

The Old Paths

Volume 9, Issue 52

February 23, 2003

“W.M.D.”

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Those aware of current events might be familiar with the above initials. There are many people right now concerned about WMD's, and are trying to prepare their homes, and stockpile food in the event that WMD's are sent over their town. Of course, WMD stands for “Weapons of Mass Destruction.”

Often this term is used to describe nuclear bombs, biological warfare, and similar things. Yet, let me suggest that there are weapons being used right now in an effort to destroy, not physical nations, but a spiritual nation, a spiritual kingdom, and they are truly “weapons of mass destruction”! What are these weapons of mass destruction aimed at Christians?

Lack Of Respect For The Authority Of God

Satan and the world at large are gaining significant ground among God's people because of this weapon. When a “volley” is launched in any congregation, saying, “There are many things we do for which we have no authority.” or, “Where does God say not to do ___?”, look out! This weapon has the potential to destroy many souls!

We live in an age where the majority of people think that all things are “relative.” When living in a society which summarily pushes God out of our lives at every turn, how can anything be said to be the “truth”? How can anything be said to be “right” or

“wrong”? It can't! When people scoff and mock at the written word of God, it has an effect on Christians! It affects us because we are forced to live our lives in this old world! This weapon has a devastating effect on Christians of all ages, and can destroy us if we are not on our guard, and “shielded” from the attack (more on this later).

Pride

Solomon stated, “*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*” (Prov. 16:18). He also said, “*When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom*” (Prov. 11:2). Pride is a weapon which will destroy many souls. It destroys us by producing an attitude of self-love, and self-centeredness which few people ever overcome!

Remember, we are not to live our lives in such a way that people focus on us, but live in such a way that people focus on Christ (Matt. 5:16)! Are we doing this? Be honest! In every case in the Bible, those whom God could use were those who thought little of themselves. For example, it was when he was “*little*” in his own sight that Saul was made “*king over Israel*” (I Sam. 15:17). When he became proud and arrogant, doing what he wanted instead of God's will, he was “*rejected ... from being king*” (I Sam. 15:23). God hates the proud look (Prov. 6:17).

Ignorance

A lack of knowledge can be a very dangerous thing. If someone lacks knowledge that there are mines buried

in a field, he could be killed or maimed. If someone lacks knowledge that a bridge is out, or that a certain substance is poisonous if ingested, it will have serious and sober consequences.

It is all the worse for a person who is ignorant of the truth! Without a knowledge of the truth, how can one know: 1) What to do to be saved (Acts 16:30-34)? 2) How to live a life pleasing to God (I Cor. 15:58)? 3) How to worship God “*in spirit and in truth*” (Jn. 4:24; Acts 2:42)? 4) What constitutes a daily walk with God (I Jn. 1:6-7)? If one is ignorant of God's will, how can one know anything conducive to his/her spiritual growth and well-being?

Apathy and Atrophy

Apathy and atrophy are twin weapons which can be detonated from within the “camp.” Like the enemy who sowed “*tares*” among the wheat “*while men slept*” (Matt. 13:24-26); if Satan can let loose these attitudes within a congregation of God's people, the Lord's work can be hindered and even stopped in an area!

To help us better understand this problem, consider the definitions of these words. Apathy is “*lack of interest in or concern for things which others find moving or exciting*” (Webster's). Atrophy is defined as, “*a wasting away of the body or of an organ or part, as from defective nutrition or other cause ... degeneration, decline, decrease as from disuse*” (Webster's). The irony here is that apathy, a condition where people show a lack of interest or enthusiasm, is actually fast-moving among God's people! It will not have the problem of atrophy, either, because it continues to move and be active! Unfortunately, spiritual apathy is successful by getting people to be less and less interested in spiritual things. When this first “bomb” has done its work, spiritual atrophy will set in, and a local body of Christians will “waste away”! What a trag-

edy. One thing we ought to remember is that no one is immune to such weapons! Can we now see the reason why we are encouraged to be watchful and vigilant as Christians (I Pet. 5:8)??

Who Possesses These WMD's?

It is Satan who has his finger on the "button," ready to launch an attack at any time! Remember, "...your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8). Through the lusts of the flesh and eyes, and the pride of life (I Jn. 2:15-17), Satan tempts men to sin and to turn from the Lord. James said, "*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). And, isn't DEATH the purpose for launching those WMD's (Physically and Spiritually)?

Satan may disguise himself as an "angel of light" (II Cor. 11:14), but he is our enemy. He wants us to lose our souls, and suffer eternally. Let us never forget this fact!

Some "Shields" Against The WMD's

What can we do to shield ourselves against these spiritual "weapons of mass destruction"? Is there anything we can do? Yes, there is!

Let us first of all have a renewed **respect for the authority of God**. The "*whole duty of man*" is to "*fear God and keep his commandments*" (Ecc. 12:13). The apostle Peter as well taught Christians to "*fear God*" (I Pet. 2:17). Will we do this? It is a tall order to submit our will to the will of God! It is easier for us to just do as we please, and not worry about God. Let us not fall for that trap, mistak-

enly excusing our sinful actions by saying things like, "Where does the Bible say not to ...?" Rather, let us respect the silence of the Scriptures (Deut. 29:29; I Pet. 4:11), and let us respect all the Lord has said, following it without compromise, or apology. In all things, let us ask, "*What saith the Scripture?*" (Rom. 4:3)

We can shield ourselves from pride by being **humble**. It is when we are humble that God will lift us up (Jas. 4:10). Else, if we are proud, God will humble us (Dan. 4:37)! Which will we choose (I Pet. 5:5-6)? Will our souls be destroyed by pride and Satan, or will we shield ourselves from Satan's onslaught by being humble?

Furthermore, we shield ourselves from ignorance by **gaining knowledge of God's word**! Paul said, "*Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*" (Eph. 3:4). He would later command those same brethren, "*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*" (Eph. 5:17). When writing to Timothy, Paul told him, "*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (II Tim. 2:15). Read Psalm 1:1-2 today and ask yourself whether or not you're prepared to make the sacrifice necessary to shield yourself from ignorance. It is not easy, but it can be accomplished. We can be successful

in combating the spiritual WMD's if we will try!

We protect ourselves from apathy and atrophy by being **focused on the goal** of Heaven, and **active** in reaching for it! When he considered his life, Paul said, "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3:13-14). Could we say this, too? Just as atrophy develops in the parts of the body which are not being used, so also does spiritual atrophy set in the souls of those who do not "*by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*" (Heb. 5:14). Let us not be lazy, but active in the Lord's work on a daily basis. There is much to do, or the Lord wouldn't have called it "work" (I Cor. 15:58)!

Conclusion

In guarding against the weapons of Satan, let us also remember the armor we need to be wearing (Eph. 6:13-18). Let us make sure we have at hand the "*shield of faith*" to guard our souls against Satan's WMD's! Those "*fiery darts*" of Satan can come from anywhere. Therefore, let us not fear, but be prepared, active, patient, and endeavor to serve God all the days of our lives!

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"***Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.***" (Jer. 6:16)