

GRIEVOUS WOLVES

*Hindering spirits that challenge
and oppose spiritual leadership*



Jack Michael

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by
Jack Michael

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Grievous Wolves

Hindering Spirits That Challenge
And Oppose Spiritual Leadership
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Introduction

Satan intends to destroy the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, perhaps you are thinking, "*Yes, those are his intentions, but he cannot do it, because the Bible says Jesus will build his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.*" (see Matthew 16:18).

This is true. On the authority of the scriptures, Satan cannot destroy the church of Jesus Christ AS A WHOLE.

However, it is also an unfortunate truth that Satan and his agents have succeeded in destroying individual churches within the body of Christ.

In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John wrote seven letters to the churches in Asia (*Asia Minor*). None of those churches are in existence today.

Just during the short period of time that I have been in the ministry, I personally know of a number of churches that have closed their doors, and ceased to exist.

I also personally know former pastors, and ministers of the gospel, who today are doing other things with their lives. In one way or another, they were defeated by the forces of darkness.

Some of those former proclaimers of truth are now bitter toward the church, and some are even bitter toward God.

Most spiritual leaders are wise enough to realize that they are in a conflict with the forces of darkness, but they frequently lack clear insight into the exact nature of the conflict. Consequently, in the lives of these spiritual leaders, confusion exists instead of peace, and uncertainty prevails instead of decisiveness.

I believe God has imparted unto me, a portion of the clear insight that pastors and spiritual leaders need in order to recognize Satan's strategy, eliminate confusion, and subsequently triumph over his schemes.

It is my prayer that these insights will bring spiritual enlightenment, and renewed spiritual strength to God's servants who have been victimized by the enemy.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Throughout the book, there are words or phrases enclosed in parentheses within a quoted portion of scripture. Although these words and phrases are not an actual part of the scripture, they are in fact, explanations or emphases derived from word studies of the scriptures.

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GRIEVOUS WOLVES

*Hindering spirits that challenge
and oppose spiritual leadership*

Chapter One

Who are these Wolves?

"For I know this, that after my departing shall GRIEVOUS WOLVES enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." (Acts 20:29-31 KJV).

When the Apostle Paul delivered the above words of warning to the elders of the Ephesian Church, he obviously was not referring to actual wolves.

Figuratively speaking, he was referring to people who would cause trouble, or be a problem in the church.

But, let's get more specific. Paul was referring to spirits: demon spirits, unclean spirits, evil spirits that would influence and motivate the people who cause the trouble. Listen to the following emphasis:

"For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood – contending only with physical opponents – but against the despotisms, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere." (Ephesians 6:12 AMP).

It is interesting that Paul refers to these spirits as wolves. If you recall, Jesus used a similar analogy when warning about false prophets:

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15).

Let me say that in a slightly different manner, *"They come to you in a friendly manner, while at the same time, cloaking hostile intentions."* As you will soon learn, such a description is equally applicable to many of these grievous wolves.

Next, notice that Paul identifies these wolves as GRIEVOUS. This word explains the range of activity of these spirits.

At the least, they can be burdensome, consuming a pastor's time and energy.

At the worst, they can be threatening, dangerous, or even MORTAL. Remember, there are good churches that have closed their doors, and are no longer in existence.

Paul said some of these wolves would come in from the outside. The danger they present is extremely serious, because they will, "...enter in among you, NOT SPARING THE FLOCK." In other words, they will not hesitate to sacrifice God's people in order to accomplish their objectives.

Others, he said, will come from within, "...speaking perverse (misleading or distorted) things, to draw away disciples after them."

Regardless of where they come from, and regardless of the other problems they may cause, you can be assured that the PRIMARY OBJECTIVE of these grievous wolves is to challenge and oppose those in spiritual leadership.

When the Apostle Paul actually spoke these words recorded in Acts, chapter 20, they were addressed to the elders of the Ephesian church. In fact, Acts 20:17 says he called for these elders:

"From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church."

Consequently, we will further identify these grievous wolves as:

HINDERING SPIRITS THAT COME TO CHALLENGE AND OPPOSE THE AUTHORITY OF THOSE IN POSITIONS OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP.

You see, if these grievous wolves can destroy the authority of leadership, it will be a simple task to finish the destruction of a local church, or a ministry.

Also, If the shepherd is defeated, it will be an easy matter to draw away disciples, because the sheep will be confused and scattered.

In order to understand both the danger and NATURE of these hindering spirits, in the coming chapters we will embark upon a journey through Bible history, and study the attitudes and actions of certain infamous, Bible characters, from whom these spirits now derive their names.

And, keep this fact ever present in your mind; although these Bible characters have long since died, the spirits that influenced them DID NOT DIE.

The evil spirits just moved through the ages, from generation to generation, and they continue to influence others with the same detrimental attitudes and actions.

Throughout the book, when I speak of spiritual leaders, I am not just referring to pastors, but also to leaders in other types of ministries (*helps ministries, evangelistic associations, missionary organizations*).

And, when I speak of the church, I am referring to the entire body of Christ, and all ministries that directly and indirectly work together to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is essential that every individual in a position of spiritual leadership be able to recognize these hindering spirits.

It is even more essential that everyone in spiritual leadership understands how to deal with these grievous wolves, and drive them out of the church.

Pastors often get so focused on being patient with people, and forgiving people, that they fail to recognize the grievous wolf that has slipped into their midst.

By the time they discover what is going on, a hindering spirit may have ripped the church apart, causing dissension, divisions, and unreparable damage.

As we shall discuss in a later chapter, maybe you can rescue the people who are being influenced by the spirits, maybe you cannot. Regardless, the wolves must go.

Those whom the Lord has called to be leaders in the body of Christ cannot allow hindering spirits to prohibit them from completing their God ordained assignments.

So, as you continue through this book, remember the following words from Paul as he shared the seriousness of this matter with the Ephesian elders:

"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." (Acts 20:31).

Pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and all those who are in positions of spiritual leadership, listen to a word from the Lord:

"Do not be misled into believing that you will somehow avoid the devil's attacks. Do not fail to prepare yourself for Satan's challenge. If you are doing anything at all for the kingdom of God, you will not escape Satan's attempts to challenge and oppose your position of spiritual authority."

Remember, Paul began his warning to the Ephesian elders by saying:

"FOR I KNOW THIS, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in...."

Chapter Two

The spirit of Nimrod

"Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen...." (Genesis 10:8-12).

Obviously, Nimrod was a very gifted, talented person. The first we hear about him, the Bible says, *"...he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord...."*

Nimrod could be included among those whom the Old Testament refers to as MEN OF RENOWN. He built four cities in the land of Shinar, then moved to Assyria and built four more cities.

Nimrod sounds like the kind of person we need working in the body of Christ. His skills, ingenuity, initiative, and work habits would obviously be a great blessing to any pastor.

But, there is one, big problem. Those who are influenced by the spirit of Nimrod are not interested in helping the pastor, or helping anyone else. Their only interest is in building their own kingdom.

Genesis 10:10 says of Nimrod, "*...the beginning of HIS KINGDOM was Babel....*" Do you remember the tower of Babel?

"And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves...." (Genesis 11:2-4).

Did you notice; Nimrod and his helpers were primarily concerned about MAKING A NAME FOR THEMSELVES?

We have people like this in the church today; gifted, talented people who could be a great blessing. Instead, because they are influenced by the spirit of Nimrod, they are a problem, rather than a blessing.

They have no interest in the vision God has given the pastor. Their only interest is promoting what they perceive as their own ministry, building their own kingdom, and making a name for themselves.

HERE IS UNDERSTANDING

Those who are influenced by the spirit of Nimrod are rebellious toward authority. They can be recognized by the following attitudes and actions...

I WILL NOT SUBMIT TO, NOR COOPERATE WITH LEADERSHIP.

Now, perhaps you are wondering, *"Is it wrong for someone who is gifted, talented, and maybe even called by God, to desire to establish their own ministry?"*

Obviously, the answer is no. However, God has an ORDER, and a TIMING in the way he does things.

When I first entered the ministry, God's ORDER placed me under the authority of a good, experienced pastor, whose wisdom and understanding far exceeded that of my own.

In God's TIMING, that pastor helped me to establish my outreach ministry, then sent me out with blessings.

To the contrary, God cannot bless, and will not promote the spirit of Nimrod. If you remember, God responded to King Saul's rebellion by saying:

"For REBELLION is as the sin of witchcraft, and STUBBORNNESS is as iniquity and idolatry." (1 Samuel 15:23).

1 Peter 5:5-6 gives us clear insight into God's order, and God's timing:

"...you that are younger and of lesser rank be subject to the elders—the ministers and spiritual guides of the church, giving them due respect and yielding to their counsel. Clothe (apron) yourselves, all of you, with humility—as the garb of a servant so that its covering cannot possibly be stripped from you, with freedom from pride and arrogance — toward one another. For God sets Himself against the proud — the insolent, the overbearing, the disdainful, the presumptuous, the boastful, and opposes, frustrates and defeats them — but gives grace (favor, blessing) to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves (demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation) under the mighty hand of God, that IN DUE TIME he may exalt you." (AMP).

Those who are influenced by the spirit of Nimrod do not have such an attitude. They run from church to church, trying to get someone to help them establish their ministry, promote their ministry, or finance their ministry.

If they cannot get the pastor to devote his valuable time and energy to their cause, they may try to create a following, and draw away disciples after themselves.

In such cases, the little kingdoms they begin always collapse. Unfortunately, just like the original Nimrod, the people who are drawn away by the spirit of Nimrod end up confused, and scattered abroad (Genesis 11:8-9).

Such people could be a great blessing to the kingdom of God. Instead, they end up being GRIEVOUS WOLVES.

From the parable of the talents, Jesus gives us further insight into God's order:

"...you have been FAITHFUL with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things...." (Matthew 25:21 NIV).

From 2 Timothy 2:2, the Apostle Paul gives us expanded insight into God's order:

"...the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to FAITHFUL MEN WHO WILL BE ABLE to teach others also."

Did you recognize God's ORDER?

Faithfulness is a higher priority, and is of greater value than ability.

God did not say, *"Find talented people with great ability, put them in charge of the ministry, then pray that they will be faithful."*

In God's TIMING, faithfulness must be exhibited first, then greater responsibilities are given. 1 Corinthians 4:2 says, *"...it is required in stewards (those whom God puts in charge) that one be FOUND FAITHFUL."*

In conclusion, here are a few words of exhortation for those who are influenced by the spirit of Nimrod:

(1) Repent before the Lord. Ask God to forgive you for your rebellious attitudes and uncooperative actions.

(2) Ask the Lord to guide you to a good church of his choosing.

(3) Submit yourself to the pastor.

(4) When the pastor asks you to serve, be faithful, and diligent.

(5) If God has also called you, it will be recognized.

(6) In time, God himself will promote you into the place of his calling.

"For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another." (Psalm 75:6-7).

Chapter Three

The spirit of Korah

Moses was a man whom God used mightily in a position of spiritual leadership. Because of his obedience, God did mighty signs and wonders before Pharaoh, and in the sight of the magicians of Egypt.

In response to Moses' obedience, God sent plagues upon the Egyptians, and in the process, executed judgement upon all their false gods (see Exodus 12:12). Thus, God delivered the children of Israel from the bondage of slavery.

The children of Israel were watching as Moses lifted up his rod, and stretched out his hand over the Red Sea. Exodus 14:21-22 tells us the results:

"...the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left."

The children of Israel were watching as Moses again stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Bible says:

"...the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained." (Exodus 14:28).

These great and mighty signs caused the people to fear the Lord, and believe his servant, Moses (see Exodus 14:31).

After Moses had been in the presence of God on Mount Sinai, Exodus 34:30 says the skin of his face shone. As a result, his brother, Aaron, and all the children of Israel were afraid to come near him.

One would think, after witnessing the mighty signs and wonders which God did through Moses, that it would be absolutely unthinkable for someone to challenge his position of spiritual authority. You would think the people would have willingly, even eagerly submitted to his leadership.

Yet, in the 16th chapter of Numbers, we read the following:

"Now KORAH the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" (Numbers 16:1-3).

Did you notice the quality of disciples Korah had drawn away? Not just a bunch of worthless rogues, but:

LEADERS of the congregation,
REPRESENTATIVES of the congregation,
MEN OF RENOWN.

Then, notice what Korah said, *"...all the congregation is holy, every one of them...."* He was saying that Moses and Aaron were not the only holy ones, not the only saints, and therefore, not the only ones who were SET APART FOR LEADERSHIP.

Furthermore, since Korah was leading this rebellion, he was insisting that he was as holy, as sanctified, and as set apart as Moses, and was therefore equally capable of leading the children of Israel.

HERE IS UNDERSTANDING

The spirit of Korah comes to challenge and oppose those in spiritual leadership by arrogantly insisting...

I AM EQUAL WITH LEADERSHIP.

The fact is, there may be people in the church who have been a Christian longer than the pastor.

There may be people in the church who are smarter than the pastor, and are more knowledgeable of God's word.

In other words, there may be people who are equal to, or even superior to those whom God has set into leadership.

However, the point is, they were not chosen by God to be the person in spiritual leadership. Therefore, their struggle to be equal is not just opposition against another human being. It is opposition and rebellion against GOD'S CHOICE of leadership!

Interestingly, even though Moses knew he was God's choice for leadership, he put the matter to the test. In Numbers 16:28-30, He said:

"...By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the Lord."

Notice that Moses said, *"...these men have rejected the Lord."* Opposing GOD'S CHOICE of leadership is not just opposing another person. It is opposing God!

God's judgement was a bit more swift in those days. Numbers 16:31-33 says:

"Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly."

Today, in this dispensation of grace, God puts up with rebellion a little longer. In 2 Peter 3:9, the Bible says:

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is LONGSUFFERING toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

However, let me strongly suggest that you do not take advantage of the grace of God for your own personal ambitions.

To oppose God's choice of leadership is just as serious today, as it was during Moses' day. On the authority of Galatians 6:7, you will reap whatever you sow.

INSTRUCTIONS TO PASTORS AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS

"Although God has not given you the authority to pass judgement upon the people who are causing trouble, please do not fail to understand that God has given you the authority, and charged you with the responsibility of dealing with the hindering spirits.

(1) God has equipped you with his Holy Spirit, that you might discern, or recognize these grievous wolves.

(2) God has equipped you with his word, that you might understand your spiritual authority over demons.

(3) God has equipped you with his name, the Lord Jesus Christ, by which demons are made subject to you."

Once, while on a missionary outreach, a certain pastor asked me to minister in his church. This was a new opportunity as I had never before ministered in that church.

I received the invitation on a Saturday morning, so all that afternoon I prayed for God's direction as to what I should minister the next morning. The Lord instructed me to teach on the spirit of Korah.

I thought to myself, *"This is rather odd, teaching on such a subject the first time I have an opportunity to minister at a new church."*

Under such circumstances, one might think the Lord would have me minister on salvation, rededication, or a deeper walk with God. Something that wasn't quite so threatening.

Nevertheless, as I continued to pray, the direction and confirmation of the Holy Spirit became even stronger: TEACH ON THE SPIRIT OF KORAH.

Very clearly, I am a teacher. That is how God has gifted me, and anointed me to deliver his word. However, the anointing upon me that Sunday morning was about as close to preaching as I ever get.

I boldly looked those people in the eye, and commanded those influenced by the spirit of Korah to repent.

By the authority of the name of Jesus Christ, I commanded the spirit of Korah to get out of that church.

I didn't know if the pastor would rebuke me, refute what I had taught, or just never invite me back, but at least I obeyed God.

After the message, the pastor politely went through the usual church protocol. He thanked the "*Man of God*" for coming to the church. He encouraged the people to take my words to heart, and he instructed them to greet me in the name of the Lord.

Shortly thereafter, the pastor and I left. As we drove out of sight of the church, he exploded with excitement: "*That was it,*" he exclaimed, "*that was the message! That was the word of the Lord! You don't know the opposition I have encountered since taking over this church.*"

In conclusion, let me remind you of something I previously emphasized. Korah died that day the earth opened its mouth, but the spirit that influenced him did not die!

You may question, "*How do I know an evil spirit was influencing Korah?*"

Simply this; Korah was opposing God's appointed, anointed leader.

Pastors, spiritual leaders, ministers of the gospel, listen carefully:

"Be sober, be vigilant (alert and watchful); because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8).

Chapter Four

The spirit of Absalom

Absalom was King David's third son, born to him by Maacah, the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur.

Geshur, or the Geshurites were among those nations whom God had commanded Joshua to drive out of the land of Canaan, but Joshua 13:13 reveals the following:

"...the children of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maachathites, but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day."

Disobedience to God has a way of troubling you, even generations later.

We know very little about Absalom's mother. We do know that during the time David was fleeing from King Saul, he dwelt among the Philistines for sixteen months.

During this time, which appears to be an ungodly period in his life, David and his men regularly raided certain nations that inhabited the land, one of them being the Geshurites (see 1 Samuel 27).

Perhaps during one of these raids, he took Maacah, who was a daughter of the king of Geshur, or perhaps he made an alliance with the king, which included the hand of his daughter in marriage.

Regardless, 2 Samuel 3:2-3 tells us:

"Sons were born to David in Hebron... the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur."

Although David really loved Absalom, everything the Bible has to say about him indicates that he was a constant problem.

In 2 Samuel 13, we have the account of Absalom killing Amnon, his elder brother. Amnon had forced his half sister, Tamar, to have sex with him, and afterwards, threw her out of his house, and hated her.

Tamar was Absalom's full sister, and because David apparently did nothing as far as punishing Amnon was concerned, Absalom took it upon himself to execute revenge upon his brother.

One has to wonder if revenge was the only motive for this slaying. Amnon was David's eldest son, and seemingly the next in line for the throne of Israel.

Absalom fled to Geshur, and stayed for three years with his grandfather, the king of Geshur. In time, however, he returned to Jerusalem, received David's forgiveness, and once again became a problem.

The Bible says of Absalom:

"Now in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he cut the hair of his head – at the end of every year he cut it because it was heavy on him – when he cut it, he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels according to the king's standard." (2 Samuel 14:25-26).

Absalom took full advantage of his good looks. 2 Samuel 15:1 reveals that he outfitted himself with chariots and horses, and 50 men to run before him.

Those 50 runners were likely charged with the assignment of heralding Absalom's approach.

But, the motives of his heart went well beyond just the flaunting of his beauty, and the inflating of his ego. 2 Samuel 15:2 reveals the following:

"...Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, What city are you from? And he would say, Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel."

Absalom would then hear the person's complaint, and declare that it was a good and just cause, but explain that there was no deputy of the king available to hear the matter. Then he would say:

"...Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." (2 Samuel 15:4).

Of course, these people that Absalom intercepted at the gate would bow down to him, because he was the king's son, but 2 Samuel 15:5-6 says of Absalom:

*"...he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom **STOLE THE HEARTS** of the men of Israel."*

In the process of time, Absalom led a deceptive conspiracy to overthrow David, and exalt himself as king.

Interestingly, this conspiracy began by Absalom asking his father for permission to go to Hebron to pay a vow to the Lord.

OBSERVATION: Grievous wolves will not hesitate to use the name of the Lord, or the word of the Lord to gain an advantage, even though they are opposing the work of the Lord!

Then, he sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel and proclaimed, "...*Absalom reigns in Hebron!*" (2 Samuel 15:10).

In the ensuing war between those who followed Absalom, and those who followed David, we have the well known Bible story of how Absalom's hair was caught in the boughs of a tree, leaving him hanging, as 2 Samuel 18:9 describes, between heaven and earth.

Subsequently, Joab, the commander of David's army, thrust Absalom through the heart with three spears.

HERE IS UNDERSTANDING

As I previously emphasized, Absalom died that day when Joab thrust him through the heart, but the spirit that influenced him did not die. The spirit of Absalom is still challenging and opposing spiritual leaders today. Specifically, that spirit comes...

TO UNDERMINE LEADERSHIP

Here are three warning signs of which spiritual leaders should be aware:

WARNING SIGN # 1

Absalom was a very handsome, good looking man. I am sure you have noticed that the world is drawn to beautiful women, and handsome men.

More often than not, such people have no godly values, but the world is still drawn to them, and gives them status, because of their looks. In the world's distorted way of thinking, whatever these beautiful people say must be right.

In a similar manner, Absalom used his good looks to draw people to himself, and to provide himself with a platform to voice complaints against God's chosen leader.

Those who claim to be servants of the Lord must not be so. Although by virtue of their parent's genes, they may be attractive people, they must not use that advantage to cause people to be enamored with them.

All true servants of the Lord must learn to draw people to Jesus Christ.

WARNING SIGN # 2

To undermine means: "*To turn things from beneath,*" or "*to secretly subvert.*" If you will notice, everything Absalom did, he did it secretly, behind his father's back.

Strangely enough, it would seem that David knew about these schemes, but did nothing. It was once said of David:

"...no one can turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken...but my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of the angel of God, to know everything that is in the earth." (from 2 Samuel 14:19-20).

Pastors and spiritual leaders also need to know what is going on behind their back. Personally, I am convinced that all spiritual leaders need the gift of discerning of spirits operating in their lives.

WARNING SIGN # 3

The process of undermining will likely take the following course:

(1) The spirit of Absalom will point out so-called weaknesses, or shortcomings in the pastor, or spiritual leader.

(2) Soon, the emphasis will shift to the leader's lack of sensitivity, lack of concern, or lack of love.

(3) Suggestions will be heard about how much better things would be if someone else was in charge.

(4) In time, the spirit of Absalom will openly recommend that he should be that person in charge.

The people who are drawn away often become so enamored, that they actually recruit the spirit of Absalom, and demand that he be in charge.

The inevitable result is a division in the church. Entire groups of people have been known to depart, to begin what they falsely believe to be: THE TRUE WORK OF GOD.

These hastily founded new kingdoms never endure. Satan does not intend for them to endure. The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).

Once again, the real victims in these tragedies are those who are caught up in the deception. All too often, they remain as scattered, wandering sheep.

Remember, the Apostle Paul warned that these grievous wolves would come in among you, NOT SPARING THE FLOCK.

Pastors and spiritual leaders, if you are truly ordained of God, you can, and must prevent these challenges to your position of leadership. God's word so instructs us:

"Be alert and on your guard; stand firm in your faith...Act like men and be courageous; grow in strength!" (from 1 Corinthians 16:13, The Amplified Bible).

Chapter Five

The spirit of Jezebel

Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. The Sidonians were among those nations from whom God had strictly forbidden the children of Israel to take wives, saying of them in 1 Kings 11:2:

"...You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods...."

The first thing we hear about Jezebel, she has married Ahab, king of Israel. Sure enough, 1 Kings 16:31-32 says of Ahab:

"...he went and served Baal (a false, Canaanite god) and worshiped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria."

In addition, the Bible also says:

"And Ahab made a wooden image (an Asherah; Canaanite goddess). Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him." (1 Kings 16:33).

Wherever you look, you see Jezebel's influence over King Ahab. As you trace her footsteps through the Bible, you begin to wonder who was reigning in Israel, Ahab or Jezebel?

From 1 Kings 18, we learn that Jezebel had the prophets of the Lord killed, and in their place, installed four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, as well as four hundred prophets of Asherah, who daily ate at her table (verses 4 & 19).

Elijah, the prophet of God, temporarily interrupted Jezebel's sphere of influence when he challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.

Interestingly, Ahab himself was there on Mount Carmel when God showed himself strong to the children of Israel, and utterly defeated the prophets of Baal (see 1 Kings 18:19-40).

One would think such a mighty sign from God would have turned Ahab's heart, but Jezebel's influence was too dominant. She was quickly back in control, and set out to have Elijah killed (1 Kings 19:1-2).

In 1 Kings 21, we see Jezebel at work again; this time employing false witnesses and murder to acquire a vineyard from a man named Naboth, who refused to sell it to Ahab.

Everywhere we see this woman, she was demanding to have her way. 1 Kings 21:25 gives us additional insight into her domination over Ahab:

"But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because JEZEBEL HIS WIFE STIRRED HIM UP" (incited him, urged him on).

After Ahab died, Jezebel continued to influence her son, Ahaziah, who succeeded his father as king of Israel. 1 Kings 22:52 specifically says of Ahaziah:

"He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father and IN THE WAY OF HIS MOTHER...."

When judgement finally came to the house of Ahab, another of Jezebel's sons, Jehoram (or Joram) was reigning as king of Israel.

Joram called out to Jehu, the newly anointed king of Israel, who had come as the instrument of God's judgement: *"...Is it peace, Jehu...?"*

In his reply, Jehu specifically made mention of Jezebel:

"...How can peace exist, as long as the fornications of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" (2 Kings 9:22 AMP).

Even as God's judgement was about to be executed upon her, Jezebel made one final effort to remain in control. 2 Kings 9:30 says:

"Now when Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and painted her eyes, and beautified her head, and looked out at [an upper] window." (AMP).

Rather than repent, beg for mercy, or even run for her life, Jezebel apparently dressed up as a prostitute, intending to seduce the newly anointed king of Israel.

Jezebel's death was a horrible one. She was thrown from that upper window by her own servants, and trampled under the hoofs of Jehu's horse.

Then, according to the word of Elijah, the prophet of God, dogs literally ate her flesh (see 2 Kings 9:30-37).

What remained of her corpse became as refuse, or dung in the field, so that no one could say, "...Here lies Jezebel," and make a memorial to her.

Perhaps some of you would complain, *"That is a terrible story. God should have had a little mercy on Jezebel. Doesn't the Bible say God's mercy endures forever?"*

Yes, the Bible does say that, but in James 2:13, the Bible also says:

"For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy...."

As I previously emphasized, Jezebel is dead, but the spirit that influenced her did not die. This fact was confirmed by Jesus himself as he instructed the Apostle John to write a letter to the church in Thyatira:

"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman JEZEBEL, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality (or spiritual idolatry) and eat things sacrificed to idols." (Revelation 2:19-20).

The original Jezebel had been dead for centuries, but the spirit of Jezebel was alive and active in the church at Thyatira.

Unfortunately, that spirit of Jezebel is also alive, and active in a lot of churches today!

HERE IS UNDERSTANDING

Interestingly, the spirit of Jezebel does not strive to gain the position of leadership, nor the responsibility of leadership. That spirit is just determined...

TO CONTROL OTHERS WHO ARE IN LEADERSHIP.

In many churches, there are people who literally control the pastor. In some churches, the pastor is nothing more than a figurehead because of such control.

Oddly enough, such people are often themselves in a lesser role of leadership, such as an elder or deacon.

Please do not misunderstand me. It is scriptural to have elders and deacons in the church, but their responsibility is not to control the pastor, and tell him every little thing he can, and cannot do; what he can preach, and what he cannot preach.

The responsibility of the elders and deacons is to support the pastor, and assist him in fulfilling the vision (*imparted by God through the pastor*) for the direction of the church. Otherwise, we have sheep leading shepherds.

This brings up an interesting question. Does the spirit of Jezebel always manifest itself through a woman?

It would seem that way, because of the original Jezebel, but I would caution you not to limit the power of a hindering spirit.

Let me draw your attention again to the words of Jesus in Revelation, chapter 2. Verses 21-23 say:

"...I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality (or, practicing idolatry), and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works."

Did you notice that Jesus referred to the CHILDREN of Jezebel? A reference, no doubt, to those who are drawn away to such an extent, that they are considered as Jezebel's spiritual offspring.

Obviously, that spirit could employ a male as well as a female in order to weave its web of controlling schemes.

I hope you also noticed that those who are drawn away by the spirit of Jezebel are in big trouble, unless they repent. Listen again to a portion of the above scriptures:

"Indeed I will cast her (Jezebel) into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds."

And, for those who persist in following Jezebel to the extent that they become her spiritual offspring, Jesus said:

"I will kill her children with death...."

So, just exactly what should pastors and spiritual leaders look for, in order to recognize this spirit of Jezebel?

WARNING SIGN # 1

Most likely, this spirit will come into the church from the outside. People just show up from who knows where?

Initially, they may appear as flattering, smooth talking individuals, who heap praise upon the pastor, and laud the effectiveness of the church. It may seem that they will be an asset to the church.

Within a short period of time, however, they will come to you with the pretense of being: *"A genuinely concerned person, who is seriously worried about the direction of the church!"*

In time, if they don't get their way, they will turn into arrogant, strong-willed people, who demand to be heard.

WARNING SIGN # 2

Sadly, the spirit of Jezebel sometimes succeeds in seducing a pastor's wife. She then becomes the grievous wolf, and tries to control every decision, as well as every person in the church.

WARNING SIGN # 3

When a pastor becomes so burdened down with trying to appease other people's demands, that he is not free to please God, the spirit of Jezebel is very likely at work in the church.

A fellow minister shared this chilling story. A woman came into his church, who had moved from another state. Shortly, thereafter, it became very obvious that she was trying to gain control over the pastor, and gain control over certain other church members. Things became so bad that he had to privately confront this woman.

After initially acting shocked and innocent, she arrogantly admitted that she was influenced by the spirit of Jezebel, and said that Satan had specifically sent her there to, *"TAKE DOWN THE PASTOR!"*

On the next page, listen again to the words of Jesus as he further identifies the type of people through whom the spirit of Jezebel will manifest itself.

"...you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." (Revelation 2:20).

WARNING SIGN # 4

Those who are under the influence of the spirit of Jezebel will insist that they are a prophetess (*or prophet*). If the leadership of the church accepts them as such, it will give them complete freedom to control the church with their so-called prophecies.

WARNING SIGN # 5

Jesus specifically said to the church at Thyatira, *"...you allow that woman Jezebel ...to teach and seduce MY SERVANTS...."* Remember, leadership is the primary target of all these grievous wolves.

WARNING SIGN # 6

Jesus said they allowed her to teach and seduce his servants to commit sexual immorality.

As I previously stated, when the spirit of Jezebel comes into the church, she may initially heap praise upon the pastor. If that doesn't work, Jezebel will not hesitate to use sexual seduction to gain control.

Jesus also said they allowed her to teach and seduce his servants to eat things sacrificed to idols. As far as I know, this is not an issue in today's church. I believe it will suffice to say the spirit of Jezebel turns God's servants away from serving the Lord with all their hearts.

Finally, listen once again to the words of Jesus:

"...you ALLOW that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants...."

Did you notice; they ALLOWED her to be in control? There is one rather obvious result; the church at Thyatira is no longer in existence.

A pastor shared with me about a lady who came to his church; a lady who was clearly influenced by the spirit of Jezebel.

She first tried to gain control over the pastor. When that didn't work, she tried to gain control over his wife.

When she wasn't able to influence the pastor's wife, she turned her efforts toward the pastor's daughter

When the pastor's daughter refused to submit to her control, she left the church, went about two blocks down the street, and started attending another church.

After two weeks, the new church made her an elder.

Pastors, please stay alert. You must be able to recognize that spirit of Jezebel. Do not allow a grievous wolf to take over your church, and destroy your ministry.

Listen to these words of wisdom from the Spirit of the Lord:

"Pastors, spiritual leaders, and all those in leadership whose hearts are right before the Lord: it was God who called you; it was God who raised you up; it was God who anointed you; it was God who trained you by his Spirit, and by his word. It was God who put you into the position of spiritual leadership. GOD INTENDS FOR YOU TO BE IN CONTROL."

Not the type of control exhibited by the spirit of Jezebel, lest you yourself become a grievous wolf, but the control of a strong and caring shepherd, as described by the Apostle Peter:

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." (1 Peter 5:2-4).

Chapter Six

The spirit of Judas

"...Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve." (John 6:70-71).

Notice that Jesus called Judas a devil. Obviously, he was not saying Judas was a spirit being, rather than a human being.

Jesus was revealing that even among his own disciples, a human being could be motivated by an evil, spirit being. Such is the case with all these grievous wolves.

Judas, it seems, was a grievous wolf from the beginning. All during the time he was with Jesus, he yielded to the influence of hindering spirits. Eventually, he yielded to the influence of Satan himself.

In John, chapter 12, we have the story of Mary (*probably Martha's sister*) taking a pound of costly, fragrant oil, and anointing the feet of Jesus. Judas challenged and opposed this act:

"Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" (John 12:5).

As in the case of all grievous wolves, the motives of their heart are a bit different than the words of their mouth. The next verse says:

"This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it." (John 12:6).

During what is called the Last Supper, the Bible reveals that it was Satan who put the idea of betrayal into the heart of Judas. John 13:2 says:

"And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him."

Later in that chapter, the Bible says Jesus was troubled in spirit, and said:

"...Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." (John 13:21).

Interestingly, the other disciples did not know that Judas intended to betray Jesus. John 13:22 says:

"...the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke."

This tells me that the spirit of Judas is a sneaky spirit, rather than being outwardly rebellious like the spirit of Korah. Let me once again remind you of the instructions Jesus gave us about false prophets:

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15).

Permit me to say it in another way:

"Although inwardly they are actually wolves, outwardly they LOOK LIKE, TALK LIKE, and ACT LIKE sheep!"

These same characteristics accurately describe the spirit of Judas, and can also be applied to some of the other grievous wolves.

After Jesus identified Judas as the one who would betray him, God's word says something else that is very revealing:

"Now after the piece of bread, SATAN ENTERED HIM...." (John 13:27).

Sometimes, pastors, and ministers of the gospel have a hard time believing that an evil spirit could actually be inside their church, or inside their ministry.

In the above case, Judas was actually in the physical presence of the Son of God, breaking bread with him, close enough to touch him, and the Bible still says, *"...Satan entered him...."*

HERE IS UNDERSTANDING

The spirit of Judas, regardless of whatever other lack of integrity it may manifest, ultimately comes...

TO BETRAY LEADERSHIP.

I know of a certain situation where the pastor of a church desired to take some personal time away from the ministry (*often referred to as a Sabbatical*).

He left the church in the hands of a trusted friend, or so he thought. This friend promised to pastor the church, and care for the flock in the pastor's absence.

Prior to the pastor's departure, it was clearly understood that when he returned, this so-called friend would step down from the position of interim pastor (*or temporary pastor*).

However, upon the pastor's return, the man refused to step down, and allow the pastor to resume his rightful ministry.

The officers of the denomination were called in to intervene. The man still refused to step down, citing that the congregation preferred him as their pastor.

When the man was firmly commanded to step aside by those in spiritual authority, he called a church meeting, and demanded that a vote be taken to determine which of the two the members preferred.

As in the case of Absalom, it seems that this man stole the hearts of the people in the absence of the pastor. The church was never returned to the rightful pastor.

Over the years, I periodically inquired about this church. For a time, it seemed to be a thriving church with a fruitful ministry.

However, with the passing of time, the influence of the church diminished, and the attendance slowly decreased. Eventually, the man who betrayed the pastor resigned.

I heard that he attempted to become a traveling evangelist. Of course, grievous wolves don't receive many invitations!

God does not bless the spirit of Judas, nor the act of betrayal.

Quite accurately did David prophesy of Judas, and of those who continue to be influenced by the spirit of Judas:

"Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." (Psalm 41:9).

This temporary pastor did not understand the principle of Psalm 75:5-7:

"Do not lift up your horn on high (raise the head proudly like a horned animal); do not speak with a stiff neck (an arrogant, grievous attitude). For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another."

When God calls, and anoints someone to pastor a church, be assured that it is not a trivial matter. From Acts 20:28, the Bible says:

"...the HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

Did you hear that? It is the Holy Spirit who makes someone an overseer of the flock. It is the Holy Spirit who puts them into the position of spiritual leadership.

Therefore, I believe I can safely say:

"A person who deceptively gains a spiritual leader's trust and confidence, and is given spiritual responsibilities where they are expected to be faithful in the sight of God, but instead, they betray that trust and confidence which was bestowed upon them; that person is in trouble with God."

INSTRUCTIONS TO PASTORS AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS

Be both CAUTIOUS and SLOW about entrusting leadership positions to others.

Of course, spiritual leaders should train those who are under them, and put those who are found to be faithful into positions of leadership, but listen to these instructions about choosing spiritual leaders:

"Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil." (1 Timothy 3:6).

The Amplified Bible says it this way:

"He must not be a new convert, or he may [develop a beclouded and stupid state of mind] as the result of pride, [be blinded by] conceit, and fall into the condemnation that the devil [once] did."

Listen to further words of caution, and slowness from the Amplified Bible:

"Do not be in a hurry in the laying on of hands – giving the sanction of the church too hastily [in reinstating expelled offenders or in ordination in questionable cases] – nor share or participate in another man's sins; keep yourself pure." (1 Timothy 5:22).

In the above verse, please notice the part that says, *"...nor share or participate in another man's sins...?"*

As a spiritual leader, if you elevate the wrong person into leadership, that person could very likely become a grievous wolf.

Then, when they rip the church apart, causing division and destruction, you have shared or participated in that person's sin, because you were the one who put them into leadership.

Even if you put the right person into leadership before God's time, you could still end up sharing or participating in that person's sin, should they also become a grievous wolf.

Pastors and spiritual leaders, let me remind you again; be both CAUTIOUS and SLOW about entrusting the responsibilities of spiritual leadership to others.

Be careful that you do not provide the place, or the opportunity in which the spirit of Judas can operate.

Chapter Seven

The spirit of Ananias and Sapphira

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." (Acts 5:1-4).

Notice once again, the real problem in this situation was not just people causing trouble in the church. The real problem was the spirit that was influencing Ananias and Sapphira. Peter said, "*...Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart....*"

Notice also that this spirit, whether it was Satan himself or one of his demons, came to challenge the leadership of the early church. Ananias didn't just quietly deposit a portion of his proceeds into the offering. He made a big fanfare out of the matter, laying it at the apostles' feet.

Some have suggested that Ananias and Sapphira were born again Christians, and were actively involved in the church at Jerusalem. I don't think so; listen carefully:

"...THOSE WHO BELIEVED were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common." (Acts 4:32).

The description of the Christians in the above scripture definitely excludes Ananias and Sapphira from being one of, "*...those who believed....*"

In those days, literally thousands were accepting Jesus as Messiah. When they gathered together as the body of Christ, they faced enormous logistical problems, as evidenced by Acts 6:1-6.

No doubt, Satan seized the opportunity to secretly slip a couple of grievous wolves into the church.

HERE IS UNDERSTANDING

The spirit of Ananias and Sapphira comes to plant seeds of dishonesty, for the ultimate purpose of...

DESTROYING THE INTEGRITY OF THE CHURCH,

and, of course...

TO DESTROY THE INTEGRITY OF LEADERSHIP.

Satan strives to generate dishonesty in Christian ministries. He wants them to be seen by the world as lacking in integrity.

The actions of Ananias and Sapphira may not seem to be that serious. I am sure that thousands of Christians have promised God they would give a certain size offering, and then gave less. However, because they were God's children, they asked for forgiveness and received mercy.

But, Ananias and Sapphira were not Christians. They conceived (*or purposed*) this scheme in their hearts. Subsequently, Satan was able to plant them in the church as grievous wolves.

Look a little deeper. Peter said they, "...agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord..." This tells me they had no fear of God.

Such defiant actions strongly indicate that Ananias and Sapphira did not believe the Spirit of the Lord was even present in the early church. Therefore, they also did not believe Jesus was the Messiah.

So, who were these people? We don't know for sure, but quite possibly they were zealous Jews, and their ultimate intentions were to prove that Christianity was false.

The devil only needs one disgruntled person through whom he can begin to work his schemes of opposition. In this specific case, he only needed a foothold to begin sowing seeds of dishonesty in the early church. In Ananias and Sapphira, he found two willing vessels.

From the Amplified Bible, Ephesians 4:27 alerts, and warns us:

"Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil – give no opportunity to him."

Had Ananias and Sapphira succeeded in deceiving the leadership in the church at Jerusalem, Satan would have acted quickly to sow more seeds of dishonesty.

I believe God has given me specific insight into what would have happened. Listen carefully.

(1) Satan would have made sure the word was widely proclaimed that Ananias and Sapphira had sold a property, and out of the generosity of their hearts, gave the entire proceeds to the church.

(2) Next, the word would have leaked out that the church received only a portion of those proceeds.

(3) Then, the lies would have started, *"That scoundrel, Peter, and those apostles; they pocketed the rest of that money!"*

Fortunately, the end results were not favorable for Ananias, Sapphira, or Satan.

"Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? She said, Yes, for so much. Then Peter said to her, How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out. Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband." (Acts 5:5-10).

So, was God's judgement necessary in this case, because Ananias and Sapphira were being used by Satan in an attempt to destroy the integrity of the EARLY church?

Yes, but let me say it a bit stronger. Satan was using Ananias and Sapphira in an attempt to destroy the integrity of the ONLY church!

Satan was attempting to terminate the church before it could extend beyond the boundaries of Jerusalem.

Apparently, this was the devil's first try at discrediting Christianity on the matter of integrity, but it definitely was not his last. The spirit of Ananias and Sapphira is still lurking about today, striving to gain a foothold into any Christian endeavor where the management of money is involved.

Dishonesty can manifest itself in many ways. Likely, all of you are aware of cases in recent church history where ministries have been destroyed, and have completely disappeared due to financial improprieties.

Building funds, special projects funds, and indeed, the general funds of churches and other ministries have been embezzled by the very people who were entrusted to manage them. In some cases, funds have totally disappeared.

Church people have emotionally made ridiculous pledges, knowing in their heart that they have neither the capability, nor the commitment to fulfill them.

The pastors who pressured the people into making the pledges have entered into financial obligations on the strength of such promises, and as a result, have lost their credibility in the community.

You see, even spiritual leaders can fall prey to dishonesty, unless they are totally committed to integrity when RECEIVING, HOLDING, and DISPERSING funds.

Spiritual leaders must also cautiously choose those to whom the managing of money is entrusted. In 1 Timothy 3:1-13, the qualifications of elders and deacons are listed. Four of those qualifications relate to the management of money:

(1) Elders and deacons must not be greedy for money.

(2) Elders must not be covetous (*or, lovers of money*),

(3) Elders must have a good testimony among those who are outside the church.

(4) Deacons must be found blameless.

Pastors, and all spiritual leaders; look for, and heed these warning signs:

WARNING SIGN # 1

Be cautious about those who come in from the outside with so-called exciting, but questionable schemes by which money can be raised quickly to help the ministry.

I realize most ministries need finances, but be on guard. Most likely, such people will turn out to be grievous wolves, and you could lose your credibility.

Do not persuade people in the church to commit money to questionable schemes. When the scheme turns out to be a fraud, the grievous wolf will disappear to be heard from no more, and you will be left to face the people.

WARNING SIGN # 2

Be on guard against people who come in from the outside, and begin to flatter you, and talk about how wonderful you are, and how they intend to give a large contribution just as soon as they can work out certain financial transactions.

Rather quickly, you could find yourself trying to please that person, rather than pleasing God, and end up in the grip of a grievous wolf.

WARNING SIGN # 3

Be reluctant to receive donations of so-called precious items, or material goods; things such as jewelry, heirlooms, property, or vehicles.

Most pastors and spiritual leaders do not have the expertise of knowing how to sell such items, and turn them into capital.

Soon, you will be hearing cries from the contributor, *"That's all you got for my grandfather's gold watch? It was worth much more than that!"*

Then, questions will arise in the mind of the contributor, followed by rumors, as to whether you sold the item for more, and kept back part of the proceeds for yourself.

Ask those who wish to donate such things to sell them on their own, and then bring an offering to the Lord.

WARNING SIGN # 4

Be careful of individuals who insist on making a big fanfare out of their giving. Watch for those who seek the recognition of men.

Teach the people to obey the scriptural principles of tithes and offerings, and teach them to do so as unto the Lord, rather than to receive glory from men.

WARNING SIGN # 5

As a spiritual leader, be a person of utmost integrity when dealing with financial matters. Do not provide the opportunity for a grievous wolf to rise up from within your midst, and accuse you of dishonesty.

Remember the words of the Apostle Paul from Acts 20:30, as he warned the elders of the Ephesian church:

"Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse (misleading and distorted) things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."

No doubt, we would be stunned if we knew the number of churches that have split, or have been destroyed over financial matters.

In conclusion, let us remember that the devil needs only a foothold to begin sowing seeds of dishonesty. With all diligence, we must constantly be on the alert to give him no opportunity.

There is already enough dishonesty and corruption in the world. Let us keep the spirit of Ananias and Sapphira outside the work of God.

One final thought. I marvel at those Christians who insist that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have passed away, and are no longer needed in today's church.

In this situation involving Ananias and Sapphira, without the discerning of spirits, and the word of knowledge, the leadership of the church would have been defenseless against Satan's schemes.

The devil's attempts to discredit the church have not lessened. Neither has the power of God to combat those attempts.

Chapter Eight

The spirit of Delilah

During the days of the Judges, there was a decline in submission to God, and a lack of godly leadership from man. Judges 21:25 says:

"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

Consequently, God periodically raised up judges, who delivered Israel from their enemies. Those judges would then govern the nation for a season.

One such man was Samson. Judges 15:20 reveals that he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

God used Samson mightily. When the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him, he could perform mighty exploits of strength. In Judges 15:9-15, we have the account of him killing a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey.

But, Samson also had a very serious problem. He was always getting involved with ungodly, Philistine women.

"...it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah." (Judges 16:4).

The question is, how did it happen? Was it just a coincidence? Was Delilah out doing the laundry one day, and Samson just happened to see her, and desired to have her?

I think not. Very likely, Delilah bathed herself, oiled her skin, diligently fixed her hair, dressed provocatively, and positioned herself in the right place, at the right time, so that Samson would notice her.

In Judges 16:5, we discover that she had an ulterior motive for being involved with Samson. The lords of the Philistines each offered her eleven hundred pieces of silver if she could find out the source of his strength.

Samson lied to her several times, but Delilah pressed him daily about the matter. Finally, he told her the truth.

"...No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man." (Judges 16:17).

When Delilah saw that he had told her the truth, she called for the lords of the Philistines. The Bible says they came up to her, and brought the money in their hand.

Then, what probably followed a time of sexual intimacy, and indulging in too much wine, Judges 16:19 says:

"Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head...."

Interestingly, the remaining portion of that same verse says:

"...Then she began to torment him, (look down upon, browbeat, or bully him) and his strength left him."

Without God's supernatural strength, Samson was overcome by the Philistines. They bored out his eyes, bound him with bronze fetters, and made him a grinder in the prison. The man who was once feared because of his strength, was now mocked because of his weakness.

HERE IS UNDERSTANDING

When the spirit of Delilah gets into the church, or in some way becomes involved in the life of a spiritual leader, that spirit comes...

TO DESTROY THE REPUTATION
OF LEADERSHIP,

and, in the process...

TO STRIP THEM OF THEIR
SPIRITUAL STRENGTH.

A fellow minister once told me that an attractive young lady, who was attending his church, telephoned and requested to meet with him for counseling.

When she arrived, he invited her into his office. In the short amount of time it took to turn his back, close the office door, and turn back around, she was standing before him completely naked.

Fortunately, he was able to call for his secretary. If he didn't learn anything else that day, he at least learned that a pastor should not counsel members of the opposite sex behind closed doors.

You see, when I speak of the spirit of Delilah, I am not just talking about a pastor, or a spiritual leader yielding to temptation, falling into sin, and having an affair.

That type of problem is bad enough. It can be devastating to a person's ministry.

However, when we speak of the spirit of Delilah, we are talking about a minister of the gospel being deliberately set up for a fall.

We would be astounded if we knew the number of women Satan has motivated to come into the church, and take down the pastor through sexual enticement.

Afterwards, the spirit of Delilah is not exactly discreet. Ministers victimized by that spirit have been exposed, slandered, mocked, and blackmailed. Like Samson, not only is their reputation ruined, but their spiritual strength (*or spiritual effectiveness*) has been stripped away as well.

Like the Psalmist David, they cry out to God in the aftermath of their sin:

"For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer." (Psalm 32:4).

Even if a spiritual leader is eventually restored to his ministry, it usually takes a little time, figuratively speaking, for his hair to grow back.

Periodically, when I am ministering to members of the opposite sex, my wife will just suddenly appear at my side.

Sometimes, I look at her, and ask, *"Did you want something?"*

She just looks back, and says, *"Oh, no, I just came to help you minister."*

Later, when I ask her about the matter, she replies, *"You didn't notice the way that woman was looking at you?"*

Women seem to have more intuition about such things. Men feel flattered that a beautiful woman is showing them special attention, but the wives can see that spirit of Delilah.

Pastors, ministers of the gospel, you should already know these things, but here are a few warning signs anyway.

WARNING SIGN # 1

Be cautious of women who constantly flatter you, shower you with praise, and talk about how wonderful you are. The Bible warns us about such women:

"For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil." (Proverbs 5:3).

You may as well be honest. If you examine yourself in the light of God's word, you will have to admit that you're not all that wonderful.

WARNING SIGN # 2

Greeting one another in church with a respectable, restrained hug is wonderful, but beware of women who almost make love to you, except for the deterrent of the clothes you are wearing.

Do not be fooled, nor enticed by her hugging, rubbing and squeezing. The spirit of Delilah may be setting you up for a fall.

WARNING SIGN # 3

Beware of women who cannot share their deepest troubles with anyone else but you, because supposedly, you are the only one who truly understands.

Avoid spending excessive amounts of time with such women. Tell them what the word of God says about their situation, pray for them, and send them on their way. Do not get some crazy idea in your mind that they cannot make it without you.

If such women are sincerely seeking help, they must learn to trust in God anyway, rather than trust in you.

WARNING SIGN # 4

The more famous, or well known you become as a spiritual leader, the greater the probability that the spirit of Delilah will attempt to seduce you.

So, if a beautiful, shapely, scantily clad young woman just happens to approach you in the airport, don't get the beclouded notion that she picked you out of the crowd because you were the most handsome and irresistible.

If a mysterious young lady knocks on your hotel door some evening, when you are out of town without you wife, don't get the befuddled idea in your mind that this opportunity came to you because you are so sexually desirable.

Brother, you are being set up by the spirit of Delilah.

Remember the original Delilah. Such women would not hesitate to entice you for money. If one of those tabloids would pay for their story about how they brought down one of God's chosen servants, they would not think twice about seducing you.

In conclusion, open your ears to the wisdom of King Solomon, while he was still functioning with the anointing of God:

"Say to wisdom, You are my sister, and call understanding your nearest kin, that they may keep you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words...For she has cast down many wounded, AND ALL WHO WERE SLAIN BY HER WERE STRONG MEN." (Proverbs 7:4-5, 26).

Chapter Nine

The spirit of Lucifer

You may wonder why such a chapter is included in this book? Are not Lucifer and Satan the same being? Are not the actions of the previous grievous wolves just an extension of the character of Satan? Is Satan not the chief devil, the source from whom other grievous wolves receive their marching orders?

To answer those questions, we must go back to the time when Lucifer was not the devil. On the following page, from the book of Ezekiel, we have a description of this being who was once known as Lucifer:

"You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you." (Ezekiel 28:14-15).

And, what was this iniquity? From the book of Isaiah, chapter 14, verses 12-14, we read the following:

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High."

Before we focus upon the iniquity of Lucifer, let us briefly recall the motivations of the other grievous wolves:

(1) THE SPIRIT OF NIMROD - A spirit of rebellion; will not submit to leadership, nor cooperate with leadership.

(2) THE SPIRIT OF KORAH - A spirit that insists, *"I am equal with leadership."*

(3) THE SPIRIT OF ABSALOM - This spirit comes into the church for the purpose of undermining leadership.

(4) THE SPIRIT OF JEZEBEL - A spirit that attempts to gain, and maintain control over leadership.

(5) THE SPIRIT OF JUDAS - A spirit that secretly schemes to betray those who are in leadership.

(6) THE SPIRIT OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA - A spirit that comes to destroy the integrity of leadership.

(7) THE SPIRIT OF DELILAH - A spirit that gets involved with leadership for the purpose of destroying their reputation, and stripping them of spiritual strength.

Some of you may have a question in your mind. *"Can more than one of these spirits be in the church?"*

Not only can more than one of these spirits be in the church; more than one of them can be in an individual. From Luke 8:2, we receive the following revelation:

"And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities – Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come SEVEN DEMONS."

Now consider this; should any of these first seven spirits succeed in their attacks, the damage done MAY, or MAY NOT result in a spiritual leader's downfall.

With God's help, a spiritual leader may rally, or repent, and overcome the attacks of these first seven grievous wolves.

However, in the case of Lucifer, we have a much more advanced motivation.

HERE IS UNDERSTANDING

The spirit of Lucifer comes for one, very specific purpose...

TO OVERTHROW LEADERSHIP.

Remember, Lucifer said in his heart:

"...I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High."

Here then is the iniquity that was found in Lucifer. He tried to OVERTHROW GOD.

Consequently, the motivation to overthrow leadership is still a prevalent part of Satan's arsenal of schemes. Look around you, anarchy is everywhere. Governments are overthrown, industries are taken over, and even the family has no leadership.

Of course, much of that motivation to overthrow leadership is aimed directly at those whom God has placed into spiritual leadership within the church.

Going a step further, let's recall something Jesus said in John 10:10:

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy..."

All these grievous wolves are thieves, and those whom they are influencing are cast into the role of thieves.

However, these first seven hindering spirits seem to be the *"Set up guys"* for the spirit of Lucifer. Primarily, they come as a thief to steal the authority of leadership. Maybe they will succeed in overthrowing leadership, maybe not.

But, when the spirit of Lucifer comes, it comes specifically for the kill. The results of the kill, as clearly stated in John 10:10, is destruction!

Unfortunately, the kill is sometimes so devastating, that not only is the effectiveness of a ministry destroyed, but in time, even the remembrance of it.

Fortunately, God does not have much tolerance for the spirit of Lucifer. I know of a situation where a young man rose up to challenge the pastor of a certain church.

He challenged the pastor's teachings and doctrines. He questioned the pastor's handling of finances. He fueled unfounded rumors of immorality, and he resisted the pastor's missions emphasis.

Five or six other families got stirred up, and joined this young man in opposing the pastor.

On several occasions, other ministers were brought in as mediators to restore the peace, but shortly after they departed, the opposition would reappear.

In the process of time, the pastor grew weary of the spiritual warfare, resigned his pastorate, and moved away from the area.

The young man who had opposed the pastor took over the church, and it looked like the spirit of Lucifer had won. However, within two weeks, the young man who had led the rebellion **WAS DEAD!**

A number of years have passed since this incident, but the pastor who was overthrown has still not fully recovered from the attack. As this book went to press, he had not resumed his rightful ministry.

The truth is, there are too many former pastors, and ministers of the gospel, who are now selling used cars, or driving trucks because of grievous wolves. Some have prematurely died, and their remains are in the graveyard.

Please, do not be offended because of my remarks about other jobs. Obviously, other types of employment are not wrong; unless, of course, you have been called by God, and anointed to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pastors, spiritual leaders, ministers of the gospel; please understand that Satan not only intends to steal your authority as a leader; ultimately, he intends to overthrow you, and destroy your ministry.

But, Satan must not win! God has not left us without power. He has equipped us with his spirit, and his word, that we might recognize these grievous wolves. Equally important, he has given us authority over these hindering spirits.

Being more specific, In Luke 10:19, Jesus gave us authority to...

**TRAMPLE ON SERPENTS
AND SCORPIONS,**

and experience victory over...

ALL THE POWER OF THE ENEMY,

and function in that place where...

**NOTHING CAN BY ANY
MEANS HURT YOU!**

On the next page, listen to additional words from the Lord Jesus, and strengthen yourself for spiritual warfare against these grievous wolves:

"...the ruler of this world is coming, and HE HAS NOTHING IN ME." (John 14:30).

Listen again to that portion of scripture, this time from the Amplified Bible:

"...for the prince (evil genius, ruler) of the world is coming. And he has no claim on Me – he has nothing in common with Me, there is nothing in Me that belongs to him, he has no power over Me."

Notice that Jesus said, he is coming! He did not try to ignore the fact, or pretend that Satan would not attack.

In a similar manner, the Apostle Paul said to the elders of the Ephesian church, *"For I KNOW THIS, that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in...."*

But, like Jesus, when hindering spirits come to challenge our spiritual authority, or to oppose our God ordained leadership, we must open our mouths, and boldly declare:

"Grievous wolves, by the authority of the name of Jesus Christ, you have no claim on me, you have nothing in common with me, there is nothing in me that belongs to you, and you have no power over me!"

Chapter Ten

The spirit of Potiphar's wife

Joseph was a young man with great leadership potential. The call of God was upon his life. At seventeen years of age, God began to speak to him in very precise dreams, which indicated that he would one day rule over his parents, and his brothers.

Perhaps Joseph was unwise in sharing his dreams. It infuriated his brothers, and caused Jacob, his father to rebuke him:

"...What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers come to bow down to the earth before you?" (Genesis 37:10).

Because of envy and hatred, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. Then, they killed a young goat, dipped Joseph's coat of many colors in the blood, and deceived Jacob into believing that he had been killed by a wild animal (see Genesis 37:12-36).

As the story unfolds, Joseph ends up in Egypt, and is purchased by an Egyptian named Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, a captain of the guard.

The Bible says, concerning Joseph's relationship with Potiphar:

"And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field. Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate...." (Genesis 39:3-6).

Potiphar, being an officer of Pharaoh, recognized leadership potential in Joseph. In the process of time, he actually trusted Joseph with all that he owned.

Interestingly, Potiphar almost certainly did not know the true God; yet, he could recognize that the hand of the Lord was upon Joseph.

But, there was also trouble brewing in Potiphar's house. Genesis 39:6-7 reveals:

"...Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, Lie with me."

Joseph, being a responsible leader, refused the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife, but she continued to press him on the matter:

"So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her." (Genesis 39:10).

A time came when they were alone in the house, and Genesis 39:12 says:

"...she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me. But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside."

I think you know the rest of the story. Potiphar's wife kept the garment, told the other servants Joseph tried to force her, and reported the same to Potiphar.

As a result of her lies, Potiphar's wife caused Joseph to end up in prison.

But, God blessed Joseph, even in the prison. The prison keeper put him over all the affairs of the other prisoners.

In time, the hand of God supernaturally delivered Joseph, and he was elevated to governor of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh.

After Joseph's rise to power, the Bible doesn't tell us what happened to Potiphar's wife. If she was smart, she probably got out of town as quickly as possible.

HERE IS UNDERSTANDING

The hindering spirits we discussed in previous chapters come to challenge those who are already in leadership. The spirit of Potiphar's wife comes...

TO DESTROY LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL IN YOUNG MEN.

Occasionally, I am invited to minister in meetings for men only. In such settings, men have a tendency to open their hearts, and share with a greater freedom.

Sometimes, men will explain that when they were a child, they felt very close to God. They sensed that God had a special purpose for their life. Adults in the church would even comment that the call of God was upon them.

As they developed into a young man, the pastor recognized their potential as a leader, and began to use them to assist in church activities.

Occasionally, a visiting minister would call them out, prophesy into their lives, and confirm God's calling.

But, somewhere along the way, they got sidetracked. Now, here they are, 50 years old, and that closeness to God has somehow been stolen away. That special purpose, the calling of God, and even the prophecies have all gone unfulfilled.

I realize that other things could cause young men to get sidetracked, but in many such cases, if you could travel back in time to see how they were derailed, I think you would discover the spirit of Potiphar's wife.

Here are some rather obvious warning signs for recognizing the spirit of Potiphar's wife. We will call them a reversal of roles:

(1) Usually, it is the young men who are asking the young girls to have sex.

(2) Normally, it is the young men who go beyond asking, and pressure the young ladies on this matter.

(3) Eventually, it is the young men who take hold of the women's garments in order to persuade them.

In the case of Potiphar's wife, IT WAS EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE.

A pastor once told me about a pretty young girl who started attending his church. All the young men were checking her out, hoping perhaps for a Christian wife.

Unfortunately, in a short period of time, it was discovered that she was seducing many of the young men in the church, and persuading them to have sexual relations with her.

Most of these young men probably had leadership potential. Very likely, some of them had the call of God upon their lives.

In a similar situation, another pastor told me that when he was in Bible school, an exceptionally attractive young lady just mysteriously showed up on campus.

He described this shapely young lady as irresistible. No matter how strong you thought you were, you could look into her eyes, and be overcome with enticement.

She too made her way through many of the young men who were in training for the ministry.

This pastor said he personally knows of five, former students, who were seduced by this girl, who today are not serving God at all, much less serving in the ministry.

Jesus once lamented to his disciples:

"...The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38).

Satan would like nothing better than to destroy a young man's spiritual potential before he has the opportunity to answer the call of God upon his life.

Listen as the Apostle Paul gives some good advice to his spiritual son, Timothy, about how to respond to such matters as the spirit of Potiphar's wife:

"FLEE ALSO YOUTHFUL LUSTS; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace...."
(2 Timothy 2:22).

Interestingly, Paul didn't say, *"Timothy, put on the whole armor of God, and stand against those youthful lusts."* Neither did he say, *"Rebuke the devil, and command those youthful lusts to be gone."*

Paul didn't even tell Timothy to pray. He just said, FLEE!

Of course, those other things are valid scriptural principles, but when it comes to such things as youthful lusts, and having to deal with the spirit of Potiphar's wife, young men need to follow the example of Joseph and Timothy, and FLEE.

Pastors, spiritual leaders; do you have young men in your church or organization who are called by God? Are there young men upon whom you can recognize the anointing of God's Holy Spirit?

Then, teach them about these things in a bold, straightforward manner. Pray that God will give them a wife of his choosing. Don't let them get sidetracked by the spirit of Potiphar's wife.

The harvest truly is plentiful...

GOD NEEDS THESE YOUNG MEN.

In conclusion, here is a word from the Lord to those older men who seem to have missed God's purpose for their lives:

"It is not too late to submit your life to God. Ephesians 5:16 commands us to redeem the time, because the days are evil. The Lord has a way of buying back the wasted years, and he can cause the remainder of your life to become spiritually fruitful."

Finally, a strong word of caution to the young ladies:

"Be certain that you do not allow the spirit of Potiphar's wife to use you to wrongly influence young men, upon whose life is the call of God. If you allow that spirit to use you to destroy the potential of a young man who is destined to serve God, you will stand before God on the day of judgement, and answer for your actions."

Chapter Eleven

The Wolf Hunt

In certain areas, authorized wolf hunts have been conducted. Such hunts were organized for various reasons; due to an overpopulation of wolves, or due to a loss of livestock to wolves.

Regardless, these wolf hunts had one objective. It was not game hunting, and it was not trophy seeking among sportsmen.

The one objective was simple: KILL THE WOLVES. Eliminate them, so they would no longer be a problem.

Regardless of how you view wolf hunts in the natural realm, those who function as leaders in the spiritual realm must have the same objective when dealing with grievous wolves that come to challenge and oppose their spiritual authority.

As I mentioned earlier, ministers of the gospel are often so focused on caring for people, loving people, forgiving people, and being tolerant of people, that unknowingly they allow grievous wolves to remain in the church, because they are trying to save the people.

Hopefully, the people being influenced by the hindering spirits can be saved. They are precious souls for whom Jesus died.

Regardless, the grievous wolves must go! Otherwise, these hindering spirits will rip the church apart, and prevent those in leadership from accomplishing what God has called them to do.

If the people being used by the spirits truly repent, they could become a blessing to the work of God, rather than a problem. On the other hand, if the people refuse to repent, then obviously, when you command the spirits to go, the people will go also.

These hindering spirits often have a real stronghold in people's lives. Those so influenced are just not willing to give up the little power trips they experience.

Jesus gives us insight into these power trips. Apparently, those who were under the influence of Jezebel in the church at Thyatira claimed to have learned Satan's deep secrets (see Revelation 2:24 NIV).

And, concerning the specific individual who was the actual Jezebel in the church, Jesus said:

"...I GAVE HER TIME TO REPENT of her sexual immorality (or, spiritual idolatry), and she did not repent." (Revelation 2:21).

About now, some of you probably have a few questions in your mind.

For example, when I talk about people being influenced by hindering spirits, am I referring to born again Christians, or those who are unsaved?

And, are they actually possessed by these spirits, or just influenced by them?

Before addressing those questions, let me make a personal observation. I believe those in leadership (*myself included*), have done a disservice to the body of Christ by attempting to compartmentalize the activity of demon spirits.

For example, I have heard the subject explained in this manner:

(1) If someone is POSSESSED by an evil spirit, then the spirit is actually residing within that person's human spirit.

(2) If someone is OPPRESSED by an evil spirit, then the spirit is residing in the person's soul (*their mind, or emotions*).

(3) If a person is only ATTACKED, or influenced by an evil spirit, then the spirit is somewhere around them, but outside of their body.

This teaching sounds logical. Perhaps it is true. It very neatly compartmentalizes the activity of demon spirits. The problem is, we have no scripture to back it up.

The word, POSSESSED, as it is used in the Bible, simply means:

1. To have a demon,
2. To be exercised (*used*) by a demon,
3. To be vexed (*troubled*) by a demon.

Another teaching attempts to make a distinction between UNCLEAN spirits, and EVIL spirits, but the scriptures clearly use the words interchangeably.

Here is my point; while we are striving to organize the devil, thus limiting his ability in our own understanding, grievous wolves could be running rampant in the church.

Here is the solution; if a hindering spirit is in the church, don't waste time trying to figure out if the person being used by the spirit is possessed, oppressed, depressed, regressed or whatever. JUST GET RID OF THE GRIEVOUS WOLF.

This brings us back to our question. The people who are being used by these spirits; are they born again Christians, or unsaved people?

Obviously, they are both. The woman who moved from another state, sent by the devil to take down the pastor, was almost definitely not a Christian.

On the other hand, if a pastor's wife is influenced by the spirit of Jezebel, she may be born again by the grace of God, but she has failed to deal with rebellion in her life.

WELL, IT IS TIME FOR THE WOLF HUNT. Let us identify our weapons.

WEAPON #1
THE HOLY SPIRIT, OUR HELPER

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all...TO ANOTHER DISCERNING OF SPIRITS...."
(from 1 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Regarding the discerning of spirits, the Amplified Bible says:

"...the ability to discern and distinguish between [the utterances of true] spirits [and false ones]...."

Obviously, this would also include the ability to discern and distinguish between the ACTIONS of true spirits and false ones.

I am convinced that this manifestation of God's Spirit is available to every pastor and spiritual leader, but quite often, leaders complain that it does not operate in their ministry. "After all," they explain, "the Holy Spirit manifests himself AS HE WILLS."

This is true. 1 Corinthians 12:11 says:

"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually AS HE WILLs."

But, this does not imply that the Holy Spirit randomly gives gifts to one, and then rigidly withholds needed gifts from others.

I believe the Holy Spirit imparts to each of us, the specific gifts we need to fulfill the ministry to which God has called us.

Spiritual leaders must be able to distinguish between the work of the Holy Spirit, and the work of deceptive, demon spirits.

However, if discerning of spirits does not seem to be operating in your life, you can still ask God for wisdom. In James 1:5, we have this assurance:

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

One way or the other, the Holy Spirit is available to help you!

WEAPON #2 THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD

What I am about to tell you is often overlooked, but listen carefully: DEMONS ARE SUBJECT TO US.

In Luke, chapter 10, the Bible tells us:

"...the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go." (Luke 10:1).

Luke 10:17 tells us what happened:

"Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

Notice that these 70 disciples did not return whipped and defeated. They did not say, *"Lord, we just didn't have the strength to defeat all those demons."*

They returned with joy, saying, *"...THE DEMONS ARE SUBJECT TO US...."*

Jesus responded by saying:

"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." (Luke 10:18).

Then, in verse 19, we have some of the most powerful words ever spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples, and indeed, to us:

"...I GIVE YOU THE AUTHORITY to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

WEAPON #3 THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

God has given us authority over all the power of the enemy, but let us understand how to use that authority. Listen again to Luke 10:17:

"Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us IN YOUR NAME."

Jesus also said:

"And these signs will follow those who believe: IN MY NAME they will cast out demons...." (Mark 16:17).

The word of God is the source of our authority; the name of Jesus Christ is the way we employ our authority.

By the authority of the name of Jesus Christ, we can boldly speak forth the word of God (*such as Luke 10:19*), and by the authority of that name, command grievous wolves to leave, and they will go!

This brings up an interesting question; when we command a hindering spirit to be gone from a church (*or ministry*), should we speak right into the face of the individual who is being influenced by the spirit?

Here is my personal recommendation. When the activity of one, or more of these spirits is uncovered, I would call a prayer meeting of my most faithful people.

In agreement, as a spiritual warfare team, we would boldly speak forth, and command those hindering spirits to leave.

If the problem persists, I would meet individually with the person being used by the spirit. In a straightforward manner, I would tell them what I had discovered, and command them to repent.

If the person being influenced by the spirit is serious about serving God, they will repent, and renounce that grievous wolf.

On the other hand, if they persist in standing against you, don't waste time with them. As a pastor friend of mine so wisely stated, "*You cannot reason with demons.*"

Should the problem continue to persist, it may be necessary to boldly stand up in a church service, call the hindering spirit by name, and openly command it to be gone from the church.

Regardless of what is required, those grievous wolves will depart. We have been given authority over all the power of the enemy. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, **DEMONS ARE SUBJECT TO US.**

Just a few more, VERY IMPORTANT pages...

A Word to the Wise

A word of caution to pastors, and all spiritual leaders:

"Be certain that the grievous wolf in your midst is not YOU."

When Paul began his warning to the elders of the Ephesian church, he said:

"KEEP WATCH OVER YOURSELVES and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:28 NIV).

Sometimes, spiritual leaders can be so domineering, that their control over God's people is akin to the spirit of Jezebel.

Pastors, please remember, God called you to set his people free, not put them into bondage with condemnation, legalism, and the traditions of men. Listen, on the next page, as Paul continues his instructions to the elders of the Ephesian church:

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32).

Please notice the following three points emphasized by Paul:

(1) Preach and teach a New Covenant word of God's grace, not an Old Testament word of Law.

(2) Build up, and strengthen those who are under you; do not tear them down.

(3) Reveal the inheritance they have in Christ, not just the losses they must endure by being a Christian.

In other cases, spiritual leaders have a mistaken idea that God could not possibly use anyone except them.

They fail to train others; they refuse to give ministry assignments to others. They do all the work of the ministry, and keep the people totally dependent upon them.

The Bible reveals, in Ephesians 4:11, that Jesus gave ministry gifts to the church:

"And His gifts were [varied; He Himself appointed and gave men to us], some to be apostles...some prophets...some evangelists...some pastors...and teachers." (AMP).

But, God did not place spiritual leaders in the church so that THEY ALONE could do the work of the ministry. Ephesians 4:12 continues to explain:

"His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church)." (AMP).

In other situations, spiritual leaders have a hard time releasing those who are serving under them. They think everyone should stay put, and help them until Jesus returns. They cannot imagine God raising someone up, and sending them out.

There were certain spiritual leaders in the church at Antioch, and the Bible says:

"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away." (Acts 13:2-3).

Sometimes, young ministers have to tear themselves away from senior pastors in order to obey God. Instead of being sent out with blessings, they are forced to leave in bitterness.

Even after they leave, the pastors for whom they once worked have been known to undermine their ministry. Comments have been heard at gatherings of ministers: *"They are out of God's will. Their ministry will fail. God will not put his blessings upon this new, renegade ministry."*

Instead of being an encouragement to young ministers whom God has raised up, their attitudes reflect the spirit of Absalom.

I heard the story of an evangelist who had an unpolished young man working for his organization.

One day, the young man announced that God had called him, and he would be leaving to establish his own ministry.

The evangelist tried to discourage him, and was later complaining to God about the situation, *"What if he goes out there, and falls flat on his face?"*

To that the Lord answered, *"If he falls flat on his face, you give him an offering, and pick him back up!"*

Spiritual leaders, listen carefully; it is a fact that God will continue to call people for the eventual purpose of sending them out. The kingdom of God will be expanded, with or without you. Be a partner with God in this endeavor.

And remember, the people under you are the Lord's sheep, not yours. Be a shepherd to guide them, not a grievous wolf to devour them!

A Prayer to Receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord

Heavenly Father, I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus into this world to die for my sins. The Bible says he was crucified upon a cross, and willingly shed his blood to offer me forgiveness, cleansing of sin, and a right standing before God.

Heavenly Father, the Bible also says you raised Jesus from the dead. He is alive now, and by his Spirit, he can come to dwell within me.

Lord Jesus, I personally invite you into my life. Forgive me of my sins; wash away my sins with the blood you shed upon the cross. Create in me, a right standing before God.

Lord Jesus, thank you for coming into my life. Thank you that I am now born again. According to your word, I am a new creation in Christ Jesus.

I declare that from this time forth in my life, Jesus Christ, you are my Lord.
AMEN.

Other books by Jack Michael include:

Deception In The End Times

The Best Way To Know God's Will

The Christ Conspiracy (Novel)

Will God Supply All Your Needs?

Bearing Fruit In Old Age
(co-authored with Randolph Ewers)

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Satan fully intends to destroy the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, perhaps you are thinking, "Yes, those are his intentions, but he cannot do it, because the Bible says Jesus will build his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

This is true. On the authority of the scriptures, Satan cannot destroy the church of Jesus Christ AS A WHOLE.

However, it is also an unfortunate truth that Satan and his agents have succeeded in destroying individual churches within the body of Christ.

One of the destructive forces that Satan has employed down through the ages is described by the Apostle Paul as GRIEVOUS WOLVES.



Jack Michael is a foundation builder. His ministry can best be described by I Corinthians 3:10: "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it..." As a Bible teacher, his teaching has been described as clear, understandable, and practical. As an author, his books and writings have been described as easily readable, yet firmly conveying the message of God. As a missionary, God has given Jack a unique vision to minister to the diverse peoples who inhabit the islands of the world.

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