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# I

## SATAN IS NOT INVINCIBLE

For eight wonderful months we were privileged to have in our home a lovely young lady, twenty-two years of age, who had been a heroin addict for at least five years. Before coming to us, Sandy had been detoxified in a prison hospital. She thrived in the secured environment of our Christian home. She was like a flower beginning to unfold. In her freedom from drugs, she started to see a whole new world around her, and she realized what she had missed during her bondage. She enjoyed going to church. She even made a profession of faith to receive Jesus Christ as her Savior. Her job as a nurse's aide in a local convalescent hospital became a delight as she comforted and helped the elderly patients. Her gift as a talented pianist began to return. Everything looked bright and encouraging.

All went well until one of her old friends found out where she was. He invited her to attend his sister's wedding with him. Reluctantly, at her insistence, we let her go. She later told us that on that very night she had started back on the road to drugs. Although we loved her very much, it wasn't long until we had to tell her that she would either have to live under the disciplines of our family, or she would have to leave.

The night she chose to leave we talked about her profession of faith. With unusual insight she pointed to her head and said, "I

have it up here, Pastor B., but I never meant it down here,” pointing to her heart. What a dark night it was for us as we watched her drive away in the new car her father was helping her purchase. Satan seemed so powerful in that moment, and we seemed so weak. A few months later I conducted her funeral. She had died of an overdose. Whether it was self-administered or forced, no one knows. Satan is indeed very powerful.

## CHRIST’S POWERFUL LOVE

However, there is a brighter side to this story. During the months after Sandy left, our family never ceased to pray for her. We had frequent calls and contact with her, sometimes to help her out of a tight spot. Always she told us she loved us.

One August day, the phone rang in my office. It was our oldest daughter, Rhonda, who was visiting from out of state. She told me that Sandy was at the parsonage, wanting to see me. I dropped everything and hurried home.

I wasn’t prepared for what I saw. Sandy had just walked away without release from a local hospital where she was being treated for an overdose. Her beautiful long black hair had been hacked off just below her ears by an angry boyfriend. Her face was an emaciated facsimile of the once beautiful girl who had been in our home. She was suffering not only from the overdose but from a liver ailment. Her clothing was dirty and torn. I took her in my arms and began to cry. My demonstration of love seemed to break her heart, and she sobbed and sobbed out her hurt on my shoulder.

When we were able to talk, I said to her, “Sandy, you know you are soon going to die, living this way, don’t you?” She looked at me a moment, and again her eyes filled with tears as she nodded. We talked about her admission that her previous profession of faith had only been a head assent and not a heart belief. We looked at

numerous Bible passages showing that eternal hope comes only to those who come heart-first to the Lord. She must of her own will acknowledge her sin and repent. She must really want to be free from the power of sin and drugs and believe that the Lord Jesus Christ could save her from all of her sins.

A terrible battle was being waged. Satan's hold upon her was being threatened, and he was fighting fiercely. At times she would seem to harden and even laugh. At other times she seemed almost to blank out. During those moments I would stop and pray aloud for her. "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bind away Satan's interference with Sandy's coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ. I invite the Holy Spirit to convict Sandy of her need of being saved from her sins. Lord Jesus Christ, open her eyes to see how much You love her."

I kept assuring Sandy that no one could make that decision for her. She had to invite Christ personally to enter her life and heart and save her soul. I had determined not to make it easy for her. I did not offer to help her pray the sinner's prayer as I had done at the time of her previous profession. I told her it had to come from her heart. She needed to pour out her heart in repentance toward God and invite the Lord Jesus to enter her life and cleanse all of her sins away.

The struggle went on for some time. One moment she seemed near deciding for Christ, the next moment she wanted to put it off until another time. Finally, I prayed a doctrinal prayer over her, claiming Christ's finished work against Satan and pleading our Lord's gracious love for Sandy.

The moment of victory came. Without any further prompting on my part, Sandy was on her knees praying. Out of her deepest soul poured forth words of sorrow for her sins and love for Christ like I have seldom heard. She expressed her longing for the Lord Jesus Christ to enter her life and free her from her sins. The tears were flowing freely, not only from her eyes but from mine as

well. When she had finished her prayer, I began to pray again that the Lord would free her from all of Satan's bondage and from any demonic powers that had laid claim to her life.

Sandy was kneeling in the middle of our living room floor with her face buried in her hands on the carpet. As I prayed for her release, she began to cough profusely and to retch as though vomiting out some invisible poison. The powers of darkness that had laid such deep claim to her life for so long were leaving. It was as if wave after wave had to leave, and each time the coughing and retching would painfully convulse her body. Sandy didn't seem to really understand what was happening, but she knew it was good. I kept praying for the Lord to clean all powers of darkness out of her life and to free Sandy completely.

When Sandy finally sat up, a radiant smile lighted her whole countenance. She looked beautiful and peaceful. The shine of heaven was radiating through all the scars of sin.

"I can't believe it," she said. "I've never felt so clean inside. I'm really saved. Jesus Christ really does love me. I can't believe it. It really has happened to me." Yes, Satan is powerful, but he is not all powerful. His terrible hold on a human life had been broken again.

As I look back upon that day, I feel I made a serious misjudgment at that point. Sandy wanted to go to her parents and tell them what had happened, and we let her go. She told her parents of her decision and said, "Mom and Dad, you need never worry about me again. Even if I die tonight, I know I'm going to be in heaven."

What happened after that we do not fully know. She told her father that she was going to turn in some "very bad" people to the authorities. He was convinced that those "very bad" people could not cope with that new girl and gave her a forced drug overdose. No one really knows, but our one joy is that we have no doubt that Sandy is absent from her body and "at home with the Lord." Satan is powerful, but he is not invincible. Warfare prayer had brought

one of life's most desperate wreckages through for Christ. The funeral service was a time of expressed victory. I shared the testimony of her conversion with the large gathering of her family and friends. Many of them did not know Christ and were deeply moved by the service.

## UNDERESTIMATING THE ENEMY

Every time Satan appears in Scripture, there is an aura of unusual power surrounding this fallen created being. The Bible seems to indicate that God has never created any other being as powerful as Satan. Even Michael the archangel, one of the holy angels of God, was apparently no match for Satan in one direct encounter (see Jude 9). Michael had to appeal to the Lord to rebuke Satan. Satan's awesome power is further seen in the gospel accounts of the temptation of Jesus. No one can read of that encounter in the wilderness without developing a sober respect for the power and position of this archenemy of God and His kingdom. Yet, there is urgent necessity to know that Satan is not invincible. He is always "second best." He is a mere creature, no match for the Creator!

At times the battle may grow fierce, and we may feel that Satan is winning. Daniel must have felt that way when he was praying for twenty-one days for an answer to an urgent prayer of his heart (Daniel 10). He tells us that during that time he was in a state of mourning. As an expression of his deep faith toward God, Daniel implemented a limited fast and other practices of self-denial.

Daniel's prayer had reached heaven the very first day, but the answer was delayed by a powerful prince of the kingdom of Persia, who had stood in the way of the holy angel's coming with God's answer to Daniel. Only as Daniel continued to pray and fast after those twenty-one days was the holy angel able to

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come (see Daniel 10:1–15). What if Daniel had thought Satan too powerful for him to gain an answer to this request? Perhaps the angelic messenger would not have come.

Do we give up too soon and miss the answers to our prayers? Christ may someday reveal the answer to that question, but the challenge of it ought to move us to pray with more faithful tenacity. Satan is not invincible, but we can be and ought to be. It is the Lord’s will that we be provided all we need to do the Lord’s will.

## SATAN’S TACTICS

How deceitful Satan is when he tries to convince us that he is too powerful for us. One young professional man called me about his battle with Satan’s kingdom. He was an athlete and very strong, both physically and intellectually. Yet, he had been plagued by ceaseless harassment from demonic powers. They afflicted him with annoying physical sensations and at times controlled his tongue so that he hissed like a snake. When those things happened he seemed unable to help himself.

I pointed out to him the principles of warfare as best I could over the telephone and sent him other material. For a time those things seemed to help, but then his affliction seemed to grow worse. He called me again. As he related his battle to me over the phone, he conveyed a message of despair and hopelessness. I could understand that in light of his long battle, but I knew he had to be shocked out of his despair.

After letting him talk about his battle and defeats for some time, I said, “I guess Satan really is stronger than God after all. He has you, and you might as well give up because there is no hope.”

The response was instantaneous and gratifying. He saw what

I was trying to say. “That’s what I’m really saying, isn’t it?” he replied. “I’ve fallen into the trap of convincing myself that I’m defeated. Pastor, pray for me.” We joined in prayer over the phone. While I was praying, the enemy tried to step up his attack, but we continued to pray and rejoice in our invincible position of victory in Christ. Their power was broken. He was able to praise the Lord for the battle and even for the defeats he suffered, rejoicing in the Lord’s purpose for the prolonged battle.

A woman called and related her difficult struggle in spiritual warfare. As I tried to share with her the principles of aggressive spiritual warfare that I will outline throughout this book, she responded by assuring me that she’d done all of that for many years. She insisted that her situation was unique and difficult beyond what anyone else had experienced. She would need some very special attention before she could ever hope to be free, because Satan had such a stronghold upon her life. The secret of the enemy’s strength in her life was this: She was assigning to him an invincible role in her life that he was only too happy to assume.

Once we do that we are locked into a cycle of defeat. We can’t win because we know we can’t. Such a person looks for someone to help her who isn’t subject to Satan’s “invincible” strength like she is, but even her Christian friends are helpless until she renounces the person she believes is renounced. Satan is not invincible. He is a defeated foe because of what our Savior did for us on the cross. The death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ has ultimately defeated the enemy. Any apparent victory Satan has in our lives is only temporary. “We are more than conquerors through him [Christ] who loved us” (Romans 8:37).

Satan wants us to worship him. He took the Lord Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him “all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me’” (Matthew 4:8–9). If he would dare to try to get the sinless Son of God to worship him, he will employ his

most subtle tricks to try to get those who belong to Christ to do the same.

Oh, very seldom will he be so brash as to try to get you to actually kneel and worship, at least not at first. He is much more subtle. He will just try to get you to exalt his power in your own thinking to the point where you regard yourself as his helpless toy. At that point, so far as you are concerned, he is indeed an invincible foe. When you fall into that trap, you are ascribing to Satan an honor that is a kind of worship, a worship composed of fear and subjection.

When I was a young man, my father would sometimes have three or more purebred bulls as part of his herd. It was inevitable that one of those bulls would have to prove in battle with the others that he was “in charge.” Once that had been proved, the defeated ones would always give him the right to rule and would not challenge his authority again. That illustrates what Satan tries to do with us. When he defeats us once or several times, he is simply seeking to establish his right to rule. He wants believers to accept the fact that he is stronger than they are and that he is “in charge.” Once we accept that fallacy, he has us caught in a psychological defeat that does not belong in the Christian life.

## MISLED BY EXPERIENCE

There are times when experience seems to defy truth. A lady from Canada claimed to have used faithfully the principles of warfare set forth in *The Adversary*. “I’ve done it all,” she said, “but it just doesn’t work for me. I’ve prayed doctrinal prayers, I’ve read and memorized the Word, I’ve aggressively and consistently resisted the devil and his demons, but I’m still harassed constantly.” She was discouraged, defeated, and desperately looking for some quick relief. She lamented that there didn’t seem to be anyone near who was interested in helping her. Her experience of battle

was a direct challenge to the truth of God. She was so defeated that she was not even attending church.

As we talked, I asked her if she had ever thanked her Lord for the battle. I asked her if she had ever prayed that the Lord would teach her everything He wanted her to learn through this prolonged battle. She confessed that she had not. Her attitude had been that this battle with Satan's kingdom was all bad and that the only thing God would want for her would be immediate and total victory. Yet when she saw that God might want to teach her stability and faithfulness in spite of the battle and in the very midst of the greatest defeat she had ever experienced—for He can bring good out of any situation—it opened up an entire new vista for her.

We talked about her neglect of church attendance and fellowship with the body of believers as an admission to Satan's victory. Her "giving up" on warfare praying and saying that warfare principles were "not working" were admissions that Satan was winning. She needed to stand upon the truth and not let the experience of her battle remove her from it.

That is what the apostle Paul keeps emphasizing in his great doctrinal exhortations of Romans 5 and 6. We must stand upon truth and not allow subjective experience to challenge the absolute truth. Only as we do that will the subjective experience begin to harmonize with truth. Subjective experience is never to be trusted as a valid establisher of spiritual truth. The revealed Word of God establishes truth.

In Romans 6:5–10 the apostle Paul expounds the truth that each believer is united with Christ in His total victory over sin and death and Satan. That is an infallible truth upon which each believer is responsible to stand. This is an unchanging, eternal truth that we are responsible to appropriate and live out in our everyday lives. Satan will ceaselessly seek to challenge the truth. He will bring all the harassment he can muster into your experience to make you think that for you this just doesn't work. He keeps

saying by your experience that sin is too strong and he can and will reign in your life.

What is Paul's answer to such attack? "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires" (Romans 6:11–12).

Paul's challenge is repeatedly communicated in similar doctrinal passages. We must stand upon truth. Our responsibility is to affirm as fact that we are "dead" to the rule and reign of sin, of death, and of Satan in our lives.

We are "alive to God." Our Lord is ruling. Our responsibility is to "not let sin reign." Sin and Satan can reign only if we "let" them do so. We "let" them reign when we accept the idea that "it doesn't work" or we neglect "assembling together" because the experience of battle is too great. The moment we allow Satan an invincible role in our lives because of our experience of battle and our experience of defeat, we are letting him reign. Victory comes because we have certainty of our victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no point at which the believer needs to "cave in" and admit defeat at the hands of Satan's craft and power. There is hope and victory available for the most defeated. The church at Laodicea illustrates this point. That body of believers had succumbed to Satan's deception. Spiritual lukewarmness had taken over. That church felt very self-sufficient and spiritually victorious in its own strength. They were saying: "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." They were so blinded by Satan's clever deception that they didn't know they were "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" (Revelation 3:17). Yet, even to people so totally deceived, the Lord Jesus offered full access to His victory.

*I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and*

*salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.*

*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:18–20 ESV)*

That great offer and assurance belongs to every believer. No matter how far Satan has come in deceiving and controlling us, we can have gold tried in the fires of refining; white, clean garments; and salve of healing to remove our spiritual blindness. Close, intimate, in-the-heart fellowship with Christ is there to be claimed. Satan is not invincible, but Christ is, and the believer is invincible in Him.

## A PRAYER OF VICTORY

Loving Heavenly Father, I praise You that Satan is a defeated foe. I rejoice that his defeat was accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ in His sinless life, His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into glory. I look forward to that day when the Lord Jesus Christ's rule has come in its fullness, when Satan is bound in the bottomless pit. I know that Satan will ultimately be forever consigned to the lake of fire prepared for him and his angels. I rejoice that You have given to me, in my union with the Lord Jesus Christ, complete victory over Satan today.

I enter into my victory aggressively and claim my place as more than a conqueror through Him that loved me. I refuse to admit continuing defeat by Satan in any area of my life. He cannot and will not rule over me. In Christ, I am dead to the enemy's rule. I affirm that the grace and mercy of God rule in all areas of my life through my union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Grant to me the grace to affirm Your victory even when experiences of life seem to say otherwise.

I thank You for these battles and all that You are seeking to accomplish in Your wisdom and design for my life. I accept the battle and rejoice in Your purpose. I willingly accept and desire to profit from all of Your purpose in letting Satan's kingdom get at me. I reject all of Satan's purpose. Through the victory of my Lord and Savior I stand resolute and strong upon the certainty of my victory. In confidence I look to You, Lord Jesus Christ. When Your purpose for this trial is fulfilled, I know that it shall fade into the dimness of forgotten battles and a defeated enemy. Through the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, it shall be so. Amen.