

Contending With the powers of darkness -

The period of Christ's personal ministry among men was the time of greatest activity for **the forces of the kingdom of darkness**. For ages Satan with his evil angels had been seeking to control the bodies and the souls of men, to bring upon them sin and suffering; then he had charged all this misery upon God.

Jesus was revealing to men the character of God. **He was breaking Satan's power, and setting his captives free**. New life and love and power from heaven were moving upon the hearts of men, and the prince of evil was aroused to contend for the supremacy of his kingdom. Satan summoned all his forces, and at every step contested the work of Christ.

So it will be in the great final conflict of the controversy between righteousness and sin. While new life and light and power are descending from on high upon the disciples of Christ, a new life is springing up from beneath, and energizing the agencies of Satan. **Intensity is taking possession of every earthly element**. With a subtlety gained through centuries of conflict, the prince of evil works under a disguise. He appears clothed as an angel of light, and multitudes are "**giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils**." I Timothy 4:1

In the days of Christ the leaders and teachers of Israel were powerless to resist the work of Satan. They were neglecting the only means by which they could have withstood evil spirits. **It was by the Word of God that Christ overcame the wicked one**.

The leaders of Israel professed to be the expositors of God's Word, but they had studied it only to sustain their traditions, and enforce their man-made observances. By their interpretation they made it express sentiments that God had never given. Their mystical construction made indistinct that which He had made plain. They disputed over insignificant technicalities, and practically denied the most essential truths. Thus infidelity was sown broadcast. **God's Word was robbed of its power**, and evil spirits worked their will.

History is repeating. With the open Bible before them, and professing to reverence It's teachings, many of the religious leaders of our time are destroying faith in it as the Word of God. They busy themselves with dissecting the Word, and set their own opinions above its plainest statements. In their hands **God's Word** loses **its regenerating power**. This is why infidelity runs riot, and iniquity is rife.

When Satan has undermined faith in the Bible, he directs men to other sources for light and power. Thus he insinuates himself. **Those who turn from the plain teaching of Scripture** and the convicting power of **God's Holy Spirit are inviting the control of demons**. Criticism and speculation concerning the Scriptures have opened the way for spiritism and theosophy--those modernized forms of ancient heathenism--to gain a foothold even in the professed churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Side by side with the preaching of the gospel, agencies are at work which are but the medium of lying spirits. Many a man tampers with these merely from curiosity, but seeing evidence of the working of **a more than human power**, he is lured on and on, until he is controlled by a will stronger than his own. He cannot escape from its mysterious power.

The defenses of the soul are broken down. He has no barrier against sin. When once the restraints of God's Word and His Spirit are rejected, no man knows to what depths of degradation he may sink. Secret sin or master passion may hold him a captive as helpless as was the demoniac of Capernaum. Yet his condition is not

hopeless !

The means by which we can overcome the wicked one is that by which Christ overcame,-- **the power of the Word**. God does not control our minds without our consent; but if we desire to know and to do His will, His Promises are ours: "Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free." "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching." John 8:32; 7:17, R. V.

Through faith in these Promises, **every man may be delivered from the snares of error and the control of sin.**

Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. **None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ.** The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who will consent to enter into **Covenant relation** with the God of heaven are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature.

They are invited by the Saviour, "Let him take hold of My Strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." Isaiah 27:5. The spirits of darkness will battle for the soul once under their dominion, but angels of God will contend for that soul with prevailing power!

The Lord says, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? . . . Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children."

Isaiah 49:24-25

While the congregation in the synagogue were still spellbound with awe, Jesus withdrew to the home of Peter for a little rest. But here also a shadow had fallen. The mother of Peter's wife lay sick, stricken with a "great fever." **Jesus rebuked the disease**, and the sufferer arose, and ministered to the wants of the Master and His disciples.

Tidings of the work of Christ spread rapidly throughout Capernaum. For fear of the rabbis, the people dared not come for healing upon the Sabbath; but no sooner had the sun disappeared below the horizon than there was a great commotion. From the homes, the shops, the market places, the inhabitants of the city pressed toward the humble dwelling that sheltered Jesus. The sick were brought upon couches, they came leaning upon staffs, or, supported by friends, they tottered feebly into the Saviour's presence.

Hour after hour they came and went; for none could know whether tomorrow would find the Healer still among them. Never before had Capernaum witnessed a day like this. **The air was filled with the voice of triumph and shouts of deliverance.** The Saviour was joyful in the joy He had awakened. As He witnessed the sufferings of those who had come to Him, His heart was stirred with sympathy, and **He rejoiced in His power to restore them to health and happiness.**

Not until the last sufferer had been relieved did Jesus cease His work. It was far into the night when the multitude departed, and silence settled down upon the home of Simon. The long, exciting day was past, and Jesus sought rest. But while the city was still wrapped in slumber, the Saviour, "rising up a great while before day, . . . went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

Thus were spent the days in the earthly life of Jesus. He often dismissed His disciples to visit their homes and rest; but He gently resisted their efforts to draw Him away from His labors. **All day He toiled**, teaching the ignorant, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, feeding the multitude; and at the eventide or in the early morning, He went away to the sanctuary of the mountains for communion with His Father. Often He passed the entire night in prayer and meditation, returning at daybreak to His work among the people.