



# INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH

*A Ministry of Carolina Evangelical Divinity School*

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## COMMENTARY

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Happy New Year! This is our first newsletter of the year. I hope you enjoy it and those that are to follow. I am dedicated to write on subjects that the Lord inspires me to write about. Most of them will relate to problems in our society and in the church.



### The Need for Spiritual Warfare

**A**s I was commuting to work one morning long ago, I ran out of things to pray about, so I asked the Lord if there was anything he wanted to say to me. I drove about 100 yards and the thought came to my mind, "You don't take Satan seriously enough!" I knew it was true. I did not! I, like most Christians and the church, tend to ignore him

and his works. Even though I have read numerous books and attended many seminars on spiritual warfare, I still am not taking him seriously

Since Satan is always looking for someone to destroy, especially God's children, we must be constantly on guard and active in spiritual warfare (1 Peter 5:8). To combat him we must be aware of his strategies. As I have already noted, his primary strategy is to gain followers through humanism, political religions, idolatry, and non-Christian religions.

His secondary strategy is to tempt authentic Christians into doubt, unbelief and sin. He does

this through the lies he fabricates. One

of the most effective these days

is found in science and

especially in the religions of

evolution, environmentalism,

animal rights, psychology and

sociology.

You can

discern the existence of the religions of science, politics and philosophy when you

find fanatics among their devotees.



***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

Ephesians 6:12 (New International Version, ©2010)

discern the existence of the religions of science, politics and philosophy when you find fanatics among their devotees.

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To deal with Satan we must counterattack! Satan's lies can be countered with truth. Jesus came to testify to the truth, and His testimony is recorded in the Bible. Science makes a concerted effort to deny the truth of the Word, but God has apologists who defend the faith by the appropriate integration of the Word and science. We must familiarize ourselves with their work called apologetics.

We also need to teach the truth about the attributes of God, his commandments and his guidance for right living. We need to pay particular attention to teaching these things to our children and youth.

Knowing we have power to defeat Satan, we must utilize it by asking God to rebuke him and bind him

The willingness of a person to witness to God's love and forgiveness demonstrated by a North Carolina mountaineer many years ago. I was leading a group of boy scouts on a fifty-mile hike on the Appalachian Trail when we came to a point near our destination in Elk Park, NC. To reach the road that would take us into town, we had to descend through a pasture that was not like those we usually saw in the mountains. It was situated in a vale and had a spring near the bottom. The grass was luxuriantly thick. There were about 20 head of fat Hereford cows to our right as we descended on the left bank. Near the spring, an old man and his wife were working on an oscillating mower pulled by two Percheron horses. As we approached the man and his wife, he beckoned to us, and yelled for us to come where they were working. Since we were on his land, we felt obliged to go. As we approached he asked, "Are you boys saved?"

I said I was, but I could not speak for the boys. He then told us that he had been a "hell raiser" in his youth, and that he drank, and gambled, and ran after women. One night, when he got in a gambling argument, one of the players pulled a gun and blew his jaw off. He then reached in his mouth and pulled out a huge dental prosthesis, and waved it in front of us. He then put it back in and paused.

Then he asked me if I was sanctified. I, believing I was, answered in the affirmative. He then waved his hand out toward a nice brick house, a large apple orchard, his pasture, and his cattle and said, "God gave all this to me and my wife. We have three children and they have all done good. My boy is a lawyer, my daughter is a school principal, and my other daughter is a nurse. God does great things if you believe in him."



**We can boldly witness to God's love and forgiveness by recounting the work Satan manifested in our lives before Christ Jesus, and then testify to what God has changed in us and restored to us. He will redeem even the most rebellious one if he or she is willing!**

We thanked him for his witness, and began our two-mile trek into town and the termination of our hike. My boys, who ordinarily were talking and laughing, did not say a word until we got to town.

To conclude, I want you to remember that I have written about spiritual warfare because it is a subject avoided in most churches. You can begin your fight by believing there is personified evil whose name is Satan. He has angelic followers called demons. He is out to destroy mankind because they are God's children. He does this by guiding people into sin if they are unregenerate. Nevertheless, God can redeem sinners.

Satan leads regenerate persons into sin by tempting them. His temptation most often appeals to our biological drives of sex, appetites for food and drink, and psychomotor activity. We are given the power to control these if we become authentic Christians. Still, if we have strongholds Satan can still successfully tempt us into sin. We can combat him with the weapons God has given us. These are: the immunity that comes with salvation; the truth found in the Word of God; and the power of prayer, praise and worship. We also can ask God to rebuke him (Zechariah 3:2). Finally, with the power of the Spirit we have the ability to bind him in his relations with us (Matthew 16:19).

N.B. If you are interested in recent good books on apologetics there are three that I recommend. All three are quite good.

- *Answering the New Atheism* by Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiley
- *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel
- *The Reason for God* by Timothy Keller



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## Personal Notes

**W**e had snow! The storm on Christmas day that pounded the east coast left us with five inches. It was much deeper down east and further north, but it stopped us for a day. It was the aftermath of a wonderful Christmas. We went up to our son's house in the country in Leasburg, NC. He has a farm there, and he raised his family on it. His wife home schooled five kids and got them all into college. One is in the USAF, another is a nurse, another is in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, another is ready to go in the Army, and another is still in college.

My daughter-in-law really did up a wonderful Christmas. We went to their church on Christmas Eve for a communion service, and it was very well done. Five little kids read the Christmas story from Luke. Then we sang carols and hymns. It was a fitting way to celebrate the birth of our savior.

I got a Kindle as a gift from my daughter and son-in-law in Sudbury, MA. I am going to start buying books as soon as I figure out what I want to buy. I will read them as I buy them, or get them to use as reference books in my writing. My grandsons wonder what an 88-year-old man is doing with all the electronic equipment that we have. Elizabeth got a webcam for her present. She will Skype her grandchildren and great grandchildren (she is 84). We have to stay on the cutting edge, you know!! This will be just the thing to expand her communication skills since she already is a Facebook fanatic.

The New Year is almost upon us. I am writing this before that date, and this is going out after the New Year begins, but I want to wish you all kinds of blessings. I have a list of all my former students, and their wives and husbands, that I pray for each day. To begin my prayer time I read the petitions Paul put in Colossians 1:9-12.

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. **We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will** through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, **so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord** and please him in every way: **bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened**

**with all power** according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and **giving joyful thanks to the Father**, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.”

I pray this prayer for you. And I pray that God will answer this prayer for you this year.



**P***Peace Seekers* is a book written by a friend of mine named Jim Abrahamson and was published by Light Messages in 2010. Jim has as his main theme that God has radical grace. Throughout the book, as he makes his points about grace, he has ideas he calls his readers to ponder. These help us to better understand the holiness of god, and his unbelievable love for mankind. I recommend his book to you since it contains vital biblical truth.

**Radical**, by David Platt, was published by Multnomah Books in 2010. When I was a young Christian, I had a book recommended to me written by William McDonald entitled *True Discipleship*. It changed my life because it told me I had to be completely sold out to Jesus. I took McDonald's advice and absolutely surrendered to the Lord. Later, I read Andrew Murray's essay on absolute surrender and again realized I have to be completely surrendered to Him. David Platt urges his readers to do the same. He does more than the other authors do, though, since he details how to do it after you have surrendered.



He also addresses American wealth and poverty in detail, and points out how we have become materialistic and forgotten the poor. He cites his travels in third world countries and the poverty he encountered there as examples of why we should give more to the poor. I have been in those same countries and seen the same poverty and realize there is no way we can take care of the extreme problems that exists. I can only try to do something about that which is around me. I do contribute to things in the third world, but I realize that

what I give will do little to alleviate the suffering there. This is the only criticism I have of his book. The main theme is absolute surrender and then radical obedience. I noticed my son and his wife gave all their children a copy for Christmas.

**Dove** is an old book written originally in 1972, and published by Harper and Row. The author is Robin Lee Graham, an adventuresome teenager who sailed around the world in a 24-foot fiberglass sloop that he named Dove. The book is a story of his travels across the Pacific, through the Indian Ocean, down around the Cape of Good Hope, across the Atlantic to the Antilles where he picked up a new boat. He then transited through the Panama Canal sailing to the Galapagos and back to California.

Being someone who loved to sail, I was enthralled at his visits to exotic places, and his encounters with people, storms and doldrums. There was a wonderful event during his sailing trip. When beset by a storm in the South Indian Ocean, he cried out to God to save him, and the storm was quieted. It was so severe it nearly did him in.

He was never big on education, but back home he decided to give it a try. He enrolled at Stanford and encountered a professor who tried to indoctrinate him with Maoist thought. Disillusioned, he left and went to Montana to live a somewhat solitary life with his wife and child.



■ **January-March, 2011**  
**1-5PM**

Subject: Marriage & Family Problems  
Carolina Evangelical Divinity  
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**Wilson 60th Wedding Anniversary**

