

YOU ARE YOUR OWN WORST ENEMY!

There are three great enemies you must fight until you conquer—in order to become a BORN SON in God's Kingdom. These three are: your own SELF—this present evil WORLD—and EVIL SPIRITS, demon influence. This article begins a series to show you HOW to fight these enemies!

by David Jon Hill

YOU are at war! Whether or not you know it, your life has been plunged into a "state of emergency" by the Almighty Creator who made you. The promise of eternal life is made ONLY to one who has gained the victory—to the overcomer—"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God..." (Rev. 3:12).

To Overcome Means to Conquer!

It is not a passive fight that God has called us to, but a direct frontal onslaught—a crushing conquest! It is an all-out war! TOTAL WAR!

Many wars have been fought in the history of mankind on this earth, but not one good thing has been produced by any of them! Men and women have been asked to give their lives that others might live. People have been called upon to die for every reason man could devise—for the emperor, for the country, for the church. The greatest motivation man can offer in war is either to protect country, home and family in a defensive struggle or to offer plunder and power if one helps wrest it from the hands of another! Or a hero's death!

But God offers us the *whole world*. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the EARTH" (Mat. 5:5). He also offers us POWER: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give POWER OVER THE NATIONS: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron..." (Rev. 2:26-27).

God does not call us to go to battle for nothing! He offers us the greatest rewards that any conquering king of this earth ever offered to his soldiers. But God offers *one thing more* that NO MAN can offer!

ETERNAL LIFE!

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the WHOLE WORLD, and lose his own soul? [life] or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mat. 16:26.) The most you could hope to gain from any other king in any other war would be a limited amount of power over a limited area for a LIMITED AMOUNT OF TIME! Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, the Caesars ruled the world all in their turn—BUT THEY ARE DEAD!

Our God offers us all that for which they fought and died, in addition to LIFE EVERLASTING! "... I am come that they might have LIFE, and that they might HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY" (John 10:10).

This goal God offers is *worth* the greatest conflict you could possibly be put through! To have the riches of all the earth, to have power beyond the realm of man's understanding, to have practicing knowledge of the laws that make life happy and pleasant, peaceful and productive, and to have LIFE INHERENT WITHIN YOURSELF to enjoy and use these other blessings forever—THIS IS A GOAL WORTH FIGHTING FOR!

Rules of Warfare

The precept followed by every great military leader is "Know your enemy—never underestimate him!"

The United States and Great Britain—the Israel of today—are going into captivity soon—conquered by an enemy they do not even recognize! Even in the struggle against the recognized enemy of Communism, the West is losing ground and having a difficult time because it *does not recognize the kind of warfare* being waged by the enemy! Both Communism and Fascism are fighting a total war—a type of war the United States and Great Britain have never had to fight before! A *trade* war, a *propaganda* war, a war using singers and dancers, artists and writers, a war of *ideas*, a war of *diplomatic negotiation* over conference tables—and at times a war of terrorism, of guerrillas attacking innocent women and children, and finally an open warfare of one army facing another in desperate all-out battle!

YOU face a war *even more* TOTAL in its concept! The enemy you fight has no honor, no ethics, no mercy!

YOU are forced to fight on *three fronts* in your war. Unless you recognize, put up a defense and mount an attack against these three fronts *you may lose!* These three battle fronts are: (1) your-SELF; (2) the world; and (3) Satan and his demons!

Of these three enemies the self is the *first* and the *WORST!*

In order to fight this enemy, you

must know his *purpose*, his *tactics*, his *strengths*, and his *weaknesses*! In this article we will examine this enemy thoroughly and also examine the battle orders that the Captain of our salvation has given to us to overcome this enemy!

All-Out War!

Let's realize first of all that no "Laodicean attitude" will ever conquer in this warfare! Every good soldier must have good morale! He must have a *desire to fight*, to *conquer*, and to *WIN*!

Military leaders give men slogans to fight by; let us see the slogans God has given to us. "FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH, lay hold on eternal life..." (I Tim. 6:12). "STRIVE to enter in at the strait gate..." (Luke 13:24). "... mortify [kill] the deeds of the body..." (Rom. 8:13). "... so *run*, not as uncertainly; so *fight* I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and *bring it into subjection*: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor 9:26-27).

The Christian life of overcoming is not a quiet, passive, contemplative sort; but an active, moving, *pressing*, *striving* RACE, won only by those who press forward constantly!

Too many of you brethren feel since you have been baptized and received God's Holy Spirit that you do *not live with a carnal mind any longer*! You tend to consider the way *you* do or look at things as *the* way. If you discover a fault in yourself or if one is brought to your attention, you tend to generalize or excuse your own faults by saying, "Nobody is perfect!" Or you say, "I know I have got to overcome, and I am trying but I just can't do everything at once."

These answers come from *YOUR CARNAL MIND*!

What YOU Are Like

Before we go any further let's understand two basic facts about the *human* mind that God has created in you. "The heart [the way you naturally tend to think, feel, and believe] is *DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS*, and *DESPERATELY WICKED*: who can know it?" (Jer.

17:9.) This situation does *not change completely* when you are baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit. It only *begins* to change. At baptism you have *added* to your carnal mind a portion of the Mind of God. God's Mind, His Holy Spirit, begins to reveal to you what *you* are really like, and gives you the power and strength to *overcome* that enemy, *to cease to be like you were*!

Too many times we like to use scriptures in the Bible against the people of this world from a self-superior sense on our part. "Because the *carnal* mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). How many times have you used this scripture referring to the world—and it *does* refer to the world—not realizing the context in which Paul wrote this scripture. The book of Romans is written to the *saints* at Rome. It is written to *begotten sons of God*, members of the body of Jesus Christ, members of the Church of God!

Paul demonstrated that neither the Greek mind, which tends to be academic, philosophical, nor the Jewish mind, which tends to be proud and self-righteous, was the right kind of mind. He showed that ALL had sinned and come short of the glory of being God. Only through God is there any power which would keep a human being from sinning and coming under the penalty of death. Paul showed all through Romans 7, that when the Spirit of God is added to your mind, there is an immediate warfare that ensues because of the basic human nature that you inherently are.

"But I see another law in my members, *WARRING* against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:23). As in any war, sometimes the enemy presses very hard, and you find yourself in retreat, not any longer in *control* of the situation and conquering. This is the time Paul is warning about in Romans 8:7, urging you never to give in to your carnal mind and live according to its dictates. In this battle the warfare is *constantly going on*, the enemy is *ever present*—you are either winning or losing at *any given minute of any day*.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we

do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds); casting down imaginations [*reasonings*], and *every high thing* that exalteth itself *against* the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity *every thought* to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:3-5). Our warfare takes place within our minds! This is the battlefield! Little skirmishes and big battles are fought here every single day at the *speed of thought*!

God's mind present with you, especially when you are in contact with Him through never-ceasing prayer, enables you to see what you should do and how you should act. But your carnal mind, also present with you as long as you are a human being, begins immediately to put up a defense against the attack of God's Spirit. It begins to think of ways *around* doing what God wants you to do. It begins to barricade and entrench itself with *justifications* and *reasons* why you have not or cannot do what God wants you to do. It all seems *perfectly reasonable*; it is *very understandable*—but it is "AGAINST THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD"!

Unless you *immediately* recognize this and ask God for reinforcements to pull down the "strongholds" your carnal mind has built up, you will find yourself beaten back, having *less character* each time you submit to your carnal mind rather than conquering with God's Holy Spirit!

Self Preservation

The basic law of all life is *SELF-preservation*! You are no different from any other form of life. *Humanly* you want to stay the way you *ARE*! *Humanly*, you *resist any change*. Your human mind is thinking at nearly the speed of light to come up with some reason why it does *not* have to submit to the mind of God.

Notice very closely what God said you must bring into captivity, what you must control: "every *THOUGHT*"—this is where sin begins!

Let's notice the process of how this develops. "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his *OWN*

LUST, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15). First of all your carnal mind makes you think you would *like to do* what is *contrary* to God's law. You *play* with the thought, roll it over in your mind, *entertain* it and plan—until finally you have GONE TOO FAR! You have not resisted from the *beginning* and the power of sin has snowballed until it is too great to resist. Next you actually *DO* what you had been *thinking* about doing—this is sin—death is the penalty!

This can be repented of. But the only one who knows how many times you can retreat before sin, and ask God later to forgive that retreat, is the one who has repented *too many times!* God says very plainly, "I am weary with repenting" (Jer. 15:6).

Don't try to find out how many times God will forgive. Certainly He is

forgiving, loving, merciful and kind. Yet He warns us very sternly that if we do not *bear fruit consistently* that He will break us off as a dead branch and cast us into the lake of fire!

Don't *assume* YOU are all right! "Examine yourselves, whether *you* be in *the* faith; prove YOUR OWN SELVES ..." (II Cor. 13:5).

Just the Way I Am

How many times have you heard people say, "I'm just hardheaded, that's all!" or, "I have a very quick temper and I tend to jump to conclusions"? This is the excuse *your carnal mind* puts up—the *reason* your human mind displays against the knowledge of God! This is *your excuse* for not overcoming because you *are* the way that you ARE!

Some even try to blame it on their *parents* and complain, "Dad was always nervous and grouchy and so am I!" This explanation satisfies the self. It explains readily that if you just *are* that way, then that's just the way you *are* and there isn't any way of helping *the way you ARE!* You just *are* easily offended. You just happen to *have* a despondent, pessimistic attitude. You "just can't seem to remember." Or you are just *weak!*

This to the carnal mind seems to be the *perfect reason why* you do not *have to overcome!* It is PERVERTED REASONING!

YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED TO OVERCOME *WHAT YOU ARE!*

God never inspired the hymn titled "Just As I Am!" We can't come the way we are to God. WE MUST CHANGE!

The human mind is very fertile and clever in coming up with all kinds of arguments *against* God's truth. When His truth, revealed by His Spirit in your mind, begins to *accuse you* of not overcoming as you should, *you* begin *immediately* to find an *excuse!* This is another tactic of your carnal mind!

The Excuse Tactic

Like the first Adam, you cast fur-tively about to find a scapegoat for your sin! You say that you *inherited* your bad habits or your faulty disposition from your parents. Perhaps you claim that it was your family background, that

you grew up in a house where mother always dominated and so you *just naturally* tend to dominate even though you are a woman. Or you men *just naturally* tend to listen to your wife more than you should because mother always told you what to do! You let this NATURAL CARNAL *reasoning satisfy you into thinking you don't have to overcome this problem!* It is not your fault, it's the fault of *someone else!*

Some like to blame their *education* and claim that if they had received more or better education things would be different! After all, you can't be expected to study the Scriptures if you had only a sixth-grade education as much as you would be expected to study the Scriptures if you had a college education!

Perhaps your excuse is your *geography!* If you had just lived in Oregon instead of Arkansas *things would be different.* If you lived in the country instead of the city; or if you lived in the city instead of the country *things would be different!*

Perhaps your *job* is your problem. If you didn't have to work such long and hard hours you would be able to study and pray more. If you had a job you could do with your hands, your mind would be free to think about the things of God. If you had a job where you had to use your mind, you would be able to develop and use all of the attributes that God would have you develop.

"Pass-the-Buck" Classic

This is an excuse that mankind has been using ever since the time of Adam! This is how the real *you* thinks and acts and works. God faced Adam with the question, "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" (Gen. 3:11.) Adam was quick to answer, but the answer was an *excuse:* "... The woman whom *thou* gavest to be with me, *she* gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (verse 12). Adam had to find a *reason why* he had sinned—just admitting it to God didn't seem to be enough. But when he offered the reason, when he explained that it was his *wife's fault*, not his, *his carnal mind* was satisfied. If you will read on briefly there in Genesis 3, you will discover the woman

was no different from her husband. When God asked her why she had done this thing, she replied that it was the *serpent's* fault, that *he* had been the one to beguile her—it was Satan's fault!

MOST PEOPLE ARE ONLY BLIND TO THEIR OWN SINS! "All the ways of a man are *clean in his own eyes*; but the Lord weigheth the spirits" (Prov. 16: 2). We can't have the understanding to know how our own carnal minds work unless we ask God in heaven to guide us in recognizing this worst enemy we have. "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" (Prov. 20:24.)

Turn now to Jeremiah 10:23—"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is *not in man that walketh to direct his steps*. O Lord, CORRECT ME, *but with judgment*; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing" (Jer. 10:23-24). Make this YOUR prayer: "...cleanse thou ME from SECRET FAULTS. Keep back thy servant also from *presumptuous sins*; let them not have DOMINION over me..." (Ps. 19:12-13).

Don't ask God to show your *husband or wife* where he or she is wrong—ask God first to show YOU where you are wrong! If your sins are not obvious to you—if you cannot pick out at least three *specific* things you need to overcome, then you desperately need to ask God to *search and cleanse* YOU—to show you the sins that are *secret to YOU!*

"Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins *in the light of THY countenance*. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is *soon cut off*, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So *teach us to number our days*, that we may *apply our hearts unto wisdom*" (Ps. 90:8-12). The marginal rendering reads better here, "*that we may get us a heart of wisdom*." This is the way to get wisdom—to fight your chief enemy, YOURSELF! Our days are numbered and slipping away all too fast—

we don't *have* the threescore and ten years left to us anymore, and using every precious second is absolutely necessary.

Concentrate all your force and energy on your worst enemy—bringing every weapon to bear to *exterminate* this enemy. "SEARCH ME, O God, and know MY heart: try ME, and know MY thoughts: And see if there be *any wicked way in ME*, and lead ME in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

What YOU Can Do!

In order to come to grips with your worst enemy, to come *concretely* to the attack—so you will know *exactly* what to do, I urge you to write a short essay about yourself. After praying, on your knees to Almighty God, in the attitude expressed by the above scriptures, take out a piece of paper and title it: "*WHAT I AM*."

Be candid, truthful before God—ask God to help you see YOU, AS HE SEES YOU! Then describe what He opens your mind to see. After you have this written, you will know what you need to change. Ask God directly in prayer to help you overcome *one* of the points that you have written down about yourself.

In a succeeding article we will examine several other phases of human nature concretely and specifically to help you find out even more how *your* human nature works and how *you*—the begotten son of God—may *overcome this nature and stand before God MORE THAN A CONQUEROR!*