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**Encountering Territorial Spirits**  
by Charles Harris

C. Peter Wagner reports that when moving into an office complex, which he had leased, he discovered it had a "grossly unclean statue at its entrance" (Breaking Strongholds 65). In fact, with one of its ugly fingers the creature pointed directly to the window of his personal office! Concluding that its presence had invited demons to dwell on the premises, he declares that if the building had belonged to him he would have immediately removed the work of art. Since that was not an option, he pursued another course.

He says: *"Doris and I invited Cindy Jacobs to join us in an office cleansing when we first moved in. She broke the power of spirits inside the office and bound any forces of darkness attached to the statue. Since then the offices have been peaceful and pleasant"* (65-66).

Neil Anderson has interesting instructions for people in such cases. He writes, "If they are renting or leasing the home, I suggest they move unless the owner is a Christian and is willing to dedicate the property the Lord" (223).

Other authorities agree with Wagner that demons can occupy buildings as well as many other places. Explaining the views of pagan peoples Otis declares, "These incorporeal beings are perceived to rule over homes, villages, cities, valleys, provinces and nations,

and they exercise extraordinary powers over the behavior of local peoples" (35). While most would agree with his statement as to what pagans perceive to be true in their teachings on demonology, many do not conclude with him that such beliefs correspond with reality.

Some parts of the American culture hold strange beliefs about these kinds of things. Many fear to live in houses where someone was murdered because they think the place to be "haunted" by the spirit of the dead or other evil spirits. Rumors abound that strange sights and sounds appear in the place, especially in the darkness of the night. Others think if they carry a foot of a rabbit as a charm or if they find a four-leaf clover they are assured of good luck in life. Still more are afraid of a black cat or would be terrified if they absent-mindedly walked under a ladder because these items bring bad luck into one's life. Do their beliefs make their views true? Certainly not, though this is not an attempt to deny the reality of demons nor their activities in our world today.

Otis, Wagner, and others have more recently associated with their views of demon activity practices like "spiritual mapping," identifying and exorcizing "territorial spirits," and "territorial staking." While they seek to support their approach to such ministries with Scripture, much of what they do is so extreme as to be disturbing to many in the Christian world. A study of their material indicates that far too much of their teaching has human experience and even pagan theology as its base.

Commendably, though, many whose theology and practice has embraced extreme concepts in demonology declare that their major concern is the evangelization of the world. As the editor of a work to which several writers contribute Wagner explains:

*The heartbeat of each one of the contributors to this book is that the world may believe; that multitudes of lost men and women will be liberated from the dark oppression of the enemy and drawn by the Holy Spirit to the glorious light of the gospel of Christ (Breaking Strongholds 25).*

However, quite apart from their questionable practices, Scripture makes clear that we can obey the Great Commission to evangelize the world by taking the Bible as our sole and sufficient guide for faith and practice.

This requires us to keep our focus on the clearly-stated content of the Commission. It also involves careful adherence to the nature of the authority Jesus gave His followers to carry it out. It further includes a practice in ministry which follows what Scripture says about the character of spiritual gifts. We will focus on all of this in the pages below.

**Following The Great Guide-Book.** The Only Guide for Faith and Practice. First, then, let us consider the encouraging fact that we can obey the Great Commission to evangelize the world by taking the Bible as our sole and sufficient guide for faith and practice. Scripture suggests several reasons for using the Bible as our only guide. Among them is the truth that trusting in other things, such as our own understanding, is not safe.

We learn much through our senses; however, experiencing a mirage on the desert in seeing an oasis at a distance, only to discover when arriving at the place that our eyes

played tricks on us, demonstrates that our senses are not infallible. Reality has only the burning sand continuing indefinitely before us. Then, to lean on the adage, "Seeing is believing,"

can be risky business. As reported twice in God's Word, a wise man of long ago declared, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). Accordingly, our God advises that we:

*"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths"* (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Certainly, also, it is sometimes sheer folly to put our confidence in anything other than the Word of God. Concerning such, Jehovah chides:

*And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"* (Isaiah 8:19-20).

Perhaps most important of all is the fact that only the Bible tells us how to make things right between our souls and God. As the psalmist says:

*"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word."* (Psalm 119:9).

We must also maintain our faith in the Bible as our sole guide because its truths are eternal. As Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"* (Matthew 24:35).

By way of contrast, the various philosophies we encounter may prove to contain truth to a greater or lesser degree. But the passing of time has demonstrated that multitudes of human theories were false, with people discarding them. Even the Church, especially its Pentecostal segment, has known numerous fads as they have come and gone with seeming regularity. Each of them has rested on some supposedly recently revealed truth from the Lord. Regrettably, some immature believers appear to lack the capacity to admit even to themselves that the last "wind of doctrine" they embraced turned out not to be true and was therefore worthless. Instead, they keep on eagerly watching for the next new thing on the horizon.

Despite such truths Wagner contends that *teaching is acceptable even when it has no biblical base, as long as it does not contradict the Bible* (Confronting the Powers 98).

And Kraft declares, *". . . we contend that ideas and/or practices may be scriptural as long as they are not condemned by Scripture"* (113).

However Christians generally condemn the smoking of marijuana, though that is nowhere specifically forbidden by name in Scripture. They use biblical principles in doing so. The scriptural prohibition of drunkenness by implication forbids smoking marijuana.

Further, Wagner rejects the "apostles only" rule of hermeneutics. He writes,; *"As I have said, I do not agree that the so-called 'apostles' example principle of hermeneutics' is a useful principle . . ."* (Confronting the Powers 162).

Actually, in the end he turns to a three-fold source as his guide for faith and practice. He writes:

*"We can learn valuable information from the totally reliable written Word of God, from the spoken or rhema word of God and from accurately analyzing and interpreting the works of God"* (Confronting the Powers 64).

**Not Experience:** An overemphasis on the work of demons appears to be among the latest of the "fads" to come among us. Recognizing the magnitude of the task of reaching billions of lost people in the world, Caballeros defends some of the current questionable teachings on demonology as resulting from new "revelations" from God. He concludes,;

*". . . God is sovereign and is revealing new and better strategies so that we may reach those billions in our generation. I am convinced that spiritual mapping is one of these revelations"* (124-125).

If he is correct in his deductions, why did the Lord wait so long to "reveal" these strategies? Did He only recently realize the magnitude of His assignment to His Church in the Great Commission? Such faulty reasoning demonstrates the danger of basing the work of the Church on lessons learned from experience.

Ray Anderson boldly declares that his theology begins with experience rather than Scripture. To begin a work with himself as editor he writes:

*"One fundamental thesis will control this discussion - the thesis that ministry precedes and produces theology, not the reverse"* (7).

Wagner reasons that Paul's theology came from his experience rather than the Old Testament. Making his pragmatic position even more clear he says:

*"By nature I find myself more goal oriented than process oriented. Application seems more important to me than theory. The theories I like the best are, frankly, the ones that work"* (Confronting the Powers 47).

Priest, Campbell, and Mullen express concern over this tendency to base doctrine and practice on experience. They write:

*New understandings of spirit realities are being constructed by missiologists based upon contemporary religious experience and upon a re-examination of Scripture through the*

*lens of such experiences. As they construct their arguments for how we are to understand spirit realities, they continually appeal to accounts of contemporary experience from which we are to infer truths about spirit realities—truths which cannot be derived from Scripture alone (11).*

Concluding their analysis of the false teachings they discuss they declare:

*"The doctrines we have presented are theories about spiritual realities not given in Scripture, something freely acknowledged by key proponents of these [erroneous] doctrines" (25).*

**Not the Theories of Men**: Further, we must not be turned aside by philosophical speculations or worldly systems which would result in our hearers losing sight of what the sacred Scriptures clearly contain. Paul told Timothy that he must:

*". . . shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker . . ." (2 Timothy 2:16-17).*

Over and over the apostle warns the youthful minister to avoid the temptation to chase after the wisdom of man as it appeared in the various philosophical/theological theories of the first century. He begins that theme in his first letter to Timothy as he writes:

*Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm (1 Timothy 1:4-7).*

In the verse preceding these Paul shows grave concern over a counterfeit message which was circulating among the churches. He viewed it as another teaching, doctrine, categorizing it as heterodox, "crooked," (3) as opposed to orthodox, "straight." He also used heteros for "another of a different kind"(10) rather than allos for "another of a the same kind." The message contained myths, fables, called old wives' fables in some passages, and endless discussions of genealogies. The apostle viewed such as amounting to nothing more than vain talking, idle discussion, endless debate, worthless philosophical speculation. Despite its attempts to use the Word of God in its teaching, Paul declared the counterfeit message was guilty of making misapplications of the law.

Rather than concluding such diversions from the Bible on the part of preachers as harmless theorizing, the apostle declared that such teachings promoted doubt rather than faith in the endless controversy it created. It failed to build believers up. Alas, it caused many to turn aside from the simple gospel which Paul preached!

Elsewhere in the Pastoral Epistles Paul makes repeated references to this tendency toward dangerous extension of "biblical" studies. As he closed his first letter to Timothy he again instructed him to *avoid profane, secular and vain babblings (1 Timothy 6:20).*

- The first reason he gave is that such leads people away from the faith (21).
- His second reason is that all such speculations amount to a waste of time (2 Timothy 2:14; Titus 3:9).
- The third reason is that discussions of this nature subvert, ruin, corrupt, overturn, and undermine the faith and morals of those who hear (2 Timothy 2:14).
- The fourth reason is that it increases to more ungodliness, such as anger and strife (2 Timothy 2:16).
- The fifth reason is that such false teaching is as deadly as canker, gangrene (2 Timothy 2:17).
- The sixth reason is that the heated discussions while engaging in speculative debate run counter to the spirit of gentleness in Christianity (2 Timothy 2:23-24).
- The seventh and final reason is all such ignores the fact that the basic problem for the sinner is moral, not intellectual (2 Timothy 2:25-26). It is as useless to reason with the spiritually blind as to argue with a drunk man.

**Not Carelessly Applied Scripture:** Also, we must be aware that some scholars providing an over-emphasis on demonic activity today appear to handle the Bible carelessly at times. For example, Wagner writes:

*We read in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that Satan has successfully blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot receive the gospel. This undoubtedly refers to individuals, but could it also refer to territories? Could it mean nations? States? Cities? Cultural groups? Tribes? Social networks?"* (Engaging the Enemy 43).

Of course, none would fault him for asking questions, but by implication he answers them all in the affirmative. Then from there he builds his excessive teaching about territorial spirits and everything he associates with it on "biblical" principles.

Elsewhere Wagner manifests the same tendency to carelessly handle Scripture when he writes: "*We have examples of Jesus both naming and addressing demons*" (Confronting the Powers 201).

The truth is that the Bible offers only one such example. Further, he takes the Greek word *nikao*, "to conquer," and makes it fit his views on spiritual warfare every where it appears in the Bible (Confronting the Powers 144-145, 151).

The fact is, of course, that believers "conquer, overcome" the flesh, the world, and the devil. Often the word concerns overcoming the first two rather than the third.

Wagner demonstrates the same tendency when he immediately concludes that Beelzebul in Luke 11:15 is "a classic territorial spirit" when many consider this to be simply one of Satan's several names in Scripture (Confronting the Powers 149). He also takes Jesus' reference to "binding" and "loosing" in Matthew 16:19 as "relating directly to strategic-level spiritual warfare" (152). Instead, a study of the terms as they appear in parallel passages in Matthew 18:15-20 and John 20:21-23 shows the emphasis is on indirect "loosing" or "binding" through church discipline, prayer, and preaching. If believers obey His commands in these three areas they will make possible the "loosing" of people from their sins. If they fail in their duties, sinners will remain bound in their sins.

And, how can Peter's "encounter" with Simon at Samaria be considered ". . . the primary event that opened the Samaritans to the gospel," as Wagner concludes? (Confronting the Powers 170).

The passage records that the "encounter" did not occur until Peter arrived on the scene after the townspeople had already responded in mass to the gospel (Acts 8:5-24).

Further, Wagner seems equally rash to consider the "beasts" at Ephesus which Paul referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:32 as having been "territorial spirits" (Confronting the Powers 209-210).

And again, as to "casting down every high thing" in 2 Corinthians 10:5, Wagner quickly concludes that these "high things" ". . . are demonic beings, principalities and powers, which in many cases have been intentionally invited to take control of whole cities or people groups or nations" (Confronting the Powers 239). Then on the basis of this interpretation he declares that here is: ". . . *one of the most direct indications in the New Testament that we are to do strategic-level spiritual warfare*" (240).

A more careful analysis of the passage reveals that in the military analogy which Paul uses he refers to a towering fortress or high rampart which stands in defiance of the gospel. Then, any system of thought which raises its head in opposition to the true message of salvation is such a "high thing" or proud obstacle.

In like manner the term "imaginings," "strongholds" of the passage (2Corinthians 10:5) likely does not refer to what the demonologists contend much that it does. Rather than thinking of the strongholds of the strongman in Wagner's strategic-level spiritual warfare, Paul writes of philosophical speculations, systems of human reason which stand opposed to the knowledge of God as revealed in Scripture. The apostle's military analogy sees these as fortresses or prisons of false teachings which hold sinners captive. They must be exposed as erroneous darkness by the light of the gospel. The truth of the gospel, then, is what sets these prisoners free.

Wagner provides another case of his hasty exegesis when he confesses to knowing that *rhema* and *logos* are used interchangeably as synonyms in the New Testament, but still declares that ". . . *logos* most frequently refers to the written Word of God (an exception being a reference to Jesus in John 1:1), and *rhema* most frequently refers to the directly spoken word of God" (Confronting the Powers 52). He seeks to support his view by reporting an episode from his own experience. He writes that:

*. . . John Wimber received a rhema word from God that the root cause of my headaches had been a demon and that I was to drive it out myself rather than ask someone else to do it for me. I obeyed. I cast out the demon in the name of Jesus, and I have not suffered any such headaches since that day" (Confronting the Powers 59).*

A final example of Wagner's tendencies in interpreting Scripture concerns Ezekiel 4:1-3. In it the prophet receives instructions to prophesy the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of Babylon in a dramatic way. He is to place a tile on a table on which he has portrayed the city. Then around it he must place small objects depicting the coming siege against it. His

actions were to serve as a sign to the citizens of the Holy City as to what was ahead for them. Yet, Wagner sees in all this as biblical support for the practice of spiritual mapping! He writes, "An example of spiritual mapping is seen in Ezekiel 4:1-3 where God instructs Ezekiel to make a map of the city of Jerusalem on a clay tablet, then 'lay siege against it.' Obviously, this refers to spiritual, not conventional, warfare" (Breaking Strongholds 20).

Beckett manifests the same tendencies as Wagner in his approach to interpreting Scripture. For example, he cites Isaiah 33:20-23 in support of the practice of "staking." Then he writes:

*I will be the first to recognize that this passage, in its historical context, has little to do with strategic-level spiritual warfare or taking a city for God. Nevertheless, we felt it was God's prophetic word for The Dwelling Place Church in Hemet, California, in 1991, so we set out to obey it and apply it as we sensed God's leading step-by-step (166).*

Accordingly, they proceeded to drive stakes around the city to hold the "prayer canopy" which they felt the Lord directed them to erect over the town. While others were driving stakes around the city, Beckett explains:

*"At the same time, Susan and I, standing by the intersection in the center of town, would simultaneously lift up a praise offering unto the Lord as a center pole of the spiritual canopy" (167).*

All the while Wagner and associates charge those who disagree with their positions on demonology of interpreting Scripture with rose-colored glasses. In this case it is that of a Western mind-set. The contention is that theologians in the Western world build systems that are logically, rationally, and empirically arranged. Supposedly, they conclude, "If you can't experience it with one of your five senses, it doesn't exist." They have difficulty, then, accepting the reality of angels, demons, and spirits. On the other hand, the claim is that Easterners tend to be more oriented toward the non-material world, the world of the spirit.

Priest, Campbell, and Mullen who question many of the teaching and practices of the demonologists respond with, "As supernaturalists, we are concerned that our critique not be construed in any sense as an attack on supernaturalism and on the importance of prayer and faith to missions, or as a denial of the powerful Satanic forces arrayed against us" (14)

Not the Beliefs of Pagan Cultures: Certainly we must beware of turning to the beliefs held in pagan cultures for support in doing the Work of God.

Yet, as to the use of the names of territorial spirits in exorcizing them, Sterk seems to turn more to cultural belief than Scripture. He says, "*I am very suspicious of names that are given by territorial spirits themselves, since I do not believe that they are about to reveal any secrets which would lead to their own downfall*" (159). But then he concludes:

*"However, this does not invalidate the using of specific names in casting out these spirits" (159).*

From there he moves to pagan beliefs for support of the practice. He declares that in many cultures the view prevails that if you know the name of a person you possess certain powers over him. Then he explains,:

*"The Tzotzil people have strong feelings about knowing the names of their 'animal spirit companion' (Vogt 1969:371).*

*If some enemy gains knowledge of the name of that spirit, he can place a curse on that person by harming that particular animal spirit" (159-160).*

Wagner makes clear his leaning on such cultural beliefs in a Christian ministry. When commenting on the advisability of learning the names of spirits to facilitate exorcism, he writes:

*"Effective spiritual warfare does not require knowing the names of the spirits, but experience has shown that when we are able to identify them specifically by name, we seem to have more authority over them, and therefore we can be more effective" (Confronting the Powers 200).*

Priest, Campbell, and Mullen warn of the dangers in this approach to ministry. They write:

*"If we proceed on the mistaken assumption that we can infer truth about spirits from people's beliefs about spirits, we will invariably end up syncretistically incorporating animistic and magical notions of spirit power into our doctrinal understandings of the demonic world" (35).*

It seems true, of course, that the Lord sometimes grants miracles to a seeking and believing individual, though the preacher involved may not be correct as to some of the methods he uses. Priest and his associates recognize this. They conclude:

*"On occasions, God works supernaturally even when the method is clearly wrong. Moses was commanded to speak to the rock (Num 20). Instead he struck the rock. His method was clearly wrong and God later punished him. Yet when he struck the rock, God still brought forth water" (42-43).*

In such cases one may surmise that the Lord met the need of the hungry individual in spite of questionable ministerial practices rather than because of them. Kraft declares himself ready even to experiment with the beliefs of pagan cultures in his search for truth. Speaking for himself and those like-minded he says:

*o, I/we believe in going beyond the overt statements of Scripture, though not outside the bounds of Scripture, whether in dealing with the material and human worlds or in dealing with the spirit world. I/we also believe in experimenting with the insights of others, such as animists, those in Scripture who did not obey God, even (though carefully) demons, in our quest to discover more of what the Holy Spirit wants to teach us in this area (102-103).*

However, Gailey raises valid questions concerning such an approach. He writes:

*"If we acknowledge the identity and names of spirits before the people, as Vernon Streck suggests (160), are we not thus validating the people's belief? If we say we believe in the spirits they believe in, do we not lend credence to pagan worldviews?" (250).*

Greenlee expresses similar concerns. He says:

*"It is feared that recent discussion of "territorial spirits" has given them more "territory" than they deserve, both from biblical exegesis and case study analysis. A significant problem is the confusion of ontological reality - what the Bible declares as "really real" - with phenomenological reality - that which is perceived by people to be real" (507).*

Not by Contending with Territorial Spirits: Priest and associates credit Timothy Warner as having been the first to promote the concept of territorial spirits (20). Wagner explains the term saying:

*"These enemy forces are frequently called "territorial spirits" because they attempt to keep large numbers of humans networked through cities, nations, neighborhoods, people groups, religious allegiance, industries or any other form of human society in spiritual captivity" (Confronting the Powers 22).*

Sterk says: *"In some cases, territorial spirits seem to be so fixed in a particular house or underground stream that everyone living in the immediate area is affected by sickness, mental illness, or serious attacks" (150).*

Scholars now writing on things like territorial spirits talk much about the necessity of binding the strongman. With a reference to 2 Corinthians 4:4 Caballeros concludes that Satan has so blinded sinners that evangelism of individuals is impossible until his power over a given area is broken (127). In agreement with him, Dawson writes, *"We must overcome the enemy before employing other methods of ministry among men and women" (139).*

This applies whether in nations, states, cities, and even neighborhoods. Indeed, some take it upon themselves to bind the demons occupying all four directions on the compass (91)!

They elaborate on how the demons came to have "legal rights" to occupy such territories originally. Kraft holds that sinful behavior of people can give demons rights over their land (131). In fact, in some cases he says the territory was formally dedicated to a specific demonic influence (132).

Otis explains the view that he and writers like Kraft hold:

*In return for a particular deity's consent to resolve their immediate traumas, they have offered up their singular and ongoing allegiance. They have collectively sold their*

*proverbial souls. It is through the placement of these ancient welcome mats, then, that demonic territorial strongholds are established (40-41).*

As to how demons maintain such "rights," Otis says that it is through "the authority transfers that occur during religious festivals, ceremonials and pilgrimages" (41). He continues:

*They are opportunities for contemporary generations to reaffirm the choices and pacts made by their forefathers and ancestors. They are occasions to dust off ancient welcome mats and extend the devil's right to rule over specific peoples and places today (42).*

A part of the doctrine of territorial spirits is the practice of "spiritual mapping." Otis declares himself to be the father of the term (32). Caballeros explains, "Spiritual mapping plays the same important role that intelligence and espionage play during war. It reveals the conditions behind enemy lines" (Breaking 125). It "shows us the enemy's lines, location, number, weapons, and above all, how the enemy can be defeated" (125). For him even lines and angles on the map become significant. He suggests that demons can sometimes move rapidly, especially down streets formed in "straight lines" (142). In Lorenzo's thinking, angles and geometric symbols (184-188), as well as numbers (192) become important in spiritual mapping.

From the doctrine of territorial spirits also comes the practice of "prayer walking." It is sometimes viewed as necessary to take a certain territory away from the spirits which control it. However, Johnstone offers words of caution concerning prayer walks. He declares, "*It is important to realize that the physical presence of the intercessor does not increase the power of the prayers*" (149). Further, he counsels, "*There is a danger that if the premise of territorial spirits is accepted, this can easily extend to the premise that physical presence of intercessors in the area controlled by the territorial spirit is essential for its binding*" (149). Then he concludes, "*So it is being in His [God's] presence, rather than in the physical location, that pulls down strongholds*" (150). He even suggests possible negatives associated with prayer walking. They include expense entailed that could be used in missions otherwise, time and energy expended, and even a danger to missions in sensitive areas (149).

If all this concerning territorial spirits is correct, why is there so little about it in Scripture? Even Robb, something of a demonologist himself, asks pertinent questions about this:

*It does not seem that the apostles spent much time teaching people about these unseen forces. Not once that I am aware of did Peter, Paul, James, or John . . . instruct that Christians were to identify these spiritual forces and command them to be bound . . . . How can we account for this lack of understanding on the part of the early disciples? Had Jesus left them in the dark about such things? Were they too immature for the Holy Spirit to reveal things of this nature to them? Or did they perhaps believe that Satan's power had been broken by the cross of Jesus? . . . that when a person turned to Jesus the power of Satan was bound in that person's life. That when a city experienced revival Satan could no longer rule that city (181).*

**A Sufficient Guide for Faith and Practice.** Not only is the Word of God trustworthy as our sole guide for faith and

practice, but it is also sufficient to serve that purpose. To the young preacher Timothy the older Paul explained, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The apostle declares that the Bible's sufficiency rests on several facts. First, from its pages we preachers glean what we need for our doctrine, teaching, preaching. By getting all of our lessons from it we present "sound," healthy food for the souls of those who hear us. The Pastoral Epistles call on us repeatedly to dispense such information (1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9, 2:1).

Second, it provides the needed tools for reproof when it becomes necessary to censure others for errors as to either what they believe or how they behave. Third, we as pastors find in God's Word the assistance required for correcting any among our flocks who wander astray, in helping them improve, or even to restore the fallen.

Finally, Scripture offers us ministers of the Gospel an adequate supply of materials for instruction, specifically in training others as to the path of duty before God.

With such a wealth of God-breathed material in the Bible, Paul declares that the man of God finds in it all he needs so that he is fully equipped for all that his work entails. With his Bible ever before him the preacher has a complete set of tools. By using it he is fully capable, proficient, able to meet all the demands of the ministry. By the Book he is completely furnished for every good work. If he carefully studies it and wisely uses it, he is fully outfitted for his work in the Church. He is fully prepared and equipped.

In view of all this, then, we as church workers have a duty to continuously study and carefully present the truth of the Bible and that alone in our service to mankind. Jehovah promised us as much as he did Joshua that we will have a successful ministry if we follow the same pathway. To Joshua, the new "pastor" in Israel, the Lord said:

*Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Joshua 1:7-8).*

Then, to plant God's word in our hearts is just the beginning. Having done so we must "meditate on it day and night." When we are certain we have a correct understanding of its message we must share its contents with others. That necessitates handling it with the greatest of care. As Paul instructed Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

This kind of "study" demands that we make every effort, do our utmost, be ever so diligent in the process. It brings us to a place where we can "rightly divide" the Word, which suggest that we must "cut a straight pathway" and guide the Scriptures along it toward their intended goal.

Then, it seems clear enough that we can evangelize the world by taking the Bible as our sole and sufficient guide for faith and practice. That will keep us from being side-tracked into trusting human experience, the theories of men, or even carelessly applied Scripture, as well as save us from unwise efforts at contending with "territorial spirits."

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***This article is part of a Chapter from Opal L. Reddin's revised book entitled: POWER ENCOUNTER. The book is available through Discernment Ministries.***

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