

## THE DANGER OF UNCLEAN SPIRITS PART TWO

In the first part of this message, I tried to show from Scripture that a person doesn't have to be *indwelt* by unclean spirits before those spirits can speak to them, affect them, deceive them, and even destroy them. I also said preachers and Bible teachers who don't want to face the reality of spirits usually take one of two approaches. Either they *deny* that these spirits can affect us (and that includes them dwelling in us); or they try to *minimize* the reality of what they can do by focusing our attention on other things. Some of these ministers concentrate on the issue of sin, while others concentrate on dying to self. My point is simply this: any idea or teaching that denies or minimizes the danger unclean spirit pose to believes does *not* proceed from God.

One of the biggest mistakes you can make when dealing with these kinds of people is to let *them* frame the debate. Those who deny the danger of unclean spirits altogether will usually try to make the whole issue one of "demon possession". They will say there is *no evidence* in the New Testament that a "born again" believer was ever demon possessed. They will also say there is no evidence in the New Testament that a "born again" believer ever had unclean spirits cast out of him.

Of course, right away, the question of just what a "believer" is, arises because you realize they are defining a believer as a person who is "born again"—in the sense of having the Holy Spirit come and dwell in them. Therefore, there are different *types* of believers in their view. There are the believers *before* the Day of Pentecost who were not born again; and there are the believers *after* Pentecost who were born again. The believers *before* Pentecost could "have a demon" because the Spirit didn't actually dwell in them. But the believers *after* Pentecost can't "have a demon" because after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the believer.

Since there is no record of any *Christians* having unclean spirits cast out of them *after* Pentecost, you will have a hard time proving that line of reasoning wrong. But it is wrong. First of all, it's an argument from silence. Just because the Scripture doesn't record any "born again" believers having unclean spirits cast out of them after Pentecost, that doesn't mean it never happened. All it means is that such events were not recorded.

I could make an argument from silence just as easily. There is no *direct* evidence in the New Testament that after Pentecost, Christians *didn't* have unclean spirits cast out of them. There is no statement in the New Testament that says a Christian *can't* be indwelt by unclean spirits. There is no statement in the New Testament that teaches (or implies) that when you are born again, all unclean spirits are automatically driven out. The fact is, there is no direct evidence for either position in the New Testament. So *both* sides of the issue can be argued from silence. However, there is *indirect* evidence that Christians after Pentecost can be indwelt by unclean spirits from what the apostle Paul said to the Christians at Corinth:

***But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.***

*II. Corinthians 11:3-4*

There is no way around the fact that Paul was *afraid* the believers at Corinth would be seduced by Satan and “*receive another spirit*”. Since he connected receiving another spirit *with* receiving another gospel and receiving another Jesus, you can be sure that when he said “receive” another spirit, he meant receive it just the way they had received the true Spirit of God when they heard the true gospel. They would receive it into themselves; they would receive it into their lives; they would receive it into their beings and it would *dwell* in them.

There is also no way around the fact that if such a thing were not possible, Paul would not have been afraid it was going to happen to the church at Corinth. Paul would only be afraid of this kind of thing if he believed it was possible, and if he believed there was a chance it would *actually* happen. Nobody can (honestly) deny the fact that this statement proves Paul believed born again (after Pentecost) Christians could receive another spirit (which would be an *evil* spirit), which would *dwell* in them. The only question a person can (honestly) raise is whether or not Paul was *right* to think such a thing was possible. The fact that he *did* believe it was possible is beyond dispute—except for those who want to intentionally resist the truth.

Those who choose to believe Paul was deceived in this whole area are certainly free to do so, but they do so at their own peril. First of all, if Paul *wasn't* deceived, then they are in danger of being seduced and destroyed by the very spirits they assume can't indwell them. But apart from all that, I'd think twice about running around claiming Paul was deceived in this regard because if he was, then how do you know he wasn't wrong in *other* areas of teaching as well? I mean, how do you know, for instance, that he wasn't wrong when he taught about the gifts of the Spirit—or anything else for that matter? What kind of spiritual yardstick will you use to judge this belief of Paul correct and that belief of Paul error?

Don't let the arguments of these people throw you. There *is* evidence from Scripture that it's possible for a Christian to “have a demon”. Apart from making their argument from silence, they also are basing that argument on an assumption that is faulty. They are assuming God is too holy to reside in the *same vicinity* as Satan or unclean spirits. I dealt with this idea last week. In short, if God is too holy to dwell in the same vessel an unclean spirit dwells in, then He's too holy to dwell in a vessel where *sin* dwells as well. He's too holy to dwell in a vessel that also houses a deceitfully wicked heart and a hostile sin nature. Sorry folks—that knife cuts *both* ways! But beyond all that, the whole notion that God is too holy to be in the same vicinity as Satan is an urban legend because the Scripture reveals just the opposite! God is not only around Satan and unclean spirits, He talks to them, He interacts with them, and He even sends them on missions!

*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*

*Job 1:6-8*

Here we find that Satan coming into the very presence of God and having a conversation with Him. Now, God wasn't talking to Satan just for the sake of talking to him. There was a reason God had that little conversation with Satan. The reason was, God was setting Satan up to be humiliated before all creation by a little pile of dust named

Job. God actually baited Satan into a contest with Job in order to shame him before all the angels and unclean spirits. He baited Satan into a duel with Job. The object of the contest was to see if Job could be turned against God. You see, Satan believed the only reason Job worshiped or served God was because God blessed him and protected him. He was sure that if God removed that blessing and protection and instead, destroyed him financially, emotionally and physically, Job would turn on God and curse Him. Satan assumed that because his evil, selfish nature had *infected* all of mankind through the Fall, all men—including Job—were just like him. He was convinced that nobody served God simply because they loved Him, but only because He blessed them. In other words, Satan assumed that all of man's worship was rooted in *self interest*. Remove the blessing and they would all turn on God and curse him.

Job was God's champion. Job was the one God would use to not only prove Satan wrong, but also humiliate him before the host of heaven. Of course, Job didn't go through that whole ordeal without faltering. He did draw a wrong conclusion about why everything was happening to him. But he never turned on God or cursed Him. He remained faithful to God to the bitter end and in so doing, he showed that Satan is a liar.

*But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.*

*I. Samuel 16:14-15*

Here we find that as a judgement on his disobedience, God actually *sends* an evil spirit to torment Saul. So not only can God be in the presence of Satan and unclean spirits, not only can God talk to them and interact with them, at times, He actually sends them on missions to accomplish His will!

*And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: **go forth, and do so.** Now therefore, behold, **the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.***

*I. Kings 22:19-23*

This is a very interesting account. At the time this story takes place, the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms—Judah and Israel. Judah was called the Southern Kingdom and Israel was called the Northern Kingdom. Judah was comprised of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and most of the Levites. Israel was comprised of the rest of the tribes and the rest of the Levites. The king of Israel was Ahab, a very wicked king. The king of Judah was Jehosaphat, one of the few good kings of Judah. God wanted to judge Ahab for all his wickedness and He wanted to do it by having him be defeated and killed in battle against the Syrians. Thus, the heavenly council that surrounded this whole decision was seen in a vision.

The first thing you notice about this whole situation is that the prophet said he saw “all the host of heaven” standing before the Lord. That host included both angels and unclean spirits. When God makes it known that He wants something done that requires Ahab to be deceived, an unclean spirit steps out of that vast host and volunteers his services. The Lord then talks to this spirit and asks it *how* it will accomplish His purpose. The spirit says it will be a lying spirit in the mouths of all the king’s prophets and they will convince him he’s going to win. Then the Lord says: “...*go forth and do so*”.

So once again, we see unclean spirits in the very presence of God. We see God having a conversation with one of them, and we see God sending one of them on a mission to accomplish His will. Listen my friends, our God is not weak or insecure. He’s not afraid of Satan or the least bit intimidated by him. Our God is all powerful. He isn’t so weak that He can be contaminated with evil just by being in the same vicinity as Satan. Another thing these people don’t realize is that we are tri-part beings. We are made up of spirit, soul and body.

*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the **dividing asunder of soul and spirit**, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

*Hebrews 4:12*

*Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole **spirit and soul and body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*I. Thessalonians 5:22-23*

The writer of Hebrews said the Word of God is like a two-edged sword that’s able to divide the “*soul and spirit*”. Thus, we see the soul and the spirit are two distinct entities. Also, Paul told the Thessalonian believers that he prayed their “*spirit, soul and body*” would all be preserved blameless until the coming of the Lord. When we are born again, the Spirit of God regenerates our human spirit, which was dead in sin, and God’s Spirit comes into our spirits and dwells there.

*What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. **But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.***

*I. Corinthians 6:16-17*

The Scripture says he who is joined to the Lord is “one spirit”—not one soul, not one heart, not one body—but one spirit. God saves and recreates our *spirits* and now His Spirit dwells in our spirits. His Spirit does *not* dwell in the soul. His Spirit *moves upon* the soul. The soul is what He’s working to change. The soul is what He is working to purify and perfect. No darkness can dwell in our spirits; but our souls are a different matter. It’s in realm of the soul that unclean spirits *traffic*. This is why it’s possible for an unclean spirit to  *dwell* in a Christian.

God’s Spirit dwells in our regenerated spirit. Unclean spirits (can) dwell in our soul. Even if it were true that God is so holy He couldn’t dwell in the same vessel an unclean spirit dwells in (which it ain’t), the actual situation we are in after we are born again would allow for God to dwell a vessel that also houses an unclean spirit anyway because He is dwelling in a *different part* of that vessel.

As for the debate about whether or not a Christian can be demon possessed—that whole thing is a ruse. It’s smoke and mirrors, designed to throw us off balance and off track. We’re not talking about Christians being “demon possessed”. Having an unclean spirit dwell in some portion of the soul does *not* mean a person is demon possessed. Moreover, you don’t have to “have a demon” or be “demon possessed” in order to listen to spirits, be deceived by spirits, and be totally destroyed by them.

Experiencially, the term “possessed” means that Satan has gained *complete control* of a person’s mind, will and body. The person will think whatever the spirits tell them to think; they will feel whatever the spirits wants them to feel; and they will do whatever the spirits tell them to do—including violence, murder, rape, suicide and many other wicked things. The person who is possessed has lost *all* control over his own life.

Legally, the term suggests that the person *belongs to* Satan. There used to be an old legal saying that went like this: “Possession is nine-tenths of the law”. In other words, whatever you possess is yours. I do not believe Satan can legally possess a person who belongs to God. However, he can possess a person who *used* to belong to God. These spirits can cause people to fall away from the faith. Then they can possess them.

So much for the flimsy arguments preachers who deny the possibility of unclean spirits hurting or indwelling us have come up with. The other kind of minister who doesn’t want to face the reality or the danger of unclean spirits is the one who doesn’t actually deny that these spirits can hurt us, or even indwell us. They just believe the *real* battle is with “the flesh”. Therefore, they can’t stand to hear anyone blame *anything* on Satan or unclean spirits. They believe we are *totally* responsible for everything we do—even if we are being deceived or enticed or driven to do it by the enemy. Since this is their view, they seek to minimize the reality and the danger of these spirits in different ways. But the end result is the same. Basically, they are all presenting death to self as a *silver-bullet* or a *cure-all*. Their answer for all our sin problems is just die to self *more*.

One way they minimize the danger of these spirits is by saying they can *only* move through our “flesh nature”. Thus, the best way to deal with them is to simply deny the flesh. The idea is, if putting the flesh to death closes the door for spirits to touch us or deceive us, then the only logical thing to do is to *focus all our efforts* on putting the flesh to death. That way you are killing two birds with one stone. But this is a very dangerous way to approach the subject for two reasons. The first reason, which I mentioned last week, is that it’s simply not true. Even if we had no “flesh nature”, we would still be vulnerable to attack and possible defeat at the hands of Satan or these unclean spirits. This is one of the lessons of the Fall.

The second reason this view is dangerous is because closing all those doors takes *time*. Death to self is a process which puts more and more of our “old man” on the cross experiencially, as we grow spiritually. We must “die daily”. Each day, as we grow in Christ, more and more of our old ways, and our old desires, and our old habits die. But while *parts* of us are being put to death daily, *other* areas of our old self life remain intact, and each one of those untouched areas is a *possible* open door for demonic activity. So we need to be able to recognize and defeat the enemy when he starts moving in one of *those* areas.

Also, we are not always *instantly* obedient when it comes to the areas of our personality that God is working on. Many times we have a hard time turning some desire, or some goal, or a habit, or possession, or some doctrinal sacred cow, or some relationship, over to the death of the cross. During that time of resistance to the dealings of the Spirit, the enemy also has an open door to attack us. So the fact is, death to self is far from a cure all, especially when it comes to unclean spirits.

Another way these ministers try to minimize the danger spirits pose is by saying if we “walk in the spirit”, we won’t have to face or defeat them. Unfortunately, this whole idea is not only unscriptural, it’s precisely the *reverse* of what is actually true! The more you walk in the spirit, the more the enemy will attack you and try to destroy you. Satan and his demons *hate* believers who actually walk and live in the spirit because those kinds of believers are the only kinds of Christians who are any real threat to his kingdom. Believers who walk and live in the spirit become prime targets for Satan and his demons. The closer you get to God and the higher you climb in the spirit, the more obsessed they become with your destruction.

The idea that if we walk in the spirit we won’t have to defeat the enemy is actually one of Satan’s “devises” that Paul talked about in II. Corinthians 2:11. He said: “*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices*”. The fact is, most of today’s Christians are very ignorant of Satan’s devices. Those who teach this kind of garbage need to explain why Jesus faced the attacks and temptations of the enemy his whole ministry. If we have to be walking in “the flesh” before Satan can tempt us or deceive us, then do they think Jesus walked in the flesh his whole ministry or what? We need to remember what Jesus said. He said the disciple is *not* above his master, but shall be *as* his master (*Lk. 6:40*). The Lord had to deal personally with Satan’s attacks and temptations throughout His entire ministry. So are these people claiming to be *above* their Master? Let’s look at a few of these attacks.

*And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, **Being forty days tempted of the devil**. And in those days he did eat nothing: and **when they were ended**, he afterward hungered. And **the devil said unto him**, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.*

*Luke 4:1-3*

We looked at the temptation in the wilderness last week. But I want you to notice one more thing about this event. Luke said the Lord was tempted the *whole* forty days. Then, *after* those forty days were ended, the tempter offered Jesus *three more* temptations and these are the three we are all familiar with. But they were not the only ones Jesus faced during those forty days. We don’t know what other temptations were, but you can be sure they were just as real and just as dangerous as these three were.

After defeating Satan, Jesus spent the next 3½ years delivering *God’s people* from the power of unclean spirits. It was the greatest “deliverance ministry” the world had ever seen. Yet, even though Jesus demonstrated His power over all the power of Satan, He Himself was *not* immune from attack. We can see another one of these attacks when Satan, speaking through Peter, reprimands Him for saying He must die:

*And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he **rebuked Peter**, saying, **Get thee behind me, Satan**: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.*

*Mark 8:31-33*

Much truth can be gleaned from this account. *First*, it shows that unclean spirits speak through *God's people*. Peter was a follower and a disciple of Jesus. He was a believer. Yet either an unclean spirit, or Satan himself, put thoughts into Peter's mind, which he eventually spoke out. The fact is, spirits *can* put thoughts in our minds. If we accept those thoughts and speak them out, we have just spoken the thoughts of a demon. We have become a *vessel* through whom they speak. This is a very simple truth; but it's a truth most Christians react to with horror and disbelief. They just can't accept that unclean spirits can put thoughts in their minds, and that if they don't recognize them and reject them, those spirits will be talking through their lips!

*Second*, this account reveals that the thoughts or desires which do come from unclean spirits are not always overtly evil. In the case of Peter, his desire was to protect the Lord, and that desire seemed to him like a *good* desire. Indeed, such a desire would have been viewed by most of us as a manifestation of Peter's love for Jesus—and in a sense this was true. No doubt this was what Peter *thought* he was doing. But he didn't realize that Jesus had to go to the Cross, and Satan was able to use that ignorance against him. He was able to use that ignorance to make him say something that was designed to stumble Jesus.

*Third*, it reveals that many times our worst enemy may not be the unsaved pagans of the world or the ones we have to work with on the job. Our worst enemy could actually be fellow believers, or even *family* members. Satan can easily speak to us *through* someone who is close to us and loves us, but who doesn't understand what God is doing in our lives. Those who are hearing this message have probably experienced this when you decided to leave the Church System. There is always some well-meaning person who is concerned for your spiritual welfare—it could even be a family member—and they beg you not to leave the church. Their concern for you is genuine because they love you. But that concern, though genuine, is being used by the enemy *against you* in order to bring you back into bondage to the Religious System.

You may remember the other week I read an article about relationships by Paul Proctor. At the beginning of that article he made a very important statement. He said: "*No one can lead you down the road of temptation quicker than a close friend, family member or fellow Christian*". That is a very insightful comment. The fact is, we humans are extremely vulnerable when it comes to relationships, especially family relationships. I've seen husbands who started out very committed to Jesus, slowly fall away because they refused to *face the truth* about their wives who were either carnal Christians or "professing" (fake) Christians. They refused to walk the kind of walk that's necessary to spiritually survive in that kind of a situation. I've seen the same thing happen to wives, and to parents, and even to children. It's a heart-wrenching experience to watch a brother or sister in Christ, be slowly drawn away from the Lord (and from fellowship with you) because they can't (or won't) face the truth regarding the spiritual condition of the people they love.

Let me be clear here. I believe love is a *good* thing. God designed us to experience love. He designed to give love and receive love. But love is also a *dangerous* thing because it so easily *blinds* us to the truth. When you really love someone—like a parent loves a child, or spouses love each other—that love tends to blind us to the reality of their *actual* spiritual condition. The stronger we love a person, the greater a tendency there is to hide from the truth regarding that person's condition. The greater our love is for someone, the greater a tendency there is to *compromise* in order to please them or keep from having trouble start between you and them.

*Fourth*, Satan's attack through Peter reveals that Jesus had keen spiritual discernment. He knew the difference between someone moving in "the flesh" and Satan moving through them. He knew it wasn't just Peter's "flesh" that was talking that night. An invisible entity was speaking through Peter.

*Fifth*, it reveals that even though Jesus defeated the power of Satan every day, the fact is, Satan never *accepted* that defeat, so he never stopped trying to stumble the Lord—and this is precisely the situation we face. Satan knows that if we are “in Christ”, we have been given the power to defeat him. He knows that: “...*in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*” (Rom. 8:37). But none of this phases him because he doesn't accept that he has been defeated; so he never stops trying to defeat us.

Those who boast they don't have to worry about spirits are not even *in* the battle. They may think that because they aren't having any major problems they are walking in spiritual victory. But this is a religious fantasy. In reality they have been *overcome* and don't realize it. Listen my friends: it's not possible to win a battle you haven't even fought! It's not possible to overcome these spirits when you refuse to face and defeat them. Thinking that we have won the war when we haven't even entered is the height of religious self-delusion!

*Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, **Satan entered into him.** "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him, but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him.*

*John 13:26-28*

When observing the last Passover with His disciples, Jesus said: “*I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*” (Lk. 22:15 NIV). In other words, that gathering special to Him. It was to be an intimate occasion—an occasion when Jesus would give the ones He loved His final words. Yet even during this most intimate of times, He had to confront Satan in one of those disciples. The Scripture says that after Jesus gave Judas the sop, Satan *entered into him*. Exactly why Satan entered him at that point we are not told. What we are told is that Satan *did* enter him at that point. You can be sure that just as Jesus knew Satan was moving through Peter on a previous occasion, He knew Satan had entered Judas at that point, and he was confronting him. Also, it wasn't till Satan entered into Judas that he actually betrayed the Lord.

*And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. **If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.***

*Matthew 27:39-40*

Matthew doesn't explicitly say it, but I believe Satan was putting his very own words in the mouths of those who mocked the Lord while He hung on the Cross because what Satan said to Jesus in the wilderness was: “*If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread*” (Matt. 4:3). These people said: “*If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross*”.

So we see that even though Jesus had the power to drive unclean spirits out of the bodies and souls of others, He couldn't stop Satan from harassing Him, tempting Him, and attacking Him throughout His entire ministry, even in His final hours—and the same is true of us. Having the power to defeat these spirits doesn't mean we can stop them from tempting or attacking us. Nor does it relieve us of the necessity of actually having to face them. Because they have not accepted defeat, we must continually defeat them, it's that simple.

If the sinless Son of God had to face Satan personally, what in the world makes us think *we* are so special that we don't have to face him. If Jesus had to battle the enemy and defeat him, what makes us think *we* are so special that we won't have to do the same thing? Those who think they don't have to do what Jesus did *are* saying the disciple *is* above his Master. They are no different than the people who say we don't have to suffer because Jesus suffered *for* us; or the people who say we should never be poor because Jesus became poor *for* us, or those who claim we should never be sick because Jesus became a curse *for* us.

The sad reality is that most of today's Christians are not only spiritual children, they act like *natural* children. The common view of what Satan can and can't do to a believer is not based on the Scripture. Rather, it is based on wishful thinking. Like natural children, most of today's Christians believe things simply because they *want* them to be true. They believe what they want to believe, regardless of what the Bible says about the issue.

Another way these ministers try to minimize the danger unclean spirits pose is by mis-representing what James said about us being tempted when we are drawn away by "our own lusts" (*James 1:14-15*). I mentioned this last week. One minister our here, who you are all familiar with, does this. He spins that statement of James to mean that whenever we are tempted—as in every time we are tempted—we are tempted by our own lust, not by unclean spirits. I would like to take a few minutes and look at a few examples, from Scripture, where Satan is clearly responsible for tempting and hurting God's people, including the Lord Jesus.

The first example is the situation where Satan attacked Jesus through Peter. When Peter reprimanded Jesus, the Lord looked at him and said: "*Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me*". This is very interesting response because if the "*every-man-is-only-tempted-by-his-own-lust*" view is true, then Jesus would never have directly addressed Satan by name, when talking to Peter. He would have only addressed Peter, and He would have rebuked Peter for not walking in the spirit. He would have said: "*Peter, you're just in your flesh right now and you don't know what you are saying*". But the fact is, He didn't reprimand Peter or even talk to Peter. He spoke directly to Satan. What was happening was a lot deeper than Peter simply being in his flesh. Satan was speaking through Peter to stumble Jesus, and the Lord laid the *responsibility* for that attack exactly where it belonged—on Satan, not on Peter's own lust or his flesh.

*But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, **why hath Satan filled thine heart** to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?*

*Acts 5:1-3*

This is a very tragic story. The first thing I want you to notice is that this man and wife were believers—the after-Pentecost kind of believers. The text doesn't specifically state that they were believers, but it is strongly implied they are believers by the *facts* of the story. First of all, they were part of the original Jerusalem Church. It's not very likely that they would be part of that church as professing (fake) Christians. In fact, it is very unlikely that this would be the case. Second, they had the same desire all the other believers had to sell their belongings and give the money—at least most of it—to the Christian community. Unsaved, professing Christians don't usually have that much commitment to the church. So if you want to claim these two people were not genuine believers, the burden of proof is on you. Nothing in the story suggests that they were not real Christians.

However, these two Christians had a problem. They were lying about the level of commitment they had to the Lord and His body. The fact that they saved a portion of the funds for themselves reveals that they didn't have the kind of faith the rest of the saints did, who sold their land and gave *all* the proceeds to the community. They held back a little nest egg, just in case. They had faith—but not complete faith. They were like many of us today, who have faith, but not always a complete faith. However, they were *still* Christians—and the fact is, *Satan* was able to fill the hearts of these two Christians to lie to God.

Notice that Peter didn't say it was their "own lust" that caused them to lie. He didn't say: "*Oh Ananias; your own lust has drawn you away from the truth and caused you to lie to God*". What he said was: "*Why has Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost*". It was Satan who caused this man to decide to keep back part of the funds—and I can guarantee you the arguments Satan gave Ananias to convince him to hold back those funds were perfectly reasonable, and no doubt, very religious. Satan convinced this *Christian* to lie about the whole deal and that lie got him killed. Thus, Satan was directly responsible for this *Christian's* death!

You may say: "But brother Dan, wasn't it Ananias's own greed ("his own lust") that *allowed* Satan to convince him to lie? Maybe—maybe not. Maybe Ananias wasn't greedy. Maybe it was just a case of weak faith. However, just for the sake of argument, let's say it was his own greed that allowed Satan to deceive him into lying. It certainly wasn't his greed that *convinced* him to lie—it was Satan who "filled his heart" to lie.

There is no evidence from the text itself that Ananias would have did all that on his own, *without* Satan first prodding him to do it, and then convincing him to do it. But there is evidence that Satan was *the cause* behind what Ananias did. That evidence comes not just from Peter, but from God Himself, for you see, Peter wasn't speaking *alone* that day, when pronounced that death sentence on Ananias. He was under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Only *God* could have made Peter do that. I'm sure Peter loved Ananias, and killing him through a prophetic utterance was the last thing Peter ever thought he would do that day! The Holy Spirit spoke through Peter, and the HOLY SPIRIT said Satan filled the heart of Ananias to lie. If all of this was just the work of Ananias' own lust, God wouldn't have said *Satan* filled his heart to lie. He would have said Ananias' *own lust* filled his heart to lie. Ananias paid with his life for what he did. So God was not absolving him of *his part* in the deal. But the fact that Satan was *responsible* for *causing* him to lie is made clear by what God Himself said.

The only reason Peter was able to be used of God to judge Ananias like that was because he hadn't been affected by all the errors we have. First of all, he wasn't infected with the *false love* all of us have been infected with. We have all been taught that God's love is some kind of mushy, sentimental thing that *never* gets angry; that it *never* raises its voice; that it *never* becomes aggressive or speaks rough or sarcastically. Well, I don't know what Bible people are reading, but it sure isn't the one *God* wrote! The Bible is full of statements which were made under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which are sarcastic, rough, accusatory, condemning, judgmental, harsh, angry, and all the other things today's Christians call "un-Christian".

Secondly, Peter was never taught that a Christian can't "have a demon". He was never taught that Christians don't have to deal with unclean spirits because Jesus took care of all that at Calvary. He was never taught any of the garbage today's Christians are taught. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit told him to pronounce a death sentence on a brother in Christ, just for telling a lie, he was able to do it! And when the Spirit told him to put *the blame* for what happened on *Satan*, he was able to do that too.

The tactic Satan used on Ananias and Sapphira is an old one. In fact, he's been using that particular tactic on us ever since the Garden of Eden. He entices us to sin against God, then he laughs when God judges us, and sometimes even destroys us. You can see Satan using this tactic on Israel, in Numbers chapter 22-24, when the king of Moab calls a "soothsayer" named Balaam to *curse* Israel so they can be defeated in the upcoming battle. First, the Lord forbids Balaam to go. But Balaam's greed had control of him. So the Lord lets him go. But when he arrives, God blesses Israel three different times through Balaam. Then, to add insult to injury, God gives Balaam a final prophesy about Israel's future glory and victory over Moab.

That made the king of Moab so angry he was going to kill Balaam. Apparently, according to Numbers 31:6, that's when Balaam told the king how to get Israel to *defeat themselves*. He told him to send in the Moabite dancing girls and the men of Israel would go a whoring after them, and that would bring God's judgment down upon them. Now, *who* do you suppose it was that gave Balaam *that kind* of wisdom. He certainly wasn't being inspired by the Spirit of God! The Scripture simply says this guy was a soothsayer. It never says he was God's servant. He was just a guy who had tapped into the supernatural realm. Just because God chose to speak through him, that didn't make him God's servant. If he would have been serving the God of Israel, he would *never* have told Balak how to *defeat* God's people!

Listening to Satan, or listening to people who are being inspired by Satan, can be deadly. Not only can it get you deceived, it can also get you killed (physically). It got a lot of Israelites killed, and it's gotten quite a few Christians killed, I have no doubt.

*I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan.*

*I. Timothy 5:14-15*

When Paul was warning the younger Christian women against getting into trouble, he said some of these women had already "*turned aside after Satan*". Why didn't he say they had turned aside after "their own lusts"? Has it ever dawned on you that if these unclean spirits were *not* constantly tempting and enticing God's people to sin, a lot less of them would be getting into trouble or departing from the faith? Many Christians try to resist the wrong desires that come from their fallen nature, and as long as unclean spirits don't involve themselves, "dying to self" will suffice. But when an unclean spirit begins to *inflame* those desires and literally *drive you* to sin, "dying to self"—by itself—is no longer sufficient. You must deal with that spirit. If you don't, you will lose.

Those who can't see any difference between someone who has been enticed or deceived into sinning—even though they are trying not to sin—and someone who simply gives in to sin because they don't want to go to the trouble of resisting it, have a very *warped* sense of justice. God judges people according to the *truth* of the situation. When unclean spirits entice us or deceive us into doing something we don't want to do and would not otherwise do, God lays the blame on those spirits because that's exactly where it belongs!

No; God doesn't absolve us for the sin we commit. He doesn't say we aren't guilty. We have to pay for that sin as well. But God does see the whole situation. He knows when it's a case where you would not have not engaged in that sin if some spirit had not enticed you or driven you to do it. Therefore, He doesn't look at the person who sins and just automatically say: "*Well, you have a sin nature and you're filled with your own lusts; so don't*

*try to blame demons for your sin. You didn't have to sin. You chose to sin. So quit trying to blame demons for making you sin".* If that's the way God approached the issue, then *none* of the statements we have been looking at so far would even be in the Bible because the Holy Spirit would have moved upon the writers of Scripture to say those very same things *differently*. He would have moved them to consistently emphasize "the flesh" or "our own lusts"—just like many of these deluded preachers and Bible teachers do. The writers of Scripture would have never even mentioned Satan, let alone *blame him* for the things people do—just like many of today's deluded preachers and Bible teachers will *never* blame him for anything people do.

Would you like to take a guess *who* it is that wants to see Satan absolved from guilt when it comes to the evil deeds of men? Who do you think is *behind* the effort to lay all the blame for the evil that man does, on man *alone*? Who do you think it is that wants to deny the fact that many times Satan is *directly responsible* for people doing things they would not otherwise be doing? It's Satan! Any time you run across a "minister" who is trying to minimize the role these unclean spirit play in enticing and driving us to sin, you need to understand you are listening to a person who is walking under the power of those very spirits. When they lay all the blame for the evil mankind does on his fallen sin nature, they are doing exactly what Satan wants them to do.

*And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.*

*Zachariah 3:1-3*

This account is one of several visions Zechariah received. In this one, the garments of the High Priest of Israel have become filthy and Satan is seen standing at his right hand. Now, do you think there might just be a connection between the fact that Satan was standing at Joshua's right hand, and the fact that his *garments* had become filthy? Remember last week, we talked about being "clean" and walking "clean" before the Lord? Anybody remember what Jesus said about "garments" in the book of Revelation?

*Thou hast a few names even in Sardis **which have not defiled their garments**; and **they** shall walk with me in white: for **they** are worthy.*

*Revelation 3:4*

*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and **keepeth his garments**, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

*Revelation 16:15*

Our spiritual garments are righteousness—the imputed righteousness of Jesus and our actual righteousness. Jesus said if we defile those garments, we will not be *worthy* to walk with Him "in white" The term "in white" is talking about HIS garment, which He kept pure and clean His entire life, when He was here on earth. Those—and only those—who keep *their* garments clean will be worthy to walk with the One who kept *His* garment clean! You see, we can defile our garments, and this vision of Zechariah shows one of the ways that happens. We defile our garments when we listen to the voice and/or the council of Satan.

Joshua's garments were filthy because Satan was standing at his right hand. Standing at a person's "right hand" is a Hebrew expression that means that person is a close confidant of the one at whose hand he stands. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father (*Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3*). In the Old Testament, the king's counselor stood at his right hand. Standing at the right hand of someone means you are in intimate fellowship with them. It means they rely on you for help and council.

Satan was standing at the "right hand" of Joshua. But he was standing there to "resist" him, not to help him. He was standing there to resist the holy work he was to do, and the holy life he was to live before God, as a priest. What that tells me is that Satan had *deceived* Joshua. He had convinced Joshua that he was the voice of God. He was counseling Joshua and helping Joshua, but in all the wrong ways—and Joshua didn't realize what was going on because he had been seduced. Listening to the thoughts of Satan and the counsel of Satan *defiled* his garments. It destroyed his righteousness and made his work and his walk, *unclean*.

My point is simply this: Why did Zechariah see Satan standing at Joshua's right hand? Why didn't the angel just show him Joshua by himself. I mean, after all, if the "*every-man-is-only-tempted-by-his-own-lust*" view is true, then why include Satan in the whole affair? It had to be Joshua's "own lust" that caused him to defile his garments, right? We must *never* blame Satan or these unclean spirits for anything mankind does, right?

Why did the angel rebuke Satan when getting ready to change Joshua's garments? Why didn't he rebuke Joshua? Why didn't he say: "*Joshua, you, like all men, when you are tempted, are drawn away by your own lust, and you've allowed yourself to be drawn away by those very lusts and you have defiled your garments; now repent*"? Why, instead, did the angel rebuke Satan, as if Satan was the one who had caused Joshua to defile his garments? Could it be that he rebuked Satan because Satan *was* the one who was responsible for those defiled garments? Could it be that Satan *was* responsible because he had deceived Joshua?

You see, according to the people who minimize the danger these spirits pose, the answer is *No*. If you try to say Satan was responsible for Joshua's condition, they will tell you you're wrong to blame Satan for what Joshua did. Then they will start talking about today's "Discernment Ministries" who try to blame *everything* on demons. They will say these ministries want to blame everything on demons because they don't want to take responsibility for their own actions or die to self. They will call these ministries "demon hunters" and say they "look for demons under every rock". Then they will accuse *you* of doing the same thing.

Unfortunately, it is true, there are a lot of people out there who blame *everything* on spirits because they don't want to exercise their own wills to resist sin. They don't want to enter the battle against their own flesh and die to self. But if your answer to the "everything-is-a-demon" error is to turn around and say "everything-is-the-flesh", then you're no different than they are. You are just as wrong and just as dangerous as they are and you're a hypocrite to boot. You are pot calling kettles "black".

I've taken the time to go through the Scripture with you tonight because one of the first things you will hear from those who deny or downplay the reality of spirits, is that people like me are teaching "extra-biblical" revelation. They like to lump everyone who believes spirits are a real danger, or anyone who says we must face and defeat them every day, together with people like C. Peter Wagner and all the leaders of today's Apostolic and Prophetic movements, who teach all kinds of unbiblical ideas regarding spiritual warfare and deliverance. This is called "guilt by association"—and it shows just what kind of evil character these people possess.

In closing, let me give you one final thought to consider. Because of all the error we have been taught, few of us realize that Satan can actually have *authority* over portions of our life. I realize we've all been taught this is not possible, but it is. If sin can have dominion (or authority) over a part of you, then Satan can too.

*Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

*John 8:34*

*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

*Romans 6:16*

Jesus said if we commit sin we are *the servant* of sin. This is a kingdom law, just like the law of sowing and reaping, and it applies to *everyone*, saint and sinner alike. Neither grace, or mercy, or forgiveness, or justification can annul or override this law. The person who commits sin is the servant of *that* sin. And just in case someone may think the Lord was only talking to Jews, or that somehow these words do not apply to those of us who have been “saved by grace”, the Holy Spirit spoke the same truth through the apostle Paul, to the *Christians* in Rome. He said we are *the servant* of the thing we are obeying. If we obey sin, we are the servants of sin. If we obey righteousness, we are the servants of righteousness. Obviously, the choice to obey sin or righteousness is one that *only believers* can make. The unbeliever has no such choice; he is a prisoner to unrighteousness.

I won't go into the Greek in this passage, but the fact is, the term “servant” means you are under the authority or the dominion of the one you are serving. To be a servant of some one or some thing means we are *under the authority* of that person or that thing. If you are bound in a sin, that sin has authority over you in *that area* of your life, and through that sin, *Satan* has authority over you in that area of your life.

Does this mean that if a Christian remains in bondage to some kind of sin (or sins), he's not really a Christian and he belongs to Satan? Not at all. That's not what Jesus and Paul were trying to say. They were just explaining the way things work in the spirit realm. As long as a person *yields* to a particular sin, he is *the servant* of *that* sin. He is also a servant of the *father* of sin in that area of his life.

The same principle applies to our *minds*. We are the servant of the one who's *thoughts* we receive and obey. If we are receiving and acting upon the thoughts that come from our “old man” throughout the day, then we are *the servants* of the flesh—it's that simple. If we are receiving and acting upon the thoughts we get from the Lord throughout the day, then we are *the servants* of the Lord. If we are receiving and acting upon the thoughts we get from unclean spirits during the day, then we are *the servants* of demon spirits. This is precisely why Paul told us to “cast down imaginations” and take our thoughts captive (*II. Cor. 10:5*). If we don't do this, it's easy to get into a situation where we are following and serving the thoughts of unclean spirits. That's right! It's not only possible, it's very *easy* for a CHRISTIAN to be the SERVANT of demons all day long!

*To Be Continued Next Week*