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**GENERATION CURSES, STRONGHOLDS,  
BINDING AND LOOSING, DELIVERANCE MINISTRY**

***ENCOUNTERING "GENERATION CURSE"***

***by Dr. Opal Reddin***

An earnest young lady approached her pastor prior to the Sunday morning worship service: "Pastor, would you pray for me?" He said he would and asked if there was something of particular concern.

"Yes," she replied, "I need deliverance from an ancestral curse." "No," the pastor assured her, "you do **not** have an ancestral curse."

"But, pastor, you don't understand," she continued, "my dad had a violent temper, and now I am also bothered by a bad temper."

The godly pastor explained that although she was reacting as her father had, it was *learned behavior*, and that the teaching of "ancestral curse" is **not Scriptural**. He reminded her that "outbursts of wrath" are one of the works of the flesh and that the Holy Spirit gives her power to overcome it (Galatians 5:16,20). The young lady was relieved and happy as the Truth set her free.

**The Power of Parental Influence.**

When we ponder parental influence, we understand why some believe people can be victims of "ancestral curses." It is difficult to overestimate the **power** of parental example. The primal chance to shape the character of a new human being is an inestimable privilege and an awesome responsibility. Parents can make a home a place of happiness and peace or "a living hell."

God's Word gives both instructions and examples. In the Old Testament He commanded His people to teach His Word to their children diligently and daily (Deuteronomy 6:7-9). Paul wrote: "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

**Fathers** are given the main leadership and responsibility. God said of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Genesis 18:19). Conversely, we see David who was "a man after God's own heart" **but** too *busy* and too *indulgent* to discipline his sons (1 Kings 1:6). He lived to experience the bitter sorrow of a rebellious son's untimely death. Only a loving parent can fully empathize with David's lament: "O my son Absalom! My son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee. O Absalom my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33).

**Mothers** also wield tremendous influence. Paul congratulated Timothy for "the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice" (2 Timothy 1:5). By contrast, we see a young woman who could be considered under a "generation curse," *if such were possible*. Her dancing was so alluring that her step-father, Herod the tetrarch, promised her anything she desired. We read the tragic results:

*And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger . . . . And his head was brought in a charger and given to the damsel; and she brought it to her mother" (Matthew 14: 8,11).*

### **The Difference Between "Influence" and "Curse"**

Since the term, "generation curse" is not in the Bible, we must ascertain its meaning by literary usage. According to Webster, a "generation" is "a single step in the line of descent from an ancestor; the average span of time between the birth of parents and the birth of their children" (348). In the same source, we learn that a "curse" is "a prayer or invocation for harm or injury to come upon one; the evil that comes as if in response to imprecation or retribution; to call on divine or supernatural power to send injury upon someone" (204).

We readily see that a new factor has entered the equation when the term "curse" is understood. Either God or Satan has been invoked and is somehow involved in "harm or injury" upon the victim. Those under "generation curses" would be born already destined to commit certain sins, dominated by a force beyond human control. This is a different realm from mere parental influence, requiring some sort of intervention by a power greater than the force of the "curse." From this proposed scenario has come the teaching of "generation curses" and the "ministry" of "breaking curses."

### **The Popular Appeal of the "GC" Theory.**

There are many reasons for the popularity of the "generation curse" concept. An obvious one is the reluctance of most humans to take blame for their wrongdoing. Psychological theories have convinced many people they are not really *sinner*s, but rather *victims* of society in general and parents in particular.

Most of those who teach the "GC" concept also claim to be able to "break curses" for those who come forward in their meetings. In an age of instant "everything," the promise of quick moral transformation is appealing.

If the "GC" teaching is true, then every believer should be involved in getting curses broken. I intend to show it is **not** true and **why** it is not true. Every doctrine must stand the test of God's *plumbline*: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak **according to this Word**, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20, emphasis mine). The Word of God **is** Truth-inerrant, immutable, and absolute (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We will examine the "GC" theory by the Word.

## **IS THE "GC" THEORY SCRIPTURAL?**

Most "Generation Curse" teachers start their Scriptural basis with Exodus 20:5-6. In order to prove their point, they then make *iniquity* a specialized category of transgression. God said:

*You shall not bow down to them (images) nor serve them For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the **iniquity** of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing **mercy** to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments (emphasis mine.).*

### **Is "iniquity" a unique sin?**

"GC" advocates arbitrarily treat the term "iniquity" as a synonym for "generation curse," implying that *iniquity* is a unique sin. In *Break the Generation Curse, Part I*, Marilyn Hickey has written, "You can come under a curse for which you are not responsible but have inherited"(15). She bases much of her argument on the use of the term *iniquity*, making it a special kind of sin: "If a sin is repeatedly committed, it becomes an *iniquity* which can be passed down through the bloodline"; the "curse of *family iniquities* passes on through your *blood*" (*BGC, Part II*, 12,50, emphasis mine).

Is "iniquity" a special category of "sin"? Not at all. The Biblical languages have a number of terms to express wrongdoing, but all of them mean "sin." Parallelism and repetition are common features in the Scriptures: "I acknowledge my *sin* and my *iniquity* have I not hid" (Psalm 32:5, emphasis mine); "And their *sins* and *iniquities* will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17, emphasis mine). Luke 13:27 shows all sinners are "workers of iniquity." The plain fact is that **all iniquity is sin and all sin is iniquity.**

### **What God Actually Said in Exodus 20:5-6.**

No one would need be misled by "GC" teaching if careful attention is given to exactly **what God said**. (1) The term, "curse" is not there. God was warning of his **judgment** on the sin of idolatry which spawns many other sins. (2) God wanted His people to know an idolatrous culture would have disastrous impact on their progeny to the third and fourth generations. (3) The phrase, "third and fourth" is not to be taken as an exact stopping point for the results of sin, because each succeeding generation starts the cycle over again. And—take note—the **judgment** would fall *only* on **those who hate God**.

"GC" teachers rarely point out that in the same verse, God promises **mercy** to a *thousand generations* of **those who love God**. As Paul wrote, "Where sin abounded, grace abounded *much more*" (Romans 5:20b).

### **Is the "Family Bloodline" Cursed?**

In addition to trying to make "iniquity special kind of sin," "GC" teachers have attached "family" to it, resulting in one of their key phrases: "*family iniquity*." They then say iniquity is passed to persons through the family blood. Here are basic facts with scriptures for you to pursue further study:

1. The only family totally affected by sin (iniquity) is the **human family**. By **one man** sin entered the world (Romans 5:12). As a result of our first parents' sin, all humans have been born with a nature that is inclined to sin (Ephesians 2:3).
2. Every baby is conceived with this sinful nature inherent (Psalm 51:5), but children are not held accountable until they personally commit sin. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Romans 5:13). Paul describes coming to "the age of accountability" (Romans 7:9).
3. The **only bloodline** that is involved with the sinful nature is that from Adam (Romans 5: 17-19) and Eve (1Timothy 2:14). "God has made of **one blood** all nations" (Acts 17:26, emphasis mine). Human blood may transmit physical diseases, but it cannot carry spirits or iniquities. A blood transfusion from the vilest sinner could not defile one; likewise, blood from the most Christlike saint cannot make one holy.
4. There **is cleansing** in the blood of the *last Adam* (1 Corinthians 15:45)! By **His blood** the Church is purchased (Acts 20:28), justified (Romans 5:9), and purified (Hebrews 9:22).

### **Do "Familiar Spirits" Pass Curses?**

Many "GC" teachers say evil spirits can be passed from parents to children. Teresa Castleman gives the following shocking instructions for dealing with **Christians** who have habits from which they desire deliverance:

*In a deliverance session we handle this in the following manner: Call forth those curses that have been allowed through the generations by way of a Familiar Spirit—we break the hold and command in the Name of Jesus that it flee. We command that it go to dry places*

*and tell the curse it not be allowed [sic] to go into any future generations. Its power and hold is broken forever (25).*

Like the "bloodline" theory, this is unscriptural and dangerous teaching. Though the terms, "family" and "familiar" come from the same root and are related in meaning, the term, "*familiar spirit*" is not associated in Scripture with a human "family." The spirit is called "familiar" because a demonized person has been made "familiar" with evil spirits who give information that could not be known any other way. In the Old Testament, God commanded that anyone "who has a familiar spirit shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 20:27). In the New Testament believers are given power to cast familiar spirits out of *demonized sinners* who desire deliverance (Mark 16:17; Acts 16:18).

### **Should One "Disown" Ancestors' Sins?**

Neil Anderson advises *believers* to say:

*As a child of God, I here and now reject and disown all the sins of my ancestors . . . . I cancel all demonic working that has been passed on to me from my ancestors . . . . I now command every familiar spirit that is in or around me to go to the pit and to remain there until the Day of Judgment (158).*

There are three errors in this statement: (1) You do not *own* the sins of your ancestors, so you cannot *dis-own* them; you only *own your* sin (Jeremiah 31:30). (2) No demon is **in** a child of God (1 John 4:4). (3) God has not given us authority to send familiar spirits to the *pit*; Jesus Himself sent some into pigs, but not to "the pit" (Mark 5:13).

### **Is a "House" a "Generation"?**

In *Break the Generation Curse, Part I*, Marilyn Hickey says that since "house" (Gr. *oikos*) can in some instances be translated "household," the term in Matthew 12:43-45 means "generation." Then she goes on to say the "house all cleaned up by Jesus" can describe a person with a generational curse (27).

However, Greek lexicons allow for no such definition of *oikos* as used here. In context, "oikos" means the heart of a person, a dwelling place for either Jesus or Satan. "When an unclean spirit goes out of *a man*" (12:43) shows Jesus was speaking not of a household and not of a generation--but of an *individual*. The *only* house in danger was one that was *empty*. **The "house" that is occupied by Jesus is in no danger from demons!**

### **The "Sour Grapes and Teeth on Edge" Theory.**

Israelites had a well-developed "theology of generational curses": "the fathers have eaten **sour grapes** and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2; Jeremiah 31:29, emphasis mine). Hickey uses that saying as explanation for the curse on children (BGC, Part I, 124). God, however, told His prophets to tell Israel **not** to use it! "As I live, says the Lord God, **you shall no longer use this proverb**. Behold, all souls are Mine . . . the soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear

the guilt of the son" (Ezekiel 18:3-4,20, emphasis mine). Jeremiah wrote, "Every one shall die for his **own iniquity**; every man that eateth the sour grape, *his* teeth shall be set on edge" (31:30, emphasis mine).

We have discussed the **power** of parental influence; of greater magnitude is the **power of individual choice** God has given to every person. The first two children had the same heredity and heritage. One became the first murderer and the other the first martyr of faith (Genesis 4:8-16; Hebrews 11:4). We see this same principle in Israel's kings (2 Chronicles 28-35). Wicked Ahaz was the father of godly Hezekiah; his son and grandson, Manasseh and Amon were idolaters, but Josiah, son of Amon, led a great revival in Israel.

In a message entitled, "Generation Curse: Is it True?" Pastor Eddie Gwin showed the fallacious thinking behind the theory. His words of wisdom brought both heartsearching and comfort:

*Your entire lineage may be ungodly; why are you so different? Because you **chose to serve the Lord**. Some of you righteous parents have wayward kids. It is not your fault! They made **the choice*** (Sermon tape).

Human "free will" is a mystery, but yet a reality. We have to respect God's sovereign wisdom in bestowing this gift on every person. We must never stop praying for unsaved loved ones, and we must never excuse wrongdoing by calling it a generation curse.

## **WHO PLACES A "CURSE"?**

One question I have repeatedly asked those who believe in "GC" teaching is this: If there is a generation curse, **who placed the curse?** Most evade the question. Some say, "The parents did," but then they realize Scripture never says that. Furthermore, there is **no Scriptural basis** for saying Satan places a curse (despite all the harm he does do). Finally, the answer is: **God** places the curse. Then I ask, "Do you think **you** can break a curse **God** placed?" The usual reply is, "I had not thought of it that way before."

The solemnizing fact is that God has indeed cursed sin and sinners (Matthew 25:41). The original curse of Genesis 3 affects every human being and all of creation (Romans 8:19-23). Some examples of specific curses placed by God are: Cain (Genesis 4:11); all who would curse Abraham or his seed (Genesis 12:3); all Israelites who were guilty of sins enumerated in Deuteronomy 27-28; God-robbers (Malachi 3:9). There are others, but none is "generational." No one can break a curse placed by God—**except God Himself!** He delights in breaking curses as soon as people *turn* to Him in *repentance*. A prime example is Nineveh (Jonah 3:10).

One of the most beautiful examples of God's deliverance is that of Ruth the Moabitess. Because of the Moabites' unusual sin, God had excluded them from Tabernacle worship: "No Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation" (Deuteronomy 23:3). That would include Ruth as well as her great-grandson, David. When Ruth said, "thy people shall be my people and thy God my God," she was accepted as an Israelite (Ruth 1:16-17). She was signally **blessed** and placed in the lineage of Christ Jesus (Matthew 1:5)!

God's chosen people should have known better than to ever use a "generational curse" excuse for sins. How could they forget their history recorded in Numbers 22-24? When Balaam tried to curse God's people, he could not. He had to tell the frustrated and furious King Balak, "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? . . . God is not a man that He should lie . . . I have received a command to bless; He has blessed and I cannot reverse it" (23:8, 19,20). To be a believer, even a newborn one, is to be blessed, and all curse is revoked. **No one can bless whom God has cursed, and no one can curse whom God has blessed.**

## **MERCY TO A THOUSAND GENERATIONS**

Stanley Horton, highly respected scholar and theologian, was asked, "Does a Christian need to do something about breaking a generational curse?" He replied:

*The so-called generation curse refers to the Second Commandment . . . (Exodus 20:4-6). The word "hate" in the Hebrew is a participle indicating characteristic or continuous action. Thus, the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who keep on hating God reap a cumulative effect of God's judgment. On the other hand, those who turn from hatred of God and choose to love Him reap something far greater. They become part of a line that reaps **the benefits of God's love on a thousand generations** of godly people who preceded them. Thus, those loving God will not suffer any judgment or curse from what their parents or ancestors did (30, emphasis mine).*

The psalmist sang, "He remembers His covenant forever, the Word which He commanded for a *thousand* generations" (105:8, emphasis mine). Every person on earth can claim *this* glorious promise of blessing simply by turning from hating God to loving Him. The moment you turn to Him, you become heir to the benefits of all your godly ancestors. Even if you have to go all the way back to **Noah**, you do have at least *one* godly ancestor (Genesis 6:9), and he lived less than a thousand generations ago!

The Good News of the Gospel is: "**Christ** has redeemed us from the **curse** of the law, having become a **curse for us**; (for it is written, 'Cursed is every one who *hangs on a tree*') that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:13-14a, emphasis mine). We need not and cannot add to the **finished work of Calvary!** There is no curse on those who are in Christ. When you encounter people talking about "generation curses," tell them how to receive "generation blessings."

## **PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS**

Valentina was our well-informed tour guide in Moscow. It was shortly after Glasnost, and we were free to give Bibles on the street and preach in the churches. One day Valentina told us the following story:

*I was a devout Communist from childhood. I believed the Marxist system to be the best in the world. I believed most people in the West lived in poverty with great scarcity of food and other necessities. Then unexpectedly I was given the privilege of going to London. Arriving late at night, the first place I wanted to visit the next morning was a super*

*market. As I just entered the door and saw the vast array of all sorts of foods, I stood as if frozen by the shock. Suddenly I knew I had believed a LIE!*

As we look together at the only occurrence of the term "strongholds" in the New Testament we will see it is referring to LIES that, like Communism, were promulgated by ungodly people.

At the time Paul wrote his second letter to the church in Corinth, heretical teachers in the church were attacking Paul's integrity as an apostle and, in the process, undermining the Gospel. In 2 Corinthians 10-13, he defends his apostleship and calls his beloved converts back to the Truth. Probably the best known verse in this section and certainly the one that is a favorite of all who engage in spiritual warfare is this: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God for **pulling down strongholds**" (10:4).

### **What Is a "Stronghold"?**

As I prepared to write this chapter, I asked a number of mature Christians that question. It quickly became obvious that many have used the term without thinking about exactly what it means. "**Pulling down strongholds**" has a great sound of victory in spiritual warfare. However, as the term "stronghold" has been dangerously abused, I call to your attention the necessity of knowing the right meaning of the phrase. We cannot simply make it mean whatever we want it to mean. "The Word of God is living and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12a). He saw fit to give us **His Word** in words of language; the power in the Word is released as we use *words* that express what the *Word* says (1 Corinthians 2:13). In *Confronting the Powers*, Peter Wagner has written on this issue:

*One of the more curious aspects of my pilgrimage into the field of spiritual warfare during the past few years has been the discovery that those who had been talking about it and doing it long before I even thought much about it did not agree among themselves about **the nature of strongholds**. They agreed that strongholds provide the forces of darkness **a legal basis** for doing their evil deeds both in individual people on the ground level and in cities and nations on the strategic level . . . . **We have not been sure enough of what we are looking for exactly**" (237, emphasis mine).*

Wagner does not attempt to define exactly what "*a legal basis*" for forces of darkness might be. Legal by whose *laws*? *Basis* for what? Is it a legal *place* or a legal *idea*? We can be sure that when Paul wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians **he** knew *exactly* what he meant by "strongholds," and he expected his readers to know as well. If we are going to use the term, we too need to find out what the Holy Spirit meant us to understand.

### **A Demonic Fortress?**

The word "strongholds" (Gr. *ochuroma*) occurs only once in the New Testament. According to Arndt-Gingrich, it was used in New Testament times to denote "fortress" or "prison" (606). Having learned this, it is not surprising that some have concluded "strongholds" to mean "a gathering place" for demons. By studying the context we will see right away that this is *not* the sense in which Paul used it here. Unless we use the term as he did, we may believe and teach something the Word does not support.

I have before me an example of a well-intended but erroneous use of the term. Teresa Castleman, leader of a "deliverance ministry," has written the following: *"Are Christians demon possessed? Absolutely not. Can Satan have strongholds in our lives? Yes" (2). She then goes on to define "strongholds" at great length; according to her, they are "evil spirits" that need to be "expelled" from Christians (16). No doubt her purpose is to help believers; she promises the spirits will "exit" as victims cooperate with a "deliverance ministry team." On pages 24-43 of her manual, she lists 20 such "strongholds," including "familiar spirit" (24), "generational curses" (25), "seducing spirits" (41), "whoredoms" (42), and "sexual demons" (43).*

All these heinous things are indeed possible where evil spirits are given freedom to control **sinner**s, but none of the above is in any way indicated in 2 Corinthians 10. With due consideration to the **context** of verse 4, her use of the term "strongholds" becomes simply a cover for teaching that believers can be inhabited by evil spirits. Any time a demon inhabits a human, he will control and possess that person in the Scriptural sense of demonization, i.e., possession. This is an entirely different matter from what Paul is referring to as "strongholds."

### **What Paul intended**

Can we **know** what Paul meant by "strongholds"? Not only **can** we know, it is **imperative** that we know if we are going to use the term in our personal spiritual warfare and in our ministries. False **doctrine** is usually the result of flawed **hermeneutics**. Scripture is its own best interpreter. We are commanded to **study** to show ourselves "approved of God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). After ascertaining the plain meaning of any portion to the best of our ability, we then carefully and prayerfully **study** the context to gather further information, looking to the Holy Spirit for illumination.

The "strongholds" of 2 Corinthians 10:4 **cannot** refer to evil spirits, as study of the context will show clearly. In fact, the entire epistle does not have a single reference to evil spirits. It is basically a letter to bring the Church at Corinth back to their former allegiance to the ministry of the one who brought them the Gospel at first. Chapters 1-7 contain loving admonitions for the Church, along with the beginning of Paul's defense of his ministry which was being maligned. Chapters 8-9 encourage generous giving to spread the Gospel. Chapters 10-13 comprise Paul's forceful defense of his apostleship and ministry against the vituperative attacks of "false apostles" (11:13) who were spreading vicious **lies** about him (10:2,10; 11:6-7,15; 12:11-12). In their attempts to alienate the Corinthians from Paul, his enemies were accusing him: of having weak bodily presence (10:10), of poor speaking skill (11:6), of being inferior (11:16), of not really being an apostle (12:11-12), and of using fleshly methods for self aggrandizement (10:3). With all that in mind, we can understand Paul's appeal in chapter 10, including his usage of the term "strongholds."

*First*, he pleads with the Corinthians to retain their confidence in him (10:1-3). He makes a play on words, using *sarx* in two ways. He writes: "Though we walk in the flesh (*sarx*—we are still in a physical body), we do not **war** according to the flesh (*sarx*—in a carnal, worldly way). His enemies were accusing Paul of something he avoided assiduously.

*Second*, in verses 4-6, he tells the Corinthians how he will win in the "**war**" against **Truth**: (1) He will not use carnal (*sarkikos*) **weapons**, but he will use weapons that are "mighty through God for **pulling down strongholds**." (2) He *defines* the "strongholds"; they are "**arguments** (*logizmous*, imaginations)" against his ministry (5a), the "**high thing**" (*hypsoma*, the prideful arrogance of his enemies) that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (5b); and the **thoughts** (*noema*) that are not obedient to Christ (5c). *Hypsoma*, "high thing" *can* be used to refer to a spirit in Greek mythology, but in context here it refers to that which **exalts itself** above the Truth of the Gospel as preached by Paul. As Craig Keener has written:

*Greek sages sometimes described their battle against false ideas as a war, in terms similar to those Paul uses here. Like those sages, Paul claims to be doing battle with false ideas. "Arguments" (NIV, NRSV, TEV) or "speculations" (NASB) is a technical term for "rhetorical or philosophical" reasonings; the **prisoners of war** in this extended metaphor are **human thoughts**. Cf. Proverbs 21:22 (508).*

When people believe **lies**, they are allowing a prison of deceit to be established in their minds. Believing a lie is one of the most dangerous things a person can do. Our eternal destiny depends on our believing Truth. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word (Romans 10: 17); without Biblical faith we cannot be saved. In further emphasizing that the **mind is the battlefield** under attack, Paul expresses his deep concern:

*I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your **minds** may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2-3).*

H. D. Spence describes the strongholds as "the evil fortifications of the **mind**, corrupt thinking, prejudices, worldly maxims, evil thinkings. The work of the true soldier is to bring this frontal force into entire subjection to Christ" (242).

*Third*, Paul tells which **weapons** will be effective to pull the **strongholds** down: (1) The stronghold of **false arguments** and **diabolical arrogance** will be cast down by the **knowledge of God**, the **full Truth** (10:5a), exposing the God-given *validity of his apostleship* and the satanic nature of his enemies (11:13, 12:12). (2) The stronghold of **wrong thoughts** will be pulled down by bringing every thought into "captivity to the **obedience of Christ**" (10:5b). (3) Paul will personally **punish all disobedience** (including that of the false apostles) as soon as the Corinthians have fulfilled their **obedience** to his apostolic authority (10:6; 12:20-21; 13:2,10).

As we gain understanding of the crucial nature of the **war** against Paul's ministry and against the Church at Corinth, we appreciate the **power of Truth** to overcome **Lies**. In his comments on 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, Matthew Henry has recorded:

*What opposition is made against the Gospel, by the powers of sin and Satan in the hearts of men: ignorance, prejudices, beloved lusts, are Satan's strongholds in the souls of some; vain imaginations, carnal reasonings, and high thoughts, or proud conceits, in others. But then observe, the conquest which the word of God gains. These strongholds*

*are pulled down by the Gospel as the means, through the grace and power of God accompanying it as the principal efficient cause (1090).*

### **The Gospel on the Line.**

Infinitely more was at stake here than Paul's reputation or the Corinthians' allegiance to him. What was at stake was the **GOSPEL!** Just as Paul earlier pronounced the curse of God (*anathema*) on the Judaizers who were preaching "another gospel" (Galatians 1-2), so at this point he was determined not to allow "false apostles" to stop his ministry. Without any sinful pride, he *realized* that if his enemies were successful in undermining his ministry, they would establish a **stronghold** of deception that could destroy the very **Truth of the Gospel.**

Using judicious satire, Paul reminds his children in the faith of what they will be tolerating if they listen to his enemies. After summarizing the message of the ungodly interlopers, he gently scolds the Corinthians for even temporarily considering the possibility he might have failed them in the beginning: "If he who comes preaches *another Jesus* whom we have not preached, or if you receive a *different spirit* which you have not received, or a *different gospel* which you have not accepted, *you may well put up with it*" (2 Corinthians 11:4, emphasis mine). With a bit more poignant satire, he continues, "For I consider that I am not a bit behind the most eminent apostles"(11:5). With the **weapon of Truth**, Paul pulled down the **stronghold** of the **lie** of the ungodly teachers. Contemplating the power of the Gospel, Adam Clarke wrote a century ago:

*It is amazing how feeble a resistance heathenism made, by argument or reasoning, against the doctrine of the Gospel! It instantly shrunk [sic] from the divine light, and called on the secular power to contend for it! Popery sunk [sic] before Protestantism in the same way, and defended itself by the same means. The apostles destroyed heathenism wherever they came, as the Protestants confuted Popery wherever their voice was permitted to be heard (1832).*

The **strongholds** were (1) the **lies** of the "false apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:13) and (2) the **erroneous thought patterns** resulting from believing the lies. There are many false religions and cults built on **lies** that are believed by gullible people. For example, Mormons believe the **lie** told by Joseph Smith when he said he found metal plates containing inspired Scriptures in addition to, and superseding, the 66 books of the sacred canon. The Roman Catholic Catechism depends on the basic **lie** of papal infallibility. These are two of many instances of **strongholds** that can only be pulled down by the **Truth** of the Word of God. If the **strongholds** were pulled down, those religions systems would collapse.

We who hold to the **Truth** are immune to deception *only* as long as we stay open to the Word, giving constant attention to doctrine, expecting Biblical doctrines to be realized in our experience. We must worship God in spirit (experience) and in Truth (doctrine). Shortly prior to his death, Don Stamps wrote:

*In the churches today there are those whose teachings contradict God's Word and lead their followers to spiritual disaster. We must be on our guard against them. False teachers*

*may state that **Biblical revelation is true**, but at the same time allege that they possess extrabiblical revelations or knowledge **equal in authority to Scripture** and valid for the church as a whole. Such false teaching usually draws the Christian faith into a syncretism with other religions or philosophies (note on 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, FLSB).*

Paul realized that if his enemies were allowed to undermine his preaching, they would establish **strongholds** of **deception** that could destroy the very Truth of the Gospel. Let us proclaim to all that the "strongholds" of 1 Corinthians 10:4 are: **false doctrines; lies** that are wrapped in a thin layer of Truth, mental barricades against Truth, "high things" such as defiant intellectual walls, knowledge falsely so called (1 Timothy 6:20), profane and vain babblings (2 Timothy 2:16), specious reasoning of proud wicked self-styled "prophets" and "apostles."

Paul's words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, are pertinent today:

*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).*

We cannot overestimate the importance of the **battleground of the mind**. Any minister who tells you to forget your mind and just jump into "spiritual experience" is mistaken. When people ignore and resist Truth, *God* turns them over to a reprobate mind that believes **lies** (Romans 1:28). Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

*The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all **power, signs, and lying wonders**, and with all **deception** of unrighteousness in those who perish, because they did not receive **the love of the truth**, that they might be saved. And for this reason **God will send them strong delusion**, that they should believe the **lie**, that they all might be condemned who did not believe **the Truth** (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11, emphasis mine).*

The book you hold in your hand is a good example of *pulling down strongholds* with Truth. After the first edition was published in 1989, I received a letter from a young man who wrote:

*No words can express my joy in finding the book, *Power Encounter*. I had been told by some ministers older than I that I had an evil spirit. At the time I was walking close to the Lord, but I believed them. When I asked them to cast the demon out of me, they said they were unable to do so. I fasted until I almost died, I considered suicide. I felt I was losing my sanity, even though in my heart I knew I loved God. As I read this book, I was totally set free of my fear. I had not had a demon; I had only believed a lie.*

That young man is today a happy minister, serving the Lord with his wife and family. The stronghold of a **lie** was demolished by **Truth**. The **weapons of our warfare** are the means of replacing lies with Truth. **We** pull down strongholds as Paul did, by *faithfully, tirelessly, joyfully* preaching, teaching, writing, and practicing the Word of Truth.

## BINDING AND LOOSING

The phrases, "binding and loosing" and "binding the strong man" are often heard today, but seldom are they explained. Some questions that deserve answers are: Just what do people mean when they say they *bind*—or *loose*—Satan and/or demons? If they bind them, for how long are they bound? Who looses them again? Why didn't the Early Church bind all the demons in their day? Since the only one called "the strong man" in the Bible is Satan and since we hear of people all over the world "binding the strong man," are we to assume he has become omnipresent? Let us go to the only source of Truth regarding these matters, looking first at "binding and loosing" in general and then considering "the strong man."

After declaring He would build His Church on the rock (*petra*, a mammoth stone, "bedrock") of faith in Spirit-revealed truth concerning Himself, Jesus told Peter (*petros*, a small rock, a pebble): "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you *bind* on earth will be *bound* in heaven, and whatever you *loose* on earth will be *loosed* in heaven" (Matthew 16:19, emphasis mine). Later He said essentially the same words to the Twelve telling them how to deal with a brother who had sinned (Matthew 18:18).

These verses have posed problems in exegesis throughout church history. To fully express all they involve would require space far beyond the possibility of the present endeavor. However, I believe we can all agree on two obvious facts: (1) **Jesus** knew how to communicate, and His disciples were no dummies. When they heard these words, **they** understood what He meant. (2) Not a single time do we find the apostles quoting these promises of Jesus or referring to them in relation to spiritual warfare. But we do see them *doing* what Jesus was in these words *commissioning* them to do.

### A "Rubber Sword".

John Lindell brought a message to his church entitled "Dealing with the Devil." He opened the Scriptures to show the church there is **no Biblical precedent** for what he termed the "ill-conceived theology of binding and loosing." He stated:

*If the church is hanging on to techniques, principles, and so-called theologies that are not true, we are launching people out into a war against an adversary who is much more powerful than we are, and they are using **a rubber sword**" (Tape, 10/30/94).*

Pastor Lindell went on to emphasize that no one is really binding Satan and that we should be Biblically factual. Would we not agree that if Jesus had intended us to use these phrases in spiritual warfare, the **apostles** would have known about it and done so? Is it not obvious that if this had been considered a method of victory over the powers of darkness, it would have been recorded in the Acts and the Epistles?

**Paul** did not consider "binding and loosing" to be an effective **weapon**; he never mentions it in all his powerful ministry, and does not include it in Ephesians 6:10-18, the *most complete* listing of spiritual weapons. **Peter** never referred to it; he told us how to be victorious over the enemy: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil

walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. *Resist him, steadfast in the faith*" (1 Peter 5:8-9a, emphasis mine). **James** 4:7 adds for our assurance: "*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*" (emphasis mine). In his old age, after many victories over Satan, **John** wrote:

*He who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the wicked one, **but**—He Who is in you is **greater** than he who is in the world"* (1 John. 5:18,19; 4:4, emphasis mine).

We can be sure that Paul, Peter, James, and John knew the way to victory over all the powers of darkness, but they never refer to binding—or loosing—them.

### **The Disciples Knew What Jesus Meant.**

So what did Jesus mean by "bind" and "loose" in these Scriptures? It should be obvious He was establishing *principles* that would make His Church victorious at all times in all places. In Matthew 16 he was assuring Peter and the other disciples that in order to extend His Church to all the world, they would be led to act in line with what had already been decreed in heaven. The verbs "will be bound" and "will be loosed" (16:19) are in the future perfect tense, passive voice: "will have been bound" (Gr. *estai dedemenon*) and "will have been loosed" (Gr. *estai lelumenon*). Peter and the others may not have had perfect understanding at that time of all Jesus meant, but by the time they launched into their ministry they were secure in the understanding of what He had told them.

We do no violence to Jesus' words if we paraphrase: "Peter, as long as you continue to follow what is revealed to you by the Holy Spirit, as you just did in your statement regarding My Deity, as long as what you do on earth is synchronized with what has already been established in heaven, you will be effective and successful. As long as you are led by the Holy Spirit, all the power of heaven will validate what you do, and by this foreordained plan, I will build My Church."

The apostles followed this principle, and they were successful! No one says they were perfect in the sense of God's unique perfection, but the Church of the first century evangelized their world better than it has yet been done since. Harold Carpenter, renowned missiologist, assures us:

*Superlatives do not exist to adequately describe the triumphs of the first century of the Christian era . . . . From India on the East to Spain on the West, the first century Church left an imprint unequalled by any other century in church history* (60).

Never do we hear the Early Church "binding and loosing" demons, but they **bound** repentant souls to the Kingdom. They **loosed** the Word of God to the multitudes, and by it they set captives **free**. What had been ordained in heaven became actualized on earth. As Paul said, "I am in prison, but the Word of God is *not bound*" (2 Timothy 2:9, emphasis mine).

### **Binding and Loosing in Church Discipline.**

The context of Matthew 18:18 is church discipline; there is nothing in the entire chapter about demons. Jesus' teaching regarding a sinning brother is set between His parable of the lost sheep (18:10-14) and that of the unforgiving servant (18:21-35). Obviously Jesus was encouraging His disciples to seek the one who had gone astray and to forgive according as they had been forgiven. Regarding a recalcitrant brother who refused correction and restoration, He said:

*Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone . . . . If he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more . . . . And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen . . . . Whatever you bind on earth will be bound (estai dedemenon) in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed (estai lelumenon) in heaven (Matthew 18:15-18).*

Jesus was explaining that a believer can sin to the extent he should be expelled from the church because he refuses to repent. He wanted them to know that by the time they had given *repeated* and *rejected* opportunities for repentance, God would have already dealt with the rebellious one's standing in heaven. Because we have an Advocate with the Father (1 John 1:9-2:1), we are assured of gracious opportunity to confess and forsake sin, thus maintaining our salvation. However, Scripture is clear that it is possible to have one's name blotted from the Book of Life in heaven. When this occurs, the name should also be removed from the church roster on earth.

### **Binding and Loosing at Corinth.**

We see this clearly exemplified in Paul's disciplining of the incestuous man at Corinth (1 Corinthians 5). He told the Corinthians to expel the man, delivering him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (5:5); they were instructed not to "keep company" or "even to eat with such a person" (5:11). We hope the man repented; there is a good possibility he is the one to whom Paul refers in his next letter. Note the beauty of mercy and grace as he writes:

*If anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but to some extent—not to be too severe—all of you. This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man. So that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow . . . . For if indeed I have forgiven anything, whom I have forgiven I have forgiven it for your sakes **in the presence of Christ**, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:5-11, emphasis mine).*

The man described here had been separated from Christ by his continued heinous sin coupled with his rebellious attitude, but the discipline of the church awakened him to the seriousness of his condition. Through the obedience of the church and the man's repentance, he was eventually *loosed* from his immorality and *bound* anew to Christ and the church. Don Stamps says:

*Leaders within the church and pastors of local congregations do well to remember that they are charged to "keep watch over . . . all the flock" (Acts 20:28). The Lord will require*

*of them a personal accounting of "the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26) who are lost because leaders failed to restore, discipline, or expel according to God's will and purpose (FLSB note on Matthew 18:15-18).*

Who knows how many sinning church members will be in hell because the leaders failed to obey the words of Jesus? On the other hand, think of the joy in heaven when an erring one is disciplined and returned to the fold (Luke 15:7, 10)!

We see this same principle in Jesus' words in the Great Commission as recorded by John. On the evening of His resurrection, Jesus came into the room where the door were shut.

*Then Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As my Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; and if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:21-23).*

He was telling them that as they proclaimed the Gospel faithfully—**as He Himself had done**—those who accepted Him would be forgiven, and those who rejected Him would be condemned. Wherever Jesus' disciples are faithful to go in the power of the Holy Spirit, receptive people repent and are forgiven. Wherever they fail to go with the Gospel, their lack of faithful obedience results in multitudes dying in their sins. The Church has the awesome responsibility of going to every creature with the Good News. Then the responsibility of acceptance rests on the hearers. The proclamation of the Gospel *binds* and *looses* according to the response of those who hear.

## **BINDING THE STRONG MAN**

One of the most oft heard phrases among those who consider themselves on the cutting edge of evangelism is "binding the strong man." The phrase comes from Jesus' reply to the Pharisees when they accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. He said:

*If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself . . . . But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. Or else how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house (Matthew 12:26-29, emphasis mine).*

This incident is also recorded in Mark. 3:22-27 and Luke 11:15-23. Jesus used this analogy, actually a small parable, to force His enemies to admit that His power was superior to Satan's power. Nowhere did He tell His disciples to "bind the strong man," and we have no record of their attempting such. Jesus never bound Satan, but by casting out demons He demonstrated that he **can** do so and **will** do so in His own time.

If Jesus had intended the Scriptures cited above to be a pattern for our ministry, he would have made it clear. All the apostles would have known about it and practiced it. Paul, the greatest evangelist-missionary of all time, would certainly have been binding the strong man regularly.

At Calvary Jesus bruised Satan's head (Genesis 3:15), disarming him and all his forces, making a public spectacle of their ignominious defeat, triumphing over them (Colossians 2:15). For God's own sovereign purposes, He allows Satan and his demons to have limited freedom during the church age.

Regardless of total lack of any Scriptural precedents, many ministers today claim to bind Satan. There is a plethora of theories and practices thought to accomplish this feat. Peter Wagner is very impressed with a recent book by Carlos Annacondia, outlining how to have authority over the devil. Wagner says, "*Listen to Me, Satan* may well be regarded in the future as one of the most important, if not *the* most important, **revival books** of the decade" (Front cover *LTMS*). Annacondia writes:

*I don't advise anyone to confront the demons in a particular place before having addressed the area's **strong man** first . . . . Once we have bound and cast out the strong man of the area, along with the evil angels that follow him, the demons are left unprotected and vulnerable to our attack and to the attack of God's angels who are helping us fight* (139).

### **Is Satan Omnipresent?**

One of the potential errors of the "binding-the-strong-man" people is that they may not consider the implications of what they are saying. If the statement above is true, then Satan is in every area where we minister. And if so, he then is omnipresent. ONLY GOD is omnipresent. Joseph Fuiten points out another problem with the "binding" theory:

*If Satan is being "bound" as often as people are saying the words, their "binding" certainly does not last very long. If the "bind the devil" people are indeed "binding the devil," somebody needs to figure out how long their "binding" lasts. Then, they could line up people all over the world on a "24-hour Bind Chain" to keep "binding Satan" so he never gets loose again* (8).

If God had intended anyone to bind the strong man, Paul would have been the prime candidate. He opened up nations to the Gospel. He and his coworkers "turned the world upside down," but not by binding any strong man. Nevertheless, Peter Wagner wants us to believe that at Ephesus Paul bound Diana. He writes:

*The **strong man**, in this case the **strong woman**, had been bound, the spiritual blinders were removed from the multitudes, souls were saved, churches multiplied, and Ephesus became a long term center of gravity for the whole church movement* (217, emphasis mine).

All of this is true *except Paul did not bind the demon known as Diana*. What he did was make tents, teach, and preach the Gospel with power. God confirmed the Word with signs following, "all Asia heard the Word," and God was glorified.

### **Grandiose Claims.**

The Biblical plan is not quite "powerful" enough, not quite "exciting" enough for some. We could wish for the success of the following plan outlined by Win Worley:

*In the Name of Jesus Christ, I bind the rulers, strong men, doorkeepers, and all connected, related and resulting demons of witchcraft and the occult in and through the world, the USA, each state, county, city, township, suburb, street, neighborhood, block, home, and church (WRW Inet).*

What can he possibly *mean*? If what he says is true, none of us would have to worry about Satan coming near us again. His statement is so preposterous we would be inclined to totally ignore it, were it not for the fact that Worley is the seemingly successful pastor of an Evangelical church. Then too, most of us are aware that there are those in our own "circles," denominationally speaking, who would approve the above prayer. Teresa Castleman gives the following instruction as preparation for "deliverance": "Bind the spirits, especially *the strong man*" (20). In the prayer manual of one Pentecostal church we find the following daily prayer covering: "I bind you, Satan, and I call all of your weapons null and void . . . I bind all division . . . discord . . . hindering spirits, religious spirits, deceiving spirits, occult spirits, witchcraft spirits . . . and spirits of antichrist" (BAGPM, 13-14).

### **Jude's Warning .**

These imprecatory injunctions sound grand, but it is foolish to say things that simply are not true. God looks on the heart, and He protects us many times because He knows we are striving to be effective in spiritual warfare. It can be dangerous, however, to use words carelessly, particularly when dealing with the devil. Jude warns: "Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, **dared not** bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (v 9, emphasis mine). God has not given us a spirit of fear, but let us remember also He has given us "a sound mind." He expects us to **use** our sound minds.

Words have meaning. No matter how loudly or often some claim to bind him, the fact is that **no one** is *binding Satan*. There is a very good reason; he is "the god of this world" as long as God wants to **use him** (1 Corinthians 4:4). But God has him "on a leash," under His perfect control. And—the day is coming when he will be bound. John was privileged to get a preview:

*I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years . . . . And when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog . . . and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. **And the devil, who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever** (Revelation 20:1-10, emphasis mine).*

Until then, Christ Jesus **leads us in triumph** (2 Corinthians 2:14). We are seated **with Christ** in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). We **can** cast demons out of any sinner who wants deliverance (Mark 16:16-17). Greater is He Who is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4), and we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us (Romans 8:37).

## **DELIVERANCE MINISTRY**

Raven Nair told missionaries Billy and Jasmine Bray of his conversion. While studying for the Hindu priesthood, Raven was sincerely seeking Truth. One day while he was in his mid-twenties, *Jesus* revealed Himself to Raven. He was immediately **delivered** of many demons. That evening he saw the demons, ugly and threatening, in a circle in his home. Pointing at each in turn, he said, "I **belong to Jesus** now, and in the Name of Jesus I command you to leave." One by one they left. Raven was *delivered*, as are all who truly receive Jesus (John. 1:12). Today Raven pastors a church in the Durban area of South Africa (Jasmine Bray's account, July 1999).

Though most Christians were not demon possessed prior to salvation, all of us were in **bondage** to sin and the devil. We are no longer in bondage because "whom the Son sets free is **free** indeed" (John 8:36). Our deliverance may not be as spectacular as Raven's, but it is just as real and just as supernatural.

### **Do Christians Still Need to be Delivered?**

A strange phenomenon is occurring in many churches; they are establishing "Deliverance Ministry" *for believers!* It is "strange" because one cannot find it described in the Word of God; it is based mainly on "*personal experiences*," with sprinklings of bad exegesis of Scripture and "extrabiblical revelations."

The pastor of a strong church told me about a "Deliverance Manual" that had been circulating among some members. It was causing confusion as those endorsing it were having meetings kept secret from the pastor. When he read the manual himself, he understood why the meetings had been clandestine. It was teaching how to have a "deliverance ministry" for the purpose of *getting evil spirits out of Christians*. Being a conscientious shepherd, he immediately moved to protect his flock from the errors. His prayers, Scriptural teaching, and manifest love for all involved have saved that church from calamity. Not all churches are so blessed.

The manual mentioned above was written by a person who desires to help people live in victory. However, her writing is more likely to bring people to a new bondage (Galatians 4:9).

Instead of reminding believers of the deliverance already received (Colossians 1:13), she gives the following instructions to **Christians** who have been convinced they need "deliverance":

1. *Suspect your need of deliverance only after you have gone through the normal channels of **prayer, spiritual discipline, applying the Word, etc.** and still don't have*

victory. 2. Start renouncing the spirits, binding them yourself, before coming for deliverance. 3. Don't pray for yourself while the workers are praying for you. Words can hinder the **exit** of the evil spirit. 4. Most evil spirits will be **expelled** via your mouth. Don't be embarrassed if you feel like you must cough, burp, etc. (BAGDM, 16).

A lengthy list of evil spirits to be expelled includes: "familiar spirit, generational curses, anti-christ, death, divination, lying, seducing spirits, and sexual demons" (24-43). Search as you may, you will not find any Scriptural basis for these instructions. The "normal channels" listed above are exactly what God has prescribed for victorious Christian living. The Word, prayer, and spiritual discipline—these were **all** the apostles and Early Church had! Peter could write, "His divine power has given us **all things** that pertain to life and godliness, through the **knowledge of Him** Who has called us by **glory and virtue** (2 Peter 1:3-4, emphasis mine ).

### **Encountering Oppression.**

Even among those who are convinced no Christian can be inhabited by a demon, it is not unusual to hear: "I know Christians cannot be *possessed*, but they are often *oppressed*." It seems there is no consensus as to exactly what is meant by the term; it can describe a wide spectrum of conditions believed to be caused by Satan. We will be wise to ascertain how it is used in Scripture. (See Chapter 4 above, 78-80).

According to Arndt-Gingrich, to "oppress" (*katadunasteuo*) is to "control, dominate, exploit, exercise tyrannical rule" (411). Of the three times it occurs in the New Testament, only once is it referring to Satan's direct activity. In two other occurrences it refers to **physical** bondage: Egypt *oppressed* Israel until God delivered them (Acts 7:6); "the rich *oppress* the poor and *drag them into court*" (James 2:6). These are graphic descriptions of being under the control of enemies.

While preaching at Cornelius' house, Peter said, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, Who went about doing good and healing all who were *oppressed of the devil*" (Acts 10:38, emphasis mine). The NIV translates the phrase, "under the power of the devil." Note this verse was describing Jesus' ministry prior to Calvary, the Resurrection, and Pentecost. Also note Jesus *healed* all who were oppressed. Most likely this refers to those diseases that were caused by demons.

### **The Secret to Freedom.**

Should believers claim to be oppressed by Satan? Are they "controlled, dominated, exploited, under the tyrannical rule" of Satan? Can Satan "drag them around" as he pleases? Are they "under the power of the devil"? No, no, no. The history of the Israelites is the example for our Christian living (1 Corinthians 10:11). In Egypt they were *oppressed* (Acts 7:6), but God *delivered* them. Once they were across the Red Sea, they were **free!** Not perfect, with battles yet to fight, but **no longer oppressed.**

Habits of thinking are hard to break. Most Christians will use "oppressed" to describe a myriad of conditions, from mild discouragement to intense desperation. It is not my intent to add condemnation to depression. However, the more we meditate on the Scriptures

describing victories in the midst of fierce attacks from the enemy, the greater will be our own victory and peace. In 2 Corinthians 4:8-10, Paul described a time of struggle:

*We are hard-pressed on every side, **yet not crushed**; We are perplexed, **but not in despair**; persecuted, **but not forsaken**; struck down, **but not destroyed**—Always carrying about in the body the **dying** of the Lord Jesus, that the **Life of Jesus** also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always **delivered to death** for Jesus' sake, that the **Life of Jesus** may be manifested in our mortal flesh (emphasis mine).*

Paul was *pressed, hard-pressed*, maybe even **depressed**, but in the Scriptural sense he was not **oppressed**! The same man who wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4) also wrote:

*In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes save one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the **other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches**. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? (2 Corinthians 11:23-29).*

Paul had obviously learned **a secret** to overcoming the pressures. Could it be in those last two lines: his concern for others? Since Scripture mentions "oppressed of the devil" only *once*, we would be wise to use other terms to describe attacks of the enemy.

## THE WORD APPLIED

What does the Word teach regarding Christians and **deliverance**? In practically exhaustive research of the terms for "deliverance," I found not a single Scripture speaking of delivering **believers** from evil spirits. The fact is that if we are saved, we **have been delivered**! Here are some of the main Scriptures describing our condition: "He (the Father) *has delivered us* from the **power of darkness** and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in Whom we have **redemption through His blood**, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14)." Note the past tense of the verbs: the deliverance from evil power and the translating into the kingdom are a fact! "**Redemption**" is one of the synonyms of "deliverance." Jesus redeemed you by His blood, and Satan has no claim on you any more..

If you are a *Christian*, you are "**in Christ**." And "if anyone is *in Christ*, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Are we to rewrite this verse and say we are still in bondage to the old things? When you were born again, you were made part of the body of Christ. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . you are the body of Christ and members individually" (1 Corinthians 12:13a,27).

## Can a Demon Inhabit Christ?

Does the body of Christ have demons in it? Do you not know that is unthinkable? Be assured, when a demon can invade Christ, then and only then can a demon come into one who is in Christ. *It will never be!*

## What About: Spirit/Soul/Body?

Some say, "I agree with you that my **spirit** cannot be inhabited by a demon, but my **body**, or my **soul** (my mind, my emotions, my will) could have a demon somewhere inside." Let us examine this. First, "he who is joined to the Lord is one *spirit* with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17). Second, the believer's *soul* is in Christ; you have received "the end of your faith—the salvation of your *souls*" (1 Peter 1:9); believers are "of one *heart* and one *soul*" (Acts 4:32); also, we have the *mind of Christ* (1 Corinthians 2:16). Third, the believer's *body* is in Christ. "Do you not know that your *bodies* are members of Christ?" and "your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:15,19). God will destroy anyone who defiles the temple. Do you think he will allow a demon to enter His temple? The prayer of Paul is that our "whole *spirit and soul and body* be preserved ["kept" in NIV] blameless" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The *whole person* is either "in Christ" or "outside Christ." Christ is not divided!

It is true that man is a tri-unity. Indeed we need to understand the distinctiveness of the human spirit, the human soul, and the human body. However, it is not possible to say that one is in Christ and the other two are not, or that two are in Christ and one is not. We can study the interrelationships of the three aspects of our being, but we cannot make rigid divisions. In order to have one's *spirit* indwelt by the *Holy Spirit* while one's *soul* is indwelt by a demon, we would have to divide Christ. We would have a person partly in the kingdom of "the Son" and partly in the kingdom of "darkness" (Colossians 1:13). **It is not possible!** If you leave Christ, you are vulnerable to demons. But as long as you are in Christ, you are secure. When a demon can find his way into the **kingdom of Christ**, *then—and only then—you need fear. It will not happen!*

## Encountering Persistent Error.

Regardless of the clear teaching of the Word regarding the accomplished deliverance of all who are in Christ, some popular teachers continue to teach that saints can have demons in them. Neil Anderson has written, "The prevailing belief among Evangelicals is that Christians can't be **demon possessed**. Nothing has done more damage in arriving at a diagnosis" (130). He admits the Epistles have no instruction for the ministry of deliverance, but implies **he** has the instructions the Epistles should have had.

## The Error of Co-Habitation:

Carlos Annacondia also believes demons can inhabit some believers: "If a person has problems it is because he or she has opened the door to the devil. We need to know what the problem is so we can promptly take action, break the bond, tell the *spirit* to **come out**, and close the door so the devil can never return" (74). Man's word cannot take precedence over the Word of God. If a Christian "opens the door to the devil and he

comes in," Jesus will not stay! He has told **us** not to be yoked with an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). Do you think **He** will **co-habit with the devil**?! Never! When the devil can get under the blood of Jesus, then you will have cause to worry.

### **The Error Regarding Location:**

Tim Warner also believes the Holy Spirit will cohabit with an evil spirit. He writes:

*We are talking about the relationship between my spirit, the Holy Spirit, and an evil spirit. That is not a spatial matter. It is a spiritual one, and the **location of the demon**—inside or outside—is not the real issue. The issue is, to whom do I yield control? (85, emphasis mine).*

The **location matters to God!** He said, "Greater is He Who is **in you** than he who is **in the world**" (1 John 4:4). Those who teach cohabitation would re-write the verse to say, "Greater is He Who is in you than the demon who is in you." Who could fail to see that this is absurd?

Ed Murphy states his opinion that "demons can enter the body of some sinning Christians. The Holy Spirit will enter the body even if there are demons dwelling there. The Holy Spirit is not afraid of demons. Nor do they contaminate Him by their sinfulness any more than he is contaminated by the sinfulness of the believer's flesh" (63-64).

There are several erroneous theories here, the main one being that Murphy has presumed to speak for the Holy Spirit opposite to what the Holy Spirit has said about Himself: "*Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 6:19), and "*if anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him.*" (1 Corinthians 3:17). Could there be any worse defilement than a resident demon?

Another problem with Murphy's reasoning is a wrong definition of "flesh." We rightly speak of "sinful flesh" and "sinful nature" because we know that human nature is inclined to be self-seeking, and this, if not overcome, leads to sinful acts. However, Scripture is clear that our "flesh" *in itself* is not sinful. Jesus never cast the "flesh" out of anyone, but He casts devils out of all who need such and are willing to receive Him (John 1:12). To compare the "flesh" to a resident demon shows dangerous lack of Scriptural understanding of Sanctification.

Those who insist that Christians can have demons in them should take note of the extremes to which such belief can lead. Frank and Ida Hammond published a book which has sold over a million copies. The title *Pigs in the Parlor* is quite descriptive of contents. They liken the parlor to the cleansed heart of a believer and the pigs to the demons who come in. They list dozens of demons that may intrude. Frank describes an encounter with some of them, as he and Ida were growing in their understanding:

*We realized that demons were responsible for certain tensions between ourselves. One day when we were at home by ourselves we decided to minister to one another in these areas. As I called for the demons to release her, she was thrown to the floor and evil spirits began to speak through her. One demon made a direct accusation against me. I*

*knew that I was guilty of what the demon accused me. I could not proceed with her deliverance. It was necessary for me to confess my sin, ask her forgiveness and have her cast the demon out of me before I was able to continue with her ministry (99).*

While this seems ridiculous to most of us, it seems logical to those who believe demons can inhabit Christians. I fear it is an example of the "blind leading the blind" (Luke 6:39).

### **A Voice of Truth:**

We can be deeply appreciative of leaders who are worthy of the title. Gene Jackson writes in the Tennessee District Bulletin for ministers, warning them of unscriptural teachings that may come their way:

*The old craze of casting demons out of believers is probably the most dangerous and damnable of all these doctrinal aberrations. . . . "Casting demons out of believers" does damage that lasts a lifetime. I have absolutely no patience with those who despise the blood of Calvary's Lamb and attempt to cast a demon out from under that precious sacrifice.*

*You can cast all the demons out of sinners that you can find. (And if you'll move out of your regular zone of fellowshiping with believers, you can certainly find a demon-possessed segment of society.) But you are not going to find a demon in a believing child of God, who is under the blood of the Cross of Calvary. Not in a million years. Don't allow such nonsense in your church (June 99).*

### **CONCLUSION**

If you are not **sure** of your salvation, do not depend on the word of any minister or any formula such as "repeating a prayer." Go to God; ask Him to let the Holy Spirit so convict you that you will be able to **repent**, confessing your sin and your inability to save yourself. He **will deliver you from the power of darkness and place you in the Kingdom of His dear Son** (Colossians 1:13).

If after salvation, you feel the **need for deliverance**, go back to God with your Bible in hand. Read *Galatians* until the message is clear. **God** says you are free: (1) your ego is "crucified with Christ" (2:20); your flesh "has been crucified" (5:24); you are "crucified to the world" (6:14). These crucifixions have one goal: **freedom via resurrection** with Christ **here and now**.

The story is told of a captive eagle tethered to a stake by a chain ten feet long. Marching in a circle for years, he wore a track in the ground. Finally the owner removed the chain, but the eagle persisted in walking in the same circle. One day someone pushed him off his beaten track; in astonishment he looked around, flapped his wings, and soared to his natural habitat.

God wants you, like the eagle, to soar into heavenly places in Christ Jesus, because He has placed you there (Ephesians 2:6). There is no need for you to wearily plod on your old

beaten track. When Satan tempts you, tell him what God says about you. When he reminds you of **your past**, remind him of **his future!**

When your "feelings" say you need deliverance, believe God, not your feelings. If misguided persons say you need "deliverance ministry," remind them of what God says, **"Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ *has made us free*, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage"** (Galatians 5:1). "Whom the **Son** sets free, is **free indeed**" (John 8:36). Who knows? You may write a much-needed book on "Generation Blessings."

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Dr. Reddin is a retired Professor from Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri (Assemblies of God). This article is taken from the book, "**Power Encounter**" which has been recently revised. This book can be obtained through Discernment Ministries for \$15.00 plus shipping & handling charges. (See order form).

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