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## Spiritual Warfare Part V

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**Have you ever been hammered by Satan and/or temptations? If so, how did you handle them?**

### **Matthew 8: 28-34**

Here is a picture of our Lord, who rescues us. He just went through a storm to cross a sea most would not dare to tread, to a place few would ever go, to see two people who needed His help. One would reject Him and one would beg to go with Him, while the community who rejected these two people also rejected Christ, and demanded His departure, as they valued pigs over people, money over eternity. This passage stresses the point that Jesus is no mere man; He is divine. Even the demons testify to this!

This is a strange story from a godly perspective, as the people who should have marveled at Jesus' ability to heal two people whom they had given up on, saw a divine miracle preformed before them, and benefited by being saved from the torment of the demons, only to demand that He leave. Yet, so many of us do the same thing every day. We may know of the Lord, even experienced His grace, maybe even have served Him for a time, yet, we too, ask Him to go away. We sometimes do not allow Him in all parts and times of our lives. Maybe we let Him in just on Sunday morning, but not on Monday, and definitely not on Friday nights. So, do you ask Jesus to leave, or allow Him to endear and embrace you?

As I write this series of articles, distilled from years of research and previous works I have done, I am being hammered. It is not pretty. It seems every time I venture into this subject, I pay a cost. The assaults from all angles can seem overwhelming and daunting and not worth the effort. But our eyes have to be—they *must* be on Christ, as our anchor both in storms and in times of joy! How we handle the assaults is what helps assure our faith and makes us a window to our Lord for others. What He has for us can be used in many ways, including for our growth.

Satan is real and he is powerful. Satan is our enemy, but we have access to an immensely far, far greater power. You must stand strong against him and not cringe with terror, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:4). We are to acknowledge the devil's reality and the presence of his demons, knowing the strategies he uses to manipulate us so we will not fall prey to them, and always in prayer for our fellow Christians so they do not fall for the deceit either. And, when we are taken in by him through our own fault or by the happenstances of others, we can persevere in faith and carry on our Christian life for His glory!

### **The Great War!**

In the Book of Revelation, John sees that a great war is over, but the battle is then taken to the streets of human life—between struggling humanity that seeks its own, and Satan who sees his role as helping people declare independence from God. So, Satan usurps his role as persecutor to makes war with humanity, focusing on the faithful. Satan is on a rampage and seeks to hurt and even destroy those who are of faith in Christ, whose trust is in Him. In the meantime, God is caring for and sheltering His faithful, giving armor, abilities, and opportunity for defense by using His means and power—His “means” being His blood that we have as artillery and as protection (Rev. 12:13-17)

Keep in mind that Satan’s role is to take and steal, and God’s role is to build up and grow us. Satan doesn’t want us to have what he freely gave up and cannot have back such as intimacy with God, ever abundant love, triumphant life, goodness, and purpose, with relationships that glorify Christ. Satan wants all the glory for himself. The passage in Matthew 8:28-34 is a strange story from a godly perspective. The people, who should have marveled at Jesus’ ability to heal two people whom they had given up on, saw a divine miracle preformed before them. A person was benefited by being saved from the torment of demons. Yet, He was commanded to leave. Even so, so many of us do the same thing every day. We may know **of** the Lord, even know Him personally and have experienced His grace and maybe even have served Him for a time, yet, we too, ask Him to go away. We sometimes do not allow Him in all parts and periods of our lives. Maybe we let Him in just on Sunday morning, but not on Monday, and definitely not on Friday nights. So, do you ask Jesus to leave, or allow Him to endearingly embrace you? Do you spend all your energies on Spiritual Warfare yet suppress Christ’s involvement in your life?

The contrast is God’s Kingdom and authority and His abundance that is at our disposal. Even though Satan is out of office, his influence still prevails in the world and is *snaking* its way to you and your church. Satan seeks to accuse, while Christ seeks to save; Satan wants you defeated, Christ wants you triumphant. Why would anyone want Satan’s ways? Remember, Satan has already been defeated; he has lost, and he cannot have you or your church unless you give up by seeking him and not HIM.

Do not fall into compliancy and arrogance, seeing no need for our Lord, ignoring His call to you, thinking you are all right, because if you are honest, you are not all right! Do not allow yourself to be filled with so much busyness that you have no time for Him! Do not be like the village people who saw the pigs as of more value than people. If you say, “Well, I have no pigs.” consider that you do in the way of what is of value to you. Does it line up with His values and call? What about your career--even ministry? Is it more important than your growth in Christ, so your real service of building quality relationships gets pushed aside? Jesus will not force Himself upon you, as He did not with those village people. The call is given. Your sin has been covered. It is up to you to now follow!

## Discussion Questions:

1. Do you like to watch horror films? If so, how have they influenced your belief system about demons? How do your thoughts line up with Scriptures?
2. How have you asked Jesus to leave? How have you asked Him to endear and embrace you?
3. Have you ever been hammered by Satan and/or temptations? If so, how did you handle them?
4. Why would the people not have marveled at Jesus' ability to heal these two people?
5. What are the things that cause us not to allow Jesus in all parts and times of our lives?
6. How have you seen people proclaiming in the church, "None of your business Jesus! Go away?"
7. How does it make you feel to know that you, as a Christian, have a special relationship with God and are privilege to promises from Him that even Moses and Abraham did not have?
8. Because what Christ has done for you, God's special and unfailing favor is being poured out to you. This favor is His love, kindness, and mercy. How have you accepted these, and put them into your life as well as the lives of others?
9. Read 1 John 4:4, how can you stand up and be strong against the devil and not cringe with terror? How does the fact that the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world?
10. How does knowing the strategies Satan uses to manipulate us we will then not easily fall prey to him?
11. Jesus was demonstrating that the powers of darkness could be fought and even overcome. What would you do if you were confronted by a demon--either directly or indirectly?
12. Think through one thing you desire to be freed from, such as doubt, oppression, worry, or physical limitations. What can Jesus do for you? What do you need to do to make it work?