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KEY SIX: SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Can Satan torment me if I am a Christian?

Do not therefore be at all surprised if Satan rages against you, nor marvel if you yourself should seem to be given into his power, but rather rejoice in this, that his great wrath is the sign of the shortness of his time. He wages war with us all the more cruelly because he knows that he will ultimately be defeated. —C.H. Spurgeon (1834-92)¹

“Why couldn’t we cast it out?” ... “Because you have so little faith.” (Matthew 17:19-20)

SOPHIA AND SATAN

When I first met Sophia, she had just been committed to a mental hospital and was on suicide watch. Her life had utterly disintegrated, and no one could figure out why. In a matter of days, she had gone from a model Christian to an out-of-control, suicidal wreck. Prior to her collapse, she had been a leader in her college ministry and was planning to devote her life to missions. But now she was saying things

¹ From the sermon, “Satan in a Rage,” preached by Charles Spurgeon on November 2, 1879, at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

like, *I belong to Satan*, and *I don't have a soul*. To me, the problem was obvious—*Sophia had somehow opened up a door to demonic influence*.

Although Sophia lived in another city, as soon as I heard about her I began praying that God would allow me to get into the mix. I enjoy God calling me into situations like this—not because it's fun to deal with the demonic, but because I expect God to win. Her parents were desperate, so they invited me to talk with her. A friend and I made the two-hour drive to visit her in the mental hospital.

On our initial visit, we talked with Sophia for about an hour. She seemed to understand everything that was being said, and I thought we had broken through. I really thought she was on her way to freedom, but when I called to check up on her, it was like a punch in the gut. Almost as soon as we drove away, she slipped back into darkness and despair. I was baffled.

We agreed to get together the next week. It seemed like we made great progress, but once again, almost as soon as I drove away, she was in chaos. (All her therapy and medication wasn't helping anything, either.) This cycle went on for two months. Again and again, it seemed like we had a breakthrough only to find her back on the edge of the cliff. While awake, she was tormented and terrorized and wanted to kill herself, and sleep brought her no relief. She told us that she dreamed about crawling on hands and knees through the flames of hell.

Her behavior only deteriorated over time, and this former “model Christian” was cursing, lying, and bingeing whenever she had the chance. When she went home for visits, her family never knew what sort of crazy stunt she might pull. She might steal a bottle of alcohol and down the

whole thing “just because.” She might jump in a car and start driving out of state. She might steal her mother’s phone and pretend to be her in text conversations. She was out of control and totally unpredictable.

Her case was particularly difficult. It took some time to figure out just what Satan was up to, but Sophia finally broke free—totally, completely free. We will explain how in the coming pages.² Her case was actually pretty textbook—the way Satan gets control in the vast majority of people. The Word of God lays out how all this works. In this chapter, we will discuss the process and focus on how to get free and stay free. You see, Satan and his minions have laws and rules they are confined to, and if we learn those laws and rules, we can pretty much beat him down every time. For anyone interested, it’s all in the Bible.

*Be excellent in what is good and innocent of evil, and the God of peace will soon crush Satan underneath your feet.
(Romans 16:19-20)*

STOP THE INSANITY!

*Nothing advances Satan's work with more skillful and readier hands than to be ignorant of Satan and his ways.
To escape his snare, we must not only have a strong faith in the fact that Satan is but also must have a most intimate*

² Since this book was originally written, Sophia moved to our town to get involved in the discipleship program, and was a founding member of our church, The Refuge Fellowship. She married Brandon (from Chapter 2), and recently became the mother of an adorable little boy. For her testimony, go to <https://youtu.be/Q5vcNxKcP7U> .

*knowledge of him and of his plans and many-sided ways.—E.M. Bounds (1835-1913)*³

It is impossible to understand the Bible rightly without believing in the existence of Satan and his army of demons—evil spiritual beings with intelligence and will. Removing them from the biblical narrative is like attempting to understand World War II without the Nazis in the storyline. Jesus’s entire ministry is summed up by the apostle John as a mission to deliver the human race from Satan’s power. *The Son of Man appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).*

Make a note of this—there are no Bible-believing Christians in history of any eternal significance who did not take the existence of these beings seriously.

*We know that Satan and all his angels are continually warring against us and watching over every child of man. They are ever watching to see whose outward or inward circumstances, whose prosperity or adversity, whose health or sickness, whose friends or enemies, whose youth or age, whose knowledge or ignorance, whose blindness or idleness, whose joy or sorrow, may lay them open to temptation. —John Wesley (1703-91)*⁴

The devil ... being driven on to his own inexpressible torment by the fury of sin, malice, revenge, and pride, and is so entirely under the government of malice that although he never attempted anything against God but he

³ E.M. Bounds, *Satan, His Personality, Power, and Overthrow* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1923), 116.

⁴ John Wesley, from the sermon “Of Evil Angels,” found in Wesley’s collected works, *Sermons on Several Occasions*.

*was disappointed. Yet, he cannot bear to be quiet and refrain from exercising himself with all his might and subtlety against the increase of holiness. —Jonathan Edwards (1703-58)*⁵

The Bible indicates that God created billions of holy angels, *thousands upon thousands ... and myriads upon myriads (Daniel 7:10)*. The consensus among theologians and Bible scholars is that the demons were once part of this host of holy angels in the service of God. Demons are the one-third who chose to rebel under the leadership of Satan. They were subsequently cast out of heaven and now are obsessed with tormenting and torturing human beings.

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him ... Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, and he has great wrath, knowing that his time is short. (Revelation 12:9-12)

Sadly, in our day there is an ocean of confused thinking on the subject of the demonic. Some Christians never think about it at all, as if these innumerable hosts of hell were all shipped off to some other planet after Jesus's resurrection. Others go nutty over the subject as if Satan and his demons are responsible for virtually everything—my flat tire, my headache, my bad test grade. But, even those who really want to maintain biblical balance often end up in confusion. Discussions among Christians can quickly get off trajectory, simply because of the words that are used. Below we will try to keep it all simple, clear, and biblically accurate.

⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2 (Southampton: The Camelot Press Ltd., 1834), 612.

THE WORDS WE USE

Some of the most widely believed errors about the demonic stem from the term *possessed* (as in *demon possessed*). The fact is that the word “possessed” is *not* in the original Greek at all, and so we should remove it from the discussion completely. This term “possessed” comes from early English translations of the Bible (like the King James Version). Using the word almost ensures that truth and clarity will go off the rails because the word “possessed” carries a whole bunch of baggage that leads people to false premises and false conclusions.

Countless misguided sermons have centered on a statement that goes something like this: *Christians cannot be demon possessed because they are possessed by Jesus (or the Holy Spirit)*. This naïve little cliché then leads the whole church to smugly conclude that they are bulletproof, impervious to demonic influence ... which is simply not true. Just for starters, if it were really this simple and Christians were bulletproof, why would the biblical authors tell Christians things like the following:

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert, your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

Don't be deceived. Born-again people like you and I can be utterly overwhelmed and even destroyed by demonic powers—like what was happening to Sophia. Countless earnest Christians have arrived at a wrong conclusion in their understanding of the demonic because they never framed the discussion properly. If we seek biblical wisdom, we can learn how Satan and his cohorts work. We can also learn how to crush them under our feet regularly.

... In order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan because we are not ignorant of his schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:11)

GET RID OF THE WORD “POSSESSED”

So, we first need to deal with this term *possessed*. Again, the fact is that it needs to be abandoned altogether because it is not in the original Greek of the New Testament. We should replace it with a word like *demonized*. Whenever we use the term *possessed*, it immediately brings to mind the idea of ownership—as in, *The devil or a demon owns that person*. THIS IS NOT THE POINT THE BIBLE IS MAKING. When the Bible talks about the demonic working in people, it is not primarily interested in *ownership*. It is talking about how people are being *afflicted*—mentally, morally, or physically.

To convey the idea of being severely afflicted by a demon, the New Testament authors sometimes use a very interesting term—they take the noun “demon” (*daimōn*) and transform it into a verb (*daimonizomai*). In the older English translations like the King James Version, they would insert the word *possessed* wherever this Greek word appeared. A much less confusing English translation that better reflects what the Bible is saying is *afflicted by a demon*. To make the same point, we can put the suffix *-ized* on the end of the word demon, as we do with so many other English words. This gives us the much more accurate word *demonized*.

How would the Bible then be read in English? The following is an example:

And when He (Jesus) came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demonized met Him. (Matthew 8:28)

Instead of:

And when He (Jesus) came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him.

The first translation eliminates all the unnecessary confusion about ownership (and more accurately reflects the original Greek). When a person is *terrorized*, they are not owned by a terrorist, and when they are *brutalized*, they are not owned by a brute. Along the same lines, when someone is *demonized*, it says nothing about ownership. Why is this so important? Because if we are muddled in our thinking, Satan can take advantage of us ... even destroy us.

Here are the facts. In this lifetime, as long as we inhabit these bodies, demons will always be trying to afflict and destroy us. In a sense, they don't really care what the ultimate state of our soul is. Saved or lost, they seek to gain access and control, and that is what we will focus on here.

As serious Christians, we really need to get our heads on straight about all this—the biblical discussion is primarily about how demons afflict people.⁶ If we want to be technical about things, we could say that everyone who is not born again “belongs” to Satan, and everyone who is born again cannot “belong” to Satan. The former group (the lost) belongs to Satan because he still has a legal claim to their souls. The latter group (the saved) do not belong to Satan

⁶ We can't talk in great detail about all the intricacies of demonic affliction. Other books have done this very well—like just about anything on the subject by Neil T. Anderson. See Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1990), and *Victory Over the Darkness: Realizing the Power of Your Identity in Christ* (Ventura, California: Regal, 1990).

because the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus has broken Satan's ultimate claim on them. BUT AGAIN, THIS IS COMPLETELY IRRELEVANT TO THE DISCUSSION HERE. We are not talking about Satan's ultimate claim on a person's soul, we are talking about how demons afflict people here on earth.

Now we can examine Satan's main strategy for afflicting people. He works this on pretty much anyone—me, you, the saved, or the unsaved. Satan and his demons are rather indiscriminating; they will just as readily afflict a born-again missionary or pastor as an avowed atheist or Satanist ... if the conditions are right. They are driven by lust to destroy. If they can't have your soul because you are saved, they can still make your life on earth a living hell.

LIKE PARASITES

When the Bible talks about spiritual things, it often resorts to metaphors. A helpful way to think about how a demon operates is by comparing it to a parasite, like a leech or a tick. Demons seem to be always trying to attach themselves to a host, which will give them some sort of temporary relief ... as if they feed off of us in a way (*Yuck!*). Jesus said that when evil spirits are not afflicting someone, it's as if they stumble around in a desert. *When an unclean spirit goes out of a person, it goes through waterless places seeking rest (Matthew 12:43).*

All evidence indicates that in this desperate state, demons will attach themselves to a child of God (a saved person) just as readily as they will attach themselves to a lost person—again, if the conditions are right. So here is the big question: *What conditions allow a demon to afflict a person?* Except for very, very rare exceptions, it is when you and I

choose to sin boldly and defiantly that demons have a right to torment and afflict us.⁷

When you or I choose to do something in clear violation of God's will—lie, cheat, steal, hate, commit sexual immorality—we are basically inviting one of these little suckers to latch onto us. This is why the apostle warns Christians not to *give a place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27)*. Jesus once told His disciples that Satan would be paying them a visit, but *he has nothing in Me (John 14:30)*. Why could He say this? Because He had not committed any sin. Why could Satan or his demons freely enter biblical figures like Saul, Judas, Peter, and Ananias? SIN!

Theologians and Bible scholars can debate exactly where these demons are when they are afflicting a person—are they in a person's mind, soul, or fallen flesh? Quite frankly, I don't really care where they are—I don't want them in me, on me, or around me. My only interest is overcoming them—crushing them under my feet (*Romans 16:19-20*).

The confusion regarding the “location” of demons probably arises from the fact that the Bible often uses language from our physical world to help us wrap our little brains around this spiritual reality. Sometimes people are likened to houses that demons can live in (*Matthew 12:44*). Sometimes they are compared to the geography demons are trying to claim (*Ephesians 4:27*). Sometimes people are

⁷ There do seem to be rare instances when God allows demonic powers to afflict a person when there is not a sin issue involved. Arguably, this is what is happening in the Old Testament book of *Job*, and in the New Testament book of *2 Corinthians*, when an angel from Satan is allowed to afflict Paul (ch. 12). But this situation is a very rare exception, not the rule, and it serves some higher purpose of God. The rule is, obedient Christians expect to regularly crush Satan under their feet.

depicted like some poor little gazelle that demons want to eat for lunch (*1 Peter 5:8*). Regardless of the metaphor, the bottom line is this—demons can influence us in profound, life-altering ways, and even destroy us.

Our main concern should be how to beat them, not get into technical arguments about their official “10-20.” (Sophia wasn’t interested in a technical discussion about where the demons were. All she knew was that they were destroying her, and she needed freedom.) What we really need to do as Christians is focus on the *how*, *when*, and *why* of demonic affliction and learn how we can get them off of us and keep them off of us.

All this talk about being *demonized* can be very unsettling for the uninitiated, but dodging the issue won’t help anything. Satan and his cohorts won’t give you a pass just because you don’t want to play their game. A much better strategy is to study what the Bible says about Satan and his demons and learn to beat them, because until Jesus comes back they largely control the planet we live on.

The whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (1 John 5:19)

And the devil said ... “I will give you all this domain and its glory; for it has been given over to me and I give it to whomever I please.” (Luke 4:6)

The Bible frames our whole struggle here on earth as a battle against these invisible spiritual forces. Like it or not, as long as you and I are living in Satan’s territory (earth), we can be afflicted and even destroyed. So it is imperative that we learn how to fight.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the complete armor of God so that you can stand

firm against the schemes of the devil. Because our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the dark forces of this world, against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:10-12)

THE ANATOMY OF DEMONIZATION

Jesus once referred to Satan as *the father of lies* (John 8:44). Why are lies so inextricably bound to Satan's identity, and his strategy? All evidence indicates that the severely demonized, like Sophia, are typically brought into their condition by first yielding to lies, and this is what leads them deeper and deeper into sin.

This strategy goes back to the dawn of human history. The earliest chapters of Genesis give us a sort of paradigm of how this works. The serpent (Satan) lies to Eve about God's will and word, and this leads her into sin. This is what first plunged the human race into darkness.

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What have you done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Genesis 3:13)

The implications and repercussions of Adam and Eve's sin were much more far-reaching than any sin we can commit—it's as if their sin put all of humanity in a prison camp run by Satan. While we are living in this prison camp, Satan still uses the same time-tested process on us. *I fear that as the serpent deceived Eve, so your minds will be led astray (2 Corinthians 11:3).*

Like a sadistic Nazi prison guard, Satan and his hosts get their thrills by tormenting, terrorizing, and destroying people. They intensify our suffering by getting us to believe

more and more lies, which leads to deeper and deeper bondage ... this is demonization.

From start to finish, we find demonized people in the biblical narrative, and we can safely assume that Satan is up to his normal *m.o.*—lies lead to sin, sin leads to demonic control. There are actually too many examples of demonization in the Bible to cite. In the Old Testament, evil spirits deceived false prophets (*2 Chronicles 18:21*), and an evil spirit terrorized King Saul (*1 Samuel 16:14*). In the New Testament, Jesus's very first sermon is interrupted by a demonized man (*Mark 1:23*). In a verse describing Jesus's ministry, the Bible summarizes it this way,

And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out demons. (Mark 1:39)

One of Jesus's most devoted followers, Mary Magdalene, is said to have been delivered from seven tormenting spirits (*Mark 16:9*). Church tradition holds that she was a prostitute, which would certainly explain the "sin entry point" for the demonic activity in her life. But whatever the case, we can safely assume that lies drove her deep into sin, which opened her up to demonic control. In many cases (like Mary's), we aren't given all the gruesome details—what lies they fell prey to, what sins gave the demons legal right to torment them—but there are instances where we can see more of the process at work.

Another clear example of demonization in the New Testament is seen in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. The language used in the Bible indicates a couple in deep sin who could have wreaked havoc on the early church. *Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? (Acts 5:3).*

Another clear-cut example of demonization, which shows the normal pattern at work, would be Judas Iscariot. Before his lust for money led him to betray Jesus, the Bible tells us that he was a thief. Satan worked this area of sin in Judas's life until he could control him at will. *And Satan entered into Judas, who was called Iscariot (Luke 22:3).*

But, even “the good guys” in Scripture are not immune or bulletproof—even the apostles were attacked. All evidence indicates that Peter opened himself up to the demonic through the sin of pride (*Luke 22:24*). Satan then demanded from God the right to *sift him like wheat (Luke 22:31)*. This all happened right before Peter's moral collapse—his denial of Jesus.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN A NUTSHELL

Satan's overarching scheme is really not all that difficult to understand. So let's review it a few more times to really lock it in. There is one place in the Bible that outlines the whole sequence of demonization more clearly than any other. It has all the major components of Satan's strategy, and God's solution. I call it *Spiritual Warfare in a Nutshell*. Here it is:

With gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance, leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:25-26)

If we work backwards, we see that someone is **held captive to do Satan's will**, and they **are in a snare**. In short, this person is demonized. How did they get this way? They were led into sin through some sort of lie. Lies have always

been Satan's primary tool for gaining control over humanity (this is why he is called *the father of lies*). This Scripture also clearly lays out the solution. The thing that is going to set this poor soul free is ***the knowledge of the truth*** which will ***bring them to their senses***. This is precisely why Jesus says elsewhere that *the truth will set you free* (*John 8:32*).

There is a little more to it, but that is basically it—Satan snares you and me by getting us to believe a lie. Believing some lie—*It won't hurt anyone—God can't forgive you—The Bible can't be trusted—You are worthless*—then gets us to act in a way that is contrary to God's will—*sin*. When we commit sin, Satan and his demons then have a legal right to attach like little life-sucking parasites. From that contact point, they then try to get more and more influence over us.

This strategy is how Satan and his demons are trying to work you and me day-in and day-out. This is why the book of Ephesians tells Christians not to go to bed angry. Why? *Ephesians 4:27* tells us that anger can become a contact point for the devil; the word Paul uses here (Gk. *topos*) quite literally means *territory*. Unconfessed sin basically gives Satan “squatter's rights” in you.

Once they latch on and begin sucking, they are voracious, and they invite others to join in. It always starts small—a little bitterness, a little lust—but the problem grows worse over time if not dealt with. Judas Iscariot was in the habit of snitching a little money from the company chest (*John 12:6*) before he morphed into a full-blown, out-of-control demoniac.

Obviously, everyone who falls for this diabolical scheme IS NOT immediately transformed into a stark-raving mad demoniac like Judas, but a little sin is how it all starts. The first sin can be like a beachhead, where Satan or one of his

demons can work out from and gain territory. The lie gets more and more power, and the sin gets more dominant until it is like an out-of-control monster. Most of us have been on this ride at some point in our lives—lying, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, or sexual addiction.

All the biblical evidence indicates that when we give in to a lie, it often sets us up for other lies ... and other sins. Pretty soon, we can have one, two, three, or even thousands of these little suckers on us. Jesus once asked a demon, *What is your name?* The demon responded, *My name is Legion, for we are many (Mark 5:9)*. This should make anyone pretty uncomfortable—the idea that innumerable evil, destructive beings can attach themselves to us and destroy us. But don't worry, God has given us everything we need to win. We will get there in a minute.

At this point, all we need to focus on is the fact that God has set up His universe with laws and rules. There are physical laws and rules—time, gravity, etc.—and there are spiritual rules and laws, as well. One spiritual law that governs our universe is that Satan and his demons gain legal access to us through sin. This means they can't simply jump on you and mug you or take over your life while you sleep. You don't pick up demons like you catch a cold. As a rule, we have to invite demonic powers to torment us, and we do this through sin. This paradigm pretty much explains the biblical evidence—lies lead to sin, sin leads to demonic influence, and if not checked, sin leads to death and destruction.

Back to our passage—*2 Timothy 2:25-26*. The apostle Paul clearly lays out the fundamental problem with the demonized person—they are out of their senses, ensnared by the devil. Why? In the first place, they believe lies. This, in

turn, leads them to sin, which gives the devil the legal right to influence them—*hold them captive to do his will*. This is all confirmed by Paul, when he says the remedy for them is *to come to the knowledge of the truth and repentance*. Repentance simply indicates the change of mind and action that takes place when a person no longer believes lies. This paradigm pretty well explains all the evidence we find in the Bible, from Eve to Judas to Ananias and Sapphira. When a person believes lies, then sins, they are *held captive to do Satan's will*.

Again, contrary to popular belief, Satan cannot just jump on you or into you when you are walking down the street. In the movies, demons may mug someone because they moved into some haunted house or got lost in a graveyard, but that is just silly Hollywood. The devil and his minions have rules they have to play by, and they are pretty powerless if you understand them and don't open the door. If they can't convince you to do stupid, sinful things, they just sort of buzz around in frustration. This is precisely what we see in the life of Jesus. He wouldn't give in to Satan's lies, so Satan couldn't get any control over Him. So what did the devil do? He just skulked off into the darkness:

When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time. (Luke 4:13)

Unfortunately, we don't always handle the devil's temptations with the strength and clarity Jesus had, and all of us give in to sin from time to time. It is at this point that we can be worked by the devil. Now the choice is up to us—will we allow Satan and sin to run their course, or do we short circuit the ride to destruction? *When sin has run its course, it leads to death (James 1:15)*. When Judas got on

this ride, he failed to get off and eventually committed suicide. But when the apostle Peter had his great fall, he broke Satan's power and was set free. How? Through repentance. (And God didn't just grudgingly forgive Peter—He completely restored him and made him the head of the early church!)

BREAKING FREE ... *TAKE OUT THE TRASH*

Satan is pretty easy to figure out if you think of sin as filth and rottenness, like the Bible often does. He and his demons are a lot like flies, and flies are attracted to filth and rottenness—garbage, rotten food, rotting corpses—delightful things like that. They love it. For them, the more, the better—but they need us to produce it. So they tell us lies to get us to sin, and as we do they luxuriate in the filth we create. As you and I lust, hate, cheat, steal, etc., it's as if we create a nice big pile of rotting, rancid, stinking garbage.

How does a born-again Christian break free of demonic bondage? It's so simple—just repent. We renounce the sinful action and (of course) the lie that motivated the sinful action. (For more details about how to live a life free of sin, go back and reread Chapter 3.) Repentance means we do a 180-degree turn and change our behavior—stop cheating, stealing, lusting, and obey God. Then Satan and his demons no longer have anything to work with; they have no legal claim. They have no pile of filth to luxuriate in, and their influence is broken. Remove the rotting veggies next to the garden, and the swarming flies disappear. Take away the dead squirrel from in front of your house, and no flies. The same thing applies to the stinking trash under your kitchen sink.

In our lives, spiritual maintenance includes regular evaluation of our actions and thoughts. In biblical terms, we must have *clean hands and a pure heart*. If we are thinking right, we will be acting right ... and if this is the case, there will be no flies, i.e., demons. This is precisely what is laid out for us in another of the most helpful spiritual warfare passages in the whole Bible.

The book of *James* tells us clearly how to beat the devil—take out the garbage. In biblical terms, this means humble yourself and align your heart and mind with the will of God again. As you do, God will break Satan’s power in your life.

Submit therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable, mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. (James 4:7-10)

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

This chapter began with Sophia’s demonic nightmare. The key to her freedom was discovering the specific lies she believed, which were leading her to sin. Sometimes this process of identifying lies is pretty easy, but sometimes it can be more complicated. Satan and his demons are deceptive, and they don’t want to go. If they can, they will keep leading us down false tracks. When I was almost at the point of giving up, we found the root of her chaos—she was angry at God; in her words, *low-key pissed*.

It finally came out that she thought God had dealt with her unfairly again and again throughout her life. She saw Him as cruel and unjust and believed He delighted in

humiliating her. So she lashed out at God in the only way she knew how—sin hard. This was her way of protesting against all the (perceived) ways that God had *done her dirty*. The more she sinned, the more she gave demonic forces the right to torture and torment and control her ... and they almost drove her over the brink.

Using Scripture, I was able to show her that her ideas about God—*unjust, unfair, cruel*—were completely untrue and unbiblical. All of her bitterness was fueled by these lies in her mind, her twisted vision of God. (I know this sounds so basic, but I have found many born-again Christians with the same problem.) When she finally realized what was going on, she immediately renounced the lies and repented of her sin. When she did this, it was like all the darkness instantly vanished. She was completely transformed, from a stark-raving mad, suicidal woman to a free, peaceful child of God. She is now a dear friend of ours, and we see her on a regular basis. I know this whole process and the results may sound too good to be true, but I have seen it happen many times.

Satan and his demons have millions of lies that they will try to tell us in their attempt to get us to sin. If we fall for a lie and then sin, Satan has a legal claim to latch on and torment us. He can't *own* us if we are born again, but he can *torment* us. All we have to do is renounce his lie and turn away from the sin. When we do, we break his power and, as the book of James says, he must then flee from us. Now that you know, you too can *crush Satan under your feet*.