

Is The United States A Christian Nation? (Part 5)

Recognizing and Battling False Spirits and Teachers

John W. Ritenbaugh

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I am going to be continuing the sermon series that I began quite a while back. In fact, this is Part 5 of that series. I am going to start it in a way somewhat the same as I did the other one, except that I am going to draw on an example from a man who is not an American. I am drawing upon this example because it illustrates one of the principles that show that the United States of America never has been a Christian nation. It is not today. It was not even from its founding at all.

This sermon is not going to begin with something about an American, but rather from a man of quite a bit of renown in the area of religion. This man lived about 500 years ago, and tales of this man's life have affected religious thinking and observances of millions of people, and he is unwittingly held in great honor, but the truth is far different from the respect that is given him.

I am including this at the beginning of this message about American Christianity because of the vivid example of the reality of how false the reality is from the honor that is paid to him. I want you to have this example so that you might be able to better relate to what I have been saying about America and thinking America has always been a Christian nation. It has taken the name, but it has never been Christian in the true biblical sense.

The man is Martin Luther. He wrote an unbelievably huge amount of material, so there is plenty to draw from. Over sixty enormous volumes of his writings are available to anybody who can understand German and wants to do the research. He wrote many letters that are available. There are three thousand of them still in existence that can be drawn upon, and what emerges from his own writings is a picture of Martin Luther as a person and a teacher far different from the common portrayal you will always hear in the world.

I am going to do this just by giving you a spattering of quotes from his own writings, and I think you are going to be able to see that what was done with this man consisted of one of the biggest spin jobs in the history of mankind. He is held up as a religious figure—the man who generated the Protestant Reformation—but what emerges from his own writings is that the man really was a political reformer; not religious, but political. He was a revolutionary in that area of the first rank. Now listen to what he says in regard to religion.

You owe nothing to God except faith and confession. In all other things He lets you do whatever you like. You may do as you please without any danger of conscience whatsoever.

It does not matter what people do. It matters only what people believe.

Be a sinner, and sin boldly, but believe more boldly still.

Why do you think that I drink too much wine? It is when the Devil prepares to torment me and mock me, and I wish to take the lead. [In other words he was saying, "I am trying to outdo Satan."]

The word and the work of God is quite clear. That is, that women were made either to be wives or prostitutes.

Lying is a virtue if it is indulged in for the purpose of preventing the fury of the Devil, or made to serve the honor, the life, and the welfare of one's fellowman.

He was a situation-ethicist of the first rank, and whatever he felt like doing at any given time, that is what he did. It did not matter what God said. It only mattered what Martin Luther felt.

I could go on, except to summarize. He said that he had three wives, but he never intended to marry. But he *did* marry. Just that quick he would change his mind, and then he would marry, and then he would commit adultery like the marriage had never taken place. He was often observed being drunk, and he even said that sex within marriage is a sin.

He was a major force in instigating a war between the princes of Germany and the peasants. The peasants revolted, and he was the one who stirred them to revolt, and the uprising resulted in the death of about one hundred thousand people.

His name is plastered all over a very large Protestant denomination as its founder, and I wonder how many people who are a part of that organization realize the things that this man has written. I mean, it is incredible, brethren. I have just given you a very tiny overview.

The men who founded this nation were truly far more sound-minded men and of good character. They built the legal foundation of this nation on very many Christian principles. Now this is very good, but it still does not make either them or the nation Christian, because to be a Christian requires conversion, and conversion requires God's calling, repentance, God's spirit, and consistent submission to the faith. None of our nation's Founders, nor the nation itself, meets these requirements, and if they did, the fruits would indeed show, and this would be a far different nation.

I want you to turn where we left off in my last sermon. That was in I John 4, verses 1 through 6. I am going to re-read these verses.

I John 4:1-6 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

As we left off in that previous sermon I was continuing to expound on why it is so important to understand that since our calling we are involved in a very real spiritual war against the spiritual foes that are invisible to human eyes. This is a war that the Founders of this nation never fought. Our spiritual foes inhabit and dominate what the Bible terms as "the world," and we are commanded to

overcome the world's influence. Another way of stating this responsibility is "to come out of the world." We cannot physically leave, but we can, with God's help, refuse to allow it to shape and dominate our practices and our character.

One of our major responsibilities is to identify who the ones are who are being used by the spirit world and who continue to attempt to influence our lives. This is where the book of I John is helpful, because John helps us to identify characteristics of the spiritual enemy. He specifically names in chapter 2 "the Anti-Christ" and "anti-Christ." That is two different groups we might say there.

Recall that the word "anti-Christ" indicates a usurper. A usurper is one who assumes a position to which he is not entitled. Now *the* Anti-Christ is one *specific* usurper who has not yet appeared on the world scene. So many anti-Christ are lesser religious figures who preach and promote ways of life, but do not follow "the faith once delivered to the saints," and thus they preach false doctrine.

Now I John 4:1-6 addresses how to identify these people. In the first place, it is through evaluation of their message. He uses the word "confesses" there. So for us this is often fairly easy. You can begin to hear them say you do not have to keep the Sabbath, you do not have to keep the Holy Days, you do not have to do this, that, or the other thing, but you must do something else like keeping Sunday. We know right away they have given themselves away. They are not following "the faith once delivered unto the saints." So that one for us is often fairly easy.

Another give-away is that often their message is very popular. Witness Martin Luther. His message was very popular, but it was also anti-Christ despite him using the name Christ so often that he should be the one that everybody followed, but the message was not in support of Christ. And so the world hears them, and that is a give-a-way.

Jesus was the greatest preacher who ever walked on the face of this earth, and when He was done He had 120 followers. It is no wonder He called it "the little flock," and the church of God always is little because the message is not popular. It does not ring true in their ears. It rings true to those God calls, but it does not ring true to the world. More of this a little bit later.

One of the areas as to why God's message is not popular is that God's message is demanding. We might say God takes no guff when it comes to giving orders, and He expects that His children will obey. Jesus put it this way—a little bit more softly, a little bit more description to it. He said, "My way is narrow, and it is straight," meaning difficult. It is demanding in terms of time and energy, devoted to submission to God's way, and it is that way for our good.

God's way is costly to human nature, and that is another thing that causes people to turn away from it unless the person has been called. So obeying God, according to God's dictate, is of great importance, and herein in a sentence or two is why. This is because obeying God according to His dictates has our becoming in the image of Jesus Christ as its purpose. No other message will produce the image of Jesus Christ. It is His, or none at all. That is why He is so demanding, because He wants the end-product to be in the image of His Son and nobody else's image. And so we hear the right things and do the right things so that right characteristics are produced within us.

The second manner of evaluating the preacher has more limitations to us, but in these days of rapid communication it eventually seems to come out, and that is that we must look very carefully and evaluate the way the false prophet lives.

Matthew 7:15-23 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, [or in like manner] every good tree [meaning a human being] bears good fruit, but a bad tree [meaning a bad human being] bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [That means the Lake of Fire]. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' [Miracles are not the proof. It is how they live and what they produce.] And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

You would think that would be so plain and clear to the false prophets. They preach that you do not have to keep the law, and here is Jesus saying, "Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

Let us reflect on this for just a minute or two on America's Founders. We did not actually see the Founders of this nation live their lives, but the report of *how* they lived their lives is evidence to all because it is recorded in history books. They were not preachers. However, the same sort of judgment of evaluation can be given them. So the evidence of their lives is that they lived in the same manner as everybody else lived in their time.

Think of when the Declaration of Independence was written and put into effect, and of when the Constitution was written and put into effect, and apply this to the Founders. For example, the Founders believed in going to war. Contrast that to what Jesus said. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world, else My servants would fight." Jesus' servants do not go to war, even for Him. The kind of war we are talking about is a carnal war.

Those people believed in using the sword. That is, using the government's power to coerce and impel people to accept the government's agendas. Ah! There is something that is topical today. Do you know that this "Stimulus Package" has rules within it that you have to use this money exactly the same way as dictated within the law, or they will cut it off? See, they are using their powers to coerce behavior. That money is going to mean a lot to some areas, and so they are going to do exactly as the law says. I will tell you brethren, it is going to impinge on your life, and you are going to lose freedoms. Those health regulations are going to impact very greatly on those of us who are older. If you have not been told earlier, you are going to be shocked at what is going to happen as a result of the regulations concerning the money that is going into the health area.

The actions of the Founders of this nation and the way they lived reveal where their heart was. It was in this world. It was in the world despite their generally high moral character. They were not converted to God's way. They had not been given God's Holy Spirit, and therefore they did not have "the faith once delivered unto the saints" to guide their life.

I said this in this last sermon, and I am going to say it again. I have said it a number of times that belief and behavior are *always* harnessed together. We behave according to what we believe.

We are going to continue on this about how it can be made available to us, as to the manner in which the false ministers are living.

Let us go back to the Old Testament to Numbers 32:23. This is a scripture to have in your memory bank. Moses is speaking, and incidentally he is speaking to representatives of the three tribes—Gad, Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

Numbers 32:23 But if you do not do so, [The "do so" was that if they did not keep their word to the other tribes of Israel] then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.

What this tells me is that people can sin in secret, but it really was not secret. God saw it. Now what will He do about it? That ought to be a cause for concern...what He does about it. Knowing what I know about God, His first approach is to be very gentle. "Okay. You did this in secret. Now let us see what we can do about bringing repentance to pass." If He cannot get us to repent, I can guarantee you something else is going to happen, which we will eventually get to here, but first we are going to go to Isaiah 59, verse 12 and see what Isaiah wrote.

Isaiah 59:12-13 For our transgressions are multiplied before You, And our sins testify against us; [They cannot really be hidden.] For our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them: [Martin Luther said we do not even have to worry about our conscience. Oh yes we do!] In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

What Isaiah was saying there reinforces Numbers 32. Now I am going to take you to the New Testament, to Luke 12, verses 1 through 3. This one is kind of interesting.

Luke 12:1-3 In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.

Do you understand what I am getting at? We are talking about the false ministers. God is not going to hide their sins. This is the same as saying, "I will show you what they are like." So this is a truism God enforces. He makes known the fruits of their lives on a "need-to-know" basis, and the false prophets' ignorance and the hypocrisy which largely consists of a piety that is put on just for the sake of appearance, will be discovered.

So let us not lose track of the importance of what Jesus said there in John 18:36—that neither He nor His servants are of this world. There are two different kingdoms, if I can put it this way, and they are at odds with one another.

It is through God's calling and conversion that we have been spiritually made a part of Christ's body. In fact, there is a place where it says that we fill Him out. He is the Head, and the rest of us are part of the body, and we fill Him out and make Him, as it were, into a whole being. Therefore, because of that, we are no longer seen by God as being a part of this world, and this, brethren, has dramatic affects. This is what I John is all about. He is telling us that there are two different groups operating at the same time, and the one of them is our enemy, and we have to be aware.

We are going to look a bit more closely at verses I John 4 , 4 through 6.

I John 4:4-6 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them [the anti-Christ], because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

As we move through sanctification, the fact of these three verses, and the fact that there are these two groups that are opposed to one another, has to become as real to us as it is to God, because the Bible makes a very clear distinction between God's children and the world. The distinction is spiritual, but it does have some physical effects. Now we are in the world, and it completely surrounds us. There is no place where we can physically move to that the world does not exist, because it saturates every culture of the entire earth.

Now I am going to take you to another verse that illustrates this in a way that we need to make part of our life. We are going to go to II Corinthians 6, verses 17 and 18.

II Corinthians 6:17-18 Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty."

Separating from the world is a demanded condition to be and to remain as one of God's children. This demand is repeated in several other places in the Bible. Probably the best known is the one in Revelation 18:4 where it says, "Come out from among them, and be separate." Remember, this is a demanded condition from God. To be and to remain part of His family, we have got to come out of the world.

We are going to go back to I John again, to chapter 3, verse 13.

I John 3:13 Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.

This is a recurring theme of Jesus and Paul, especially.

We are now going to go back to the book of John and pick up on something Jesus said in His farewell message to His disciples.

John 15:18-21 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.

There He made clear the dividing line between us and the world. We know the Father and the Son. They do not. They may use His name. They may refer to Him quite often, but they do not know Him. I think you understand that "know" indicates intimacy, and can even indicate a sexual act. We know God in an intimate way because He is close to us. He holds the world at a distance from Him, and so

they do not have an intimate relationship with Him. They know *of* Him. They know *about* Him, but they do not know Him because there is no relationship there. That is a big difference between the two.

We are now going to go to John 17, verses 14 and 15.

John 17:14-15 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

I hope that by this time I have established in your mind, and you have accepted it, as it is going to be a part of the operating procedure of your life, and that is to know the way God and His Son Jesus Christ feel about the world. They are the enemy of Jesus Christ even though they know of Him. They know a good bit about him, but the world, brethren, is the abode of the enemy.

The world is the abode of the enemy, but it is not because of the people. It is because the world is home-base for the physically unseen demon spirits who are using the world's people to accomplish their end, which is aimed at destroying God's purpose. They do not know—because they do not have an intimate relationship with God—that they are being used to accomplish somebody else's end. So they act the way they do because they do not know God. But because God loves us, He wants us to understand and to make use of the fact that we know that the enemy is out there. We cannot see them. We cannot hear them. We cannot smell them. We cannot taste them, but they are there, because God's word says they are there.

Now back to I John 4 again.

I John 4:4 You are of God.

We are going to go back to Matthew 4, verses 1 through 4. I will repeat something that I said in my previous sermon, and that is every confrontation that we have with these unseen spirits begins with an intellectual battle. Now here is a pattern that is established for us in Matthew 4, beginning in verse 1.

Matthew 4:1-3 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter [Satan] came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

Now for one of us that probably would get us on the defensive and upset. "What do you mean, '*If*'?" "I *am* a Christian," see?

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

The battle is going to be over God's word. This is why I said every confrontation begins with an intellectual battle. "**Has God said ...?**" That is what he said to Adam and Eve. He was challenging, first of all, their knowledge of God, and if they really were intimate with God, they would know what God said, and they would track what God said. But he had them on the defensive immediately, and they could not think properly and they did not use the weapon of the word of God to refute the challenge to their knowledge of God.

Do you understand that what is going to be fired at us—the artillery shells that are going to come at us—are going to be over truth? It is going to begin with an intellectual challenge to our knowledge of God, and that is to just get us in a weakened position so that we will sin. We will drop our guard in confusion.

Now let us recognize a truth. We may not be getting challenged by Satan directly, only indirectly, but we may be getting challenged directly by a lesser demon. So we are not only challenged by Satan himself. Regardless of whether it is Satan or one of the lesser demons, I think we have to admit, brethren, that intellectually we are badly outmatched. They are, in most cases, far smarter than we are. They may know God's word better than we do. When I say "know," I do not mean they really grasp and understand and appreciate God's word. They do not know God's word in a way that matters—in the way in which we really believe it. It makes all the difference in the world as to what our behavior is going to be, whether we trust it, or whether it is just something light and fluffy moving through our mind, because it really has a great deal of meaning to us.

I want you to notice back in I John 4, again, the people John was writing to were no different than you and me. God says He has called the weak of the world. In so many words He tells us He has done this to amaze the great people in the world. When they come to the place when they understand they will say, "These people were *Your* children?" But notice what verse 4 says.

I John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and [despite being outmatched, you] have overcome *them* .

That applies to you and me too. You people in the room here, you have overcome them too. Do you know what the proof is? You are still here. They have not gotten you to fold up your cards and leave. That is the best evidence you have that you are beating them at their game.

Now what do we have going for us that is also unseen? But I would prefer to call it "the big artillery." Guess who is really winning the battles? It is Jesus Christ. If we are maintaining a good relationship with Him, and we are really coming to know Him, despite our weaknesses intellectually, and even some of our spiritual weaknesses, He steps in and blocks them off from overcoming us.

There is a war going on that the Bible tells us about between Jesus Christ and His angels, and Satan's angels, where Jesus' angels are fighting in our behalf, because to them we are just like little kids running around who need to be protected.

But still, remember this always that God in the end is going to have to be able to trust us to some degree that is acceptable to Him, and so the tests that are coming from the demons, and on occasions from Satan himself, will always be tempered so that we do not get in over our head. That is what a good parent does. The tests might be very difficult, but nonetheless, you see, the big artillery is there, and that is Jesus Christ who is watching over us, and as Paul says in I Corinthians 10, He will always make a way of escape. He is faithful that way because He does not want to lose us.

In God's creative efforts in preparing us for the Kingdom of God...if we fail a test we are going to get it again until we pass it to His satisfaction. He is not playing games. He is deadly serious about getting us into the Kingdom of God, so He is going to allow the challenges to come upon us, and we have to do all that is within our power to keep from breaking face with Him. Brethren, that ought to be encouraging. We know the way is going to be narrow and difficult, but there is somebody watching over us constantly.

Notice the change in pronouns; verse 4 said "you," verse 5 says "they."

I John 4:5 They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them.

The "they" are the anti-Christians who are putting these temptations before the people of God. They are the ones Satan and the demons are using to try to trip us up, and so "they"—if we will carefully do our responsibilities—will not be able to trip us up. But on the other hand, they will be readily accepted by the world because the world is of the same spirit as those who are attempting to tempt us.

Now look at verse 6. The pronoun changes from "you" to "they" to "we." There is something very interesting when combined with another verse or two. Notice the distinction here.

I John 4:6 We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

The "we" in verse 6 are the apostles. The "you" (in verse 4) are the members of the congregation. The "they" (in verse 5) is the enemy that is out in the world. We could say the "we" is the ministry that God has sent. Even though the "we" is also part of the "you," there is a dissension right here so that John can get his lesson across.

Now what is it the world rejects? The world rejects the preaching of the apostles of God. Under the Old Covenant they rejected the true prophets of God. In an overall sense what they do is reject the messages of the messengers of God. They rejected Jesus Christ, who is very clearly called an apostle in Hebrews chapter 3. An apostle is a messenger. He is one sent bearing a message. This begins to become very important, because Jesus told the apostles in Matthew 10 that if they reject the apostles, they have rejected Him; and if they have rejected Jesus Christ, they have rejected the Father. If they reject the messenger, they have rejected the messenger of God, and they have rejected God Himself—the One who sent the message.

This gets very interesting. I want you to turn back to Romans 10, a very famous scripture.

Romans 10:17 So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

What Paul said there is a summary statement that ties in very well with what we just read here.

Romans 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?"

Here we have an Old Testament prophet—a great figure in the Old Testament epic there. Isaiah found that he was rejected by the people. So was Jeremiah rejected by the people. In fact, as Jesus said, Jerusalem has a record of rejecting the prophets of God and putting them to death. They rejected the ones that God sent to give the people the messages they needed to hear.

Romans 10:17 So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The faith that he is talking about has to be *saving* faith. People can have faith in an automobile, or faith in any kind of a product, but when in the context of the Bible, especially in this context right here, he is talking about "the faith that saves." Here is where the messenger begins to become

important. It ties to something I said earlier. It is this: That in order for a person to become in the image of Jesus Christ, he has to hear, he has to believe, and he has to follow "the faith once delivered to the saints." Why? Because only that message will end up with the person being in the image of Jesus Christ. No other message will do. No other message will produce the same thing. That is exactly what Paul is talking about in Romans 10. It is what John is talking about in I John 3:15.

The only messages that will save are those messages that come from God through the minister that He sent. This is the ultimate reason why we should not listen to false prophets, because the message is not going to lead to what God wants it to lead to. It is only that message that will produce the faith in the individual that will end in salvation. Brethren, that really narrows things down tremendously.

Since the world will not listen to that message—I John 4:6—there is no salvation in what they hear. The difference is in the message. I said earlier, the battle is over truth. That is what the war is being fought over, and it is this area that we have to use the knowledge God has given to us to make choices that are based within the message *He* gave to us.

So did America and its Founding Fathers hear the message that came from an apostle? They did not. The closest they could come to was what was printed in the Bibles that they had available to them. Even that, though, was reasonably good because it helped produce in them a very good carnal character.

I do not know whether we are capable of really appreciating what I am saying here—appreciating the value of the messages that we have heard and by which we were converted.

One thing God warns us of in His word is that truth is not always clearly defined. That is why God raises up teachers. It is to help people to search through the messages—this Book—that came through others He sent with a message so that it would be available to us. So He then gives us teachers to help us, to lead us, and guide us so that the truth begins to accumulate within us.

But every one of us is responsible to do our own searching and seeking of God individually and personally. It can not all be put on the shoulders of the ones God sends to do the preaching. Each of us has to do his or her own research as well, and when our own researches are combined with what the apostles help us to clearly define with the things that are written in the book, as well as the teaching God gives us through His ministry, then the accumulation of truth begins to be multiplied and enables us to get ammunition to fight the battles against the demon spirits in this war. Our guns, as it were, are being loaded by the truth that is given to us that we believe and make use of.

We live in an unusually relativistic age. Everything has become relative. Regarding truth, they say, "Oh, that is the way you look at it." That is what people have decided. But we must know and understand and really believe what John 17:17 says, that we are sanctified by truth—*God's* truth. This is what we need.

We are going to go now to II Corinthians 10, and we will just summarize something here.

II Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments [Remember I told you an intellectual challenge is usually what will come first.] and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

A very important principle for our winning this warfare we are involved in.

The spiritual realm is clearly divided between two distinct entities. There is the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world, and we are involved in a very real war that is spiritual in nature, and we are the nation that is under attack. We do not make war against them. They make war against us because they are inspired to do that by the demon spirits that are influencing them.

Brethren, you can be sure that the things that are taking place in the nations, and most especially within the United States of America—those governmental things that are taking place—that they have one end in mind, and that is to destroy God's family. There are going to be an awful lot of people who are persecuted and maybe even put to death because they are caught in the line of fire that is taking place, and is going to be aimed at the Church of God. It has always been this way.

I am going to turn to some scriptures that are given in Ephesians 6. We pick this up about the war.

Ephesians 6:10-12 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

As I said earlier, it is not the people. It is the demon spirits that are motivating the people and influencing them to be our enemy. We do not want to be enemies with them. They do not know why, but they do not like us. We are harmless, but that is not the way the demons see us.

Ephesians 6:12-17 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Now seen from our side, looking at what is being aimed at us, the battle, brethren, is over truth. Did you notice that God is not calling upon us to defeat them? Except for one piece of equipment, everything he mentioned is defensive. The one offensive weapon we have is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Brethren, that is exactly what Jesus did. He defeated the attack against Him by Satan by quoting, believing in, and trusting God's word. This is again why I said the battle is going to be over truth. Every battle will begin with the challenge of our knowledge of God and His word. It will be an intellectual battle.

Did you notice that God said, "I just want you to stand"? "Don't get knocked off your feet." "Don't get run over." "Don't lay down on the job." "Stand up to them." "If you believe My word, you will win." We will win, not just not on the basis of that, but because Jesus Christ is at our side.

There are three points of encouragement there for us. Remember we looked at verse 4, in I John 4 which said that we are overcoming them already; because if we have not caved in to them, we have not given up, we are enduring it to this point.

Here is what we have going in our favor. First, we are no longer deceived and blind, and though our foes are invisible, we *know* the war is going on. We know just by the evidence that is out there in the Church of God, we are being attacked. The idea is to break our will and to break our trust in the word of God. If that is broken, our will be broken.

The second thing is that we have truth by which to defend ourselves from attack. That is what Jesus did. He defended Himself, and then we might say attacked with the word of God, and He parried Satan's barge by refuting with truth. And then third, another encouraging thing is that the heavy artillery—Jesus Christ—is always with us. He knows exactly what kind of level of testing that we are prepared for, and He will always make a way of escape.

Now here is my overall conclusion to this point in the series. I am not done with this series yet. America's Founders and the American nation, despite being positively influenced by Christian principles and inserting some of them into our founding document, has never truly been a part of this spiritual war. They were not called. They were not converted. They never had "the faith once delivered to the saints," and therefore, though they had a fairly high level of carnal character, they never truly lived the Christian way except for some isolated parts of it. The clear evidence of this is in its wars, its battles. There has always been carnal wars that all the kingdoms of this world engage in, in order to defend or to compel its agenda and way of life.