



The Devil Made Me Do It

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).