

"A Cord of 3 Strands and the Knot I am In" The Image of God and the Sanctification of Man (Pt. 6)

The Ministry of the Spirit

September 13, 2026

TITLE: 3 Strands = $F_F + F_W + F_D$...together these forces can mysteriously tie my life in "knots"!!

Eph 6:10-12

...Paul Opens a Massive Can of Worms in this brief passage ...It is "Sobering" & "Complicating"—but it is NOT Exhaustive or Detailed!

"Life is often hard and ugly. The Evil One animates incalculable evils. These are dark days. It is easy to feel overwhelmed, besieged, threatened, and vulnerable. ...With so much light, life, truth, goodness, strength, and protection pouring forth from Christ, why is the process so messy? Why are churches so weak and compromised? Why do we stumble so often? Why do we have so many blind spots?" **David Powlison**, "Safe & Sound – Standing Firm in Spiritual Battles", p. 40

"...this world of ours, and the whole course of human history, is, in the last analysis, nothing but the arena in which a mighty spiritual conflict is taking place, a conflict between God and the forces of heaven, and the devil and the forces of evil and of hell. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' And that, according to the Bible, is the ultimate explanation of the whole of human history, both biblical and secular." **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**, "Not Against Flesh and Blood", p. 10.

... **"The Chronicles of Restoration" is a good title for God's Big Story!**

"We cannot understand the world today without the doctrine of the Fall. The Fall alone explains why men and women are as they are, the slaves of sin and of the devil. The devil is the god of this world and, by nature, we are in the kingdom of darkness. The devil and his forces exert their power upon us first and foremost by attacking our minds, but not only our minds, they attack our moral nature and, indeed, even our bodies. And the devil does not confine his attacks to individuals.² It is an essential part of the teaching of the Bible that he operates on a world-wide scale, with larger groupings—states, nations and continents." **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**, "Not Against Flesh and Blood", p. 11

"Why is it that Satan is able to get a foothold in our thoughts and feed discouragement and defeatist attitudes? Why is it so easy for him to get us to focus on our own comforts and needs, nurture a sense of entitlement and turn us away from obedience? ...when we act and express attitudes contrary to the nature and character of Christ, God is no longer glorified. However, we seldom think of this as spiritual warfare. It is so normal that we just brush off as human nature the lack of spiritual maturity, or weakness in our own faith and commitment. After all, this is just the way we live. We accept it as the norm." **Jerry Rankin**, "Spiritual Warfare - The Battle for God's Glory", p. 13

"Christians have always understood that we face a three-fold moral enemy: the world, the flesh, and the devil. ...Scripture treats spiritual warfare as a normal, everyday part of the Christian life, and so we should as well. It's not about spooky special effects. It's about how we think, feel, live, desire, and act in the presence of our enemies." **David Powlison**, "Safe and Sound - ", p. 15

Premise: **"The Cord of 3 Strands** (the connections/interactions between the world, the flesh, and the devil) **is Contributing to "the Knot I am in"** (the things that control me ...confuse me ...deceive me ...darken me ...Sometimes it feels like life has tied me in a knot!)

INTRO ...Why does my life 'FEEL' the way it does? ...there's probably a dozen versions of this question that show up in my mental "inbox".

- This is a Theological Question
- This is a Multi-Faceted Question ...we are physical and non-physical beings
 - There's a **PHYSICAL** Dimension in Play ...
 - There's an **IMMATERIAL** Dimension in Play ...
 - There's a **SPIRITUAL** Dimension in Play ...

Heads Up for THIS Moment of the World...

- If your background/default is more 'medical' (physiology)...
- If you're Charismatically informed & inclined ...
- If you're more "soulishly and intellectually inclined"...
- **Our Cultural Moment is trying to make sense of the "Cord of 3 strands" that is tying us in knots! ...Please don't lose sight of Transcendent Truth—amidst the latest “trending thought”!**

...Modern American thinking (secular, technological, education informed) isn't thinking of the Cord of 3 Strands being at work in us! ...Thus it may be partially on to something helpful, but it is not fully informed!

- There is no pill that can cure the biblical issues of the soul and the human fallen condition!
- Casting out demons is not a full fix for the Christian—because the other forces are still in play
- Human behaviorism is in play, when we renew our minds and put-off sinful attitudes and actions ...but even there, physiology and demonology is still in the arena of life with us!

"If you were counseling Harry, Joe, Kaitlin, and Stacey, what would you say? Would you talk with them about the spiritual battle they are in and the unseen enemies they face? Or would you be more naturally drawn to talk about matters that are concrete and easier to describe: psychological dynamics, social influences, and physiological givens? How does the uncanny power of darkness fit in with the more accessible factors in a person's life? Is it possible that these seemingly accessible factors are actually far more elusive than we imagine, because they work hand in hand with the weaver of illusions and delusions?" **David Powlison**, "Safe and Sound - Standing Firm in Spiritual Battles", p. 11

Eph 6:10-12

...There are “SCHEMES” of the devil ...strategies where he “animates” (sets on fire) the F_W & F_R

... “Standing”—needs “Strength” ...but it is a “Strength” that comes from the Holy Spirit!—“HIS MIGHT”

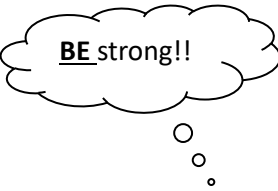
Ischýs - *The group ischy- has the sense of 'ability,' 'capacity,' 'power,' or 'strength.'* (Theological Dictionary of the N. T. (Abridged - Kittel))

1 Pet 4:11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Jam 5:16 ...The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Eph 6:18 ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Acts 1:8 ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”



BE strong!!

? – WHY Focus on “The Ministry of the Holy Spirit? ...Because I don’t just need to be “AWARE” of this power/might—I Need to Learn How to “Tap Into It”!! [to ‘engage’, ‘receive’, have an ‘exchange’ with the Spirit of God] [ILLUST: Power Lines]

...v. 12 is a “Complexity Verse”!! ...it corrects our “Simplistic Defaults” ...it sets “SPIRITUAL FORCES” at the Forefront!! ...What does that Look Like Throughout Scripture?

The “KNOTS” in Job’s Life! [The “Hall-of-Fame Life Knot Guy”]

Job 1:13-19 ¹³ Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁴ and there came a messenger to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵ and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” ¹⁶ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” ¹⁷ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” ¹⁸ While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹ and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

Job 2:7-8 ⁷ ... loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸ And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

...What “FORCES” have touched Job’s Life?

>> Job's Life Experience Contains the Following: Crime/Human Evil ...Natural
Disasters ...Tragedy ...Circumstantial Economic Collapse ...Bodily sickness/disease
...Shock!/ Confusion ...Grief/Sadness

...But that’s not all this Story Reveals to Us!

Job 1:6-12

Job 2:7-8

...This Story Pulls Back the Curtain to Reveal “HEAVENLY PLACES” ...“SPIRITUAL FORCES” ... “COSMIC POWERS” (the “Interplay” between HEAVEN & EARTH)

The “KNOTS” in Daniel’s Life...

Dan 10:1-6

Daniel 10:12-14

? – What “Forces” are in this story? ...There’s economic forces ...political forces ...human oppression & abuse
...emotional despair & confusion & depression ...AND a realm of Spiritual Forces—that were being
Impacted by Daniel’s Prayers!

...Does My “Prayer Life” look like I believe it is a REAL FORCE in this world???

The “KNOTS” in a Daughter of Abraham’s Life...

Luke 13:11-13, 16

Luke hints at the devil’s involvement when he says that she had “a disabling spirit” (Luke 13:11). This expression is not simply a figure of speech. Nor does it reflect a primitive, premodern understanding of the human body, in which every disability is attributed to some evil spirit. As a doctor, Luke knew that this woman’s disability (or “weakness,” to translate the term more literally) had a supernatural cause. This is the only place where he describes someone as having a disabling spirit. He knew that in this unusual case, the victim was under spiritual attack. This diagnosis is confirmed in verse 16, where Jesus says that she was bound by Satan.

We should be careful not to attribute every medical difficulty we have to a direct attack from Satan. ... The woman was bowed low by demonic oppression. Her physical trouble was caused by spiritual torment.”
Phillip Ryken, “Luke” (Reformed Exp. Comm.)

The “KNOTS” in Annanias & Saphira’s Life...

Acts 5:1-3 ...Here it seems—Satan has “ANIMATED” a “Passion of the Flesh” that craves a particular “APPEARANCE” before others! (Most likely a “Pre-Existing-Craving” for them!)

"We learn (and need to know) that the devil is not merely a metaphor for human darkness, reducible to psychological or sociocultural forces (“your inner demons”; “the powers that be”). Rationalism debunks the personhood of the evil one, considering all that is evil to have human origins. This fails to fully recognize the uncanniness of the power of evil. Allergy to Christ expresses an inexplicable irrationality. Individual sarx and corporate kosmos intimately connect and cooperate with diabolos, expressing diabolical instincts for falsity, for empire building, for destroying love. But none of the partners in the dance of darkness reduces to either of the others." **David Powlison**, "Understanding Spiritual Warfare-4 Views", p. 91

Eph 4-6 ...tells us that there’s a “COMPLEXITY” to the Warfare of Life!

...We LEARNED—That we were “sealed with the Holy Spirit” (Eph 1:13)

...We’re WARNED—Not to “give the devil an opportunity” (Eph 4:27)

...We’re INSTRUCTED—Not to “grieve the Spirit” (Eph 4:30)

...We’re INFORMED—That Spiritual Forces are in this World of Flesh & Blood (Eph 6:12)

WE NEED to “Normalize” Eph 6:10 “...be strong in the Lord and in the strength of HIS MIGHT”

Prayer: *Lord, these things were true—no matter how much or how little they were understood and engaged by the Ephesian church! There were MORE Forces at work in their world—but, there was also MORE Power available to Them by the Holy Spirit! ...O, Lord make us a people who don’t just have some intellectual understanding of the power in overhead electrical lines, but rather we are a people who know how to plug in and harness that power so that it is reshaping our world!*