

The Meaning of...

DEMON SPIRITS

To the reader: Keep your Bible beside you. Always read your Bible first, then read these notes. Check the references and read them also. Invite a friend to study with you. You will be blessed.

TWO WORLDS

There are two worlds. One world we can see and touch. We call this the material world. The other world we cannot see. We call this the spirit world. Some people don't believe in evil spirits, but the Bible speaks of them often. And many people are troubled by them. The Bible calls them demons or evil spirits or unclean spirits. They obey Satan.

For some reason we don't understand, God has let these demon spirits remain free to come and go in the world. Here they inflict human beings and sometimes animals.

This all began when the great DECEIVER, Satan, came into the garden in Eden and tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:16-17). Adam and Eve were the first people God created. Satan spoke to Eve. He promised the woman a good outcome if she listened to him. "You will not surely die," he said, you will be like God (Gen 3:4-5).

What could be wrong with that, Eve thought, being like God. Satan talked on: "When you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil."

Read: Genesis 3:1-10

THEY SINNED AGAINST GOD

The moment Adam and Eve ate the 'fruit' they knew they had done wrong. They were afraid of the Creator-God and they saw that they were naked. This made them feel shame, so they found some big leaves and sewed them together to make aprons. They tried to 'cover' the shame they felt in their hearts. And they hid among the trees.

They felt shame. Shame comes from Satan. Any time we feel shame, Satan has been at work. When God created Adam and Eve "the man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Gen 2:25).

Adam and Eve did not have any sense of shame until they sinned. Were they shrouded in the light and glory of their Creator? Did this suddenly fall away, leaving their bodies 'naked,' as they had never seen them before?

"The righteous will shine...like the sun..." (Matt 13:43). This seems to be the original state of the man and woman in the garden - shining beings! What hinders our shining now? The veil of sinful flesh? The Bible says that 'no good dwells in it' (Rom 3:11-12; 7:18).

Man's mind and body have been dragged down by sin. All men and women have a sin nature which they inherited from Adam.

One day believers will receive a new body and a new nature. They will shine again. They will be changed into Christ's likeness, and shine with His perfection. That is God's plan for all who love Him.

TALK ABOUT

1. What is the difference between the two worlds?
2. What are they called?
3. Evil spirits are real. Are they also strong?
4. Paul wrote, "Do not give the devil a foothold" in your life (Eph 4:27). How might a Christian do this?

WHAT ARE EVIL SPIRITS?

In eternity, before God created the heavens and the earth, Satan was a beautiful angel in heaven. But he rebelled against God. Satan wanted to occupy God's throne. Many spirit

beings, which God had created beautiful, intelligent angels, followed Satan in his rebellion against Almighty God.

God drove them out of heaven. And now some of them are free to come and go in the earth. God has not told us and we don't understand why this is. All we know is that evil spirits are real, they are strong and they are here to stay until the final judgment of all evil. Then they will cast into the lake of fire, which is hell (Rev 14:10-11; 20:10). God said hell was prepared for Satan and his angels.

God did not create evil spirits. Everything God created is good and for man's benefit (Gen 1.31; 1 Timothy 4:4-5). Evil came into heaven when Satan and certain angels rebelled against God and evil came into this world when Adam and Eve did the same (Gen 3:1-10). They obeyed Satan and were cut off from the immortal life which God had given them (Gen 3:22-23).

Adam and Eve brought sin and death into this world. They probably did not know what death was until they sinned against God and their spirits died within them. Later, their bodies also died and turned to dust, as God said they would (Gen 3:19).

Adam passed his sin nature on to all his children, and they passed it to all their children and so on. So that God could say, "All (men and women) have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). God also said, "all men are without excuse" (Romans 2:1).

Read: Matthew 12:43-45

SPIRITS NEED BODIES

It seems that evil spirits must have a living body to occupy. Jesus told a parable about demons needing a living body or 'house' to occupy. When an evil spirit came out of a certain man, it went looking for a place to live in and rest (Matt 12:43).

In the meantime, the man's life was empty; He did not take Jesus into his heart as his Saviour and there was nothing to fill the emptiness.

The evil spirit said to itself, "I will return to the house I left." It found the man's life empty (the house it had left was not occupied or filled). So the evil spirit went back into the man, "taking with it seven spirits more wicked than itself."

This story may sound strange, but it is in the Bible and it is true. Jesus rescued many a poor soul from the clutches of evil spirits. Mark's Gospel is alive with the record of how Jesus cast evil spirits out of men in particular. These unclean spirits war against God. Jesus called Satan, "the prince of the power of the air" (John 12:31). Satan has a lot of power, but God is more powerful. Satan is like a "roaring lion," but he is on a chain (1 Peter 5:8). If we have Jesus and follow close to Him, we need not fear Satan and his evil spirits.

Almost every day, Jesus met people 'bound' by Satan and possessed by evil spirits. They had given their lives to evil and Satan had taken advantage of their empty hearts. There are many of them in our communities today. It is just that Satan keeps a low profile, so as not to cause other people alarm.

There are demons of sex, drugs, alcohol, gambling, any of which can rob our families of fathers or mothers. Or turn men into liars, cheats, and totally selfish. Only Jesus' power can cast these demons out. Only in the name of Jesus and by His power can demons be cast out. Jesus can give those who are bound by demons "a right mind" and bring them back to their families (2 Timothy 1:7 KJV).

TALK ABOUT

1. How can we have a personal relationship with God, our heavenly Father?
2. Why did Adam and Eve feel shame?
3. What changes people so that they become like Jesus (2 Cor 3:18)?
4. Does natural man have any good thing in him (Rom 3:11-12)?

SPIRITS AND LIVING BODIES

We don't understand why evil spirits seek to do harm to their victims and even kill them. The father who brought his son to the disciples told Jesus, "It (the spirit) has often thrown him into the fire or water to kill him" (Mark 9:22).

Why would the evil spirit try to kill the boy when it needed the lad's living body for a home? There seems to be no answer to this question in the Bible.

I met a young man in India who had a limp. When I asked him about his leg, he told me a demon spirit threw him under an oncoming truck and it ran over his leg. The lad's leg was broken in several places.

When he became a Christian, the young man was delivered from the influence of demon spirits, but his family turned against him. His father told him to leave the house. After that he chose to go to Bible college and was living with a pastor friend.

Read: 1 Samuel 28:1-25

SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR

Saul and his army gathered to fight the Philistines. When Saul saw the Philistine army, gathered to fight Israel, "terror filled his heart."

Saul asked the Lord for a battle plan to fight king Achish, but the Lord refused to answer him, by a dream, by the ephod, or by sending a prophet (1 Sam 28:6). Saul became desperate. He asked his servant to "Find me a woman who is a spirit medium". Now God had told His people not to go to witches. God had said, "Don't use fortune telling or witchcraft" (Lev 19:26).

Almost all witches had been put to death or chased out of Israel. "There is one at Endor," Saul's servants told him. The witch of Endor was in contact with evil spirits. Evil spirits are real! They are unclean spirits led by Satan, the Prince of this evil world" (John 12:31).

"So Saul disguised himself and went to Endor. "Consult a spirit for me," he told the woman. But she was afraid (1 Sam 28:8-10). She knew it was Saul under the disguise. "You know what Saul has done," she said. "he has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land."

"Why have you set a trap for my life?" she asked the King.

"Don't bother about that," Saul told her. "Just do what I say. Bring up the spirit of Samuel," and the King swore an oath not to harm her. The woman went into another room. Then she screamed. Saul heard a gruff voice. Was it the voice of the dead prophet? Or was it the voice of an evil spirit?

"Why have you disturbed me...?" the spirit-voice asked. Saul fell to the ground. "I am in great distress," he said, "because of the Philistines fighting against me, and God has turned away" from me (1 Sam 28:15).

The Lord's message to Saul was the same as before, "The Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to David" (1 Sam 28:17; 15:28). At this, "Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear... His strength was completely gone" (1 Sam 28:20).

We, too, sometimes go to the wrong places for help. Some go to 'Advisors'. Others let friends read the palms of their hands. Or we 'read' the stars or horoscopes. God's Spirit says "No" to all of these. God has said, the Holy Spirit will be our counselor and guide. He is the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17).

TALK ABOUT

1. How did Saul disobey God?
2. Why did King Saul go to the witch of Endor?
3. What message did Saul get from the witch (1 Sam 28:17)?
4. How did the witch get her message?
5. Did Saul believe what she said?

Read: Deuteronomy 18:10-14

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

Satan is behind all sorcery and witchcraft. That is why God strictly forbade mediums (persons who practice spiritism) and any form of spirit worship in Israel (Deut 32:17). Heathen people who lived in close contact with God's people were bound by witchcraft and tradition. But God was against any form of idolatry. Magic was strictly condemned. In the days of Moses, Israelites who got involved in these evil practices, were punished by death (Leviticus 20:27).

When the people were taken captive to Babylon, they became like the Babylonians. They practiced divination and magic. By Ezekiel the prophet, God told His people, "I am against your magic charms... I will tear off your veils and save My people from your hands and they will no longer fall prey to your power" (Ezekiel 13:20-22).

All through history, Satan has been hard at work deceiving kings and nations. King David was deceived by Satan to number Israel's fighting men. The Bible tells us that he did not recognize that the thought was put into his mind by Satan (1 Chron 21:1; 2 Samuel 24:1-25).

After the death of Joshua, the whole world turned to idol worship and the evil practices that always go with it. God punished His people for doing this (Judges 2:1-3).

The false prophet Balaam tried to curse God's people. God did not let him do this, but he did deceive the men of Israel. They went over to the tents of the Midianites and had sexual relations with their women (Numbers 25:1-18; Rev 2:14). Later on, the same thing happened with the Moabite women. For this, God sent a plague among them which killed many Israelites (Num 25:16).

TALK ABOUT

1. What did Jesus tell the man of Gadara to do?
2. Did he obey Christ's instructions (Mark 5:20)?
3. How did Satan deceive Eve?
4. Did he deceive any Old Testament kings and queens (2 Sam 24)?
5. How did Balaam cause the men of Israel to sin (Num 31:16)?

Read: The Revelation 9:20-21

DEMONS DEMAND WORSHIP

Paul said that, behind every idol there is a demon spirit. This means that those who worship idols actually worship demons (1 Cor 10:6-8). People worship many things and are obsessed by some, but we are not told how these people open themselves to be possessed by evil spirits. We are told to "resist the devil" (James 4:7) and to "flee from evil" (1 Cor 6:18). Rather to "abide in Christ" (John 15:6 KJV) who will protect us from evil (John 17:11).

The person who lives to please his or her own lusts leaves his or her life open to being possessed by demon spirits. There are also generational demons which pass from parent to child, sometimes for many generations. That can account for a small child being possessed (Mark 19:20-27).

Read: Mark 9:14-29

THE BOY POSSESSED BY A SPIRIT

A very distressed father brought his demon-possessed son to Jesus' disciples. He wanted them to heal the boy. When Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, He saw them arguing with one another. Jesus asked, "What are you arguing about?"

The boy's father cried out, "Teacher, I brought my son who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I begged your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not" (Mark 9:16-23).

"How long has he been like this?" Jesus asked the boy's father. "From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

Jesus looked at the boy's father and said, "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mark 9:23). Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief."

When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to see what was happening, He quickly rebuked the evil spirit, "You deaf and mute spirit," He said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again" (Mark 9:25).

Some time later, the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" Jesus replied, "Because you have so little faith." Jesus continued, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed (the smallest of seeds), you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matt 17:20-23).

TALK ABOUT

1. Where had Jesus been (Mark 9:2-13)?
2. What were the disciples arguing about?

3. Why would the evil spirit want to kill the boy?
4. Jesus called the spirit a “mute spirit.” Why?
5. How long had the boy been afflicted by this evil spirit?

Read: Ephesians 6:10-18

SATAN FIGHTS AGAINST GOD

The armies of Satan in heavenly places are arrayed against God Almighty. God has always given these enemy forces permission to roam the earth. You might ask, “Why does God allow this situation to continue?” He could destroy Satan “with the breath of His mouth” (2 Thess 2:8).

Yes, He could! But Satan and his demon spirits are allowed to roam the earth until the final judgment day (Rev 20:10).

There are other angels who “did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these God has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the Great Day” (Jude1:6).

Satan and his demons continually war against God and His glory. Satan boasts of his power. He boasts, “I am Legion,” a mighty military force. But he has no power in the presence of Jesus Christ and His faithful servants. The believer’s power to cast our demons depends on his or her faith. Jesus gave His disciples His authority to cast out demons (Matthew 19:1,8). In the name of Jesus, through faith, we can also command evil forces to leave and never return.

When Jesus healed the demon-possessed boy, He rebuked the disciples and the people gathered around them, for their lack of faith and their lack of power over the evil one. Jesus accused that generation of being without faith.

Read: Daniel 10:1 - 11:1

SATAN RESISTS GOD’S MESSENGER

Satanic powers are further revealed to us in the Book of Daniel. There ‘princes’ of Satan opposed the heavenly messenger God sent to Daniel (Daniel 10:4-14). God’s answer to Daniel’s prayer was delayed for twenty one days (Dan 10:12-14) by the Prince of Persia.

In the presence of such powerful beings, Daniel fell senseless (Dan 8:18; 10:10-14). A hand touched him and set him trembling on his hands and knees (Dan 10:10). Then he was able to stand up. Slowly understanding of the vision came to him.

Again the one who looked like a man (Dan 10:5-6) touched Daniel. “Do not be afraid,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong” Dan 10:18-19).

There had been war between Michael and “the Prince of Persia” (Dan 10:20) and the same struggle would continue, but not before Michael told Daniel “what is written” in God’s Book of Truth (God’s decrees?) He assured Daniel that God was taking care of His Church (Dan 11:1).

Read: Luke 4:1-13

SATAN TEMPTS JESUS

As soon as Adam sinned, God pronounced a curse on Satan. At that same time in history, God promised “a seed of the woman who would, one day, crush Satan’s head” (Gen 3:15).

From that sad day forward, Satan’s followers were against the offspring of the woman (that is Jesus and His followers). Satan used the ‘Serpent’ to speak to and deceive Eve. Behind him were a host of evil beings. Down through the years they have attacked the woman’s offspring (all the sons and daughters of God) and caused them untold pain and suffering.

When the seed of the woman, (the promised Redeemer) was born into this world at Bethlehem (Gal 4:4), Satan made a plan to get rid of Him immediately. King Herod issued an order that all baby boys in that part of Israel be killed (Matt 2:13-15). God sent an angel to warn Joseph to take Mary and the child and escape to Egypt. Joseph obeyed. They did not return until a new King ruled over Israel.

After Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist (Matt 3:13-17), He was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. During that time, Jesus was without food for forty days. Three

times, He was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-13). Jesus suffered these temptations so that He could show us how to have the victory over Satan. "He was tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

In the synagogue in Jesus' home town of Nazareth, Jesus preached to the people. He read to them from the scroll of Isaiah the prophet: "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the good news to the poor..." (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18). Then He said, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." He was the promised Messiah who would crush Satan's head (his authority) - (Hebrews 2:15).

TALK ABOUT

1. Does Jesus give every believer the power to overcome Satan's temptations (1 Cor 10:13)?
2. Was Jesus tempted as we are (Heb 4:15)?
3. How did the baby Jesus escape King Herod's wrath (Matt 2:13-15)?
4. Satan set the people of Nazareth against Jesus (Luke 4:28-30). Why could He not do any miracles there?
5. When did Jesus crush Satan's authority (Heb 2:15)?

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:19-33

FOOD WAS OFFERED TO IDOLS

In New Testament times, workers guilds were very strong. Their members did business and, at the same time, drank large amounts of liquor and ate rich foods at their meetings. They indulged in pagan revelry at their feasts. Before they ate meat and drank liquor, it was offered to the local idols.

Christians were told not to eat food offered to idols (1 Cor 8:4). Paul said. "The worship of idols is the same as worshipping demons. The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons not to God" (1 Cor 10:20).

If a believer's conscience is clear, he could eat meat bought in the market. He could eat whatever is put before him, even if it had been offered to an idol, if that did not trouble his conscience. But if it troubled his brother, he should not eat. He should respect the weaker brother (1 Cor 10:27-31; Romans 14:1-8). If someone told him the food had been offered in sacrifice, don't eat it.

Read: 1 Timothy 4:1-5

IN THE LAST DAYS

We believe we now live in the last of the last days. We believe that Jesus Christ could come again on the clouds at any moment. Paul and the Apostle John both believed demon activity would increase as Christ's second coming drew closer and that many will be deceived by evil spirits in these last days (1 Tim 4:1-3; Rev 16:13-14).

John wrote, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but 'test' the spirits to see whether they are from God... This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit): Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus, is not from God" (1 John 4:1-3).

Paul warned Timothy and the early believers:

- a) Some shall fall away from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1-2).
- b) They will give heed to seducing spirits.
- c) They will be deceived by "the doctrines of demons."
- d) The method of deception will be with 'doctrines' spoken by hypocrites and liars, ie spoken as if it is true.

TALK ABOUT

1. What problem did Christians make when they ate food offered to idols?
2. What did Paul warn Timothy about (1 Tim 4:1-3)?
3. How do some modern-day preachers deceive the people?
4. What is the 'prosperity gospel'?

Read: Ephesians 6:10-18

RULERS, AUTHORITIES, POWERS

Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus to warn them of powerful spirit forces “in heavenly places.” He said the Christians’ struggle was “not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:12).

When he told the Christians, “Put on the whole armour of God,” he was speaking of clothing ourselves with Christ. This means to be totally surrendered to Him and His word, to obeying His commands and following hard after Him. If Christ fills our lives, there will be no room for Satan to get in.

THE GREAT DECEIVER

Sometimes it is not what the demon doctrines present as truth, but what is left out.

- Repentance for sin
- The atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross
- The absolute necessity for the blood of Christ
- The anointing of the Holy Spirit

The demon forces are shown to be divided into:

- a) Principalities – demonic officers dealing with nations and governments.
- b) Powers – those having authority and power to act in certain spheres.
- c) World-rulers – spirits governing the darkness and blindness of the world at large.

All these direct their “wiles,” “fiery darts” and every imaginable false doctrine against the Church of Jesus Christ. This onslaught comes from supernatural spirit beings “in heavenly realms” who are persons (Mark 1:25). They have the ability to plan (Matt 12:44-45) and devise the best strategies to cause believers to take notice of their message and fall prey to them.

Read: Acts 19:13-16

THE ABUSE OF POWER

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits called on the name of the Lord Jesus over a man who was demon possessed.

They said, “In the name of the Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out” (Acts 19:13). Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

One day, the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?” Then the man who had the evil spirit, jumped on them and gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

A Pastor who had a deliverance ministry told my wife, “If you take authority over the evil spirits in the name of Jesus, they can only be polite and respect you.”

TALK ABOUT

1. Paul listed pieces of a soldier’s armour. Can you name these pieces (Eph 6:13-17)?
2. When the Bible says, “Put on Christ,” does it mean to put on the same armour?
3. What happened when wicked men used the name of Jesus to cast out a demon (Acts 19:13-16)?
4. Does Satan have a lot of evil spirits following him? How do we know (Eph 6:12)?

Read: The Revelation 9:17-21

MEN REFUSE TO REPENT

In their lifetime, God gives most people many opportunities to repent. The Holy Spirit calls as a small voice in the innermost part of their beings. At the same time, Satan has them deceived. He holds them in a bondage stronger than chains.

They are deceived. Even some who appear to have faith in Jesus Christ will abandon their beliefs and “follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons”.

They forbid people to marry and order them not to eat certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Even when the final judgments of God come upon the earth, those who survive the plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur will not repent. “They did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver bronze, stone and wood – idols that cannot see, hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts” (Rev 9:17-21).

WE MET SATAN IN ZAMBIA

Before we left Ndola for northern Zambia, my travelling companion warned me, “Many of the people in the north are possessed by demons.” I assured him that I was prepared and claiming the blood of Jesus for my protection and an effective ministry. Francis would be carrying the weight of the preaching; I would speak when called upon and supervise a book table.

Our bus went north to cross the Luapula River and the eastern end of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), before heading for Mansa and Nchelenge, which was our final destination.

After preaching the gospel in his native Bemba language, Francis made an appeal. In most of our meetings he preached on the cross of Christ and the need to repent and forsake sin.

I noticed that when Francis prayed for those who came forward, he did so one by one. He laid his hands on their heads and commanded any and all evil spirits to come out of that person. In some cases the individual fell prostrate on the floor and had to be carried to an adjoining room. I did not follow as I was responsible for the book sales.

One Sunday morning at a church service in a school, Francis chose several hymns with words that spoke of the blood of Jesus. When the congregation sang of the blood, demons shrieked and some possessed people collapsed. I felt the presence of Satan and his hosts and it troubled me that I could not speak the language and help the distressed people, many of whom were women.

I knew one thing I could do, so I stepped outside and walked in a cornfield and prayed. Francis told me later that many were delivered from demons that morning.

TALK ABOUT

1. When judgment comes on the earth, will men repent (Rev 9:17-21)?
2. What will they be doing?
3. Do demons possess people today?
4. To be healed, must a possessed person ask God to forgive their sins?

HEALING IN NDOLA

On another visit to Ndola, we stayed in the home of the late Timothy Chilufya, his wife Kunda and their three girls. One afternoon, a distress call came from a Christian living two blocks away. An uncle had tried to poison the believer to take his property. Pastor Timothy hurried to the house to find the brother very ill. The Holy Spirit directed a sister to give him milk. There was no milk in the house, but she found an egg. She beat the egg and he drank it. All present prayed for deliverance, which caused the sick man to vomit a fetish he had swallowed.

That night, as Timothy’s family prepared to retire for the night, we saw a spare mattress carried down the stairs to an empty room. They feared that, in his weakened state, the sick brother’s life could be in danger.

Next morning, the man was his old self. He got into his car and drove off to work completely healed.

Read: Matthew 24:15-25

EVIL SPIRITS AND THE BELIEVER

Jesus said, at the end times, “false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible. See I have told you ahead of time” (Matt 24:24-25).

Great signs and wonders done by Satan will appear genuine, but will be found to be false. People who look for excitement in their Christian lives are open to believing these false signs.

Those who “wait on the Lord” or “wait for the Spirit,” can be tricked by Satan’s counterfeit. Some act on texts they receive from Scripture. Satan uses Scripture, too. Others make prophetic statements which Satan puts into their minds.

Any activity or service that promotes self is suspect. Only those things done in the power of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God count in eternity.

Paul said, “I laid the foundation (of the gospel church at Corinth) as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames” (1 Cor 3:10-15).

Many ‘prominent builders’ are deceived. They think they are building with gold and silver, but in reality they are trying to build God’s Kingdom with wood and hay. They put themselves first, centre and last and their work will not stand the test of the last great Day.

TALK ABOUT

1. What foundation was Paul building the gospel church on (1 Cor 3:10-15)?
2. What did he say to the builder who did not use gold, silver and costly stones to build with?
3. When the wood and hay church was tested with fire what happened to it?
4. What happened to the builder?

ACTIVE COOPERATION WITH GOD’S SPIRIT

Satan takes advantage of any passive waiting for God or His Spirit to show the believer truth, or what he should do. God demands an active, conscious cooperation between the believer’s spirit and His Spirit.

When a person is born again by the Spirit of God, he or she receives all the anointing they need to love God and serve Him. From that point on, they “grow in grace and a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

If we don’t grow up into Christ, we drift away and don’t reach the potential God intended for our lives. This was happening to believers when the Book of Hebrews was written. They were urged to “leave the elementary teachings” and to press on to higher things. For it is possible for those who have ‘tasted’ salvation to fall short of being saved (Heb 6:1-8).

RESIST DEATH

Satan is an agent of death. His spirits drive people to take their own lives. And they whisper to elderly believers who are suffering from incurable illnesses that they would be better off in heaven. That is true, but no one should wish for death until they are absolutely sure God has nothing more for them to do. Even if you cannot move your hands and feet, those in their right mind can pray. And prayer is the greatest work anyone can do for God.

That a believer is ready to die is a small matter. Be ready to live and like Paul, exalt Christ in your body and spirit (Phil 1:21). Witness to others (Acts 1:8).

TALK ABOUT

1. Are you seeking to grow in grace and your understanding of what He wants you to do?
2. Do you study God’s word?
3. Have you ‘tasted’ but not taken the salvation Jesus offers? Now is the time of God’s favor; now is the day of salvation (2 Cor 6:2).

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