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This Is Spiritual Warfare!



By
Fred R. Coulter

Satan has launched a major spiritual attack on the hearts and minds of God's people—and it is not limited to any one organization. It is designed to destroy the knowledge of God's plan—to ensnare the brethren with persuasive, yet deceitful, words—to cause them to accept doctrines that deny Jesus Christ and God the Father. You need to read this booklet. Your eternal salvation may be hanging in the balance!

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Fourteen Rules for Bible Study

- 1) Begin with Scriptures that are *easy* to understand
- 2) Let the Bible interpret and prove the Bible. Don't look for what you *want* to prove—look for what the Bible *actually* says.
- 3) Understand the *context*—the verses before and after, and the chapters before and after. Does your understanding of a particular verse harmonize with the rest of the Bible?
- 4) As much as possible, try to understand the original Hebrew or Greek. But never try to establish doctrine or teachings by using only *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. *Strong's* can be helpful at times, but is very limited.
- 5) Ask: What does the Scripture *clearly* say?
- 6) Ask: What does the Scripture *not* say?
- 7) Ask: To whom was the book written?
- 8) Ask: Who wrote it?
- 9) Ask: Who said it?
- 10) Understand the *historical time frame* in which the book was written.
- 11) Base your study on the scriptural knowledge you already have. What do you *know* up to this point in time?
- 12) Do not allow personal *assumptions* or *preconceived* ideas to influence your understanding and conclusions.
- 13) Do not form conclusions based on *partial* facts, insufficient information, or the opinions and speculations of others.
- 14) Opinions—regardless of how strongly you feel about them—don't necessarily count. Scripture *alone* must be your standard and guide.

Introduction

Satan the devil stalks this earth—including *the Church*—seeking those he can devour (1 Pet. 5:8). How does Satan attack? What are his primary methods? Let the Bible answer. The parable of the “sower” (Matthew 13) tells us that *some* who hear the Word preached go on to bear good fruit (verse 23). Some fall away because of persecution and difficulty; they simply lack the courage to endure (verses 20-21). Others fail because the Word is *choked* by the “cares of this world” (verse 22) or because the “wicked one”—Satan—*steals* what understanding they may have received (verse 19). Thus, Satan's primary tools are *distraction* and *deception*.

As the “god of this age,” Satan has engineered this world with a *carnival* atmosphere. Like a child at a glittering carnival, we are pulled in a hundred directions at once: work, maintaining our health, keeping up a home, raising kids—not to mention our addiction to media: TV, the Internet, Facebook, etc. Then there are the pressures, the worries, the fears of modern life. In a word, *distraction*. If Satan can keep you overly busy with mundane tasks, you will never find time for prayer, Bible study, meditation. The truth of God will be *choked* out of your life.

But another—and perhaps the number one—tactic used by Satan is *deception*. Revelation 12:9 says, in the Greek, that Satan is *actively deceiving* the whole world. Satan has orchestrated a myriad of false ideas, theories, teachings and doctrines to keep mankind blind to the truth of God's plan. And, amazingly, some of those false teachings have found their way into the very churches of God!

Like the last individual mentioned in the parable above, it is all too easy to become tripped up and *lose* the truth you may already have. Might that include you? Remember, a deceived person doesn't *know* he's deceived, or else he wouldn't be deceived.

Satan is working hard to deceive *you*. Like never before, those who make up the Body of Christ need to be diligent and circumspect in making doubly sure we are *in the truth*.

This Is Spiritual Warfare!

The Church of God is being assaulted by an invasion of *false* doctrine. It is affecting *every* church of God, regardless of corporate organization. No one can escape—but you can defend yourself!

This invasion is not being conducted by gun-wielding ATF storm troopers, as in Waco. **It is a *spiritual* invasion! It is an assault against the Word of God, Jesus Christ and God the Father!** And it is being launched in full force!

Indeed, our enemies are not across some border in a foreign land—they are *within* the Church, sitting on doctrinal boards. Coming from these doctrinal boards is an avalanche of satanic doctrines designed to undermine and destroy the faith of the brethren.

In his book *Satan's Ten Most Believable Lies*, Dave Breese gives us some stunning insight on how Satan works. (We have a complete 12-tape series going through this book. If you don't have it, write for it. If you have the series, go through it again!) Here is what he writes about Satan's tactics: "The most potentially rewarding activities of Satan—his deadliest spiritual influences—are not overt and public. Rather, the *covert*, the hidden, activities of the devil constitute his greatest accomplishment. With witchcraft, orgies, séances, and demon possession, he has captured thousands. *With false doctrine, he has subverted millions*" (p. 9).

"That deadly, hidden work is the production of 'doctrines of demons.' A doctrine is a categorical statement of belief. The use of the word doctrine, therefore, implies a satanic system of belief that appears to be categoric, appealing, and—worst of all—true. The production of attractive doctrinal falsehoods is the *most deadly activity* of the enemy of God in the world today" (p. 11).

In many of the churches of God in the last decade or so, *false doctrine* has been subtly introduced. At first, it is introduced under the guise of "new understanding." These subtle doctrinal changes seemed to be harmless. They could be overlooked as a "slightly different" way of looking at things because the "main trunk of the tree" seemed to be intact.

As a Christian, you may *think* you are on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Perhaps you are, but let's ask a question: Are you asleep, or awake?

Too many brethren have been put to sleep, or have allowed themselves to go to sleep. This is the result of deceitful doctrines and teachings of men. Being asleep is just another way of being deceived!

We are warned, "**Do not let anyone deceive you with vain words** [that is, spiritually empty words]; for because of these things [the sins detailed in verses 3-5] the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. **THEREFORE, DO NOT BE JOINT PARTAKERS WITH THEM!**"

"For you were once darkness; but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. (Because the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is well pleasing to the Lord.

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. For it is shameful even to mention the things being done by them in secret. But all of these things being exposed by the light are openly revealed.

"Therefore He says, '*You* who are sleeping—**WAKE UP**, and arise from the [spiritually] dead! And Christ shall shine upon you.' So then, take heed that you walk circumspectly [according to the truth], not as fools, but as those who are wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:6-16).

Brethren, we need to WAKE UP! We need to REDEEM THE TIME!

False doctrines are a denial of Jesus Christ—a denial of God the Father—a denial of the power of the Holy Spirit! False teachings deny God's wonderful plan! All false doctrine goes straight back to ancient Babylon—to Satan as its source.

Jesus Christ gave this end-time warning to the entire Church: "Behold, I am coming quickly; **HOLD FAST THAT WHICH YOU HAVE so that no one may take away your crown**" (Rev. 3:11). Will you wake up or will you let a man steal your crown by leading you into false teachings?

May God the Father bless you with a *love of the truth* and the courage to do His will!

Ultimately, God places the responsibility on *each one of us* to make our calling and election sure—to guard against false teachings that would otherwise jeopardize our eternal life. Ministers and non-ministers, we are all brethren, striving together to grow up unto Christ—**“that we no longer be children, tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in cunning craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error; but holding the truth [the Word of God] in love, may in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, even Christ”** (Eph. 4:14-15).

The “systematizing of the error,” as it is in the Greek, is nothing more than the system of religious, philosophical, and traditional teachings developed by men.

An Additional Layer On the Foundation of Christ

God reveals that there is *another layer* which He Himself added to the foundation of Jesus Christ. This additional layer is not of men, but of God. The entire Church of God is **“being built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE** [foundation stone] in Whom all the building, being conjointly fitted together, is increasing into a holy temple in *the Lord*; in Whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in *the Spirit*” (Eph. 2:20-22).

With Christ as the Chief Cornerstone, the inspired writings of the apostles and the prophets, as preserved in the Scriptures, complete the true foundation. If we have any other foundation, it is a foundation of sand. This is why Jesus gave the parable of Matthew 7:24-27.

Again, “If you stand with someone who has no foundation, you stand in the quicksand with him.” When he falls, you fall. Brethren, any other foundation than Jesus Christ is the same as having no foundation at all. It is just so much quicksand.

We are witnessing many trials that are now coming on the various churches of God and the brethren. In times like this, we need to stand on the foundation of Christ—and none other!

But a time of confusion and doubt set in. Overall, the brethren were just “too busy with life” to be bothered. The ministry purred nice sermons of contentment, urging the brethren to “trust the leadership,” claiming that “everything is fine,” that there is “no need to worry” because “God is on His throne.” The brethren were not taught these “changes” through the Word of God (because they are, after all, *false* teachings); rather, they were *intimidated* into accepting these “changes” by the use of “church government”—demanding that brethren “submit to the government of God or risk losing their salvation.”

But the frustration of knowing that “something is wrong” kept gnawing away at the consciences of the brethren, now intimidated and lulled into a state of spiritual malaise. Some just turned off. Others have just gone to sleep spiritually or put on blinders. But brethren and ministers who know and understand their Bibles questioned these “new doctrines”—because they did not agree with the Word of God.

Breese continues: “Christ warned us that Satan was a liar from the beginning and the father of lies (John 8:44). **At this point, we do well to remember that the cleverest liar makes statements that sound nearly like the truth. The father of lies will surely present assertions that sound blessedly true and are only proved false when analyzed in depth.... The cleverest set of lies that he has ever produced is the satanic system of doctrine**” (p. 11).

As we will see, these doctrines are *theological* and *philosophical*—but *not scriptural*. Yet they *sound* religious. But God’s way is not a “religion”—it is a *way of life!* The truth of God is being *craftily* corrupted. It still *sounds* true, but in reality it is a “little strange.” Yes, they *are strange* because the “god of this world” is subtly replacing the truth of God with his perverse doctrines.

“With his doctrines, he presses quiet arguments upon reasonable men, appealing to high intelligence and mature sensibilities. Every person who is not a Christian believes one or another demonic doctrine as the first principle of his life.

“Many Christians, though saved by believing the truth, have been rendered spiritually impotent through accepting, along with the truth, a doctrine of Satan.

“It is interesting and even titillating to consider the overt activities of Satan. It is surely of more value, however, to study the doctrines of the devil and the biblical answer to these frightening subversions. *Subversion*, incidentally, is a good word for all of this, for it literally means ‘to undermine the truth,’ or ‘less than the truth.’ A proposition that is *slightly less* than the truth is a far more treacherous lie than the clenched fist of a categorical denial” (p. 11).

Some ministers and brethren have made a *stand* for the truth—only to find themselves thrust out, disfellowshipped, and marked as rebellious trouble makers. But they are not that at all. They only want the *truth* of God’s Word—to live by every word of God, as Jesus commanded. Some are holding fast, resisting this onslaught of false doctrine. But “the unfortunate problem of our present age is that these individuals are somewhat rare. Too many Christians have settled for the simple outline produced on their denominational mimeograph machine and have developed little knowledge beyond this. We must assure ourselves that there is no religious syndicate, no organization, that has a corner on the knowledge of Scripture. **Each individual is called upon to know the Word of God for himself. Indeed, no ministry is doing its job unless it produces individual competence in Scripture. Too many organizations are merely producing a limp mass of spiritual dependents, saints who are not equipped to study the Bible for themselves. They must ever be propped up by their spiritual gurus, never coming to the place of personal doctrinal expertise.**

“No ministry is successful unless it produces independent capability in the lives of those whom it reaches. The individual who comes to the place of independent capability, who enjoys the blessing of God in spiritual growth to the extent that he is ‘combat ready,’ is the one who meditates day and night in the Scriptures” (pp. 141-142).

This is exactly why the brethren in the churches of God are *vulnerable* to such attacks. They are not praying! They are not studying! They are not meditating on the Scriptures! They are not *thinking with* the Scriptures. As a result, many brethren are battered and bruised by this avalanche of false doctrines couched in clever “doublespeak.” They are in

is manifested, you shall receive an unfading, *eternal* crown of glory. In the same manner, *you* younger men be subject to *the* older men; and all *of you* be subject to one another, being clothed with humility because God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble. Be humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time; casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you” (1Pet. 5:1-7).

Here is what God inspired the apostle Paul to write concerning the true function and purpose of the ministry: “And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers **for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; until WE ALL [ministers and brethren] come into the unity of the faith [Christ’s very own faith] and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST**” (Eph. 4:11-13).

Ordained ministers and elders of God fulfill various *roles* in *servicing* the Church. Indeed, the listing of *ministerial functions* here in Ephesians is not intended to establish a hierarchy ruling over the brethren. Rather, these are *positions of service* established by Christ to *build up* the Church. Elders and ministers are to *serve* the brethren. We are to *feed* the Flock of God as led by the Holy Spirit. Thus, we are merely *stewards* of the Church of God, called to help the body of Christ develop as the *living* Temple of God.

Brethren, this is the true *purpose* of the ministry. Paul includes *himself* and all ministers in the “we” of Ephesians 4:13. Ministers are also to grow in grace and knowledge. As ministers learn from God’s Word, as led by God’s Holy Spirit, they are to “teach themselves” (Rom. 2:21). As a result, we—ministers and brethren—are to grow up “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” We are not to be carried away or led about with the teachings of *men*—as takes place in the religions of the world. When this happens, teachings of men eventually *replace* the true teachings of the Word of God. Thus, when we consider the times in which we are now living, it is essential that we remain anchored into the foundation of Christ.

what he wrote: “For you are still carnal. For since envy and contention and divisions *are* among you, are you not carnal? And *are you not* walking according to human *ways*? When someone says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another one *says* ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal?”

“Who then is Paul? And who *is* Apollos? *They are* but ministers through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to each one. I planted *and* Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. Therefore, neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters; for *it is* God Who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.

“For we are God’s fellow workers; and you [brethren] are GOD’S HUSBANDRY, EVEN GOD’S BUILDING” (1 Cor. 3:3-9).

The greatest spiritual reality that any minister needs to bear in mind is that we all *belong to God*—as a result of His calling. We have nothing—*absolutely nothing*—that was not given to us. Everything has come from God—everything!

Likewise, God has called the ministry and has entrusted them with the responsibility of teaching the flock. God, through grace, has given them this vital work. But the various offices or functions ministers fulfill are *not ranks of power* in a hierarchy designed to rule over the brethren’s lives. In God’s Church, there is no iron fist of ministerial “authority.” Men may hold “ranks” of authority and power in high esteem, but God does not. True ministers are to teach and oversee the flock of God—not rule over the brethren in power as if the members were their own personal possessions.

In full agreement with Paul, Peter strongly admonishes elders against “ministerial hierarchies” designed to rule over brethren, treating them like they were personal possessions or merchandise. “The elders who *are* among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder, and an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed: **feed the flock of God that is among you**, exercising oversight not by compulsion, but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain, but *with an eager attitude*; **not as exercising lordship over your possessions; but by being examples to the flock of God.** And when the Chief Shepherd

a spiritual daze, just wandering in sorrow and disillusionment. Some have even questioned their sanity.

But there is hope! There is Christ! He will *never* leave or forsake us. He is always there to help and strengthen us. God the Father has called us to love and eternal life. So we need to keep *looking to God* Who will supply our needs—spiritual and physical.

To overcome these problems and be victorious against the enemy, we need to begin with the basics. Nothing is more basic than examining our *foundation*. Is your foundation Jesus Christ—or some man?

On Whose Foundation Do You Stand? On Whose Foundation Are You Building?

A man once said, “If you stand with someone who has no foundation, you stand in the quicksand with him.” Think about that statement for a moment. It is so true and profound—especially for Christians in this time of doctrinal assaults. So we need to ask ourselves, “On what foundation do we stand?” Have you checked your foundation lately? Are you seeking Jesus Christ, the *only* source of salvation?

Are you sure you are building your life on Christ? Are you sure He is your Rock? Or are you building on sand? Remember, “If you stand with someone who has no foundation, you stand in the quicksand with him.”

Let’s compare that statement to Jesus’ words. **“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and practices them, I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock”** (Matt. 7:24). In the Greek, “hears” and “practices” are present tense participles, which means that our “building” is *ongoing, continual*.

On what are you building—the Rock? Or sand?

Jesus continues, “And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; but it did not fall, for it was **founded [was built] upon the rock**” (verse 25).

The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus Christ is that Rock (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 10:4; Psa. 18:2). However, for those who are against Christ, He is called the “stone of stumbling,

the rock of offense” (Isa. 8:14; Rom. 9:32-33; I Pet. 2:8). He is also called “the Stone that was set at naught by you, the builders, which has become the Head of the corner” (Acts 4:11; see Psa. 118:22-23).

But this same Rock, the precious Stone of God, is the foundational stone for true spiritual growth (I Pet. 2:6; Isa. 28:16). Indeed, **Jesus Christ is the foundation!** The apostle Paul wrote about how we are to *build upon Jesus* as our foundation. “For no one is able [Greek: no one has the power] to lay any other foundation besides that which has been laid, **which is Jesus Christ**” (I Cor. 3:11).

Brethren, He is the only foundation—there can be no other!

Any other foundation is a foundation of sand. Listen to what Jesus said about building on the sand: “And everyone who hears these words of Mine and **does not practice them shall be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand**; and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and **it fell, and great was the fall of it**” (Matt. 7:26-27).

On what—or *Whom*—are you building? Are you on solid rock, or sand? Remember, “If you stand with someone who has no foundation, you stand in the quicksand with him.”

It is utterly anti-scriptural to build on any other foundation than the foundation of Jesus Christ. Yet, even today, I hear ministers—who supposedly preach from the same Bible you and I have—proclaim that we need to build on the religious traditions or philosophies of men, an idea Jesus utterly rejected. I have heard many ministers proclaim, “I am going to build on the foundation that this man or that man has laid.” We have all heard ministers profess that they were going to follow the teachings of a particular man. But brethren, *no man* can be a substitute for the foundation of Jesus Christ!

Religion, philosophy, or traditions of men are *not* the Word of God. Any man, minister, or priest is not Jesus Christ. Anyone who attempts to build upon foundations of *men* is headed for a fall, because Christ is the only *sure* foundation. If you follow men or the teachings of men, you are walking in quicksand. They *will* fall, and you will fall with them!

Paul wrote, “[S]ince everyone among you says, ‘I am of Paul’; or, ‘I am of Apollos’; or, ‘I am of Cephas [Peter]’; or ‘I am of Christ.’ Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?” (I Cor. 1:12-13). No, Christ is not divided—but *men* are divided! Organizations are divided and a major cause for this division is the lack of building on the true foundation of Jesus Christ.

True ministers of God have a sacred responsibility to always build on the foundation of Christ. They are never to build on *themselves* and become a substitute foundation. Jesus alone is “**THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE.**” He *alone* is the foundation!

Obviously, ministers and pastors have a vital part in teaching and feeding the flock of God. But the flock of God is not the *property* of any minister to use as he desires. But we have all seen cases where the flock of God has been used, abused, robbed and threatened with the loss of eternal life. Brethren have been intimidated into submission by being threatened with the ultimate doom of being cast into the lake of fire! What kind of foundation is that? What kind of spiritual growth can be inspired from such an approach?

In fact, when a so-called minister builds on any foundation other than Christ, he is *stealing* members of the flock of God for himself. But we are the purchased possession of God the Father, purchased with the blood of Christ. We do not *belong* to any minister! Paul warned the elders of Ephesus against this very evil: “Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the **church of God, which He purchased with HIS OWN BLOOD.** For I know this: that after my departure grievous wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will rise up speaking perverted things [false doctrines] to draw away disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:28-30).

This tragedy has occurred over and over throughout the history of the Church. Why? Because both ministers and members did not build on the foundation of Jesus Christ!

Paul wrote that he did not reckon himself or the other apostles to be *great* men. Thus, how can *any man* be the foundation upon which brethren should build their faith? Here is