

Prayer

Store

**Breaking the
strongholds of Europe**

Jim Smith

Difficult days

Europe is facing a very difficult time. Financially, socially and politically there are signs of stress. Oil and commodity prices are rising, while incomes remain very static, or are deteriorating. We are trying to integrate millions of Muslims, and struggle with a legacy from the world wars which still causes tension. Xenophobia is under the surface, and far right political parties are gaining ground. As I write, the Euro is under great pressure, and its survival is questionable. If it should fail, the political and social turmoil will be massive.

Against this background, Europe needs its Judeo-Christian heritage, and at this point of need, finds that heritage slipping away. The church, in its widest context, is weak, and mostly ignored. Split by inner stresses which it does not seem able to resolve, answering questions which the world is no longer asking, and with a reputation for failing to speak out about and into the large issues which are threatening us all, if ever there was the need for a united Christian presence it is now. But it is just not there. Few Christians will admit this. All I ever hear is “my church is doing very well. I have grown tired of the institutional church, regarding it not as a reservoir of the Spirit, but as a millstone, preventing, controlling or destroying the free movement of the Spirit. One Muslim website said recently “Islam is young and growing. Europe is old and decaying.” There is truth here which we would do well to recognize.

Not every Christian is blind to reality. In fact God’s everyday people are very aware of what is happening, but look in vain for guidance, hope and positive direction from their leaders. Is this all just a human crisis, or, as the Bible teaches, are there spiritual forces at work which are opposed to the things of God and the people of God. The New Testament sums these forces up with the name and personality of “Satan”, who Jesus calls “the father of lies.” Satan was defeated at Calvary. One day, the Lord will return and establish that victory. In the meantime, Satan is still active. He is a strong man, and establishes strong places, from which he can harm God’s people.

We are facing a tough foe that is well organized. (Ephesians 6:12) How has he organized himself in Europe? We often look at the little things, and it is important to face and defeat him at the micro level. But he plans at the macro level, and we have to oppose and break him there as well. God’s people often stumble here, because they don’t have the bigger picture, and our leaders do not encourage us to take the wider view. So what is the wider view like? What strong places of enemy activity exist in Europe, and how can we challenge and defeat them?

The Spirit of control

This is a very dangerous spirit - especially dangerous to God's people. We see a clear demonstration of both the danger and the method in the story of Balak. Here is the relevant passage:-

“A people have come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed.” (Numbers 22:5-6)

The people of God were fulfilling the purposes of God as they journeyed towards the Promised Land. Balak was afraid of them, fearing for his land and people. So he tried to exercise control over them – *using spiritual powers to get control*. This is a classic demonstration of the spirit of control. It seeks to:-

* **Pervert the purposes of God.** The command to God's people was clear - they were to take their land of promise, and they were acting on that command. They had God's commission to pass through Balak's land, and they were fulfilling that commission. Balak wanted to pervert this purpose.

* **To control the people of God**, so that they cannot or will not respond to those purposes. This is key activity of the spirit of control. It cannot allow any free movement of the Spirit because it cannot control that free movement. It hates verses like **“the wind blows where it wants”** (John 3:8) and **“you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”** (John 8:32). Ultimately, the spirit of control wants to assist the enemy in getting control over God, in order to be God.

How does this spirit gain its control?

* **Dominating by power and strength.** Nebuchadnezzar is a very good example. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to submit to worship his massive gold statue, he tried to control them by dominant power:-

“This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language. As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” (Daniel 3:4-6)

May be Nebuchadnezzar didn't know what he was doing. Perhaps he just wanted to exalt himself, but the controlling spirit saw an opportunity to control God's people, and restrict their freedoms. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were made of sterner stuff. They lived a sacrificial faith, and they would rather sacrifice themselves than submit to any loss of freedom of the Spirit.

* **Deception.** This spirit gets a whole section to itself later, but I include it briefly here because the controlling spirit often gets its hold by deceiving us in our walk with the Lord, and getting into our theology and church life. Satan wanted to destroy God's work, so what better way than to deceive Eve away from the way of truth, into the path of her own human desires? So he says . **"Did God really say..?"** (Gen.3:1) Satan controls by deceiving. He drags people away from the covering of God's blessing, and into the area of his control. He deceived Ananias and Sapphira, (Acts 5:1-11) Demas, (2 Timothy 4:10) and many others.

* **Fear.** This has been an age old technique of control. Many totalitarian states have used it in the last two centuries, and there are many examples today. Let Goliath speak for all:-

"This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified." (1 Sam 17:11)

* **To control through intellect.** The western world thrives on intellect, thinking and philosophy. Problems are solved, and progress made, by thinking and study. It's the inheritance of the enlightenment, and a very good inheritance. But there is a problem with thinking people – they often find it hard to see, spiritually, what is going on. The spirit of control finds it easy to make a home in such cultures. Look at Caiaphas and the intellectual way he deals with the "problem" of the resurrection of Lazarus:-

"Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." (John 11:9)

It's the classic statement of the controlled mind, and it led to serious consequences:-

"So from that day on they plotted to take his (Jesus) life. Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples."(Jn11:53,54)

Religion in the West is seriously controlled. Freedom in the Spirit is constrained by the traditions of men in almost every denomination. We seem to have the desire to encase the Spirit in our doctrines, rules, systems of order and governance. The Spirit can no longer blow where he wills. Committees and systems control those who try to move freely in his love. The controlling spirit within religion is one of the greatest threats we are facing in these difficult days. The threat to Jesus came from within religion, and that is where we see the controlling spirit at its most powerful and most dangerous. How does the spirit of control work within religion? Ultimately, it strives to:

***Silence all dissent.**

Nebuchadnezzar again:-

“Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” (Daniel 3:12-15)

Kill the messenger, and then the message will die. Get rid of the dissenting voice, and then all voices will agree. Over the history of our Faith, the dissenting voice has often been the right one, (and often a prophetic one). But that doesn't stop the method being successfully employed over and over again.

***Shut people's minds to the reality of what is happening.**

The city of Laodicea was ruined by an earthquake in 60 C.E. but the inhabitants declined imperial assistance to rebuild the city and restored it from their own means. They must have been a very go-ahead group of citizens, with plenty of finance - just the sort of place you would want to live. But look at what the Bible says about it:-

“You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.” (Rev 3:7)

The people were blind to the spiritual truth and a prophet had to come and tell them that they were poor, naked and blind. I have been in the position of such a prophet, and the response is almost universal - silence the voice. God's people in Laodicea were blind, and in my experience, this same blindness is, today, certainly Europe wide, if not worldwide.

***Lock people in to a system which gives them position.**

This is a real prison. People are so indebted to the system that they cannot break out of it, because if they did they would lose everything. The Jews who heard the profound challenges in John chapter 8 replied: **“We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”**

I have met so many leaders who are in this position. Once they moved freely in the Spirit, but then they begin to “get on”. They get good churches, and are well respected and trusted. But the fire begins to dim. The controlling spirit pulls them back, hems them in, damps them down and draws their passion from them. But by now they owe everything to the system which gives them their salary, their pension, their house, their honour and respect. They cannot, or will not bite the hand that feeds them. They are locked in, and useless to the life of the Spirit. Yet such people often rise high in the system and draw others in as well. Before long, there is a small circle of like-minded locked up people controlling large areas of church life. Then slowly they begin to destroy all those who would move freely. The radical edge of the church is neutered, and those who want radicalism are excluded.

***Destroy the moving of the Spirit.**

This is the goal of the spirit of control. Isaiah warned against it:

The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.” (Isa 29:13)

The king of Israel exercised it against Micaiah:-

The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah.” (1 Kings 22:8)

Zedekiah exercised it against Jeremiah:-

“Then the officials said to the king, “This man should be put to death. He is discouraging the soldiers who are left in this city, as well as all the people, by the things he is saying to them. This man is not seeking the good of these people but their ruin.” “He is in your hands,” King Zedekiah answered. “The king can do nothing to oppose you.” So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered

Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud and Jeremiah sank down into the mud. (Jer. 38:4-6)

The Jews exercised it against Stephen:-

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:59-60)

The controlling spirit is one of the most dangerous powers we will ever face, and I believe it is a massive stronghold in Europe. The lively moving of the Spirit will be replaced with dull formalism and ritual, (“These people honour me with their lips”) which people will believe will make them safe. They are totally unaware of the spiritual danger they are in. Any who speak the truth will be reviled, (Micaiah) thrown out, (Jeremiah in pit) or killed. (Stephen) Rooting out such a spirit is very hard - almost impossible in fact. Only a deep cleansing of the church can do it, and that is very painful.

How can we bring this stronghold down?

I would be naïve if I thought a few sentences could answer this question, but there are a few things which I have found useful:-

* God has set us free, and as long as we put the obeying of his will first in our lives, he will guarantee that freedom. It's not easy to live an obedient life, and we will all fall at some point. But as long as our heart's desire is to obey, God himself will keep us free from this spirit. But if our hearts desire is not to obey, or to obey when we feel like it, or how we feel like it, then we are heading for serious trouble. The controlling spirit will start to try and control us, our family, our work, our church, our life, our village, town or nation. I believe that many of God's people have strayed into this position, and consequently, the spirit of control is hard at work in Europe.

* The sacrificial life, built on the commitment to obey. (Phil 2:5-11) From the beginning, the basic disciplines of faith will defeat this spirit. If we live an obedient sacrificial life, then we are a fortified wall, and a bronze pillar. (Jeremiah 1:18) and 10,000 may fall beside us, but it will not come near us. (Psalm 91:7) Why would it be otherwise? The God who is the heart of faith would surely put into that heart ways by which we can defeat all the strategies of the enemy.

* **“Fix your eyes on Jesus.”** Peter didn't, and his faith failed him. If we do as Jesus commands, then nothing can make us afraid. This looks simple, but it is very effective. We stand firm in faith, and let God do the rest.

Will we ever break free as a united people of God? Occasionally new groupings begin, new churches that are going to be free, but it doesn't take long for the old ways to reassert themselves. Is there a basic desire to organise in those who have an inclination to religion? Before long, these new groupings are issuing their principles, and those who cannot accept them are forced out. If we are ever going to break free, it is going to be hard work.

The spirit of deception

Deception has been a stronghold for the enemy from the beginning of time, as Eve found out:-

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" (Genesis 3:1-3)

The deception revolves around the words "Did God really say...?" What really happened to Eve? Did she fancy a nice piece of fruit? Was she hoping to advance knowledge? Was it her undisciplined human spirit which caused the problem?

These may have all played their part, but whatever it was in her thinking, the heart of her problem was that she was deceived. The enemy deceived her into thinking that there was something better than God's presence. She desired that, and was unaware of the consequences. They came to her soon enough, but by then it was too late. Jesus warned us that Satan was the father of lies. From this point on in the Bible, the serpent deploys a range of deceits, all designed, ultimately, to allow him to control God's people, and from that position, to control God. These deceits are to be found all over Europe.

*** The deceit of power**

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!" So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. (Exodus 14: 5-6)

Pharaoh thought he had the power to destroy God's people, and he was very nearly successful. Even Moses was pushed to the limit of faith, before God strengthened

him. Pharaoh thought that he had the power of life and death over people, in much the same way as Nebuchadnezzar and Goliath did. In each case, one person was not deceived – Moses, Shadrach and David found the answer. Face them down, whatever the cost. But those with weaker characters are easily cowed by power.

* The deceit of the spirit

The deceiving spirit likes to use spiritual powers to deceive. The Pharisees show this spiritual deception at work. When Jesus challenges the demonic, they reply: - **“By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.” (Luke 11:15)** The real danger of this kind of spiritual darkness is that it allows the deceit of the demonic into the heart of religion. There it can hide and control.

* The deceit of religion

“Abraham is our father.” (John 8: 39)

The Jews believed that they did not need to open their minds to anything new, because they were safe within their religion. Having Abraham as father did nothing to correct the sinfulness of their natures, but they were deceived away from seeing this truth, hiding behind the walls of religion. We see this everywhere today. People have the erroneous belief that the right kind of ritual can change things, but the heart needs an internal, not an external change. The spirit of control loves ritual, and loves people to get drawn into it. They learn to love the ritual, and depend on it, rather than Jesus.

* The deceit of the darkness

Jesus said **“I am the light of the world”**, and he did not hesitate to shine that light into many dark places, to dislodge the enemy and bring freedom. But that didn't stop the darkness trying to invade creation. Jesus taught that light has come into the world, but added **“men preferred darkness.”** The battle continues, even though the light has triumphed at Calvary, and will continue to triumph. Satan is always seeking for open doors for his darkness to enter. He found one in Judas (Luke 22:3) and in Balak. He found one in Alexander, (2 Timothy 2:14) and in the Pharisees. He knows that men prefer the darkness, rather than light.

We see these open doors today in humanism, secularism, unsanctified science and in other religions which seek to chain, rather than release. Millions of people fail to ask the questions, or examine the claims, and fall prisoners of the darkness. Once the mind is darkened by the infiltration of evil, it becomes darker. The journey is downwards. (King Saul. 1 Samuel 13) There are so many darknesses in Europe, which

are deceiving, and consequently weakening, God's people. Here are just a few of them and each one is a manifestation of the spirit of deceit:-

Darkness of the arrogant spirit: "Where did this man get these things?" (Mk 6:2)

The enemy has planned many strategies to prevent people recognising Jesus - we see this every day in our media. One of those strategies is the response of arrogance to the words and works of Jesus. This arrogance slams the door to the entry of the light of Christ. The arrogant have to remain in the darkness. The god of this world has blinded their eyes. (2 Cor. 4:4)

The darkness of pride: "We are Abraham's descendants." (John 8:33)

Pride shuts the mind to the light of Christ. For the Jews, it was pride in their great heritage. No "Messiah" could ever come in the way Jesus came. They were a great people, and expected to have a suitably great Messiah. In this thinking, they were shut in, untouchable by the light. God would not force their belief. For us, it is our great enlightenment heritage, our exaltation of self, of every man being his own king, of scientific achievement which has cleansed us from much physical darkness, but at the same time has shuttered the light of Christ from our minds. The enemy loves this form of darkness. Pride appeals to the human spirit, and he loves to play on these feelings.

The darkness of minds open to the occult: "Then he (the king of Moab) took his firstborn son, who was to succeed him as king, and offered him as a sacrifice on the city wall. The fury against Israel was great; they withdrew and returned to their own land." (2Kings3:27)

Nothing darkens the mind more than being open to occult practices. The King of Moab was open in the extreme, and such things do happen today. But many are open to the occult at more simple levels - the fortune tellers, the mediums, the revival of the pagan gods. These things reveal a world wide open to invasion by the darkness. These things are also found within religions. Some make it a key platform, where communicating with the spirit world is part of the daily ritual – Juju, Fetish, spiritists. Others have it embedded in less obvious ways. The occult fills our TVs and cinemas, with films which expose those who watch to occult doorways. Once the darkness has gained entry in this way, there is always a corruption of standards, an acceptance of things previously regarded as taboo. With the darkness, there is only ever one way - down.

The darkness of perverted sexuality: But when she (Tamar) took it to him (Amnon) to eat, he grabbed her and said, “Come to bed with me, my sister.” “Don't, my brother!” she said to him. “Don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace?” (2 Samuel 13:11-15)

Sex and the exploitation of it have given access to darkness into many minds. The Bible is quite realistic about the problem. The rape of Tamar, the defilement of Bathsheba and the murder of her husband show how easily sex can be exploited by the enemy, to gain access and darken the mind. Jesus was totally realistic: - **“You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”**(Matthew 5:27-28)

Sex is a really tough battle ground, and if we get it wrong, we enter a darkness that can only increase – as Amnon, Absalom and David discovered. It has also polluted many churches, and destroyed many ministries.

The darkness of the religious spirit: “Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.” (Mark 3:6)

The opponents of Jesus were not willing to think about what he was doing and saying. They had their religion, and anything which challenged it had to be stopped, at any cost.

The religious spirit is one of the most dangerous weapons of the enemy. It's always hardest to see its workings when they are within the church, and disguised as good religious practice. In Mark 3, the Pharisees, full of righteousness, planned murder, even though such an act was against their own teachings, except for blasphemy, which had not been committed. They saw Jesus as a challenge to their religion, and so they planned to kill him. Caiaphas summed up their intention accurately: - “it is better for one man to die.” Alexander the silversmith gives clear expression to this spirit, and interestingly enough, he was a pagan, worshipping a false god. The religious spirit hardens the human spirit, closing it to the working of the Holy Spirit, and opening it to the invasion of the darkness of bigotry, which leads, in the end, to murder, in reality or spiritually. It also drives out the true voice of God, and those who truly bear the vision for the church in their hearts.

The religious spirit always turns against those who want to move in the freedom of the Spirit, and it usually has the weight of denominations behind it - it has spent centuries infiltrating them.

One voice is easily marginalized or silenced by the bureaucracy of the church, when it is backed by the religious spirit, and this writer will testify to this truth in his own experience.

Deception is a massive stronghold in Europe. Those who hold to biblical truth are finding it increasingly difficult to be heard. Does this matter? I believe Europe is facing a shaking the like of which we have not seen for hundreds of years. There is a huge threat to Christian things, and millions have abandoned faith, to trust in falsehood of one kind or another. If ever there was a time for a radical spirit filled church to lead the way it is now. But what do we see - a church which is old and decaying, and a Judeo- Christian heritage which is slipping away, and other philosophies and faiths rushing to fill the gap. In the face of this, the strongholds are growing, and we are losing the knowledge of how to pull them down.

The spirit of violence.

Why can we, as a race, be so violent? None of us start off as violent babies, but something seems to happen, and the results are horrific. Is this violence cultural, genetic or just part of our human condition? The Bible will not let us think like this, but challenges us to face up to the spiritual reality of violence which might be one of our problems in Europe. The first act of violence is the murder of Abel by Cain.

“The Lord looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.”
(Gen 4: 4-5)

“Cain was very angry.” (Heb: “Charah” – “to be hot, furious, burn, become angry, be kindled, to heat oneself in vexation”.) Theologically, Cain’s anger was a result of his failure to understand the nature of God. The Lord had already cursed the ground, (3:17) so bringing an offering from the ground was bound to lead to rejection. Cain might have known this, but he didn’t, because he was consumed with himself. How do we know? We only have to look at his reaction - “Cain was very angry.” He desired the blessing, and realising he was not getting it, anger flared, which would soon mature to murder.

The Decalogue is clear about anger – **“You shall not murder, commit adultery, steal, give false testimony, covet.”** (Ex.20:1-17) Why does the Decalogue put murder on a par with these other things? It’s a warning about the danger of the unreformed heart of men. Jesus made this very clear: - **“Anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.”** (Matt 5:21)

In other words, the deed in the heart can so quickly become the deed in reality. Cain's selfish and uncontrolled anger was, in God's sight, already murder, which it quickly became. (Gen 4:8)

I don't expect anything written here comes as a big surprise to us. The uncontrolled human spirit is capable of murder. Given the circumstances, we all are capable of murder. The seed, which Jesus places as located "in the heart", given the circumstances, can germinate into the deed. It took Hazeal (2 Kings 8:7-13) to push the spirit of violence on: - **"Because I know the harm you will do to the Israelites," he answered. "You will set fire to their fortified places, kill their young men with the sword, dash their little children to the ground, and rip open their pregnant women."** It took the Third Reich to push it even further, with the systematic extermination of those it regarded as impure. Recently, we have seen terrible acts of terrorism, from 9/11 to beheading on video— Cain's heritage just rolls on and on.

So Cain murdered, and murder became part of our fallen experience, but why? God said these words to Cain: - **"sin is crouching at your door: it desires to have you, but you must master it."** (Gen.4:7) Something very serious is being indicated here. We are at the first biblical murder, and already the Lord is warning of the dangerous door that is swinging open. Through the urge for self, sin can enter, and fan the flame into greater acts of evil. This physical act is a reflection of the propensity to violence which is Satan's nature. The Lord again makes that nature clear: - **"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy"**. (John 10:10) Violence is part of Satan's nature, but why does this affect us? Look at this verse: **"For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."** (Matthew 15:19) (Note the sequence.) What Jesus makes clear in the New Testament is exactly what is being said in Genesis. Satan is a murderer, a killer. He wants the human spirit to be made in his image, and so "crouches at the door", just looking for the uncontrolled desire, which he fans into anger, and then to murder. He is a violent opponent, who is looking, always, to kill. Just as Jesus is the embodiment of all that is good in God, so Satan is the embodiment of all that is evil. He stands, a violent killer, watching and waiting for his opportunity to bring violence into the human situation.

Is this violent spirit free in Europe? Is a stronghold of violence to be found in Europe? And if it is, what are the consequences for a church which has not overcome it? Let's take a look at what might be loose in Europe, as preparation for seeking ways of binding these demonic things, and pulling down the strongholds.

Legion: A destroyer.

“They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!” (Mark 5: 1-10)

Every person has the chance to choose between darkness and light. For some reason “Legion” chose darkness - and what a darkness! He had lost his family, his community and his mind. Raving in the tombs, he could not even be bound, to protect himself or his helpers. When Jesus arrived, he came to him, crying out **“What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?”** In the presence of the Spirit the demonic will often seek a confrontation, and that is exactly what happens here. During the discussion we discover more about this man. He is full of the demonic - so full that the demons name themselves “Legion.” A legion could be up to 6000 men, and they were well organised. What had “Legion” done to this man? He had robbed him of his dignity, his family and his community. But there is a deeper level. The Bible speaks of “destruction” and “destroyer.” Here is a sample:-

*** “A lion has come out of his lair; a destroyer of nations has set out. He has left his place to lay waste your land. Your towns will lie in ruins without inhabitant.” (Jer. 4:7)** The Hebrew here for “destroyer” is “*shachath*,” meaning “to destroy, corrupt, go to ruin, decay”.

*** “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the Lord Almighty.” (Mal 3:10-11)** The Hebrew here for “devour” is “*akal*,” meaning “to eat, devour, burn up, feed.”

*** “By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.” (Hebs. 11:28)** The Hebrew here for “destroyer” is ‘*Olothreuō*’, meaning “to destroy”.

*** “They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.” (Rev 9:11)** “Abaddon” has been described as

both a force and a person. Here is the definition:- “Ruin, destruction, the place of destruction, the name of the angel-prince of the infernal regions, the minister of death and the author of havoc on the earth.”

From these verses we can see that destruction attacks, corrupts, ruins, devours, feeds on, and ultimately brings under the demonic everything it can touch. This is the heart of demonic Legion. Everything he had has been destroyed. He is a destructive force, and everything he touches he destroys. Is Legion loose in Europe? If he is, he brings no hope, no light, no joy and no future. He brings destruction to all that he touches – physical, social, emotional and spiritual. His eyes are turned to the Church. He must not be allowed inside the camp.

Goliath: The spirit of fear.

“A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armour of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him.” “Then the Philistine said, “This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.” On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.” (1 Samuel 17: 1-10)

Goliath was certainly an awesome figure and he used his massive presence as a way of beating down the confidence of the Israelite army. Not only did he use his bulk, but he was also arrogant in the presence of God's people - **“I defy the ranks of Israel.”** (Heb: *“charaph”* – “to reproach, taunt, blaspheme.”) He also used spiritual powers:- **“And the Philistine cursed David by his gods .”** (v43) The result of this was that a spirit of fear fell on God's people. (Hebrew: *“yare”* - “to fear, be afraid, to stand in awe of, be awed, to fear, reverence, honour, respect.”)

Many years ago, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I wrote some material called “Is Goliath back?” Here is one small quote from that material:-

“When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.” (Luke 11:24-26)

So into former eastern Germany Goliath strode confidently, looking to weaken and destroy the people of God. Those who should have, by prayer and fasting, driven him

away were, in the most part, too busy celebrating. They failed to understand that the enemy may have lost the battle, but he does not yet acknowledge that he has lost the war. Goliath's aim has never changed. He is totally committed to the destruction of the church of God, because God's people are the only ones who see him as he really is, and have the power to break him. He is at work, dividing, diluting, hardening, blinding, destroying, and he has all the satanic power he needs at his back."

After the wall had gone, Goliath strode across not just East Germany, but was loose in Europe. Nothing has happened since to obstruct his progress. The spirit of fear induced the by threat of violence is loose in Europe.

Nebuchadnezzar: Domination

"King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace." Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up."(Daniel 3: 1-17)

Nebuchadnezzar had absolute power. No one could stand against him. He was dominant, and he dominated. His greatest desire was to uplift and promote himself, and he used false religion as a front to achieve domination. He did this in these ways:

*** The vast size of the statue.** All forces which want to dominate do this. To see this, we only have to look at the huge buildings on the Acropolis in Athens, the Pantheon in Rome, the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus and the vast entranceway to the Pergamum museum in Berlin.

* **The demand for absolute obedience.** The Roman Emperors demanded this of Christians in a number of persecutions, (C.E 41: C.E. 64-68). In more recent times, the Communist party demanded obedience to the Party. This domination is the mark of dominating spirits.

* **Threat of death.** There is never any alternative to obedience, except torture and death. The dominant one can only retain its position by crushing all opposition. There are plenty of recent examples of this - Joseph Stalin in USSR, Pol Pot in Cambodia and Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Such dominant use of power has been the method of dictators down the ages. Usually it is by pure aggression, but sometimes it is by building a structure which controls, and we have to be aware of both methods. Looking at Revelation 12 and 13, we can see how control can be exercised within religion, by counterfeiting the truths about Jesus, and then, like Nebuchadnezzar, force people into obedience, or face death. Satan likes to dominate God's people. This satanic use of power leaves no alternative but to conform. Sadly, many, may be most, of the citizen of Europe are all too happy to conform. They have no understanding of what is happening. Their eyes are blinded:- **"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."** (2 Cor. 4:4)

The church should have a clear understanding, and be willing to face down this dominating power, even to death:- **"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death"**. (Rev 12:11) Sadly, much of the Church also seems blind to what is happening.

Moab: Occult powers

When the king of Moab saw that the battle had gone against him, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through to the king of Edom, but they failed. Then he took his firstborn son, who was to succeed him as king, and offered him as a sacrifice on the city wall. The fury against Israel was great; they withdrew and returned to their own land. (2 Kings 3:26-27)

This is not a simple passage to expound, but the point is clear. Moab, finding that he could not beat God's people, tried to control God's people by the use of the occult. Occult practices are growing almost everywhere in Europe. The natural religions are rising up again, paganism is rising up again, and the use of occult powers against God's people is becoming a familiar experience. We are being cursed, being challenged with sickness, marriage break up, pornography, destruction of our

children, and desecration of churches. Is Europe coming under threat from this occult stronghold?

Control, deception, darkness, violence. These are dangerous things. What is their ultimate aim? The letter to Laodicea in Revelation chapter 3 shows exactly what the enemy wants for God's people:- **"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."** (Rev 3:17)

Is this what God's people will be reduced to, by the overt and covert methods of the enemy in the coming years? Here is the definition of these 5 very disturbing words:-

Wretched:	"enduring toils and troubles, afflicted"
Pitiful:	"To be pitied, miserable"
Poor:	"Reduced to beggary, begging, asking alms destitute of wealth, influence, position, honour lowly, afflicted, destitute of the Christian virtues and eternal riches, helpless, powerless to accomplish an end"
Blind:	"Blind, mentally blind"
Naked:	"Unclad, without clothing, the naked body"

This is not the church I want the heritage to grow up in, but unless we wake up, this is exactly what we, in this generation, are going to bequeath them. What a disturbing thought. So what can we do? What power is available to us that we can use to bring down these demonic strongholds? By God's grace, we stand on this verse:-

"We have divine power to demolish strongholds." (2 cor.10:5)

Let's take a look at what we are demolishing. The bible gives us a glimpse of the inner workings of a stronghold at Jericho.

* They are built on fear. **"A great fear of you has fallen on us,"** (Joshua 2:9) Fear fills the strongholds of the enemy. It is a fear which neutralizes people, (Mark 4:38) but much more it is a fear of God's people, and what they can do, inspired by the spirit of God. That's us! The strongholds are afraid of us.

* They are shut up. **"Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred."** (Josh. 6:1) This is a fundamental truth about strongholds. They close the way. We are opposed, there is no way past and no way in to these demonic strongholds - that's what we are meant to think. The impression we are given is that the way is locked. But history proves this an empty threat. The Jebusites, who held Jerusalem against King David,

said - **“You will not get in here. Even the blind and the lame can ward you off.”** But David’s men did get in, and took the stronghold and made it central to the purposes of God for the next three millennia. Goliath and Nebuchadnezzar made the same mistake. The truth is simple – nothing can stand in the way of God’s people, filled with the power of God. Any stronghold which suggests this is the case is lying - taking after its father.

* They are bound. **“Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness, prisoners suffering in iron chains.”** (Ps 107:10) There is an imprisonment within the stronghold. Jericho was “tightly shut.” From the outside, this looked like strength, but that is not the truth within. Satan binds those who are under his domination. He binds people (Luke 13:11. Woman bent double); he binds nations (Judges 6:13. The Midianite oppression). He even binds his own demonic forces, leaving them in misery. (Mark 5:10. Legion). We, however, are in the unbinding business, (Matthew 16:19) and every stronghold and work of the enemy knows this As a divine truth.

* The knowledge of defeat. **“The Lord has given this land to you.”** Jericho knew that it would lose, even before the battle. This is a facet of strongholds which we can so easily overlook. The power against us can look so massive. But it’s a losing power. The stronghold is fatally flawed. So let’s pray in these ways:-

With confidence.

Rahab said this, and it should echo in all our hearts:-

“I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.” (Joshua 2: 9-11)

Jesus said: **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”** (Matt 28:18) Let’s take the power, and triumph.

Apostle Paul said:- **What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also**

interceding for us. **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”**

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:31-39)

With determination

When we start to pray against strongholds, there is no time for nice friendly prayer! Sometimes I hear people praying in ruthless situations as though they were planting nice pretty flowers in the garden, or knitting a suit for a new baby. That kind of prayer will not bring down strongholds. David was ruthless towards Goliath. At no point did he yield his ground. He asserted the positive truths about God and then, even after the stone had killed him, we read: **“David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine’s sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword.** (1 Samuel 17:51)

It’s war. (Ephesians 6:10-17) It’s war to the death, or in our case, victory. **“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.”** (1 John 5:4) We have to press hard against the enemy, and the stronghold will eventually fall, because divine principles say that we have diviner power to pull them down.

*** With faith**

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1)

The strongholds will fall, however strong they seem to be. This faith, which has passed down the generations is what the enemy fears most of all. When the Roman army attacked, the soldiers linked shields and came towards the enemy. If one man fell, another took his place, and the advance went on. It was a terrifying wall of shields, backed up by well trained and determined soldiers. This is what the enemy has to see - the people of God, linked, determined, believing, coming at the strongholds down the ages. If one goes to glory, another will take his place.

As the older ones go to glory, the younger ones will step into the wall of spiritual advance. Our faith is simple. Nothing can stop us. This kind of faith will bring down every stronghold, until the Lord returns and winds everything up. Marana Tha. Come Lord Jesus.

©Jim Smith

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