examined. The exegesis of relevant spiritual warfare Scriptures and analysis of peer-reviewed sources support this paper's claim that that the US-American church’s preparation is inadequate to survive the chaos and destruction that is currently terrorizing the Christian community. Both leaders and members are encouraged to train and equip themselves to develop their own personal method to put on Christ as their full Armor of God.

⁷⁶ Kinnaman, 1.

⁷⁷ Arnold, 3 *Crucial Questions*, 19.

Why or why not wear spiritual armor? This researcher believes that if he does not wear Christ as his full Armor of God that he will be tricked, deceived, and defeated by one or more spiritual warfare schemes. Defeat and failure are inevitable if believers do not adequately defend themselves against Satan's evil schemes. Spiritual warfare is not in itself bad; it comes with the decision to follow Christ. However, it is how the Christian responds to spiritual warfare that is the challenge that needs to be considered. Why? Because in defeat, the believer's incarnational testimony becomes marginalized and discredited. Also, their Christian walk will be labeled hypocritical, and their close relationship with the Lord will suffer.

Reflections on the scriptural examples of spiritual warfare show that Satan preys on his next victim's needs, desires, fears, hopes, and dreams. He commonly appeals to a person's vanity and pride by proposing temptations of fame, fortune, power, and status. This chapter reviewed three approaches to spiritual warfare called the liberal, traditional, and conservative approaches. The conservative approach supported by Clinton Arnold is the favored view to support this paper's thesis. This chapter also reviewed and challenged a controversial dissertation on spiritual warfare that claims evil ultimately brings glory to God and salvation to humankind.⁷⁸ Finally, an examination of the role and influence that spiritual warfare plays in the Christian church in the United States adds support to this paper's thesis claim. Also, the Barna Group surveys endorse ethnography as a research tool for added knowledge when conducting studies on spiritual warfare in the Christian church.

Chapter 3 on cultural influences and historical patterns of evil will discuss this author's two years of academic field research and fourteen years of experiential lived

⁷⁸ Ressa, 32.

research on spiritual warfare. The primary sections of Chapter 3 include how culture, consumerism, and humanism influence spiritual warfare. The “Patterns of Evil” sections will discuss how evil hides in plain sight and the impact of desensitization and globalization on spiritual warfare.

CHAPTER 3: CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Chapter 1 began the dissertation by asking why Christians in the US-American church are unable to withstand the effects of spiritual warfare. This author's field research findings help address the ongoing need, problem, and opportunity to further investigate spiritual warfare. His thesis claims that putting on Christ as one's spiritual armor prepares Christians to understand and withstand malevolent schemes perpetrated by Satan in spiritual warfare.

Chapter 2 builds on the paper's thesis foundation by analyzing the groundwork from the Old and New Testament that promotes putting on Christ as spiritual armor. Six biblical examples of spiritual warfare reveal Satan's strategies and techniques used to tempt, deceive, and compel people to sin. Fame, fortune, and power, in various forms, are the primary motivators used by Satan to entice and lure his intended victims into sinning.

Chapter 3 adds depth to the first two chapters by examining the cultural influences on spiritual warfare. This author reviews how culture interacts with spiritual warfare from the viewpoints of naturalism, consumerism, and humanism. He next illuminates how evil hides in plain sight by analyzing the effects of social media, globalization, and the problem with sin as they relate to spiritual warfare.

How Culture Influences Spiritual Warfare

Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne say, “Everyone has a culture.”¹ Culture is where people live, what they do, and how they interact with each other. According to Ralph Winter’s definition, culture is a “patterned way in which people do things together.”² A culture is a mixture of people, places, and practices that maintains a worldview, language, and values. Culture is always adapting, changing, and modifying itself to internal and external influences encountered in the world:

Culture is an integrated system of beliefs (about God or reality or ultimate meaning), of values (about what is true, good, beautiful and normative), of customs (how to behave, relate to others, talk, pray, dress, work, play, trade, farm, eat, etc.) and institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs (government, law courts, temples or churches, family, schools, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, clubs, etc.), which binds a society together and gives it a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity.³

It is important, when researching the problem of spiritual warfare, to have a good understanding of culture because Satan and his demonic forces are experts in all world cultures, languages, beliefs, and customs. As such, he uses culture to his advantage when designing spiritual warfare schemes. For the purposes of this paper, most of the research is narrowly focused on the Christian church in US-American cultures. However, there are geographic regions in the United States, like the Somalia population in Minnesota, that warrant an increased understanding of foreign cultures. Knowing how Satan uses spiritual warfare to influence immigrants and refugee cultures is important for ministry leaders

¹ Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 397.

² Winter and Hawthorne, 507.

³ *Ibid.*, 507–08.

who might be serving a diverse congregation that needs help preparing to understand and defend against spiritual warfare.

“Following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air” is a dangerous way to do culture.⁴ Focusing evil spirits at Christians and promoting disobedience to God’s Word is a culture of evil, and if left unrestrained by God, would overrun the entire world. Paul was a 1st-century apostle with a 21st-century message that encourages believers to put on Christ as their full Armor of God. After two thousand years, the sins of humanity remain the same, but the enticements and seductions from a technologically-driven culture increase the Tempter’s chances of winning at spiritual warfare.

Naturalism

The current US-American culture promotes naturalism, consumerism, humanism, and globalization. Paul Hiebert claims, “There is a sharp distinction between the natural and supernatural world... Few people, even those who are religious, live with a constant awareness that the world around them is inhabited by spirits that directly influence their everyday experiences.”⁵ Hiebert defines a worldview:

Let us define “worldview” in anthropological terms as “the foundational cognitive, affective, and evaluative assumptions and frameworks a group of people makes about the nature of reality which they use to order their lives.” It encompasses people’s images or maps of the reality of all things that they use for living their lives. It is the cosmos thought to be true, desirable, and moral by a community of people.⁶

⁴ Eph. 2:2.

⁵ Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 358.

⁶ Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People*

Naturalism, according to Hiebert, “has thoroughly infected American culture.”⁷ He reports that naturalism is the predominant cultural system and is the “foundation for the scientific academy, education, the legal system, and the news media.”⁸ The naturalistic worldview, which separates science from the spiritual, has been the leading cultural viewpoint for many years. Naturalism promotes the advance of reason and science over Christianity, which leads to addiction to social media, dependence on virtual relationships, and obsession with instant photo and video messaging. Naturalism influences social norms by decreasing censorship on violence, sexuality, and other forms of social injustice. As a result, the spiritual world influences both good and evil.

For example, Christian practices of prayer in public schools and the preservation of new life are fading. In comparison, non-Christian practices of racism, violence, and hate-focused forms of communication are increasing in centers of education and national media outlets. These symptoms of increased social injustices in the United States are direct evidence that evil spirits and principalities and powers are migrating from the shadow world into the visible world. Evil is now hiding in plain sight.

Change (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 25–26.

⁷ Ibid., 146.

⁸ Ibid.

Consumerism

In the current US-American culture, religion looks like a commodity, and religious people act as the consumer.⁹ Vincent Miller's narrative *Consuming Religion* examines how a postmodern US-American culture influences the spiritual warfare schemes between a nation of consumers and a nation of believers. According to Miller, the commodification of culture transforms goods, services, ideas, and people into commodities of trade, while consumerism encourages society to consume more commodities.¹⁰ Unfortunately, US-American consumers portray an insatiable desire for more commodities. Their unmet needs create a type of culturized opening for Satan to enter and begin influencing people and systems with his myriad of spiritual warfare schemes. His evil schemes motivate people to adapt and normalize their excessive commodity desires into a new normal for their consumeristic culture.

Courtney Wilder says that "consumers are encouraged to see the objects they pursue as constitutive of their identity."¹¹ Satan effectively uses the constitutive theme as a spiritual warfare tactic to focus people on their idols rather than on their relationship with Christ. Could Paul's message on putting on Christ as the Armor of God be viewed as a type of spiritual commodity? By leveraging Miller's "treasure troves" line of thinking, the message behind the full Armor of God fits his ideas on religious

⁹ Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 70.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹ Courtney Wilder, "Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture (Book Review)," *The Journal of Religion* 85, no. 4 (2005): 681.

consumerism. The Armor of God is not only a critical artifact and symbol, but to the religious consumer, it is a valuable treasure that dates to the 1st century.¹²

What is the pushback against the Armor of God from culturally evolved modern religious societies? How will they respond to a spiritual warfare commodity that helps them resist Satan and defend against spiritual warfare? Miller suggests that for many Christians, it is “easier for religion to become an empty myth than to be the bearer of uncomfortable challenges.”¹³ While salvation is a gift from God, it does come with conditions, risk, and a personal cost that many religious consumers hesitate to add to their list of spiritual commodities. Fear is the reason.

Satan, as the great deceiver, and his legions of demons, continually create fear in the spiritual marketplace, which causes consumer fear and timidity in their spiritual investing strategies. While Miller highlights the effects of consumerism in spiritual warfare, he nevertheless takes a safe theological position. Instead of naming Satan as the underlying source of the consumer sin problem, he describes the symptoms of the problem. For example, Miller says, “the real problem with consumer culture lies in the structures and practices that systematically confuse and misdirect well-intentioned people seeking to do good.”¹⁴ Translated and viewed through the Armor of God lens, Miller’s “structures” equate to Satan’s demons, evil powers, and dark forces, while his “practices” compare to the evil schemes and destructive wiles of Satan. Used together, the structures

¹² Miller, 70.

¹³ Ibid., 94.

¹⁴ Ibid., 225.

and practices of consumerism is a modernized approach to the old temptations of idolatry and lust for someone else's stuff.

Wilder critiques Miller's work for being soft on the consumer's opportunity "to make moral decisions about their consumption."¹⁵ Furthermore, Wilder does not give Christians a "pass" on their stewardship responsibility when consuming spiritual and worldly commodities. If Christians are responsible for their consumerism, what are the implications and stark realities when "all forms of culture, including ideologies of resistance" are commodified?¹⁶ For example, if evil were trading as a stock on the Standard and Poor's 500 stock market index, Miller would say evil is "bullish" because investors are buying more shares of evil and adding them to their life's portfolio holdings. Because so many people view life through their financial investments it is helpful to compare evil with stocks because the association between evil and commodities creates a type of consumer tension for people. This tension promotes secular and theological spaces where people can see evil more clearly as a commodity in a recognizable context, and compare it with their investments in a type of living portfolio where they can compare their investment performances over time. Evil, therefore, is Satan's number one commodity for sale on his version of the spiritual warfare scheme exchange.

Miller's "remedy for the problem of commodified religion is to fight back."¹⁷

This paper agrees that spiritual warfare is a fight, a struggle, and battle based on

¹⁵ Wilder, 682.

¹⁶ Matthew S. Hedstrom, "Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture," *Church History* 77, no. 1 (March 2008): 248.

¹⁷ Hedstrom, 249.

scriptural precepts between good or evil, right or wrong, and truth or lie. He says to fight back “on the level of practices and structures rather than meanings and beliefs.”¹⁸

Miller’s fight against religious consumerism inspires Christians to stand firm and fight against spiritual warfare desensitization. He calls for “re-embedding” doctrines and practices within the body of Christ. This author contends that putting on the Armor of God by wearing Christ is an “armoring up” practice to complete and a battle cry for Christians to hear as they march faithfully forward in the army of God.¹⁹ Putting on the Armor of God is not a form of bricolage warfare. Instead, Christians are encouraged to practice putting on Christ as the full Armor of God because it is a precise and divinely ordered warfare against evil. Symbolically and spiritually, wearing Christ, gives the religious consumer an authentic incarnational life.

Humanism

Humanism is a viewpoint that is contrary to the Christian worldview. In the context of spiritual warfare, humanism is a cultural viewpoint against the theism of God. Satan and his demons use humanism to exploit people and systems at every opportunity. Humanism is closely related to Atheism, the disbelief in God. The American Humanist Association says, “Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism, affirms a responsibility to lead ethical lives of value to self and humanity.”²⁰ Humanism puts the responsibility for ethical living on the human, without any help or support from

¹⁸ Miller, 180.

¹⁹ Hedstrom, 249.

²⁰ Sarah Henry, “Humanists in Fight for Right to Perform Nonreligious Marriages,” American Humanist Association: Good Without a God, December 23, 2019, <https://americanhumanist.org/featured/humanists-in-fight-for-right-to-perform-nonreligious-marriages/>.

their creator God. As such, humanists are easy prey for Satan, who is called a roaring lion who is prowling the world and seeking someone to attack and devour with his spiritual warfare schemes.²¹

Rationalism, an element of humanism, relies on reason as a primary input for determining many cultural norms. Does rationalism influence spiritual warfare? Yes, according to Keith Ferdinando, who describes how reason easily influences US-American interpreters. He says interpreters have a “rationalistic worldview” because they contextualize what the Bible says about demonology and spiritual warfare.²² The following two examples illustrate the danger of reasoning with temptation in a world ruled by Satan. First, the Young Saint vignette from Chapter 1 is an instance of how a young believer, wanting to fit in at work, tried to “reason” with the Holy Spirit by justifying that having one intoxicating drink with his coworkers would not be a wrong decision. The Young Saint’s reasoning led to moral failure, a strained relationship with God, and created a type of self-imposed cyclic purgatory over regret and guilt that Satan leveraged against the Young Saint for years.

Second, the Garden of Eden scheme from Chapter 2 is an example of how a new human, wanting to adapt at home, tried to reason with the Holy Spirit by justifying that having one bite of the forbidden fruit with her husband would not be a wrong decision.²³ Eve’s reasoning led to moral failure, a strained relationship with God, and created a self-imposed hell-on-earth over sin and shame that Satan leveraged against humanity for

²¹ 1 Pet. 5:8.

²² Keith Ferdinando, “Screwtape Revisited: Demonology Western, Africa, and Biblical,” in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 105.

²³ Gen. 3:6.

thousands of years. Both examples reveal the impact of humanism and its influence on spiritual warfare. Reasoning with God, after being tempted by Satan, almost always leads to moral failure and defeat. According to Paul, the only chance in surviving the humanist, spiritual warfare approach, or for that matter, any spiritual warfare approach is to put on Christ as the full Armor of God.²⁴ Only then, wearing Christ as personalized body armor, can the believer survive the onslaught of spiritual warfare attacks from Satan and his demonic army of fallen angels.

How Evil Hides in Plain Sight

This section examines the implications of spiritual warfare when Satan can successfully hide in plain sight. The following scripture offers advice and describes how to evaluate people and discern spirits to determine if they are from God or from Satan:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.²⁵

Armed with John's advice on testing false prophets and evil spirits, the Intercessors for America provides help to Christians. They offer a significant Christian prayer ministry that coordinates nationwide prayer and provides Christian support and prayer resources to the United States. They have over one hundred spiritual warfare prayers, strategies, devotions, and training links to support the Christian's battle against evil. For example, Derek Prince says that intercessory prayer is not only defensive but

²⁴ Eph. 6:11.

²⁵ 1 John 4:1-3.

also offensive and should be used as an offensive “weapon of attack” against the forces of evil.²⁶ Intercessors for America also provided a pamphlet and six days of focused prayer for the United States’ leaders, called *Spiritual Warfare through Intercessory Prayer*.²⁷ Intercessory prayer is not just a US-American response to spiritual warfare. Africa, for example, is a vast continent, approximately three times larger in landmass than the United States, with fifty-four countries that are being called to prayer against the forces of evil. Donald Lewis and Richard Pierard describe African countries that openly acknowledge their continent-country-wide recognition of their daily “struggle against demonic forces and spiritual evil.”²⁸ They highlight how the Intercessors for Africa recognize evil and call-out the failure of many African states who are struggling with a spiritual problem. The Intercessors for Africa uses “prayer to counter the evil forces behind the political agents.”²⁹ Prayer, like Prince says with Intercessors for America, is one of the most powerful supernatural weapons in the believers’ Armor of God arsenal.

James 4:7 says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Even with all the prayers from Christian intercessors, this paper’s research reveals significant gaps of divine protection in the US-American church against spiritual warfare. In order to defend against evil attacks effectively, it is vital to know the enemy’s strategies. Where are the rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces

²⁶ Derek Prince, “Prayer as a Weapon of Attack,” Intercessors for America, October 10, 2015, <https://www.ifapray.org/blog/prayer-as-a-weapon-of-attack/>.

²⁷ George Taylor, *Spiritual Warfare through Intercessory Prayer* (Purcellville, VA: Intercessors for America, 2019), 1–7, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/ifa-assets/General+Assets/Spiritual+Warfare+through+Intercessory+Prayer+Daily+Devotional.pdf>.

²⁸ Donald M. Lewis and Richard V. Pierard, *Global Evangelicalism: Theology, History and Culture in Regional Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 162.

²⁹ Ibid.

hiding? If Paul commands believers to put on the Armor of God and stand against evil so they can defend and survive each spiritual battle by the minute, hour, and the day it would be nice to know where the enemy is coming from and where to stand and fight.³⁰

The advance of information technology, media, social media, and instant access to almost anything one desires creates a spiritual warfare trap, even for the most experienced Armor of God-bearer. Satan's newest strategy is to hide in plain sight. In other words, people in general, and Christians precisely do not see Satan's schemes because of their desensitization to the reality and threat of Satan, so much so that Satan can stand inside almost any US-American church foyer and not worry of being recognized for what he truly represents: pure evil.

For example, during the 2013 Super Bowl XLVII half time, Allstate Insurance aired a commercial that shows how Satan is coming out of the shadows.³¹ Satan portrays himself publicly as both a serpent and the devil in a dramatized Garden of Eden scene recreation.³² Taking the name of Mayhem, Satan deceived, entertained, and desensitized millions of viewers watching and laughing away the first sin of humankind. The commercial ended with a catchphrase that says, Mayhem "has been and always will be, everywhere."³³

The Allstate Insurance Mayhem commercials are just one example of the many strategies on how Satan uses people, technology, and timing to broadcast his spiritual

³⁰ Eph. 6:12–13.

³¹ Allstate Insurance, "Mayhem Has Forbidden Fruit," advertisement, produced by Leo Burnett, aired February 3, 2013, during Super Bowl 47 on ABC, 1 min., 9 sec.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

warfare-laden messages to the world. The Mayhem commercials—over forty of them by 2015—are a key satanic influence successfully marginalizing the Christian church in the United States’ response to spiritual warfare.³⁴ Dean Winters, the Mayhem actor, called his work in the Allstate commercials “the best five years” of his life.³⁵ Winters, playing the Satan-Mayhem personification, helped minimize, rationalize, and personalize accidents, fire, damage, and injury as just another part of life in a fallen world. Mayhem would likely say, “It is not my fault; I’m just doing my job.” Mayhem uses the catch phrase for sin, “Mayhem has been and always will be, everywhere,” in most of the commercials. Six of the commercials were so violent that the satanically influenced media systems prohibited showing them, at least for now.³⁶ Mayhem, in each Allstate insurance commercial, can subtly and subconsciously advance the repeating notion that “sin, like life, just happens,” and it was not Adam, or Eve, or anybody else’s fault for eating the forbidden fruit. So, Mayhem asks, why should any of us suffer God’s wrath?

Mayhem’s alternative claim presumes the biblical account of the Garden of Eden is wrong. Instead of referencing Scripture, Mayhem presents a post-modern interpretation of the Eden events. He used dark humor with a theatrical cast, including Satan, played by Mayhem, a snake, and Adam and Eve played by actors. Satan altered the Eden storyline, leaving viewers with fairytale impressions of an old Bible story that effectively marginalized the divine scriptural events as they occurred. Mayhem dressed up in a black suit, white shirt, and black tie, presenting himself as just another unlucky fallen angel

³⁴ Jesse Spero, “Dean Winters: 6 of My Allstate Mayhem Commercials Are Too Violent for TV,” *Access*, February 18, 2015, <https://www.accessonline.com/articles/dean-winters-6-of-my-allstate-mayhem-commercials-are-too-violent-for-tv-157600>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

who got hurt for just doing his job of creating chaos, disorder, and havoc. Satan not only hides in plain sight on TV commercials, but he also hides in the digital ones and zeros of social media platforms.

Social Media

Scott Galloway's *The Four* is a book on how to understand, navigate, and live in a fast-paced digital age that is currently dominated by the apocalyptical Four Horsemen named Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google. Referred to as "technology giants" these four companies have the power to defy the law, control people's private data, and create overwhelming business monopolies.³⁷ They appeal to humans' need for love, sex, information, and "selfies." Believers need to understand the digital landscape they live, work, and worship in so they are prepared and equipped to recognize spiritual warfare schemes embedded in their social media applications.

Called the "Four," Galloway says that Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google dominate the digital marketplace and social media platforms. Amazon's investment strategy, according to Galloway, is to borrow money and buy "extraordinarily expensive control delivery systems" so they can secure a future retail position that will "asphyxiate" their competition.³⁸ For example, if Amazon is successful in creating a cost-effective small package delivery system, it will take business away from Federal Express, United Parcel Service, and the United States Postal Service.

³⁷ Scott Galloway, *The Four: The Hidden DNA of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google* (New York: Portfolio, Penguin, 2017), 1.

³⁸ Galloway, 33.

The Four create jobs, increase consumer value, provide desired commodities, and promote social connections. What is not to like about the Four's business model? Their marketplace model promotes the United States' capitalist society. Galloway says, "A country's place in the world is correlated with its level of consumer demand and production."³⁹ The Four promote capitalism and are not inherently evil organizations. Nevertheless, the adage "buyer beware" is sound advice for Christians in the United States church who are trying to live faithfully in a consumer-driven society. Jesus offers some helpful advice for the modern Christian consumer. While preparing to share the parable of the rich fool Jesus says, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."⁴⁰

While the Four look like they have good business models that provide successful investment opportunities and positive social connections, they nevertheless are prime targets for infiltration by the forces of evil because the Four's profit-driven agenda is powered by gaining access to people's personal information, spending patterns, and social likes and dislikes. Since Satan is not omniscient, omnipotent, nor omnipresent, the Four unwittingly provide valuable information that Satan's agents and demons can leverage to design new spiritual warfare schemes.

The Four's strategic plan is to provide goods and services to people for a "lower cost, greater selection, and faster delivery" than any of their competition.⁴¹ In comparison, God's strategic plan is to provide salvation from sin to people that is free,

³⁹ Galloway, 16.

⁴⁰ Luke 12:15.

⁴¹ Galloway, 31.

lasts forever, and is available immediately. This is important to illuminate because Christian consumers in the United States are continually bombarded from systems, like the Four use, to try and gather, store, and evaluate every bit of their personally identifiable data.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a new addition to Satan's spiritual warfare schemes in the 21st century. AI is not evil in and of itself. AI is the process of computers doing tasks that generally take human know-how to accomplish. Amazon invests heavily in AI, and "Alexa," named after the Library of Alexandria, is one of their AI platforms that "gets smarter every time you use it."⁴² Galloway reports that customers get so comfortable with Alexa; they knowingly allow Amazon teams to "listen in on their conversations and harvest their consumption data."⁴³ Very few people read the fine print or evaluate the legal language and risk they accept in order to use the application they want. These consumer behaviors to trust and accept, without understanding or evaluating the privacy and freedoms they are allowing others to see, supports this paper's notion that Satan is hiding in plain sight.

How does AI help Satan and his army of demonic angels? AI gives them more access to behavioral information about people so they can accomplish their goal and steal souls from God. Galloway confirms that, thanks to AI, "We now can track behavior at a level and scale previously unimaginable."⁴⁴ Neither Satan nor his demons are omnipresent, omniscient, or omnipotent. In spiritual warfare terms, Satan and his demons

⁴² Galloway, 28.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 188.

must travel to and from their war with humankind. While they are supernatural, interdimensional, and have powers beyond human comprehension, they have limitations. However, God, who created angels, maintains his ultimate control and restraint over Satan and his demons.

Satan and his army of demons use all modes of modern travel, information technology, communication, and now they have the advantage of obtaining freely-given spending habits from millions of believers using Amazon's Alexa AI platform. People talk to Alexa like they are praying to God. Instead of asking God, millions of people ask, "Alexa, is this a good thing?"⁴⁵ Additionally, Satan's evil agents can view Google searches that people conduct. They can read and monitor believer's social media posts, know whom they like or dislike, and get information on where they have been, where they are going, and who they are with at the moment. Now that AI is in the spiritual warfare tool-kit, it is not difficult for Satan to find his next believer to tempt and create moral failure or unbeliever to tempt and steal their soul. AI platforms gather their users' personal information and then sell it to the highest bidder who then uses the information for behavioral targeting. Marketing firms say that "behavioral targeting" is like the "white meat of marketing."⁴⁶

In summary, while the Four may be unintentionally building an AI equivalent of the Tower of Babel to access God in the digital world, omniscience reserves itself for only the one true God. Therefore, the Four's social media abilities to collect personal data and predict spending behavior on humanity may promote capitalism but it falls short by

⁴⁵ Galloway, 265.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 189.

comparison to the unfathomable, eternal, and omnipotent characteristic of a triune Creator God. So, how long will the Four survive asks Galloway? He and other consumer watch-guards of the digital age prophesy, “Business mimics biology.”⁴⁷ In other words, Galloway believes the Four has an expiration date and like biology, “the mortality rate is 100 percent.”⁴⁸ If the Four fail, Satan and his demons will adapt and move on to their next unwitting hosts. Finally, evil is not just a Satanic commodity in the United States but also, through the rapid advancement of globalization, a heavily traded spiritual commodity in global markets. The influence of globalization in spiritual warfare will be examined in the next section.

Globalization

Globalization is a complex process of connections between people, systems, beliefs, and how they live and interact with each other around the world.⁴⁹ Simply stated, globalization is people’s connections. The Tower of Babel account from Chapter 2 is an example of spiritual warfare in the Old Testament that promoted a type of forced globalization. As the biblical narrative records, the Babylonian people group, estimated at 200,000 people only spoke one language, determined they would seek fame, fortune, and status with God by building a tower into the heavens.⁵⁰ God was not surprised by the Babylonian’s desire to seek him, but their method was wrong and sinful because of the

⁴⁷ Galloway, 175.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Lewis and Pierard, 61.

⁵⁰ Tertius Chandler and Gerald Fox, *Three Thousand Years of Urban Growth* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 1.

spiritual warfare schemes used on them by Satan. However, God was merciful and extended His grace in line with accomplishing His divine purposes. Instead of punishing the people for their sins of pride and arrogance, God simply “confused” their language and turned one common language of the Babylonians into many global languages.⁵¹

Anthony Elliott says there are costs associated with the continued advance of globalization, positive and negative. He says, “Globalization has enmeshed individuals throughout the world in historically unique circumstances placing an unavoidable burden on each individual to reflexively manage their own life—creating a new and pervasive individualism.”⁵² Elliott asserts that globalization must be “conceptualized as possessing efficacy” within the private life of the individual before they can adapt to the magnitude and scale of the outside influences, stimuli, and forces that they encounter in everyday life.⁵³ This is important because living in a “borderless world” creates stress.⁵⁴ The world is not borderless yet, but the Four’s information advances and instant access communications is pushing nations in that direction. Looking forward, Christians wearing the full Armor of God are best prepared to help people find scripturally appropriate ways to cope and adapt with the stress of globalization.

Making research connections between globalization and spiritual warfare in many cultures is contingent upon the type of worldview they hold on evil principalities and

⁵¹ Gen 11:7–8.

⁵² Anthony Elliott, Charles Lemert, and Mark Carrigan, “The New Individualism: The Emotional Costs of Globalization,” *Journal of Critical Realism* 9, no. 3 (2010): 384.

⁵³ Elliott, Lemert, and Carrigan, 386.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 335.

powers.⁵⁵ For instance, Jean DeBernardi summarizes a global conference in Guatemala City in 1998, where participants from 115 countries gathered to share their experiences about ground level spiritual warfare.⁵⁶ Churches and believers from around the world gathered and talked about their problems with spiritual warfare. In many countries, like Guatemala, spiritual warfare is part of their social theory construct. The Lausanne Conferences, like the Global Conference on Spiritual Warfare held in Guatemala, confirm that many American countries and cultures are sensitive to the influences of Satan and the forces of evil.⁵⁷

One of the adverse effects of globalization is that it marginalizes and desensitizes Christians and the American church to the threat of spiritual warfare. As such, their response to Satan's schemes is inadequate, and many leaders and members of the Christian church experience moral failure as they are deceived, discouraged and dismantled. Elliott says that Christians are overwhelmed with information, data, stimulus, images, and satanic influences in their home, work, and social lives. He concludes that many believers, trying to manage their own lives reflexively, create non-scriptural levels of individualism, which may even lead to idolatry, sin, and separation from God.⁵⁸

Donald Lewis and Richard Pierard compiled a collection of scholarly essays examining how globalization impacts the southern shift of Evangelicalism.⁵⁹ Lewis

⁵⁵ Jean E. DeBernardi, "Spiritual Warfare and Territorial Spirits: The Globalization and Localisation of a 'Practical Theology,'" *Religious Studies and Theology* 18, no. 2 (December 1999): 69.

⁵⁶ DeBernardi, 85.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁸ Elliott, 384.

⁵⁹ Lewis and Pierard, 13.

reveals how globalization is helping advance the Gospel to South America and Africa. Conversely, their research shows that Evangelicalism in North America is shifting south. Evangelicalism is moving out of Canada and the United States because Christians are shifting away from their fundamental Christian beliefs.⁶⁰ Fundamentalism, in the context of the Christian church in America, holds a strict and literal interpretation of the Bible. Lewis suggests that North America is trading its fundamentalist religiosity for a progressive position on Scripture interpretation.⁶¹

This liberal position on God's Word, related to the worldview of Post-Modernism, is one of the key factors contributing to the Gospel's migration south and into receptive countries who seek to know Christ and receive the Gospel.⁶² The Lausanne Conferences of 1974, 1989, and 2010 document the shift of the center of Evangelicalism from North to South America and Africa.⁶³ Satan's world system of spiritual warfare contributes to the rise and fall of empires and people. Globalization, from Satan's perspective, is a never-ending evil process of watching and waiting; like a lion in the wild watches and waits for his next prey, Satan in the global context watches and waits because he is the adversary who "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."⁶⁴ Satan is not omnipresent, but he does command a sizeable evil angel army. Revelations describe Satan as the red dragon whose "tail swept down a third of the stars

⁶⁰ Lewis and Pierard, 56.

⁶¹ Ibid., 118.

⁶² Post-Modernism is a movement away from biblical authority towards self and the subjective interpretation of Scripture.

⁶³ Lewis and Pierard, 57.

⁶⁴ 1 Pet. 5:8.

of heaven and cast them to the earth.”⁶⁵ Given that Revelations uses apocalyptic language and the universe has billions of stars, it is impossible to estimate how many demons Satan has in his army. Nevertheless, scriptures warn of their real and present existence in the world and suggest that there are enough demons to target, harass, and torment all living humankind.

The apostle John gives this prophecy: “And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”⁶⁶ John called Satan a dragon, the serpent from the Garden of Eden, the devil, and a deceiver of the whole world who was forcibly removed from Heaven with a third of the angels who chose to sin, disobey God, and follow Satan. Since then, Satan and his demonic angels watch and wait for any opportunity to insert evil, create temptation, and promote sin into any human’s life with the intent to divide, disrupt, and destroy everyone and everything. Finally, globalization is a type of spiritual paradox. While connecting people across a borderless globe may help speed up the advance of the Gospel, it also has the inverse effect of giving Satan more access to steal unsaved souls and destroy immature testimonies of faith. That is the problem with sin, like moving water, it always flows in the path of least resistance.

⁶⁵ Rev. 12:4.

⁶⁶ Rev. 12:9.

The Problem with Sin

Standing firm against the problem of sin in the postmodern world is the biggest single challenge any human can face. The US-American church is failing in this challenge due to a shifting theodicy based on the advances of a consumer-driven culture, a religious market economy, and a subjective worldview. Unfortunately, God has been moved off the center stage of Christian life and replaced with idolatrous images and prideful morals. The difficulty of discussing sin with postmodern believers makes the problem of sin even more significant than anticipated.

Contrary to postmodern belief, the biblical view on the source of sin places the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of every human. The apostle James said, “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.”⁶⁷ This paper posits that even though Satan controls the world, the power of Jesus overcomes Satan’s grip because at the cross, Jesus defeated Satan, providing all people a way to be free from sin. By putting on Christ as the Armor of God, praying for wisdom and discernment, and persevering amidst the battle, the believer can successfully defend against the forces of evil.

Since the fall of Adam, humankind has wrestled with the problem of sin. The essence of sin is unbelief and hardness of the heart, whereas the chief manifestations of sin are pride, sensuality, and fear.⁶⁸ Other significant aspects of sin are self-pity,

⁶⁷ James 1:14–15.

⁶⁸ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 1104.

selfishness, jealousy, and greed.⁶⁹ The problem of sin originated from a created being, a fallen angel, who sinned and later caused the first human to sin. “The devil” is the name given in Scripture to the created being who first sinned, who is now the world ruler of the forces of evil. Those dark forces of evil make up a vast host of fallen angels, often called demons, created by God for good; but they sinned and became evil.⁷⁰ He is also known as Satan, derived from the Hebrew verb *satan*, which means to be or act as an adversary.⁷¹ Thus, Satan is the Christians’ opponent, the evil one who opposes God and tries to destroy His people. Satan, like a lion, can track its prey, stays low and out of sight, is stealthy, deceptive, and powerful.⁷² The devil is secretive, shows no favoritism, and his nature is to “destroy, to kill, to maim, to devastate.”⁷³ The other scriptural names for the devil are thief, father of lies, Beelzebub, deceiver, and tempter.⁷⁴

Scripture provides the best source of data for a postmodern-era review of biblical terms for a better understanding of the problem of sin. The devil engages in opposing God and the work of Christ by the primary means of deception. The apostle Paul stated that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light and his demons impersonate the servants of righteousness.⁷⁵ He can also blind the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the light

⁶⁹ Elwell, 1104.

⁷⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 472.

⁷¹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford, 1955), 966.

⁷² Charles F. Stanley, *Overcoming the Enemy* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁵ 2 Cor. 11:14–15.

of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, even with all his power, Satan is still a created being. He is subject to the omnipotence of God, and he is limited in scope, as indicated in the case of Job.⁷⁷ The apostle James says to resist Satan and he will flee while the apostle Paul says to stand firm and face the attack.⁷⁸ These two verses do not conflict but support God's plan to put on the whole Armor of God, face the spiritual attack, and resist Satan.

Millard Erickson wrote that the causes of sin are linked to people's ignorance, error, and inattention.⁷⁹ In the Old Testament, the expression "sinned through ignorance," is likely grounded in Leviticus 4–5 and Numbers 15, where there is a distinction between unintentional and deliberate sin.⁸⁰ The context here makes it clear that unintentional sins are not only attributable to ignorance but also negligence and human frailty. "Ignorance" does not so much characterize the sin as it does the circumstances under which the sin happens. While ignorance did not eliminate guilt, it did attenuate it, for in contrast to deliberate sins, a purification offering was available for sins done through ignorance.⁸¹ In the New Testament, the lack of knowledge also mitigates sin. Even Jesus, while not exonerating those who crucified him, does seem to attenuate the guilt somewhat, noting that they "acted in ignorance."⁸² Other passages, however, indicate that ignorance can be

⁷⁶ 2 Cor. 4:4.

⁷⁷ Job 1:12.

⁷⁸ James 4:7 and Eph. 6:11.

⁷⁹ Erickson, 583.

⁸⁰ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 590.

⁸¹ Elwell, 590.

⁸² *Ibid.*

culpable without any mitigation. Paul’s teachings do not lightly dismiss intentional ignorance associated with deliberate blindness and hardness of the heart.⁸³

“Error” is another scriptural reference to sin that describes the human tendency to go astray and to make mistakes. Error, in the literal sense, can be described as sheep that stray from the flock, or a drunkard who staggers and stumbles from the bar. The most common Hebrew reference to error is *ta’ah*, occurring approximately fifty times in the Old Testament, which means to err or wander about someplace.⁸⁴ The consequences and culpability for committing an error in moral conduct are often disregarded and ignored by those living in a postmodern world. Erickson stated, “Regardless of the source, those who fall into error know or ought to know that they are being led astray.”⁸⁵ Erickson’s point is important for the believer to understand because their armor may not work as advertised if there is a break in their relationship with God. Paul says, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”⁸⁶ This verse means that God’s being for the Christian is conditional depending on the believer’s present relationship with Him.

Another scriptural designation for sin is “inattention.” The Greek word *parakoe* refers to hearing amiss or disobedience.⁸⁷ The most precise case for interpreting *parakoe* is when the apostle Paul stated that if the messages spoken by angels were binding, then

⁸³ Rom. 1:18–23 and Eph. 4:18.

⁸⁴ Charles Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Sin and the Ways of God with Sinners* (London: Epworth, 1953), 20.

⁸⁵ Erickson, 585.

⁸⁶ Rom. 8:31.

⁸⁷ Erickson, 585.

every violation and disobedience received its just punishment.⁸⁸ “Inattention” also means refusing to listen or ignoring, as expressed in the writings of the apostles Matthew and Mark.⁸⁹ “Ignorance,” “error,” and “inattention” are terms that emphasize the causes of sin. Scriptural terms describing the causes of sin carry relatively minor consequences; however, the next group of sins is much graver regarding evaluating the character of the individual sinning.

Many scriptural terms describe the meanings that emphasize the character of sin—missing the mark, transgression, and perversion, highlight the seriousness associated with the character of sin. First, the most common concept that stresses the nature of sin is the Hebrew verb *chata*, which means missing the mark. It appears approximately 600 times in the Old Testament.⁹⁰ The phrase “missing the mark” suggests not merely a failure, but a decision to fail, a voluntary and culpable mistake.⁹¹ The New Testament term *hamartano* means to miss the mark because of aiming at the wrong target, emphasizing the result rather than the motivation.⁹² This term used nearly 300 times, describes the character of sin in the New Testament.⁹³ The second term is transgression, *abar*, which appears almost 600 times in the Old Testament, meaning to cross over or to pass by.⁹⁴ In most cases, the word involves transgressing a command or commandment,

⁸⁸ Heb. 2:2–3.

⁸⁹ Matt. 18:17 and Mark 5:36.

⁹⁰ Erickson, 586–87.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 587.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 589.

for example, Adam and Eve’s eating of the forbidden fruit.⁹⁵ The third term for examination in the character of sin is a perversion, *awah*, which means to bend or twist as well as to be bent or bowed down.⁹⁶ Perversion carries the idea from the physical to the mental realm, from a twisted body to a warped mind. Erickson stated that there is a close connection between sin and its consequences.⁹⁷ The character of sin demonstrated through the definitions of missing the mark, transgression, and perversion all fall short of God’s standard of perfect love and obedience. In summary, the causes and the character of sin eventually lead to outcomes known as the “results of sin,” which are the negative consequences that ultimately follow the act of sin.

The results of sin contribute to long-term destructive effects upon the world. People are restless, evil has increased, and trouble is everywhere. Brown, Driver, and Briggs describe the Hebrew word for restlessness, *resha*, which means wicked, abnormal, and ill-regulated.⁹⁸ *Resha* suggests the concept of a tossing sea, which cannot rest. Erickson says this form of sin promotes disorder, chaos, and confusion.⁹⁹ Evil or *ra* in Hebrew means “badness” and can refer to anything harmful or malignant. It can either be an expression of spoiled food or a dangerous animal.¹⁰⁰ Evil binds together the act of sin with its consequences while also blaming and holding people responsible for choices against the will of God. The Hebrew word *aven* literally means “trouble.” It conveys the

⁹⁵ Rom. 5:14. Adam’s sin resulted in death.

⁹⁶ Gustave F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1950), 160.

⁹⁷ Erickson, 593.

⁹⁸ Brown, Driver, Briggs, 957.

⁹⁹ Erickson, 594.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, 15.

idea that sin brings trouble upon the sinner. Equivalent translations of *aven* also mean fatigue, weariness, sorrow, misery, and difficulty.¹⁰¹ As Scripture has shown, the consequences of sin weigh heavily upon the world. The Bible says that if people sin, they are subject to a variety of effects of sin beginning immediately, or over a period of time, or at the end of time during God's final judgment of sin. Satan is wholly the cause of sin, he retains the pure character of sin, and he constructs the eventual results of sin with his lies and deceit, endlessly attacking the Christian army of believers both directly and indirectly.

Charles Stanley helps close this section on "The Problem with Sin." The paper critically analyzed the biblical Greek and Hebrew translations to gain a deeper understanding on the original Scripture writers' word context and meanings. Stanley says three problems with sin are the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.¹⁰² This paper will further examine the world, flesh, and devil in Chapter 5. In short, sin is the number one problem in the world. It is pervasive and Paul says that "a mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God."¹⁰³ Next, it resides in a type of scriptural DNA for every descendant from Adam and Eve to the present who God cursed to sweat, toil, die, and return to the ground.¹⁰⁴ Last, sin is proud like Satan was proud when he tried to proclaim himself to be God.¹⁰⁵ The problem with sin, reviewed through a biblical lens, examined causes, character, and results of sin. This paper supports the need for the power of Christ. Armed with this

¹⁰¹ Brown, Driver, Briggs, 19–20.

¹⁰² Stanley, *Overcoming the Enemy*, 3.

¹⁰³ Rom. 8:7.

¹⁰⁴ Gen. 3:19.

¹⁰⁵ 2 Thess. 2:4.

knowledge and revelation from God's word, the Christian is encouraged to prepare for battle against the evil forces of Satan and put on the whole Armor of God.

Summary

The following excerpt from the Lusanne Covenant set the closing tone for Chapter 3 by reinforcing the Christian's need to maintain truth, righteousness, and morality:

Because men and women are God's creatures, some of their culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because they are fallen, all of it is tainted with sin, and some of it is demonic. The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture.¹⁰⁶

Chapter 3 put another layer of research into spiritual warfare by adding an analysis of the cultural influences on spiritual warfare. The author showed how culture impacts many aspects of spiritual warfare through his review of naturalism, consumerism, and humanism. The second half of Chapter 3 explored how Satan is hiding in plain sight through his analysis of the effects of social media, globalization, and the problem with sin as they relate to spiritual warfare.

Chapter 4 addresses the impact of principalities and powers as they relate to the investigation into spiritual warfare. This chapter expands on the author's original Field Research. Also, Chapter 4 will review the identity, perspective, and response of the Christian church in the United States to principalities and powers. Finally, the author presents a section on alternative views on how to manage spiritual warfare in the Christian church in the United States.

¹⁰⁶ Winter and Hawthorne, 767.

CHAPTER 4: SPIRITUAL WARFARE RESEARCH AND PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

Building on the first three chapters, this chapter reviews the research leading to this dissertation along with an examination into how Satan achieves his spiritual warfare goals through what Paul refers to as “principalities and powers.”¹ In review, chapter 1 asks why Christians in the US-American church are unable to withstand the effects of spiritual warfare. Putting on Christ as personalized spiritual armor prepares Christians to both understand and withstand Satan’s spiritual warfare schemes. Chapter 2 analyzes the biblical foundations that support putting on Christ as spiritual armor and reveals Satan’s enticements of fame, fortune, and power as his most common spiritual warfare strategies. Chapter 3 reviews how culture and worldviews influence spiritual warfare. Chapter 3 concludes with a stark revelation about how evil hides in plain sight and offers examples of how Satan and his demonic forces exert their evil influence over people through world systems like social media.

Chapter 4 addresses the research behind the dissertation investigation into spiritual warfare. For fourteen years, before enrolling in the George Fox University Doctor of Ministry program, this author conducted experiential-longitudinal research on spiritual warfare. Next, he continued the research with two years of seminary-level field research on spiritual warfare, which led to the paper’s thesis claim that putting on Christ prepares believers for spiritual warfare. This chapter also examines principalities and powers from the viewpoint of three US-American worldviews and evaluates their

¹ Eph. 6:12 (NKJV).

proposed solutions for the church. The chapter finishes by reviewing theological viewpoints on principalities and powers as they relate to spiritual warfare.

Experiential-Longitudinal Study on Spiritual Warfare

This paper's author conducted an experiential-longitudinal study on the problem with spiritual warfare from 2003 to 2017. The research design involved repeated observations of the same two variables, people and a challenge coin message, over a fourteen-year period. The study methods included many presentations, participant observations, participant contributions, interviews, surveys, and observations for the changes in people after presenting them with a ministry challenge coin.

The coin was circular, measuring 1.5 inches in diameter, 4 millimeters in thickness, and 1 ounce in dry weight. The researcher's ministry challenge coin patterned after his own experiences and traditions in receiving and giving away military challenge coins after surviving the wars he served in for his country. The idea of serving God and Country while surviving death or injury from the enemy inspired the researcher to design and produce a ministry challenge coin. The challenge coin is designed after the Pauline doctrine in Ephesians 6 of putting on Christ as the whole Armor of God.² The researcher's ministry purpose, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is to help train and equip people to understand and withstand spiritual warfare so they can overcome Satan's evil schemes and advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The experiential-longitudinal study on spiritual warfare spanned fourteen years. During that time, the researcher repeated his observations with approximately three

² Eph. 6:11.

thousand people who received a challenge coin with the accompanying appeal to put on Christ as their Armor of God. Approximately two thousand people from the United States and one thousand people from the Middle East, Africa, and South America made up the spiritual warfare study participant pool. The study follows the qualitative research intent set by Richard White and Hanna Arzi, who define the requirements for a longitudinal study: a minimum of one-year between observations and the observations must be of the same nature.³

All of the people who volunteered to participate in the Armor of God study were selected primarily based on their geographic co-location with the researcher and the Holy Spirit's divine appointment between researcher and participant. The experiential research method helped form a "co-operative inquiry" relationship between researcher and subjects.⁴ John Heron, in one of his early papers on experiential research, says, "Each is involved as co-researcher, contributing to the research propositions at all stages from the working hypothesis to the research conclusions."⁵ The experiential method promotes learning by doing and reflecting praxis. So, serving as a researcher and co-researcher with the participants of the spiritual warfare study helped facilitate the process for repeated observations and interactions between the two study variables: the people and the ministry challenge coin message.

The sampling process for choosing participants was purposeful. There were two broad categories for participants: ministry-related and divine-appointment. For example,

³ Richard T. White and Hanna J. Arzi, "Longitudinal Studies: Designs, Validity, Practicality, and Value," *Research in Science Education* 35, no. 1 (2005): 138.

⁴ John Heron and Peter Reason, "A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm," *Qualitative Inquiry* 3, no. 3 (1997): 285.

⁵ John Heron, *Experiential Research* (Guildford, Surrey: British Postgraduate Medical Federation, 1981), 2.

ministry-related participants came from Christian churches, Christian education classes, study groups, growth groups, recovery groups, foreign missions, first-responders, prisons, and graduation classes. On the other hand, the divine-appointment participants came from the researcher's day-to-day travels, interactions, and engagement with people from all walks of life both in the United States and internationally in vocational service and marketplace ministry. The only variations to the research method occurred when the researcher, limited by geographic reach into Papua New Guinea, mailed the challenge coins to the participants. Even though he was not able to be co-located during the interaction of the two variables, people and the challenge coin message, he successfully observed the participants on multiple occasions via asynchronous communications, emails, interviews, and Skype calls.

During the duration of the study, the researcher held vocational roles in public safety, military aviation, missionary aviation, contract aviation, and marketplace ministries. These vocations provided the spiritual warfare study with a sizeable socio-economic sampling of volunteers from a wide variety of cultural settings, religious backgrounds, and workplace environments. The experiential-longitudinal study came to a logical end once the researcher enrolled in a Doctor of Ministry: Leadership in Global Perspectives program with George Fox University. Then, he integrated fourteen years of experiential participant-observer research with two years of scholarly investigations on the problem with spiritual warfare in the Christian church in the United States.

Field Research on Spiritual Warfare

Supervision and direction for the field-research exercises came from the Doctor of Ministry: Leadership in Global Perspectives program professors and staff at Portland Theological Seminary of George Fox University. The purpose of conducting a two-year field-research experience between 2017 and 2019 is to investigate why the Christian church in the United States is not able to withstand the effects of spiritual warfare. First, the researcher wanted to determine what the church and its leaders see as their problems with spiritual warfare in their congregations. The researcher believes the existing church and members show symptoms of desensitization to harmful influences of evil in their midst based on his experiential observations. As a result, the church and its leaders present a marginalized ministry response for its members and community. Thus, the Christian church in the United States is not adequately preparing their congregants with the available scriptural solutions to both understand and withstand the detrimental effects of spiritual warfare. Second, the researcher is trying to evaluate the efficacy of the Armor of God (AOG) challenge coin as a ministry tool that helps Christians both understand and withstand the evil schemes used by the devil when he is waging spiritual warfare against church congregants. This study uses the following research methods: survey, interview, observation, and reflection on how church leaders and members see their problem with spiritual warfare. Further, the researcher assesses the effectiveness of the Armor of God challenge coin as a ministry tool to help believers resist and overcome spiritual warfare. How church leaders and members understand and withstand the schemes of the devil is of great importance to this study.

Summary

The researcher conducted three twenty-five-hour field-research exercises over two years and surveyed thirty-five participants. Each of the three field-research exercises, systematically conducted, used the scientific method to document, process, collect, and interpret data collected from the volunteer participants. He obtained George Fox University Institutional Review Board approval to interview and survey human subjects. He prepared letters of consent to participate, developed a ten-question survey, and integrated the survey into an on-line format. The participant pool was made up of Christian church pastors, elders, and ministry leaders.

Methodology

The researcher reviewed *Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools* to compare this field-research experience against Linda Elder's criteria for evaluating and analyzing the study's "Reasoning and Research."⁶ First was the purpose of the problem—"The Christian church in the United States is not adequately preparing congregants with the biblical solutions to both understand and withstand the effects of spiritual warfare," clearly stated, implied, and understood? Second, was the purpose and goal of the research survey clear, relevant, and significant to the objective?⁷ The researcher answers "Yes" to both questions claiming that he clearly outlined his objective, research goal, and survey waiver that was sent to each ministry leader participant, as shown below.

⁶ Linda Elder and Richard Paul, *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools* (Tomales, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2009), 32.

⁷ Ibid.

The research methods used for the three field-research experiences included email correspondence, electronic survey, interview, data collection, and data analysis. The ten questions used in the survey are divided into two sections. The first section asks questions focused on the participants' ministry demographics, experience, training, and assessment of the churches capability to understand and withstand the schemes of the devil. The second section asks questions about the participants' familiarity, use, and efficacy of the Armor of God challenge coin used in their ministry context. The ten survey questions and the research objective, goal, and waiver are provided in the paper's Appendix.

Findings

The following findings summarize the survey and interview data from the volunteer participants. The findings calculate demographic averages, ministry percentages, and provide additional participant survey comments where appropriate. Answers from the respondents about their demographics showed that they each averaged thirty-two years as a Christian, twenty-one years as a ministry leader, and served in churches that averaged 458 congregants. When questioned about their biggest challenges to understanding and withstanding the schemes of the devil 23 of 33 respondents (70 percent) noted desensitization and 8 of 33 respondents (24 percent) noted unawareness as a challenge.⁸ Of those 33 respondents, 7 focused on a lack of time, priorities, and distractions while 6 focused on a lack of biblical training. Half the respondents mentioned

⁸ "Preparing the Church for Spiritual Warfare," Survey Monkey, accessed January 5, 2020, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/G3R37MJ>.

two challenges (desensitization and unawareness) and 18 mentioned three or more challenges including denial, fear, and apathy.

Regarding the respondents' training for spiritual warfare, there were 33 responses. 25 of 33 respondents (76 percent) said they received formal training listed as Bible school and seminary while 8 of 33 respondents (24 percent) said they received informal training. Of the 25 responses citing informal training 1 respondent listed Neil T. Anderson's guide *The Bondage Breaker* as their training source. Further, 6 respondents listed AWANA as their informal training source.

Answers from the survey questions on the ownership, use, and efficacy of the Armor of God challenge coin show that 29 of 34 respondents (85 percent) have had an AOG challenge coin for an average of 6 years. Of the 29 respondents with an AOG challenge coin 20 of 29 respondents (69 percent) obtained it from the researcher and 9 of 29 (31 percent) obtained it from a church ministry leader.⁹ When the respondents answered what techniques they used to defend against spiritual warfare 35 of 35 respondents (100 percent) use prayer, 33 of 35 (94 percent) use scripture reading, and 28 of 35 (80 percent) talk to another Christian. In addition, 21 of 35 respondents (60 percent) put on the Armor of God, 15 of 35 (43 percent) use fasting, and 14 of 35 (40 percent) listed other techniques. Of the 14 respondents who listed other techniques, 5 listed a combination of worship-fellowship, 4 listed further study, and 4 listed meditation.

Regarding the efficacy question if the AOG challenge coin helps the respondent put on the full armor of God 23 of 33 respondents (70 percent) answered yes it does help. Out of the 23 who answered yes that the AOG challenge coin helps the respondent put on

⁹ The researcher created, produced, and began sharing the AOG challenge coin in the year 2003.

the full armor of God 17 of 23 (74 percent) said it was a good reminder and 6 of 23 (26 percent) said it was a tangible reminder.¹⁰ The respondents were asked if they had ever shared the AOG challenge coin with anyone and 16 of 33 respondents (48 percent) said yes. Of the 16 respondents who have shared the AOG challenge coin, 7 of 16 (44 percent) said they shared it during evangelism, 6 of 16 (37 percent) during discipleship, and 3 of 16 (19 percent) during family ministry.

The final question to the survey asked what actions the respondent will take to help people understand and withstand spiritual warfare. Of the responses 17 of 33 respondents (52 percent) said they will challenge others to put on the AOG, pray, and persevere and 16 of 33 (48 percent) said they will share stories about how to resist the schemes of the devil. Of those who selected more than two answer choices, 13 of 33 (40 percent) will show others how to put on the full Armor of God, 10 of 33 (30 percent) will share the AOG coin with people. Further, 3 of 33 (9 percent) will preach sermons on how to resist Satan and 3 of 9 (9 percent) will begin a planning process to help prepare, train, and equip congregants for spiritual warfare.¹¹

Discussion and Analysis

After reviewing the survey responses from thirty-five participants, this researcher makes two main conclusions. First, fear, ignorance, complacency, desensitization, lack of

¹⁰ When respondents were interviewed about the efficacy of the AOG challenge coin they reported that in addition to reminding them to put on the full Armor of God, the AOG coin served as a tangible artifact that helped them in their ministry.

¹¹ 17 respondents made comments in the “Other” section of question 10. Their comments on taking action to help congregants in spiritual warfare included keeping a supply of AOG coins in the prayer room, becoming more intentional in sharing the AOG challenge coin message, helping others understand that there is a real devil, and beginning neighborhood ministries to share the message about the AOG challenge coin.

training, and poor understanding are reasons why the Christian church in the United States is struggling in their ministry response to spiritual warfare. Second, receiving, sharing, and showing others how to symbolically and spiritually put on Christ as a personal defense against evil has a substantial positive correlation with the use of the Armor of God challenge coin as a ministry tool to train, equip, and prepare Christians for spiritual warfare. Therefore, this paper's research supports continued use of the Armor of God challenge coin and similar artifacts to promote greater efficacy in defending against the evil schemes of the devil.

Moving Forward

Now that the history and research basis for the dissertation exists, the next sentences integrate research, studies, and the researcher's pre-Doctor of Ministry experiential research into this paper's spiritual warfare corpus. First, the Schaffer Institute studies reported in Chapter 1 confirm that 75 percent of Christian church pastors feel they are unqualified and undertrained to manage their churches.¹² The study also reports statistics on church ministry leaders' moral failures with stress, divorce, anger, pornography, and sexual misconduct. Second, the researcher's fourteen-year experiential-longitudinal study on spiritual warfare, with observations on approximately three thousand participants, reports a positive correlation between giving an AOG challenge coin with the Armor of God message to improve understanding and withstanding the evil influences of spiritual warfare. Research confirms there is a positive causal relationship in defending against spiritual warfare between the people who have an AOG challenge

¹² Richard J. Krejcir, *Statistics on Pastors: What is Going on with the Pastors in America?* (Pasadena, CA: Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development, 2007), 1.

coin and ministry message versus those who do not have the AOG challenge coin or message. The real causation is the message behind the AOG challenge coin, Jesus Christ. The next phase in this dissertation examines and reflects on US-American worldviews and how principalities and powers influence Satan’s ability to wage spiritual warfare.

Examining US-American Worldviews on Principalities and Powers

Clinton Arnold, in his *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, recommends that Christians adopt a scriptural worldview if they want to endure and survive the never-ending conflict of spiritual warfare in their lives. He warns that having a scriptural worldview “collides head-on with the modern worldview and its naturalistic assumptions.”¹³ Naturalism, says Hiebert, “infected North American culture” by severing the scientific-religious approach into two separate and opposing worldviews.¹⁴ Before they were separated by shifts in their fundamental worldviews, the scientific and religious communities got along. They maintained a mutually coherent religio-scientific understanding between the natural and the spiritual realms.

Chapter 2 introduced three worldviews on principalities and powers called the liberal, traditional, and conservative viewpoints.¹⁵ Each spiritual warfare viewpoint associates with authors Walter Wink, C. Peter Wagner, and Clinton Arnold—liberal, traditional, and conservative, respectively. First, the liberal approach regards Satan and his

¹³ Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Three Crucial Questions) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 30.

¹⁴ Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Academic Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 146.

¹⁵ Landon Coleman, “Principalities and Powers: A Historical and Biblical Study with Strategic Application in North American Churches” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 2–3, in UMI 3411367.

demons as fictitious folklore and fantasy for the undereducated and fearful.¹⁶ Second, the traditional approach believes in evil territorial spirits, which promote instances of geographically specific demonic activities perpetrated by Satan and his demons.¹⁷ Third, the conservative approach believes in a real devil, acknowledges there are evil spirits in the world, and trusts the Bible as their guide for living.

Arnold says, “If we want help from the Bible for dealing with the problem of evil, we must be willing to take seriously what the Bible takes seriously.”¹⁸ This author supports the scriptural worldview and mainly follows the conservative approach to spiritual warfare. However, remaining open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the researcher is prepared to see and adapt to spiritual warfare situations through an adjustable lens of conservative, traditional, and liberal viewpoints when applicable. Defending and overcoming the vast array of spiritual warfare schemes available to the devil is the goal for believers wearing Christ as their spiritual armor.

The apostle Paul provided a 1st-century worldview about the Christian church when he said, “The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”¹⁹ Two thousand years later, Satan continues to blind the minds of the lost and deceive the minds of the saved. Paul’s timeless decree foretells Satan’s persistent strategy designed to steal unsaved souls and destroy Christ-saved ministries and testimonies.

¹⁶ Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986), 172.

¹⁷ C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996), 22.

¹⁸ Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*, 30.

¹⁹ 2 Cor. 4:4.

Paul's pattern and practice is to show the believer how to put on Christ as armor. He says, because "God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will."²⁰

Liberal Worldview

Wink's liberal worldview on spiritual warfare posits that the New Testament needs to be demythologized. Wink wants the false myths of the Bible removed. He believes that Satan is not a threat to Christians. Therefore, there is no need to put on Christ as the whole Armor of God. Demythologizing Scripture is the "stripping off the elements of its outmoded worldview as a means of hearing what it has to say for the present day."²¹ In other words, the liberal approach dismisses and removes the miraculous events in the Bible as mere myth and legend. As a result, the liberal approach changes the Gospel to fit the narrative to line up with their worldview. For example, Wink wants to remove from Scripture Christ's virgin birth, walking on water, miraculous healings, feeding the five thousand, and His resurrection from the dead. What is left is a reinterpretation of the historical scriptural events offering a new liberalist message of universal truth, but without documenting the divine supernatural events. Arnold says that the liberal's "bottom-line" reason for demythologizing Paul's doctrine of principalities and powers is their "denial of the real existence of evil spirits."²² Instead of trying to

²⁰ 2 Tim. 2:25–26.

²¹ Clinton E. Arnold, *The Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 172.

²² Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 172.

demythologize the Bible, Arnold’s conservative approach recommends “revising the modern worldview to affirming the actual existence of evil spirits and angels.”²³

Traditional Worldview

Wagner’s traditional worldview on spiritual warfare speculates that there are ground-level, occult-level, and strategic-level principalities and powers.²⁴ Wagner believes principalities, powers, and evil spirits are territorial and congregate in a variety of geographic locations. Thomas White describes principalities and powers as “fallen spiritual beings” that serve Satan and oppose God.²⁵ Further, White claims that these spirit beings are territorial, exist in a hierarchy, have names, and are identifiable.²⁶ The 1st-century practice of naming and invoking evil spirits to hurt others and calling upon good angels by their names to thwart evil prompted the apostle Paul to point to Christ in his letters to the churches. He wrote, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”²⁷ Paul is telling the local church and future Christians to keep their primary focus, trust, hope, and love on Christ instead of worrying about anything else.

²³ Ibid., 174.

²⁴ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 21–22.

²⁵ Thomas B. White, “Understanding Principalities and Powers,” in *Territorial Spirits: Insights into Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare and Intercession*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Chichester, England: Sovereign World Limited, 1991), 60.

²⁶ Ibid., 62.

²⁷ Rom. 8:38–39.

Chuck Lowe counters Peter Wagner's traditional worldview on territorial spirits, saying that according to the Bible, demons are not "geographically specific."²⁸ He analyzes many Scriptures that Wagner claims support territorial spirits and Lowe concludes that while the idea of territorial spirits is possible it is not definite, and while inferential it is not explicit.²⁹ Clinton Arnold does not support the notion of territorial spirits and notes that the apostle Paul "never connected the powers of darkness with any specific country or territory."³⁰ Arnold, like Lowe, argues that the Bible is silent on evil spirits controlling territories or geographic regions and believes Wagner builds his entire territorial spirit approach to spiritual warfare based solely on inference and supposition.³¹ This researcher, traveling to many geographic locations in the world and sharing thousands of AOG challenge coin ministry messages, has never experienced any evil spiritual activity to indicate they are geographically organized.³²

Arnold's exegesis of how the apostle Paul leveraged ideas from Daniel and wrote to the New Testament church portrays Paul's theological position on principalities and powers. Arnold concludes that Paul did not give specific emphasis or express concern for the believers' need to acknowledge territorial spirits, demonic hierarchy, or calling out demons by their names. Instead, Paul's practice for engaging evil spirits in spiritual

²⁸ Chuck Lowe, *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation: A Biblical, Historical, Missiological Critique of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Sevenoaks, KY: OMF International, 1998), 27, 113.

²⁹ Dan. 10:13, 20 is the most cited support for territorial spirits. Deut. 32:8–9, Ps. 82:1–2, Isa. 24:21–22, Ezek. 28:12–19, Mark 5:10, Luke 8:31, and Rev. 2:13 and 17:15 are lesser cited verses used to try and support territorial spirits. See Lowe, 31.

³⁰ Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 99.

³¹ Ibid.

³² This researcher's travels include sharing the Armor of God in various locations in North America, South America, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

warfare was how “he lumped them all together and spoke of Christ’s supremacy or the believer’s authority over them.”³³ Paul’s comprehensive approach to principalities and powers expands in his letter to the Ephesians, which is presented in Chapter 5.

Conservative Worldview

Arnold’s conservative worldview on spiritual warfare submits to the authority of Scripture, and it acts as his guide on how to respond to principalities and powers. He implores Christians to believe in the biblical truth that Satan, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces of evil dominate, influence, and distress the human condition every moment of every day.³⁴ He believes in the teachings and truthfulness of the Scriptures as his two key principles for the conservative worldview.

First, “the person and teaching of Jesus was to become the single most influential factor in the thinking and writing of Paul.”³⁵ The “Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness Scheme” from Chapter 2 integrates successfully with Arnold’s *Powers of Darkness* chapter 5, “The Teaching of Jesus.”³⁶ Both accounts relate how the Holy Spirit led Christ into the wilderness where he fasted until His human body was exhausted, dehydrated, and hungry. Satan used these vulnerabilities to tempt and test his dedication and loyalty to God the Father by using enticements of food, pride, and power. In each test, Christ put on biblical truth and cited these verses from Deuteronomy:

³³ Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 99.

³⁴ Eph. 6:12.

³⁵ Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 75.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

- Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.³⁷
- It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear.³⁸
- You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.³⁹

Christ defeated Satan on this one-on-one type of spiritual warfare match in the desert. It was a noteworthy victory recorded in the Bible that shows the pattern and power for believers to accept and wear Christ into spiritual battle and achieve success in their defense against Satan.

Second, Arnold's worldview is committed to the inerrancy and truthfulness of the Bible. The Bible, through the Holy Spirit's inspired guidance, was written by men like Paul, who wrote, narrated, and passed on truth, principles, and practices on how to live a God-honoring Christ-filled life that is capable of both understanding and withstanding the evil schemes and temptations of Satan. One of the often-debated truths of the Bible is the interpretation of Paul's principalities and powers. Landon Coleman writes, "Arnold also shows how the major cultural and religious influences of Paul's time tended to interpret the principalities and powers as personal, evil, spiritual beings."⁴⁰ Paul identifies these spiritual beings as evil angels, called demons, who are in league with Satan to oppose, divide, disrupt, and destroy every living human, especially those who believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior. Demons use a variety of destructive tactics against the Christian church. These tactics include temptation, deception, illness, disunity, and immorality.

³⁷ Deut. 8:3.

³⁸ Deut. 6:13.

³⁹ Deut. 6:16.

⁴⁰ Coleman, 130.

When comparing the conservative worldview on spiritual warfare to the traditional worldview, Arnold points out that Paul's scriptural message about principalities and powers stays grounded in Christ's victory at the cross. While Paul acknowledges Satan's power to exert his influence over people and structures, he encourages believers to exercise prayer, trust, and faith in Christ. His resurrection and victory over evil principalities and powers give people hope. For Paul, putting on Christ supernaturally as a strong suit of metaphorical armor just makes good theological sense. While it requires a leap of faith and intentional obedience to wear Christ in spiritual warfare, to Paul, there are no other conceivable options for survival against such a threatening enemy as Satan and his army of demonic angels.

Evaluating Worldview Solutions for the Church

Once Christians adopt the scriptural worldview, they are empowered by the Holy Spirit to focus on and determine how evil powers influence their world. Prayer, according to Arnold, is Paul's weapon of choice and primary "way of gaining access to the power of God for waging successful spiritual warfare."⁴¹ The apostle Paul, Arnold, and Coleman analyzed principalities and powers. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that believers, looking at life through a scriptural lens, have the best chance to see with their eyes and discern with their minds when they are under the threat of one of Satan's spiritual warfare schemes. This section reviews the Liberal, Traditional, and Conservative Worldviews with the intent to examine, analyze, and inform this paper's research into

⁴¹ Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 158.

spiritual warfare. Each worldview presented below addresses how it can best approach Paul's principalities and powers doctrine and integrate a response to the Christian church.

Liberal Worldview

Solutions from the liberal viewpoint encourage the church to name the powers of evil and preach messages to the powers that expose their "material and spiritual aspects."⁴² Walter Wink's strategy employs demythologization, depersonification, reductionism, and reinterpretation of Scripture as his liberal approach to make the Bible fit his principalities and powers model.⁴³ He openly endorses the use of non-canonical sources and integrates personal mystical experiences into his liberal worldview paradigm.⁴⁴ Coleman's research concludes that Wink's worldview of God "amounts to pantheism," the belief and tolerance for all gods.⁴⁵ Stephen Noll says the liberal view fails to "distinguish God from Satan and the holy angels from the powers."⁴⁶ Instead, Wink believes, "The whole universe is a spirit-matter event, and the self is coextensive with the universe."⁴⁷ This worldview is not supported by this paper.

⁴² Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 89.

⁴³ Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 7, 280.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁵ Coleman, 88.

⁴⁶ Stephen F. Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan and Principalities* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 1998), 25.

⁴⁷ Walter Wink, *The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Galilee Doubleday, 1998), 184.

Traditional Worldview

Solutions from the traditional viewpoint encourage the church to actively engage territorial spirits by naming demons, casting out demons, holding warfare prayer vigils, conducting spiritual mapping, binding demons, and leading the congregation through identificational repentance. Wagner’s primary strategy utilizes strategic-level spiritual warfare to confront the “high-ranking” principalities and powers that Paul describes in Ephesians 6.⁴⁸

Wagner’s stated goal for the church using “warfare prayer” is to advance global evangelism.⁴⁹ Criticisms of the traditional model include its use of subjectivism, pragmatism, and demonic obsession that Duane Garrett calls “Protestant angelphilia.”⁵⁰ He says that the traditional model gives too much attention-seeking, naming, and trying to exorcise demons during strategic-level spiritual warfare “power encounters.”⁵¹ Garrett warns that Wagner’s strategic-level strategy for the church is on a slippery slope towards “pagan superstitions.”⁵² Coleman’s research documents additional scholarly criticisms against the traditional approach because it is “flirting with animism in their desire to exercise power over territorial spirits.”⁵³ This worldview has attractive ideas for the

⁴⁸ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 21–22.

⁴⁹ C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer: How to Seek God’s Power and Protection in the Battle to Build His Kingdom* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1992), 19–20.

⁵⁰ Duane A. Garrett, *Angels and the New Spirituality* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 213.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 217.

⁵³ Coleman, 122.

spiritual warrior but unfortunately they are not grounded in solid biblical truths. This worldview is not supported by this paper.

Conservative Worldview

The conservative viewpoint's solution encourages the church with a two-fold plan for evangelism and resistance. Arnold's strategy, in warfare terms, promotes offensive actions to spread the Gospel and defensive actions to defend against the principalities and powers in spiritual warfare.⁵⁴ He says that spiritual warfare is both offensive and defensive for the Christian. Arnold says it is offensive because Paul describes Christians as "soldiers" in God's army called to "advance on enemy territory" and proclaim the Gospel of Christ.⁵⁵ He says it is defensive because Paul instructs Christian to recognize "the supernatural nature of temptation and being prepared to face it."⁵⁶ Arnold endorses Paul's admonition for believers to "stand firm" and suggests that standing, in Christ's armor, promotes "integrity, purity, and holiness."⁵⁷ Critics support Arnold's conservative model on spiritual warfare but note that he tends to focus more on the individual believer than the collective church body.⁵⁸ This worldview is the only one of the three that most closely follows Scripture and provides a biblical basis and worldview that this paper can support.

⁵⁴ Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 154-155.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1869.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1841.

⁵⁷ Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*, 99, 186.

⁵⁸ Coleman, 37.

Analysis of Worldviews

In review, all three worldviews strive to provide the Christian church with solutions for spiritual warfare. First, this paper concludes that the liberal viewpoint goes too far left, provides an unbiblical passive response for the church, and creates a vulnerable religious atmosphere for its members. As a result, the liberal model undermines well-intentioned Christ seekers and Christians, causing them to become susceptible to the temptations of heresy, magical experiences, and pantheism where they end up unwittingly worshiping Satan rather than God; whom they thought they were serving. Second, the traditional viewpoint goes too far right, provides an extrabiblical aggressive response for the church, and creates an exposed spiritual position for its members. As a result, the traditional model inflates well-meaning Christian adherents, causing them to become prone to evil suggestions by the schemes of animism and pagan superstitions. Third, the conservative viewpoint takes the middle ground between the extreme passive-left liberal viewpoint and the overzealous aggressive-right traditional viewpoint. Consequently, the conservative model empowers Christians to adopt the scriptural worldview and practice the Pauline defense of putting on Christ as the solution to resisting temptation and advancing the Gospel. This paper's research finds positive correlations that putting on the whole Armor of God is the best chance to survive spiritual warfare in the 21st century. Therefore, Christians are urged to do likewise.

Theological Viewpoint on Principalities and Powers

After reviewing this chapter's field research on spiritual warfare, examining US-American worldviews on principalities and powers, and evaluating US-American

worldviews on solutions for the Church, this paper adopts a theological perspective warranting Christian application and additional research. The application need for the Christian church in the United States is to identify and implement solutions to spiritual warfare. Additional research is needed to continue investigating Satan's new variations, twists, and lies about the scripturally documented truths about Satan and spiritual warfare. This paper holds two primary positions in spiritual warfare. First, the Christian church in the United States is under increased spiritual attack from Satan's principalities and powers. Like Coleman states, this author believes Paul's teachings that principalities and powers are "personal, evil, spiritual beings who seek to destroy the church."⁵⁹ Second, the Christians in the United States need crucial help in understanding and withstanding the evil schemes of Satan and his demons. This paper holds the conservative scriptural worldview on principalities and powers. The next sections look at the scriptural and alternative viewpoints of principalities and powers.

Biblical Viewpoint

Paul says, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."⁶⁰ The "principalities and powers" terminology used by Paul is taken from the New King James Version. Paul references principalities and powers in the following verses:

- For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any

⁵⁹ Coleman, 141.

⁶⁰ Eph. 6:12 (NKJV).

other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.^{61, 62}

- He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power.⁶³
- The manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.⁶⁴
- For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.⁶⁵
- For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.⁶⁶
- Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.⁶⁷

In comparison to the New Kings James Version, the English Standard Version, which is the stated default version for this dissertation, uses “rulers and authorities” instead of “principalities and powers.” They mean the same thing and are shown here to demonstrate the biblical relationship and context as it relates to spiritual warfare. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians focuses on the dangers of principalities and powers more than anywhere else in his writings.⁶⁸ The apostle Paul, more than any of the other New

⁶¹ Rom. 8:38–39 (NKJV).

⁶² Martin Luther believes Paul’s conclusion that these angels are evil. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, trans. Jacob A. O. Preus, in *Luther’s Works*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg, 1972), 25–78.

⁶³ Eph. 1:21–21 (NKJV).

⁶⁴ Eph. 3:10 (NKJV).

⁶⁵ Col. 1:16 (NKJV).

⁶⁶ Col. 2:9 (NKJV).

⁶⁷ Col. 8:15 (NKJV).

⁶⁸ Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 2358.

Testament writers, champions the cause and call to do righteous battle against the forces of evil in the spiritual and physical realms.

Alternative Viewpoints

There are alternative viewpoints on Paul's scriptural meaning of principalities and powers. What does it mean to train, equip, and prepare the Christian church in the United States to understand and withstand the effects of spiritual warfare? Many of the survey participants interviewed emphasized seeing many trouble spots for their Christian churches. For example, they cited their member's alternative viewpoints of coexisting with evil, determining self-truth, denial of a real devil, and a belief that the Bible is flawed with myth and legend. Further, they mentioned poor scriptural knowledge, laziness in prayer, apathy towards ministry, and outright avoidance of fellowship contributing to a general lack of Christian unity. Finally, a sense of being desensitized and just ignoring the problem of evil are examples of the alternative viewpoints plaguing the Christian church in the United States. Opponents to the Armor of God challenge coin ministry say that everyone will get to heaven eventually, so why bother with all this spiritual warfare nonsense?

Three alternative viewpoints to the biblical approach follow. First, Steve Snow calls spiritual warfare a type of "scapegoat ideology" and believes that right-wing Christians are using the threat of spiritual warfare as a type of political leverage.⁶⁹ Janet Warren says spiritual warfare is a "dead metaphor" and suggests that there needs to be an

⁶⁹ Steve Snow, "Prophets, Demons, and Witch Hunts: American Spiritual Warfare as Scapegoat Ideology," *Journal of Religion and Society* 18, no. 1 (2016): 1.

alternative language. She wants to discuss demonology, deliverance, setting boundaries on evil, and appropriating divine authority.⁷⁰ Paul Hiebert says that tribal religions support a worldview of spiritual warfare that focuses on ancestors, animals, earthly spirits, witchcraft, and magic.⁷¹ This researcher believes the Armor of God challenge coin is a viable ministry option that can intersect and penetrate all of these alternative perspectives.

Therefore, the author challenges Christian church leaders and members to commit their lives intentionally, invest their faith, and pledge their obedience to Christ as their full Armor of God. While acknowledging that putting on Christ as the whole Armor of God is a descriptive method and his personal practice to survive in spiritual warfare, the author also recognizes Christians may defend against evil schemes differently, to achieve the same victorious results. The main point is to remember Christ and make sure whatever defense is chosen to withstand the wiles of the devil, “gets it done.”

Summary

Chapter 4 is a symbolic cornerstone for the dissertation’s foundation because it helps cement the research thesis that states, “Putting on Christ prepares believers for spiritual warfare.” Building on the first three chapters of this dissertation, the author uses his sixteen years of experiential study and field research to critically examine how Satan achieves his spiritual warfare goals through his evil principalities and powers. Paul

⁷⁰ Janet E. Warren, “‘Spiritual Warfare’: A Dead Metaphor?,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 21, no. 2 (2012): 278.

⁷¹ Paul G. Hiebert, “Spiritual Warfare and Worldview,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 24, no. 3 (2000): 242.

interprets the evil powers as fallen angels who are the real spiritual beings and demons which Satan uses to wage spiritual warfare in the world. Chapter 4 examined three US-American worldviews on principalities and powers. The author chose to align with the conservative scriptural viewpoint and endorse Arnold's solution for the Christian church to put on the armor of Christ, be Christians soldiers, and march toward the forces of evil to advance the Gospel of Christ.

Chapter 5 will investigate the schemes of the devil by surveying his formidable but limited powers. It will review Paul's description of the three opponents to Christian life and discuss the implications of unchecked heresy in the Christian church. Finally, the chapter provides scriptural application to understand and withstand Satan and his evil schemes by reviewing Paul's checklist on how to prepare, pray, and persevere in spiritual warfare.

CHAPTER 5:
THE DEVIL’S EVIL SCHEMES VERSUS THE BIBLICAL ARMOR OF GOD

Chapter 5 continues the inquiry into the problem with spiritual warfare in the Christian church in the United States by focusing on the devil’s evil schemes versus the biblical Armor of God. In review, chapter 1 asks why Christians in the US-American church are unable to withstand the effects of spiritual warfare. Putting on Christ as personalized spiritual armor prepares Christians to both understand and withstand Satan’s spiritual warfare schemes. Chapter 2 analyzes the scriptural foundations that support putting on Christ as spiritual armor and reveals Satan’s enticements of fame, fortune, and power as his most common spiritual warfare strategies. Chapter 3 reviews how culture and worldviews influence spiritual warfare. It offers a stark revelation about how evil hides in plain sight and then provides examples of how Satan and his demonic forces exert their evil influence over people through world systems like social media. Chapter 4 reviews the research leading to this dissertation along with an examination into how Satan achieves his spiritual warfare goals through what Paul refers to as “principalities and powers.”¹

Chapter 5 analyzes the evil attributes of Satan that motivate him and his demons in their relentless efforts to introduce evil schemes, enticements, and attacks on Christians. First, the chapter examines how the devil is a formidable enemy but has limited powers. Next, the researcher evaluates the opponents to the Christian life that Paul terms “the world,” “the flesh,” and “the devil.” The devil is a powerful supernatural

¹ Eph. 6:12 (NKJV).

being, created by God, and is referred to in Scripture as the “ruler of this world.”²

Nevertheless, the devil is not all-powerful. Divine attributes belong to the one and only omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent God. After a review of unchecked heresy in the church, the remaining portion of chapter 5 presents the six pieces of the Armor of God in a metaphorical contrast between Roman armor and spiritual armor.

Formidable Enemy but Limited Powers

Satan never gives up. Satan has godlike powers and uses them in nefarious combinations to tempt, entice, deceive, and seduce Christians to sin. Once the believer sins, Satan uses the same powers but reverses the temptations against the same believer to induce guilt, shame, depression, and fear. Satan wants to create just enough of a schism in the believer’s relationship with God to trap them in a sin, guilt, forgiveness, and sin cycle. Once a vulnerable believer stumbles over a sin obstacle in their Christian walk with the Lord, they often find themselves deceived into a feeling of desperation. The evil scheme creates a sense of fear and trepidation in the believer who feels like they are desperately hanging on to their seats on a fast-moving runaway train. It is not uncommon to find believers trapped in guilt and shame over sin for weeks, months, and years. Studies show that not only Christian church congregants, but also their pastors are leaving churches, leaving the ministry, getting divorced, and going to their graves without experiencing freedom from Satan’s grip on their lives.³

² John 14:30.

³ Richard J. Krejcir, *Statistics on Pastors: What is Going on with the Pastors in America?* (Pasadena, CA: Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development, 2007), 1–2.

The Young Saint vignette from chapter 1 is an excellent example of how easy it is to be tempted by Satan, willingly sin, and then become trapped. The Young Saint felt like he was watching his life unfold on a computer monitor, which was looping a video of his moral failure on a computer screensaver. He was so pre-occupied with trying to be a Christian that all he was doing was playing the part of a Christian. Mark Noll equates this evil scheme, which motivates Christians to “race ahead of their Savior” as one of many temptations used by the devil.⁴ He points to the teachings of Christ and His verses on nothingness, servanthood, gentleness, humbleness, and duty as the attributes of a rightly minded Christian.⁵

Impersonating a Christian is one of the devil’s most successful spiritual warfare traps. Once the believer becomes trapped in Satan’s snare, it is challenging for them to escape the illusion without confession, repentance, and restoration with God. The Young Saint spent years struggling to break free from Satan’s grip and regain his spiritual freedom, faith, and personal relationship with God.

One special day God blessed the Young Saint with a message of truth and hope. It happened just when the Young Saint felt like his spiritual life was dead, and he was at the end of his proverbial rope. God’s blessing to the Young Saint was a care package he received in the mail. What appeared to be a simple exchange of mail between family members turned into a spirit-led plan for restoration for the Young Saint. The Young Saint received his care package in a very austere location, which was only identified by

⁴ Mark A. Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2013), 62.

⁵ Matt. 11:29; Phil. 2:7; and Luke 17:10.

an APO address to the outside world.⁶ Even though he was wearing a gas-mask, chemical gear, and body armor for protection from a foreign enemy, God knew what the Young Saint needed for protection against a spiritual enemy.

The Young Saint was eager to open his care package from family. Inside the package, among the letters, toothpaste, gum, candy, and family photos was a paperback book titled *Grace Walk*. There was a note inside the front cover from his father saying, “Please read this book.” It was signed, “With love from Mom and Dad.” The Young Saint showed interest in the subtitle on the cover, *What You’ve Always Wanted in the Christian Life*. He read the book from cover to cover, and then he reread it. He was inspired by Steve McVey’s personal, practical, and purposeful theological narrative about how to do Christianity and survive temptation. For example, consider McVey’s portrayal of temptation:

Let’s face it: If temptation has no appeal, what’s the big deal about being tempted? Yes, sometimes those flesh patterns do look enticing and I still yield to the flesh. There, I’ve said it. But don’t be too quick to judge me—your flesh is not better than mine. Flesh won’t improve through Christian maturity, spiritual warfare, or anything else. The only remedy for flesh is walking in the Spirit.⁷

The Holy Spirit used a care-package containing a book called *Grace Walk* along with the Young Saint’s austere location, aviation vocation, and conviction to begin his restoration journey. The symbolic eye scales of desensitization seemed to fall from his eyes, convicted of real sin in his life, and he repented and asked for forgiveness. Almost immediately, he began to heal emotionally and spiritually. The Holy Spirit began teaching him how to protect himself from Satan’s spiritual warfare schemes, and he was

⁶ APO is the abbreviation for the Army Post Office, where the United States Postal Service (USPS) can ship APO addressed letters and care packages to Army or Air Force military installations around the world.

⁷ Steve McVey, *Grace Walk: What You’ve Always Wanted in the Christian Life* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2005), 100.

encouraged to walk in a new direction with the Lord. Finally, the Young Saint successfully escaped the satanic grip of the devil. His recovery was allegorically like a digital reboot of his spiritual hard drive. It is as if the Holy Spirit helped him reconnect his spiritual modem with God, erased his sinful cache data, and gave him a fresh new spiritual application on how to put on the full Armor of God.

Opponents to Christian Life

The apostle Paul claims that the three evil opponents to a victorious Christian life are the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. The following Scripture reveals each of these enemies:

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.⁸

Paul's message to the Ephesians is a warning to all Christians, then and now, to avoid the influences of worldly systems, resist the temptations of the devil, and abstain from the desires of personal lust.

World

Paul refers to a world made up of systems and networks that are influenced and controlled by evil authorities, dark forces, and satanic powers. In Scripture, the term *world* can have several meanings like "the earth," "sin," and "culture." For example, in the time of Noah and the flood, it means "Earth" when Scripture says that God "did not

⁸ Eph. 2:1–3.

spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.”⁹ God made it rain for forty days and forty nights.¹⁰

Peter Frankopan sees the old world through a historic lens but tells a story about how the world systems influence the spread of evil under modern contexts. He exposes the satanic powers creating havoc and destruction in his historical review on the origins of civilizations. He portrays a worldly condition of desensitized humans who are numb to the pangs of evil in their homes, churches, and workplaces. For example, he tells how evil forces influenced kingdoms, cultures, and countries from the Holy Land Crusades in the Middle Ages to the Iraq-Syrian War in the 21st century. Frankopan says there is a recurring pattern of “sin and evil” in the world.¹¹ This paper says the existing world pattern of evil is like a demonic recycling center. It collects and reconstitutes fragments of evil, storing it symbolic demonic landfills until there is enough evil to repurpose it into horrific acts against humanity. For example, the world’s religious systems are still warring against each other, as demonstrated when the multiple commercial aircraft were hijacked, weaponized by evil authorities and powers, and crashed into the New York Twin-Towers and the Washington D.C. Pentagon on September 11, 2001.

These terrorist events, resulting in mass casualties, are seemingly acts of absolute world evil. However, on the day-to-day routine where life just seemingly happens, Christian church leaders often wonder why ministry and mission are so messy. What is

⁹ 2 Pet. 2:5.

¹⁰ Gen. 7:12.

¹¹ Peter Frankopan, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (New York: Knopf, 2016), 151.

the cause? Is it the pastor's fault, or the elders, or the music director, or the new members, or the old members, or the refugees, or the seating, or the baptismal? Sadly, these seemingly common areas of conflict, confusion, and crisis impact Christians' daily lives, destroying their incarnational witness, and leading them to moral failure. This paper investigates spiritual warfare, and the associations with Francopan's historical review helps the researcher. He says that Christian church leaders and their congregants in the United States are spiritually blinded, theologically confused, and satanically desensitized. As a result, they are inadequately prepared, untrained, and ill-equipped to understand and withstand the world systems that oppose Christian life. Nevertheless, there is hope for the believer in Christ's words: "In the world you will have tribulations. But take heart; I have overcome the world."¹²

Flesh

The flesh, paraphrasing Paul, is the Christian's alter ego, archenemy, and doppelganger who never leaves the Christian's side and is always lurking nearby in the shadows. He describes the characteristics of the works of the flesh to the Galatian church:

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.¹³

¹² John 16:33.

¹³ Gal. 5:19–21.

Paul encourages Christians to “walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”¹⁴ The flesh is the old self, the past sin nature, and the bad habits that seem to revisit the Christian even though their “old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.”¹⁵ This researcher, after sharing thousands of ministry messages to people with the Armor of God challenge coin, can discern when a person is feeling free from sin. Even if that freedom is just for a moment, many people experience Paul’s principle of denying their flesh and walking by the Spirit.

Resisting the enticements of the flesh is both a scriptural mandate and a Christian’s daily struggle. Even the Muslim prophet Muhammad, according to Francopan’s review of the Quran, says that Satan’s work creates divisions.¹⁶ Therefore, people from differing faiths and cultures do not have to be Christians to experience the lure of the flesh. In fact, from Satan’s perspective, non-Christians are easier targets than Christians when tempting them with the flesh. Temptation always exists, according to Charles Stanley, who says the desires of the flesh “are with us until we die because they reside within us.”¹⁷ Consequently, resisting the flesh, successfully, requires a divine intervention that can only be claimed and activated when Christians put on Christ as the whole Armor of God. When Christians prepare, put on the whole Armor of God, pray, and persevere they are ready to advance the Gospel against Satan’s evil forces trying to tempt a Christian’s flesh. Finally, Paul encourages the Christian in their daily fight

¹⁴ Gal. 5:16.

¹⁵ Rom. 6:6.

¹⁶ Frankopan, 83.

¹⁷ Stanley, 3.

against the flesh by stating, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”¹⁸

Devil

The devil, or Lucifer, is called by many names in the Bible. Lucifer was created, ordained, and anointed as a cherub.¹⁹ He was a high-ranking guardian angel who guarded the Garden of Eden, walked on the fiery holy mountain of God, and was known for his beauty.²⁰ Lucifer’s beauty and power turned into pride and arrogance, and his desire to become God caused him to lead an uprising against God. He was defeated, and his punishment for his sin and disobedience was banishment from Heaven. One-third of the angels followed Lucifer. Cast out of Heaven and condemned to the earth, they await their final imprisonment in the Lake of Fire.²¹ Scriptures tell of the devil’s evil traits and schemes that he and his demons use to steal souls and destroy testimonies from Christ’s saved and unsaved people:

- The devil persecutes and tests the Christian faith at all levels of severity, from pure discrimination, slander, and injustice to severe trials, tribulations, and death.²²
- The devil’s goal is to destroy Christianity. He uses rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces of evil.²³

¹⁸ Gal. 5:16.

¹⁹ Ezk. 28:13–15: “You were the anointed guardian cherub.”

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:7–12; Rev. 20:10.

²² Rev. 2:10.

²³ Eph. 6:12.

- The devil tempts Christians with sexual immorality if they display a lack of self-control.²⁴
- The devil disguises himself as an angel of light and promotes disunity in the Christian church.²⁵
- The devil tricks and uses doubt and deception against humankind made in God's image.²⁶
- The devil slanders and accuses Christians before God after he tricks them into sinning.²⁷
- The devil distracts Christians with their love for the things of the world.²⁸
- The devil prowls around a Christian's pride, power, and prosperity until it leads to sin, and then he uses shame, regret, and moral failure to devour and destroy their Christian witness to others.²⁹
- The devil afflicts the Christian with fear, doubt, depression, and despair.³⁰

In summary, these scriptural examples of the devil's spiritual warfare schemes include how he persecutes, attacks, tempts, disguises, tricks, slanders, distracts, prowls, and afflicts Christians. Therefore, the devil and his demons are formidable enemies to the Christian. The devil's unrelenting goal even after being eternally defeated by Christ at the cross is to destroy Christianity. Nevertheless, the devil's fate, written in the book of Revelations, tells of his final demise.³¹

²⁴ 1 Cor. 7:5.

²⁵ 2 Cor. 11:13–15.

²⁶ Gen. 3:1–6.

²⁷ Rev. 12:10.

²⁸ 1 John 2:15–16.

²⁹ 1 Pet. 5:6–8.

³⁰ 2 Cor. 4:8–9.

³¹ Satan will be bound and restrained in a type of prison during Christ's millennial reign on earth, released to deceive the nations, and then cast into the Lake of Fire for the rest of eternity. See Rev. 20:1–3,

Christians often ask if the devil is a defeated enemy, and if God is the supreme ruler of the Universe, why does God keep the devil around? The full answer to that question is known only to the sovereign God. In the meantime, Scripture provides the answers Christians need to prepare for eternity with God. One of those answers, as unwelcomed as it may be, is that the devil is not going anywhere soon. He is the god of this world and blinds the eyes and minds of unbelievers.³² As such, the devil has the power and permission to harass, tempt, and entice Christians until Christ returns for His church and begins a one thousand-year reign on the earth.

Nonetheless, the Bible assures believers of three essential truths about temptation. First, temptations come from the devil and the believer's flesh, not from God: "God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire."³³ Second, believers are not victims of their desires and have the free will to resist sinning. Paul tells believers, "He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."³⁴ Finally, the third promise God makes to believers is that they are not alone, and their struggles with temptation are not exclusive only to them: "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful."³⁵ This means that Christians are not alone because the Holy Spirit resides inside them. It means that temptations are not personally unique because everyone experiences

7–10.

³² 2 Cor. 4:4.

³³ James 1:13–14.

³⁴ 1 Cor. 10:13.

³⁵ Ibid.

them. It means that in Christ, wearing Christ as the full armor of God, a believer can defend against the temptation, look for the way of escape, and even advance the Gospel of Christ when it fulfills God's plan for the temptation.

Unchecked Heresy

The World, the Flesh, and the Devil are three dangerous opponents to living the Christian life according to Paul's message to the Ephesians.³⁶ They are forces of evil that work individually or in combination to divide, disrupt, and destroy the Christian church in the United States. Ross Douthat's *Bad Religion* symbolically punches the Christian church in its religious gut because of heresy. Douthat says the problem with US-American Christianity is not atheism nor secularism, but just good old-fashioned biblical heresy.

The heresy Douthat speaks about comes from pride, arrogance, greed, and overconfidence in debased versions of the Christian faith that he calls a "hubris" nature.³⁷ This paper agrees with Douthat's assertion and sees unchecked heresy as an underlying factor supporting his research that heresy, one of the many evil schemes of the devil, has overtaken Christianity. For example, Walter Wink's ideas on demythologizing biblical miracles examined in chapter 4 qualify Wink as heretic, according to scholars like Clinton Arnold.³⁸ Wink's liberal viewpoint on principalities and powers insists that

³⁶ Eph. 2:1-2.

³⁷ Ross G. Douthat, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (New York: Free Press, 2013), 29.

³⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, *The Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 200.

Christ's walking on water, feeding the five thousand people, and rising from the dead are all myth and legend.

Edward Polson identifies “unchecked heresy among ordinary religious citizens” as one of the most significant challenges facing the Christian church today.³⁹ Polson summarizes heresy as a problem with pluralism, modernization, accommodation, simplification, and deemphasizing the healthy spiritual tensions that exist between “Scripture, doctrine, and tradition.”⁴⁰ Douthat concludes that the Christian church in the United States has a problem with becoming a one-sided faith as the nation is influenced by principalities and powers who use anyone, anything, and any idea to create political, social, and economic disorder. These spiritual warfare tactics hold Christians comparable to hostages in their own homes, churches, and workplaces.

Many Christians, desensitized to the reality of a devil, are vulnerable to his spiritual warfare schemes. They become confused, afraid, and unloved, so they just accept their bondage and struggle as just part of life. Take accommodationist Christianity for example. It is an overt gnostic position suggesting that Christians need to “modernize and secularize to survive.”⁴¹ Douthat names an example of a modern-day gnostic, Elaine Pagels, who suggests people should reject the Old Testament, “consider Satan as a reflection of how we perceive ourselves,” and create space for a new type of Christianity.⁴² Paul says we should resist Satan's schemes, tricks, deceptions, and near-

³⁹ Edward Polson, “Ross Douthat. Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics,” *Christian Scholar's Review*, 42 no. 2 (2013), 198.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁴² Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics* (New York: Vintage, 2011), xviii.

truth arguments.⁴³ So, what does this mean for Christians? It means that Satan is tricky. Unless Christians are paying attention to their spiritual surroundings, staying close to Christ and wearing Christ as personal armor, praying with the Holy Spirit for daily wisdom and discernment, and seeking the Lord's will in everything, that it is easy to sin and end up in moral failure before one knows it.

Douthat exposes spiritual warfare schemes in his research for *Bad Religion*. First, the most prominent modern scheme or threat to Christianity is prosperity theology that believes "God grants believers wealth."⁴⁴ He names famous TV evangelists Joel Osteen and Joyce Meyer as proponents of the "health and wealth" gospel. Douthat says their messages are simple: obey God, do whatever He says, and financial and spiritual blessings follow.⁴⁵ Second, when Christian churches accommodate their core spiritual beliefs to fit the changing social and cultural circumstances, this is heresy, one of the devil's predominate schemes to use in spiritual warfare against the church.⁴⁶ Third, the use of moral, judicial, and theological relativism is another example of the heresy scheme used in spiritual warfare. Heresy hurts. It hurts because it is a sin that is easy to commit, easy to rationalize, and easy to pass on to others like a contagious cold or flu.

Douthat takes a robust theological position to expose the devil and disarm his heretical schemes. He contends that Satan and his demons are the responsible agents for the increase in heresies in the Christian church in the United States. Heresy is on the

⁴³ Eph. 6:10–18. The Armor of God Doctrine, putting on the full Armor of God so that one can stand firm against the schemes of Satan.

⁴⁴ Douthat, 193.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

increase because it generally goes unnoticed before congregants feel the effects of their damaged and failed testimonies. Pastors are leaving the pulpit because heresy causes church conflict, which 78 percent of pastors report as a contributing cause for leaving the ministry.⁴⁷ Sadly, many other contemporary authors and ministry leaders remain soft on Satan, so as not to appear too radical, which helps them maintain a wider readership and congregant membership. Douthat concludes with an update on Osteen's ministry, saying that despite what he believes and what most conservative Christians want to believe about the prosperity gospel, Osteen sells! Douthat says, "The book sold. The ratings rose. The tours continued."⁴⁸ One might say, "That is not fair." Whether fair or not, it is an excellent visible example on how effective Satan's spiritual warfare schemes can be when luring people with a "name it and claim it" type of temptation. Finally, Douthat reports that many of Osteen's followers are beginning to leave his ministry because their lives did not gain or maintain his promised "sunny vision" of good health and wealth.⁴⁹

Armor of God

The apostle Paul is a prolific author, writing thirteen books of the Bible, and is the founder of the Armor of God doctrine. He did not discover this idea from a life of health and wealth. Instead, he earned it by obedience, faith, and a life of pain and poverty in service for the Lord. Paul was jailed, beaten, stoned, and imprisoned under Roman rule and held in captivity by Roman soldiers wearing a uniform designed for battle. During

⁴⁷ Krejcir, *What is Going On*, 2.

⁴⁸ Douthat, 210.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

the hours, days, weeks, months, and years that Paul remained a prisoner, he watched Roman soldiers. He observed, studied, and integrated what he learned into an Armor of God doctrine. His captors guarded him, restricted his movements, and denied his freedom. Paul's experiences as a prisoner, a Jewish scholar, a Roman tentmaker, and a Damascus Road convert to Christianity helped him envision and write about a new kind of armor. The armor Paul writes about is a spiritual type of armor that is powerful, invincible, and supernatural. He integrated symbolism with spiritualism, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and created the perfect defense system to survive against spiritual attack. This type of armor fulfills what Christ said, "In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."⁵⁰ When a Christian puts on Christ as their armor, they are figuratively and factually wearing Christ as a spiritualized suit of armor that covers their entire body.

Ray Stedman, in his book *Spiritual Warfare*, says the "effective armor is a crucial element of victory in any war including spiritual warfare."⁵¹ He warns Christians not to leave any area of their life or body unprotected because the devil waits and watches for an opening, a weakness, and then he finds a "way to exploit that chink in your armor, and he will destroy you."⁵² Therefore, Paul says, "Put on the whole Armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."⁵³ Note, Paul says, "the whole Armor of God." He intends for believers to put on every piece of Christ's armor to ensure complete coverage and protection against the evil schemes of the devil.

⁵⁰ John 14:20.

⁵¹ Ray Stedman, *Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2009), 34.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Eph. 6:11.

Belt of Truth

Paul begins the Armor of God doctrine with this announcement: “Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth.”⁵⁴ The belt of truth symbolizes the Roman soldier’s duty belt, designed to hold their uniform in place and carry a sword. In the 1st-century Roman context, the soldier’s uniform consisted of a short kilt and a tunic. They wore a girdle as a belt to hold their uniforms in place. When preparing for battle, the soldier tucked the tunic up under the girdle. They called this preparation for battle “girding the loins,” so their legs were free to move without the restrictions of the long tunic.⁵⁵

Christ represents the truth symbolized by the belt of truth. Scripture is full of truth proclamations and testimonies about Christ. For example, Christ said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”⁵⁶ The belt of truth is always the first piece of armor listed by Paul because without the belt, and without Christ as the truth, the other pieces of armor would fall off. Neil Anderson says that the “belt of truth is our defense against Satan’s primary weapon which is deception.”⁵⁷ Putting on Christ and tightening the belt of truth sets the foundation for adding more pieces of the Armor of God.

Wearing the belt of truth tight around the believer’s waist helps block the temptation of the flesh. Paul says to “put off your old self” because Jesus is the truth.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Eph. 6:14.

⁵⁵ Stedman, 35.

⁵⁶ John 14:6.

⁵⁷ Neil Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2019), 95–96.

⁵⁸ Eph. 4:21–22.

Removing the old self means the believer is to take off their old nature and put on the new nature of Christ, who is the truth. Therefore, Christ is the life, the reality, the truth, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”⁵⁹ Then, when a Christian intentionally, prayerfully, and spiritually puts on Christ as their belt of truth, they have access, under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to unlimited power and knowledge as long as they are in Christ and Christ is in them. Stedman says this about the truth:

Truth is reality. Truth is the sum total of the way things really are. Therefore, truth is the explanation of all things. You know you have found the truth when you find something that is wide enough and deep enough and high enough to encompass all things. That is what Jesus Christ does.⁶⁰

Stedman preached ten sermons in the 1960s on the Armor of God. He contextualizes truth for the present day while honoring the intended meaning of truth from Paul’s dark and damp Roman cell. Truth is Christ, incarnate in the believer, which is worn like a tight belt around the waist.

Breastplate of Righteousness

“Having put on the breastplate of righteousness” is the second piece of the whole Armor of God. The breastplate was made from leather or chain mail and worn to cover the chest and abdomen. It protected the soldier from strikes and jabs from edged weapons like swords, spears, and blunt weapons like clubs. The breastplate did not cover the back of the soldier, so facing a threat was critical if the wearer was to be protected. The

⁵⁹ Col. 2:3.

⁶⁰ Stedman, 37.

breastplate protected the vital organs and gives the soldier a chance to defend, withstand, and fight back.

The breastplate of righteousness represents Christ as the symbol for the Christian's righteous standing before God. It covers the heart, soul, and emotions of the believer. It represents how Christ imputes his divine righteousness to people who believe in Him as their Lord and Savior. By putting His righteousness on, the believer's spiritual account allows for the reconciliation between believers in Christ and God. Without Christ, as the believer's breastplate of righteousness, there is no restoration with God. For instance, Paul says, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain."⁶¹ He is saying that his past life of persecuting Christians does not matter anymore because Christ has remade him into who he is now. Paul is not basing his position on his righteousness but is claiming his right standing on Christ's credited righteousness to him.

Shoes of Peace

Describing the third piece of armor Paul says, "As shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace."⁶² The shoes of peace represent the soldiers' leather sandals that they wore to protect their feet from jagged rocks and uneven terrain. Fighting barefoot would bruise and damage the feet. If their feet became injured,

⁶¹ 1 Cor. 15:10.

⁶² Eph. 6:15.

then they could not march, advance, or fight from a position of advantage. They often wore hobnailed sandals, like a pair of modern-day football shoes, for better traction.⁶³

Fighting from a position of peace is not a contradictory strategy. The Young Saint, who served in public safety and military aviation, understood Paul's notion about fighting from a position of peace. He learned during his experiences that fighting from a position of peace and promoting a just cause was a good strategy. Paul encouraged Christians to become righteous leaders and challenged them to help prepare, train, and equip others for any eventuality in battle. Positive preparation promotes victorious outcomes. Scripture promotes the strategy of peace: "He himself is our peace,"⁶⁴ "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you,"⁶⁵ "And the peace of God...shall guard your hearts and minds,"⁶⁶ "You will keep in perfect peace,"⁶⁷ "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts."⁶⁸

Christ is the Christian's truth, righteousness, and peace. His peace is the firm foundation where the Christian stands to face the battle when it comes. The Roman soldiers of Paul's day often defended castles to protect the people inside. Likewise, Christians are called to stand firm, repel Satan's spiritual warfare attacks, and protect the people inside their homes, churches, and workplaces. Putting on the shoes of peace completes first half of the six steps for putting on the whole Armor of God.

⁶³ Stedman, 39.

⁶⁴ Eph. 2:14.

⁶⁵ John 14:27.

⁶⁶ Phil. 4:7.

⁶⁷ Is. 26:3.

⁶⁸ Col. 3:15.

Shield of Faith

The second half of the Armor of God requires action by the Christian to “Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.”⁶⁹ There were two types of Roman shields; a small one that they used for close quarter combat and a large one that they stood behind when they were fighting in formation or laying siege to a castle.⁷⁰ The small shield made of durable metal could protect the soldier against a sword attack. Used in combination—shield and sword—the soldier could successfully defend against many adversaries.

The large shield protected the soldier from flying objects like burning arrows. Arrows dipped in tar continue burning their target from the inside out. If soldiers were not standing behind the large shield when archers shot fiery arrows at them, they might have injuries. When locked in place with other shields, the large shields provided safety for many soldiers. It was often constructed with sturdy wood or metal frame and covered with animal hide.⁷¹ When soldiers were about to enter battle, they soaked their shields with water. The wet animal hide provided a protective barrier between the soldier and the adversary shooting the flaming arrows. The wet surface on the shield helped extinguish the flames of the fiery darts shot by the enemy.⁷²

⁶⁹ Eph. 6:16.

⁷⁰ Bob Bishop, *The Biblical Strategy for Spiritual Warfare: Shield of Faith* (Boise, ID: UBC, 2018), 3.

⁷¹ Rick Renner, *Spiritual Weapons to Defeat the Enemy* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 2012), 12.

⁷² Bishop, *Shield of Faith*, 6.

The flaming darts represent evil temptations, enticements, and trials prompted by the devil. The faith part of the shield is not saving faith or historical faith but a resolute practical faith. For example, practical faith is when a Christian believes without proof and believes without a doubt that the shield of faith protects them from the devil's spiritual attacks. This kind of faith is not based on experiential reality but based on the application of a scriptural promise. Faith means believing that Christ is the believer's sole source of truth, righteousness, and peace and then acting on that belief. The shield of faith unlimited to how many fiery darts of temptation it can quench and withstand because it can extinguish all of them.

Helmet of Salvation

Paul names the fifth piece of armor saying, "Take the helmet of salvation."⁷³ The Roman helmet covered the soldier's head, protecting the soldier's eyes, ears, mouth, neck, and face from edged weapons and strikes to the head.⁷⁴ Roman helmets were not just used in battle but were also designed, painted, and arrayed with colorful dressings to signify the soldier's rank, title, and allegiance.⁷⁵ Wearing a helmet meant one of two things: either the soldier was going into battle, or the soldier was paying respect to a Roman leader.

The figurative helmet in the Armor of God is worn by the Christian to help them protect their minds, their sense of right thinking, and to block temptations intended to

⁷³ Eph. 6:17.

⁷⁴ Renner, *Spiritual Weapons*, 12.

⁷⁵ Rick Renner, *Dressed to Kill: A Biblical Approach to Spiritual Warfare and Armor* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 2007), chap. 14.

distract and destroy the Christian mind. For example, sexual temptations, alluring thoughts, and enticing seductions are all intended to target the Christian mind. When wearing Christ as the helmet of salvation, the believer is protected and guarded against sinful thoughts, which, if acted upon, can result in sin and moral failure in approximately thirty seconds or less.⁷⁶ During the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says that anyone who looks at someone with “lustful intent” has already committed the sin in their heart.⁷⁷ For example, a believer sees a pop-up advertisement with an alluring photograph on their computer screen. The believer knows that there is pornography attached to the internet link. As if there is an angel on one shoulder and a demon on the other, the spiritual warfare battle is real. This example is what Ray Stedman calls the “battle of thought-life.”⁷⁸ Unfortunately, the temptation can turn to willful sin in just a few moments. Within seconds the believer clicks on the link and instantly sees and sins because of a demon’s successful sexually explicit scheme. God does not need a stopwatch to know how long it took someone to sin. However, it does not take long for the devil to entice, lure, and trap someone with internet pornography.

Paul says it takes courage to defend against the darkness and become victors in Christ. In his letter to the church in Thessalonica, he tells Christians to be “Children of the day...not of the night,” to stay sober, and “put on...a helmet of the hope of

⁷⁶ Sin can happen fast as it did for Eve in the Garden of Eden Scheme in Genesis 3. Also, James 4:17 says, “Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” The Young Saint knew what the right thing to do was, but did the wrong thing anyway and it only took approximately thirty seconds.

⁷⁷ Matt. 5:28.

⁷⁸ Stedman, 60–61.

salvation.”⁷⁹ *Salvation* in the Christian context means having a saving faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Salvation associated with the helmet context means a rescuing or delivery from harm.

Sword of the Spirit

Paul says, “Take...the sword of the Spirit.”⁸⁰ The Roman sword was a short, heavy, two-edged weapon used for offense and defense against soldiers’ enemies.⁸¹ It was carried on their uniform belt and, when used in conjunction with the small shield, made the soldier a formidable foe.⁸² Because the sword was short, the soldier used thrusting and jabbing techniques rather than swinging at the enemy.⁸³ In battle, the soldier would push forward with their shield to block the enemy, expose their vital areas, and then thrust quickly with their sword.⁸⁴

The spiritual sword of the Spirit represents the Bible. Christ is the Christians source of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation. Further, Christ is the Word of God, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”⁸⁵ The Bible reveals Christ, and Christ defines the Bible. So, when Christians put on Christ as the Armor of

⁷⁹ 1 Thess. 5:4–8.

⁸⁰ Eph. 6:17.

⁸¹ Renner, *Spiritual Weapons*, 9.

⁸² Stedman, 55.

⁸³ Bob Bishop, *The Biblical Strategy for Spiritual Warfare: Sword of the Spirit* (Boise, ID: UBC, 2018), 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ John 1:14.

God, and a question, issue, struggle, or temptation comes up, all they must do is reference the sword of the Spirit, the Bible.

The Holy Spirit speaks to Christians through the word of God and will give them the right verse, discernment, and wisdom for the struggle before them. The sword of the Spirit is the only piece of armor that is offensive and defensive.⁸⁶ Soldiers use the sword for blocking defensively and jabbing offensively. Christians use the sword, symbolic as the Bible, to offer good defense and to also act as a good offense. Hebrews describes the Bible as a sword that is sharp, double-edged, and “piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”⁸⁷ When the Christian wields the sword of the Spirit, the Christian can resist the devil. James says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”⁸⁸

Summary

Chapter 5 makes a rigorous examination of the spiritual warfare problem plaguing the Christian church in the United States. The researcher’s thesis claims that putting on Christ prepares believers to defend and survive the evil schemes and temptations brought to them by the devil and his demonic forces. This chapter analyzed the evil characteristics of the principalities and powers used against Christians. Further, the paper reviewed the opponents to the Christian life—the World, the Flesh, and the Devil—and concludes that the only successful defense to spiritual warfare is to put on Christ as the Armor of God.

⁸⁶ Stedman, 55.

⁸⁷ Heb. 4:12.

⁸⁸ James 4:7.

Chapter 5 takes a conservative viewpoint on spiritual warfare. It is not so liberal as to consider the devil a myth, and it not so traditional as to chase demons, name evil powers, and cast out territorial demons, as described in chapter 4.

While the devil is a formidable enemy, he and his demonic cohort are limited, restrained, and controlled by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Unchecked heresy is a leading scheme for spiritual warfare in the church. Chapter 5 concluded with a presentation of Paul's six pieces of the Armor of God. The author described each piece of the Armor of God and compared them in a theological context to the Roman soldier's armor. An exegesis of this portion of Scripture could go much further but is not relevant for the purpose of this paper. Finally, chapter 6 integrates the entire dissertation, draws research conclusions, makes theological recommendations, and presents research application ideas on how to achieve the thesis claim that putting on Christ successfully prepares Christians for spiritual warfare.

CHAPTER 6:
PUTTING ON CHRIST AS THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD PREPARES
BELIEVERS FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Chapter 6 culminates this paper's current analysis and research into the problem with spiritual warfare in the Christian church in the United States. This final chapter presents a comprehensive review of the preceding five chapters that lead up to the summary and application presented in this paper. The application section encompasses the researcher's reflections. It then reviews the believer's courage, struggle, battle, strategy, armor, prayer, and perseverance as they learn how to put on and wear Christ as their full Armor of God in the battle against the forces of evil.

The chapter concludes by reviewing the Christian church and the Armor of God, along with a review of the Armor of God challenge coin as a useful ministry tool. Finally, the researcher envisions the future needs for researching and writing about how to help others discover Christ and find their own way to put on the whole Armor of God.

Spiritual Warfare Dissertation Summary

Putting on Christ as a personalized suit of armor to defend and overcome the temptations of the devil is this paper's preferred solution to the problem of spiritual warfare. This section summarizes the previous five chapters in the way of review and reflection. Preparing the reader for the application and implementation recommendations is the goal of this research into spiritual warfare.

Chapter 1 presents the background, need, problem, and opportunity to investigate the phenomenon of spiritual warfare. This study researches the problem with spiritual warfare and asks why the Christian church in America is failing to prepare and equip their congregants to defend against the evil schemes of the devil. The need is Christians failing to resist evil temptations. The problem is the Christian churches' marginalized response and desensitized approach to the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. The opportunity for Christians is to recognize, resist, and overcome evil in their homes, churches, and workplaces.

The thesis claims that when Christians put on Christ as their full Armor of God, they are better prepared to resist temptation successfully. In turn, as more Christians prepare, train, and equip themselves for spiritual warfare, the better the Christian church in the United States improves in its ministry role and responsibility to do the same with its congregants. The goal is increasing the Christian churches' resistance against Satan through the compounding effect of life on life training with believers and showing them how to put on the whole Armor of God. The paper hopes to successfully engage, intersect, and advance theological research, knowledge, and application that helps Christians both understand and withstand the evil influences of spiritual warfare.

Chapter 2 analyzes the scriptural foundations that support putting on Christ as spiritual armor and reveals Satan's enticements of fame, fortune, and power as his most common spiritual warfare strategies. Six Old and New Testament examples of Satan's spiritual warfare schemes are reviewed and analyzed. From the Old Testament, this chapter analyzed the schemes of the Garden of Eden, the Tower of Babel, and King David's infidelity. New Testament schemes included the temptation of Christ in the

wilderness, Judas' betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and Peter's denial of Jesus three times. All but one failed the devil's evil schemes. Christ, tempted three times by Satan in the desert, was the only example that successfully defended against the devil's enticements of food, power, and pride. Christ succeeded not because he was the Son of God, but because as the Son of God He claimed God's written law, precepts, and guidance on how to respond to Satan's temptations. Christ provided the pattern for future believers to survive, defend, and overcome the schemes of the devil.

Three worldview approaches to spiritual warfare from Walter Wink, Peter Wagner, and Clinton Arnold were introduced and examined as primary Christian-based viewpoints on the problem with spiritual warfare. Reviews of each viewpoint from the liberal, traditional, and conservative bias take place. This author concludes that Arnold's conservative approach best supports the research and worldview of this paper.

Chapter 3 reviews how culture and worldviews influence spiritual warfare through naturalism, consumerism, and humanism. Naturalism influences spiritual warfare by promoting reasoning and science over Christianity, which leads to many forms of unhealthy social media addictions. Consumerism influences spiritual warfare by promoting the idea that more is always better, which leads US-American consumers towards an insatiable desire for more commodities. Humanism influences spiritual warfare by promoting a viewpoint against the theism of God, which leads to Atheism, immorality, and unethical lifestyles. Finally, Chapter 3 alerts readers to the research discoveries that Satan is acting with impunity and hiding in plain sight. Satan uses social media, artificial intelligence, and reality TV shows to desensitize the world and marginalize his status as an evil spiritual actor.

Chapter 4 assesses the research leading to this dissertation. The researcher conducted an experiential longitudinal study for fourteen years, followed by two years of in-depth field research in preparation for writing this dissertation. The researcher administered surveys to volunteer ministry leader participants to determine why the Christian church is failing to prepare its members for spiritual warfare adequately. Also, the goal of the survey was to determine the efficacy of the Armor of God challenge coin as an artifact and ministry tool. The research summary reports that fear, ignorance, complacency, desensitization, a lack of training, and a poor understanding of how the devil works are the reasons why the Christian church in the United States is struggling in their ministry response to spiritual warfare. The research shows a positive correlation between having and using the Armor of God challenge coin as a ministry tool and the believer's success rate in putting on the whole Armor of God and defending against the evil schemes of the devil.

The second half of the chapter examines three popular US-American worldviews on principalities and powers.¹ First, the Liberal view attempts to demythologize the Bible and refers to the miracles of Jesus as myth and legend and supports pantheism. Second, the Traditional view chases demons, calls them by name, fights them in strategic-level warfare, and practices forms of paganism. Third, the Conservative view submits to the authority, veracity, and inerrancy of the Scripture. The Conservative viewpoint believes in Christ as the Savior of the world, supports Paul's Armor of God doctrine, and engages in evangelism. Chapter 4 presents a review of the scriptural viewpoint on principalities and powers and then concludes with a quick summary of three alternative viewpoints to

¹ Eph. 6:12 (NKJV).

spiritual warfare. Three alternative viewpoints to the biblical approach are scapegoat ideology with a political twist, dead metaphor approach with use of demonology, and ancestor worship with emphasis on witchcraft and magic. This researcher believes the Armor of God challenge coin is the best ministry option that can successfully intersect and negate the preceding alternative perspectives.

Chapter 5 investigates the devil's attributes as a formidable enemy but notes that he has limited powers and that God restricts and restrains Satan's actions. The author evaluates three opponents to the Christian life—the World, the Flesh, and the Devil—in their context and evil influence on the believer. The world's influence on the believer comes from human-made systems, social orders, cultures, viewpoints, wars, genocide, terrorism, to name a few. The flesh is the believer's old self, the Adamic sin nature, the lost soul, and the alter ego that is an easy target for the devil's principalities and powers that lure, entice, and deceive with seductive schemes and temptations. The devil is Satan and his fallen angels who harass, terrorize, and attempt to destroy Christians and anything they hold dear to themselves.

Chapter 5 reports that unchecked heresy in the Christian church can infiltrate and take over a congregation before the ministry leaders recognize the spiritual warfare problem. Ross Douthat recommends that the Christian church take a firm theological stance against any heresy forms if there is to be any hope of disarming the devil's schemes in spiritual warfare against the church.² This chapter finishes with a presentation of the symbolic and spiritual relationship between Roman armor and Christ's armor.³ The

² Ross G. Douthat, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (New York: Free Press, 2013), 210.

³ Eph. 6:14–17 describes the six pieces of the Armor of God.

apostle Paul tells the believer to put on the full Armor of God as follows: after having put on the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, and shoes of peace the believer is to take up the shield of faith, helmet of Salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.⁴

Application: Putting on Christ for Spiritual Warfare

The researcher conducted sixteen years of study into the problem of spiritual warfare. The researcher claims, investigates, and concludes that putting on Christ as the whole armor of God creates both a symbolic and spiritual personal defense system against the evil schemes of the devil. While this method is the author's preferred solution to the research problem, he acknowledges that Christians may find alternative means to defend against the devil's evil schemes. As such, the author suggests remembering the process of putting on the whole armor of God and says, "You may do it a different way, but my challenge is to help you remember and make sure it gets done." Not only is putting on Christ as the full Armor of God a practical solution, but it is also the perfect scriptural solution ordained by God.

Believers' Courage

Believing in spiritual warfare is courageous. Believer's courage requires scriptural faith, spiritual nerve, and a personal resolve to both understand and withstand the devil's barrage of satanic attacks. To truly grasp the reality that a devil, demons, and dark spiritual forces are controlling evil schemes in both physical and spiritual realities is a remarkable act of believer's courage. Therefore, the challenge for any believer is to put

⁴ Ibid., paraphrased by the author.

on Christ, resist evil, and maintain a biblical viewpoint on spiritual warfare. Adopting this practice provides the believer with the best strategy to defend against evil and advance the Gospel of Christ.

It takes courage to stand firm against dark forces that are under the influence of the devil and his demonic militia of principalities and powers. Take, for example, the story of Elisha when a Syrian army of horses and chariots encircled him. Elisha modeled the believer's courage to his servant, who was sorely afraid of the approaching evil forces. Elisha prayed, "Lord, please open his eyes that he may see...and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."⁵

Elisha's story is a tremendous scriptural account of a believer who was under the threat of attack from evil forces and displayed courage in God. He was courageous because he trusted God for his safety and security. He was courageous because he had faith in God for an outcome that was good for him and would glorify God. The outcome for this spiritual warfare anecdote is that the Syrians were blinded, taken captive, relocated, unblinded, fed a big feast, and released back to their people uninjured. This example of a believer's courage in spiritual warfare was good for Elisha and brought glory to God because it encouraged Elisha's servant, showed the extra-dimensional reality with the horses and chariots of fire, and instilled fear and awe in the Syrians towards the God of Israel.

Theologically balancing spiritual tensions between the destructive forces of evil versus the overwhelming forces of good requires a divine dose of believer's courage. Furthermore, there are two primary dangers for believers in the US-American church

⁵ 2 Kings 6:15–17.

regarding spiritual warfare. The first danger is disbelieving in the existence of Satan and characterizing him as only myth and legend. For example, Allstate Insurance promotes the idea of the devil as a myth or legend. They portray a personified image of the devil, played by Dean Cain, as “Mayhem” in television commercials that demythologize real scriptural events like the Genesis 3:3 record of the first sin.⁶ Mayhem, in the Allstate Insurance commercials, creates all kinds of evil havoc for people like theft, fire, property damage, and injury to sell insurance to people who have or might experience these types of insurance claim events.

The second danger is an overemphasis in the presence of Satan and characterizing him and his demons as territorial spirits that can be named, tamed, and famed by overzealous demon-chasers and exorcist seekers who pursue the knowledge of evil in unhealthy ways. According to Duane Garrett, Peter Wagner’s worldview on the devil’s principalities and powers used in spiritual warfare acts like it is more of a pagan viewpoint than a traditional viewpoint.⁷ If not believing in Satan is on the left side of the spiritual warfare scale, then an over belief in Satan is on the right side of the scale. Wagner is on the right side of the spiritual warfare examination. He not only believes in the devil but seeks to know the devil, names his demons, and pursue demons during what he calls “strategic-level spiritual warfare power encounters.”⁸ Both dangers, under-believing in the devil and over-believing in the devil, exposes the Christian aligned with those viewpoints to a higher risk of spiritual attack. Anytime the devil can create tension,

⁶ Allstate Insurance, “Mayhem Has Forbidden Fruit,” advertisement, produced by Leo Burnett, aired February 3, 2013, during Super Bowl 47 on ABC, 1 min., 9 sec.

⁷ Duane A. Garrett, *Angels and the New Spirituality* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 213.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

doubt, distrust, and overconfidence in believers; they become prime targets for the schemes of the devil.

The following verses provide Scriptural examples of the real devil as he terrorizes humanity from the first in the Garden of Eden until he is chained and thrown into the eternal lake of fire. These verses provide a balanced position on the scales of under-belief and over-belief in the devil. These scriptures represent the scriptural viewpoint on Satan and the demonic principalities and powers that strive to divide, disrupt, and destroy Christianity:

- So, the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.⁹
- The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days.¹⁰
- Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.¹¹
- And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.¹²
- And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your disability.”¹³

⁹ 2 Kings 6:17. Elisha was going against an overwhelming enemy and his servant was in fear. Eliaha prayed and God opened the servants eyes to see God’s supernatural army with horses and chariots of fire in the spiritual dimension.

¹⁰ Dan. 10:13. Daniel gets a report from the Archangel Gabriel who battled satanic forces for 21 days. This glimpse of the unseen dimension where good angels and evil spirits reside supports the Biblical examples of truth about spiritual warfare.

¹¹ Matt. 4:1. Jesus was tested three times by Satan. Each time Jesus used the Word of God, both defensively and offensively to resist Satan’s temptations and achieve victory. This example, 3 years before His death, fortells how his followers will be able to resist and defeat Satan in the future.

¹² Matt. 10:1.

¹³ Luke 13:11–12. Jesus spoke about and acted against demonic activity and demon possession on

- For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.¹⁴
- But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.¹⁵
- For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.¹⁶
- Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.¹⁷
- Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.¹⁸
- And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.¹⁹
- For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.²⁰

many occasions documented in the Bible. Other examples include Mat. 4:24 “possessed by demons” and Mat. 9:33 “when the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke.”

¹⁴ 2 Cor. 10:3–4.

¹⁵ 2 Cor. 11:3. Paul worries about the Corinthian church and their ability to withstand Satan and his spiritual warfare. He connects the first act of spiritual warfare against Eve in Gen. 3:3 to the New Testament post death and resurrection of Christ context.

¹⁶ Eph. 6:12. Paul explains that the Believers’ Warfare is not against humankind, but against satanic powers and forces that are in the world, in spiritual dimensions, and in heavenly places.

¹⁷ James 4:7.

¹⁸ 1 Pet. 5:8. Peter compares people living with the devil in the world to living with a lion in the wild it hunts its prey to kill and eat. Peter wants to gain the attention of the new Christian church and warns them that the devil is just like a lion, which is big, powerful, and dangerous.

¹⁹ Jude 6. Jude confirms the angels who “abandoned” Heaven. God threw them out of Heaven with Satan and now they war over humanity to take the souls of the lost and destroy the witness of the saved. They may outnumber the humans. One can imagine how busy the spiritual dimension must be, and we cannot see them, but sometimes are given glimpses of God’s glory.

²⁰ Rev. 12:10. John confirms that Satan is the “accuser” who tempts and torments humanity. In the end, when Christ comes again, Satan will be judged.

These verses point to the truth that people live in God’s creation, which is made up of both a physical world and a spiritual world. There are at least two dimensions of life going on simultaneously: human life and spiritual life. God created the heavens and the earth allowing humans, angels, demons, and evil spirits to coexist, albeit in different dimensions of time, space, and perception.

Having courage in spiritual warfare, to be successful, requires the Christian to stand firm.²¹ In the apostle Paul’s time, the one who remained standing after a wrestling match was the winner. If one wrestler threw his opponent three times to the ground, and he was left standing, then he was the winner.²² Paul used the imagery of standing firm as the proper spiritual stance for a believer to maintain when engaged in the struggle of a spiritual attack. The spiritual warfare struggle that Paul describes is not being wrestled out against “flesh and blood,” not against other humans, but against evil dark forces that rule the world.²³ Putting on Christ, spiritually and symbolically, is designed to help believers defend and overcome the schemes of the devil.

Researcher Reflections

Perseverance, according to the apostle Paul, follows the practice of metaphorically putting on Christ as an individual Armor of God suit. The armor suit represents six unique Christ-like attributes. Paul directs Christians to put on truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and Spirit to defend against the schemes of the

²¹ Paul emphasizes Christians to stand firm three times in Eph. 6:11, 13, and 14. Standing firm is a must.

²² Bob Bishop, *The Biblical Strategy for Spiritual Warfare: Three Opponents to the Christian Life* (Boise, ID: UBC, 2018), 4.

²³ Eph. 6:12.

devil. Paul says in addition to putting on the Christ suit of armor, the wearer is to pray for other believers and persevere in faith.²⁴ Persevering infers that God tests the wearer of the Christ suit of armor. This author believes that perseverance is both an intentional spiritual practice and a practical situational warning to watch for, defend against, and overcome the evil, destructive schemes of the devil. Sin, death, destruction, violence, and evil are but a few of the schemes that come from Satan and his host of demons. Their number one goal is the destruction of humanity by any means possible.

Satan and his demons influence world systems and contribute to financial market failures. For example, Karl Polanyi says, “The trading classes had no organ to sense the dangers involved in the exploitation of the physical strength of the worker, the destruction of family life, the devastation of neighborhoods, the denudation of forests, the pollution of rivers, the deterioration of craft standards, the disruption of folkways, and the general degradation of existence.”²⁵ According to Scripture, the best chance to survive the spiritual warfare generated by the idea of a self-regulated market described by Polanyi involves a generous investment into remembering the Armor of God.

Therefore, the Armor of God challenge coin serves as a useful artifact for the dissertation research and is an example of Tim Seelig’s “Invention Cycle.”²⁶ In 2003 while serving in a warzone, the researcher was inspired to study ten sermons by Ray Stedman on spiritual warfare.²⁷ He read Scripture, studied books, listened to audio

²⁴ Eph. 6:18.

²⁵ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation the Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, 2nd Beacon Paperback ed. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), 139.

²⁶ Tina L. Seelig, *Insight Out: Get Ideas out of Your Head and into the World* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 8.

²⁷ Ray Stedman, *Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2009).

recordings, talked to theologians, and prayed for wisdom and discernment. Somewhere during Seelig's narrative of her book's imagination phase, the researcher imagined creating a ministry challenge coin to embody, embrace, and connect people to Paul's "whole Armor of God" principles in Ephesians.²⁸ This author's idea, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is to share and show people how to put on Christ and successfully defend against Satan's evil spiritual warfare schemes.

Dr. Chuck Conniry encouraged this author at a George Fox University conference by sharing his ideas on "lived theology."²⁹ He said lived theology uses the right vocabulary to speak meaning into the lives of others.³⁰ John Perkins is a contemporary illustration of lived theology that speaks meaning into a spiritual warfare example of racial injustice.³¹ Perkin's lived theology "takes social location, cultural context, and historical background seriously."³² The researcher believes that combining lived theology with the Armor of God doctrine strengthens the believer's ability to understand and withstand the devil's schemes. Putting on Christ is a personalized practice, a lived theology, and an intentional pattern and practice to not only survive but overcome the forces of evil. Wearing Christ gives the believer a discerning lens that looks at relates to and interprets the spiritual world.

²⁸ Eph. 6:10–18.

²⁹ Chuck Conniry, "DminLGP8 Best Program of its Kind" (lecture, Commodore Hotel, Cape Town, South Africa, September 20, 2017).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Peter Slade, Charles Marsh, and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, eds., *Mobilizing for the Common Good: The Lived Theology of John M. Perkins* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), XV.

³² Ibid.

Putting on Christ metaphorically is a spiritual innovation that advances belief into faith. The researcher believes that God's Son is incarnate, sinless, and miraculous, and he was crucified for his sins, defeated Satan in His death and resurrection, ascended into Heaven, and now sits at the right hand of God. Therefore, this author faithfully envisions a supernatural dimension and spiritual state of being where he wears the whole Armor of God. Putting this into application, the researcher personally and purposefully puts on the six pieces of symbolic Roman armor that represent Christ's belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and shoes of peace.³³ Next, he "takes up" the shield of faith, helmet of Salvation, and sword of the Spirit.³⁴ Only then, after following Paul's Armor of God checklist, is the researcher ready to pray, persevere, and stand firm. Finally, the researcher can stand firm in Christ's victory, adequately preparing to understand and withstand any spiritual warfare challenge of the day.

History acknowledges that military challenge coins promote identification, membership, allegiance, community, and patriotism. Seelig calls it entrepreneurship, but the researcher credits the creation of the Armor of God challenge coin to the imagination, creativity, innovation, and will of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the researcher was compelled, urged, and driven by God's conviction to create a ministry challenge coin. So, he took the Armor of God idea and trusted God to design something tangible, reproducible, and transferable. The message behind the Armor of God is Jesus Christ. When believers put on Christ as their armor, they have power over death, temptation, addictions, schemes, and challenges that Christians face every day during their journey towards eternity.

³³ Eph. 6:14–15.

³⁴ Eph. 6:16–17.

Believers' Struggle

Believers can only understand the forces they face if they see them the way

Scripture describes them. Paul analyzes the Christian life and concludes the following:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.³⁵

Paul says that life is a struggle. Scripture describes the Christian life as a type of combat between two opposing forces who are wrestling against each other in a type of universal good versus evil, God versus Satan, fight to survive. Paul infers that this continual battle and jarring of life is the reality that people live, work, and have worship. He concludes that no matter how much effort is given to avoid the conflict, believers cannot escape the spiritual forces of evil. Stedman writes about the woes of life and the believers' confrontations, the seemingly uncontrollable circumstances, and the agonizing decisions associated with temptation. He calls these "evil days" and says that all of life would be an evil day if it were not for the grace of God.³⁶ The grace of God is documented in the Old and New Testaments:

- The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.³⁷
- The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.³⁸

³⁵ Eph. 6:10–13.

³⁶ Stedman, 5.

³⁷ Num. 6:25.

- Therefore, the Lord waits to be gracious to you.³⁹
- For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.⁴⁰
- The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.⁴¹
- Even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved.⁴²

Grace matters. Grace is the only reason that people have any chance for an eternal life without Satan. Grace is God's unmerited favor and invitation to accept His Son as Lord and Savior. Grace allows for the forgiveness of sins, gaining of eternal life, and entering into the family of God.

Paul warns believers that they must choose a side in the fight between good and evil: there is no neutral ground. Jesus said, "Whoever is not with me is against me."⁴³ Eschatologically speaking, the believer's eternity depends on the choice they make. In contemporary terms, the believer shall not stand on the sidelines or sit on the bench while the two cosmic teams engage in mortal combat for the souls and good works of saved and unsaved people.

Following Christ does not give the believer a pass to avoid and sit out the conflict when it comes to spiritual warfare. The devil wants believers to think that "once saved, always safe" is a biblical principle. The devil uses half-truth, lies, and subtle

³⁸ Ps. 103:8.

³⁹ Isa. 30:18.

⁴⁰ Rom. 6:14.

⁴¹ Phil. 1:25.

⁴² Eph. 2:5.

⁴³ Matt. 13:30 and Luke 11:23.

misinterpretations of Scripture. He asks believers that same question he posed to Eve, “did God say” in order to cause the believer to think they are safe to live the way they lived before Salvation.⁴⁴ The devil creates the perception for the believer saved by grace that they can sit back in their theological easy-chair and doze off into a blissful sleep while counting angels flying around in their heavenly dreams. However, the gruesome reality for believers is that there is a serious cost to count when it comes to following Jesus.⁴⁵ This believer’s adage is more accurate to declare, “Once saved, always wrestling against the evil forces.”⁴⁶

Believers’ Battle

Clinton Arnold said that Christ’s victory on the cross was the “decisive battle” that determined the outcome for the believer’s battle.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the war is not over, and there are more battles and evil skirmishes to be fought as the believer approaches eternity. While this may be a “mopping-up period” for the church, and the final “victory is assured, ...it is still a dangerous time, and there are many battles to be fought.”⁴⁸ Stedman adds his caution, “Great skepticism, care, and clear thinking must be used by anyone attempting to investigate this dark realm.”⁴⁹ Further, Paul warns believers to

⁴⁴ Gen. 3:3.

⁴⁵ Luke 14:28: “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?”

⁴⁶ See Eph. 6:12.

⁴⁷ Clinton E. Arnold, *The Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul’s Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 123.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Stedman, 19.

avoid mediums, spiritism, occultism, and the black magic arts like horoscopes, fortune-telling, astrology, and witchcraft.⁵⁰

Understanding where the believer's battle begins is key to success. First, it is essential to understand that unsaved people, people who do not believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior, are not free. Instead, unsaved people are prisoners to sin, slaves to Satan, and hell-bound. However, like the thief on the cross, unsaved people can become saved believers when they believe Christ is the Son of God, believe Christ is Lord, confess and repent of their sins, and humbly ask him into their lives. At that instant, the miracle of salvation occurs, and the sinner turned saint joins the family of all believers in an epic cosmic battle against Satan and his evil schemes used in spiritual warfare.

Believers' Strategy

Paul encourages believers to prepare, train, and equip other believers to defend and overcome the wiles of the devil. Many Christians in the US-American church believe that when Christ saved them, they were freed from Satan's grip to live and act as they desire. Freedom to act without limitations could not be further from the truth, according to Stedman. He claims that believers are "set free to do battle, to engage in the fight, to overcome in our own lives, and to become the channels by which others are set free."⁵¹ Paul says, "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."⁵²

⁵⁰ Lev. 19:31, 20:6, and Isa. 8:19.

⁵¹ Ray Stedman, "The Strategy of Satan" (sermon, Discovery House, Palo Alto, CA, 1995), 2.

⁵² Col. 1:13.

The believer's strategy, according to Paul, is to "Put on the whole Armor of God."⁵³ When the believer adopts this strategy, the Holy Spirit activates God's plan for resisting the devil. Putting on Christ and wearing him as a metaphorical and spiritual set of armor gives the believer the power and the ability to "stand against the schemes of the devil."⁵⁴ Paul's strategy for resisting Satan is not the only strategy for believers engaged in spiritual warfare. For example, Christ's promise, "I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" provides an additional method to successfully put on Christ and defend against Satan's grip (John 14:20).

In addition to Paul's Armor of God doctrine, the apostle James writes to believers and warns them about the evil world systems that Satan controls with his principalities and powers. James says to, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."⁵⁵ This verse is a powerful biblical promise that God gives the believer to resist the evil schemes of the devil. The promise that the devil will flee from the believer assumes the following: submission to God, salvation in Christ, acknowledgment of a real devil, belief that Christ defeated the devil at the cross, a prayer for help resisting the devil's schemes, and a prayer asking God to force the devil to flee. Putting on the whole Armor of God and claiming God's promise that the devil will flee is more than enough to survive and overcome the evil schemes of the devil.

⁵³ Eph. 6:11.

⁵⁴ Ibid. Paul's Armor of God checklist is divine, purposeful, and supernatural.

⁵⁵ James 4:7.

Integrated with other temptation verses in the Bible, the believer can adjust, adapt, and personalize their spiritual warfare resistance methods and defend against the wiles of the devil. For example:

- And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.⁵⁶
- No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.⁵⁷
- The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials.⁵⁸
- For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.⁵⁹

These verses, if committed to memory, or at least personalized in a spiritual paraphrase, give the believer a source of God's Word that the Holy Spirit can help the believer recall under spiritual attack. In other words, if God's promises are not in the believer's heart and head, then Satan has a better chance at achieving a successful temptation and sin from the believer.

Believers' Armor

The believer's armor and how-to put-on Christ as the whole Armor of God comes from Paul's doctrine in Ephesians chapter 6.⁶⁰ Here is Paul's inspired and timeless checklist for putting on the first three pieces of the armor:

⁵⁶ Matt. 6:13.

⁵⁷ 1 Cor. 10:13.

⁵⁸ 2 Pet. 2:9.

⁵⁹ Heb. 2:18.

⁶⁰ Eph. 6:10–18.

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.⁶¹

Paul's 1st-century process and 21st-century procedure provide the believer with a type of theological user guide or checklist that provides the method and lists the precise order to put on each piece of the armor, which is vitally essential for the believer to understand.

In the first section of the armor, it is vital to recognize the context of the verb. Three times Paul says "having" in the verses on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and shoes of peace.⁶² Paul used the passive verb "having" because God bestowed the first three pieces of the Armor of God to the Christian at their point of Salvation. Stedman says, "This is something that has already been accomplished for us in the past, not something we need to do in the future."⁶³ So, when believers, through obedience and faith, appropriate the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and shoes of peace, they are actively and intentionally putting on the Armor of God. Christ describes His union with the believer as follows, "In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."⁶⁴ Therefore, having put on Christ's truth, righteousness, and peace is more than a symbolic gesture. Putting on Christ is an absolute truth that proclaims the physical and spiritual union between Christ and the believer: "In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the

⁶¹ Eph. 6:14–15.

⁶² Ibid. The verb "having" is an important point to remember because these pieces of the Armor of God are bestowed on the believer once they accept Christ as their Savior.

⁶³ Stedman, *Spiritual Warfare*, 35.

⁶⁴ John 14:20.

flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of Salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”⁶⁵

In the second section of the armor, it is equally important to recognize the context of the verb. Paul says, “take up” the shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit.⁶⁶ *Taking* is an active verb and indicates an action on the part of the believer. The second section of armor is put on in the present moment. Stedman puts it best in the following description and process for the first and second sections of armor: “There are, first, the things we have already put on once and need never put on again. But we must be sure they are there and remind ourselves of what they mean. Second, there are aspects of Christ which we take up again and again whenever we feel under attack.”⁶⁷ The shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the spirit are the three pieces of armor that are appropriated and put on each day to complete Paul’s doctrine of the Armor of God.

Believers’ Prayer and Perseverance

Once believers complete Paul’s checklist for putting on the full Armor of God they are ready for their pre-battle preparations of perseverance and prayer. Paul encourages believers to continue “Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.”⁶⁸ Clinton Arnold recommends that believers, after they put on their full Armor of

⁶⁵ Eph. 6:16–17.

⁶⁶ Eph. 6:16–17. The verb “taking” is something the believer does by faith.

⁶⁷ Ray Stedman, *Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2009), 2.

⁶⁸ Eph. 6:18.

God, “ask God to grant strength for endurance and perseverance.”⁶⁹ Prayer is talking to God, and perseverance is not giving up on God.

Putting on the Armor of God through prayer combines putting on both the passive—belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of peace—and active—shield of faith, a helmet of salvation, a sword of the Spirit—sections of armor. The researcher’s study on the efficacy of the Armor of God challenge coin ministry reports that the more believers practice putting on the full Armor of God before and during spiritual warfare attacks, the faster they get. Survey and interview participants report that it is much easier to put on the Armor of God before the spiritual attack than during the spiritual attack. The researcher concludes that putting on the Armor of God at the first moment of awareness after sleeping is the quickest and most spiritually effective time to armor up for the day. Once the believer’s armor is on, prayer just happens as part of the union with Christ. Once the believer’s armor is on, prayer becomes more like spiritual breathing than a laborious ritual that the devil uses as a clever scheme to distract the believer from putting on their daily Armor of God. These practices work for the author and he encourages believers to consider his research findings and then find the practice that works best for them.

This author also learned from this study that the participants who put on the full Armor of God and prayed before they started their day were more likely to be ready for an attack, and when it came, they were better prepared to withstand and persevere. Believers who wear the full Armor of God are less surprised by chaos and crisis than

⁶⁹ Clinton Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare (Three Crucial Questions)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 125.

unbelievers. Why, because Christ says, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”⁷⁰

Christian Church and the Armor of God

Believers wearing the full Armor of God understand and withstand the evil schemes of the devil. The fruitful multiplication of fully trained Armor of God bearers is a key strategy for the ministry survival and congregant restoration to a state of Christian readiness. Putting on Christ as the Armor of God is a personal approach but serving in God’s army of Christian soldiers is not optional. Regardless of the chosen methodology, Paul’s instruction suggests all believers should “put on” the full Armor of God for doing daily spiritual battle. It is the author’s contention that if the Church across the United States does not, the country may fail from the takeover of Satan’s principalities and powers.

The primary reason for this dissertation is to help Christians rally around Paul’s message on how to put on the whole Armor of God. Also, teaching others about the art of spiritual warfare and multiplying faithful stewards to share and show others is a goal. Wearing Christ as armor and wielding the sword of the Spirit is a call to arms for the believer to battle against injustice, evil, and immorality.

Armor of God Challenge Coin

The Armor of God challenge coin in Figure 1 has an evangelistic Christian message that crosses all social, cultural, religious, and gender divides. Christ does not favor any one person or class of persons when it comes to His free and unmerited gift of

⁷⁰ John 16:33.

salvation. The Armor of God coin is not magic, does not grant wishes, and does not have healing by the touch powers. However, the message behind the coin, Jesus Christ as the symbolic and spiritual Armor of God, has supernatural divine power. That is why the Armor of God challenge coin is so useful as a tool and ministry artifact because it connects people to the message of Christ.



Figure 1. Armor of God challenge coin

The coin depicts the six pieces of the Armor of God and cites the significant biblical sayings from Ephesians 6:10–18. The challenge coin reminds the believer to put on the whole Armor of God during times of distress when being tempted with sin, and when challenged to decide when facing one of Satan’s lies, lures, and enticements. The coin is a daily reminder to put on the Armor of God. It is tangible; it has weight, texture, beauty, strength, courage; and it serves as a reminder to Paul’s Armor of God doctrine.

The Armor of God challenge coin promotes fellowship, community, and unity in the Christian church. It serves as an evangelism tool, mission outreach, and promotes a friendly challenge to other believers to carry the coin and show the coin when challenged by the words, “Armor of God coin check.” Challenging fellow believers to wear their

armor, using the non-threatening use of a challenge coin artifact, is a friendly and fast way for believers to share their burdens, ask for prayer, and testify about their victories in their recent spiritual warfare battles.

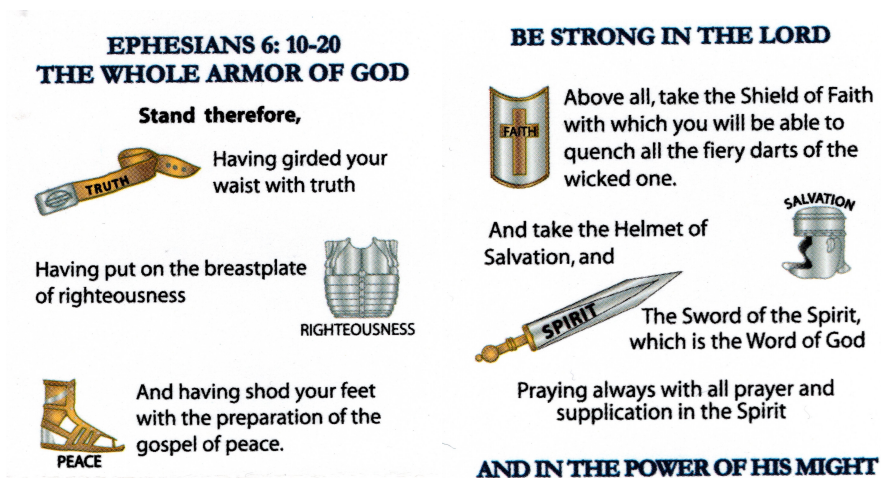


Figure 2. Training insert: Armor of God challenge coin

The training insert provides the Pauline verses that support the Armor of God challenge coin shown in Figure 1. The two-sided insert is placed inside a clear plastic coin holder where the Armor of God Challenge Coin is kept before ministry distribution. Together, the informational Training Insert and the Armor of God challenge coin provide people with a tangible ministry tool. Accompanied with a ministry message to help Christians remember to put on the whole Armor of God, the recipient is spiritually enrolled in their own personalized spiritual warfare readiness training.

Future Research and Writing

The study on spiritual warfare is not a new problem for Christianity. The art of temptation that Satan uses in spiritual warfare has been every person's problem since humanity failed the first enticement to sin. What is new for the 21st-century Christian church in the United States are the improved strategies and tactics used by Satan to influence their congregants. The devil is not hiding in the shadows anymore, and he is making blatant appearances in public. Satan makes bold overtures in US-American systems like social media, television series, and primetime commercial advertisements. He has captivated television viewers and desensitized huge percentages of the contemporary Christian population.

This paper examined the problem of spiritual warfare, surveyed and interviewed ministry leaders about the cause, and tested the efficacy of an artifact that helps improve the believer's spiritual warfare preparedness, perseverance under attack, and prayer for God's promise that resistance in Christ's name causes the devil to flee. The researcher thinks his ten-question spiritual warfare survey can be adapted and scaled to larger audiences. The survey is digitized and formatted for an internet application that is trusted by social media users and already has a large sample population of ministry leaders for future research. This author also wants to expand the Armor of God challenge coin ministry and write articles on its positive correlations and ministry efficacy in peer-reviewed Christian journals.

This author believes that the last sixteen years of his dedicated ministry service, mission travels, and study in spiritual warfare prepares him to join the theological ranks

of ministry professionals who seek a voice to know and share Christ while glorifying God. Stand firm.

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APPENDIX:

PREPARING THE CHURCH FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE¹

- Researcher:** Mike Webb,
Dmin candidate, George Fox University-Portland Seminary
mwebb17@georgefox.edu 208-994-9805
- Objective:** Determine why the [your denomination] Church is not adequately preparing members with the Biblical solutions to both understand and withstand the effects of spiritual warfare.
- Goal:** Determine the effectiveness of the Armor of God (AOG) challenge coin as a ministry tool, which if used, helps train, equip, and prepare Christians to resist, defend, and overcome the threat of spiritual warfare.
- Waiver:** This survey is voluntary. If you choose to participate, please answer the questions with as much detail as possible. You may answer all, some, or none of the questions without need for further explanation.
- If necessary, I may request an oral interview with you at another time to clarify your answers on the survey. You may choose not to participate without need for further explanation.²

¹ “Preparing the Church for Spiritual Warfare,” Survey Monkey, accessed November 28, 2019, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/G3R37MJ>. This is the full version of the survey that participants take online.

² Research Methods and Research Findings are accessible at, “Preparing the Church for Spiritual Warfare,” Survey Monkey, accessed November 28, 2019, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/G3R37MJ>.

Field Research Survey Questions

1. How many years have you been a Christian?
2. How many years have you participated in ministry? (as a member, youth, leader, small group, Sunday School, teacher, pastor, elder, or any type of ministry counts). Please specify.
3. How many members attend your church? Estimating is okay.
4. Describe what you see as the biggest challenges for ministry leaders when trying to help members both understand and withstand the schemes of the devil.
5. Describe how you have been trained, equipped, and prepared to both understand and withstand spiritual warfare.
6. Do you have an Armor of God (AOG) coin?
 - a. If so, for how long?
 - b. How did you receive your AOG coin?
7. What techniques do you personally use to defend against spiritual warfare? Check all that apply:
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
 - Scripture reading
 - Talking to another Christian
 - Putting on the Armor of God
 - Other (please specify)
8. If you have an AOG coin, how does it help you put on the full Armor of God? Please describe.
9. Have you ever shared an Armor of God coin with another person?
 - a. Was it used for evangelism, discipleship, mentoring, encouragement, personal testimony?
 - b. Did the Armor of God coin message help the other person?
10. Describe what actions you will take to help other people learn how to both understand and withstand the evil effects of spiritual warfare. Check all that apply:
 - Share and AOG Coin with other people as led by the Holy Spirit.

- Show and tell others how to put on the full Armor of God listed in Ephesians 6:10–18.
- Discuss and share stories with others about how to resist the schemes of the devil.
- Challenge others to put on the Armor of God, pray, and persevere.
- Other (please specify)