

THE PULPIT

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

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THE REALITY OF DEMONS

WHEN THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT GOES OUT OF A MAN, IT PASSES THROUGH WATERLESS PLACES SEEKING REST, AND NOT FINDING ANY, IT SAYS, "I WILL RETURN TO MY HOUSE FROM WHICH I CAME." THEN IT GOES AND TAKES ALONG SEVEN OTHER SPIRITS MORE EVIL THAN ITSELF (Lk 11:24-26). THE BIBLE DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF DEMONS ANY MORE THAN IT ATTEMPTS TO PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. IT SIMPLY REPORTS ON THEIR ACTIVITIES AS IF ITS FIRST READERS ACCEPTED THEIR EXISTENCE. NOR DID THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE REALITY AND PERSONALITY OF DEMONS.

IN REGARD TO THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS AND OPPOSING POWERS, THE ECCLESIASTICAL TEACHING MAINTAINS THAT THE BEINGS DO INDEED EXIST; BUT WHAT THEY ARE OR HOW THEY EXIST IS NOT EXPLAINED WITH SUFFICIENT CLARITY. THIS OPINION, HOWEVER, IS HELD BY MOST: THAT THE DEVIL WAS AN ANGEL; AND HAVING APOSTATISED, HE PERSUADED AS MANY ANGELS AS POSSIBLE TO FALL AWAY WITH HIMSELF, AND THESE, EVEN TO THE PRESENT TIME, ARE CALLED HIS ANGELS.

LK 11:24-26 GIVES US A HELPFUL VIEW INTO THE PERSONALITY AND INDIVIDUALITY OF EVIL SPIRITS. WE CAN GLEAN SEVERAL POINTS OF INFORMATION ABOUT EVIL SPIRITS FROM THIS PASSAGE: DEMONS CAN EXIST OUTSIDE OR INSIDE HUMANS; THEY ARE ABLE TO TRAVEL; THEY ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE; EACH ONE HAS A SEPARATE IDENTITY; THEY ARE ABLE TO REMEMBER AND MAKE PLANS; THEY ARE ABLE TO EVALUATE AND MAKE DECISIONS; THEY ARE ABLE TO COMBINE FORCES; THEY VARY IN DEGREES OF WICKEDNESS.

BUT YOU NEED NOT FEAR SATAN AND HIS DEMONS AS LONG AS YOU CLING TO GOD'S TRUTH. THEIR ONLY WEAPON IS DECEPTION. "THE DEVIL...CAN ONLY GO TO THIS LENGTH, AS HE DID AT THE BEGINNING, TO DECEIVE AND LEAD ASTRAY THE MIND OF MAN INTO DISOBEYING THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, AND GRADUALLY TO DARKEN THE HEARTS." IF YOU CONTINUE TO WALK IN THE LIGHT, YOU DON'T NEED TO BE AFRAID OF THE DARKNESS.

A VERY REAL DEVIL

YOU FORMERLY WALKED... ACCORDING TO THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR... THE SPIRIT THAT IS NOW WORKING IN THE SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE (EPH 2:2). THE DEVIL IS ALIVE AND FUNCTIONING AS THE GOD OF THIS WORLD, AND HE OFTEN DISGUISES HIS OPERATION AS INTRIGUING, HARMLESS FUN. THE FACT THAT HE IS ENJOYING SUCCESS IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY ALL OVER THE WORLD IS EVIDENT. POPULAR SATANIC MOVIES GLORIFY EXPERIENCES WITH SPIRITS. NEW AGE PHILOSOPHY IS BEING MODELLED IN SOME OF THE CARTOONS. AND ON HALLOWEEN MANY DRESS UP THEIR CHILDREN AS WITCHES, GOBLINS, SLASHERS AND MONSTER. MEANWHILE, BEHIND THE SCENES, SATAN IS SYSTEMATICALLY DESTROYING THE FABRIC OF THE SOCIETY BECAUSE HE HAS CONVINCED US THAT HE'S JUST A HARMLESS LITTLE MAN IN A RED SUIT CARRYING A PITCHFORK.

IN 1990, A NEWSPAPER IN ITALY REPORTED THAT MORE WOMEN CONSULTED MEDIUMS AND SPIRITISTS THAN PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLORS FOR PERSONAL HELP AND GUIDANCE.

ISN'T IT AMAZING THAT GULLIBLE PUBLIC WILL ACCEPT SUCH OBVIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF THE OCCULT! JUST CHANGE THE NAME OF A MEDIUM TO A CHANNELER AND A DEMON TO A SPIRIT GUIDE AND SUDDENLY IT'S ACCEPTABLE, EVEN SOUGHT AFTER.

THE LURE OF KNOWLEDGE AND POWER IS DECEPTIVE, SUCKING MILLIONS INTO THE ABYSS AND AWAY FROM DIVINE REVELATION AND THE ULTIMATE POWER THAT IS EXTENDED TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE (EPH 1:19). THE CONCEPT OF SATAN WAS NOT MANUFACTURED IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY HAS ALWAYS HELD THE BELIEF IN A PERSONAL DEVIL (*NOT JUST AN IMPERSONAL FORCE*). THERE IS NO NEUTRAL GROUND IN THE UNIVERSE: EVERY SQUARE INCH, EVERY SPLIT SECOND, IS CLAIMED BY GOD AND COUNTER CLAIMED BY SATAN. A VERY REAL DEVIL IS INTENT ON SPOILING YOUR LIFE. BUT BE ASSURED THAT IN CHRIST YOU HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO DEFEAT SATAN'S SCHEMES.

ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

FOR THOSE WHO ARE ACCORDING TO THE FLESH SET THEIR MINDS ON THE THINGS OF THE FLESH, BUT THOSE WHO ARE ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT, THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT (ROM 8:5). THE CENTER OF ALL SPIRITUAL BONDAGE IS THE MIND. THAT'S WHERE THE BATTLE MUST BE FOUGHT AND WON IF YOU ARE TO EXPERIENCE THE FREEDOM IN CHRIST HE PURCHASED FOR YOU ON THE CROSS. PAUL WROTE: "FOR THOUGH WE WALK IN THE FLESH, WE DO NOT WAR ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, FOR THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT OF THE FLESH, BUT DIVINELY POWERFUL FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF FORTRESSES. WE ARE DESTROYING SPECULATIONS AND EVERY LOFTY THING RAISED UP AGAINST THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, AND WE ARE TAKING EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST" (2 COR 10:3-5).

BEFORE YOU CAME TO CHRIST, BAD HABITS AND SINFUL THOUGHT PATTERNS WERE ESTABLISHED AS YOU LEARNED TO LIVE YOUR LIFE INDEPENDENTLY OF GOD. YOUR NON-CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT TAUGHT YOU TO THINK ABOUT THE RESPONSE TO LIFE IN A NON-CHRISTIAN WAY, AND THOSE PATTERNS AND RESPONSES WERE INGRAINED IN YOUR MIND AS STRONGHOLDS. WHEN YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN, YOUR OLD FLESHLY HABITS AND PATTERNS WERE NOT ERASED; THEY ARE STILL A PART OF YOUR FLESH WHICH MUST BE DEALT WITH ON A DAILY BASIS.

THANKFULLY, HOWEVER, YOU ARE NOT JUST A PRODUCT OF YOUR PAST; YOU ARE A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST AND NOW YOU ARE PRIMARILY THE PRODUCT OF THE WORK OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS. OLD STRONGHOLDS CAN BE DESTROYED. PATTERNS OF NEGATIVE THINKING AND BEHAVIOUR ARE LEANED, AND THEY CAN BE UNLEARNED THROUGH DISCIPLINED BIBLE STUDY. SOME STRONGHOLDS ARE THE RESULT OF DEMONIC INFLUENCES AND SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS FROM PAST AND PRESENT MENTAL ASSAULTS. IF PEOPLE BELIEVE SATAN'S LIES, THOSE LIES WILL CONTROL THEIR LIVES. THESE PEOPLE NEED TO BE FREED FROM THE SHACKLES OF SATAN'S LIES BY GOD'S TRUTH. JESUS SAID: "YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE" (JHN 8:32). VICTORY IS TRULY AVAILABLE FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST. THERE IS A WAR RAGING FOR OUR MINDS, BUT WE ARE ON THE WINNING SIDE, FOR WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS IN CHRIST!

THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATE YOU, BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU, PRAY FOR THOSE WHO MISTREAT YOU (LK 6:27-28). HERE ARE SOME SIMPLE STEPS YOU CAN USE TO WALK THROUGH THE PROCESS OF FORGIVING SOMEONE WHO HURT YOU IN THE PAST: IF YOU ARE GOING TO FORGIVE FROM YOUR HEART, YOU MUST LET GOD SEARCH THE DEPTHS OF YOUR HEART. YOU START BY ACKNOWLEDGING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROSS. IT IS THE CROSS OF CHRIST THAT MAKES FORGIVENESS LEGALLY AND MORALLY RIGHT; DECIDE TO FORGIVE AND THAT YOU WILL NOT RETALIATE (*LK 6:27-34*). FORGIVENESS IS A CONSCIOUS CHOICE TO LET THE OTHER PERSON OFF THE HOOK AND FREE YOURSELF FROM THE PAST.

DO NOT TELL THE OFFENDERS WHAT YOU HAVE DONE. YOUR FORGIVENESS IS BETWEEN YOU AND GOD UNLESS THE OFFENDERS HAVE ASKED YOU FOR FORGIVENESS. DO NOT EXPECT THAT YOUR DECISION TO FORGIVE WILL RESULT IN MAJOR CHANGES IN THE OTHER PERSONS. INSTEAD, PRAY FOR THEM (MATT 5:44). FREEDOM IS A RESULT OF FORGIVENESS IN YOU. THE PEOPLE YOU HAVE FORGIVEN ARE VICTIMS ALSO. IN TIME YOU WILL BE ABLE TO THINK ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO OFFENDED YOU WITHOUT FEELING HURT OR ANGER. WHEN APPROPRIATE, ACCEPT YOUR PART OF THE BLAME FOR THE OFFENCES YOU SUFFERED. CONFESS YOUR FAILURE TO GOD AND TO OTHERS (1 JHN 1:9) AND REALISE THAT IF SOMEONE HAS SOMETHING AGAINST YOU, YOU MUST GO TO THAT PERSON (MATT 5:23-26).

RIGHTING WRONGS

BY THIS IS MY FATHER GLORIFIED, THAT YOU BEAR MUCH FRUIT, AND SO PROVE TO BE MY DISCIPLES (JHN 15:8). HOW CAN YOU KNOW IF YOU'RE BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT OR THE FLESH? VERY SIMPLE: LOOK AT YOUR BEHAVIOUR. IF YOU RESPOND TO A GIVEN SITUATION BY EXERCISING LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS AND SELF CONTROL, YOU ARE FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT'S LEAD (*GAL 5:22-23*). IF YOUR REACTIONS AND RESPONSES REFLECT THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH LISTED IN (*GAL 5:19-21*) YOU ARE FOLLOWING THE FLESH.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU DISCOVER YOU ARE NOT WALKING BY THE SPIRIT? ACKNOWLEDGE IT FOR WHAT IT IS. YOU HAVE CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY CHOSEN TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY OF GOD BY WALKING ACCORDING TO THE FLESH. WALKING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT IS A MOMENT-BY-MOMENT, DAY-BY-DAY EXPERIENCE. ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR SIN TO GOD, SEEK THE FORGIVENESS OF ANYONE YOU MAY HAVE OFFENDED, RECEIVE FORGIVENESS, AND BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT. HERE ARE A COUPLE OF THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN YOU ARE FACED WITH RIGHTING FLESHLY WRONGS.

FIRST, THE SCOPE OF YOUR CONFESSION SHOULD BE AS BROAD AS THE SCOPE OF YOUR OFFENCE. IF YOU LASHED OUT AT A RELATIVE WITH ANGRY WORDS, YOU NEED TO CONFESS TO GOD AND THAT RELATIVE. IF YOU ENTERTAIN A SECRET, LUSTFUL THOUGHT OR PROUD ATTITUDE WITHOUT ANY OVERT, OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR, YOU NEED TO CONFESS IT TO GOD. CONFESSION LITERALLY MEANS TO AGREE WITH GOD. WHEN YOU RECOGNISE AN INTERNAL FLESHLY RESPONSE, IMMEDIATELY ACKNOWLEDGE IT IN YOUR MIND. THAT'S IT; JUST AGREE WITH GOD AND WALK IN THE LIGHT.

SECOND, THE PROCESS OF RESTORING A RELATIONSHIP THROUGH CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS IS A STEP OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH. YOUR ROLE AS A SPOUSE, PARENT, FRIEND, CO-WORKER, OR FELLOW-CHRISTIAN IS TO MODEL GROWTH, NOT PERFECTION. IF YOU'RE TRYING TO KEEP UP A FRONT OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE SAINTS AND WIN SINNERS, FORGET IT; IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN.

BUT WHEN YOU OPENLY ADMIT AND ASK FORGIVENESS FOR YOUR FLESHLY CHOICES, YOU MODEL THE KIND OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH WHICH WILL TOUCH SAINTS AND SINNERS ALIKE. THIS IS WHAT SHOULD BE DONE AND THAT IS HOW IT SHOULD BE DONE.

FORGIVING YOUR PAST

BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER, TENDERHEARTED, FORGIVING EACH OTHER, JUST AS GOD IN CHRIST ALSO HAS FORGIVEN YOU (EPH 4:32). THE SECOND STEP IN RESOLVING PAST CONFLICTS IS TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE OFFENDED YOU.

AFTER ENCOURAGING A RAPE VICTIM, TO DEAL WITH THE EMOTIONAL TRAUMA OF HER RAPE, THE COUNSELLOR SAID, "LOOK SISTER, YOU ALSO NEED TO FORGIVE THE MAN WHO RAPED YOU." HER RESPONSE WAS TYPICAL OF MANY BELIEVERS WHO HAVE SUFFERED PHYSICAL, SEXUAL OR EMOTIONAL PAIN AT THE HANDS OF OTHERS: "WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE HIM? YOU DON'T KNOW HOW BADLY HE HURT ME!" "HE'S STILL HURTING YOU, SISTER," SAID THE COUNSELLOR. "FORGIVENESS IS HOW YOU STOP THE PAIN. YOU DON'T FORGIVE HIM FOR HIS SAKE; YOU DO IT FOR YOUR SAKE."

WHY SHOULD YOU FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE HURT YOU IN THE PAST? FIRST, FORGIVENESS IS REQUIRED BY GOD. AS SOON AS JESUS SPOKE THE AMEN TO HIS MODEL PRAYER ... WHICH INCLUDED A PETITION FOR GOD'S FORGIVENESS ... HE COMMENTED: "IF YOU FORGIVE MEN FOR THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS, YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER WILL ALSO FORGIVE YOU. BUT IF YOU DO NOT FORGIVE MEN, THEN YOUR FATHER WILL NOT FORGIVE YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS" (MATT 6:14-15).

WE MUST BASE OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS ON THE SAME CRITERIA ON WHICH GOD BASES HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH US: LOVE, ACCEPTANCE AND FORGIVENESS (*MATT 18:21-35*).

SECOND, FORGIVENESS IS NECESSARY TO AVOID BEING TRAPPED BY SATAN. IT IS NUMBER ONE AVENUE SATAN USES TO GAIN ENTRANCE TO BELIEVERS' LIVES.

THIRD, WE ARE TO FORGIVE LIKE CHRIST FORGAVE IN ORDER TO KEEP OUR HEART FROM BITTERNESS (EPHESIANS 4:31-32). YOUR ACT OF FORGIVENESS WILL SET THE CAPTIVE FREE, THEN YOU WILL REALISE THAT THE CAPTIVE WAS YOU!

FREE SEX!

EVERY OTHER SIN THAT A MAN COMMITS IS OUTSIDE HIS BODY, BUT THE IMMORAL MAN (FORNICATOR) SINS AGAINST HIS OWN BODY (1 COR 6:18). SEX GLANDS ARE A GOD-GIVEN PART OF OUR AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM. NORMAL SEXUAL FUNCTIONING IS A REGULAR, RHYTHMIC CYCLE OF LIFE. BUT WHEN JESUS SAID, "EVERYONE WHO LOOKS ON A WOMAN TO LUST FOR HER HAS COMMITTED ADULTERY WITH HER ALREADY IN HIS HEART" (MATT 5:28), HE WAS DESCRIBING SOMETHING BEYOND THE BOUNDARY OF GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEX.

THE WORD FOR LUST IS EPITHUMOS. THE PREFIX EPI MEANS "TO ADD TO," SIGNIFYING THAT SOMETHING IS BEING ADDED TO A NORMAL DRIVE. JESUS CHALLENGED US NOT TO ADD ONTO THE GOD-GIVEN SEXUAL DRIVE BY POLLUTING OUR MINDS WITH LUSTFUL THOUGHTS. THE ONLY WAY TO CONTROL YOUR SEXUAL DRIVE IS TO CONTROL YOUR THOUGHT LIFE. SEXUAL LUST DEMANDS PHYSICAL EXPRESSION, AND THAT'S WHERE ROMANS 6 COMES INTO PLAY. WE ARE NOT TO LET SIN REIGN IN OUR MORTAL BODIES (VS. 12-13) BY USING OUR BODIES AS INSTRUMENTS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

WHENEVER YOU USE YOUR BODY WRONGLY THROUGH A SEXUAL OFFENCE, YOU GIVE SATAN A FOOTHOLD AND YOUR SEXUAL PROBLEM BECOMES A SPIRITUAL PROBLEM.

A BROTHER SHARED WITH ME THAT HE WAS FINALLY FREE AFTER 20 YEARS OF BONDAGE TO LUST. HE SOUGHT COUNSELLING FOR HIS PROBLEM AFTER A DELIVERANCE SERVICE IN THE CHURCH. HE HAD TRIED SEVERAL TIMES ON HIS OWN, BUT HE NEVER GAINED LASTING VICTORY UNTIL HE REALISED THAT IT WAS A SPIRITUAL PROBLEM WHICH NEEDED A SPIRITUAL SOLUTION. SCRIPTURE INDICATES THAT SEXUAL SINS ARE IN A CLASS BY THEMSELVES BECAUSE THEY REQUIRE THE USE OF THE BODY.

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