

Spiritual Minefields

Satanic Obstacles and How to Overcome Them

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Have you ever noticed that certain of our past experiences are recalled more vividly and in greater detail than most others? Does it not seem that the more intense the experience the more deeply ingrained the imprint on our minds and memories is? And even though some experiences may have happened many years ago we can recall those events as though they occurred only yesterday. We remember them with great clarity—reliving every moment, feeling, and emotion.

One of the most intense experiences of my life, aside from having to give my first speech in Spokesman Club, was my time spent serving in the Korean War. I am going to rehearse certain intense, personal experiences which happened during this time. The intent of which is to focus on an aspect of warfare—a brutal and horribly destructive aspect of warfare—and use it as an analogy for our edification and forewarning as we traverse this dangerous end time.

Let me tell you a little of my time in Korea—The Land of the Morning Calm. I was assigned to "Dog" Company, which was actually "D" Company. This was a heavy weapons company, which meant that we carried mortars, recoilless rifles, and machine guns (among other weapons).

When I joined my outfit I was approximately four or five miles behind the front lines. I spent one week with them. It was good that I did because they gave us training there that we simply did not receive back in basic training. We had to disassemble a machine gun and then re-assemble it in sixty seconds—all the while wearing a blindfold! This was to prepare us for battle. Plus I came to know the people with whom I would be fighting.

Now we had set up in a position which was rather unusual. We had the low ground and the Chinese had the high ground. This was not a good position in which to be! Our bunkers were built into a railroad bed and we used the rails on top to hold the logs and the sandbags. The sides of the bunkers were, of course, made of dirt and they were sandbagged. We had positioned our guns out in front and out of the back was the entrance and exit through just the one opening.

We were called the MLR—the main line of resistance. Even stranger than having the low ground in this strategic confrontation was that the MSR—the main supply route—was in front of us, the main line of resistance. In other words, it was *between* us and the Chinese!

And so whenever supply trucks arrived they would arrive at night. There was the constant danger of being shot or drawing mortar fire from the enemy.

I remember the night that we moved up. We arrived on a ridge above a valley and it was about 8:00 p.m. and dark by that time. There were search lights illuminating the valley below and the Chinese position. It seemed like some Hollywood movie. Only this was all too real!

I was wondering what this was going to be like. I knew I was not going to be killed. I had seen all the war movies. And in them the *good guys* never were killed. But, nevertheless, I was nervous, frightened, and excited all at once.

In the morning we were transported by truck and we traded places with the soldiers on the line. We were then told that if we lived two weeks we would probably live our entire tour of duty. During these two weeks we would learn the sounds of the battlefield, what to do and how to conduct ourselves.

We settled in and began to clean out our bunker as we set up our guns. As I settled in, I really began to notice my surroundings. I would sit behind my gun and look out of the bunker. Before me was a lovely valley. It was full of flowers and bushes and cypress trees. There was a creek and a lovely grassy area. It was about three hundred yards wide and several miles long.

On the far side of the valley were some low foothills and behind that was the hill called "1062" (ten-six-two). This is where the Chinese lived. The sky was almost always blue and the clouds were white and fleecy. It looked just like a picture postcard of a lovely Oriental landscape.

This was the Kumwah Valley. It was a valley in which anyone would be thrilled to hike. One might even want to picnic there with their family. It was a beautiful valley.

But no one would dare hike in this particular valley. If one were to walk in it they would have to walk warily. The reason for this was the small, red triangles made out of metal that hung on the barbed-wire fence just across the road. There was one word posted on these signs and it was spelled—M-I-N-E-S!

It was a minefield! Our side had set up this minefield to prevent the Chinese from reaching our position. The Chinese had a minefield on their side to keep us from reaching their position.

You might be wondering what lessons we are to learn from this scenario. Remember that we have a goal to reach, an objective. There is one who does not want us to reach it! And just as an army constructs a minefield to stop the enemy or to slow him down, so Satan has laid a minefield to confuse and to wound and, if possible, to destroy us! He does not want us to reach the Kingdom of God.

Various mines are designed to cause different kinds of damage. There are anti-personnel mines. This sounds so sanitary and so clean, does it not? It sounds like a title or description that could only come from an office. And I say that with every bit of sarcasm I can muster!

I do not know what minefields are like today, or what they were like in the Vietnamese War, but forty-three years ago we had a small mine which, I think, may have been a Claymor. It was a small mine about ten inches across and was buried in the ground about eight to ten inches. Anyone one stepping on it would be killed or he would lose his legs at the very least!

This mine was not designed to kill people around the one unsuspecting soldier who tripped the weapon. Normally the platoon was spread out enough to avoid any collateral damage save for, perhaps, some slight wounding. But the Claymor mine, nonetheless, was a very deadly mine and something about which we were all concerned.

The English had a little "dandy" that resembled a six inch clay pigeon. This mine was never

buried. The men in the trenches and foxholes would arm these mines and set them out in front of them in a half-circle—about six or eight of them. Anyone stepping on them or crawling up and putting their hand on one of them would lose an extremity. In the morning the mines would be carefully picked up, disarmed, and stored away to be set down again that evening.

But the mine about which we were all most concerned was the *Bouncing Betty*. This mine was built on a little metal platform about ten inches long and five inches wide on one end and an inch or so at the other. It was triangular in shape. On the small end was a metal rod about one foot long with three little "feelers" sticking out of the top—somewhat like an upside-down tripod. On the broader side of the base was what looked like a soft drink can, the center of which contained a powder charge running the length of the can.

This can was packed with 3/8th inch ball bearings all along the charge. It was buried in the ground with just the "feelers" showing. At the "tickling" of one of the feelers a small, muffled "puff" would shoot the can about six feet into the air where it would explode, shooting the ball bearings everywhere. This would result in the killing and/or injuring of all in the vicinity of this destructive mine.

We may find it very difficult to relate to such an experience. The vast majority reading this article are not—nor have ever been—faced with such peril. We are not cognizant of how terrifying and deadly dangerous a minefield truly is!

The most deceptively hazardous aspect of a minefield is that it can look so very peaceful. One may not even be aware of the danger until he is actually in the middle of one. And then the terrifying realization of not knowing what to do about it floods the mind!

In these end times, the minefields which Satan constructs are not like the types just described. His devious explosive devices are not laid just to cause physical damage, although they very easily can. They are set to cause spiritual damage: confusion, doubt, fear, resentment, terrible wounding, and spiritual death!

And it is these mines with which we are here concerned.

We must be made aware of the types of spiritual landmines that are laid before us. We must know how to extricate ourselves if we find ourselves in the midst of a "minefield." And we must know how to safely traverse the course which is already set before us so that we may reach our objective, our destination—the Kingdom of God.

The first mine with which we are faced does not, like a physical mine, seem like one. It is hidden. It is subtle. It is the very world in which we live!

For some of us who were born in the 1930s and early '40s, we remember a time much different than that of today. We were just coming out of an economic depression and Hollywood was producing movies like "The Five Little Pennies And How They Grew."

The theme of this movie was about a family—a mother and her five children who had lost their husband and father, the head of the family. There was no welfare program. There was no "safety net" of which to speak. This woman *worked* to take care of her family. She washed windows, scrubbed floors, took in laundry, and did all she could to raise her children and put

them through college. It showed the tremendous appreciation the children had for their mother and how they helped, too.

Other movies showed husbands and wives going through difficult times and yet they stayed together. Upright character and honesty were always portrayed as valuable assets to see people through the most difficult of circumstances. It was a wonderful time in which to live.

Every Sunday Oakland, California would be shut down, with the exception of the movie houses opening in the afternoon. I recall there was only one drugstore open in all of Oakland and you had to hike eighteen blocks to get there. The whole nation shut down on what they thought was the Sabbath.

Today we do not have any idea what that was like! It was most peaceful! Everyone sat on their porches and congregated around the neighborhood—and talked. It was, again, a wonderful time.

During World War II we had the scrap metal drives. There was one area which was one block long and two blocks deep where they had a pile of scrap metal which was two stories high! They had engine blocks and even a working shotgun piled on this scrapheap and nobody touched it. Do you know why? Because it was for the war effort—it was for the country!

If we attempted something like that today there would be nothing left on that lot! It would be stolen and sold!

The times were different then. The very character of the nation, though it was not perfect, was a lot more stable, solid, and moral. There were sins and there were problems, but neighbors helped parents raise their children. The character of the nation helped us to have solid homes and a good work ethic.

But today we have a nation tearing down the family and causing divorce. Our teens and younger children are being perverted with every kind of vicious and morally wrong examples of family and work ethic in movies, television, and books. The culture around us works to destabilize and confuse—instead of strengthen and guide.

We in the church have seen a world which was fairly stable (relatively speaking) become unstable and frightening. Even our former church affiliation, which was so strong and solid, has crumbled. And if we think this does not rub off on us and have a negative, destructive effect on us, then we are *wrong!*

Jesus Christ saw this coming and He gave us a warning.

II Timothy 3:1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

The phrase "perilous times" has various meanings. It means violent times, fierce times, demonic times. These are wild and difficult times, grievous times, hard-to-bear times. It means hard and rough (not tame), savage and evil (like a pack of wolves on the attack), very hard to deal with. These are dangerous and furious times! These are times that can ensnare and entrap us!

Why are times like this?

II Timothy 3:2 For men will be lovers of themselves...

People will be lovers of pleasure, self-centered and selfish. They will be more concerned with themselves and not willing to put up with any discomfort. They will want their pleasure at the expense of others. This is the time in which we live. This is the end time!

II Timothy 3:2 ...boasters...

They will be braggarts. There will be people wandering around boasting. They will be insolent as they do wrong to others for the pleasure that they receive from the afflicting them.

II Timothy 3:2 ...proud...

This word means puffed up and is often used of one who rejects God in his own mind and by his very conduct!

II Timothy 3:2 ...blasphemers...

People will be impious. They will be slow, sluggish, and stupid. They will be defiling and destroying the good names of others.

II Timothy 3:2 ...disobedient to parents...

They willfully disbelieve and they will be unreachable. They will be unbelieving toward the Word of God.

II Timothy 3:2 ...unthankful...

They will be ungrateful. They will not appreciate what we have been given in this country.

II Timothy 3:2 ...unholy...

They will be detestable and they will hate God!

II Timothy 3:2 unloving...

In the Authorized Version it says men will be without natural affection. As we look at this world today we see what is done with little children: the abortions, babies dumped in trash cans or burned with cigarettes, being abandoned—they are without natural affection. They are without

family love.

II Timothy 3:3 ...unforgiving...

Again, the Authorized Version translates this as trucebreakers. They are irreconcilable. These are they who refuse to lay aside their hatred and animosity toward others. They are in a constant state of war.

II Timothy 3:3 ...slanderers...

They are false accusers and they try and destroy the character of others.

II Timothy 3:3 ...without self-control...

The Authorized Version says, incontinent. We think of this word when describing the elderly in a rest home. They have no control over their bodily functions. The people here described have no control over their mental functions. This is the society in which we live.

II Timothy 3:3 ...brutal...

They are fierce! I think that here in Los Angeles we can appreciate a brutal and fierce culture more than in any other part of the country.

I read the other day of a fourteen year old boy who was killed—shot! This same boy had also been shot when he was ten years old! He was shot by a gang member and it had taken him two years to recover. He was to the point where he was finally beginning to smile again and be a fourteen year old boy.

Do you know why he was shot? He was shot for the same reason that a dog lifts its leg and urinates on a tree. This gang wanted to mark their territory. He had done nothing. They just wanted to show that they had control of the surrounding area. So they shot the boy!

In 1991 there were 439 boys killed between the ages of 13 and 16 in the same manner. We live in a brutal and fierce time!

II Timothy 3:3 ...despisers of good...

They are unfriendly, hostile and they despise God.

II Timothy 3:4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God

We would call them hedonistic. And probably next to Sodom and Gomorrah, Los Angeles and the times in which we live are the epitome of hedonism, appetite, and lust. They do not show any

love for God, for fellowman, or for good character. They just want to please themselves. This is just one of the minefields that we face. And God says to turn away from such people!

II Timothy 3:5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Did you ever ask what effect such perilous times have on us? They weaken us! They cause us to lose strength. This is exactly the meaning of perilous times! Have you ever been so afraid that you could not function? I have been!

One time I had to carry two boxes fifty yards through our MLR. I went for twenty-five yards and I had to lie down. Others asked if I was alright. I said, "I am fine, I just cannot go any further."

Sometimes you get up to sing a solo and what happens? Your body just shuts down.

And this is what perilous times do to us. They take away our strength. Living through them is like traversing a minefield!

Now here is an example of a man who was almost trapped by such a minefield. This world does have its glamour; it does have its allure. There is so much that we want. This world advertises, it markets, and it tries to pull us in through temptation!

My concordance entitles Psalm 73 "The trial of faith."

Psalm 73:1-13 Truly God *is* good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I *was* envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For *there are* no pangs in their death, but their strength *is* firm. They *are* not in trouble *as other* men, nor are they plagued like *other* men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace; violence covers them *like* a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; they have more than heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth. [Now this is the effect on God's people] Therefore his people return here, and waters of a full *cup* are drained by them. And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" Behold, these *are* the ungodly [the worldly wicked], who are always at ease; they increase *in* riches. Surely I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocence.

The psalmist says, "*I have tried to do what God has wanted. I have tried to stand for God. And yet these people are out here driving their Mercedes, their BMWs, and their sports cars. They have a girl on each arm. They are living in an immoral way. Why am I trying to do what is right? The world looks like more fun than does God's church!*"

Psalm 73:14-15 For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning. If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.

If I come to church services and say, "Brethren, what is the use of doing what is right?" Then I would have hurt God's people.

Psalm 73:16-28 When I thought *how* to understand this, It *was* too painful for me— Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* I understood their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are *brought* to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when *none* awakes, *so*, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind. I *was* so foolish and ignorant; I *was like* a beast before You. [I reacted to what I saw all around me. I acted on my urges and my desires and not by your Spirit or my mind] Nevertheless I *am* continually with You; You hold *me* by my right hand [you pick me up and hold me]. You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory. Whom have I in heaven *but* You? And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; *but* God *is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever. [And then, for the foolish, David writes] For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry. But *it is* good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works.

So here was a man who was just about to "slip." Then he caught himself and realized that this world is going to go down—in a moment, in a heartbeat! And people are going to be terrified!

The minefield can look so attractive. It can suck us in! So, the first minefield is the world in which we live, this system. And God gives us strong warnings to stay away from this present, evil world!

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.

When our bodies want the desires of this world and feel the pulls of it, God expects us to say, "No!" He expects us to pull back and make our bodies His sacrifice.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed [do not be

pressed into this world's mold] by the renewing of your mind [this involves Bible study, this involves prayer, this involves proper fellowship], that you may prove what's that good and acceptable and perfect will of God [so that we can live by it].

We cannot specifically cover all the mines that are set for us. But in an overall, general sense what are the mines set for us in this world by Satan the devil? In a broad sense, all the plagues of this world which can easily ensnare us, too, are outlined in I John 2 and verse 16:

I John 2:16 For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

Let us just take the "mine" of *greed* for an example. Greed is the unlawful desire to have more than we need. If we would only spend the proper time with God in study, prayer, and meditation we would not be "blown apart" by this deadly mine! Many have been taken and overcome by this lust!

I had a friend who seemed to stay away from church services more and more as he was promoted on his job more and more. The time he spent with us in fellowship on the Sabbath Day became less and less as he climbed the company ladder. He would arrive closer and closer to the beginning of services and began to leave sooner and sooner after services had ended.

The world, promotion, and prestige held more for him than God's church. He did not see prayer and study and fasting and meditation as vital priorities. God dropped from first on the list to not even making the list. And pretty soon he was gone.

It has been said of this society that it is not concerned about morals, ethics, or duties. It is just concerned about getting what it wants. And that can rub off on all of us.

I remember a story about a man who was called and he was very poor. God began to work with him and when he would make fifty cents he would tithe on it—a nickel. When he would make a dollar he would tithe on it—a dime. And God blessed him for the humble attitude that he had.

One day the man made fifty thousand dollars. But that was too much money on which to tithe. This is what happens when we are overcome

by greed. Greed does funny things.

I remember in the church some years back there was a man who wanted to start a bank. People put millions of dollars in this bank. And God took it all away! They all lost millions of dollars! People who were quite wealthy ended up with nothing. People lost their pension money; they lost their homes, all because of greed.

Another minefield is the desire to escape from day-to-day reality. When you stop and think about it, one of the finest "escapes" we can have is Bible study. Or perhaps we could read a good book depicting historic events or a biography about people of character. This will refresh our minds so that we can shore up our moral foundation upon which to stand in these tumultuous times.

This world does not opt for such kinds of escapes. They turn, for the most part, to alcohol, drugs, and sex.

Alcohol is a tremendous industry. And we have it everywhere today. Many rely on alcohol to relax and escape the pressures of the day. Many have lost everything they had. Some of us old-timers can remember an evangelist that we all treasured. He gave in to alcohol. He lost his wife and everything he had. I also had a close friend at Ambassador College who lost his wife, his children, his home, and is now on the very edge of existence because of alcoholism.

There is another destructive mine called drugs. This little mine destroys young and old alike. It claims more and more lives everyday. We find that many of our sports, movie, and entertainment heroes are on drugs. Children of all ages abuse drugs. And, like so many dangers, they seem harmless—initially.

And last, but not least, there is sex. The multi-million dollar porn industry ruins so many lives and leads into rape and child molestation and the break-up of so many homes. Sex is just as addictive as alcohol, drugs, and gambling.

Years ago there was a young lady who came for a job interview. I asked her where she lived and she told me. She then mentioned her roommate and that "he..." I was stunned. I mean, can you picture an unmarried woman living with an unmarried man? Have you ever heard of such a thing?

Back then it was shocking and uncommon. Today we think nothing of people cohabitating. Church members with children are living together and unmarried. They do not give it a second thought. It is the way of life of our "modern" society.

Do you know what age group is contracting AIDS/HIV at the fastest

rate? We may not think that this "sexual revolution" holds grave danger. It is the age group over fifty! They are the group contracting AIDS at the greatest rate. Why is this? They are giving in and following the poor example of society around them.

In the hotel where we will be keeping the Feast of Tabernacles the manager cleared his throat and asked, "You are going to have a church meeting here?" We said, "Yes." He explained to us that the hotel provided their guests with adult movies in the rooms—basically "dirty movies." Not unusual—so does every hotel in America!

I assured him I knew about these movies. The hotel manager suggested that we call the front desk and have them turned off. This way none of the children—or adults—would have access to this despicable form of entertainment.

Every businessman that travels and every family that stays in these hotels has access to these movies. All these are part of Satan's minefield. They are deliberately set to pull us away from God and into this world.

I refer to the above three mines as the Claymor mines. Like the small mine set to maim or kill the individual who steps on it, alcohol, drugs, and sex destroy the individual caught up in them. Family and friends are also injured just as those standing nearby an exploding mine can be critically wounded.

One recent anti-drug commercial stated quite succinctly the hold that drug abuse—and by extension all addiction—has over those so enslaved. This commercial used about five actors. *Drugs* was personified and asked a question of one actor, "Would you steal for me?" "Yes," the actor replied. *Drugs* asked the second person, "Would you give up your home for me?" Again, the answer was, "Yes." *Drugs* queried each person; "Would you lose your job for me? Would you give up your wife and family for me and lose all you have for me?" The scripted, yet true-to-life answer to all of these questions was, "Yes!" The final question came: "Would you kill for me?" The answer came in the affirmative.

More ministers and brethren of God's church have answered, "Yes," to these very same questions than you might believe. And they have even answered yes to one more vital question, "Would you give up *God* for me?"

These obstacles and dangers—these mines—are all around us everyday. I know we do not even begin to appreciate the danger that is out there. When we step on a mine it produces guilt and shame, loss and separation from God.

I remember when we were headed toward the front. We had some training on what to do if we were captured. We were told that if we were captured by the enemy we should escape as soon as possible. The reason being was that the sooner you escaped from the enemy the closer you were to the front line and your own troops.

But if you remain in enemy hands you might find yourself perhaps forty, sixty, maybe one hundred miles or more behind enemy lines. To return to the front line would then be almost impossible.

And this same principle applies to us. If we are ever captured by alcohol, drugs, sexual sins, or any lust of the flesh we must escape and return to a place of safety as soon as possible!

There is another worldly mine set for us which, at first glance, seems quite harmless. You can pick it up and play with it. You can hold it, hug it, and put it on your lap—if it is small enough. You can take it to bed; you can kick it and it will not harm you—until you turn it on!

I am describing, of course, the television! Movies, books, and magazines all teach us about the world in which we live. But the television lulls us to sleep as it inculcates our minds with this world's wrong attitudes, values, and counterfeit solutions to life's problems. Plus it fills us with desires we should never have.

The home is our place of safety! When you are there it is a haven of peace, security, and safety. Be very careful what you allow into your home.

Revelation 18:1-3 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

Here we read a description of the end of this world's system—the end of this world's ways and immorality.

Revelation 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

You see, God commands us to come out of the world! In Jeremiah 51 we see the same warning. And the same command is also stated—even more strongly!

Jeremiah 51:6, 45 Flee from the midst of Babylon, And every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, For this *is* the time of the Lord's vengeance; He shall recompense her...My people, go out of the midst of her! And let everyone deliver himself from the fierce anger of the Lord.

I John 2: 15-17 says that the world is passing away. Come out of it! Do not be a part of it! And, concerning greed, in Luke 9 we are told...

Luke 9:25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?

We must live in this world. We must work in this world. But we have to be on guard!

Can there be danger in the church? I think that after the events of the last two years there can be minefields here, as well!

Many of us can remember when the church was our place of safety. Prior to Mr. Armstrong's death we might have gone through a particularly bad work week. We would work all week long and then we would arrive at church services and be fed. There was fellowship with people of like mind and we were refreshed!

Our entire week would be planned around the Sabbath Day. We so looked forward to the Day of Rest. We could not wait to go to services. How many of us have said, "You know, I had problems all week long and today the minister spoke about just the problems through which I was going!" We were refreshed, renewed, and inspired. We were uplifted!

And then Mr. Armstrong died and changes in the church started taking place. Our foundation that was once so firm, so sure, and so solid began to crumble! And to quote a close friend of mine, "I thought all I had to do was follow Herbert Armstrong and I would be in the place of safety. And I would be in the Kingdom of God. But now I have to truly know what I believe and stand up for it on my own two feet."

These changes have opened up a plethora of new landmines for Satan to use against us. I have to say now that my being here, in the Church of the Great God, is just like it used to be in the church years ago. The Sabbath is exciting, the fellowship is uplifting, and I am so thankful to be here!

The changing of doctrines and our being forced to leave our former association has allowed Satan to subtly set up new minefields with which to shatter and destroy God's people!

One of the first mines he planted was that of doctrinal differences. Many were pulled away from the trunk of the tree and toward wrong teaching. This type of mine has wounded many and caused separation and anger among God's people. What a destructive weapon this was—and still is!

Doctrinal differences are something like the "Bouncing Betty" mine. You hear a small puff and then the charge goes up and the ball bearings of dissension and differing thoughts go everywhere and affect everyone.

Now one of these mines was the 15th Passover. When we first left our former association we had two men who came with us and tried to persuade the brethren into accepting Nisan 15 as the proper day to keep the Passover. We had many people come and visit us during the first year and when this doctrine was discussed they left for other organizations that would keep the 15th Passover.

And then the doctrine of the postponements reared its head. That little mine went off and quite soon many went off to organizations which focused on this doctrine. Again there was a separation.

Then there was the question of the new moon—another mine that exploded! Which day to keep the 14th Passover based on the new moon. Which month to keep the 14th Passover based on the barley harvest? We ended up with four different Passover dates. One was correct and three were incorrect. How to count Pentecost was something else which raised confusion.

I had two close friends who went with the Sacred Names Society after thirty years in the church. This was yet another minefield. And all of these doctrinal differences continue to pull God's people apart and

prevent us from being united.

Subjects that were *never* a question in anyone's mind were, because of Satan's minefields, all of a sudden of great importance. These in turn resulted in God's people taking their eyes off of overcoming. Their focus was then on peripheral things and distracting subjects. Satan has caused many to take their eyes off of God-inspired instruction that had been taught over the course of these past fifty years.

There were also some side effects which resulted from these "Bouncing Betty" mines. We could call them the new understanding or the new truth mines. Each of these caused God's people to be taken away and separated from the Family of God.

And then there was yet another mine which exploded. This was "the ministry does not have any authority over me" mine. The ministry only ever wanted to teach and to help. God established His church in this organizational manner.

This mine produced an independent church member who thought they could teach themselves separate from the structure that God had set up. And it produced an unspoken—and oft times spoken—attitude of "my opinion is just as good as the ministry's counsel concerning the Bible, concerning teaching, or concerning just about anything having to do with understanding. And therefore, if it is just as good as the pastor's then I can go and teach myself." Again this caused separation.

The sadness of all of this is that these people, without realizing it, have all been trapped in Satan's minefield! When their feet hit the feeler wire of the "Bouncing Betty" there was no explosion or puff of smoke there was no flash of fire and no noise. There was just a little inserting of a wrong thought or attitude. They never really understood what had happened—they left!

The second category of mine we face in the church is common to all of us. Compromise has caused much devastation to civilizations—and mankind in general. Usually it is because people make concessions concerning right principals. This seems so unimportant at first. But, inevitably, one little compromise leads to another and pretty soon godly character is lost—just as the nation of Israel lost their identity. If we compromise enough we will lose our identity with God, as well.

Fear—Satan plays upon all of our fears. It was a difficult choice to leave our former association. We fear losing our job. We fear standing up for what is right and standing up for the truth against those who are changing it. We fear losing popularity with friends in our social world.

Fear takes away our courage—producing shame. Over a long period of

time fear takes away the love of God and the love of His Word. And God, in Revelation 21, says that the fearful and the cowardly will not be in the Kingdom of God. He expects us to stand for what is right!

Complacency is another mine which can hurt or destroy. This is simply not doing anything at all. We hope that Jesus Christ will solve all of the problems, relieving us of having to make any of the hard decisions. This is the cause of half-hearted prayer and a lukewarm attitude. We know what category this places us in (Revelation 3)!

And, finally, anger is a most dangerous and prevalent mine. Now is the time for us all to be pulling together. We have all of these separated groups and we should all be praying for each other. We need to have God's people fed and taken care of.

And yet there is great anger between the various groups which have sprung up out of the disintegration of the Worldwide Church of God. What a terrible mine this is—and has been—and we know that God must be terribly disappointed with us!

How do we know if we have stepped on one of these mines? This is an important question! We will know by the fruit that is being produced in our lives and in the church.

How is God described in His Word? He is described as a God of love, as a servant to all, kind, giving, tenderhearted, ready to forgive, a Family that gets along, peacemaker, a God of unity and harmony. And we see Jesus Christ as a God who organizes His church for the betterment of all. We see Him as a God who gave Himself for every person on the face of the earth.

What fruit does anger toward another group produce? It produces more anger, disharmony, slander, harsh words, and name calling. That is not the fruit that God wants to produce in His church.

What fruit did confusing the doctrine of Passover produce? It produced four different dates for the Passover, hurt feelings, anger, outright hatred, and division.

And what did the arguments over the new moon and postponements produce? They produced division in the church and the splitting off and separating of God's people.

Everyone going through this Christian calling has to examine the fruit of his own life. If it is producing the character of God in us, well. If it is not producing such character then we had better change—repent—and get back on our feet!

What is Satan specifically trying to accomplish? He wants us to take our

eyes off of God and to focus on something—anything—different. He wants our faith to crumble. And he wants us in fear and confusion. He wants to frustrate us into giving up and not staying the course laid out before us.

What should we do when we find ourselves in a minefield? I saw a man in a minefield. Remember the MSR—the Main Supply Route—that went out in front of the bunkers? This went about a mile down in front of my bunker. Then there was an off road that went to an outpost. It went off the MSR at a right angle.

This man was supposed to string communications wire down the MSR and then turn right at the road that went to the outpost. And, as many of us do, he thought he could take a shortcut. There was an open field without any mine tags on it and he thought he could go across.

He went about one hundred yards and tripped a Bouncing Betty. We heard the first puff and turned to see the explosion. It exploded on his left side and got him in the head, the left side of his neck, under his arm, and in the left shoulder. Down he went!

He was not killed—in fact he could stand up. But he was hurt. He was still physically capable of walking out of this minefield. What prevented him from doing so was his fear. He was terrified!

He found himself in a minefield and did not realize where he was. All of a sudden he did not know where to place his foot. He did not know where to step. He was thinking, "Is the next step going to produce what has just happened?"

What he should have done was to trace his steps back out—following his steps exactly from where he had just come. But he was so afraid that one of the sergeants had to run out and get him.

This is exactly how it is when we find ourselves in a spiritual minefield. Initially, we do not know where to turn or what to do next. The first thing to do is make a decision. We must consciously decide to not take one more step, but call out to God for help. We must admit to God that we have made a mistake and say, "Father, please help me. I am in a bind and I cannot find my way out."

Then we must examine ourselves to see just what we have done to land us in such a situation. And with great concentration, just as we would summon up if we were in a real minefield, trace our way back out.

What minefields are yet in front of us? There will yet be some few. The trials of this end time tell us, on the one hand, that the end is near. And on the other hand, if we are not careful, they can cause us to take our eyes off of God.

II Peter 3:1-4 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder) [he says, "*I want to remind you of something*], that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior [you see, here they were being taught by apostles], knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue *as they were* from the beginning of creation

The scoffers have always said and will continue to say, "*Look, nothing has changed since the beginning of creation. What is the rush about overcoming? You can let down, be a part of the world.*"

I still recall one person calling the church office and saying, "I would love to come with you, but you are too serious about your calling!" We had better not be sloppy concerning our calling! It is of vital seriousness to us!

II Peter 3:17-18 You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.

I John 2:18-23 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. [These are those who bring wrong teachings and wrong thoughts]. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One,

and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. [And the power of the Father and the Son—and faith in them]. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

Let us look at one verse in Matthew 24. We are, and will continue to be, tried and tested by all that we read in this particular chapter. Satan will use all of his resources to turn our minds from God and the future and the calling He has given us. This particular verse gives us warning about something that, I think, is definitely on the horizon.

Matthew 24:24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

There will be many such mines that are going to be set up to deceive and entrap us. It is going to be a difficult time. All of these end-time trials will test our faith and trust in God. Satan will use these same trials as much as possible to take our focus off of God and turn it onto ourselves.

We have a part in all of this. What must we do to stand? What is our part? The first thing we must do is *ask*. We must ask God for His protection. I do this everyday and I presume you do too. If you are not doing this, you should start!

The outline for prayer in Matthew 6 teaches, in part:

Matthew 6:13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.

Deliver us from the evil one. That phrase means "to snatch away from;" to rescue us from Satan. This is the first thing we must do. We must ask God for His help. Secondly, we must put forth effort concerning our calling. We cannot just sit back on our laurels.

II Peter 1:2-5 Grace and peace be multiplied

to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge...

In other words build on your calling. Do not simply say, "Well, I am called," and then relax.

II Peter 1:6 ...to knowledge self-control...

Remember that in the end time self-control will be lacking. Here we are told to add self-control to our knowledge. As we find out what to do we are to control ourselves.

II Peter 1:6-10 ...to self-control perseverance [stick-to-it-iveness], to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble

What do we think of when we think of the word diligence? We may think of someone steadily working at Bible study or someone who is patient. But the word as it is used here means to speed up; to hasten your overcoming; to be earnest about it. We must be filled with zeal and urgency about growing and overcoming. This is how we avoid the mines which are set by Satan the devil.

Now in what attitude must we be found? We can have all the gifts, all the intelligence, all the good looks—we can have money. But none of

these mean a thing to God. No matter how talented we are it matters not unless we are humble, because God cannot work with us if we are not. We are expected to be humble and faithful, full of thanksgiving.

Remember what it says in Isaiah 66: 2? God asks the rhetorical question, "To whom will I look?" He said that the very earth is His footstool. "To whom will I look?" We know that the one upon whom God will cast His eyes and the one to whom He will pay attention and work with will be the one who is humble and of a contrite heart and trembles at His Word.

James 4:6-7 But He gives more grace.
Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Do you want to avoid Satan's minefields?

James 4:8 Draw near to God...

This is what it takes at this time. Later I am going to show us how much effort this is going to require.

James 4:8-9 ...and He will draw near to you.
[He will save us from the minefields]
Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

Be serious about your calling. I might even say be dead serious!

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up

Just like the man in Psalm 73 where God reached down with His hand and lifted him up.

We have to be serious about our calling. And God expects us not to be stupid either. He expects us to be aware and have our eyes open to the dangers around us so that we can avoid what Satan has planned for us.

Ephesians 5:14-15 Therefore He says:
"Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light." See then that
you walk circumspectly...

See that you stand still and look to the left and to the right. See danger and avoid it. Look at where you are putting your feet. And more importantly, look at where you are focusing your mind and your thoughts.

Ephesians 5:15-19 ...not as fools but as
wise, redeeming the time, because the days
are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but
understand what the will of the Lord is. And do
not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation;
but be filled with [God's] Spirit, speaking to
one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual
songs...

Our efforts and focus must be on fellowshiping and being together as we are told in the book of Malachi. God will then write a book about us.

Ephesians 5:19-21 ...singing and making
melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks
always for all things to God the Father in the
name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to
one another in the fear of God.

This is what being a Family is all about. This is going to help us to stand! And yet something else is required.

Jude 1-3 Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ,
and brother of James, to those who are called,
sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in
Jesus Christ: mercy, peace, and love be
multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was very
diligent to write to you concerning our common
salvation, I found it necessary to write to you
exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith
which was once for all delivered to the saints.

This term, contend earnestly, is very interesting. To my knowledge it is the only place in the Bible where it is used. It depicts a wrestling match! Remember in Genesis 32 when Jacob wrestled with Jesus Christ? Jacob was about to reunite with Esau and he was not certain how this meeting would turn out. He sent a great company bearing gifts to Esau. And lastly, behind all of these, he sent his wives and family. Jacob was left alone.

I do not know what time of day this might have been. But a man strode up to him. This man was Jesus Christ. We do not know how this wrestling match began. Maybe Jesus said, "Jacob, you never finish anything you start. I am disappointed in you!"

Maybe someone pushed the other. I have no idea. But whatever happened, these two persons—Jacob and Jesus Christ—locked arms. And they strained and they wrestled and they rolled in the dust. Maybe someone got a bloody nose. The sweat came and the dust caked on them as dirt and mud.

They strained until almost daybreak. And Jesus Christ said, "Let Me go!" Jacob said, "No!" Jesus Christ reached down and dislocated Jacob's hip. It must have been very painful!

Jesus Christ said, "Now let me go!" And Jacob said, "No. I know what I am holding onto. And I will not let you go!" Then Jesus Christ said, "Alright, I am going to change your name from Jacob (which means supplanter and cheat, sneak) to one that means a prince that prevails with God!

This is the lesson of Jacob's encounter and Jude 3. We must learn to put forth intense effort continuously, as in a wrestling match. The phrase shows that the struggle is continuous, it never ends. That is what God expects of us at this end time—which is only going to get worse and worse.

The bulk of the book of Jude points out what is coming—and what has already come.

Jude 4-11 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. But I want to remind you, though you once knew this [this is not a simple reminder, but a dire warning to us!], that the Lord, having saved

the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality [which is what this country has done] and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" [he did not play that game] But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. [They follow their urges and desires and they corrupt themselves] Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Remember Korah said, "Who set you (Moses) over me? You cannot tell me what to do! You cannot run my life!"

Jude 12 These are spots in your love feasts,
while they feast with you without fear,
serving *only* themselves.

An alternate translation describes these "spots" as reefs—jagged rocks—upon which one can wreck his boat. You can tear the bottom out of it. You can hull the boat and sink and drown and be destroyed.

Jude 12-13 *They are* clouds without water,
carried about by the winds; late autumn trees
without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the
roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up

their own shame [they have muddied the water so that what is happening cannot be seen]; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Wandering stars can be referring to rebellious angels in blackness; those that had been deceived into rebellion and following the lead of Satan the devil. By the same token, these wandering stars cannot be used for navigation because they are never in the same place twice. Attempting to navigate by them only causes confusion.

Jude 14-21 *Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."* These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling *words*, flattering people to gain advantage. But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit. [This is what we are going to be faced with in the end time]. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

So we have to contend earnestly and be praying and looking toward God and the Kingdom of God. This is where our focus has to be! The warning here is against unbelief and against rebellion!

How do we walk through these minefields which are set for us? We had a man in our outfit that looked like "Crocodile Dundee." He did not look

like a soldier. He wore an open vest and light khaki pants and a floppy hat. He was either English or Australian. He carried a long cane with a sharpened point on the end. He was allowed out in front of the outpost in the minefield.

I do not know why he walked out there, or more significant, why he was never killed! But nobody shot him and he was allowed to just walk around and he would poke the cane into the ground. He would find the mines and he would walk around them. It looked like he was so very casual about what he was doing. But he was anything but casual! He was so very concentrated on what he was doing. He wanted to know what was out there. He was an amazing individual!

We have seen these old war movies where a soldier was going through a minefield using his bayonet to gently push the ground in front of him to locate the mines which were deliberately laid out. The soldiers following him walked exactly in his footsteps. Not to the left or to the right, but exactly in them. This is exactly what we must do!

I John 2:5-6 But whoever keeps His word,
truly the love of God is perfected in him. By
this we know that we are in Him. He who says
he abides in Him ought himself also to walk
just as He walked.

This is our calling—to walk as Jesus Christ walked.

I Peter 2:21 For to this you were called,
because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us
an example, that you should follow His steps.

Jesus Christ has been through the minefields, all of them; even those through which we will never have to go! If we follow in His steps we will successfully negotiate the mines which are set before us.

I Peter 2:25 For you were like sheep going
astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd
and Overseer of your souls.

This reminds me of the Kumwah Valley and Psalm 23: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death You are with me. And Your rod and staff comfort me.

Jesus Christ is with us and no matter what we must walk through He is going to be there with us. And in Psalm 73 we find that He is going to take our hand and bring us through it.

What lies ahead for us as a church—and as individuals—is difficult to say specifically. But overall we know that the most devastating time to ever hit this earth is about to arrive! The world has not the faintest notion that it is coming!

Some might consider the dangers ahead and perceive the way as too difficult. But we should all turn around from time-to-time and look back to see how far we have come. My wife and I have twenty-seven years in the church. We have come a long way. How about you?

We have all stepped on the mines which Satan has set. We have all been hurt, wounded—and sometimes severely. Jesus Christ has always picked us up and healed us and put us back on our feet.

In these last few years we have all had to make decisions that have been very difficult. We have had to stand up for Jesus Christ and for God the Father and for the truth. We have not denied God. And so we can be assured by the promises of Jesus Christ that He will not deny us! We are secure!

The end appears to be very near and we have covered the lion's share of the journey. The distance left to go is far less than that which we have already covered. Remember that Jesus Christ has been with us every step of the way.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life [Jesus Christ is the way to the Kingdom of God]. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

No man will be in the Kingdom of God except through Jesus Christ. He is the way through the minefields! "If God is for us who can be against us?" Paul writes this in the book of Romans.

II Chronicles 16:9 says that God's eyes run over the earth to and fro to see for whom He can be strong. For whom is He strong but His humble people that look to Him? And Hebrews 13:5 says that He will never, ever, ever leave us! No matter what the trial, God will be there for us.

Jude 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling [to Him who is able to keep us from being killed in the minefields and from

being terribly wounded], and to present *you*
faultless before the presence of His glory with
exceeding joy...

Imagine just having gone through the tumultuous events at the end of
the age and finding yourself in the presence of God—having made it!
Can you even begin to imagine the exceeding joy that you will
experience, the tremendous relief that you will know?

Jesus Christ, too, will be filled with joy. He will be overjoyed and elated
beyond what we could possibly know at this time!

We might be saying in our heart, "Why would God want me? Look at
the mistakes I have made. Look at the mines I have tripped. Look at
the Bouncing Betties that have hit me."

It will all be behind us. We will be with God in a true place of safety.
We will be spirit beings. And furthermore, we will have come to
understand the minefields that have been set for mankind which will
enable us teach and help those in the World Tomorrow.

Jude 25 To God our Savior, Who alone is
wise, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and
power, both now and forever. Amen.

Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your
Father's good pleasure to give you the
Kingdom.

God the Father has predestined us to make it. But we have to do our
part. He has given us His Son to lead the way! He has predestined us
to make it—and make it's what we are going to do!

So be of good cheer and focus on Jesus Christ through all the trials
ahead. God's purpose for us and all of mankind will stand. And we will
all be together in the Kingdom of God!