

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA, NY

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"Know Your Enemy (part 4): The Method Behind the Madness (2)"

SATAN'S METHODS OF ATTACK (review part 3)

Last week we looked at Satan's primary method of attack. His attacks are meant to accomplish his goals. And since he seeks to take God's place and be worshipped, he goes about trying to thwart God's plans. He does this by deceiving the world concerning the true nature of God and the role creation plays in our lives. Therefore, when Satan came to deceive Adam and Eve, he did so by lying about what God had said and then tempting them with the pleasures of creation (the tree's fruit). Satan continues with the same dirty tricks today and he uses the same lies and temptations to deceive and enslave our world. In addition, he fights the saints of God (Christians).

DECEPTION CONCERNING JESUS

So it shouldn't surprise us that Satan not only seeks to deceive the world concerning the nature, character and Word of God, but he also does the same concerning the Word of God made flesh - the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said in **Jn. 14:6**: ***"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me."*** This verse is unacceptable to most people. Why? While Jesus is seen by the other great religions as a great prophet, a great moral teacher, even a "type" of son of God, He is not seen as God in human flesh. But the truth is if Jesus is not who He said He was than He was either a liar or a lunatic. He can't be considered a good teacher, unless He is Lord. Of course, Satan would have us believe otherwise. For if Satan can convince people to believe that Jesus is one of many ways, that they can pick and choose what they want to believe, they will never come to know the real Jesus, and as a result never know what it means to truly turn from sin, be forgiven, and have the assurance of salvation and eternal life. That is why the Apostle John said, ***"every Spirit that believes that Jesus has come in the flesh is from God and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist."*** (I Jn. 4:3). ***"God gave us eternal life and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life whoever does not have the Son does not have life."***

So Satan deceives us via lies about God, man and creation, and the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the only way you can be set free from this deception is through God's Spirit and God's Word. Now what are some other methods of attacks that Satan uses?

OPPRESSION

First, there is deception. Then, second, there is oppression. This involves attacks from outside ourselves. In **Acts 10:38**, the Bible tells us ***"how Jesus of Nazareth was full of the Holy Spirit and with power and went about healing all who were sick and oppressed by the devil"***. Now the word translated "oppressed" in this verse literally means "to rule over" or "take authority over someone." In other words, it means to put someone down and control them.

Do you remember **James 2:6**? James writes, ***"Is not the rich who oppress you?"*** He uses the same word for oppress that is used in Acts 10:38. Now think about how the rich may oppress or take

advantage of the poor. I mean, who really controls our world? Isn't it the ungodly and unscrupulous rich? They take advantage and suppress those who do not have money or power. In the same way, the devil and his demonic spirits oppress both believer and nonbeliever alike.

And it doesn't matter if you are walking perfectly with the Lord. Don't get the idea that if you just don't sin you'll be ok. The truth is you can be perfectly righteous and still be battling the devil. Jesus had to do battle with the devil. The devil came to Jesus to oppress Him.

Now in the Scriptures Satan and his demons are shown to afflict people with sickness, fear, anxiety, and sudden anger. Remember Job? Job lost his children, much of his livestock and servants, and his health. Why? They were all attacks from Satan. **Job 2:7:** *“So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord and inflicted loathsome sores on Job the sole of his feet to the crown of his head.”* And in the New Testament, we have many examples of illnesses and infirmities begin caused by demonic spirits. One example can be found in **Lk. 13**. After healing a crippled woman, Jesus said to a Pharisee who was criticizing him for healing on the Sabbath, *“Ought not this woman whom Satan bound for 18 long years be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?”* Deafness, epilepsy, blindness, suicidal thoughts,

Or how about a more recent example? I read in the Buffalo News a few months ago about what happened on the set of the movie, *“Constantine”* with actor Keanu Reeves. The movie was about a man who does battle with the demonic world. During filming, the movie's director Francis Lawrence said that he and Keanu Reeves were overcome with fear when certain strange things began happening on one of the sets. In an interview with Britain's Empire magazine Lawrence said, *“It was strange. There was one set that we worked on that got weird. We were on Warner Brothers sound stage 16, and we'd built these two rooms, the physiotherapy and hydrotherapy rooms – they're a huge part of the ending of the movie and one half of it, the physiotherapy side, just got weird. We were there for six weeks in this room and people were getting sick, or didn't feel good or got angry. There was just something about that room.”*

OBSESSION

Then there is obsession, Satan's third method of attack. The Bible says in **Luke 6:18:** *“That a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon came to hear Jesus and to be healed of their diseases and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured.”*

The word for “troubled” is taken from the Greek word, *“ochleo”* which literally means “to mob, to overwhelm.” In other words, you are overwhelmed with something in particular. The KJV translates this verse as “vexed.” If oppression is from without, obsession involves attacks from within. It deals more with the mind and the heart. And all around us we see people who are obsessed. The truth is more people have demonic obsessions than we might first realize. We all can get obsessed.

Now how does obsession work? It's when our hearts and minds become obsessed with certain things in life whether it be money, sex, sports, drugs (*pharmakeion* in the Greek and also the word used for “sorceries” and “witchcraft”) food, alcohol, achievement, knowledge, anger etc; The devil always uses what God has created as good and perverts it. And when we start to dwell and seek after such things in a way that takes us away from doing God's will, then we are opening ourselves up to obsession and addiction. Thus, that which is to be under the control of God's Spirit, now instead, controls us. And then we find the obsession driving us in a particular way, filling our minds, molding our hearts, and consuming our energies, keeping us from God's plan, peace and joy for our lives.

And Satan and his demons will find what we are obsessing about and send temptations in that area of our lives. Remember the devil is a prowling, hungry lion seeking someone to devour. The truth is anything that is part of the created order can become an obsession. That's why the Bible says in **Eph. 4:27**: "***Do not make room for the devil.***" In other words, don't give a place in your life to the devil, or he will take it and turn it into an obsession. For Satan and his demons will use the things of creation to tempt us into following them rather than God. They will try to convince us that it is better to fulfill our heart's desire and do our own will than to follow God's Word. And more often than not when we given to these temptations, they will become obsessions. They will become addictions that become near impossible to break. There is an ancient word for such thinking and behavior, it is called idolatry.

POSSESSION

Finally, the fourth method Satan uses to accomplish his goals is possession. **Mk. 1:32** says: "***they brought to him (Jesus) all that were sick and possessed by demons.***" We have many examples of demon-possessed individuals during Jesus ministry.

Now what happens when a person is possessed? It's when a demon is not merely oppressing or obsessing, but has actually moved in and taken up residence in that person. It's when that demon spirit begins to occupy the place that belongs to God the Holy Spirit in the human spirit.

You see man is made up of three parts: the spirit, the soul (the mind, emotions, and will), and the body. And the way we are meant to operate is that God the Holy Spirit is to dwell in man's human spirit. And then man's human spirit in link with the Holy Spirit is to give direction to the soul which is the mind, the emotions and the will, and then the mind, emotions, and the will are to tell the body what to do and the body is to go out into the world and express the life of the Lord Jesus. And so I then am able to express the Lord Jesus Christ as He inhabits my humanity. I am possessed by God's Holy Spirit. He comes into me. He possesses me and I am His temple and He lives in me. That's how we are suppose to live.

But if the Holy Spirit is not in a person, then it is possible for a demon to come in and take the place that belongs the Holy Spirit and so possess that person. And so the demon spirit takes possession because he controls the soul (the mind the emotion and the will) and body of the person and all kinds of terrible and horrible things are worked out in the life of the demon-possessed individual. As a result this person is expressing the life of Satan in his or her life and Satan rather than God is getting the glory.

CAN A CHRISTIAN BE POSSESSED?

Now the question that naturally arises is, "Can a child of God be possessed?" Can possession happen to a Christian? Absolutely not. While we can be oppressed and obsessed, we can never be possessed.

Why? If Jesus is your Lord, the Holy Spirit lives in you. So if you were to be possessed, the Holy Spirit would have to be dispossessed. The Holy Spirit would have to move out or over taken before the demon could come in and take possession. And this is impossible. During our baptisms, the priest makes the sign of the cross on our foreheads, "You are marked as Christ's own forever." This means exactly what it says. We are Christ's own forever not simply because of the act of Baptism or the sprinkling of water, but because of God's grace and His Spirit that comes in us. Of course, it is not the act of baptism that saves us, it is our faith in the grace that is in Jesus Christ that saves.

But if you do not have the Holy Spirit living in you, you are not only open to Satan's deceptions, his outward attacks and his temptations which often lead to addictions, but you are fair game to being demonically possessed. And demon possession usually comes as a result of a person either dabbling in the occult, seeking out evil, being exposed to such things without the protection of God's Holy Spirit, or turning their back on the truth and love of Jesus Christ.

Yet for those who are saved, for those who are marked as Christ's own forever, what does the Lord say? He says, "***I will never leave you or forsake you.***" The truth is the enemy can't dispossess that which already belongs to Almighty God. Of course, this doesn't mean you won't have to do battle. You still may be oppressed. You still may fall into the snare of the devil and become obsessed. But if Jesus is your Lord, no one here needs to worry about being possessed.

Recall last week that I said that Satan wants us either dead or defeated. And if he can't kill you, know this – he wants to defeat you and rob you of the joy, love and power that you have in Jesus Christ. And the two primary ways he will do this is through oppression and obsession. In fact, the Bible tells us what to do to fight off these attacks. In two weeks, we will look at how we can not only defend ourselves from these attacks but how we can break Satan's strongholds in our lives and be dangerous to his kingdom here on earth. Until then may we remember Jesus' words in **Jn. 12:31-32**: "***The ruler of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.***" And it is because of what Jesus did that we can never forget that we have overcome the ruler of this world for the eternal truth is that "***Greater is He who lives in you than he who is in the world.***" (1Jn. 4:4). In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, AMEN!