

Deliverance from 'Self'

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During our twenty-five years of intense involvement in deliverance ministry we have seen people set free from every sort of bondage: addictions, lust, perversions, unforgiveness, rebellion, hurts, withdrawal, double-mindedness, mental illness, fears, rejection, passivity, doubt, spiritual hindrances, curses and on-and-on. However, we are persuaded that the foremost need for deliverance is deliverance from 'self'. In fact, all bondage is in one way or another an expression of self-bondage.

A person wrapped up in himself is absorbed in his own problems, circumstances, ambitions and feelings. His whole being is concerned with 'self'. Thereby, he disregards the first and greatest commandment:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment' Matt. 22:37.

The devil has a master plan to capture mankind. His plan is the same for every person - imprisonment in self. Self is the devil's chief ally and man's number one enemy. Self thwarts the believer from being a true disciple of Christ. Jesus declared:

'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple' Luke 14:33.

Self hinders our living up to our spiritual potential. By being all that we can be in Christ, we become a powerful influence for the Kingdom of God. The devil fears this, so he does all that he can to prevent us from reaching maturity and fulfilling our calling in Christ. The devil's objective is to get the believer so occupied with self that he loses his spiritual saltiness: his ability to influence whatever he contacts.

'Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out' Luke 14:34,35.

Selfishness takes the saltiness out of Christians.

Consider the believer's great potential. The new birth has equipped him with powers of spiritual discernment. He can see the things of the spiritual realm. He can 'see the kingdom of God' John 3:3. In contrast,

'The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned' I Cor. 2:14.

'The god of this age [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God' II Cor. 4:4.

The twelve disciples were slow to see their potential in Christ. When Jesus spoke spiritual truth they turned their eyes upon themselves; therefore, He said,

'Do you still not see or understand?...Do you have eyes but fail to see?' Mk.8:17, 18.

In addition to our power to see into the spiritual realm, Jesus further promised us,

'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses' Acts 1:8.

Thus, Spirit-baptized believers have the potential to function in supernatural power. We are given power to heal sickness, cast out demons, speak in new tongues, interpret tongues, prophesy and perform miracles.

After Pentecost, the disciples ministered in the Holy Spirit's power:

'And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people'
Acts 5:12.

However, some were defeated by selfishness. Ananias and Sapphira coveted and lied, and their lives and ministry ended. Simon, a converted sorcerer, coveted the Holy Spirit's power for personal gain and Peter rebuked him saying,

'You have no part or share in this ministry' Acts 8:21.

Each believer as a member of Christ's spiritual Body, the Church, is required to die to self in order to fulfill the purpose of the Head and function with other parts of the Body. The ministry of the Body is frustrated when members fall into Satan's 'self' trap: either thinking themselves inadequate or superior in comparison with others. (See: I Cor. 12:14-27).

Yes, every demonic problem entails a problem with self. For example: The person wounded by rejection becomes conscious of 'self' because self hurts. Until one becomes secure in God's love, and loves all others, even his enemies, he will remain in bondage to self. Lust is self-gratification and self-indulgence; rebellion is self-rule; guilt is self-accusation; fear is self-concern; resentment is self-vindication; witchcraft is self-advantage; pride is self-exaltation. Every demon that can be named has a synonym name with a 'self' prefix. Therefore, deliverance does not come solely from casting out demons: the self thing that gives place to demons must also be removed.

Many Bible heroes initially had self problems, and only after their self problems were remedied were these men useful to God. Moses was bound by inferiority. He felt unqualified for the ministry to which the Lord called him. Gideon also felt inadequate. He considered himself the least person in all of Israel. David yielded to self-indulgence and committed adultery, but afterward became 'a man after God's own heart'. Isaiah exclaimed,

'Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips'. Is. 6:5

He felt unworthy to be God's spokesman. Jonah was self-willed. He didn't want to do things God's way. Saul of Tarsus was a self-righteous Pharisee and a persecutor of Christians. But each of these men were delivered from self and greatly used of the Lord. This means that there is hope for each of us!

'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.' Rev. 12:11

In Revelation 12:11, three spiritual weapons are named by which the Saints are to defeat the devil. First, believers in Jesus Christ can utilize the power inherent in His incorruptible blood. The blood becomes a weapon when we testify what the blood of Jesus has done for us through its justifying, sanctifying, redeeming and atoning power. The devil is put to flight when we remind him that we have taken refuge in the shed blood of Jesus.

The second weapon named is 'the word of their testimony'; namely, 'the testimony of Jesus Christ' Rev. 12:17. We wield the weapon of testimony when we declare who Jesus is: the sinless son of God Who left His throne in glory, became incarnate, was tempted in all ways and yet without sin, Who went to the cross and laid down His life for us sinners, rose from the dead, ascended to His throne at the right hand of the Father and is coming again in power and glory.

The believer's third weapon, death to self, seems a strange weapon indeed.

'And they loved not their own lives even unto death' Rev. 12:11.

When understood, this is an especially powerful weapon yet sadly neglected. Jesus overcame the devil. The victory of the cross was assured in Gethsemane when He prayed,

'Father...not as I will, but as you will' Matt. 26:39.

Jesus loved not his own life even unto death. He is our example. He showed us that we can defeat the devil with the same weapon. The devil has no advantage over a person who has died to self.

For understanding's sake, suppose that a person is delivered from all oppressing demons. What is left? Only his real self is left. What then must be done with the real self? It must be crucified: taken to the cross and put to death! Only as self dies can Christ come forth in us. Only through death to self can one experience full deliverance.

Satan knows that he is thwarted when a person dies to self in order to live for Christ. Therefore, the devil's strategy is to entice us to set our own agenda and follow selfish pursuits instead of a commitment to God's purposes. We see the devil's strategy very clearly at work in Scripture's two classic examples of temptation: the temptations of Eve and of Jesus. How did the Serpent tempt Eve? He tempted her to set aside God's command and gratify self. What three avenues of temptation did he employ? The same avenues that are stated in I John 2:16 - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

'The woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food'
- appealed to the lust of her flesh.

'And [was] pleasing to the eyes'
- appealed to the lust of the eyes.

'And desirable for gaining wisdom'
- touched pride. See: Genesis 3:6

The devil's three-pronged temptations of Jesus followed exactly the same pattern. (Matthew 4:1-11). He tempted Christ to turn stones into bread in order to gratify the lust of the flesh. He further tempted Jesus through the lust of the eyes by showing Him the kingdoms of the world and their glory and offering them to Him in exchange for His worship. The third temptation appealed to the pride of life: Jesus was urged to leap from the pinnacle of the temple, depending upon angels to catch him, thus making a public display that would draw men's acclaim.

Ever since Eden, Satan has continued to use the same three temptations to draw men and women out of their devotion to God and into self-idolatry.

If Jesus had yielded to any one of these temptations it would have disqualified Him from becoming our Savior. He would have sinned, having abandoned the Father's will in preference to fulfill His own desires. Throughout His earthly sojourn, Jesus spoke and acted only in accord with the Father's will. He never acted independently of the Heavenly Father. In His acceptance of the Cross, He declared,

'Not as I will, but as you will' Matt. 26:39.

This is why Jesus could victoriously announce,

'The prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me' John 14:30.

The Persons of the Godhead never act independently of One Another. Likewise, in order for us to have victory over the devil and his demons, we cannot act independently of God. This is why the Bible tells us in James 4:7,

'Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you'.

Submission to God comes through the surrender of one's own will. Only through such surrender can one effectively resist the devil.

Goals for deliverance must go beyond casting out demons. We must identify the devil's schemes and shut the door against him. We must be determined in Christ to keep demons from coming back once they have been driven out. These goals cannot be achieved apart from victory over self. Uncrucified self gives demons an opportunity to take up residence in our lives.

Paul expressed the formula for victory in these words:

'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' Gal. 2:20.

To reiterate, every demon is a self-oriented spirit. Any demon, by whatever name described, either pulls down or puffs up the 'self'. When 'self' gets the attention, God is no longer central in one's life. This is why our greatest need for deliverance is deliverance from 'self'. For anyone expecting lasting victory over the devil and evil spirits, the self-life must be crucified and all self-related spirits evicted.

'Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.' Matt. 10:39

COMMON 'SELF' SPIRITS

Self-pity, Self-accusation, Self-rejection, Self-condemnation, Self-will, Self-rule, Selfishness, Self-deception, Self-seduction, Self-delusion, Self-consciousness, Self-analysis, Self-evaluation, Self-concern, Self-indulgence, Self-gratification, Self-savior, Self-defeat, Self-reproach, Self-concern, Self-criticism, Self-vindication, Self-hatred, Self-flagellation, Self-exaltation, Self-promotion, Self-destruction, Self-reward

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