

# Engaging in Spiritual Conflict: Theological Foundations, Christian Identity and the Armor of God

## *I Biblical teachings about Satan*

### A Satan's dominion in the biblical tradition

- 1 God created the world
- 2 The fall of man took place
- 3 Sin, illness, struggle and death entered the world
- 4 In His sovereignty, God has allowed the world to fall under the power of a dark ruler, Satan, for a limited period of time
- 5 Evil and godlessness often seem to have the upper hand, and God's people frequently live under pressure and persecution
- 6 Only at Christ's second coming will God's kingdom come in its fullness, and God's enemies will be defeated and judged

### B Satan's dominion in the New Testament

- 1 Evidence of Satan's dominion in the New Testament
  - a John's gospel refers to Satan as "the prince of this world", thus affirming his power and rule (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
  - b The apostle Paul refers to the Evil One as "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4)
  - c 1 John contains the most unambiguous statement: "We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (5:19)
- 2 The results of Satan's dominion
  - a Christians often face trials and struggles as they seek to follow Jesus
  - b The enemy is at work to tempt us, deceive us, accuse us, discourage us, divide us and, if possible, even destroy us
- 3 The goal of Satan's dominion
  - a Plan A: To keep each of us under his power and out of the kingdom of God (Mk 4:15; cf. Col 1:13-14)
  - b Plan B: To neutralize our impact in the world by leading us into bondage to sin, destroying our lives and our families, destroying our Christian testimonies, and rendering us powerless and ineffective

### C Satan's nature in the New Testament

- 1 He "is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44; Rev 12:9)

- 2 He "was a murderer from the beginning" (Jn 8:44)
- 3 He tempted Jesus (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13) and he tempts believers (1 Thess 3:5 — in this context the temptation comes through persecution)
- 4 He is opportunistic by nature (Eph 4:26-27)
- 5 He is scheming and attempting to outwit us (2 Cor 2:10-11 — in this case through being "overwhelmed by excessive sorrow"; Eph 6:11)

## *II Resources to help us stand Firm against the enemy*

### A Understanding our position in Christ (Eph 1:3-14)

- 1 The general principle is explained: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." (Eph 1:3)
- 2 The specific blessings are enumerated (Eph 1:4-14)
  - a We were chosen by God (v. 4)
  - b We were adopted as sons (v. 5)
  - c We were redeemed through Christ's blood (v. 7)
  - d We were forgiven (v. 7)
  - e We have come to know his will (v. 9)
  - f We were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (v. 14)

### B Experiencing deeply the love of Christ (Eph 3:14-19)

- 1 Paul's first petition: "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ..." (v. 17-18)
- 2 Paul's second petition: "...and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

### C. Putting on the armor that God provides (Eph 6:10-20)

- 1 The general exhortation (Eph 6:10-11)
  - a "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" (v. 10)
  - b "Put on the full armor of God" (v. 11a)
- 2 The goal of the exhortation (Eph 6:12, 13)
  - a "...so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."
  - b "...so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."
- 3 The nature of God's armor
  - a The belt of truth

- b The breastplate of righteousness
- c The readiness that comes from the gospel of peace
- d The shield of faith
- e The helmet of salvation
- f The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

### *III Things to remember*

- A The enemy has been defeated at the cross, at the empty tomb and at Jesus' ascension

- 1 The power of Jesus' death

Key Scripture: "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." (Colossians 2:13-15)

- 2 The power of Jesus' resurrection and ascension

Key Scripture: "It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." (1 Peter 3:21b-22)

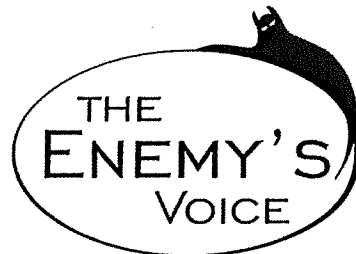
- B The enemy has not yet "been crushed under our feet"

Key Scripture: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." (Rom 16:20)

- C We live in a time of tension. The enemy's "doom is sure," but he is still at work to oppose God's purposes in the world
- D. Yet as believers we have authority to stand against him, using the authority that God has delegated to us as His children as we minister in the powerful name of Jesus



- Builds us up
- Lifts us up when we fall
- Gives us hope
- Leads us toward repentance and obedience
- Reminds us that we are precious in God's sight



- Accuses
- Stimulates hopelessness
- Reminds us again and again of our sin
- Creates the impression that we will never break free from the sins that bind us
- Whispers that we are of very little value to God

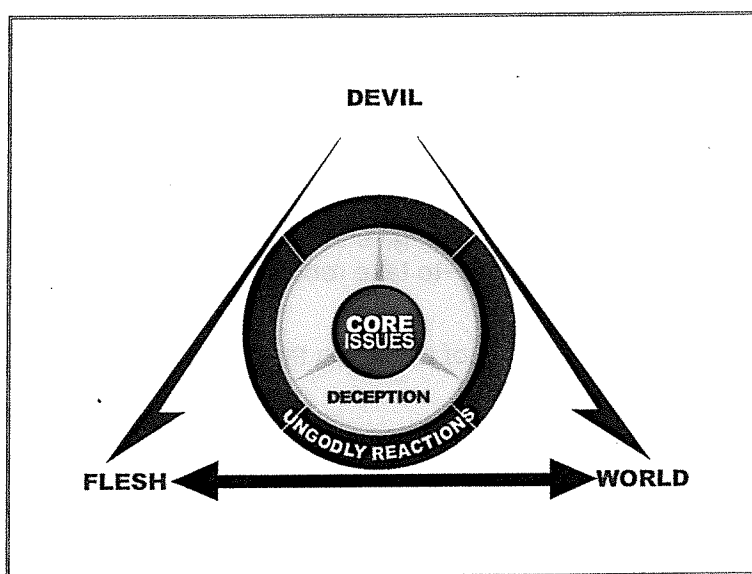
# ***From Brokenness to Restoration: An Integrated Approach to Healing and Deliverance***

***Tom Sappington***

As Christians we must face an unpleasant reality. Some believers are struggling to grow in Christ, but are making unsteady progress. They move forward three steps, then step back two (or even three!) steps. Some find themselves unable to enjoy their time with the Lord, while others struggle in their relationships with other people. Why are they spiritually stagnant? And what can we do to help?

In our experience there are a variety of reasons for this type of spiritual stagnation. In some cases, people are deceived—they think they have trusted Christ as Lord and Savior, but in reality they have yet to receive Him. In other cases, they are truly born again, but are unable to grow in Christ because of a wounded heart, a load of anger or bitterness, involvement with spiritual power outside of Christ and His will, deception, trauma, and a host of other possibilities.

How do people fall into these traps? How can we help? Inner healing is a useful tool, as is the ministry of deliverance. In order to bring people from brokenness and bondage to true restoration and wholeness, however, we need to use an integrated approach that includes both ministries. This approach can be visualized as follows:



After visualizing the entire paradigm, it is important to break down the various levels of negative influence and discuss them one at a time. Since the Enemy often attempts to hinder our spiritual growth by working in various ways, it is important that our ministry includes a multi-dimensional approach to healing and restoration.

## ***I Core Issues***

God's people often struggle because of the continuing negative influence that comes from one of two sources: (1) inherited consequences of the sin of our parents and other relatives or (2) traumatic experiences. These factors often form the core of the problem—a kind of “seed” that grows and becomes, ultimately, the source of many personal problems. These core issues often open the door to deep-level deception, ungodly reactions, and the influence of the world, the flesh and the devil.

### **A Consequences of Ancestral Sin and Dysfunction:**

- 1 The sin and dysfunction of our parents and other relatives in our family line often bring negative consequences into our lives
  - a Consequences related to a child's financial situation
  - b Consequences related to a child's mental and emotional state
  - c Consequences related to a child's ethics and core values
  - d Consequences related to a child's spiritual condition
- 2) Parents that say they are Christians but live as hypocrites often produce children who (a) confess faith in Christ but do not walk with God or (b) reject completely the gospel of Christ.
- 2) Parents who practice certain patterns of sin or who involve themselves in the occult often give an opportunity to demonic powers to work not only in their lives, but also in the lives of their children and grandchildren.

### **B Traumatic Experiences**

- 1 In many cases personal problems that hinder Christian growth develop around traumatic experiences in the person's life
  - a These types of experiences can influence a person's emotional and spiritual life
  - b These types of experiences can give an opportunity to demonic powers—especially spirits of fear and deception—to take root in our lives and to influence us in negative ways
- 2 Several examples of the types of problems that can develop from traumatic experiences
  - a Fear and anxiety
  - b Strange physical symptoms that cannot be treated effectively by medical professionals
  - c Panic attacks
  - d A pattern of bad dreams
  - e Sexual problems

## ***II Deep-level deception***

Often the core issues are only the beginning of a person's struggles, for deep-level deception can take root in his or her life in connection with inherited consequences of ancestral sin and traumatic experiences. Often, it seems, the negative impact of this deception in the person's life is greater than the impact of the core issues, just as a plant quickly grows larger than the seed from which it originated.

## A Various sources of deception

Ultimately there are three primary sources of deep-level deceptions: other people, our own false interpretations of life-experiences, and demonic suggestions.

### 1 From other people

- a *Parents and family* are often the primary source of deception in the life of a believer.
- b *Tradition and environment* are often a source of deception in the life of a believer.
- c *Mass Media and social media* are sources of deception in that they often communicate values that are contrary to God's word.
- d Some examples of deep-level deceptions:
  - 1) Parents who tell their kids that they are "stupid," "worthless," or "will never amount to anything"
  - 2) An unbelieving relative sees us in a difficult situation and comments, "What good does it do for you to trust in Christ? He isn't going to help you."
  - 3) A mother informs her daughter, "Watch out if a boy seems interested in you. They're like dogs. All they want is sex."

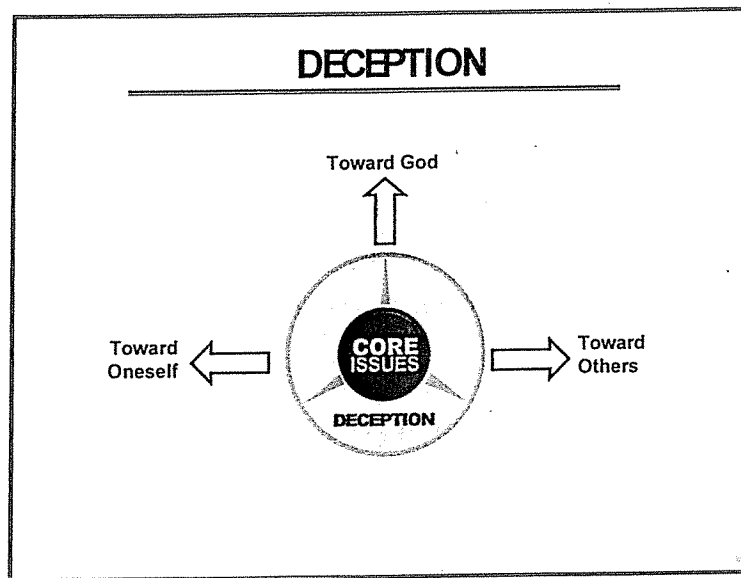
### 2 From our own false interpretations of reality

- a Another source of deception is our own understanding and interpretation of life-experiences. If our perception is false, we can, in effect, deceive ourselves.
- b This type of deception grows stronger whenever events occur that seem to reinforce our original perceptions of reality. In many cases negative expectations and judgments develop as the deception increases in power and intensity.
- c Some examples:
  - 1) A child whose parents divorce often concludes that his family disintegrated because he was naughty the day his father left
  - 2) An older brother or sister can carry a terrible weight of responsibility as a result of concluding that he must protect his younger sibling from his father's abusive discipline, then feel terribly guilty when he is unsuccessful in carrying out his responsibility.
  - 3) A child who is abused may conclude that he was not worthy of being loved

### 3 From the suggestions of evil spirits

- a Evil spirits often suggest or implant false ideas in our minds, especially when we are in the midst of traumatic experiences.
- b Evil spirits can influence us as a consequence of ancestral sin or occult involvement. Once they are in a position to influence our thoughts, they tend to reinforce the false teachings and values that we have received in order to influence our patterns of thinking.

## B The Direction of Deception



## 1 Toward God Himself

- a Anger toward God is a common deception that we encounter in the lives of people to whom we minister. Often they blame Him for various trials and tragedies that they experience in life.
- b Besides anger, believers often become disappointed with God and choose not to trust Him in the midst of trials. Of course, this type of deception is especially strategic from the Enemy's point of view, since it blocks their spiritual growth and their ability to receive God's truth.
- c Some examples:
  - 1) "God doesn't care about me" or "God can't be trusted"
  - 2) "God cares for others more than He cares for me"
  - 3) "As hard as I try I'll never be able to please God"
  - 4) "God let me down and He'll do it again if I give Him a chance"
  - 5) "God values my ministry more than He does me"

## 2 Toward ourselves

- a Deception toward oneself often arises in the lives of people who have gone through traumatic experiences, especially trauma that is related to rejection, control, self-image, sexual abuse or molestation
- b Deception toward oneself often arises in the context of dysfunctional families, especially where the person experiences pressure, ridicule, or other forms of abuse that destroy their self-image.
- c Some examples:
  - 1) "I'm not worthy" or "I'm ugly"
  - 2) "My life is pointless" or "My life isn't worth living"
  - 3) "No way I'll ever be a blessing to others"



### 3 Toward others

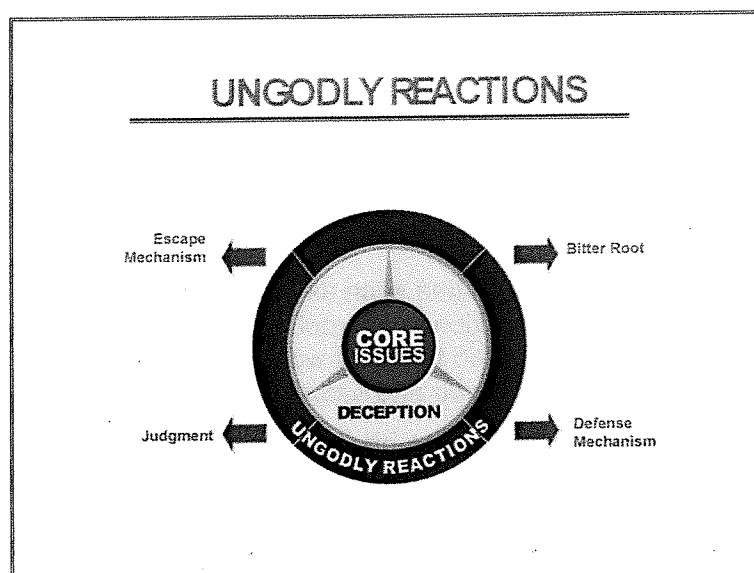
- a People who have gone through traumatic experiences caused by the sin of others often make life-decisions with the goal that they will protect themselves (avoiding being hurt again in the future), or in order to exact revenge. These two things often go together, and in many cases become a major controlling theme in a person's life.
- b Intimacy between husband and wife is often impossible due to the presence of deep-level deceptions. Both parties blame the other for their problems, and develop negative patterns of thinking toward their spouse. Often deeply rooted judgments develop, and true intimacy is impossible until such time as the power of these judgments is broken.
- c Some examples:
  - 1) "If given the opportunity, others will hurt me"
  - 2) "You can't depend on others. You can only depend on yourself"
  - 3) "I must guard my feelings and my words so that I don't give others an opportunity to hurt me or shame me."
  - 4) "It's better if I hurt others before they have a chance to hurt me."

### C The impact of deep-level deception

- 1 A lack of intimacy in our relationship with God
- 2 Negative emotions that are not appropriate
- 3 A false self-image
- 4 Problems in relationships with others
- 5 Sexual problems

## III Reactions that are unhealthy or ungodly

There are four types of reactions that often develop from the core issues in a person's life: (1) bitterness and hatred, (2) ungodly judgments, (3) defense mechanisms, and (4) escape mechanisms.



## **A Bitter Root (Bitterness and hatred)**

- 1 The problem of bitterness and hatred is common among God's people.
- 2 Bitterness and hatred are reactions that arise from the flesh.
- 3 Situations that we often face in counseling:
  - a A child is neglected by his parents or is treated poorly by them. As a result, he harbors bitterness in his heart toward them.
  - b A student breaks off the relationship with his girlfriend. As a result, she develops a bitter root in her heart, not only toward him but also toward men in general.
  - c A pastor perceives that another pastor is trying to steal his sheep, and he develops a deep hatred in his heart toward his brother.
- 4 Bitterness and hatred can only be resolved through forgiveness, but the church of Jesus Christ lacks clear, practical teaching on how to forgive others.
- 5 As a result, bitterness and hatred are not resolved and consequently poison our lives and our relationships.

## **B Ungodly judgments**

- 1 The problem of ungodly judgments is common in the church, but we rarely hear teaching that is both biblical and practical on this subject.
- 2 Key verses:
  - a "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Mat. 7:1-2).
  - b "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?" (James 4:12).
  - c "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat....Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another" (Rm. 14:10-13a).
- 3 Why does God command us not to judge others?
  - a Judging others is incompatible with the gracious way God treats us in Christ
  - b Judging others is incompatible with a life of humility
  - c Judging others is incompatible with the fact that only God has the right to judge

## **C Escape Mechanisms**

- 1 The basis of the problem
  - a Often a child's life is full of trauma such as rejection or sexual abuse. Because of his situation, a deep-level deception takes root in his soul. Due to the trauma he has experienced and the deception that is at work to influence his thoughts and his feelings, his life is full of struggle and sadness.
  - b The child will usually respond from his flesh, attempting to work out his situation on his own

- c Because he does not yet know God, or his relationship with God is not yet intimate, he attempts to find comfort and affection through one or more escapes such as drugs, alcohol, sexual activity, occult involvement, or fantasy.
  - d This approach may help him in the short term, but in the end it will be harmful to his spiritual, emotional, and (perhaps) physical health, limit his options for positive experiences in life, and result in many other types of problems.
- 2 A person turns to escape mechanisms in an attempt to avoid:
  - a Emotional restlessness
  - b Impulsive impulses that are destructive
  - c Threats to one's self-worth
  - d Negative thoughts
  - e Painful memories
- 3 Examples of escape mechanisms
  - a Drugs and alcohol
  - b Occult activity
  - c Sexual activity outside of marriage
  - d Living in a fantasy world
  - e An unhealthy focus on performance

#### **D Defense mechanisms**

- 1 Defense mechanisms are common among people who oppose rather than merely accept their negative circumstances. Their fundamental goal is to avoid pain as well as unpleasant thoughts and feelings. Several examples are as follows:
- 2 Hardening one's heart
- 3 Keeping others at a distance
- 4 Self-justification
- 5 Put the blame on others
- 6 Denying the truth

#### **E A general pattern for ministry to those with unhealthy/ungodly reactions to life-trauma**

### ***IV Demonic influence***

#### **A Demonic influence can be at work in all of the levels/factors listed above**

- 1 It can be at work due to inherited consequences of ancestral sin
- 2 It can be at work due to traumatic experiences
- 3 It can be at work due to deep-level deception
- 4 It can be at work due to our unhealthy or ungodly responses to traumatic experiences

**B The ministry of deliverance is often required in connection with each of the factors mentioned above**

- 1 Usually we deal with the issue in question first (through repentance, renunciation, forgiveness, etc.), thus removing the basis for the spirit's influence
- 2 After dealing with a particular issue, we often go directly into deliverance *that is related to that issue*

**C Usually we throw out the “trash” first, then we chase off the “rats”**

- 1 Charles Kraft, who teaches at Fuller Theological Seminary, likes to compare issues that give an opportunity to evil spirits to work in our lives (e.g. inheritance, trauma, deception, bitterness, or sin patterns) to “trash”, and the presence of the evil spirits themselves with “rats”.
- 2 If we want to get rid of the “rats” (= evil spirits) once and for all, the best way is to throw out the “trash” first (= deal with issues such as inheritance, trauma, deception, bitterness and sin patterns), then deal with the “rats”.
- 3 If we follow this approach, the benefits are several:
  - a The process of deliverance is usually relatively quick and easy
  - b The spirits do not come back unless the person gives them an opportunity to do so
  - c The ministry results not only in deliverance, but yields true spiritual growth

**D Do not become so obsessed with the ministry of deliverance that you forget about the influence of the “world” and the “flesh”**