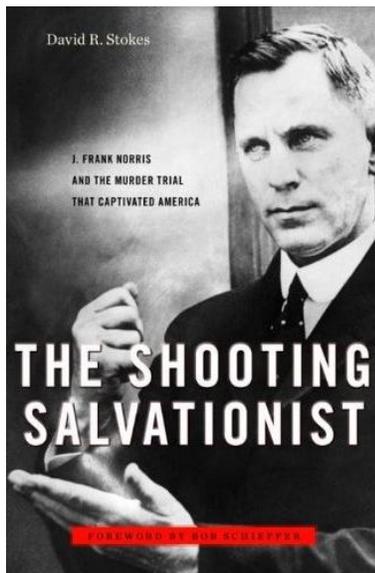




2 Peter 2:10-22

*Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, **11** whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. **12** But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, **13** suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. **14** They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! **15** Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray.*

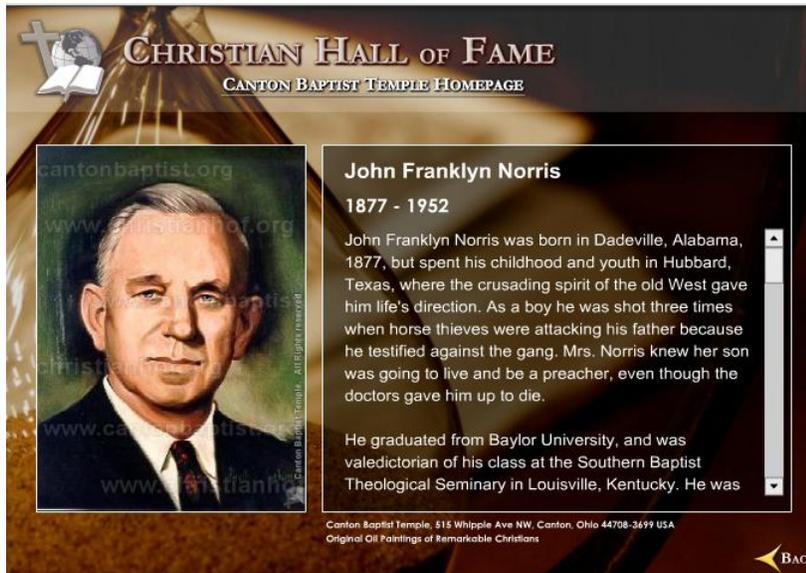
*They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, **16** but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.*



I am reading this fascinating book called *The Shooting Salvationist* about America's first mega-church pastor. J. Frank Norris took a church of several hundred and turned it into a church of more than twenty thousand and he did it during the era of World War 1 and through the Great Depression. In 1926, his Sunday School program alone had an attendance of 5,000. The only problem was that he grew his church by preaching the equivalent of sermons that sounded they were lifted off of the pages of the tabloid newspapers. He preached sermons about famous people in his city of Fort Worth, Texas. One sermon was bore the title, as "Should a Prominent Fort Worth Banker Buy

Expensive Silk Stockings for Another Man's Wife?"¹ He preached about the mayor, city leaders and several businessmen. If you got in Frank Norris's way, you would probably end up being featured in one of his sermons. Here are some of the names he called his enemies: 'Jezebel,' 'boot licker,' 'radio fraud,' 'Absalom,' 'traitor,' 'arch-conspirator,' 'deep freeze,' 'filthy lucre,' 'picket fence,' 'weeds and diapers,' and 'know all.'

On two separate occasions he was charged with setting fire to his own church but was acquitted both times. Norris' biggest legal battle came when an angry lumber baron came to his church office and allegedly threatened to kill him. Norris pulled out a pistol from his desk and shot the



The screenshot shows a webpage titled "CHRISTIAN HALL OF FAME" with the subtitle "CANTON BAPTIST TEMPLE HOMEPAGE". On the left is a portrait of John Franklyn Norris. To the right of the portrait is a text box with the following information:

John Franklyn Norris
1877 - 1952

John Franklyn Norris was born in Dadeville, Alabama, 1877, but spent his childhood and youth in Hubbard, Texas, where the crusading spirit of the old West gave him life's direction. As a boy he was shot three times when horse thieves were attacking his father because he testified against the gang. Mrs. Norris knew her son was going to live and be a preacher, even though the doctors gave him up to die.

He graduated from Baylor University, and was valedictorian of his class at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He was

Canton Baptist Temple, 515 Whipple Ave NW, Canton, Ohio 44708-3699 USA
Original Oil Paintings of Remarkable Christians

A "BACK" button is visible in the bottom right corner of the screenshot.

unarmed man four times. He was charged with first degree murder and his trial was the biggest news in the country at the time. It could be likened to the OJ Simpson murder trial. And like Simpson, Norris was found not guilty of any crime. Remarkably, it didn't ruin his ministry. He pastored the same church for another 25 years and to this day Norris is lauded as a great man of faith. He appears in the online Christian Hall of Fame in my hometown of Canton, Ohio.²

I don't pretend to know the inner motives and workings of this man, but one thing is certain—he was enormously arrogant. One immediately wonders how he was able to get so many followers—and to keep so many followers. Why would anyone follow a man like this? The same questions could be asked as to why 40,000 people follow another megachurch pastor today that is down the road from Fort Worth. J. Frank Norris was not pure evil. He may have fit the example of those whom Paul described in Philippians chapter one—those who preach the gospel from selfish motives. It seems that people did get genuinely saved under his ministry but perhaps his chief downfall was his arrogance.

This was also the chief issue with the false teachers described by Peter. They were so *Bold and willful*, that *they did not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones*, This is a tricky passage to put our minds around. The NIV says that they were not afraid to slander celestial beings. The glorious ones or celestial beings are almost certainly referring to demons, especially since they are contrasted with angels in verse eleven—*whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord*. The tricky question is how does one blaspheme a demon? Demons are our enemy bent on our destruction so how is it even possible to blaspheme them?

We really don't know the issue to which Peter refers but key was the attitude of arrogance. You have probably heard it said that there are two basic errors when it comes to spiritual warfare—

one error is to give the enemy too much credit. Some believers see a demon under every bush. These people think that demons are to blame for every sickness and every problem that comes way. The opposite error is to discount both the presence and the power of the demonic realm.

We must arrive at a Biblical balance between these two extremes. The problem is that even though we are physical beings and we live in a physical world, we are very often unaware that we are also spiritual beings who inhabit a spiritual world which is every bit as real as the physical. Ephesians 2:6 says that part of our salvation includes the fact that *God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus*. As believers, you and I are seated in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. Do you feel like you are seated in the heavenly realms? We usually don't feel like this because we are too busy battling life in the physical realm but we need to remind ourselves of these truths.

Let me give you three main ways that Satan and his cohorts seek to harm us and then three of Jesus' solutions.

Accuser—Satan is the accuser of the brethren, as the King James puts it. This is found in Rev 12.10. *And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. You no doubt remember the scene in heaven when Satan lobbed bombs of accusation against Job. Stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face (Job 1:11). Satan did the same thing to the high priest, Joshua. Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him (Zechariah 3:1). Apparently he does the same thing to you and me. Satan accuses us day and night before our God. I don't think he literally stands in the presence of God as he did in the case of Job and Joshua, but we are told that his accusations never cease.*

How many times have you heard that small voice in your head speaking quiet accusations? "If you are a Christian, then why did you just do that? No one really likes you. You can read your Bible but you will never be able to understand it, so why even try? God doesn't really care about you. You will never change. You will never get freedom from that besetting sin. If your friends at church found out what you did, they would be sickened." If you have heard those kinds of accusations, chances are they are coming directly from the accuser.

Now here is where we need to be careful. The Holy Spirit also speaks to us and tells us of our sin. We both want and need this vital work of the Spirit in our lives. There is Holy Spirit conviction and there is Satanic accusation, so how can you tell the difference? The answer lies within the solution. The solution to both genuine conviction and malicious accusation is the blood of Jesus Christ. If you don't know 1 John 1:9, you need to know it. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* If you truly confess your sins then the blood of Christ cleanses you from all unrighteousness.

I want to take a moment and make sure we understand what this entails. Have you ever tried to clean something and then someone comes along and tells you it's not really clean? I don't know about you, but this happens frequently in our house. One of the kids come and tell us that they

cleaned their room. Well what's usually the first thing that happens next? Mom or dad walk into the room and perform an official inspection. They pull their clipboard out and start taking notes—three stray socks behind the bed; bed is only partially made; clothes are stuffed into half open drawers; oh, and there's a strange lingering odor. In the history of the world has a child ever passed a clean room inspection on the first try? Parents, here's something fun you can do some time. After you get done inspecting your children's bedrooms, why not let them inspect yours and see what they find?! ☺

The fact of the matter is that most kids' definition of clean really is different than their parents'. Do you know the only way that a child's room will actually pass a full inspection? You need to have mom clean your room for you. If mom has a certain standard of clean and the child can never meet that standard, then only mom can clean the room according to her high standards. (Note to all children—if you know what's good for you, DO NOT try this at home! That would be incredibly disrespectful and miss my point entirely.) Here is the application I am driving at. When we confess our sins and the blood of Christ cleanses us from all unrighteousness, who is doing the cleaning? Your only job is confession. That's all you can do. You cannot possibly cleanse your own sins. Just as only mom can clean a bedroom to meet her own standards of cleanliness, only Jesus can cleanse your sins according to his standards of clean. When you confess your sins, it's a bit like asking your mom to clean your room for you. You are admitting that you cannot cleanse your own sins and you are inviting Jesus to do it for you.

And what is that called when the blood of Christ cleanses us from sins? It is called the gospel. We talked about this during our men's study in Romans on this past Wednesday morning. The gospel is the coming of the sinless God in human flesh to take our sins upon himself and die in our place, be raised to life and ascended to his throne in glory to await his second coming. This is the gospel message that we preach and share with the unbeliever but it is the same message that the believer desperately needs. You may remember a few months ago when I used the old Anita Bryant orange juice commercial as an illustration. Orange juice—it's not just for breakfast anymore. The Gospel—it's not just for salvation anymore. We need to preach the gospel to one another all of the time.

Don't mistake this to mean that you are getting saved over and over again. There is an unrighteousness that leads to death and judgment and Jesus cleanses us from that at our conversion but there is also an unrighteousness that leads to grieving the Holy Spirit and breaking of fellowship with the Lord.

But if you say that the blood of Christ is insufficient to cleanse you of your sins, this is the height of arrogance. You might never verbalize this specifically, but you live in such a way that it is true. You live like you are still paying for your sins, that you somehow need to earn your forgiveness. You are putting yourself in the place of God and declaring that the sacrificial blood of his Son is not sufficient for you. If you are struggling with guilt or regret, then chances are someone has at one time said this phrase to you. "What you need to do is to forgive yourself." Have you heard that one before? Maybe you have said it to someone yourself. I know people say this they mean well and are only trying to help but do you see the terrible theology in this phrase? "You need to forgive yourself." What? Is that what you would say to an unbeliever? You

say to them, “Listen, because you don’t believe in Jesus you are destined to spend eternity in hell. I don’t want that to happen to you so what you need to do is to forgive yourself.” It sounds ludicrous when we put it in this context so why we would use it if you are talking with a fellow believer? If you are struggling with guilt and shame, you don’t need to forgive yourself because you can’t forgive yourself. What you need to do is to apply the forgiveness of Christ to that sin and shame. I realize that when some people say you should forgive yourself, they are speaking somewhat metaphorically and really mean something like what I am saying. But if that is true, why not be more specific? Why not be more Biblically accurate and suggest to someone that what they need to do is apply the gospel their sin and shame. What they need to do is make sure they have Godly sorrow and genuine repentance and then allow Christ to cleanse their conscience and stop trying to work out some twisted form of penance until they feel worthy to be forgiven.

This reminds me of a song I heard on 103.9 Thursday night in the car. The song is called [*Someone Worth Dying For*](#). It’s a catchy tune but unfortunately, it has awful lyrics. The key phrase in the song is the same as the title—*Jesus help me believe that I am someone worth dying for*. I understand that people want to know that they are forgiven. They want to feel forgiven and to know that they are cleansed from their sins. They want to have an emotional response to their faith—and that is all fine and well and this song is a good song that details the struggle we have in life. But the solution is completely backwards. I don’t care how many times you sing this song or pray to the Lord and ask, “help me believe that I’m someone worth dying for,” he will never answer this prayer because you were not worth dying for. That’s the whole point of the gospel!

Here is what the Bible has to say about the kind of a person we were before Christ died for us.

- For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Romans 5:10)
- And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:1-5).
- What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, **10** as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” (Romans 3:9-12).
- God demonstrated his own love for us in this—while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

Do these verses sound like we were “worth dying for”? The truth is the exact opposite. We were not worth dying for because if we were worthy. Christ would not have had to die for us. He died for us not to demonstrate that we were worthy, but as Romans 5:8, in order to demonstrate his love for us. He died for us to put his love on display. His sacrificial death was never meant to point the way to our inherent worth but to his inherent glory, mercy and love.

How does all of this relate to Satan's work as the accuser? For one thing, the lyrics of this song (I'm not just picking on this song but rather the weak theology and sentimentality they represent) could very well be spoken as an accusation by the devil. He is whispering in the ears of some of you, "You sin so much that you could never be worthy of Jesus' love. You're not good enough to be a Christian." Here's the thing about the devil—most of time he is at least half right. If he tells you that you are a sinner, he's right. If he accuses you of a specific sin, he may be right about that also. You really aren't worthy. You really aren't good enough. That's the point of the gospel. That's the point of the entire Bible.

If you hear the accusation spoken to you that you are not good enough, say to yourself—and I would do it out loud since demons can't hear your thoughts— "it's true, I am not worthy, but I trust in the blood of Jesus to cleanse that sin. If you hear that accusation and you have confessed it, your solution is to rely on the blood of Christ. Tell yourself—again, speak it out loud—that you are cleansed by the blood of Christ. You did not cleanse your sins—Jesus did. If you confess your sin and the accusation remains strong and clear, then it may be the word of the accuser trying to discourage you. Claim the blood of Christ over your sin and rest in that assurance alone.

Deceiver

Satan is so good at weaving truth into his accusation because he is also the deceiver. Satan masquerades "as angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). John 8:44 gives us sound instruction. *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* It's interesting isn't it? There is no truth in Satan yet he masquerades as an angel of light. There is no truth in him yet he might speak a partial truth in order to accuse and discourage us. We all survived the recall election but I need to tell you this—politicians did not invent lying. Satan was the original spin doctor. He can spin a lie and make it sound like the truth. There is no one who does it better.

If Satan's weapon is lies and deception, then what do you think the solution would be? The solution is truth or the Word of Christ.

Satan's Strategy	Jesus' Solution
Accuser	The blood of Christ
Deceiver	The Word of Christ

You can see how all of Satan's attacks and all of Jesus solutions are interwoven. In order to apply the blood of Christ to Satan's accusations we need to know the Word of Christ, the Bible. Some Christians think that it is more important to live out the Bible than to know the Bible. They are fond of using the phrase from St. Francis of Assisi. *Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words.* There are two problems with this statement. First, St. Francis never said this and second, it leads one to think that words are not really that important when it comes to the gospel. Obviously, actions are extremely important. Jesus' death and resurrection are real actions anchored in real history but we know about these actions because of the words of Scripture. Jesus and every Biblical author used words to communicate God's truth. If we understand these words appropriately, they will automatically turn into action

Destroyer

Satan's activity as accuser and deceiver has one primary goal in mind—to destroy us. He is called the Destroyer.

- Rev. 9:11—*They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer)*
- 1 Peter 5:8—*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

What is one way that the devil can gain a foothold in our life? The well known passage is Ephesians 4. *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil* (Ephesians 4:26-27). The NIV reads, do not give the devil a foothold. The original word is *topos* from where we get the word topography. It means territory or region or in other words, a beachhead.



We just celebrated the 68th anniversary of D-day when the allied troops established a beach head in Normandy. The effort required 5000 ships, 13,000 aircraft, and 160,000 troops. Taking Ohama Beach did not guarantee that we would win the war but it was a decisive turning point. So we need to understand that something as simple as our anger gives the devil a beachhead in our lives, which is really much more than a foothold.

The word foothold implies that Satan has placed his foot in the doorway and has a better chance of forcing his way in but that

is not the meaning of the word, *topos*. A sin like anger does not give the devil a foothold but a beach head. It is like you have invited him into your living room. Furthermore, he is in the house because you have given him authority to be in the house. He has territory in your life that you have given to him.

And once Satan establishes a beachhead in your life, he proceeds to munch quietly and contentedly on your soul until you do something about it. The solution to Satan gaining ground



in our lives is to place ourselves under the authority of Christ. There is hardly a better text for this solution than James 4:6-7. *Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

And here's where we come full circle on the topic of arrogance and the false teachers in Peter's day. Arrogance of any kind is a destroyer of spiritual growth but especially so

when the arrogance goes so far as to blaspheme celestial beings. Here is a very quick summary of the rest of the chapter and the slippery slope that started with arrogance.

1. Spiritual arrogance—*blaspheme glorious ones*
2. Sexual immorality—*eyes full of adultery*
3. Selfish greed—*hearts trained in greed*
4. Slaves to sin—*they themselves are slaves of corruption*
5. State of destruction—*the last state has become worse for them than the first*

This is why humility and submission to the Lord is absolutely necessary for spiritual warfare. You can see how the Jesus solutions go hand in hand with Satan’s three primary modes of attack.

Satan’s Strategy	Jesus’ Solution
Accuser	The Blood of Christ
Deceiver	The Word of Christ
Destroyer	The Authority of Christ

You submit yourself to God by coming under the authority and protection of his Word. You never take on Satan by yourself but you need to place yourself under the authority of Christ through the Word of Christ and apply the blood of Christ to all of Satan’s attacks. But too many people attempt to resist Satan without first coming submitting themselves to Christ in this way.



The person who made this illustration probably meant this man to be a regular believer but I see him as Jesus. I can’t tell Satan to go away. I don’t recommend that you engage the devil in any kind of conversation even if it is telling him to get lost. Our job is to submit ourselves to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and then Jesus tells Satan to hit the road. Jesus says, “No more authority in this soul’s life. He or she is mine.”

Rich Maurer
June 10, 2012

¹ Stokes, David R. (2011-07-12). The Shooting Salvationist: J. Frank Norris and the Murder Trial that Captivated America (Kindle Locations 290-291). Random House Inc Clients. Kindle Edition.

² <http://www.christianhof.org/indexflash.html>