



## 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.

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).