



ARTICLES

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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).