

The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 1: Overview

“The devil made me do it,” is a statement often used in a joking fashion to evade personal responsibility for a particular unsavory deed. While few take it seriously, the expression raises a legitimate question about just what Satan and his cohorts can do in and through a person’s life. Some people are quick to attribute any ungodly thought or action to him while others feel that he can only have an impact on those he truly “possesses,” a condition usually relegated to pagan cultures. An even more controversial issue is how much influence, if any, Satan can have on a Christian. These are the issues I’ve chosen as a focus for the next few issues of *Prayer Matters*. Defining the nomenclature related to this subject is probably the best place to start. Most versions of the Bible translate the Greek word “daimonizomai” as “demon-possessed.” This is unfortunate because the Greek word does not inherently carry the meaning of “possession” at all. Therefore, many scholars today prefer to use the more literal translation of “demonized” and feel that it applies to any degree of demonic attachment or influence on a person, which can range along a broad continuum.

The first chapters of Job, as well as 2 Chronicles 18:18-21 and Ephesians 1:19-22, leave no doubt concerning God’s ultimate sovereignty over Satan. Nevertheless, God has allowed him to have a limited amount of power and authority (Eph. 2:2; 6:12) so that he can serve as a viable alternative object of devotion for mankind (2 Cor. 11:2-3; James 4:4). The parameters within which he is allowed to operate, however, have been precisely defined by specific spiritual principles established by God. This means that Satan is confined to being a strict legalist and can only exercise his own initiative within distinct boundaries.

The spiritual principles God has established in relationship to Satan actually give man himself the ability to determine how great an influence Satan has on his life. If man does “a,” then Satan has an open door to do “b.” On the other hand, if man does “c,” then Satan must disengage himself from that individual.

While Scripture describes a broad range of possible demonic influence on man, it does not differentiate it into clearly labeled “boxes.” Any categorization we do along this line is purely human in derivation. Nevertheless, when one studies and works in this area, patterns become evident. Therefore, for didactic purposes I would like to propose the following types of relationships that can exist between evil spiritual beings and mankind.

1. True demon *possession* in which one or more specific demons are able to suppress the person’s will and exert control over his/her actions. This control can be constant (Mark 6:2-5) or intermittent (Luke 9:38-39).
2. Demonic *attachment* in which one or more specific demons have a legal right to be associated with a person and can affect that individual in various ways but cannot actually take control of his/her actions
3. Demonic *assignment* in which one or more demons are specifically sent against a person to cause a particular effect for a particular purpose desired by God, Satan, or other individuals
4. Demonic *contamination* in which demons gain an opportunity to “hang around” and affect a person because he/she has been in a place where demons have been particularly prevalent
5. Demonic *influence* in which demons with no legal right for attachment are able to affect a person in various ways only because they are not recognized and banished

We will examine each of these in greater detail in the coming issues.

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Part 2: Demonic Control

We are currently examining the capabilities that the “devil” has to affect individuals’ lives. We pointed out in our last issue that the Greek word “daimonizomai” is usually translated in Scripture as “demon-possessed” when, in fact, it does not carry the meaning of “possession” at all. For this reason many modern theologians believe that it may more accurately refer to a broad continuum of varying degrees of influence by demons.

At the extreme end of this continuum are the cases in which demons can actually override the person’s will and take control of various aspects of his or her life (2 Tim. 2:26). This control can be constant (Mark 5:2-5) or intermittent (Luke 9:38-39). It may involve a single demon or a whole host of them. Many of the examples of demonization described in the Gospels and Acts seem to fall at this end of the continuum. In my last issue I consented to calling this level of control “demon possession.” However, I think a better designation would probably be “demonic control.”

Although Scripture does not reveal the causative roots of this most extreme form of demonization, we can postulate from the experience of those who have dealt with such cases that it may involve a deliberate “contract” made by, or on behalf of, the person with Satan or what may be perceived as other “deities” or ancestral spirits. When this virtual “selling of one’s soul” to Satan occurs, demons seemingly can gain such a degree of control that they can affect the person’s mental health, physical health, behavior, and speech as well as endow the individual with supernatural abilities.

The two demon-possessed men of the Gadarenes (Mat. 8:28-34) provide the most vivid example in Scripture of the mental effects demons can have on an individual. These men were so “out of their minds” that they dwelt in caves away from other people. They disdained wearing clothing (Luke 8:27) and would scream and cut their bodies with stones (Mark 5:5). In this case a whole “legion” of demons was involved (Luke 8:30). We know that the demons were causing these symptoms because when these men were delivered of them, they were instantly restored to their right minds and put on clothes (Luke 8:35). For this reason the *possibility* of demonization must not be ruled out in people with mental illness today, although it does not always seem to be involved.

Demons having the legal right to exert control in a person’s life can also affect his or her physical health. Examples are given in Scripture of their being able to block one or more of the physical senses of the body, thus causing the individual to be blind, deaf, and/or mute (Mat. 9:32-33; 12:22; Mark 9:17, 25; Luke 11:14). They can also cause crippling of the body (Luke 13:11). While those effects are generally exhibited in a constant fashion, controlling demons can also intermittently cause convulsions, accompanied by foaming at the mouth and grinding of the teeth. They may even try to destroy the person by physically throwing the body into water or fire (Mark 9:20-22). These intermittent episodes can be so intense that when they end, the person’s body feels badly beaten and depleted of strength (Luke 9:39).

Demons can also speak through a person when they are in a position of control. When Jesus approached demonized individuals, the demons often shouted out their recognition of Him as the Son of God. This was sometimes followed by an expression of panic concerning what He might do to them (Mark 1:23-24; 3:11; 5:7). In Acts 19:15 demons verbally interacted with those trying to cast them out and revealed that they also knew who the Apostle Paul was. The demons controlling the men of the Gadarenes revealed their name when Jesus asked them for it and also implored Jesus regarding their fate when he cast them out (Luke 8:30, 32).

The supernatural strength that demons can manifest when they have control over a person must not be underestimated. The demoniacs of the Gadarenes were so violent and uncontrollable that others tried to bind them with chains but to no avail, as they had the supernatural strength to break the chains (Mark 5:3-4). Acts 19:13-16 describes an incident in

which unbelievers attempting to cast a demon out of a man ended up being assaulted, overpowered, stripped, and wounded by him. Demons can also enable an individual to tap into supernatural knowledge, giving them “psychic abilities,” such as predicting the future (Acts 19:15; 1 John 4:1).

The purpose for this kind of demonization is difficult to understand. Perhaps it is done to destroy the image of God in a person’s life or to give people a sense of the reality and power of Satan. In third world countries demonic manifestations such as these seem to keep large populations of people in reverential awe of the spiritual realm and the need to live in proper abeyance—and bondage—to it. Oh, that more of God’s people would heed the call to bring the power of the Gospel into their lives, for Jesus alone can set them free!

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Part 3—Demonic Attachment

Sliding down the demonization continuum away from its most extreme end, which depicts an almost total control by evil spirits, is a degree of demonic influence that for lack of a better word I am calling “demonic *attachment*.” In this case one or more specific demons have a particular legal right to be associated with a person and can affect that individual in various ways but cannot actually take control of his/her actions.

Some of the same manifestations that occur in the more extreme form of demonization that I’ve called “demonic control” can occur at this level as well *but only with some level of volitional compliance* by the person or alter-identity (if DID is present). These can include the more obvious actions of demonic speech, violent behavior, self-injury, tearing off of clothing, etc. as well as more subtle character traits, behavioral tendencies, and thought patterns.

The minds of those afflicted at this level are exceptionally vulnerable to Satan’s manipulation. His intent seems to be to implant lies, sear the conscience, and decrease the spiritual discernment of these individuals, leaving them susceptible to further deception and bondage. Some may become so affected that they adopt and even propagate false doctrines (2 Cor. 11:3-4; 1 Tim. 4:1-2). Because this spiritual deception comes about so subtly, they may actually see themselves as true Christian leaders (2 Cor. 11:13-15). What they teach may sound godly to those without a firm grasp of the Scriptures, but it really consists of cleverly sculpted lies designed by Satan to turn people away from a true saving faith or to keep them focused on a legalistic righteousness rather than coming into a genuine relationship with the living Savior (Acts 13:6-11; 1 Tim. 4:1-3). Paul aptly described such individuals as having been taken captive by Satan to do his will. (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

Another potential effect of a seared conscience caused by demonic “attachment” is an increasing desensitization to sin. Christians unknowingly under this influence may justify their actions by emphasizing the inevitability of sin and the promise of God’s grace (Rom 6:1). Many, however, spiral downward into a lifestyle of lawlessness and moral degradation in which the flesh is more or less given free reign (Rom. 6:19; Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Peter 3:17).

The legal grounds providing the right of “attachment” for demonization at this level usually involve the person’s overt participation in occult activity or in certain habitual, ungodly behavior patterns. Generational inheritance is also a possibility (Ex. 20:5), however, and even Christians can be susceptible through this means. Since demonic activity at this level is dependent on the person’s volitional consent, the effects in a Christian’s life may be greatly diminished. However, because these “inheritances” often go unrecognized, consent may be unknowingly given for subtle effects to take place without the person being aware of their demonic origin.

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Part 4: Demonic Assignments in the Old Testament

In our current study of the potential effects of various degrees of demonization, we started with the most severe level that enables demons to take *full control* of a person's mind and behavior on either a consistent or intermittent basis. We then progressed to describe a slightly less intense degree of domination which I labeled demonic "attachment." In this case, demons have a specific legal right to be consistently associated, or "attached," to the person but can only act with the compliance of some part of the person.

Our focus in this issue is on demonic "assignments." This level of demonization is quite distinct from the previous two levels in that it is not based on specific legal grounds given by the afflicted individual. Instead, it occurs by the direction of God, Satan, or another individual and is designed to accomplish a specific, usually short-term, purpose in a person's life. Christians are not immune to such assignments. However, the example of Job indicates that Satanic plots against the godly can seemingly only be executed with God's permission and within explicit bounds set by Him.

Job was an extremely wealthy and prominent man who exhibited exemplary godliness and integrity. When Satan claimed that this was only because of the spiritual protection and abundant blessings God had granted him, God allowed Satan to test his claim. He gave Satan permission to destroy Job's possessions, his children, and eventually his health, but he could not take his life.

When released by God, Satan had the ability to direct the actions of foreigners as well as the forces of nature to destroy Job's livestock, herdsmen, and children and finally to smite his flesh with severe boils (Job 1:1-2:8ff). Through all of these adversities Job's faith in God never wavered. In the end God rewarded Job's endurance through this massive, undeserved attack by giving him double of all he lost (Job 42:10).

We usually think of evil spirits serving the purposes of Satan. However, as seen in Job's case, they are never exempt from the higher authority of God's sovereignty and ultimately answer to Him. In fact, they seemingly appear before Him on a regular basis (Job 1:6; 2 Chron. 18:18) and can be sent on assignments that God initiates to fulfill *His own* will.

Second Chronicles 18 reveals such a scene with God specifically soliciting an evil spirit from among the "hosts of heaven" to entice King Ahab into a fatal battle. The spirit that volunteered for this assignment said that it would cause Ahab's prophets to speak falsely about Ahab's success in the battle. God approved this tactic and commissioned the spirit to do this, bringing the outcome God desired.

Although the purpose is not quite as clear, God also sent an evil spirit to "terrorize" King Saul when the Holy Spirit (and God's favor) departed from him. When it came intermittently upon him, it caused him to rave like a mad man and inspired violent and murderous behavior within him, particularly against David (1 Sam. 16: 14-23; 18:10-11; 19:9-10).

God also sent an evil spirit to fulfill a curse that Jotham uttered against Abimelech and the Shechemites, who had conspired together to kill all the sons of Jerubbaal (Gideon), proclaiming Abimelech as king over them. Jotham, the only half-brother to escape, retaliated by uttering a curse that Abimelech and the Shechemites would destroy each other. God stood behind Jotham in this and sent an evil spirit to stir up animosity and inspire treacherous actions between them, leading to their destruction (Judges 9).

Thus far we have seen that demons "on assignment" have the ability to affect a person's speech, actions, and health as well as the forces of nature. They can also be commissioned to carry out curses and acts of divine punishment by the order of God. In our next issue we will continue to examine demonic assignments within the context of the New Testament.

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Part 5: Demonic Assignments in Connection with Jesus' Life and Death

In our present series examining the extent of Satan's power to affect human life, we are continuing to look at the nature of demonic "assignments," focusing this time on the New Testament. Here we see that even Jesus was not immune from Satanic assignments *directed by God*. At the beginning of His earthly ministry He was led *by the Holy Spirit* into the wilderness to be tested by Satan himself. Satan's intent was to derail Jesus' earthly mission while God's purpose was for Jesus to prove His sinless character and worthiness to be the Savior for all mankind. One of Satan's capabilities demonstrated during this assignment was his ability to lead Jesus in an experience of extra-dimensional transport to the "pinnacle of the temple" and to a "very high mountain" from which He was able to see the "kingdoms of the world" (Mat. 4:1-11). Jesus' triumphant victory over Satan in this wilderness experience did not deter Satan from instigating further attempts to divert Jesus from His primary mission. As Jesus approached His final months of ministry, Satan's schemes seemed to focus on using Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples. Just as we saw in the Old Testament, however, with the godly man Job, Satan first had to gain permission from God to put his plan into action. God granted that permission but, again, not without putting a "safety net" around Peter. This "net" consisted of the powerful prayers of Jesus Himself that Peter's faith would not fail during this time of being "sifted like wheat" by Satan. God also grasped the opportunity to bring good out of Satan's actions. Not only did He expect Peter to be spiritually strengthened through this time of testing, but He also envisioned the impact Peter could have in strengthening other believers (Luke 22:31-32). When given permission by God, Satan was seemingly able to permeate Peter's thoughts, words, emotions, and actions, disconnecting him from the intentions of his heart. The first recorded incident occurred when Jesus began telling his disciples about His coming suffering and death. Peter quickly declared, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." Jesus immediately recognized the Satanic origin of these words. Looking squarely at Peter but speaking to Satan, Jesus ordered Satan behind Him, declaring him to be a stumbling block to His cause (Mat. 16:21-23; NASB).

Satan's impact on Peter was also seen the night that Jesus was arrested. Peter had vowed only hours earlier that he would die with Jesus rather than desert him. His eagerness to stand with Jesus was demonstrated when he attacked the high priest's servant as the Roman soldiers arrived in the Garden of Gethsemane to take Jesus. He was also one of the only disciples to follow Jesus to His arraignment before the high priest. There in the courtyard, however, fear gripped his heart so strongly that he ended up denying even knowing the Lord three times, exactly as Jesus had foretold him. Recognizing how greatly he had failed and succumbed to the evil one, Peter went out and "wept bitterly" (Mat. 26:31-35; 56, 58, 69-75; Luke 22:50-51; John 18:15).

Of course, Satan used Judas in an even more drastic manner that night. Scripture does not mention Satan seeking approval from God to work through this disciple's life, but we know that Judas' act of betrayal was in accordance with God's pre-ordained plan (Psalm 41:9; Acts 1:16). If Judas wasn't a true "believer," or Satan was "on assignment" for God in his use of Judas, permission was perhaps not needed.

With Judas, too, Satan was able to penetrate his inner being and put within his heart a desire to betray Jesus. As Judas nurtured this thought and eventually acquiesced his will to it, I believe it opened the door for Satan to "enter" him and carry out his reprehensible act (John 13:2, 21-27).

Satan actually "entering" a person was seemingly without precedent, and yet the nature of the act performed was in keeping with Satan himself doing it, just as it was Satan himself who was

involved in the wilderness temptations. While Satan used both Peter and Judas in his plots against Jesus, there was a drastic difference in the culpability of the two men. As Jesus washed Peter's feet in the Upper Room, He assured Peter that he was "clean," but not Judas. Jesus also earlier referred to Judas as a "devil" (John 6:70). Perhaps these are indications that Judas was *not* a true "believer" as Peter was.

In both of these cases, however, Satan was able to lead these men into actions they probably would never have done on their own accord. This is borne out by the intense reaction of both of them when Satan departed and they recognized the nature of what they had done. The degree of remorse shown is also in keeping with the significance of the offense (Mat. 26:75; 27:3-5).

All of these examples reveal a deep, but temporary, penetration of the person's being by Satan for a specific purpose. We see Satan being able to affect man's heart, and thus his actions, as well as impart an extra-dimensional experience of travel and vision. In our next issue we will continue to look at the nature of other demonic assignments in the New Testament that did not involve Jesus.

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Part 6: Other Demonic Assignments in the New Testament

In our current study of the abilities that Satan and his forces have to affect the lives of humans, we are continuing to examine instances in the New Testament in which evil spiritual beings were involved in carrying out "assignments" in people's lives. In our last issue we focused on assignments directly involving the life and death of Jesus Christ. We will now broaden that focus.

The vulnerability of godly men and women to demonic assignments is further illustrated in the life of the Apostle Paul. Here again, however, Satan was used to serve the purpose of God. In view of the extraordinary revelations Paul had experienced, God did not want pride or arrogance to hinder the effectiveness of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. Therefore, He had Satan send a demonic affliction to "torment" him. Many debates have taken place over the nature of this "thorn in the flesh." Whatever it was, it was apparently something that caused an almost constant irritation or "torment" in Paul's life and gave him some sense of physical weakness. Interestingly, God's will was for Paul never to be delivered from this demonic affliction but to trust in God's sufficient grace and the power that *He* would provide in Paul's life in spite of it (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

The Apostle Paul himself dictated a demonic assignment against the man who had committed the grievous sin of having an incestuous relationship with his father's wife. In this case Paul instructed the church body to deliver this man to Satan for the "destruction of the flesh" so that his spirit would be saved on the "day of the Lord." Since Satan would certainly not be involved in destroying the fleshly sin nature, this assignment most likely entailed bringing the physical destruction of this man's body. Whether this would be a wasting illness or death itself is unclear, but in spite of this severe punishment at Satan's hand, this man would seemingly not lose his salvation (1 Cor. 5:1-5).

Although we don't know the compelling details, Paul launched another demonic assignment against Hymenaeus and Alexander. In this case he "handed them over to Satan" so that they would learn not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:20). This was probably not blasphemy against the Holy Spirit as that would have been an unpardonable sin (Mat. 12:31; Mark 3:28), and the purpose of the discipline here seems to be remedial in nature. Therefore, this assignment seemingly involved bringing some kind of demonically afflicted suffering on these men. A quick recall of the misery Satan brought upon Job assures us that Satan is well equipped to do this.

In summary, a “demonic assignment” involves a usually temporary negative effect brought upon a person by evil spiritual beings for a specific purpose. Although we often hear of people involved in witchcraft and other occult practices sending curses and demonic attacks against people, Scripture seemingly gives no example of this. Instead, it records many accounts of demonic assignments being initiated by God to serve *His* purposes as well as a few being directed by Satan or godly people. Believing Christians are not exempt from such assignments, but any attack launched by Satan against a believer must seemingly gain God’s approval first. When “on assignment,” Satan’s forces can negatively impact a person’s physical, mental, and/or spiritual health. They are seemingly capable of influencing one’s thoughts, words, emotions, and actions to such an extent that the person may even do things that are contrary to the intentions of his heart. In Job’s case they were also able to direct the forces of nature and bring death to his children. With Jesus in the wilderness, Satan seemingly enabled Him to experience extra-dimensional travel and vision.

Satan’s capabilities must certainly not be underestimated, but neither should we be intimidated by his bulging “tool kit.” How comforting it is to know that God is still sovereign over him! He holds the reins and is lovingly protective of His children!

The Devil Made Me Do It Part 7: Demonic Contamination

In our study of the various degrees to which Satan is able to affect a person’s life, we have covered demonic control, demonic attachment, and demonic assignment. We come now to demonic “contamination.” This refers to the opportunity that demons have to “hang around” and affect a person because he/she has been in a place where demons are particularly prevalent.

Scripture is much more vague in its allusions to this type of demonic affliction. However, Zechariah 13:2 indicates that a spiritual contamination of the land seemingly occurs when idols or false gods are worshiped in a country, possibly taking the form of a “spirit of impurity” establishing a stronghold there. While not stated directly, the implication seems to be that this evil spiritual heritage may have an effect on the people living there and possibly on those who may enter such a place as well.

In Isaiah 52:11 the prophet instructed the Israelites to leave Babylon, touching nothing unclean, and *to purify themselves*, seemingly from the contamination with evil they had experienced in that place. We can’t be sure, but possibly all of the Old Testament laws concerning purity were meant to serve as a metaphor in some way for the concept of spiritual contamination as well.

Interestingly, 2 Corinthians 6:17 quotes from this passage in Isaiah and instructs New Testament believers to come out from the midst of those who are associated with the kingdom of darkness, mentioning that we, too, are “not to touch what is unclean.” The implication seems to be that even a Christian will be adversely affected by being in the evil spiritual “climate” associated with these people and things.

Experience seems to indicate that if a person intentionally or unintentionally enters a “den of iniquity” or even a seemingly innocent place, such as a motel room, where evil activity has been carried out in the past, he not only may open himself to demonic harassment while in this place but may also emerge with demons following him and continuing to harass him. This “carry-over” effect can also seemingly be experienced at times by individuals ministering to, or doing deliverance with, another person.

Because Scripture is much more vague in its allusions to this avenue of demonic affliction, the nature and extent of Satan’s capabilities to affect a person through this means is more difficult to ascertain. The influence of a spirit of impurity, as mentioned in Zechariah 13:2, would perhaps have a negative effect on the morality of the people. Individuals who have seemingly

experienced demonic contamination today report a general oppression or mental/emotional/spiritual “discomfort.” Sometimes the spiritual origin of this is not recognized but may be identified by someone more gifted in spiritual discernment who comes into their presence.

When a person has done nothing to give legal grounds for demonic “attachment” to occur, “contaminating” demons are generally easy to dispel once they are recognized. If you sense demonic harassment on property that you own or are renting (even for a night), you need only remind the demonic forces that you are a child of God and have a legal right to take spiritual authority over the place while you are there. If you have deliberately entered a spiritually “contaminated” place for a godly purpose, you need only assert that you are an Ambassador for the Kingdom of God and are on the King’s business in this place and command all evil beings to leave you alone.

If you have in any way succumbed to your fleshly nature and willfully entered into an evil environment, then confession is necessary, followed by a request for cleansing by the blood of Jesus. Sometimes a direct request for the banishment of any lingering evil beings in the name of Jesus may be necessary.

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Part 8: Demonic Influence through the Flesh

We have been describing the broad continuum of effects that evil spiritual beings can have on man, starting with the most severe. I arbitrarily labeled various levels within this range as “demonic control,” “demonic attachment,” “demonic assignment,” “demonic contamination,” and “demonic influence.” Our discussion now turns to the latter.

By “demonic influence” I am referring to the effects that demons with no legal right for attachment can have on us just because we are human and caught in the spiritual battle of the cosmos. This would include what some call “demonic harassment” as well as the evil spiritual influence that comes through the flesh and the world system (Eph. 2:2-3). In this segment we will focus on the flesh, or “sin nature.”

The flesh is a powerful internal avenue through which Satan can exert his influence in man’s life. His victory in the Garden of Eden gave him access to this aspect of the soul that is integrally connected to man’s inner drives and passions and enabled him to leave his imprint on the very nature and character of man. This is when man’s heart became “desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9 KJV). This is not how God created it but how Satan corrupted it (Gen. 1:31; Rom. 7:18, 21).

The descriptions of the flesh in Scripture leave no doubt concerning its Satanic affiliation. Its hostility towards God, its inability to subject itself to the law of God, its unwavering allegiance to the law of sin, its opposition to the Holy Spirit, and the destination of corruption and death to which it leads man do not reflect the inalienable freedom of choice given to man but the incorrigible nature of Satan, the enemy of our souls (Rom. 7:25; 8:6-7, 13; Gal. 5:17; 6:8).

The extent to which the flesh influences a person’s life, whether he is a believer or unbeliever, is seemingly determined by the mind. This is where man’s free will comes in. While the mind can be perverted to follow the corrupt desires of the flesh, it can also be changed (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23), whereas the flesh cannot.

After salvation the mind that has been naturally bent towards the flesh must be deliberately trained to bring it in line with the will of God and His righteousness, thus transforming the person’s life (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22-24). The process of “renewing” the mind’s focus, motivations, and priorities occurs as the individual studies the Word, communes with God through prayer, fellowships with other godly Christians, and learns how to tune into the Holy Spirit, who now indwells his life.

The gift of the Holy Spirit to every believer (Rom. 8:9; Eph. 1:13-14) is a powerful asset in overcoming the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). While man is virtually enslaved to the internal pulsations of the flesh before salvation (Rom. 6:6, 16-17, 20), the entrance of the Holy Spirit provides an alternative inner drumbeat with which he can synchronize his life. Even with this tremendous advantage, however, he must still choose which drumbeat to follow. He can set his mind on either the flesh or the Spirit, with drastically different results in his life (Rom. 8:5-7; Gal. 5:16, 19-23).

When the flesh is allowed to direct a person's life, it will lure him to indulge in self-centered, sensual pleasures and sexual improprieties, to engage in lawless behavior; to pursue occult interests; and to instigate divisive actions among his fellowman (Rom. 6:19; Gal. 5:19-21). In one sense a person can say, "The devil made me do it" when he succumbs to these kinds of behaviors because Satan truly is the instigator of the deeds of the flesh, but the person is still responsible for his own actions, as his mind is free to choose whether or not to follow the desires of the flesh.

Satan never gives up his efforts to turn man's mind towards the flesh and lead him into these patterns of sin. Only through Jesus Christ can the daily battle for the mind be won, and only through Him will we finally be delivered from the "body of this death" and its alliance with the flesh, which is enslaved to Satan and sin (Rom. 7:21-25).

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Part 9: Demonic Influence through the World

In our study of the various ways in which Satan is able to affect man's life, we are currently focusing on the least binding but perhaps most broadly pervasive area, which I have labeled "Satanic influence." This refers to the effects Satan and his forces are able to have on man as a result of Adam and Eve's sin, which gave Satan dominion over the flesh and the world system of government (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). While his association with the flesh provides Satan with an internal influence on man (Rom. 8:7-8; Gal. 5:17), his temporary authority over the world system (John 12:31; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19) enables him to saturate man's environment with alluring pleasures craftily designed to appeal to the flesh and entice man away from devotion to God. This external influence that Satan exerts on man through the "world" is the focus of this issue.

Scripture describes the world as corrupt, defiled, and full of lust, pride, and evil deeds (John 7:7; 2 Peter 1:4; 2:20; 1 John 2:16). Many fall headlong into the clutches of its evil tentacles. Others slide slowly into its grasp through seemingly small and innocent compromises with its pervasive intrusion into their lives. Still others are deceptively ensnared by its subtle system of false knowledge, philosophy, and religiosity (1 Tim. 6:20; Col. 2:8, 20-23).

In whatever form it takes, the world is marked by a hatred towards God and His children (John 15:18). Scripture strongly emphasizes that we cannot love both the world and God, likening anyone who finds enjoyment in the pleasures of the world to an adulteress. The seriousness of this betrayal can only be understood when one recognizes the role of Satan behind the entire world system (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15). For this reason God clearly instructs us not to love the world, be conformed to it, or be stained by it (1 John 2:15; Rom. 12:2; James 1:27).

While we cannot extricate ourselves completely from the world, we do well to examine our lives on a regular basis regarding the source of our *pleasures*. If we are entertaining ourselves with that which has its derivation in the world system or patterning our lifestyle in any way after the world, we are succumbing to Satan's influence. We dare not think that we can dabble in worldly activities and not be affected by them. Even if we could, we must recognize how this "flirtation" grieves the heart of our heavenly Father.

God has graciously equipped every believer with the capacity to overcome the temptations of the world. The foundation for this victory lies in Jesus Christ's defeat of Satan on the Cross and our participation in it through faith (Gal. 1:4; 1 John 5:4-5). The internal enablement for this victory comes through the Holy Spirit, whose power greatly surpasses that by which Satan attempts to lure us into the self-gratifying pleasures of the world (1 John 4:4).

Attaining this victory requires a deliberate effort on our part, however. Ultimately, we must train our minds to receive our pleasures from the hand of God rather than the hand of Satan (Rom. 12:2). When we make God the center of our delight, we will discover how fully He satisfies the deepest desires of our hearts (Ps. 37:4). Anything that Satan offers through the world system is but a flimsy and fleeting substitute for the true and lasting pleasures that originate from the hand of our heavenly Father (Ps. 16:11; Mat. 7:11). When we draw near to His heart, we will find joy in its truest and fullest measure (John 15:11; 16:24).

The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 10: Demonic Influence to Hinder Spiritual Birth and Growth

In our study of the various effects demons can have on a person's life, we are currently in the area which is least binding but most prevalent. This is what I am calling "demonic influence." In this case demons have no legal right for attachment but are able to affect a person in various ways only because they are not recognized and banished.

We have already looked at the powerful ways that Satan can influence our lives through the flesh and the world system, which he gained control of in the Garden of Eden. Now we will look at other avenues of influence he exerts on the general public without any right of attachment.

One of Satan's primary goals seems to be to hinder unbelievers from coming to salvation and believers from attaining spiritual growth that would enhance the Kingdom of God. To accomplish his agenda with unbelievers, Satan is able to blind their minds so they are incapable of comprehending the truth of the Gospel (Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:3-4). He can also "snatch it away" from lingering in their minds lest, upon further reflection, they grasp its meaning and the seed sown takes root and sprouts into new spiritual life (Mat. 13:19).

This is why praying for the unsaved involves spiritual warfare. While we can't ask God to change their wills, we can request that He remove the spiritual blindness affecting their ability to understand the Gospel. We can also pray that when they do hear it, Satan will not be allowed to "snatch it away" before it has a chance to germinate.

Even when a person has heard the Gospel, understood its meaning, and expressed a personal faith in Jesus Christ, Satan seems to have a brief window of opportunity to stamp out the life of the new seedling before its roots are firmly implanted. If he can bring a rapid onslaught of affliction or persecution, he may cause a tentative believer to question God's love and reality and thus to relinquish the embryonic faith that might otherwise have taken root in his life (Mat. 13:21). For this reason our prayers must diligently continue even after an individual makes an initial gesture of faith.

The person whose faith remains steadfast through whatever adversity Satan may initially throw at him has developed a firmly implanted root system. Satan will never be able to pluck up or destroy the spiritual life of this new "plant" (John 10:27-29). He will still attack the believer, but his efforts are now directed at keeping him from maturing and becoming an effective warrior in God's kingdom.

Again, he will be most effective if he acts quickly while the new believer is less educated in the Word and just learning to listen for the new, inner drumbeat of the Holy Spirit in his life. During this time Satan may increase the tantalizing pull of the world, the flesh, and the “deceitfulness of riches” that previously governed his life. If he is able to keep the believer ensnared by these false sources of satisfaction, he has successfully halted his spiritual growth. While the individual does not lose his salvation, he becomes unfruitful in the Kingdom of God, which is Satan’s intent (Mat. 13:22; 19:23; Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 2:1-3).

Another, more deceptive, strategy he may employ to derail young Christians, especially those committed to overcoming worldly lifestyles, is to lead them astray through false teachers. To the uneducated and undiscerning, these individuals may seem to advocate godly practices, but in reality they are led by “deceitful spirits” (1 Tim. 4:1).

The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 11: Demonic Influence through the Deceitfulness of Riches

In our extended study of Satan’s ability to affect a person’s life, we are looking at the least binding level of involvement, which I am calling “demonic influence.” Our last issue focused on the ways in which Satan tries to keep people from salvation or to stamp out the spiritual growth of new believers so they are ineffective in the Kingdom of God. I noted his use of the world and the “deceitfulness of riches” to choke out the development of fruit in a new believer’s life (Mat. 13:22). Although my stated intention was to move on in this issue to look at Satan’s use of false teachers to misdirect some who are “babes in Christ.” I have felt led instead to examine more closely how he uses the “deceitfulness of riches” to derail the spiritual lives of both new and old believers.

The possession of monetary assets is not evil in itself. However, what we *do* with our money and our *attitude* towards it can be greatly influenced by Satan.

We’ll look first at what we *do* with our money. When we use it to indulge the desires of our flesh and strengthen our bonds to the world, we are most obviously succumbing to Satan’s enticements, whether we are new believers or not. Admittedly, a new Christian who has been indulging in this ungodly use of money before salvation may be particularly vulnerable to Satan’s endeavors to keep him caught in this stranglehold that will surely impede his spiritual growth and usefulness in God’s kingdom.

A less obvious way in which Satan can influence our use of money is in encouraging us to store it up for ourselves. Scripture indicates that stockpiling our assets to assure that our needs for the future are secure is putting our trust in fallible money rather than in our unfailing God (Mat. 6:19-20, 34; Luke 12:16-21; Prov. 23:4-5). It is serving self and building a treasure in the world rather than in the Kingdom of God. While letting go of this self-centered mindset takes tremendous faith, God promises that if we pursue a righteous life in His Kingdom, He will surely take care of not only our basic needs but all we need for true joy (Mat. 6:31-33, Luke 12:27-31; Phil. 4:19; 1 Tim. 6:17).

What God wants us to do with the money He allows us to have in addition to that necessary for meeting our essential needs is to use it for Kingdom purposes and the benefit of the poor (Luke 12:33; Acts 2:44-45). This sacrifice, which is pleasing in God’s sight, is again coupled with the promise of His supplying all our need (Phil. 4:18-19).

While taking this step may be difficult for many, practicing a life of self-denial for the sake of the Kingdom of God increases the riches we will enjoy in the place God is preparing for us in heaven (Mat 6:20; Luke 12:33; John 14:6; 1 Tim. 6:18-19). Being unwilling to part with their money in this manner keeps many, like the rich young ruler, from salvation (Mat. 19:16-24; Luke 16:19-31). Others will reach heaven's gates but find themselves woefully bereft of the prosperity God desired them to have there—all because they chose to live in luxury during their brief sojourn on earth and failed to deposit money into their eternal “accounts.”

The advantage that Satan gains in encouraging this “all for me” use of money lies not only in keeping some from salvation but also in depriving Kingdom ministries of the resources they need to extend their effectiveness and outreach. If believers who have been blessed with significant financial resources would put their extra money in this direction, these critical ministries would be freed from the time-consuming burden of fund-raising and be free to expend their energies doing that for which God truly called and equipped them.

Given this perspective, each of us does well to evaluate whose purposes our money is serving—God's or Satan's. Old Testament believers were required to give a tithe of their possessions towards God's work. I believe God holds up an even higher standard for New Testament believers.

The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 12: Demonic Influence through the Deceitfulness of Riches (cont)

In our last issue we addressed how Satan tries to influence man in the *use* of his money, getting him to spend it on worldly pleasures or to hoard it up selfishly for himself rather than using it to benefit the poor and God's eternal kingdom (Mat. 6:19-21; 19:21; Luke 12:16-21, 33; 1 Tim. 6:17-19). Now we will go deeper and examine how Satan tries to influence our underlying *attitude* towards money, which can affect even those who have few financial resources themselves.

The world eagerly seeks after money for the pleasures, status, and security they hope it will provide. When we enter the family of God, our Heavenly Father is committed to supplying these things in an infinitely superior manner. Satan works hard, however, to keep man living under the bondage of a money-directed mindset. Using the same tactic he did in the Garden of Eden, he will often try to implant doubts and questions in a believer's mind concerning God's desire or ability to be his all-sufficient source of joy and material provision.

By getting us to continue to trust in money for these things instead of God, Satan sets up a shrine of idolatry in our hearts. While this may seem like strong language, Scripture distinctly labels greed and covetousness as “idolatry” (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). It also declares that serving mammon, or wealth, is mutually exclusive to serving God (Mat. 6:24), inferring again that the drive for personal, financial gain is entwined with an evil spiritual source.

Those caught in this subtle web of satanic influence put their spiritual lives in jeopardy of serious shipwreck. What begins as a seemingly innocent accumulation of material assets or a mere dabbling in worldly pleasures places one on a path of increasing temptation, activating foolish and harmful desires, which will eventually plunge him into misery, grief, ruin, and destruction (James 5:1-3; 1 Tim. 6:9). This is the “deceitfulness of riches” that Satan uses to render believers ineffective in God's Kingdom (Mat. 13:22).

By diverting man's attention to material things, Satan also succeeds in blinding him to the spiritual treasures that God desires to deposit in his life, which are the true key to abundant living and effective ministry (John 10:10; 1 Tim. 6:19). Not only is the person deprived of significant spiritual enrichments in this life, but in the end he will find that his selfish, materialistic focus in life has bankrupted his eternal inheritance in the heavenlies (Mat. 19:21; Luke 12:33; 18:22).

So the decision is ours. Will we serve God or mammon? While this is seemingly an easy question for Christians to answer, it becomes harder when it is asked in more specific terms. What we must really decide is if we are going to trust in money or God for our security (Mat. 6:31-33; Phil. 4:19), if we are going to seek our pleasure from that which worldly wealth provides or at our Father's right hand (Ps. 16:11; 1 Tim. 6:17), and whether we desire to be known as successful, rich, but mere, men (Luke 16:19; 18:18-25) or to shine as children of the living God in this life (1 John 3:1-2). The decisions we make in regard to these things will indicate where our hearts are (Mat. 6:21).

As long as we are looking to money as a means to provide our pleasure, security, or status, we are serving the spirit of mammon, not God. God desires us to be content having food and raiment (1 Tim. 6:8; Heb. 13:5) and to set our hearts on the true and eternal riches of His kingdom (Mat. 6:33). This does not necessarily mean that He expects all of us to live as paupers but to manage whatever material assets come into our lives wisely with a focus of using them, not for ourselves, but for the Kingdom of God. What a difference this would make in the funding of Christian ministries and the advancement of the Gospel throughout the world!

The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 13: Demonic Influence through False Teachers

As we continue to study Satan's ability to affect people's lives, we are considering the lowest, but perhaps most prevalent, level of involvement, which I am calling "demonic influence." This includes the many ways we are exposed to Satan's efforts to ensnare us just because we are Christians. Most recently we looked at how he tries to use the "deceitfulness of riches" (Mat. 13:22) to destroy a believer's fruitfulness in the Kingdom of God and to deprive Christian ministries of the financial support they need. In this issue we will look briefly at his use of false teachers to deceive and misdirect believers.

With the same hypocrisy he used to entice Eve in the Garden of Eden, Satan continues his efforts to lure others to follow "deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons," shrewdly orchestrating them to come from the mouths of individuals wearing sheep's clothing (Mat. 7:15; 2 Cor. 11:3-4; 1 Tim. 4:1-2). Once again his intent is to prevent the growth of God's kingdom, and his primary target seems to be those who are immature in their faith and relationship with God (Gal. 1:6-8; Eph. 4:14; 2 Peter 2:14; 3:16).

The Bible is full of warnings about false teachers (Acts 20:29-30; Rom. 16:17-18; Phil. 3:2; 2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude 4). In most cases these are individuals whom Satan has led astray and then coaxed into positions of leadership by tapping into their fleshly desires for self-glorification or worldly gain (1 Tim. 1:7; 4:3-5; 6:3-5; Titus 1:10-11; 2 Peter 2:3, 14; Jude 11, 17). Eventually they become so entwined with their self-designed or Satan-directed heresies that their consciences are "seared," and they lose whatever sensitivity they once had to discern truth from error and good from evil (1 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:15). At this point they have become almost hopelessly blinded to the error of their ways. 123

The tactics, or *modi operandi*, of false teachers can take a number of forms. Perhaps most difficult to recognize are those that put a strong emphasis on a supposedly godly manner of living. The diabolical twist that marks false teachers using this approach is that the “righteousness” they espouse is derived from the strict observance of a legalistic set of rules rather than from the inner, transforming work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:1-21; Gal. 2:4; 4:9-10, 5:1-10; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Peter 2:19).

Other seemingly Christian teachers draw believers away from the central message of the Word by leading them into fruitless discussions and quarrels about the meaning of certain obscure words in Scripture as well as other controversial issues and matters of speculation (1 Tim. 1:6; 4:3; 6:3-5; 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:14; 2 Peter 2:23). Some may try to lead them even further astray by focusing on myths, genealogies, and various commandments and philosophies originating in men rather than God (Mat. 15:9; Col. 2:8, 20-23; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; Titus 1:14).

Another variety of false teachers takes a completely different tack by appealing to man’s fleshly desires, sensuality, and greed, grossly adulterating the law of grace (Phil. 3:19; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:2, 12-15, 18-19; Jude 4, 18-19). This self-centered approach attracts those who want a semblance of Christianity while keeping their feet planted in the world. Although their ungodly lifestyle is more apt to expose the error of their ways, astute believers will recognize all false teachers by the lack of true fruit in their lives (Titus 1:16; Jude 12-13).

The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 14: Satan’s Influence through False Teachers Regarding End-Time Events

In our last issue we looked at how Satan uses false teachers to draw people away from truth by leading them into a legalistically-based righteousness, arguments about controversial issues, or a sensual manner of life that exploits the law of grace. Our focus this time will be on false teachings concerning end-time events.

Even as far back as the first century, the Thessalonian Christians were troubled by messages designed to convince them that the “day of the Lord” had already come. The false teachers in this case were so brazenly deceptive that they signed Paul’s name to a letter they sent to these believers. This was very disconcerting to them, as this new “teaching” seemed to contradict what Paul had taught them about believers being raptured before this final day of judgment came upon the earth (1 Thes. 1:10; 2 Thes. 2:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1). To ease their distress and correct this false teaching, Paul explained the events that must precede the coming of the Lord to set up His kingdom, including the apostasy, the removal of the restraint of lawlessness, and the revelation of the Anti-Christ (Mark 13:24-26; 2 Thes. 2:1-10).

Both Jesus and Paul warned that the deception from false teachers concerning end-time events would escalate in the latter days as the struggle between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan moves towards its climax. Key elements of Scriptural truth will be abandoned by individuals still appearing to be cloaked with the vestiges of Christianity (Mat. 24:11; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:3-4).

As the centuries pass with no evidence of the Lord’s return, mockers will increasingly deride the belief in His second coming (2 Peter 3:3-4; Jude 18). Others will deny the deity of Christ. John refers to this latter group of false teachers as “antichrists” and explains that many of them are already in the world. They will become even more prolific, however, as we approach the end-times. Startlingly, many will be “counterfeit Christians” coming out of the Church (1 John 2:18-19, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7).

The most extreme deception will come during the Tribulation period when the opposite will occur and many will arise and claim to *be* Christ, the coming Messiah. Jesus warned that these

individuals will be cleverly disguised as servants of righteousness, trying to fool even the elect. Some will even be able to perform miraculous signs, mimicking those that Jesus performed when He walked the earth (Mat. 24:24; Mark 13:6, 21-22; cf. 2 Cor. 11:14-15). To prepare His disciples for the deception of this second type of “antichrists,” Jesus emphasized that His return would not be something done secretly in some corner of the world, like His birth was, but an event that the whole world will see. It will leave no confusion at all that it is He (Mat. 24:25-27; Mark 13:23, 26-27).

The era of these false “christs” will come to a climax when *the* Antichrist arises and exalts himself above all other so-called deities, taking his seat in the temple of God and demanding to be worshipped as “God” (Dan. 11:31, 36; Mat. 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 13:5-8, 12). Empowered by Satan, this person will be a master of deceit, performing great signs and wonders to attest the validity of his claims (2 Thes. 2:8-10; Rev. 8:25; 13:13-14) and will make war with all who do not believe in him (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:7). He will be allowed to exert his influence on the world for 42 months, after which his “reign” will come to a swift and mighty end by the return of the true Lord Jesus Christ, who will slay him with the breath of His mouth (Dan. 7:25-27; 8: 23-25; 2 Thes. 2:8; Rev. 19:11-21). Hallelujah!

The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 15: Guarding against Satan’s Influence through False Teachers

I would like to follow up our examination of the avenue of influence Satan can have in our lives through false teachers by looking at the instructions God has given to help us recognize these often cleverly disguised individuals so that we don’t get misled by them. I have heard that the experts in identifying counterfeit currency in our country study the real thing, not the false thing. In other words, they try to become so familiar with the real thing that they can easily catch whatever deviates from that standard.

I believe the same principle is true in recognizing false teachers. We must be so familiar with the person of God, the Word of God, and our own heart’s resonance with the Spirit of God that we can easily discern what is not in accord with these. In his scholarly way, Paul explained that as believers grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ towards full spiritual maturity, they will be much less likely to be led astray by false teachers (Eph. 4:13-14). John, in his more tender language of the heart, wrote that when we are truly bonded to our Shepherd, we become so thoroughly familiar with His distinct “sound,” or ambiance, that we will easily recognize and shun anyone who might come in the garb of a shepherd but without this “sound” (John 10:4-5).

Later, in his epistles John gave further criteria by which to identify false teachers. Perhaps the biggest red flag, which even the most immature believer should recognize, is the denial of the deity of Christ. We must keep in mind, however, that when these deluded individuals put on their sheep’s clothing, this belief may not be readily apparent. It may only be reflected in slight nuances of speech that could easily sail past nominal Christians. An astute believer, however, may pick up on these and be prompted to probe deeper with skillfully-directed questions that succeed in revealing the sacrilegious garb of this servant of Satan (1 John 2:23-24; 4:1-2; 2 John 7; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; cf. 2 Peter 2:1; Rev. 2:2).

Another flag should go up if this person does not accept the established doctrines of the Church or delight in listening to proven servants of God. Those within whom God has implanted His Spirit usually feel a longing to be with other men and women of faith and to sit under the teaching of more mature believers, whereas false teachers will generally shun these opportunities and are more apt to operate independently (1 John 2:23-24; 4:1-6; 2 John 7-9; 3 John 9).

During His earthly ministry, Jesus emphasized the importance of evaluating all teachers, prophets, and spiritual leaders by the nature of the fruit manifested in their lives. Through a parable He indicated that seed sown by Satan in the very fields in which He is “growing” His own disciples would be difficult to distinguish at first. Only as the plants came to fruition could the difference be recognized, but even then His servants were not to root out those that didn’t belong there lest in the process they reject some that truly were children of God (Mat. 7:15-20; 13:24-30).

When Jesus spoke of fruit, He made it clear that He was not speaking of the performance of great “signs and wonders.” He carefully warned that not all who prophesy, cast out demons, and perform miracles in His name are truly of His kingdom (Mat. 7:21-23). The quality of what comes out of a man’s heart is far more important in distinguishing a true servant of God, with love for one another being the single, most distinctive mark (John 13:35).

In his epistles, John taught that the servants of God and the servants of Satan could ultimately be distinguished by their demonstration of true righteousness and love (1 John 2:9-11; 3:10; 4:8; 3 John 11). Paul listed love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control as a broader list of fruit that give evidence of the Holy Spirit truly abiding in a person’s life (Gal. 5:22-23).

The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 16: Satanic Influence through Temptation

We have been looking at the various ways in which Satan and his forces can affect man’s actions and are currently focusing on the least binding way, which I am calling “Satanic influence.” In this case no long-term, binding connection exists with the evil beings involved, but they are nevertheless able to affect man in various ways as he lives in a fallen world. We have examined this influence as it comes through the flesh, the world, riches, and false teachers. While these are all agents through which Satan exerts his influence to lure, or “tempt,” man away from his devotion to God, we will look more closely in this issue at times when Satan’s temptation occurs in a more direct and targeted manner.

The two primary examples of this in Scripture are his temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden and of Jesus in the wilderness before the beginning of His earthly ministry. In these instances his tactics included challenging the Word of God and appealing to the allurements of the senses, physical appetite, and desire for personal gain, power, or glory. Eve, of course, succumbed while Jesus did not falter, countering Satan’s futile efforts with His own astute use of Scripture.

While operating more behind the scenes, Satan also deliberately targeted Job in an effort to lure him away from his devotion to God. This time Satan’s tactics were totally different as he inflicted great suffering on Job by stripping his life of every aspect of pleasure and fulfillment he once enjoyed, including his health. Much to Satan’s dismay, Job’s faith triumphed and Satan was handed a humiliating defeat.

Satan’s efforts of temptation were also seen in a more direct way as Jesus moved towards His last days on earth. Not only did he enter Judas and bring about his betrayal of Jesus (Luke 22:3), but he also received permission to put Peter through great temptation, “sifting him as wheat” (Luke 22:31). While we don’t know how he exerted this temptation or however else it may have affected Peter, we do know that his faith and loyalty to God faltered to the point of denying three times that he even knew Jesus after Jesus was taken into custody (Luke 22:31-34). Peter was also among the whole group of disciples that yielded to temptation in the Garden of Gethsemane. After being warned by Jesus to watch and pray with Him during these crucial

hours, Satan was able to draw them into sleep, stripping Jesus of the support He desired at this most critical juncture of His life (Luke 22:40-46).

Satan undoubtedly has many other tactics to use in his behind-the-scenes efforts to test our devotion to God, and we are all susceptible to his devious schemes at virtually any time (1 Peter 5:8). Scripture points out certain situations, however, when one's ability to withstand temptation may be weakened. These include going through times of affliction (1 Thes. 1:3-5) or incidents in which anger, pride, or jealousy is incited (Gen. 4:6-7; 1 Cor. 10:12; Eph. 4:26-27); becoming caught up with the desire for wealth (1 Tim. 6:9); abstaining from marital intimacy for too long a period (1 Cor. 7:5); and confronting a fellow-believer regarding a sin in his life (Gal. 6:1). Scripture also indicates that those who have recently come to faith in Christ (Luke 8:13; 1 Tim. 3:6) and those who are leaders in the church (1 Tim. 3:7) may be particular targets of Satan in his desire to halt the growth of God's Kingdom.

God has not left us defenseless against Satan's temptations. Our primary means of protection is undoubtedly meant to come through consistent prayer and the diligent application of the character traits represented by the spiritual armor (Luke 11:4; Eph. 6:10-18). We also have the security of knowing that God, at least in some cases, requires Satan to seek permission from Him before unleashing extraordinary temptation on man (Job 1:8-12; 2:3-6; Luke 22:31). He also sets limits on the extent to which Satan is allowed to go and promises in every situation to provide a way of escape for us (as He did quite remarkably with Lot). His absolute faithfulness in these regards leaves us with no excuse for yielding to temptation in any situation (Job 1:12; 2:6; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Peter 2:7-9).

The Devil Made Me Do It

Part 17: Concluding Summary

Since our study of the various ways in which Satan and his forces can impact our lives as humans has spanned several years, I thought it would be good to summarize the various degrees of attachment they can have and the effects they can reap in our lives through each one. Even this will take two issues.

6. Demonic control/possession

In these cases demons can override the person's will and take control of various aspects of his life (2 Tim. 2:26). This control can be constant (Mark 5:2-5) or intermittent (Luke 9:38-39); involve a single demon or host of them.

Possible Causes:

- Deliberate "contract" with Satan or a part of his domain
- Dedication of a child to Satan by parents
- Inter-generational bequeathing of a spirit onto a child

Possible Effects:

- Can affect physical health (Mat. 9:32-33; 12:22; Mark 9:17, 25; Luke 11:14)
- Can affect mental health (Mark 5:2-13)
- Can exert self-destructive behavior (Mark 5:5; 9:20-22)
- Can control speech: use of obscenities (Mark 1:23-24; 3:11; 5:7-9; Acts 19:15)
- Can bestow supernatural abilities: strength, magic, divination (Mark 5:2-4; Acts 8:9-11; 16:16; 19:13-16)

7. Demonic attachment

In this somewhat less extreme case one or more demons have a specific legal right to be associated with, and affect, a person but (at least in the case of Christians) cannot take control of his/her actions without some level of compliance by the person or alter (in DID).

Possible Causes

- Overt participation in occult activity
- Certain habitual, ungodly behavior patterns (Rom. 6:12-13, 16; Eph. 6:26-27; 1 Tim. 5:14-15)
- Generational inheritance (Ex. 20:5)

Possible Effects

- Control of voice and behavior, if assent is given
- Tainting of character, behavioral tendencies, and thought patterns
- Increasing desensitization to sin and searing of the conscience (1 Tim. 4:1-2; Titus 1:15-16)
- Increased vulnerability to deception, demonic lies, and false teachings (2 Cor. 11:3-4; 1 Tim. 4:1-2)
- Decreased spiritual discernment

8. Demonic assignment

This type of demonic affliction is the result of one or more demons being sent by the specific direction of God, Satan, or another individual to accomplish a specific, usually short-term, purpose in a person's life.

Causes

- Spawned by the direction of God or Satan (Judges 9:23-24; 2 Chron. 18:18-22; Job 1:6-12)
- Fulfillment of curses and instructions of people (Judges 9:16-20, 23-24, 57; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20)

Effects

- Destruction of one's possessions (Job 1:13-16)
- Death in one's own life or in one's family (Job 1:18-19; 1 Cor. 5:1-5)
- Hindered health and well-being (Job 2:1-8; 2 Cor. 12:7-9)
- Infliction of mental torment, mania, and even murderous, behavior (1 Sam. 16:14-23; 18:10-11; 19:9-10)
- Stirring up animosity between people (Judges 9:23-24)
- Pressure to deny one's faith (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Luke 22:31-32; 55-62)
- Permeate one's thoughts, words, and actions, disconnecting one from the intentions of his heart (Mat. 16:21-23; 26:31-35; 56, 58, 69-75; 27:3-5)

4. Demonic contamination

This refers to the opportunity demons gain to "hang around" and harass a person because he/she has been in a place where demons have been particularly prevalent.

Possible Causes

- Intentionally or unintentionally entering a place where idolatry or other evil activity has occurred (Lev. 18:27; Isa. 52:11; 2 Cor. 6:17-18)
- Counseling or doing deliverance with a demonized individual

Possible Effects

- Spiritual oppression, depression
- Irritability and other forms of emotional instability
- Increased susceptibility to sin, immorality

5. Demonic influence

This refers to ways in which demons with no legal right for attachment are able to affect a person in various ways because of the fallen world in which we live.

Situations increasing susceptibility

- Spiritual immaturity (Luke 8:13; Eph. 4:14; 1 Peter 2:1-3)
- Not cultivating godly disciplines: study of the Scriptures; prayer; righteous living; self-control; perseverance; brotherly love (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Peter 1:3-8; 1 John 2:9-11)
- Not utilizing the spiritual armor by standing firm in truth, righteousness, peace, and faith (Eph. 6:10-18)

- Giving in to the desires of the flesh (Rom. 6:12-19; 8:5-7)
- Falling in step with the lusts and pleasures of the world (Rom. 12:2; James 1:27; 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Jn 2:15-16).
- Loving money for the pleasure, prestige, & security it gives (Mat. 6:19-24; Luke 12:16-34; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:9, 17)
- Allowing love for God to wane (Rev. 2:4)
- Uncontrolled anger (Gen. 4:6-7; Eph. 4:26-27)
- Pride (1 Cor. 10:12-13)
- Lack of sexual intimacy in marriage (1 Cor. 7:5)
- Going through times of afflictions (1 Thes. 3:1-5)
- Being a spiritual leader or playing a major role in God's plan (Gen. 3:1-6; Mat. 4:1-11; Luke 22:31, 44-46; 1 Tim. 3:7)
- Confronting a brother who is sinning (Gal. 6:1)
- Possible Effects
- Loss of faith (1 Tim. 6:10)
- Lack of spiritual fruit (Mat. 13:22)
- Spiritual blindness and lack of direction (1 John 2:11)
- Loss of wealth (Mat. 6:19)
- A sinful, shipwrecked life full of misery, grief, ruin, and destruction (1 Tim. 6:9-10)
- Indulgence in self-centered, sensual pleasures, sexual improprieties, and lawless behavior (Gal. 5:19, 21)
- Pursuit of occult interests (Gal. 5:20)
- Jealousy, anger, and the instigation of divisive actions among one's fellowman (Gal. 5:20)
- Being captivated and led astray by deceitful spirits, false teachers, and/or human philosophies (Acts 20:29-30; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Col. 2:8; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 4:1-3; 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:13-14; 4:3-4; Titus 1:14; 2 Pet. 2:1-3, 18-19)
- Falling into the trap of legalism (Gal. 2:4; 3:1-10; 4:9; 5:1-7)

Note: Since beginning this topic of Scriptural exploration, we have come to a fuller understanding of the evil spiritual beings of a higher rank than demons. While I have continued to use "demon" and "demonic" throughout this study, higher cosmic beings may also be involved in some of the effects mentioned.