

COLOSSIANS: DISCERNING TRUE DOCTRINES
"Part VI: Winning The Angelic War Over Discipling Men With The Truth"
(Colossians 4:2-4 with Ephesians 6:12, 18-20)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We all know fellow **believers** who have *started OUT* with great intentions of serving the Lord to make disciples, only to falter and even, in some cases, to make "shipwreck" in their lives:

(1) At a gathering of pastors, I was once asked about some former missionaries he and I had both known, as to whether I knew if they were still married.

I had to reply I knew they were no longer with each other.

Then the questioner asked me in front of the other pastors present, "Well, have they received help so they can make progress toward getting back together?"

I had to reply that things had unfortunately gone from bad to worse by all accounts and from all the witnesses who have spoken with me. In fact, a concerned elder from a large, Evangelical church in the area stopped by my house one day to share other problems facing one party of that former couple! I was naturally saddened to hear this!

(2) My wife and I were walking down North Main Street in Torrington one Memorial Day several years ago to get a good spot to see the parade. Suddenly, we spotted a man who used to attend our church walking down the street, and, suddenly, he crossed over to the other side and pretended that he had never seen us!

I could see why! He was walking hand-in-hand with a woman we knew had not been his wife when he attended our Church! He had once earnestly wanted to serve the Lord, and expressed how much he deeply loved God and wanted to live for Him and His glory, and now he was in this defeated position!

In seeing such failure, and noting that sometimes we ourselves face similar temptations to let sin get the upper hand in our own lives, HOW do we EXPLAIN what is going on? HOW do we LIVE in VICTORY over such failures?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "I have seen well-meaning Christians START OUT well to serve God only to 'crash' in spiritual failure, and even see the SAME drifts in MYSELF to that unfruitful end! WHY is this so, and WHAT I can do to insure spiritual VICTORY in my OWN efforts of serving the Lord?!"

- I. **In writing Colossians and Ephesians, Paul revealed a WAR rages in the spiritual realm when we seek to disciple men with God's truths:**
 - A. Paul wrote Colossians and Ephesians at about the same time, for very reputable scholarship identifies close affinities in style and vocabulary between these two letters, Guthrie, N. T. Introduction, p. 492-499.
 - B. Comparing the two epistles, we see Paul voiced concern about a huge angelic conflict raging over our discipling efforts (as follows):
 1. Paul mentioned the believer's **praying** with "**watching**" in Colossians 4:2 along with **praying** about **evangelism** in Col. 4:3.
 2. This praying-while-watching thought also exists in Ephesians 6:18-20, Paul's "sister" epistle to this Colossian letter:
 - a. In Ephesians 6:18, Paul asked for prayer for all Christians along with the charge to "watch" in conjunction with this prayer.
 - b. Then he added a request for prayer for himself that he might open his mouth to evangelize as God's ambassador, 6:19-20.
 3. Of interest to us, his Ephesians 6:18-20 charge on prayer and watching is part of a larger section on the angelic conflict, 6:12-17!
 - C. We can trace this prayer-while-watching idea back to Christ's charge to His disciples to "watch and pray" to avoid the temptation to sin when Satan controlled Judas in Gethsemane, cf. Mtt. 26:40-41, 45.
 - D. In summary, Paul's call for believers to "watch and pray" recalls **Christ's** similar call on handling the angelic conflict, and **Paul** attached this conflict to the process of our making discipling in his epistles! **Thus, a spiritual war exists as WE Christians seek to DISCIPLE men: Satan seeks to COUNTER our efforts by luring us spiritually to sin where God urges us to rely on His power by faith through prayer for discipling PROGRESS!**
- II. **We view Scriptures for DETAILS on this angelic conflict war in discipling, and HOW we WIN in it (as follows):**
 - A. We believers can be tempted to *sin* and thus become **powerless** in serving the Lord to try making disciples the following **itemized** ways:
 1. We can fall for temptations to **personal** sin in our **lifestyles**:

- a. Failing to "watch" can lead to a preoccupation with the world's system so that we cease serving God, Mtt. 24:40-41, 42-44.
- b. Failing to "watch" can result in a fall into error, 1 Cor. 16:13.
- c. Failing to "watch" can lead to a generally sinful life, 1 Thess. 5:6
2. We can fall for temptations to **follow** or **allow** ungodly "wolves" in the Church to create division and the spread of doctrinal error by such men if we don't "watch" in prayer for such things, Acts 20:29ff
3. We can yield to Satan's direct pressures upon us in our **human institutions**, leading to relationship **sins** if we do not "watch" for such temptations, Eph. 5:22-6:9 with 6:12 and 1 Pet. 5:8, 5-7:
 - a. Paul noted Christians "wrestled" in an angelic conflict, Eph. 6:12
 - b. Well, he had previously revealed "wrestlings" between marital partners in Eph. 5:22-33, between parents and children in Eph. 6:1-4 and between slaves and masters in business in Eph. 6:5-9.
 - c. Peter noted Satan worked to stir up relationship problems between leaders and subordinates in local churches, 1 Pet. 5:5-8!
 - d. Thus, "wrestlings" in such cases can often be Satanically based.
- B. Such sinful failures lead to our loss of effective service, 1 Cor. 9:27!
- C. Thus, we believers **WIN** in this **discipleship war** as follows:
 1. We stay alert in God's discerning help to **identify** efforts of Satan to trip us or other believers up to personal sin, or to sin in getting entangled in spiritual "wolves" problems in a church or to fall for pressures to sin in marriage, family, business or church institutional relationships and processes (as **itemized** in II,A above).
 2. Once we **identify** Satan's moves here, we **pray** for God's help that counters them whether it is others or ourselves who are in need!
 3. We also pray for opportunities and power in service, whether it involves our efforts or the efforts of others, Col. 4:3-4; Eph. 6:18b.

Lesson Application: *A great angelic conflict exists in which Satan's powers seek to COUNTER the true believer's discipling efforts, so one must (1) believe on Christ for salvation from sin to be himself translated from Satan's domain to the kingdom of Christ in the SPIRITUAL realm, Col. 1:13-14. (2) Then AS believers, we fellowship with God to tap HIS POWER in service through (a) confessing any sins we do after salvation (1 Jn. 1:9, 10) and (b) depend upon the Holy Spirit for the power to do God's will, Gal. 5:16-23. (c) In this condition, we WATCH for Satan's "trip-up" efforts as listed in II,A above, and pray when we identify them so as to gain God's help to avoid falling into sin, and that for other believers and ourselves, and to find His aid in our discipling efforts that invade Satan's realm to make disciples!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

A number of years ago, during one of our Annual Meetings, Don Ereminas was put into an incredibly difficult position.

He had agreed to run as a deacon in our Church, and so his name was put on the ballot. However, due to a complex issue involving Church Polity, Don was not then elected to office.

I remember feeling a sense of dread, knowing that Don must have been hurt and angered at this event, and wondered if he was understandably going to get up and walk out at any instant. Many another man would have done just that!

However, he didn't do so. As he thought, Don has testified at a later Annual Meeting that he realized such an action wouldn't solve any problems. Nepaug Church was where he had heard the Gospel, and Nepaug Church was the body to which he was dedicated. So, he kept his feet firmly in place and resisted the strong temptation to get up and just walk out of our church and out of our lives.

There's an upside of this event. When he ran for office again, he was elected, and now has been granted the position of serving as our Board Chairman.

he had *stayed* the **course** in **his** time of temptation to leave, *they* should do the **same**!

So, as a result of one man's spiritual victory over the Evil One's temptation, another party has been helped, and our Church has richly enjoyed the service of BOTH to the glory of God. As a result, that much more has been done for the discipling work of God at Nepaug than otherwise might have occurred!

There is a WAR going on to get us SIDE-TRACKED and DEFEATED from the discipling ministry! **It is a war in which Satan lures or antagonizes us to stop looking to the Lord, to react in the flesh and do our OWN destructive thing before others!**

May God help us SEE that, and PRAY for victory!