

DEMONS, THE DEVIL, DELIVERANCE, AND THE CHILDREN OF GOD - Part Four

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DEALING WITH THE QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

Ephesians 6:10-20 - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. [14] Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. [16] In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; [17] and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, [18] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, [19] and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak."

Probably a quick review is in order. We started in part one of this study looking at the foundation of almost *all* warfare theology. It is rooted in a *trichotomist* view of the nature of human persons. That is, each person is made of up *three distinct parts* - *body, soul* and *spirit*.

Trichotomists believe the *spirit* is saved at conversion. It is instantly cleansed and set apart as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. The *soul*, another separate part of your being made up of your *mind*, your *will*, and your *emotions*, is *not* saved at conversion. In many cases - up to 85% of the time, according to *Neil Anderson* - born again Christians have either *demons* or *demonic strongholds* in their souls. These must be, depending on your theology, either *cast out* or *renounced and cast down*.

We took the whole of the first teaching in this series showing that the Scriptures simply won't allow this kind of trichotomist construction with any consistency. There simply are not *separate residences* for demons and the Holy Spirit in the human person. In fact, very significantly, Paul specifically calls the *actual physical body* of the Christian the *"temple of the Holy Spirit"* - **1 Corinthians 6:19** - "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own...."

Then we established the *impossibility* of the demonic indwelling or establishing strongholds inside the believer. The Bible goes to great lengths to describe the *new ownership* that is established over the Christian at conversion. There are some wonderful and powerful texts, and we studied many of them. Here are a few samples of the consistent New Testament teaching on this:

Colossians 1:12-13 - "....giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. [13] He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son....",

1 John 5:18 - "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him."

Then, in the second teaching, we noted a shift in the New Testament in the *description of the spiritual battle Christians wage in their own lives*. In the ministry of Jesus in the gospels, He ushers the breaking in of His kingdom among the lost and dying of this world. He confronts, speaks to, and casts out demons (plural). The disciples are commissioned (especially in Mark 16) to *continue* this supernatural ministry as they too, carry the gospel to the lost. They will encounter demons in unbelievers. But that need not be an obstacle to the advancement of the gospel. They can be cast out in Jesus' Name. We see this happening several times in the book of Acts.

But then, as you come to the epistles - the letters to Christians in the churches that were being established - you find no emphasis on *demons* (plural), but rather, the emphasis is on the battle with *Satan* (singular). There are many examples of this:

Ephesians 4:26-27 - "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, [27] and give no opportunity to the devil."

James 4:7 - "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

1 Peter 5:8-9 - "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. [9] Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."

I believe this emphasis on the *Devil* rather than the *demonic* is planned and intentional. I believe we are meant to perceive our spiritual enemy as an *external* enemy. The Devil is *not* omnipresent. He can't possibly get *inside* all of the believers who are having spiritual problems. The Apostles *know* this to be the case and deliberately set the spiritual battle of believers as a battle with a *singular external* enemy, rather than *numerous internal* enemies.

Then we looked at the *nature* of the spiritual battle we, as Christians, are engaged in. If Satan can't be everywhere at once, how is it that he can be so successful with so many Christians at the very same time?

In a nutshell, we spent a whole teaching devoted to the *Devil's* use of this *fallen world* (he's called the god of this world) to cater to and appeal to the *desires of the flesh*. These are the three components of all temptation and sin. The Devil is *behind* this battle. He has his temporary limited control over this pagan world. He certainly works *inside* many pagan people. There are principalities and powers over the affairs of this world. They work inside of pagan people in industry, entertainment, politics, education - you name it. The Devil sways the affairs of much in this world. And he uses this world to war against the saints. Sometimes this battle comes in the form of *persecution*. Sometimes it comes in the form of *seduction*. Sometimes it comes in the form of *deceitful philosophies of relativism* and *hedonism*.

The Devil uses this world to lead Christians to *yield to their own fallen desires of the flesh*. That's why the whole New Testament calls upon Christians to *crucify the flesh*. The whole New Testament calls upon Christians to *die daily to self*.

And the whole New Testament treats this battle with *self* as a *spiritual warfare with Satan*. That's because while the Christian's battle is *directly* with inward lusts and desires, it is, at the very same time, an *indirect battle* with the *world and the Devil*. And this is the *only* spiritual warfare the New Testament instructs Christians to involve themselves in.

All of this sums up where we've come to so far in this study.

1) **"BATTLING WITH 'FLESHLY LUSTS' DOESN'T SEEM AS MUCH LIKE SPIRITUAL WARFARE TO ME, PASTOR DON"**

I know this can be a problem for some people. They've been immersed in teachings regarding *"binding the Devil"*, and *"standing on the enemy's throat"* and a host of other expressions. Now, suddenly, Pastor Don is telling them to *"crucify the flesh"* and to *"love not the world."* What kind of warfare is that?

And, in my opinion, it's right at this point that many in the warfare movement need to *realign their thinking with the revelation of the New Testament*. I maintain that if we *realized* and *assessed*, and *committed ourselves* to the terms of spiritual warfare as accurately set forth in the New Testament, with the *same diligence and intensity* that is given to the *contemporary spiritual warfare movement* regarding demonic strongholds, *we would see the same measure of power and victory over debilitating, stubborn sins that people THINK they experience at group deliverance sessions.*

This is so important. We all need to realize that the battle with the *lusts of the flesh is the Scriptural warfare for your soul*. This is very clearly and specifically stated in the Scriptures. Let me give you a great verse of Scripture:

1 Peter 2:11 - "Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, *which wage war against your soul.*"

Verses 9-10 make clear that Peter is thinking of Christians here - "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. [10] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Again, there are no demons mentioned here. That's not the arena of the battle. But the battle is no less *real*, and no less *dramatic*, and no less *crucial*. The battle is still for the soul. You can win it or lose it. There's nothing more important or urgent than that.

But here's the problem. Christians no longer **think** of this battle with the urgency placed upon it in the Scriptures. This is what gives the spiritual warfare movement its momentum. People want something more striking, more intense, more vivid, and with quicker results than just some **daily** denial of self.

But there **is** nothing more dramatic, or intense, or more urgent than this very battle with fleshly lusts. You can lose your soul. Jesus said the very same thing:

Matthew 16:24-26 - "Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [25] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. [26] For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"

Notice, Jesus is talking to his followers about **discipleship**. He's talking about the very thing Peter was talking about. He's talking about how the Christian deals with the **lusts that war against the soul**. That's why the Christian must **"deny himself and take up his cross"** if he's going to follow Jesus. And Jesus says the **soul is at stake in this battle**. There is simply no way to get it back once this battle has been ignored and lost.

This is not because God isn't generous with grace and forgiveness. Rather, in the worst kind of spiritual defeat, the desires of the flesh, once catered to, will rarely even desire genuine repentance. That's what Jesus means when He argues it's very hard to get the soul back once you're prostituted your inward desires with compromise.

That's the battle for the Christian. That's what we're talking about when we talk about worldliness. That's what we're talking about when we talk about prayer and Bible study and steady, consistent church attendance. We're talking about winning the battle for your soul! This is not some legalistic knit-picking. Everything is at stake! You can't negotiate your soul back once you've lost this battle. This is the biggest issue in every Christian's life.

In fact, here's the irony of this present era in the Church and the interest in the spiritual warfare movement. Just when Christians are getting **more focused** in a battle with demons they **don't** have to even think about, they're getting **less focused** on the very battle they **must fight** to keep their souls. Jesus will keep all the demons out of my life. But Jesus won't crucify the flesh for me. I have to do that every day. Jesus said so.

2) **CHRISTIANS FIGHT THE BATTLE WITH THE DEVIL BY DRAWING CLOSE TO GOD**

Again, this truth is consistently taught throughout the New Testament:

James 4:7 - "**Submit yourselves therefore to God**. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Ephesians 6:13-17 - "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. [14] Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. [16] In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; [17] and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...."

These are both classic passages on the spiritual warfare of the Christian in this present world. And they both teach the very same thing. They give absolutely **no instruction** on confrontation with the demonic. They give **no instruction** on addressing and identifying and speaking to demons or Satan. In fact, as we've already seen, there is no such instruction anywhere in the New Testament.

So how do we fight the Devil? We do it **indirectly** rather than **directly**. Both these passages frame the battle with the Devil primarily in terms of **strengthening the relationship with God** rather than **confronting the Devil**.

In other words, we **resist the Devil** by **drawing near to God**. That's why all the pieces of armor Paul describes in Ephesians 6 are **parts of the believer's relationship with God through Christ**. That's why, right at the heart of this classic warfare passage, Paul writes to these Christians about the **truth of God's Word (14)**, and being **clothed with the righteousness of Jesus (14)**, and **being active in sharing the gospel with others (15)**, and **keeping your faith in the Lord strong and vibrant (16)**, and **having a sound understanding of the doctrine of salvation** with all its provisions and protection (17), and filling up your mind with the **Word of God (17)**, and **keeping diligent in prayer (18)**.

All of those things **keep you close to God**. You **resist the Devil** every time you pick up your Bible. You **resist the Devil** every time you pray and seek God's Face. You are actually resisting the devil with ongoing, consistent, ordinary church attendance. This is what the Devil hates most. He surely **doesn't** have any future against God Almighty. And he hates it when people use means of grace to draw near to God through Christ.

Here's what the devil knows. He's already a defeated enemy through the cross:

Colossians 2:13-15 - "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, [14] by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. [15] He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

You don't win the battle by fighting the Devil directly. You **resist** the Devil by **crucifying the lusts of the flesh**. And you **resist** the Devil by **drawing near to God**. That's the safest place for the Christian to live. The Devil simply can't mess you up there. Stand firm in the victory of the Cross.

3) **WHAT ABOUT CHRISTIANS WHO ARE SURE THEY'VE SEEN OTHER CHRISTIANS SET FREE FROM DEMONIC STRONGHOLDS?**

Sooner or later you have to face this question. I've talked to people who will say, "Pastor Don, it's all well and good for you to have your theology. But I know I've seen demons cast out of Christians. I've seen the violent reaction of demons leaving bound believers. And I've seen their lives transformed by that experience."

Let me say right off the bat that I'm not sure I can explain all of those things to everyone's satisfaction. I don't have all the answers I would like to have. But let me tell you **how I always start my search whenever I'm faced with situations hard to explain**: I always start with what I perceive to be the clearest teaching of the Scriptures. Then I move on to try to explain my own experience, or the experiences of others, **in the light** of those Scriptures.

Or, to state the opposite, I **never start with the experience and then shape the Scriptures in the light of the experience**. I start with the Scriptures first. I make my decision there. **Then, after that, I move on to testimonies, feelings, experiences, etc.**

So here's what I think might be **some** explanations for the testimonies and experiences of others:

a) **FIRST, if Christians sincerely seek God and turn from sin - even if they mistakenly attribute those sins to demonic forces - they will find help from the Lord.**

This only makes sense. There is usually great intensity at deliverance sessions. People are passionately seeking God's help. The sinner is sick to death of being bound in sin's sway. He or she is usually led by others to **deal deeply in confession and remorse**. Even though usually framed demonically, sins are specifically named and renounced. Then there is usually follow up and fellowship with concerned Christians.

Listen, why would we be surprised that, in that kind of environment, God would cleanse and minister to His children? Even if the theology is mixed up, the Lord wants to help anyone who sincerely wants to forsake sin.

And if, prior to that moment of spiritual breakthrough, great indoctrinating has been drilled into my mind that the problem was demonic, and that the renouncing of the demonic was the actual **cause** of the victory, there is no doubt that I will actually **attribute** my breakthrough as an actual victory over demons.

b) **SECOND, I agree that demons may be cast out of professing Christians.** I am not in charge of drawing the line between those who genuinely know Jesus Christ and those who merely **claim** to know Christ. But I **do** know that Jesus made it very clear that those two things are not the same:

Matthew 7:21-23 - "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22] On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' [23] And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from

me, you workers of lawlessness.”

- c) **THIRD, I personally believe the Scriptures teach that not everyone who genuinely begins the Christian life, stays with the Christian life.** While this is not the subject of this teaching today, we have looked in other teachings and seen that **apostasy from the faith is a genuine possibility in the Scriptures.**

So, just because at some point a person was genuinely saved, I wouldn't take that to mean there was no possibility of that person **ever** encountering demonic bondage. This is why we are all encouraged to **draw near to God** as we resist the Devil's appeals to the desires of the flesh.

Remember, God is the object of my attention. He has already won the battle with the Devil. The lusts of the flesh are the immediate enemy I must put to death daily. And, as I turn from the world and draw near to God, the victory I experience is actually a victory over the Devil. Let's fight the **real** battle. And let's fight it **God's way.**