

# Common Misconceptions About Bondage

*From Neil T. Anderson's "The Bondage Breaker"*

Where do the voices and the confusion come from? Where do the divergent thoughts and the condemning emotions originate? One of the main reasons I fumbled and failed in my early days of ministering to people in bondage was because I didn't know the real answers to these questions. I labored under a number of misconceptions about the spiritual world which had to be dispelled. Perhaps you are struggling with some of these same faulty ideas which keep Christians in darkness.

1. Demons were active when Christ was on earth, but their activity has subsided today

Christians who hold this extreme view in light of what God's Word says and what is transpiring in the world today simply are not facing reality. The New Testament clearly states that believers will wrestle "against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6: 12). Paul goes on to itemize the pieces of spiritual armor that we are to put on in order to defend ourselves against "the flaming missiles of the evil one" (verses 13-17). In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 Paul again specifies that believers are engaged in a spiritual battle against forces which stand against the knowledge of God. If dark spiritual powers are no longer attacking believers why would Paul alert us to them and insist that we arm ourselves against them?

The powers and forces that Paul wrote about in the first century are still evident at the dawn of the twenty-first century as evident in the popularity of the New Age movement and the proliferation of satanism and the occult.

God's people wrestling against dark spiritual forces is not a first-century phenomenon, nor is it an option for the Christian today; it's unavoidable. The kingdom of darkness is still present and Satan is intent on making your life miserable and keeping you from enjoying and exercising your inheritance in Christ. Your only options in the conflict are how and to what extent you're going to wage the battle. If your world view as a Christian does not include the kingdom of darkness, then either God or you will have to take a bum rap for all the corruption Satan is foisting on you and the rest of the world.

2. What the early church called demonic activity we now understand to be mental illness. I heard one counselor argue concerning a demonically disturbed Christian, "There is no way his problem can be demonic; he's a paranoid schizophrenic." Simply accepting secular psychology's definition of a human problem in no way establishes the actual cause of the problem. Terms such as schizophrenia, paranoia, psychosis, etc., are merely labels classifying symptoms. But what or who is causing the symptoms? Is it a neurological or hormonal problem, or perhaps a chemical imbalance? Certainly these options must be explored. But what if no physical cause is found? Then it must be a psychological problem. But which school of psychology do you choose: biblical or secular? And why isn't someone exploring the possibility that the problem is primarily spiritual?

We should not be surprised that secular psychologists limited to a natural world view supply only natural explanations for mental problems. They offer their explanation from a viewpoint with no concept of God, much less the demonic. Even many Christians who vociferously reject the scientific community's explanation for the origin of the species naively accept the secular psychologist's explanation of mental illness. Research based on the scientific method of investigation of human spiritual problems is not wrong; it's just incomplete. It ignores the influence of the spiritual world because neither God nor the devil submit to our methods of investigation.

3. Some problems are psychological and some are spiritual

This misconception implies a division between the human soul and spirit, which does not exist. There is no inner - conflict which is not psychological, because there is never a time when your mind, emotions, and will are not involved. Similarly, there is no problem which is not spiritual. There is no time when God is not present or when it is safe for you to take off the armor of God. The tendency is to polarize into a deliverance ministry, ignoring the realities of the physical realm, or a psychotherapeutic ministry, ignoring the spiritual realm.

Dr. Paul Hiebert, who teaches in the School of Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary, contends that, as long as believers accept "a two-tier world view with God confined to the supernatural and the natural world operating for all practical purposes according to autonomous scientific laws, Christianity will continue to be a secularizing force in the world. "If your world view does not recognize the activity of the God of this world in

human problems, it is at best incomplete and at worst a distortion of reality."

#### 4. Christians aren't subject to demon activity

The prevailing belief among evangelicals today is that Christians cannot be severely oppressed by demons. Even the suggestion that demonic influence can be part of the problem often prompts the hasty disclaimer, "Impossible! I'm a Christian!"

Nothing has done greater damage to diagnosing spiritual problems than this untruth. If Satan can't touch the church, why are we instructed to put on the armor of God, to resist the devil to stand firm and to be alert? If we aren't susceptible to being wounded or trapped by Satan why does Paul describe our relationship to the powers of darkness as a wrestling match? Those who deny the enemy's potential for destruction are the most vulnerable to it. Our vulnerability to demonic intrusion and influence is the subject of Part Two of this book.

#### 5. Demonic influence is only evident in extreme or violent behavior and gross sin

Although there are cases today like the wild demoniac called "Legion" in Luke 8 most Christians suffering from demonic activity lead relatively normal lives while experiencing serious personal and interpersonal problems for which no cause or solution has been found. Since they relegate satanic involvement only to mass murderers or violent sex criminals, these ordinary problem-plagued individuals wonder what's wrong with them and why they can't just "do better."

Satan's first and foremost strategy is deception. Paul warned: "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11: 14,15). It is not the few raving demoniacs which are causing the church to be ineffective but Satan's subtle deception and intrusion into the lives of "normal" believers. One Christian psychotherapist who attended my conference on spiritual conflicts and counseling said, "I had never seen any evidence of demonism in all my years of counseling until I came to your conference. When I returned to my practice I discovered that two-thirds of my clients were having problems because they were being deceived by Satan and so was I."

6. Freedom from spiritual bondage is the result of a power encounter with demonic forces

Freedom from spiritual conflicts and bondage is not a power encounter; it's a truth encounter. Satan is a deceiver and he will work undercover at all costs. But the truth of God's Word exposes him and his lie. His demons are like cockroaches that scurry for the ..shadows when the light comes on. Satan's power is in the lie, and when his lie is exposed by the truth his plans are foiled. When I was a boy on the farm, my dad, my brother and I would visit our neighbor's farm to share produce and labor. The neighbor had a yappy little dog that scared the socks off me. When it came barking around the corner my dad and brother stood their ground, but I ran. Guess who the dog chased! I escaped to the top of our pickup truck while the little dog yapped at me from the ground.

Everyone except me could see that the little dog had no power over me except what I gave it. Furthermore it had no inherent power to throw me up on the pickup; it was my belief that put me up there. That dog controlled me by using my mind, my emotions, my will, and my muscles, all of which were motivated by fear. Finally I gathered up my courage, jumped off the pickup, and kicked a small rock at the mutt. Lo and behold, it ran!

Satan is like that yappy little dog deceiving people into fearing him more than God. His power is in the lie. He is the father of lies (John 8:44) who deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9), and consequently the whole world is under the influence of the evil one (1 John 5: 19). He can do nothing about your position in Christ, but if he can deceive you into believing his lies about you and God, you will spend a lot of time on top of the pickup truck! You don't have to out shout him or out muscle him to be free of his influence. You just have to out truth him. Believe. declare, and act upon the truth of God's Word, and you will thwart Satan's strategy.

This concept has had a dramatic effect on my counseling. Previously when I exposed a demonic influence in a counseling situation it would turn into a power encounter. Counselees would become catatonic, run out of the room, or become suddenly disoriented, and I would attempt to take authority over the demon. My first approach was to get the demon to expose itself, then I would command it to leave. This exchange often resulted in a great deal of trauma for the counselee. Although progress was made, the episode would usually have to be repeated.

But I have learned from the Scriptures and my experience that truth is the liberating agent. The power of Satan is in the lie, and the power of the believer is in knowing the truth. We are to pursue truth, not power.

Furthermore, persons in bondage are not liberated by what I do as the pastor/counselor, but what they do with my help. It's not what I believe that breaks the bonds, it's what they believe, confess, renounce, and forgive. Notice the progressive logic of Scripture:

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32).

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. (John 14:6).

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide ~ you into all the truth (John 16:13). I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. ...Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. (John 17:15,17).

Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth. (Ephesians 6: 14).

Finally, brethren, whatever is true. ...let your mind - dwell on these things (Philippians 4:8).

When God first disciplined the early church in Acts 5, He did so in a dramatic way. What was the issue: drugs, sex? No, the issue was truth. Peter confronted Ananias and Sapphira: "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" (verse 3). God wanted the church to know that Satan the deceiver can ruin us if he can get us to believe and live a lie. That's why it is so important that we take "every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). If could infiltrate a church, a committee, or a person undetected, and deceive them into believing a lie, I could control their lives That's exactly what Satan is doing, and his lie is the focus of the battle.