



## 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.