

## Lesson #9

### Doors to Demonization and Oppression

One of the most difficult lessons for a Christian to learn is that protection against demonic attack is *not automatic*. Simply being a child of God does not guarantee that we can waltz through life insulated from demonic influence and invulnerable to the schemes and strategies of the enemy. The implements and weaponry of a soldier are not for decoration. They are to be utilized in fighting a war.

Having examined the nature of demonization, we must now take note of why or how this phenomenon occurs. Under what circumstances or for what cause might a person experience demonic oppression, even to the point of demonization?

We will distinguish between *voluntary* and *involuntary* demonization.

#### A. Voluntary

##### 1. *What we neglect to do*

The word "neglect" is possibly a poor choice of terms. It isn't that one little, inadvertent, slip-up will lead to demonization, but rather that *persistent and unrepentant* refusal to do what the Bible says to do may open the door.

- a. Failure or refusal to *resist* the devil (Js. 4; 1 Pt. 5). Is Satan required to flee from us if we don't resist him? No.
- b. Failure or refusal to wear the *armor* of God (Eph. 6). What happens if we engage the enemy unadorned?
- c. Failure or refusal to *put on* Jesus (Rom. 13:14).
- d. Failure or refusal to *pray* for protection from the power of temptation (Mt. 6:13).

##### 2. *What we deliberately do*

- a. Occultic activity (Deut. 18:9-14)

For example: astrology, palm reading, any form of fortune telling such as reading tea leaves, using a crystal ball, etc.; ouija board, tarot cards, witchcraft, sorcery, magic (not sleight of hand or illusion but appeal to supernatural power to effect miraculous events), table lifting, Dungeons & Dragons, automatic writing, hypnosis (?), seances, incantations, good-luck charms, amulets, water-witching or dowsing, pendulum, etc.

- b. Idolatry (Deut. 7:25; Acts 19:18-19; Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:34-39; 1 Cor. 10:19-21).

"When objects are made for occult purposes, or when people look to an object with the anticipation that it has power, demons will meet their expectation quite apart from any qualities inherent in the object itself. Or, in other cases, a person engaging in occult practices may invite demons to empower an object, and in this way the demons may become associated with that object" (Warner, 94).

- c. Willful, unrepentant, unresolved sin (1 Tim. 3:7; 1 Pt. 5:8; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 4:26-27).

"Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our Enemy's will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, *and still obeys*" (Screwtape, writing to the demon Wormwood, 39).

- d. Embracing demonic lies or heresy (1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 2:24).
- e. Inner vows or oaths.

## B. Involuntary

Some insist that there is no such thing as involuntary demonization. They insist that no demon can gain access or a foothold apart from the willful, voluntary complicity of the individual. But the case described in Mark 9:14-29 proves otherwise. Here we see that a child is demonized. What willful sin could he have committed to warrant this condition?

### 1. Ancestral sin

Most proponents of deliverance ministry speak of ancestral sin and the intergenerational or *familial* spirits that come with it. Appeal is made to Exodus 20:5-6 -

***"You shall not worship them [i.e., false gods or idols] or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."***

Several things should be noted about this text.

- Nothing is explicitly said here about the passing down or generational transference of demonic spirits. The threat articulated here is the judgment of God, not the perpetuation of a demonic presence in a family line.
- It is crucial to observe what the text says about those on whom this judgment comes. It is ***"those who hate Me"*** who are subject to this punishment. Nothing is said about innocent victims of ancestral rebellion. Along these lines, we must take into consideration Deut. 24:16 - *"Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin"* (cf. Ezek. 18:2-4,20). The point is this: if you do not "hate" God, this threat is not applicable to you. We should also note that divine "blessing" or the experience of "lovingkindness" does not extend automatically to the children of godly people but only to ***"those who love Me and keep My commandments."***
- Finally, the emphasis in the passage is on God's mercy, not his wrath. The point is that whereas the effects of disobedience last for some time, the effects of loving God are far more extensive ("to a thousand generations").

My conclusion is that this passage in Exodus cannot be used *directly* to prove the reality of intergenerational spirits. What it does imply, however, is that the sinful behavior of one generation can have lingering and disastrous consequences on subsequent members of that family line. You cannot be held morally accountable (before God) for the sins of your father or mother, but you can be made (involuntarily) to suffer from the social, economic, and spiritual consequences of their sin.

Is there other evidence for the concept of generational spirits? Yes.

- Consider first of all the case of the demonized young boy in Mark 9. As Arnold explains, "the demonization was . . . not the result of the boy's own sin or his choice to give his allegiance to false gods. The spirits were passed on to him from some other source, the most likely of which would be his family" (119). Suppose, for example, that this boy's grandfather was demonized as the result of his involvement in idolatry or sexual perversion. When this man dies, what happens to his demon? Where does it go? Is it possible that the demon might assert a legal claim or "moral rights", so to speak, to this man's posterity?
- We should also consider the fact "that children tend to act out many of the same sinful patterns of behavior that their parents engaged in. Thus, when we read Old Testament historical books such as 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, we find the kings of Israel typically following in the evil steps of their ancestors. The biblical writer often asserts in the narrative a line such as 'he committed all the sins his father had done before him' (1 Kings 15:3). These tendencies may not only be genetic and environmental, but may also have a spiritual root. This is particularly apparent when we investigate the allegiances to other gods that the kings of Israel repeatedly gave themselves to" (Arnold, 119). Arnold goes on to recommend that "the solution is to recognize the sinful tendencies and the past ungodly commitments, ties, and allegiances of one's family and to disavow them. It is especially important to note that this is not a repudiation of one's family, only a renunciation of the sinful patterns and connections" (124).

## 2. *Curses*

One of the problems in discussing *curses* is the failure of most people to define precisely what is meant by the term. Although curses were most often verbalized, biblical curses have little if anything to do with modern profanity. *To curse is to call down or a send forth, from a supernatural source, calamity, trouble, chronic harm, or some other form of adversity upon another person or object. It is to speak evil of another person (hence, malediction or imprecation) with a view to inflicting injury (both physical and spiritual).*

The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* says, "to curse is to predict, wish, pray for, or cause trouble or disaster on a person or thing" (I:1218).

Another problem in discussing *curses* is the misapplication of certain biblical texts. For example, appeal is often made to Gal. 3:13 ("Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree'"). The problem is that this text and the OT passages on which it is based all refer to **divine judgment**, not demonic attack. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28 are devoted to articulating the grounds on which God will "curse" a person as well as "bless" him/her. Clearly, to be the recipient of a "curse" in this context means you come under divine judgment. God sends calamity or disaster or punishment in one form or another because of disobedience. Likewise, to be the recipient of a "blessing" is to experience his favor, his bounty, prosperity and the like. When Jesus is said to have redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse for us, the meaning is that he has suffered, in our place, the righteous wrath of God which we justly deserved. Therefore, Christians are no longer subject or vulnerable to a "curse" in that sense of the term.

In Joshua 6:26 and 9:23 a curse is pronounced by Joshua on both Jericho and Gibeon. But again, in both cases this appears to be a calling down of *divine* judgment, not demonic harm. In 1 Sam. 17:43 we see that pagan people in ancient times (in this case, Goliath) believed that curses (calamity) were the work of their gods. Spoken curses were thought to possess a power that derived from whatever deity they served. A curse was thought to trigger the release of malevolent spiritual energy toward the person or the object being cursed. See also 2 Samuel 16:5-12.

The question remains: Does the Bible speak about demonic curses? Do we read in Scripture of anyone invoking or calling down or sending forth a demonic being to bring pain and problems, harrassment and harm, to another person? This would appear to be what the Moabite king Balak asked Balaam to do regarding Israel. God himself forbids Balaam from cursing Israel: "you shall not curse the people; for they are blessed" (Num. 22:12). Although no mention is made of demonic spirits being involved, it is reasonable to think that they would have been the instrument of bringing calamity on Israel had Balaam carried through with this task. As far as I can tell, there is no NT example of a demonic curse, although there are numerous NT instances of a curse as an expression of divine judgment for sin.

Proverbs 26:2 is especially instructive, if we could only figure out what it means! It reads: "Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, so a curse without cause does not alight" (NASB). Or again, "Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest" (NIV). This seems to suggest that a curse is not effectual in itself. If it is undeserved, its impact is undermined. What would be the implications of this? At minimum, it would seem that a curse is, in itself, incapable of leading to demonization apart from the moral complicity of the person involved.