

## **DEMONS, THE DEVIL, DELIVERANCE, AND THE CHILDREN OF GOD - Part Five**

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### **ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS PEOPLE ALWAYS ASK (continued)**

Tonight, as we finish up this series, I want to look at two very disturbing aspects of contemporary spiritual warfare teaching. These two points probably cause more confusion and questions to arise in Christians, and do more damage in the church, than any other aspects of warfare theology.

First, are there such things as **generational curses**? Can Christians be affected by them? Do such curses need to be broken before deliverance can come? We're going to look at that whole issue tonight.

Second, what about **demonic strongholds** being established in the lives of Christians much earlier in their lives? Does this happen? Does my previous experience of child abuse, or a father who loved pornography, or a mother who studied horoscopes, affect my ability to follow Jesus effectively today? How much of my distant past, even though totally unremembered or considered, do I have to rummage through to find deliverance from present sins?

These two issues are usually treated as related - like different sides of the same coin. And there are scores of Christian books devoted to this kind of teaching. Authors know what sells. Money is the name of the game. Not sound theology. Christians need to beware.

I took this off the internet just recently:

**"Ever wondered why everyone seems to get blessed but you? Ever wondered why you've been prayed for but never healed? Ever wondered why, just when you start getting ahead it seems to fall apart? Ever wondered why the sins your father or mother were in are the ones you fall into? (Yes, there's a Scriptural explanation for that - *not* generational curses.) Ever wondered why all the things your mom and dad said about you come true?"**

Then the answer is spelled out. **Generational curses** are the problem. The teaching of generational curses is common in the spiritual warfare movement. You'll find it in the writings of people like **Neil Anderson, Peter Wagner**, some **Cleansing Stream** notes, **Marilyn Hickey**, and others.

Since the term **"generational curse"** is never used in the Bible, the closest useful texts used to back up this teaching come from the book of Exodus:

**Exodus 20:4-6** - "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. [5] You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, [6] but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."

**Exodus 34:4-7** - "So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. [5] The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. [6] The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, [7] keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

Let's put together the teaching of the Scriptures on this important topic:

#### 1) **THE TEXTS FROM EXODUS DO NOT TEACH THE DOCTRINE OF A GENERATIONAL CURSE**

Both of these passages, and later references quoting these words in other places in the Old Testament, deal with the keeping of God's law. The people were to know that it mattered greatly whether or not they were earnest about obeying the Lord. But they were also careless and forgetful.

Like most of us today, they found it easy to keep God's law for short periods of time. They made resolutions and forgot them. They were careful and disciplined in fits and starts. So God has a word for them. To encourage their

holiness, He reminds them that their actions carry consequences far beyond the brief moment in which they are committed. Many of us are prepared to live with the personal consequences of the wrongs we do. We feel we are responsible enough to face the music for our own decision if we must.

But, then as now, most parents wanted their **children** to care more about the things of God than **they** did. This is human nature. We all want the very best for our kids. We want for them what we don't pursue that aggressively for ourselves.

So, as God gives the law to His people, He calls them to remember that if they grow careless and set up a pagan culture, it will have disastrous consequences **beyond their own time**. It will affect the actions of generations to come.

This is always the case. That's why these serious words are placed right where they are in the text. The command is about fleeing idolatry. People must be very careful about what they worship - what they put first in their lives. **Why?** Because future generations will probably grow up to worship those same things.

Then, as now, Moses doesn't want these parents spending their week-ends by the pool, then phoning the youth pastor when their kids aren't crazy about the things of God and going to church. So he warns if these children **learn** to worship the false gods of their fathers and grandfathers, they too will come under the wrath of God, just as their parents and grandparents did.

In other words, God isn't punishing the children **for** their parents sins. But their parents can **bring the judgement of God on future generations by setting them down the wrong path**. This is seen clearly in the text:

**Exodus 20:5 - "You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me...."**

Where did these children **learn** to hate God? Where did they **learn** not to take Him all that seriously? They learned it from their parents.

There's the problem. The children grow up to **hate** God. That word "**hate**" is a continuous participle in the Hebrew. It indicates **ongoing, continuous action**. That's the problem for future generations. They grow up, at their parents example, to worship other Gods. They **continue** in those same sins. And they will bear the punishment for that sin. This is not a curse passed on like some gene in the bloodline. In fact, the word **curse** is not even found in these verses.

Church, **flee superstition**. What these verses describe is the way people can **learn** sinful courses of action from previous generations and receive God's just punishment for those sins.

A blood transfusion from the worst sinner cannot make the Christian more wicked. Just as a blood transfusion from the greatest saint won't make the wicked person holy. This kind of nonsense is totally against the precious teaching of the Cross and the finished work of Jesus Christ.

## 2) **THE OLD TESTAMENT TEACHES MUCH TO REFUTE THE DOCTRINE OF GENERATIONAL CURSES**

**Ezekiel 18:1-3 - "The word of the LORD came to me: [2] "What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? [3] As I live, declares the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel."**

These are interesting words. The people were getting superstitious. This has always been a problem among God's people. They had actually developed a saying - a proverb - to **dodge personal responsibility** for their own sin. The fathers had the sour grapes. That's why the children's teeth were set on edge. It was like saying, the fathers eat the lemon, the children wince and pucker up their faces.

And God tells the people He doesn't want them talking like that, and He doesn't want them thinking like that. The whole chapter is a detailed explanation of personal responsibility before God. Then the Lord sums it all up in very clear words:

**Ezekiel 18:20 - "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the**

**father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.**

Listen carefully, you do not **own** the sins of your ancestors. There is no need to **disown** them. This goes back to the very same issue we've been studying this whole series. Sins like outbursts of anger, greed, hatred, etc. are **sins of the flesh**. They are not the work of ancestral spirits or demons or any such thing. You have your own nature corrupted by the Fall. And it needs constant nurture, denial, and re-training in righteousness. This is the essence of the ongoing spiritual battle we face:

**Galatians 5:16-21** - "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. [17] For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. [18] But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. [19] **Now the works of the flesh** are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Any Christian can **choose for himself** either to walk in the flesh and give into these impulses, or **walk in the power and life of the Holy Spirit** and deny them. We, and we alone, are responsible for that choice.

3) **CAN SINS FROM MY PAST ESTABLISH DEMONIC STRONGHOLDS IN MY PRESENT? IF THAT IS THE CASE, HOW CAN I BE SURE I AM REPENTING OF ALL MY SINS? WHAT ABOUT SINS I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER?**

This issue troubles many Christians. They've been taught that demons can invade their souls with strongholds through sins from the distant past. These could even be sins committed by their parents while the children were simply in the house. Infants can be invaded by demonic strongholds of sexual addiction by the addiction of fathers to pornography, etc.

Sometimes Christians are even **prophesied over** by someone else who will **reveal** to the suffering Christian the source of demonic strongholds that the troubled Christian can't even personally remember. This is a terrible abuse of a very precious gift to the church. Prophecy is never meant to be used in this way. Don't allow anyone else to ever direct your spiritual pursuits by their personal prophecy over you. Prophecy is to edify and encourage and build up. Don't let anyone else **shepherd your spiritual walk with their prophecy**.

All of this raises a very important issue in the understanding of repentance. How deep does the repentance need to go? Who's sins am I repenting of? And what if I miss confessing something I don't even remember?

This is how I approach the subject of confession and repentance and cleansing:

**1 John 1:9** - "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I take those words very literally. I take them to mean that if I confess the sins the Lord reveals in my heart (through conscience, the witness of the Holy Spirit and the clear teaching of the Scriptures - with the first two being examined and regulated by the third), then the Lord is very faithful to forgive those sins. That in itself is a very precious promise.

**But it is not all this verse promises!** There is something even more stunning and wonderful. If I will faithfully confess and forsake all the sins the Lord brings to my mind, not only will He forgive **those sins** (the ones I confess), but He will **cleanse my life of all unrighteousness**.

Please notice, contrary to some of the teachings of the spiritual warfare movement, true repentance brings both **forgiveness** and **cleansing**. In other words, repentance and renunciation aren't **two separate works**, and forgiveness and cleansing aren't **two separate results**. Cleansing comes from the finished work on the cross, not renouncing the demonic.

But notice even further that this verse describes the work of the Cross in very complete terms. There is **no part of my life** that it will miss. The whole being is cared for. All the seasons of my life are covered.

Church, don't let anyone *impute sins to your life you don't remember*. Like the Honda commercials - **"Never open your hood to strangers."** By all means, let Jesus, through His wonderful Word reveal anything He wants to your heart. Always confess instantly and forsake any sin He brings to the surface of your life. Stay in the Word. Stay in frequent, regular fellowship with **one** church body.

But don't worry about trolling through the fog of half forgotten memories. Don't let other people stir up your imagination. Don't let anyone else be Jesus for you. As we saw in the previous point, God doesn't hold you accountable for things your parents did. Your sins become yours when you embrace them with your own will. There are no other kinds of sin in the Scripture.

As far as I can tell, there is really only one curse mentioned in the Scriptures that I need to respond to. There is only one ancestor who has affected my present spiritual needs. In fact, this one ancestor has affected the whole human race. His name was Adam. But that curse has been properly and thoroughly dealt with by God Himself. He totally took care of the one curse I did have to worry about:

**Romans 5:12, 15-17 - "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned....[15] But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. [16] And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. [17] For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ."**

Keep it simple church. Stay away from superstition. Rely on the Word more than personal testimony and the experiences and statistics of others. He is able to keep you from falling.