

## JAMES 2:18-19

### ORTHODOXY OF THE DEVIL

“Someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!”<sup>1</sup>

**T**hough orthopraxy is absolutely dependent upon orthodoxy, orthodoxy can be divorced from orthopraxy. Orthopraxy and orthodoxy are strange words today, seldom heard from Christian pulpits. Orthopraxy simply refers to correct practise or action. Orthodoxy speaks of correct doctrine. Let me restate the proposition in less formal language, then. Doing what is right is absolutely dependent upon believing what is correct. However, believing what is true and correct does not necessarily lead to doing what is right. James refers to this oft-neglected truth when he makes what superficially appears to be a rather controversial statement. James says that the demons believe that God is one.

With this incisive commentary on a postulated attempt to dismiss the need for faith to influence life, James insinuates that the demons are more committed to their belief than are the people of God. In fact, it is fair to say that the demonic powers have knowledge of God that exceeds that possessed by the finest among the saints. The demons *know* there is a God and they fear His power and are utterly terrified at the thought of facing Him.

Contained in this challenge delivered by James are truths that are essential for an effective Christian walk. Exploration of James’ strange contention will prove valuable for each of us as children of the Living God. Join me, then, in study of these truths.

**DEMONIC ORIGINS** — Unbelief, doubts and unanswerable questions, characterise the society in which we live. We flatter ourselves that we are a scientific society, but even the science in which we place so much hope is as much venerated as are the tenets of religion. Among the doubts that prevail is denial of demonic powers. Our sophistication does not permit us to accept the existence of an unseen world, and we dare not admit that such unseen powers exist lest we expose ourselves to dismissive ridicule by our peers.

Nevertheless, the Word of God assumes the existence of malevolent beings we know as demons. Moreover, reflection upon the evil that continues in our world drives us to the conclusion that such evil powers must exist. What does the Bible say about these creatures? What was their origin? These are questions that demand an answer.

That the demons exist is assumed throughout the Bible. The identification of demonic powers is not prominent in the Old Testament, though the people of Israel were condemned for sacrificing their children to the demons [**DEUTERONOMY 32:17; PSALM 106.37**]. As an aside of some significance in this day which celebrates “choice,” Israel’s children were sacrificed for convenience of those slaughtering the innocent. Their actions were not unlike the actions of modern mothers who sacrifice their children for personal convenience. However, 115 times the Old Testament writers speak of idols, and behind the idols are demonic powers, as Paul acknowledges when he writes the Corinthians, cautioning against idolatry adopted via the backdoor, “What pagans sacrifice they offer to demons” [**1 CORINTHIANS 10:19, 20**].

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In contradistinction to the Old Testament, 77 times in the New Testament, demons or demonic powers are admitted. All but ten of those statements concerning demons occur in the Gospels, and all but six of the 67 occurrences are found in the Synoptic Gospels. The ministry of the Master focused to a large extent on freeing those oppressed by demons. Peter, explaining the Lord's ministry to Cornelius, said that Jesus "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" [ACTS 10:38]. He acknowledged the existence of unseen, though very real forces, though he confessed that the Master had power over the demons.

In the Gospels, we read that the Master delivered those who were "oppressed by demons" [e.g. MATTHEW 4:24]. Not only did He have power over the demons, but He assigned that power to His disciples. The seventy whom He sent out were commissioned to "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, [and] cast out demons" [MATTHEW 10:8]. Then, the Master appointed 72 others to precede Him into the towns He would enter. When they returned, they were rejoicing because, "Even the demons [were] subject to [them] in [Jesus'] Name" [LUKE 10:17]. Jesus testified that He had indeed given them authority over the power of the enemy [LUKE 10:19].

That demons exist, and that they oppress people, is assumed and demonstrated throughout the Synoptic Gospels, especially. It is appropriate to demonstrate where these beings came from. In order to explore this, we must refer back to his satanic majesty, the devil. "Satan," whose name means "Accuser" or "Slanderer," is also known by the Greek term, "devil." He is a created being. At one time he was the guardian cherub, watching over the throne of God. Listen to Ezekiel as he recounts the early days of this beautiful being.

"Thus says the Lord God:

"You were the signet of perfection,  
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.  
You were in Eden, the garden of God;  
every precious stone was your covering,  
sardius, topaz, and diamond,  
beryl, onyx, and jasper,  
sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle;  
and crafted in gold were your settings  
and your engravings.  
On the day that you were created  
they were prepared.  
You were an anointed guardian cherub.  
I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God;  
in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.  
You were blameless in your ways  
from the day you were created,  
till unrighteousness was found in you.  
In the abundance of your trade  
you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned;  
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,  
and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub,  
from the midst of the stones of fire."

[EZEKIEL 28:12B-16]

Satan was created a beautiful cherub. He served the Lord God, until the day that sin was found in him. Isaiah wrote of that day when Satan fell.

“How you are fallen from heaven,  
O Day Star, son of Dawn!  
How you are cut down to the ground,  
you who laid the nations low!  
You said in your heart,  
‘I will ascend to heaven;  
above the stars of God  
I will set my throne on high;  
I will sit on the mount of assembly  
in the far reaches of the north;  
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High.’  
But you are brought down to Sheol,  
to the far reaches of the pit.”

[ISAIAH 14:12-15]

He had a name befitting his beauty, “Day Star.” He was the guardian cherub, watching over the throne of the Most High God. Indeed, he yet appears as “an angel of light,” and his servants “disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” [2 CORINTHIANS 11:14]. Dear people, mark well the knowledge that evil appears attractive. Were it otherwise, we would not succumb to it.

Addressing His disciples, Jesus spoke of Satan’s fall from his august position in heaven, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” [LUKE 10:18]. The devil is a “star fallen from heaven to earth” [REVELATION 9:1]. For a brief while he has been given authority over the nations. Endeavouring to tempt the Lord Jesus, Satan offered Him the kingdoms of the world. When the devil boasted that these kingdoms had “been delivered to [him],” Jesus did not rebuke him as a liar, but rather rebuked him for seeking to usurp the position of the Living God. In fact, Jesus repeatedly referred to Satan as “the ruler of this world” [JOHN 12:31; 14:30; 16:11].

The demons are also created beings—angels who followed the cherub once known as Day Star in rebellion against the Lord God. Those angels chose to rebel against the Most High God, and were cast to earth. Looking to a day when Michael and the angels who serve under him at last cast Satan from the heavens, we read, “War arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” [REVELATION 12:7-9].

For the moment, before the throne of God, Satan slanders the saints. We cannot understand why God permits this to occur, but the Word of God is quite clear that God does permit this nefarious action to continue for the moment. On earth, the demons influence nations in opposing the righteousness of God while promoting the evil designs of the devil. We know that the nations are influenced for evil by the demonic powers. Gabriel, sent to give answer to Daniel’s prayer, testified that he was opposed by the “prince of the kingdom of Persia,” and that he would shortly return to fight against him and against “the prince of Greece” [DANIEL 10:13, 20].

As we near the return of our Lord, we witness increased demonic activity. Paul warned, “The Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” [1 TIMOTHY 4:1-3].

At work within this world are powers that God identifies by the sobriquet “spirit of error” [1 JOHN 4:6]. Concerning the deceitful work that Satan is even now perpetuating and concerning the intensification of demonic activity, Paul has written that the Day of Christ “will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” [2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12].

As the age moves toward a culmination we will witness an increase in deceitful activity. Paul describes the intensification of these activities in the opening paragraphs of the Letter to the Roman Christians. Though he wrote of the general condition of society, in this instance he wrote of the inexorable movement toward evil when he wrote of the drift of society. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

“Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

“For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

“And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them” [ROMANS 1:18-32].

The demons have great intelligence, being angels who fell from their first estate. We know from Scripture that these malevolent beings employ their superior intelligence to deceive. Those who seek out mediums and necromancers do see some of the intelligence of demonic powers. Within limits, those who seek demonic insight appear to foresee the future. Demons have great strength, and they often use that strength to terrify people [see **MARK 5:3-5**]. The demons have power to cause mental instability [see **LUKE 8:26-36**] and induce suicidal tendencies [see **MARK 9:22**]. The demons are unclean—morally depraved. Thus, it should be no surprise that they cause those oppressed by them to tend toward morally depravity, approving of every sort of moral decadence and ethical corruption. All who are under the sway of demonic powers are said to follow “the prince of the power of the air” [**EPHESIANS 2:2**] or to be part of “the domain of darkness” [**COLOSSIANS 1:13**]. Demons have power to oppress the body, causing inability to speak [**MATTHEW 9:32, 33**], blindness [**MATTHEW 12:22**] and other physical ailments [**LUKE 13:11-17**]. These malicious spirits induce fear in men’s hearts and thus lead them to cease looking to Christ and from receiving the peace that He gives to all who walk with Him.

Above all else, these cosmic powers oppose the knowledge of God and alienate men from Him. The spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places blind the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ [see **2 CORINTHIANS 4:3, 4**]. The demons subject men to temptations, destroy the good seed—the implanted Word of God—in men’s hearts and plant bad seed [see **MATTHEW 13:24-28**]. Wicked powers may even at times exert control over the forces of nature, causing whirlwinds, lightning and disease in order to discourage people, turning them from Christ.

I have spoken briefly of the demonic powers, and some may fear these beings. Indeed, they should be respected as powerful creatures. However, they should not be feared. We know that “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” [**2 TIMOTHY 1:7**]. Though it is true that our “adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” [**1 PETER 5:8**] God has commanded us to submit ourselves to Himself and to “resist the devil” as we “draw near to God” [**JAMES 4:7, 8**]. We are to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts as we humble ourselves before the Lord so that He may exalt us [**JAMES 4:9, 10**]. As followers of the Lord Christ, we must “give no opportunity to the devil” [**EPHESIANS 4:27**], which we do when we are untruthful, when we destroy community within the Body of Christ, when we permit anger to reign over our lives, when we embrace corrupting talk, or when bitterness takes root in our lives. Guarding our heart, placing a watch over our mouth, and seeking what honours the Lord, we are equipped to withstand the demonic powers.

That is indeed glorious encouragement the Apostle offers Christians when he writes, “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 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” [**EPHESIANS 6:10-18**]. Let us accept the challenge so that we can defeat the enemy.

**DEMONIC FAITH** — The study to this point has not been exhaustive, but it does provide a basic summary of the demonic powers. Now, we must focus ever so briefly on James' insistence that the demons believe. Because they are beings of superior intelligence, and because they once served the Lord God in Heaven, the demons know who God is; and they know the Son of God. Throughout the Gospels and the historical account of the early church are incidents demonstrating that the demons knew both Christ and their ultimate end.

On one occasion as Jesus was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum, a man possessed by an unclean spirit cried out in the middle of Jesus' message, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God" [MARK 1:24]. The demon knew who Jesus was and confessed his ultimate doom.

When Jesus encountered two demon-possessed men in the country of the Gadarenes, the demons "cried out, 'What have You to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time'" [MATTHEW 8:29]? The demons both recognised Jesus and knew that He would ultimately dispatch them to Gehenna. They were terrified at the thought of His judgement, but there is no indication that they placed their trust in Him.

On yet another occasion when He came into the country of the Gerasenes, Jesus encountered a man who was demonised. The demon cried out with the man's voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me" [MARK 5:7]. The demonic response provides what is for demons a familiar recognition of Jesus' authority and His position as the Son of God, coupled with a confession that the demon will be tormented by banishment into the pit of fire. Though the demons begged not to be punished, there is not a scintilla of evidence that they submitted to the reign of the Master.

Whilst teaching in the Capernaum synagogue on another occasion, Jesus encountered a man oppressed by a demon. In Luke's Gospel, we read the account of this encounter. "In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, 'Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God'" [LUKE 4:33, 34].

I never read this account and similar accounts without marvelling that worshipping among the people was a demonised man—and the people had been oblivious to his presence! How many church members are doing the devil's work and God's people are oblivious? This thought should serve to warn us against the danger of tolerating just "a little bit of error."

Following the first missionary push into Europe, opposition to the Gospel arose. In Philippi, a woman with the spirit of the python followed the missionary band, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation" [ACTS 16:17]. If demonic powers could not keep people from following the message, they would co-opt what the messengers of the Most High God offered.

One of the humorous accounts from the missionary endeavours of the Apostle is the account of the attempt by some itinerating Jewish exorcists to appropriate the Name of the Saviour. They had witnessed Paul as he cast out demons, and so it appears that they determined that this could be a profitable business. So, they got a gig casting a demon out of a man oppressed with the unclean spirit. They adjured the demon to come out, "by the Name of Jesus who Paul proclaims." The blood must have frozen in their veins at what happened next. "The evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I recognise, but who are you'" [ACTS 19:15]? Then, we are told that the man leaped on them, overpowered them and stripped them naked before chasing them into the street.

What should be apparent from all these accounts is that the demons *know* there is a God. They believe that power and might reside with Him. They believe that He will judge them, casting them away from His presence. They believe that Jesus is the Son of the Most High God. Nevertheless, there is no possibility that a demon has ever been or ever will be saved.

Herein is a stunning truth—knowing there is a God does not save an individual. Trusting Christ is all that is required for salvation; however, the trust required will lead the one believing to receive the Master as Ruler over his life. Thus, the believing individual is transformed immediately from one who once opposed the work of God into one who participates in advancing the work of the Saviour. To dispel any errant notions, I must also state that those who believe are not simply neutral on the issue of advancing the work of the Kingdom of God—they are both favourably disposed to that advance and they are willing participants in God’s work.

Perhaps it appears to you to be a conundrum when I speak of belief that does not save. The answer to this seeming riddle of how demons can believe and yet be unsaved is provided through a review of the opening verses of the Gospel of John. John states that the Son of God “was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” [JOHN 1:10-13]. To believe Jesus is to receive Jesus. To receive Him is to accept His reign over your life and to accept your place as His servant, doing what He commands. This act of placing oneself under the reign of the Master is voluntary and not coerced.

Restating the matter, it is not merely believing there is a God, but it is in committing oneself to Him as God that brings salvation. The demons believe, and shudder at the thought of His existence! The concept is that their hair stands on end at mention of the Lord God. Not only do the demons know God exists, they are terrified at the thought they must give an accounting to Him. However, this knowledge neither saves them nor changes them from opposing His work. Similarly, those who believe God exists are not saved through that knowledge that He is. Only when an individual submits to the Lord as Master of his or her life can they be saved.

As we saw in a previous message, receiving Christ Jesus as Master of life transforms the individual. Without that new birth, there is no salvation. By the same token, the one who is born from above is born again into the Family of God, and the character of the Father will be progressively evident in the life of that individual. Because the question has been raised in private conversations recently, I need to take a moment to clarify this matter. It is not our place to judge others, though we are to be discerning. This means that it is not our place to determine whether they are children of God or part of the kingdom of darkness. However, we must caution those who walk contrary to the Spirit that their lives give no evidence of the new birth. Therefore, we are to warn them once and then a second time. If they refuse the admonition and continue to engender strife, we are commanded to “have nothing to do with” that person, “knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned” [TITUS 3:10, 11]. The life of such an individual demonstrates that they are allied with the opponents of grace.

**APPLICATION** —Certainly, we need to know our enemy, accurately assessing his power and his tactics. We need to have this knowledge in order to avoid being frightened into making mistakes in our conflict, for we are engaged in a conflict with the enemy of our souls. However, knowledge divorced from application is at best esoteric, and at worst useless. Therefore, I propose several applications that will benefit us as God’s holy people.

The first application that I would suggest resulting from our study this day is a statement of the obvious—the people of God must **recognise the deceptive power of demonic faith**. What I mean is that we are often urged from evangelical pulpits to believe. However, the belief urged upon hearers frequently fails to transform those who say they believe. The reason for this failure has nothing to do with the degree of belief; rather, it is the result of the object of belief. As John stated, life is granted to those who believe in His Name.

Demonic faith will lead one to believe that God exists, but to delay submitting to Him as Ruler of life. Demonic faith will lead the individual to acknowledge God, even to participate in the rituals of the church, all without submitting to His reign over life. The Word of God calls us to confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, believing in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, so that we will be saved. It is with the heart that one believes and is declared right with God, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For this reason, Scripture concludes, “Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved” [see **ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13**].

Demonic faith will lead mankind to be religious, to accept positions within a church, to actively sing the hymns of Zion and to recite the prayers of the Faith, even while failing to seek the will of God. I well recall a family I visited in this community who were quick to tell me of their past service in a church. He had been an elder and she had been president of the Ladies Guild. They had taught Sunday School and prepared the Communion elements. Nevertheless, they wanted nothing to do with the church or with God, because they believed. You see, they were deceived into believing about Jesus without making any commitment to Him as Lord.

Again, the message begs the people of God to **assess their service for the Saviour**. This raises the question of our service to God. Why do you serve? Is your service perfunctory—a duty performed because it is your job? Do you serve Christ in exchange for what you hope is forgiveness of sin? Or do you serve because of your joy in serving and because of your love for the Master and for His people?

I marvel at the attitude of the Baptist when his influence was waning and that of Jesus was waxing. John testified, “I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease” [**JOHN 3:28-30**]. His joy was to serve. Those who reflect the Spirit of God rejoice at the opportunity to serve. Their service is not drudgery, but a joy.

Finally, the message demands that as the people of God we **realise that we are at war**. Ours is not a war fought with human weapons, but ours is a spiritual conflict fought with spiritual weapons. The Apostle has stated the case succinctly when he wrote, “Though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” [**2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-5**].

We grow tired of the conflict. We are weary, knowing that we are weak and that the enemy takes a toll of our fellow saints. We see too many of our beloved colleagues fall in the conflict, becoming casualties of the war. This is war, and we have no discharge. Though society has trained us to believe that life should never have a conflict, our Faith subjects us to constant attacks. Perhaps you recall a motion picture that was popular a few years ago.

General Maximus comes to Rome dirty and shackled. This is not the way it's supposed to be. Where's Rome's legendary pageantry to greet one of her war heroes—the heraldry, the burnished armour, the laurel crown? Where's the honour due him?



Maximus comes as a slave.

That's the premise of the movie **Gladiator**. Through a maze of events, Maximus goes from celebrated warrior, favourite of one emperor, to despised traitor and nemesis of another. He becomes a fugitive, then caged slave, then unvanquished gladiator. His fame in the arena brings him to the sport's pinnacle: Rome's magnificent Coliseum to face her elite warriors.

The games open with a re-enactment of the battle of Carthage. The gladiators, all foot soldiers, are cast as the hapless Carthaginians. It is the stage for slaughter. They are marched out a dark passageway into brilliant sunlight and met with a roar of bloodlust.

Maximus, their leader, shouts to his men: "Stay together." He assembles them in a tight circle in the centre of the arena: back-to-back, shields aloft, spears outward. Again he shouts, "Whatever comes out that gate, stay together."

What comes out that gate is swift and sleek and full of terror. Chariot upon chariot thunder forth. Warhorses pull, with deadly agility and earthshaking strength, wagons driven by master charioteers. Amazonian warrior princesses ride behind and with deadly precision hurl spears and volley arrows. One gladiator strays from the circle, ignoring Maximus' order, and is cut down. Maximus shouts once more: "Stay together!"

The instinct to scatter is strong. But Maximus exerts his authority, and they resist that impulse. The chariots circle, closer, closer, closer. Spears and arrows rain down on the men's wood shields. The chariots are about the cinch the knot. Right then, Maximus shouts, "Now!"

The gladiators attack, and decimate the Romans. Commodus, the evil emperor, caustically remarks to the games organiser: "My memory of Roman history is rusty, but didn't we beat Carthage the first time?"

***Whatever comes out that gate, stay together.***

That echoes Jesus' prayer for us: "May they become perfectly one" [see **JOHN 17:23**]. Since this is war, we need more than ever to stay together. Amen.