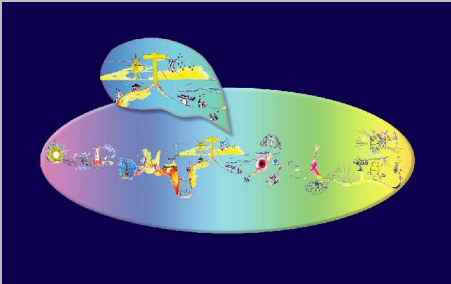


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AUGUST 2006

NO 130



Eternal Fellowship News Bulletin

We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Hebrew Bible and New Testaments) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

All activities are free of charge and no obligation whatever. Just enjoy our fellowship!

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HULDAH MINISTRY

LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

【 SPIRITUAL WARFARE -2- 】

So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest'" See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest'"

And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest." It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. Therefore God again set a certain day,

calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. Hebrews 3:1-4:11.

Jesus' half brother James pointed out the responsibility for actions of our flesh as God's people in his letter, James chapters 3 and 4: *'We all stumble in many ways...The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ...No man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig-tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water...But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice....What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desire that battle within you? You want something but don't get it...You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.'* In this context, James teaches that when the devil attacks, if we believers have a right relationship with God, i.e., being submissive to Him, but not friendship with this world that hates God and His principles, then we can resist the devil and overcome spiritual warfare. Man's vulnerability in flesh is inevitable, especially, controlling the tongue is a far reaching target: *'If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check....no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.'* Within us as natural man, there is a battle between God's law and Satan's law. If our desire, motives, thoughts and emotions submit not to God's law but to Satan's, i.e., the principles of this world, there will be many problems; rebellion, contempt against God, fights, quarrels and contention in relation to others, and bitter envy, selfish ambition in our hearts. When James exhorted the followers of Christ: *'Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up,'* he seems to have addressed every believer as a continual sinner as if they were no way guaranteed to be wholeheartedly able to surrender to the Lord. If this is our reality as natural man, even born-again believers in Christ, wouldn't it be right to prevent ourselves from condemning ourselves, or even other believers of their illness, unceasing troubles and difficulties simply as a result of our or their sins? There is without doubt a kind of trend among the flock of the Lord, Christians, in that they hate to refer to unseen spiritual forces; the devil, demons and devil's causes, and instead, they try to find reasons of problems in man's sinfulness, probably something like hidden sins. However, if we properly acknowledge the reality of the existence of the evil behind the scene we may realise more clearly our own helplessness and powerlessness against demonic seduction and deception.

We can pick up several examples out of the biblical accounts where we can see the enemy's seduction and deception cunningly working behind the scene, while man is of course responsible for his or her actions as a result of the enemy's drive. First, the fall of the first human-beings, Adam and Eve, was apparently a result of falling into the temptation by the devil behind his agent, the serpent. The tempted couple, completely deceived, most probably because of lack of total submission to God, wrongly chose to eat from a forbidden tree, the *'tree of the knowledge of good and evil,'* instead of simply depending on the *'tree of life'* in the garden Eden. If the latter was a symbol of a life-giving God, the former was a symbol of sin and death-causing Satan. As consequence of misuse of man's free will, which means rebellion against God's lordship over man, Satan successfully led man into sin. Secondly, in the case of a righteous man Job, behind a series of abrupt and enigmatic attacks upon him, his possession and his household, there was Satan. Theology-oriented Job's friends that believed the "cause and effect relationship" as reasons of man's troubles, tried to persuade Job to repent of his hidden sins. However, the truth was that Satan, who was jealous of Job's steadfast faith in God was attacking him, yet he was still under Sovereign God's permission. The devil's aim was to try to prove the validity of his theory that Job's righteousness and blameless attitudes towards God simply depended on God's blessing and

protection upon him and accordingly, if God were to remove his well-being, property and all his possessions, he would certainly curse Him to His face. Job, though he could neither understand the reason of such sudden affliction, nor fathom God's will at all, never yielded to Satan's temptation to curse God. Finally, after duration of perseverance he overcame the difficulty. Battling through spiritual warfare, he encountered God more directly and clearly than before. Furthermore, what Job was deeply convinced of was his utter helplessness and unworthiness before the Almighty God. His conclusive utterance of repentance tells us how a deeper knowledge of God resulted in his real encounter with Him and through perseverance, i.e., a time of trial, how he learnt humility, i.e., a sign of the mature servant of God: ***“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my council without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. “You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.’ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”*** (Job 42:2-6). Thirdly, when King David took a census of Israel, the Scripture says that it was led by Satan. Also the Scripture says that God allowed David to do it as well. It was probably because He wanted David himself to be convicted of his ambitious motives out of the flesh. Later, his conscience being stricken, David repented and begged the Lord to take away the guilt of having done such a foolish thing even by ignoring his commanders' reluctance to do it. It is interesting that although Satan had incited man to sin to displease God and to meet his purpose to stand against God's people, Israel, in the end, God was able to use it to lead man into repentance. God's Sovereignty paradoxically used Satan's trap as divine opportunity so that David would turn to Him with far closer relationship through repentance. Fourthly, when Jesus foretold of Peter's betrayal, He implied its cause to be Satan's and yet it was allowed to happen under God's permission: ***“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*** (Lk.22:31-32). Although it is true that Peter fell into temptation, i.e., Satan's trap, and denied Christ three times at his crisis in his own right, so he should be responsible for his wrong actions. Nevertheless, it was the Lord Himself that allowed Satan to sift Peter. The Lord's purpose for building up Peter, His precious servant as an invincible leader of the wavering community of the Lord's followers after His death had already overruled Satan's schemes of driving His people astray from the Lord, even before Peter's denial of Christ took place. Peter needed to be changed so as to become a steadfast leader, yet, only through his stumbling and repentance. The fact that Jesus had prayed for Peter's recovery from his utter despair over denial of Christ before it took place is worth noting. Because of Christ's intercession, Peter was able to turn back to His strength and faith in Christ again and to maintain his faith to the end. It is encouraging for us as well that Christ is continually interceding for all those who come to God through Him so that they would maintain the faithfulness to Him to the end.

All the examples shown above seem to indicate that there will inevitably be failure, problems and difficulties in a true believer's life. This may remind us of the well known passage about God's disciplines over His people in Hebrew 12: ***‘Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons...God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.’*** This exhortation corresponds to Paul's teaching that the Lord sometimes judges us because being disciplined by Him, we will not be condemned with the world. In the same context, Paul said: ***‘But if we judge ourselves, we would not come under judgment.’*** In other words, Paul's teaching might be comprehended in the following way. Whenever we sin, if we judge ourselves correctly and ask forgiveness of the Lord with wholehearted repentance, we will neither be condemned by Satan, nor disciplined by the Lord. Each of the believers should examine him- or her-self whenever he or she commemorates the Lord's new covenant in His blood, which means the believers should always been kept in a right relationship with Him to the end. Otherwise, if the believers continually live in an unworthy manner as the redeemed by Christ's blood without repentance, God will allow Satan to cause illness and troubles to them so that they will be saved by sinning no more. Accordingly, as for once-confessed believers God will continually look after them with loving care, even by disciplining them and punishing them as His loving rod, so that every single one of them will finally be accepted as His true son. For the sake of salvation of all who come to God through Christ, God disciplines

them and lets them produce His attributes; holiness, righteousness and peace in the end. God's loving rod is discipline for His beloved, true sons in this age but not punitive punishment in the coming age. Daily examination of ourselves to see whether or not we are on the right track to salvation, and also daily repentance would correctly lead us to a path of righteousness and holiness, which Christ Himself passed through and kept open for His followers. For those who are able to judge themselves in this way and who could renew their mind so as not to conform to the pattern of this world but to God's law alone, the Lord needn't discipline them at all.

As examined above, our path of salvation is to battle against spiritual warfare. No matter how furiously the devil attacks us if we are persistent not to compromise with this world and if we are submissive to God's principles alone, we would be overcomers and be able to enter the kingdom of God along with all God-promised rewards. This expectation of rewards would motivate our wholehearted submission to God and only such a single-minded commission to Him can overpower the devil's attack, and ultimately it is the devil that flees from us. The validity of this expectation is being assured by the ancient Israel's experience of how she entered the promised land, the possession of which God had promised to her, and how she conquered and possessed it. At the same time how the majority of the Israelites failed to enter the land leaves a serious and important message to us as well, who are called to be overcomers **'against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms,'** in order that we are guaranteed of our inheritance. The possibility of failure would befall us just as it happened to the ancient Israel, however, the Scripture quoted at the beginning tells us that the way of salvation, i.e., entering God's rest is still wide open. As those who provoked God's anger during the time of testing in the wilderness by hardening their hearts with rebellion and by testing and trying God failed in entering His rest, the promised land, so if we fail in holding on to our courage and hope towards what is promised to possess in steadfast faith to the end, we would lose the rewards promised to **'God's house'**. What turns us away from the living God is "our own sinful, unbelieving heart hardened by sin's deceitfulness," which might be expressed in a different way, as "our own evil-infiltrated, unbelieving heart hardened by Satan's deceitfulness." The so-called original sin that was brought in to man by Satan after the fall of man is the root of every sin and it is none other but Satan himself. Sin, an embodiment of the indwelling Satan in man's fallen body, i.e., "flesh" is the final weapon of the enemy to destroy what the devil hates most, i.e., God's kingdom and His people, from within. Accordingly, Satan is looking for any opportunity to seize to attack God's people by infiltrating their mind (emotions, thoughts, decision) through their flesh. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that hearing the Word of God alone, we cannot resist the devil unless faith is combined with it. Those who were disobedient and rebellious to God, because of unbelief in spite of hearing the message of God, in consequence were deceived by the devil to be driven away from God and thus, they lost their inheritance. Paul says that the offering of your whole bodies (thoughts, emotions, decisions, actions) as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, and the renewing of your mind, i.e., to submit your whole being to God is a way to resist the devil. In other words, not conforming to the pattern of this world cannot be achieved by man's own effort or power but by trusting in God alone.

The ancient Israel's experience in the wilderness revealed the truth that though God's law required His people to fulfil it, they had no strength to achieve it. For the Israelites it was utterly impossible to fully meet the righteous requirements of the law, the reason for which Paul explains in the following way; **'the sinful mind is hostile God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.'**(Ro.8:6-8). After experiencing the struggle between the overwhelming power of the flesh that wants to overrule himself and God's righteous law, Paul found the only way out of this battle. It was Christ Jesus alone that was able to set him free from the law of sin and death. The only solution found lies in the principle that the indwelling Spirit within him, who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to his mortal body and thus, instead of living lives according to the sinful nature, if he puts to death the misdeeds of the flesh by the Holy Spirit, he will live. This **'law of the Spirit of life'** through Christ Jesus is our God-given salvation. The law of the Spirit of life alone enables us to be away from the **'law of sin'** in our flesh and also to achieve the requirements of God's law. If we are able to live according to this law of the Spirit of life, the result will without doubt be victorious in Christ. This is a summary of Paul's letter to Romans chapters 7, 8 and 12. Paul's prayer is that we in Christ may all acknowledge the Sovereignty of the Lord over all demonic forces and the fact that we are completely secure and protected by Him and also that we are given His authority to demonstrate God's kingdom against them. Scripture tells us that being involved in battles, strive and fight against spiritual attacks is normal for us, Christ's followers, through which we are to deal with our old ways of thinking and the things that belong to the worldly principles, and to be transformed to live under the new order of the lordship of Christ.