

THE DANGER OF UNCLEAN SPIRITS PART THREE

I'm going to continue with this series on the danger of unclean spirits tonight. But before I begin, let me share a few thoughts in relation to this whole subject that I feel are important for us to understand. First of all, Christianity is *not* a religion, much less a religion that's designed to produce happiness. The idea that happiness in *this* life is what being a Christian is all about is a perversion of the gospel. Christianity, in this life, is a training ground and a war. If we fail to orient ourselves to this reality, we will miss the *primary purpose* of redemption because salvation isn't about being saved *from* Hell. It's about becoming a new creation in this life—a creation which is radically, radically *different* from the one we were before we were born again.

We must become a new creature *now*, in every area of our lives, except the body. The body will not become a new creature until the resurrection. Our spirits *became* a new creation the moment we were regenerated. Our bodies *will* become a new creation at the resurrection. The issue right now is the soul. Our souls *must* become a new creation today (not after we die) because our *future* rewards and destiny in God's kingdom—including what kind of body we get—will be in direct proportion to *how much* of a new creature we have become.

One of the greatest deceptions the Church has ever embraced is the idea that believing in Jesus guarantees we will become everything God has ordained us to become, and that we will receive all the rewards God has ordained us to receive. Such a notion is a monumental lie, straight out of the pit of Hell. It's one of Satan's most successful devices, which he uses to keep God's people from reaching the goal of redemption. The Scripture teaches very clearly that we have to *overcome* all the resistance we face from our own sin nature, and also, from the demonic kingdom, in order to actually become everything we were destined to become and gain the rewards we were destined to receive.

This is why, when God calls us to salvation, He's not calling us to a life of self-fulfillment and happiness. He's actually drafting us into His army. He's calling us to be a soldier. He's calling us to learn how to resist and overcome sin, self, Satan and the world. Satan and his unclean spirits in particular, will do everything they can to stop us from attaining our destiny. This is why the apostle Paul said: "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh*" (1. Cor. 10:3). This is why he talked about soldiers and warfare:

*This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest **war a good warfare**;*

I. Timothy 1:18

*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a **good soldier** of Jesus Christ. No man **that warreth** entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be **a soldier**.*

II. Timothy 2:3-4

Whether we like it or not, we are in a spiritual war that is every bit as real as any literal war. We are in a war, not only against our own sin and the entanglements of this world, but against invisible beings who are very powerful, who hates us with a supernatural hatred, who are determined to destroy us and who plot our destruction day and night. If this isn't a reality to you, then ask God to make it a reality.

*Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary** the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom **resist steadfast** in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*

I. Peter 5:8-9

The apostle Peter warned us to watch and be sober because “your adversary” is going to and fro, seeking whom he may devour. The first thing we need to realize is that Satan isn’t some intangible force that roams the earth, influencing the unsaved. He’s *your* adversary. He’s specifically after *you*. He is seeking to not only keep you from becoming a new creature today—which will keep you from attaining the rewards and reaching the destiny God has for you tomorrow—he is actively seeking your complete and total destruction.

One of the reasons people get so confused when they hear this kind of teaching is because there are passages in the Scripture which seem to imply the Christian life should be a joyful and pleasant walk with God. False teachers have extracted and separated these passages from the rest of the New Testament and in so doing, they have created a “happy” religion where everything is love and joy, where God does everything *for* us, where God fulfills all of our desires, where God protects us from any possible harm, etc. But the reason those kinds of verses are in the Bible is because the Bible isn’t written just for spiritually mature believers. The Bible is written for believers of *all* spiritual ages. It contains “milk” for baby Christians and “meat” for mature Christians.

Both Peter and Paul, as well as the writer of the book of Hebrews, talked about spiritual babies and their need for milk. Paul said the Corinthians were *carnal* believers, not *spiritual* believers. He said they were still “babes in Christ” and he had to feed them “with milk and not with meat” because they couldn’t handle meat (*I. Cor.3:1-2*). Peter said “newborn babes” are to “desire the sincere milk of the word” so they will grow spiritually (*I. Pet. 2:1-2*). The writer of Hebrews said the Christians he was writing to had “become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat”. He also said “every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age” (*Heb. 5:12-14*).

*I write unto you, **little children**, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, **fathers**, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, **young men**, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, **little children**, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, **fathers**, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, **young men**, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

I. John 2:12-14

The apostle John talked about *spiritual* children, young men and fathers. The Bible makes it clear there are different *spiritual* ages. Just as in a natural family, there are babies, children, young men and fathers, so it is in the family of God. When we are born again, we aren’t born spiritual adults any more than a natural baby is born a natural adult. We are born spiritual babies—and just as natural babies must be fed milk, so spiritual babies must be fed the milk of the Word. We don’t try to feed meat to natural babies and in like manner, we shouldn’t try to feed spiritual meat to spiritual babies. God is a Father, and being a Father, He knew exactly what He was doing when He inspired the writers of the Scripture to write what they did because the Bible contains both milk and meat. It contains food for Christians of *all* spiritual ages.

The *milk* of the Word teaches us about God's love and faithfulness. It teaches us about the many *blessings* of Christianity, including divine healing. It teaches us about walking by faith. It teaches us about the love of the brethren, about spiritual fellowship, and about the gifts of the Spirit. The *meat* of the Bible deals with issues of *adult* spiritual life. Meat has to do with coming to the place where we willingly do *only* the things the Father instructs us to do and say *only* those things the Father instructs us to say. Jesus said: "*My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*" (Jn. 4:34). Finishing the work God has ordained for us is meat—and meat is for spiritual adults. Meat also has to do with learning how to defeat our enemies. We come to the place where we are willing to battle anything that's hindering us from attaining the destiny God has prepared for us. Meat has to do with strict and full obedience to God, and also, with spiritual warfare.

By the way, did you notice the attributes John associated with spiritual young men? Young men are strong in the spirit, they have the word of God abiding in them, and they have *overcome* the enemy. So not only are there different ages in the spirit, there's a certain *age group* that is associated with defeating the enemy.

When we are spiritual babies, God deals with us *differently* than He does when we become spiritual children. When we are spiritual children, God deals with us differently than He does when we become spiritual young men. When we are spiritual young men, God deals with us differently than He does when we become spiritual fathers. One of the areas that changes as we grow is the level of protection we receive from battle. Just like in a natural family, the father is responsible to protect his new-born infant, so God protects His new-born children. He is never *totally* responsible for our protection because even spiritual babies have to do *their* part. However, their part is very small. The point is, the degree of responsibility God carries for our protection *changes* as we grow from a baby to a child, from a child to a young man, and from a young man to a father.

In other words, when we are babies, God fights all our battles *for* us. When the enemy attacks us, the Lord is instantly there to run interference and protect us. Most of the time we don't even realize an attack has taken place. But God's *goal* for us is that we eventually learn how to fight the enemy and overcome him *ourselves*. When we are babies this isn't possible. However, the more we grow, the more God allows us to *begin* fighting our own battles. When I say fight "our own" battles, I'm *not* talking about fighting them in our own strength. I'm talking about us engaging in that battle, as opposed to having God do all the fighting for us. We will always need God's wisdom and power to win. We will never be able to win by our own strength alone. But when we are babies, we don't even realize there's a war going on because God is doing *all* the fighting for us.

As we grow spiritually, we notice that when trouble starts, God doesn't always show up instantly, like He did before. As a matter of fact, He begins to gently lead us into the realm of warfare, whether its warfare against our own flesh or warfare against the demonic kingdom. At first, He only leads us into *small* battles in order to build our faith and our spiritual stamina. Slowly, He begins to open our understanding regarding the forces we are up against. By the time we become young men in the spirit, we are ready to carry the *full weight* of the battle, and more importantly, we are prepared to *win*. Also, we are ready to help others understand this war.

The problem with today's Christians is that the vast majority of today's religious leaders think the way God deals with us as babies, is the way He should (and will) *always* deal with us. They don't realize that our relationship with God *changes* as we grow and the demands upon us become greater. So they encourage believers to keep relating to God as spiritual babies or children their *whole* lives. This is one of the reasons so many Christians never grow up. After 40 or 50 years of attending church services, they are still babies or little children in the spirit. Religious leaders don't teach the people what it means to grow up in the spirit because they themselves have never

grown up in the spirit! How can they teach others something they know nothing about? Thus, the situation in the Religious System is one where spiritual babies or children who have never grown up, continue to produce more and more spiritual babies who will *never* grow up.

This is one of the reasons most Christians flip out when you try to tell them there is a war going on and they must join in the battle if they want to *gain the inheritance* God has prepared for them. That's not the kind of reality spiritual babies and children understand! All they understand is what they've been taught, and what they have experienced with God, which is the kind of relationship a baby or a little child experiences. God doesn't place a lot of spiritual responsibility on babies and young children. He doesn't make babies and children go to war. He treats them just like babies and children need to be treated.

Since this is the *only kind* of treatment most Christians have ever experienced from God, and since they assume this is the way it should always be, when you start talking to them about the issues of *adult* spiritual life they go banana's. They simply go banana's! They start accusing you of teaching false doctrine. They say you don't believe in the sovereignty of God. They say you don't believe in the finished work of the Cross. They say you're trying to be saved by works instead of "by grace". They say you're exalting Satan's power above God's power, and all kinds of stupid things. Well, my answer to all that nonsense is this: "*Excuse me! It's time to grow up now! Please read First Peter 5:8-9 because it shows that many of your sacred-cow doctrines are lies!*"

The first doctrine it exposes as a lie is the idea that since Jesus defeated Satan at Calvary, we don't have to actually defeat him ourselves. If that were true, Peter would never have said what he did! You don't have to be on guard against an enemy who has already been defeated *for* you. You don't have to "resist steadfast" an enemy that is *no longer* any threat to you.

The second doctrine it exposes is the idea that God is the one who is totally responsible to protect us and keep us spiritually safe. If that were the case, then *we* would not have to watch, *we* would not have to be sober, and *we* would not have to resist this creature who is seeking to devour us—God would do all that *for* us.

The third doctrine it exposes as a lie is the whole Eternal Security delusion. If Christians were eternally secure, then there would be no need to warn them against being "devoured" by Satan because it *wouldn't be possible* for us to be devoured by Satan. The term devour means to completely destroy something—so we're talking about the possibility of a Christian being totally destroyed by Satan. If Peter didn't think such a thing was possible, he would have never given that kind of a warning to us.

The fourth doctrine it exposes as a lie is the idea that "the flesh" is our only *real* enemy. I've said this before and I'll say it again: The flesh is certainly an enemy. We are told in the New Testament to not live after the flesh, or walk according to the flesh, or walk in the flesh, or mind the things of the flesh, because if we do, we will die spiritually. We are also told to deny our flesh, make no provision for our flesh, and put it to death for the same reason: "*For if you live after the flesh you shall die*", said Paul (*Rom. 8:13*).

However, the fact is, when it comes to specifically naming the enemy of God's people, it's not the flesh that's named. In Scripture, Satan is the one who is specifically referred to as the enemy of the believer. The reason for this is twofold. First of all, Satan is our original enemy; therefore he is our greatest enemy. Second, the flesh, though it can be deadly, is not a *living* creature. It's not a personal entity that has supernatural power and intelligence and lays plans for our destruction.

But Satan and his demons *are* all these things. They are living creatures who possess not only intelligence, but supernatural intelligence and power. They are persons—*invisible*, angelic, persons who plan our destruction. The flesh is simply our fallen human nature. It's an *inanimate* tool these invisible beings use against us. Yes, the flesh is our enemy. But Satan is also our enemy and he's much more dangerous than our flesh.

Most of us can't really fathom the kind of hatred this creature has for us. His primary goal is to make you as miserable as he can, for no particular reason, other than the fact that you are human being and you have the potential to become a child of God. He seeks to destroy us any way he can—mentally, emotionally, financially, physically, and especially spiritually because when he destroys someone spiritually, he destroys them *eternally*. He is the ultimate *opportunist*. He'll take whatever he can get. If he can't totally destroy you, he'll settle for partially destroying you. If he can't do that, he'll settle for causing you to miss your destiny. If he can't accomplish even that, then he'll settle for just making you as miserable as possible in *this* life. He will do anything he can to hurt us as much as he can because he loves to make the lives of human beings miserable.

*And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with **divers diseases and torments**, and those **which were possessed with devils**, and those which **were lunatick**, and those that had **the palsy**; and he healed them.*

Matthew 4:24

The *ignorance* that surrounds the subject of Satan and unclean spirits is mind-boggling. But this ignorance is not the result of a lack of information in the Scripture. The Bible tells us much about Satan, about his kingdom and how it operates, and about what he can do to human beings. So the ignorance people walk in is self-induced and deliberate. They don't want to know the truth. After defeating Satan in the wilderness, Jesus spent the next 3½ years delivering God's people from his power. It was the greatest "deliverance ministry" the world had ever seen, or ever has seen.

Please notice what the Scripture says these unclean spirits are capable of doing to people—and remember, these were God's covenant people. Spirits are not only responsible for all kinds of *physical* illnesses (diverse diseases; the palsy), they are also the cause of various *emotional* problems (torments) and *mental* problems (lunatic). The Lord revealed that unclean spirits are the root cause of many physical, emotional and mental problems people face. He pulled back the veil that *separates* the realm of the flesh and spirit and showed us the truth. But most of today's Christians have missed that truth and they continue to view all of mankind's problems as mere "human conditions" which can be managed through various medications, psychological counseling, 12-step programs and so on. They continue to blame everything on the flesh.

Obviously, many of those people had unclean spirits dwelling *inside* of them because Jesus had to cast them out. The spirits were dwelling inside their bodies, and inside their minds and emotions. However, tonight I'm not going to be talking about unclean spirits *indwelling* us. I know people are interested in that kind of thing, but what I want to focus on tonight is learning how to stop these spirits *before* they become a stronghold in our lives and end up inside of us. As I have said before, unclean spirits are dangerous even from the outside. You don't need to be "demon possessed" or "have a demon" indwelling you before they can deceive you and ruin your life. The best medicine is preventative medicine. The best medicine is to learn how to recognize when the *first begin* to move and defeat them at *that* point, so they don't have a chance to get inside.

There are five *major* avenues Satan and these unclean spirits use to entangle themselves in our lives. The first avenue is the mind. They can plant thoughts or ideas in our minds, and they can do it in such a way that we think those thoughts or ideas are coming from ourselves.

The second avenue are the desires (good or evil) that already reside in us. They have the ability to stir up bad desires and inflame them to the point where we can't stop thinking about them and we are driven to fulfil them. But their work in this area is not restricted to just stirring up *evil* desires so we will "sin". They are also very skilled at using good desires to hinder us. They know how to time their attacks just right, using good desires to lead us off in a direction that causes us to *miss* something God has for us.

The third avenue they use is people—all kinds of people. People you know; people you don't know; people you work with; people you live with; people you fellowship and worship with. Everything they are capable of doing in *your* life, they are capable of doing in the lives of other people. So the more people you know and are involved with, the more chances these spirits have to attack you.

The fourth avenue they use is circumstances. They are masters at arranging circumstances to tempt us, or interfere with things we are doing in the Lord (or are planning to do). They can also use any number of things to frustrate our lives in general to make us miserable.

The fifth avenue they use is the self-life. That's why "death to self" is such an important message. The only reason I don't talk about this more is because it's continually over-emphasized and presented as a silver bullet for all our problems by many ministers outside the Religious System. But the fact is, we *must* "die daily" if we want to walk in victory. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they became *like* Satan in their character and their personalities, with respect to self will and selfishness because they were infected with the same self-centered nature he has. The fact is, the nature of Satan and the nature of man are *identical* in these areas.

We really need to let this truth sink down into our hearts because the person who lives to please *himself* is doing exactly what Satan is doing. Selfishness belongs to Satan. It's a manifestations of his nature—no less than murder, rape, fornication, alcoholism, drug-addiction and so on. A *Christian* can live for self just as easily as a pagan can live for self. Indeed, it is very *easy* to be a selfish Christian. Just look around you! The world is *full* of them. Self will is the same way. When we do our own will, we are living just like Satan lives. Self will is a manifestation of Satan's nature because that's where it *originally* came from.

Christians don't understand how easy it is for Satan to become entwined in their lives. He doesn't have to possess us or indwell us. He doesn't even have to get us to "sin". All he has to do is encourage us to stop focusing our lives on God and start focusing them on *ourselves*. That alone is enough to make us useless to God's kingdom. The most worthless Christian on the planet is the one who is selfish and lives a self-willed life. Focusing on ourselves or living for ourselves is enough to cause us to miss the destiny God has prepared for us.

Let's look at the first avenue these spirits use. The Bible reveals that Satan has an incredible amount of access to the whole panorama of mankind's mental experience. Personally, I don't believe he can read our minds, but that's probably about the only thing he can't do. He can *plant* thoughts in the minds of people; he can *steal* thoughts from the minds (and hearts) of people; he can *know* whether or not people *understand* something they've heard; and he can *blind* the minds of people to the truth. That's a pretty impressive list of things he can do to with regards to your mind.

People don't realize Satan has the kind of access to our minds that he does for various reasons. The first reason they don't want to understand it. They are like little children who live in a make-believe world. They believe whatever they want to believe. Another reason they don't understand it is because they are listening to the false teachings of religious leaders like John MacArthur instead of the Scripture. When asked if he thought Satan can put thoughts in our minds, Mr. MacArthur said:

"If you are living a godly and a righteous life, and thinking on things that are pure and lovely and honest and so forth, and if your life is pure, **then you have that protection of the helmet of the hope of salvation** and the breastplate of righteousness. But **if you're sinful**, I believe that there are ways in which Satan can activate your thinking processes towards sin. . .

When you think a sinful thought, that may have absolutely nothing to do with the devil. If it's any encouragement to you, **you could live your whole life from birth to death, and the devil never bother you once in your entire life**. He's not omnipresent. He's fast, but he is not omnipresent. . . You say, 'Where do those thoughts come from?' I'll tell you where they come from. It's very clear; you don't have to expect the devil to do that. Listen. **It comes right out of your own heart**. That's the sad reality of it. 'Lust,' when it conceives, says James, 'brings forth sin.' **So, it comes right out of your flesh**. . . Your flesh will conjure those thoughts up."

*Bible Questions and Answers
Taped Message #GC 70-10*

Remember what I said the last two weeks about ministers who try to *minimize* the work of unclean spirits by saying everything's the flesh or our own lusts—and how they mis-apply the words of James to do it? Like many ministers out here, MacArthur blames everything on the flesh. He's teaching a combination of errors. First he's teaching that the only *real* problem is our wicked hearts or our flesh. He begrudgingly admits that it is possible for Satan to put thoughts in our minds; but *only if* we are "sinful". He says if we are living a godly and a righteous life, and thinking on things that are pure and lovely and honest and so forth, and if your life is pure, then Satan can't reach our minds because they are protected by the "helmet of salvation". In other words, he's saying if we walk in the spirit, Satan can't touch our minds. Only if we are "sinning" can he touch them.

Well, that's more than most preachers will admit. Most of them claim Satan has no power to touch our minds at all, regardless of how we live. But MacArthur is still *far* from the truth. My question is: why is it possible to receive thoughts from our flesh when we're not sinning, but *not* possible to receive thoughts from spirits when we're not sinning? Are the thoughts of our flesh more powerful than the thoughts of spirits? On what basis is he saying the thoughts of our heart can breach the helmet of salvation but the thoughts of spirits can't?

After admitting (begrudgingly) that Satan can put thoughts in your mind—but only if you're sinful—he strongly emphasizes the fact that thoughts come from our own hearts and our own flesh. He seeks to minimize the role unclean spirits play in all this by saying: "*When you think a sinful thought, that may have absolutely nothing to do with the devil...you could live your whole life from birth to death, and the devil never bother you once in your entire life*"

Excuse me?

Anyone who even thinks, let alone teaches publicly, that a genuine Christian can live his whole life without ever being bothered by the enemy is walking in *total* deception. The fact is, MacArthur, like so many of today's religious leaders, is deceived and he's being used like a puppet by Satan to deceive multitudes.

Last week we saw that it's possible for the enemy to plant thoughts in our minds when we looked at the situation with Peter, where Satan actually spoke through Peter and rebuked Jesus. So tell me, Mr. MacArthur, was Peter "sinning" the evening that happened? Was he walking in some type of sin just before Jesus told the disciples He was going to die? Is *that* why Satan could "activate his thinking process"?

When ministers like MacArthur tell their congregations week in and week out that their hearts are desperately wicked, and that any sinful thoughts they receive come from that wicked heart, that gives these unclean spirits *free reign* to tempt, harass and eventually stumble God's people—and I'll tell you one of the ways they do it. A very common tactic these spirits use is to bombard our minds with thoughts (or one specific thought), or desires or feelings, until we yield to them.

Many times people get discouraged and give in when this happens—and it's because of this false doctrine that our hearts are, and will forever remain, desperately wicked. If an unclean spirit bombards you with evil thoughts or feelings, and you believe those things are coming from your own wicked heart, then after a while, you will give in to them because in the back of your mind, you're saying to yourself: "*Well, my heart is deceitfully wicked and it will always be wicked. So there's no chance these thoughts or feelings will ever stop coming. I'm wicked, and those things are in my own heart, so I must really want to be thinking and feeling them—that's why I'm having them*".

Brethren, this is crazy! This is INSANITY!

That's just what those spirits want you to believe because as long as do, you'll *never* get victory over your thought life. Unclean spirits will continue to play you like a fiddle. This is why I've been teaching some of the things I have been teaching the last few months. Do you remember what I said about "reckoning ourselves alive unto God" and "identifying with the new man" instead of the old man? Do you remember what I said about our hearts *not* being desperately wicked if we have been born again; and how God is making *us* (not just "Christ in us") righteous? Well, right *here* is one of the reasons these truths are *so* important.

Let me clarify something about the heart. The heart is NOT identical to our fallen sin nature (ie: "the flesh"). The heart, like all the rest of the functions of the soul—the mind, the will, and the emotions—can be influenced *by* the flesh or it can be influenced *by* the Holy Spirit. When the heart is being influenced by the flesh, then it's as wicked as the degree of influence it's moving under. When it's being influenced by the Holy Spirit, then it's as righteous as the degree of influence it's walking under. The ONLY part of you that is permanently and desperately wicked is your fallen sin nature, which is also called "the flesh" in Scripture. You are not permanently and desperately wicked, and neither is your heart! The people who keep telling you this trash don't know what they are talking about. They do *not* know how to rightly divide the word of truth.

One of most successful tactics unclean spirits use is, they give us evil thoughts (or desires or feelings) in such a way as to make us think these things are coming from us. They just love it when we go through life *assuming* that *everything* evil we think or feel must be coming from our own flesh or our wicked hearts because as long as that's how we view the situation, their activity will remain *hidden* and they themselves will remain totally *undetected*. The reason most of us never discern we are under attack from an *external* enemy is because these spirits have the ability to make us feel as though these things are coming from the *inside*. Since it feels like they are coming from the inside, we just assume it's our own wickedness that keeps popping up. This whole idea is then *reinforced* and *confirmed* by preachers who continually tell us precisely the same thing.

They tell us our hearts remain desperately wicked. They tell us we can never be righteous—only “Christ in us” will ever be righteous. Every week they tell us we are wicked, wicked, wicked. Well, if you continually tell people *they* are wicked and *their hearts* are wicked—guess what? They will walk away convinced that *everything* they thing or feel that is wrong, must be coming their our own wickedness.

The only “help” these worthless ministers can offer people who are under spiritual attack is to tell them they need to die to self more. “*You’re problem is, you’re not putting you flesh to death enough*”—they will say. “*Quit walking in the flesh and start walking in the spirit*”—they will say. The person who is being bombarded by these sprits is probably putting his flesh to death as much as he knows how and it’s not helping him. But he’ll listen to his pastor anyway, and try to put his flesh to death even more. However, since the flesh isn’t the problem, all his efforts at dying to self more won’t do squat! And again, wherever he turns for help, the only answer he’ll get from all these ministers who in the palm of Satan’s hand is: “*You just need to die to self more*”!

What do you think will happen to this guy? Eventually, he’ll get worn out and beat down, and he’ll give up because he’s not fighting the right enemy. He’ll wear himself out fighting against his own flesh and his wicked old heart. Then, after he has given in and acted upon those desires or feelings or thoughts, those same spirits will turn right around and *accuse him* and heap *condemnation* on him. The whole process becomes a vicious cycle, and people go around that same mountain, again and again, until eventually they just give up. They finally come to the conclusion they are *too* wicked for God to help—and preachers like John MacArthur are *responsible* for their defeat because of all the theological garbage they are teaching.

When God opens your eyes and you see how these religious leaders are teaching things that came straight from Satan, which are *designed* to dis-arm God’s people and keep them ignorant of the enemy’s capabilities and tactics, and how they are actually helping Satan to *defeat* the saints—it will make you sick. When the reality of what’s happening actually hits you, you’ll weep bitter tears. The more you understand how these spirits deceive and torment God’s people, the more of a *hatred* you will have for them. In addition, you’ll lose *all* your tolerance for the ministers who are helping Satan do what he is doing. The fact is, anyone who tries to minimize the work or the danger these spirits pose to God’s people is an enemy of God’s kingdom, and he is *my* enemy as well because he is helping Satan *win* the war he has declared on *my* brethren.

*When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, **and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.** This is he which received seed by the way side.*

Matthew 13:19

Here, Jesus tells us that under certain circumstances, Satan can *steal* thoughts the are sown in people’s hearts. Since we must hear things with our mind as well as our heart, this would include the mind. The Lord said that when a person hears the Word but does *not* understand it, Satan comes and snatches that word out of his heart, and by implication, his mind too. Now think about *that* for a minute. How much access does someone have to have to your mental experience in order to know whether or not you *understand* something? Oh, I can hear the skeptics now. They’ll say Satan can’t possibly have that kind of access to our minds. He must watch what the people do and say. That the way he can figure out if they understood what they heard or not. Oh really? Well, let’s see if that idea holds true regarding the parallel account of this same teaching in Mark.

*And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, **Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word** that was sown in their hearts.*

Mark 4:15

In this account of the same teaching, the Lord said Satan comes IMMEDIATELY and takes away the word that was just sown in the person's heart who didn't understand it. He doesn't have to hang around the person for a few hours or a few days and listen to what that person says or watch what that person does in order to *figure out* whether or not they understood what they heard. He knows immediately whether or not they understand what they just heard—and if they *didn't* understand what they just heard, then he has the power to snatch that word right out of their mind and heart.

Of course, in this teaching, Jesus is was talking about the *unsaved* hearing the gospel and not understanding it. The real question is: Does Satan have the power to snatch thoughts out of the minds of believers? I can't find any Scripture that says he can. But based on personal experience, I believe he can. In any case, if he can do something like that to the mind of an unbeliever, why couldn't he do it to the mind of a believer? Being a Christian doesn't stop him from being able to *plant* thoughts in our minds.

Have you ever *lost* your thoughts? Have you ever been in the middle of saying something very important to someone about the Lord, or about their spiritual condition, and all of a sudden you completely forgot something you were going to say? Have you ever been in a situation where you are trying to show somebody they are in error from the Scripture and all of a sudden, you totally forget the argument you just had in your mind or the verse of Scripture you were just about to share with them?

What makes us assume that when we lose an important thought at an important moment like *that*, it's just a natural malfunction of our brains? Why do we never even *consider the possibility* that such a thing could be an attack from the enemy? I'll tell you why we don't—because our minds have been filled false doctrines; doctrines that are being taught by men who *deny* the reality and the danger of unclean spirits; doctrines which come *from* seducing spirits, which are being taught to us by ministers who have themselves been seduced. These ministers are being used by Satan to deceive God's people.

Did you ever lose an important thought, and then stop what you are doing and pray, asking God to bring that thought back? And after you prayed, did the thought ever come back? If you have ever experienced something like that, then it's very possible you were engaged in spiritual warfare without even realizing it. It's possible the enemy stole that thought and the Holy Spirit returned it to you *after* praying.

*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath **blinded the minds** of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

II. Corinthians 4:3&4

Notice that according to what Paul said in this passage, Satan also has the ability to keep the minds of people blinded, so they can't receive the truth. Of course, he's talking about Satan keeping *unbelievers* from receiving the gospel. But having your mind blinded to the truth is certainly not something that's restricted to unbelievers. I

know quite a few Christians whose minds are blinded to some Scriptural truth. I'm sure every one in this room knows someone who has had their mind blinded by the enemy regarding some of the truths you have been shown by the Spirit. We also saw last week that Paul was afraid Satan would *blind* the minds of born again believers in the Corinthian church. He was afraid the same people who had already received the truth, would turn around and receive error which would *blind* their minds to the original truth they had received.

Another reason people don't understand Satan has this kind of access to our minds is because we don't understand what it means to be a supernatural creature, living in the supernatural realm. We don't even understand what the term supernatural really means. Whenever most of us hear the term "supernatural", the only thing we usually think of is miracles or the *invisible* realm. And even though that's true, it's not the whole truth. The word supernatural is really *supra*-natural. "Supra" is a Latin term which means "above". Thus, *supra*-natural means "above the natural". The *supra*-natural realm is not only invisible, it's *above* the natural realm—not so much directionally (like up and down)—but more so in power. The *supra*-natural realm is much more powerful than the natural realm. That's why the acts of that realm are called miracles. Satan and these unclean spirits don't have the power they do simply because they are invisible. They have the power they do because they *supra*-natural creatures and they dwell in a realm that is above the natural realm in power and capability.

Because they are supra-natural creatures, and because they have the kind of access they do to our minds, the Scripture says a lot about the mind. It tells us to renew the mind (*Rom. 12:12; Eph. 4:23*). It tells us to gird up the loins of the mind (*I. Pet. 1:13*). It also tells us to cast down all vain imaginations of the mind, and take every thought of the mind captive to the obedience of Christ (*II. Cor. 10:5*). In order to take every thought captive, we must *judge* every thought. Judge every thought? Try doing that for a day. Try arresting and scrutinizing every thought and every imagination that you are not *actively* thinking, but which just comes into your mind.

The mind is a powerful force. It's only a natural force; but it's still a powerful one. The power of the mind over how an individual behaves and what kind of person he becomes is so strong, the Bible says: "...*as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he*" (*Prov. 23:7*). If Satan can control your mind, he can control *you*—Christian or not, it makes no difference. He doesn't have to indwell you or possess you in order to control you through your mental process. This is why it's imperative that we recognize spirits are *thoughts*. That's one of the ways we can recognize when a spirit is talking to us. We judge the thoughts that are coming into our minds.

Now, please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I'm not saying *all* thoughts are spirits. I'm just saying thoughts *are* spirits. Some of the thoughts we receive during the day are bound to come from spirits. If we don't know how to judge our thoughts, we can easily receive those thoughts and act upon them. We need to wake up to the reality that we have an enemy who is invisible and who is seeking to destroy us. We have an enemy who can plant thoughts in our minds, steal thoughts from our minds, blind parts of our minds, and also know what we understand. We have an enemy who knows how to customize his temptations to perfectly match our weaknesses. He is a *very* dangerous enemy, and only a fool would take his power lightly.

Satan isn't some force that dwells up in the atmosphere. Through a highly developed kingdom and a hierarchy of unclean spirits, he can be *in* our home, *in* our car and all around us. The spirits that are under his control try to speak to us throughout the day, either directly or indirectly, through friends, family, co-workers, and even other Christians. Satan is alive, and he *knows* you. He knows all about you. Through his spirits he can listen to every word you speak and watch every move you make. He knows your weaknesses. He has intimate knowledge of all your problems and hang-ups. He knows all the times you have fallen and *exactly* what you have fallen for.

He knows exactly what kind of temptation and desire to stir up in you to make you fall. You have a track record and he knows that track record inside and out. Every minute of every day, he's scheming, scheming, scheming, to deceive us and eventually destroy us.

These unclean spirits never sleep; they never take a break. Every minute of every day they are watching for that open door, watching to see if you will listen to their voice, watching to see if you will accept any of the thoughts or imaginations they shoot into your mind, watching to see if you will yield to any of the desires they are trying to continually stir up in you.

This is precisely why Peter warned us to watch and be sober. The power to deceive, which Satan still has, is certainly a *sobering* subject. Peter was no fool. He spent over three years walking the length and breadth of Israel, watching Jesus cast unclean spirits out of multitudes of people. Indeed, he cast many of those spirits out of God's people himself. He saw first hand what these spirits can do to the minds, emotions, and bodies of people. He also knew first hand what it was like to have Satan fill *his* mind with thoughts that were directly opposed to God's will. He knew first hand what it was like to be *used* by Satan.

Because of all the things he experienced first hand regarding these unclean spirits, he could warn God's people with deep conviction to "*be sober and vigilant*"—meaning, watch earnestly for the wiles and tricks of the adversary. Because there was a time when *he* hadn't resisted the enemy strong enough and fell as a result, he could warn *us* in all sincerity to "resist steadfast" the one who is seeking to devour us. Peter knew exactly what he was saying when he wrote those words because he knew what the adversary is capable of doing.

Whenever I teach this kind of unpleasant reality, there's always someone who contacts me afterwards and accuses me of exalting Satan's power above the power of God. They will say: "*Come on Daniel! If Satan had the kind of power you're saying he does, most of the Christians in the world be walking under his influence right now! Where's the power of God in all this? Is Satan stronger than God?*"

So, just in case anyone is thinking that, let me answer you right here and now with my own question—How do you know most of today's Christians *aren't* walking under the influence of Satan? Like I said, I'm not talking about Christians being "demon possessed". I'm not even talking about Christians "having a demon" at this point. I'm still talking about what these spirits are capable of doing to us from the outside. I'm talking about Christians walking under *the influence* of Satan or unclean spirits, either directly, though his influence upon their minds, or indirectly, through the influence of other people who are walking under his influence.

I'm talking about Christians, for instance, who are selfish. Do you know any *selfish* Christians? If you do, then you know Christians who *are* walking under the influence of Satan. I'm talking about people who listen to preachers like John MacArthur and as a result, don't even bother to check their thoughts because they just *assume* their thoughts are coming from God because they are a Christian. Do you know anybody like that? If you do, then you know Christians who *are* walking under the influence of Satan.

Of course Satan *isn't* stronger than God. Satan was created by God. Through Jesus, even we have the power to defeat him. Him being too powerful isn't the problem. The problem is getting Christians to accept the truth that there is a war going on, and that they have an enemy who can *actually* kill them. We have already been given the power to win. The problem isn't a lack of power—the problem is, God's people *hate* the truth!

Therefore, the unpleasant reality is—Yes!—most of today’s Christians *are* walking under the influence of Satan to *some* degree. They don’t realize they are because they don’t think such a thing is even possible. They also don’t realize they are because walking under Satan’s influence isn’t necessarily the same as being “demon possessed” or even “having a demon”. It can be very subtle—and also very *comfortable*. That’s right! Many Christians are comfortable walking under the influence of these spirits because it seems perfectly *normal* to them. It’s what they are *used* to.

That doesn’t mean they aren’t genuine believers. It doesn’t mean they’re on their way to Hell. What it does mean is, they will never walk in *complete* victory unless they have their eyes opened and they change the way they walk. What it does mean is, they will never be *overcomers* unless they accept the truth of what’s happening, get into the battle, and start defeating their enemies.

Okay, let’s look at the second avenue these spirits use—our desires, both good and evil. Unclean spirits can stir up evil desires that are already present in us. There is a big difference between when a desire of our flesh rises up in us, and when that same desire is being *inflamed* by a spirit. Though the desires of the flesh can be very strong, when a spirit is inflaming them, they become so strong you can’t ignore them. Either you will fight them until they have subsided, or you will give into them.

Many times these spirits will stir up a desire that you have had a problem with in the past, but have managed to overcome and have been walking in victory over. They like to stir up these kinds of desires for two reasons. First of all, they know that you are more prone to fall for that particular desire than some other one. Second, they know that when they do this, we tend to get *discouraged*—sometimes very discouraged—and that’s exactly what they want. They are always trying to get us to the place where we ready to give in and give up.

The discouragement comes because we thought we had conquered that particular issue, and now, here it is again, after all these months (or years), raising it’s ugly head and tempting us so strongly that we’re ready to give into it again. If you are a Christian who’s trying to walk in holiness and in victory, this kind of thing can be very discouraging. However, if you can recognize that it’s the work of an unclean spirit, then the whole situation is *different* in your mind. For you see, the fact is, our “old man” will never change. That sin nature is the same today as it was 10 years ago, or 20 years ago, or 40 years ago, when you were first saved. It has never changed one iota and it never will. YOU have changed, but *it* hasn’t. You have gotten victory over many areas of that nature, but the nature itself remains the same.

Therefore, when a desire you have *already* conquered through the Spirit begins to be stirred up by an unclean spirit, you need not be depressed. You don’t have to just *assume* you have “fallen off the wagon” or that you are backsliding. Of course, this is always possible. But if that’s not the case, then pick up your sword and start fighting! Talk to that spirit. That’s right. I said talk to it. You are dealing with a *invisible person*. You can’t see or hear it, but it can certainly see and *hear* you. So talk to it. Tell it the jig’s up and you know exactly what’s going on. Tell it you’re not going to fall for that trick. Then renounce *it* and the desire it’s stirring up, in the name of Jesus. I promise you, if you will just fight these spirits the battle will be yours! The only reason we lose many of these battles is because we are fighting the *wrong* enemy and we are using the wrong weapons.

And don’t let any of these *deceived* ministers buffalo you with all their pontificating about how you are trying to avoid responsibility for your own sin and blame everything on the devil. For crying out loud! When we’re under a *spiritual* attack, it’s not wrong blame what’s happening on the enemy! Blaming these spirits doesn’t mean you

are trying to blame everything on demons! You're not denying you still have a sin nature, and you're not denying that this desire is still a part of you. You're simply relating to the situation the way it really is. That desire may still be part of you—since it still dwells in your flesh—but it's not *you* who is stirring it up! It's not *you* who is desiring something you have been walking in victory over. It's *a spirit* that's stirring up that desire.

These spirits can also utilize *good* desires to hinder us. When I say good, I mean *natural* desires that are part of every day life. For example, you may need to change the oil in your car. That's a natural duty of this life that's necessary from time to time. But maybe you haven't set an exact day or time when you are going to do it and one day, the *desire* to get that job out of the way gets so strong you decide to go and do it right then. But while you are outside changing the oil, you miss an important phone call that was designed by the Lord to encourage you spiritually or help you in some way. What happened was, a spirit stirred up a *good* desire at the *wrong* time (the wrong time for you), in order to have you *miss* something God had for you. If you think such a scenario is absurd, it's because you don't know your enemy. It's because you're ignorant of his devices. Spirits pull this kind of stuff on us all the time—and they are successful more times than not because of *our* ignorance.

When you were still going to church in the Religious System, did your car ever break down, or did you ever lose your keys, or did you ever get unexpected company, or any number of things like that happen just *before* it came time to leave? Do you think they were all just coincidences? Don't you think supernatural beings who live and move in the supernatural realm can be *the cause* of these kinds of things at times? I'm not saying they are behind *everything* that goes wrong in life. But when something happens to hinder you from going somewhere *the Lord* is sending you, or being somewhere *the Lord* wants you to be, when something has hindered you from getting something *the Lord* had prepared for you—then *Yes!*—it's possible spirits are behind those events.

I mean, what on earth do we think Paul was talking about when he said: “*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices*” (II. Cor. 2:11)? Do we think Satan's only devices consist of persecution from unbelievers? Listen my friends: Satan has *all kinds* of devices. He has an endless bag of tricks he uses to tempt us, to lure us away from something God has for us, to deceive us, to hurt us, and to make us miss our call and our destiny.

The problem with most of today's Christians is that they are still spiritual babies and children, and as such, they never even consider the possibility that these kinds of hindrances could be *spiritual* attacks. They just assume all these things are part of natural life on earth. After all, people lose their keys all the time, don't they? Is it the work of demons, every time someone loses their keys? Of course not! Certainly unclean spirits are not behind every occasion of lost keys. But it's *not* absurd to think they are behind a lost set of keys if you're a *Christian*, and you are getting ready to go somewhere, where God has ordained a *blessing* for you.

Secondly, even if you could convince them that at certain times, spirits *are* the cause of the hindrances we face, they still *wouldn't* take it seriously because they have been taught that if they walk in “faith”, God will take care of all those hindrances for them, regardless of their source. They have been taught that all you have to do is trust God, and He will automatically *override* any desire that might lead you in a wrong direction, or *pre-empt* any hindrance that might keep you from being where you are supposed to be.

Right here is where things get *complicated* because the fact is, there's a lot of truth in that whole idea—when it comes to spiritual babies and children, that is—because that's basically the way things *do* go when you are a baby or a little child. God doesn't expect babies and children to be able to *discern* what's going on behind the scenes

like He does young men and fathers. He doesn't place the same kind of *responsibility* on babies and children that He does on young men and fathers. So when a baby Christian sneers at the whole idea of believers being *responsible* to watch for these kinds of devices, he has good reason to do so, at least based on *his own* experience as a baby or a child.

You run into this kind of thing all the time, whenever you start teaching God's people things that pertain to *spiritual adult-hood*. Whenever you begin serving them "meat" the babies start choking and the children start getting upset. They start screaming "legalism" and "works-based religion". Then they whip out all their favorite verses and their "key" passages of Scripture and accuse you of *not* believing in the "faithfulness" of God, or not believing in the "sovereignty" of God, or the "power" of God, or the "love" of God, etc., etc.

But that's alright. God knows the situation of *every* believer. He knows where we are spiritually, and where we *should be* spiritually. He knows if it's *okay* for us to be a spiritual baby or child. He also knows when it's time for us to grow up and move deeper into the things of the Spirit, and He knows just how to bring babies and children face to face with *the truth*. Once they have been presented with the truth, then the whole situation changes. They can choose to remain a baby or a child, and they can choose to keep relating to God as babies and children, but God no longer accepts that kind of thing. From then on, they will begin to get into all kinds of trouble because God will no longer protect them the way He used to protect them. The situation has changed. Now, they are walking in *rebellion*. Now, they are not spiritual babies and children because that's what they *should be*. They are babies and children because they have rejected the truth.

Before closing tonight, I want to answer a question some of those who are listening to this are bound to be asking themselves at this point. The question is: "*How in the world am I supposed to be able to recognize all these different tricks of Satan*"? The answer is: It can only be done with the help and discernment of the Holy Spirit. That may sound like a religious cliché to you, but it's the truth—and it's the only answer there is.

You'll just have to trust me on this one. If you allow God to open your understanding in this area and start watching for the enemy's devices, the Holy Spirit *will* be faithful to show you *when* these spirits begin to move against you or in your life. You'll *know* when something is a *spiritual* attack because there will be an *inner* witness regarding the situation. The only reason Christians don't walk in this reality is because they have been taught by deceived leaders that unclean spirits can't possibly use these kinds of devices on them. When we accept the truth begin watching and fighting, that puts us in a place where God can really begin to move on our behalf, and He will show you things you have *never* seen before. But you must first *believe* the truth, then you must *act* on it. Once you do, the rest will come—and it will come easier than you think.

I'm going to end right here because the next avenue we're going to look at is an extremely important one, and I don't want to have to rush through it. Except for the mind, this is the avenue spirits use the most because it's the most successful one. Dedicated and serious Christians who have conquered these spirits in their own lives have nevertheless been defeated by them as they work through the people *around* them.

To Be Continued Next Week