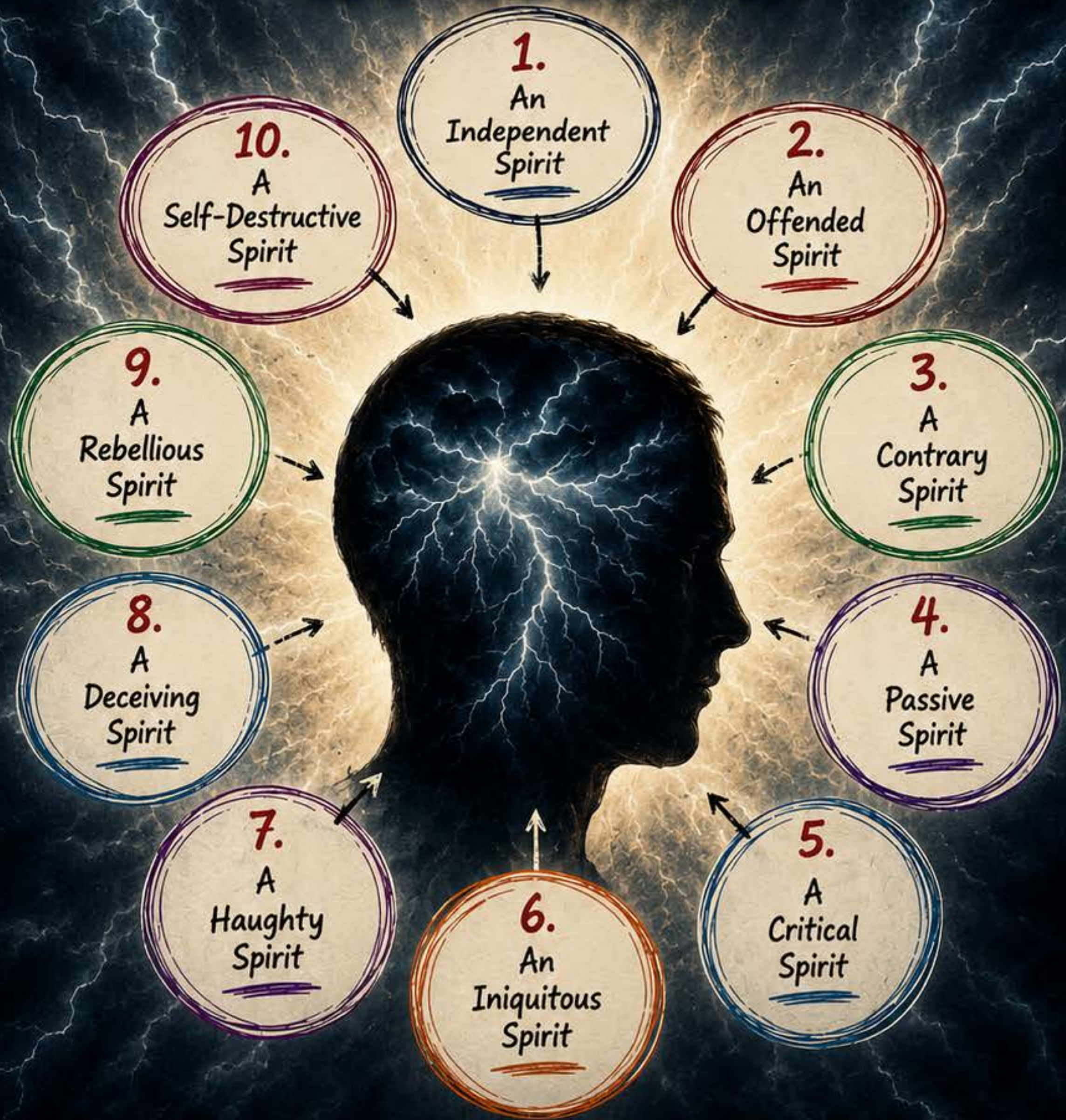


TEN DANGEROUS SPIRITS



By Rev. Glenn Goodwin

Ten Dangerous Spirits

Satan has many tools to corrupt the good spirits of God's people. He is seeking what is his. He was told that dust shall be the serpent's meat in Genesis 3:14. No literal snake in the entire world subsists on a diet of dirt. The serpent in Genesis 3 is called that old serpent in Revelation 12:9 and Revelation 20:2. The dust that the serpent feeds on is mankind. Adam was told, "for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Genesis 3:19.

Jesus gave a parable of four types of soil in Mark 4. There was nothing wrong with the seed sown, but three of the four types of soil did not produce. The seed was unfruitful in the stony, thorny and wayside soils. Only the good ground brought forth 100-fold, 60-fold, and 30-fold. Soil is dirt, or dust. Satan feeds on dust. It is his business to be sure you are not good ground, and he feeds on you to corrupt your ability to produce the fruit of the Spirit.

In seeking his own dirt, the devil tries to put you into a bad spirit. Actually, there are many types of bad spirits. I'd like to cover ten of them here. Prayerfully consider if you ever get into one or more of these spirits. If so, you need to be transformed – by the renewing of your mind. Romans 12:2.

Proverbs 18:14 says, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" A wounded spirit is a hurt spirit, or a defective spirit. Proverbs 20:27 states, "The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly." The spirit of man is a measure of the maturity, the spirituality, the godliness and the Christianity of any believer. Let's make sure our spirits are good, and correct them as needed. Consider these particular bad spirits:

1. An Independent Spirit

The early church was united. Acts 4:32 says they had one heart and one soul. Salvation isn't just an individual relationship with God. You are saved out of sin and the world to be put into the body of Jesus Christ. It is a common union, a communion, a community. Notice Ephesians 2:5-6; Paul kept using that word, "together." We were quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places. Together...together...together. That's why I Cor. 1:10 admonishes us to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and same judgment.

In the church, as in an army, or a business venture, or in anything worthwhile; it is very dangerous when everyone or anyone has their own independent judgment. When loyalty to the cause is gone, any venture will fail. Mankind is, by nature, independent. But independence is detrimental to a group cause. Basic training in the military is designed to break down independence and form a group mentality. So much more can be accomplished when several people are working together, in unity, for a purpose or goal.

The church of Jesus Christ has always been successful when the people were united in their cause. It has always been weakened by the development of an autonomous, independent spirit. This spirit says, "I don't care what the church teaches, I'm going to decide for myself what I'm going to do and how I'm going to live." Some people just don't believe in the program the church is working on – whether it be the healing of the Body, personal evangelism, a holiness lifestyle, or whatever. The preacher can preach, the Bible can be clear, but an independent spirit just will not get with the program.

We read in II Samuel 3:20-21; 26-27 that Joab had an independent spirit. He submitted when he wanted to, and he rejected David's commands when he wanted to. There were times when Joab disobeyed direct commands. See II Sam. 18:5,12,14. We also read of King Saul's independent spirit in I Samuel 15:3,9, when he disregarded God's command through the prophet, and decided for himself what to do.

An independent spirit is subject to the snare of the devil. The man in Mark 9:38 (working for Jesus but not working with Jesus) was too independent to submit to the order of God at the time. He should have been at Jesus' feet with Peter and John, but he was too independent to work with the group. He really thought he was going places in God; he thought he was doing what was right for Him; but he never amounted to anything because he could not get with God's program.

2. An Offended Spirit

Jesus said that offenses would come to all. That is, everyone will have the opportunity to be offended; but, not everyone has to develop an offended spirit. The provocation will come; the response is up to you. Proverbs 18:4 says that a wounded spirit is hard to bear. An offended spirit is truly a wounded spirit.

Jesus warned His followers in Matthew 24:10 that many would be offended, and that those wounds would lead to betrayal and hatred. People with wounded spirits will turn on you. Those who are offended have had their sense of justice hurt. They believe that retribution is the only way to balance the scales. Animosity smolders and builds, until there is a lashing out.

A good example of this is seen in II Samuel 13:22-23. There, we are told that King David's son, Absalom, was wounded in his spirit because of harm done to his sister. That wound festered over time; two years. He couldn't get over the offense, and plotted revenge. Finally, he lashed out to murder his brother.

Do not nurse your grudge. There will be hurts over time. And some of the time, the wounding is not fair or just; but do not hold on to any real or imagined hurts. As long as there are human beings in the church, sinners saved by grace, there will be some offenses. It is sad, unfortunate, and probably wrong that you were hurt; but the real issue is whether you are seeking a cure for the wound. You can either keep that offense inflamed and openly sore, or you can pour in the healing balm of Gilead. An offended spirit can prevent the good seed from growing and producing the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

3. A Contrary Spirit

Paul told Titus to be a good example in every way, "that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed." Titus 2:8. Some people in the church are just contrarians. Whatever the pastor and the church leadership feel the church should be doing; they want to do just the opposite. Or at least they want to do something else, or do it in a different way.

In I Corinthians 16:12, the Apostle Paul said he “greatly desired” Apollos to come visit the church, but it was not his will to come at that time. Apollos said he’d come at a time of his own choosing. It didn’t seem to matter what the great apostle to the Gentiles wanted; Apollos had a contrary idea.

A contrary spirit can feed a sense of self-importance. “If everybody else is wearing blue, I’ll wear green just to show I can, and that I am different. I march to the beat of a different drummer.” Those manifesting a contrary spirit take a perverse pleasure in defying the norm, in being different, in breaking the rules – just to feed their ego.

Be careful what brings satisfaction to you. If you derive a sense of pleasure or self-worth from defying the teachings of the church or breaking the rules; Satan is feeding on your dust; and you won’t bear good fruit.

4. A Passive Spirit

When some people are not happy about the way things are going, they become passive. They withdraw. They quit working in the church; they quit speaking in the church; they do not worship with any fervor. Those with a passive spirit sit and watch, unconcerned and uninvolved.

The Lord said (through Deborah and Barak) in Judges 5:23 to curse Meroz; because they went not to the work. There was a battle to be fought; but the inhabitants of Meroz refused to take any part in the struggle against Sisera. The church is in a constant battle with our adversary, but those with a passive spirit refuse to help in the warfare. Yet Jeremiah 48:10 warns: “Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword” when there are battles to be fought for the Lord.

The truth of Hebrews 10:38 is that it is not good to draw back into quiet passivity. We mentioned Absalom before, but when he was offended, he went passive. II Samuel 13:22 says he went quiet and didn’t speak to his brother – “neither good or bad.” He was clearly not happy; and that passivity allowed him to drift into destruction.

Eventually, age and infirmity limits what we can do physically for the Lord in His church. But those who are not too old to keep working for the Lord; who simply choose not to be involved any more because they do not agree with the program of the church, or how they have been treated, or some other cause – they are harboring a dangerous spirit. They cannot work in a church department, or they cannot testify, or they cannot support the church because of some reason that looms large in their mind.

Yet their service was not for men anyway; it was for God. Their work on the staff of the church was not supposed to be for earthly glory or merit; but to lay up treasure in heaven. In the mind of a person with a passive spirit, they are justified in their withdrawal. In reality, they are denying themselves the wonderful opportunity to let their light shine, to be a good influence and example, and to work for the Lord.

5. A Critical Spirit

When Satan feeds on the soil of some, they become hyper-critical; they criticize. They criticize the pastor, his wife, the elders, the band director, other department heads and co-workers, the way the property looks, how the church spends money, etc., etc., etc., *ad nauseum*.

Psalms 101:5 says directly that God is against private slander. (Criticism can be a form of slander – designed to make others look bad in your eyes.) Isaiah 32:6 tells us that a vile person will speak villainy. The Hebrew word for “villainy” means “wickedness.” Isn’t it wicked to be constantly criticizing those who are trying to serve God to the best of their ability?

The Lord told His prophet in Ezekiel 33:30 that some people were criticizing him in their houses. They wouldn’t say it to Ezekiel’s face, but grumbled, complained and criticized behind his back. But God knew, and He doesn’t approve of a critical spirit. We read in Numbers 12:1 that Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses. (Anyone can be caught up in this spirit, even “good” people.) But God judged them – and Miriam experienced Leprosy.

We’ve mentioned Absalom before. He shows us you can contract many of these dangerous spirits. In II Sam. 15:3, Absalom began to find fault with David’s rule. He found fault with the fact that David wasn’t adequately handling the problems of the people. Don’t be continually criticizing others in your mind or with your tongue.

Please note that any one of these spirits can take you out of the church. That is the goal of the adversary. A combination of these bad spirits, for example an independent, contrary, critical person, is in grave danger of being ensnared and destroyed.

6. An Iniquitous Spirit

It is easy to move from being critical to actively working against and undermining the leadership of the church, or any institution. This is nothing new. People – normal, seemingly-honorable and seemingly-respectable people – have always turned against and lashed out at what they have publicly criticized.

There is a natural tendency in humans to believe they are right – and to seek validation and approval from others. They need to hear other people say, “You are right and the pastor is wrong.” Or the head usher, or the song leader, or the elders, etc. It is music to their ears. It feeds their ego. It can destroy their soul.

This seeking of validation and commiseration often grows into a spirit of iniquity. A disgruntled person wants to gather a following and make others believe he or she has identified problems that must be addressed. These persons can start out withdrawn and sullen, but move to being political.

When Absalom developed this dangerous spirit, he began to involve others. II Samuel 15:3. He became the center of a cell of discontented people. Verse 6 says he stole their hearts. Their hearts should have belonged to David – he was God’s anointed. But Absalom stole their loyalty. In II Corinthians 10:10, Paul had to defend his ministry against politically-motivated charges and criticism.

This is a spirit of active rebellion and disloyalty. Those with this type of spirit cannot be coddled. If they come to you, it is because they believe they can enlist you in their cause. These people must be

confronted! When they come to you, they will say something like: “A lot of people are upset about...” or “I know a lot of people are concerned.” Stop them! Say, “Just a minute; I believe in this church! I have confidence that the Lord is with our elders!”

Absalom almost succeeded because he captured the hearts of the people. If he would have had no supporters, he might have never raised an insurrection against David. Do not join in with iniquity. Remember Proverbs 25:23: an angry countenance drives away a backbiting tongue.

7. A Haughty Spirit

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” Proverbs 16:18. A haughty spirit is dangerous to your spiritual life. Hannah said, “Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth.” I Samuel 2:3.

Some people are just too proud to admit they have made a mistake. We all know of people who have left the church, and who ought to be back in church, but are just too proud to admit that leaving was wrong. Pride keeps you from doing the right thing, even when you know what the right thing is. Pride is inflexibility. Pride is a dictator. Pride is a mountain that must be scaled in order to do what you know you should do. So many scriptures condemn pride and haughtiness; and so many scriptures commend the opposite spirit – which is meekness and humility.

Psalms 10:4 states that the wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. Proverbs 16:5 says a proud heart is an abomination to the Lord. Isaiah 6:2 informs us that God looks to those with poor and contrite spirit. So many more verses could be cited. But the point is that Satan will destroy the proud. Pride was his fault. It is his favorite tool to feed on the dust of the believers.

Don't let the dangerous spirit of pride prevent you from doing the right thing.

8. A Deceiving Spirit

The devil is the great deceiver. One of his greatest tools is deception. He uses it like a farmer uses a plow, digging furrows in the hearts of the people. Insurrection can only grow in an environment of deception. Those who rebel against Jesus Christ, and His body in the earth, are truly deceived. Rebellion destroys those who are involved, and nobody wants to be destroyed.

Those in this spirit are deceived into thinking that they know more than the pastor, more than the elders, more than the department directors, etc. They are convinced they could do a better job of leading the people. Absalom said, “If I were king . . . things would be different; things would be better.”

That's the spirit of Diotrephes in III John 9-10. This man thought he knew better, and could do better. Diotrephes loved to have preeminence. Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:39 that men would arise, speaking perverse things, to gather disciples or followers.

Those who are captured by this spirit are deceived into thinking that they are as gifted, as talented, as anointed, as smart, as anyone else. They develop contempt for their leaders and teachers. Notice, they develop contempt; it is not something that springs up, full-grown, overnight.

These are the people who start competing churches and try to draw followers from their former church. They go on the internet and media outlets to try to destroy their former leaders. This is a spirit of Lucifer, to replace and take over rightful authority. See Isaiah 14:12-14.

9. A Rebellious Spirit

Those who get into a rebellious spirit are ready for an open challenge of the leadership. A person in this attitude will either leave and try to destroy the church from the outside; or like Absalom, will attempt to oust the current leadership and take over. This usually leads to multiple challenges and battles – sometimes openly in church services, sometimes in courts, sometimes in the media, occasionally in private.

Micaiah was a true prophet. In I Kings 22:24, a rebellious man didn't like what Micaiah said, and struck the prophet on the cheek. Usually, the "smiting" is metaphorical – but just as dangerous. Don't ever lash out against what just might be of God. David refused to strike down King Saul, because Saul had formerly been "the Lord's anointed." See I Samuel 24:6.

But those influenced by this dangerous spirit of rebellion have no such compunction. You can read in Jeremiah 28:10-11 about Hananiah's direct challenge of Jeremiah. But you don't want Hananiah's judgment. See verses 16-17.

10. A Self-Destructive Spirit

Sadly, every one of these other wrong spirits can lead into self-destruction. Spiritually, every one who turns against the work of God crashes and burns. Some repent and recover, but most dash headlong into destruction. It is spiritual suicide. Lucifer, Absalom, Joab, Hananiah, Judas Iscariot, and many others are examples. You can probably name several modern-day examples.

I Samuel 15:23 says that rebellion is like witchcraft; and Exodus 22:18 commands that witches are to be executed. Dangerous spirits, if left unchecked, always deteriorate to self-destruction. Like the swine who received the dangerous Legion of spirits, and rushed violently toward destruction, see Matthew 8:31-32, these spirits are dangerous, damaging, devastating and destructive.