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**TWO MINOR SKIRMISHES
WITH THE ENEMY**

About twenty-five years ago (around 1973) I had a fixed permanent dental bridge cemented in place in the lower left part of my mouth, to replace a missing tooth. The dentist was a good practitioner, but for some reason the configuration of the bridge was not suited to my mouth as it might have been. Shortly after the bridge was put in place, I would occasionally bite the inside of my lip opposite the front part of the bridge. This continued on an intermittent basis for years. Each time there would be a slight swelling of the inside of my lip. Then I would eat carefully for a week or so and the small swollen area would return to normal, only to be forgotten with the same thing recurring a few weeks later. The repetitious biting of my lip eventually became annoying. I then went to an oral surgeon and asked him to excise the small scarred area that kept getting in the way of my chewing, to get rid of the problem. After examining my mouth, the surgeon said, "In your case the cure is worse than the disease. I suggest that you eat very carefully for a longer period of time and see if this problem won't take care of itself." That sounded good in the dental chair, but it didn't work. I'd be very careful, the swelling would recede and then I would completely forget the problem and bite my lip again -- at the same place. This went on for something like fifteen years and I had reconciled myself to living with the problem. Then one morning I was out for my exercise walk and, for a reason I cannot explain, except in retrospect, I became mad, not angry, that's too nice a word, but mad at the situation in my mouth and did something I had never done before. In a very forceful and authoritative voice, I said, "You foul spirit in my mouth, I curse you by the power of the Word of God and command you to come out of my mouth in Jesus' name!"¹ At that very instant

¹In a part of His Great Commission as recorded by Mark, Jesus said, "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues. (Mark 16:17). The power to deal with evil spirits was given to the seventy, whom Jesus sent out two by two, who returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to you in Your name." (Luke 10:17). Then Jesus said, "Behold I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions [demons or evil spirits] and over

I literally

felt something move inside of my mouth. There was immediate improvement. That was at least ten years ago, about the year 1988. I still remember where I was walking the morning this occurred. Since then I have gone through the same cleansing procedure three or four times, feeling nothing physical, but feeling reassurance spiritually. Other than that, during the past ten years, there has been no recurrence. The problem I wanted an oral surgeon to solve surgically was not a physical problem. It was a spiritual problem, not to be excised surgically but exorcized spiritually as I was led by the Holy Spirit. It was only in retrospect that I knew I was led by the Holy Spirit to rebuke the foul spirit in Jesus' name. I would NEVER have considered this to be a spiritual problem without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This method of "oral hygiene" has been shared with two Dental Hygienists who assured me that this procedure is not a part of the Dental Hygienist's training curriculum.

The second encounter with the enemy is similar to another incident I previously wrote about in my letter of March 10, 1998. On June 16, 1997, I was playing the piano in the Health Care Unit of a north Dallas retirement center. The residents, most of whom were neither lucid nor rational, were brought into the activities area in wheel chairs for my piano program. About ten or fifteen minutes into my program, a woman who was seated over to my right, about twenty feet from the piano, began to scream violently with every breath. An attendant immediately walked over to her wheel chair and began wheeling her out of the area to get rid of the distraction. He pushed her through the room over to the left of my piano and was headed for the exit. Then, under the sound of my piano and the

all power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you." (See Luke 10:18, 19). The power for believers to deal with the enemy comes with baptism of the Holy Spirit, for immediately prior to his ascension Jesus said, "But you shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8). An encounter with the enemy must not be undertaken without this **power**. For an account of some people, who attempted to do this without Holy Spirit anointing and power, read about the seven sons of a Jewish high Priest named Sceva in Acts 19:13 - 17.

screams, I rebuked the screaming spirit, commanded it to come out of her in Jesus' name and enter her no more. She immediately stopped screaming. As she did so, the attendant promptly stopped in his tracks and left her wheel chair in the activities room. The woman was quiet for the remainder of my program.

To my knowledge, this is only the second time I have successfully dealt with a demonic spirit in a Nursing Home resident in over four years of playing the piano in Nursing Homes. During this period of time, I have been unsuccessful in three or four other efforts. This is not something I do often. Up to now I have attempted this only when I discern a disruptive spirit in a resident with which I can deal, without stopping my piano program. In such cases, I am careful to command the departing evil spirit **not to enter** the person again, following the example Jesus gave us in Mark 9:14 - 29. I am fully aware of the problem in ministering deliverance to a person who is not a Christian so as to leave him or her in worse condition, as Jesus taught in Matthew 12:43 - 45 and Luke 11:14 - 26, and fully support this teaching. I am praying for additional discernment in this area so as to be better able to minister to Nursing Home residents and Christians in need of deliverance. The discerning of spirits is one of the nine spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8 - 10.

I have much to learn about deliverance ministry. But I have learned enough to know the reality of the spirit world and understand that Jesus came to earth to destroy the works of the devil.² In my considered judgement, there is much need for a Spirit filled team or teams in every church who are equipped by the Holy Spirit to minister in this area. Our church is so equipped. I know as a matter of fact that there are instances where Christians, with proper teaching, can receive deliverance which will clear up serious physical, mental and emotional problems.

PRAYER AS DISCERNMENT

There is more than one type of discernment. For example, discernment of spirits, one of the nine spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:10, is essential for a successful deliverance ministry. I have been shown another type of discernment which I use to know if a person's heart is open to hear about the Lord Jesus.

²See 1 John 3:8.

One may also discern information about an individual from knowledge of his prayer life. As a matter of fact, prayer is a barometer of the Christian life. Should you tell me the intimate details of your prayer life, I could write a profile of who you are, where you are and what you are in the journey called life. That's all I need. Just prayer details. When do you pray? To whom? For what? For whom? How often? Under what circumstances? I have not known this all of my Christian life. I learned it, after I learned to pray, from *Someone* whom I met, after being a Christian for many years. Here is a brief explanation of what I mean.

In 1965 I was a very active member of a Dallas church which made exclusive salvation claims for its members only. Then I discovered a personal relationship with Jesus. It took about a year for the other church leaders to determine that I no longer was "one of them." It was all right to know the Mayor of the City, a Senator or some other prominent person, but knowing Jesus was another thing entirely. It was dangerous as both *He* and I found out. It just wasn't allowed. Within a year or so I was expelled from that congregation by fine, well-meaning Christian men and women. They had no idea *Who* they were turning out. Here is some insight on that church (and all other churches with exclusive salvation claims for its members only), illustrated by one of the song leaders who came from a prominent family in that denomination. One evening I heard him say, "I can't use or lead a certain song in the church hymnal because it contains the phrase, 'Beyond the sacred page I seek thee, Lord.'" That statement was descriptive of his prayer life, or the absence thereof, and of his spiritual condition. He obviously did not know Jesus. *That is also descriptive of the same weakness which will invade every church whose doctrine is legalistically inclusive so that it excludes salvation from everyone outside of its boundaries.* And that includes all churches, whether Catholic or Protestant. It flies in the face of what Jesus said and what He came to do.³

I'm reminded of a book in my library entitled, "A Taste of New Wine," written by Keith Miller, who was introduced to Jesus by the Holy Spirit. One chapter in his book is devoted to the dilemma of being

³Jesus came to seek and save the lost, see Luke 19:10. When He finds you, you become acquainted with Him, see John 17:3. Once you become acquainted with Him, talking with Him (prayer) as Someone you know is the result of your acquaintanceship.

in a church where the leaders do not know Jesus personally. For example, what does a member or a parishioner who knows Jesus say to his Pastor, Minister or Priest, who *does not* know Him? Professional clergymen who do not know Jesus preach *about Jesus* and nothing happens except in the flesh. When the same leaders *know Jesus*, they *preach Him* as the complete answer to every issue of life. And people get saved, healed, delivered, blessed and filled with the Holy Spirit. That's what Jesus came to do. It's in the Book!⁴ The church is supposed to be God's hospital where hurting people come for help. And *everyone* is hurting. That's life. The only way we can help a *hurting* world is to introduce them to Jesus. When you know Him personally, your legalistic doctrine will self-destruct and denominational walls will come down. Then you can *see* that salvation is in Him alone, not the institution or its doctrine, however carefully it may conform to certain scripture verses. Not long after I met Jesus, while I was still "*one of them*," I read an editorial in one of the prominent magazines of that church, published in Austin, Texas, and written by the editor, now deceased. The conclusion of the editorial was this: There is no way to know whether or not God ever answers a specific prayer you pray. This was so upsetting to me at the time that I left out the back door of our home and told my wife I was going to pray. I then drove over to a prayer chapel⁵ on Garland Road and prayed until I was at peace again. The very idea of a visible church leader who doesn't know Jesus personally and who has never experienced the answer to a specific prayer epitomizes the problem in that church.

God, deliver us from such blindness. Remove the scales from our eyes that we might see Jesus. God, strike us blind as you did Saul of Tarsus and send to us

⁴All of these blessings are accessed by faith which comes by hearing the Word of God preached, for "faith comes by hearing." See Romans 10:17. There are churches today that teach and preach all of the blessings contained in the Atonement of Christ: salvation, healing deliverance and Holy Spirit baptism. Wherever this occurs, in time, people will begin to experience the total blessing package of the Atonement, which includes God's 401 (K).

⁵Part of the Garland Road Baptist Church, which, at that time, was open 24 hours a day for prayer.

our Ananias⁶ to lay hands on us that we might regain our sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. That same editor, in another editorial, written on the exclusive claims of salvation for members of that church only, wrote, "If we are not what we claim to be, there is no reason for our existence."⁷ Enough said. Every institution which makes exclusive salvation claims for *its members only* will be destroyed, but the Church⁸ will shine brighter and come forth gloriously triumphant.

Prayer *is* a barometer of the Christian life. When you become acquainted with Jesus, you are *driven* to your knees in prayer, in tearful, joyful gratitude, and you experience miraculous answers to specific prayers. As this happens, you are again *driven* to your knees in gratitude to give glory to God for such blessings. Abraham "grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God."⁹ In that respect, **you are no different from Abraham**. *Talking to Someone you know is a lot different than talking to Someone you have read about.*

⁶Read Acts 9:1 - 18 for the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. God used Ananias, who was not an Apostle, to lay hands on Saul that he might regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

⁷I cannot cite the date of publication for either of these editorials, but the words are stamped indelibly upon my mind. Jesus said, "And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch." Matthew 15:14 (a).

⁸In this case, the **Church** to which I refer is the body of the Lord on the earth. This includes everyone who has confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God and has claimed Him as Savior and Lord of his life. See Matthew 16:16; Romans 10:9, 10. This has nothing to do with affiliation with any organized church, group or denomination. It does have to do with allegiance to Jesus as Lord. Those who profess such allegiance **are** the body of the Lord on the earth, irrespective of any denominational or church organizational ties.

⁹This is a quotation from Romans 4:20 (b), RSV. In Romans 10:17 the Apostle Paul also wrote, "So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." These two scriptures in Romans reveal two sources of faith: (1) Hearing the word of God and (2) Giving glory to God. One secret to giving glory to God is receiving something from Him as the direct answer to a specific prayer you have prayed so that you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that He responded to **your prayer request**. That is another blessing of *knowing Jesus personally*, about which I write. That same blessing is available to you since God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34), for Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." (John 6:37).

THE SOLUTION

The reason for exclusive salvation claims within the borders of a specific denomination or church, Protestant or Catholic, is due to the beguiling and deceitful way of the enemy. We must neither criticize nor judge the people involved. They are no different from you and me. But for God's grace, I would still be spiritually imprisoned by a legalistic doctrine. Jesus has given us the answer. Shortly before His crucifixion He poured out His heart to the Father in intercessory prayer for the little band of disciples He was leaving behind. Hear these words from that prayer: "But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they [His disciples] may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should *keep them from the evil one*. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As you sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; *that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*"¹⁰

Only prayer can tear down the manmade claims of exclusive salvation within the borders of a church or denomination. Such claims are strongholds of the enemy. Herein lies a call to spiritual warfare.

A HIGH WATER CROSSING

Within a few years after I came to know Jesus, I began to understand the experience of the Israelites in Egypt, the wilderness, the Jordan and Canaan as shadows and types of our spiritual pilgrimage today. I saw Egypt as the world; the wilderness as a test of faith to receive God's blessings; the Jordan river as the final exam before entering Canaan and Canaan as God's abundant life¹¹ as promised by Jesus to His followers.

As I began to comprehend the blessings of spiritual Canaan, it became the subject of my prayers.

I began to say to the Lord, "Take me over the Jordan to Canaan. I know there is more and I want it -- now, or as soon thereafter as possible!" My insistent prayers for the Lord to take me out of the wilderness across the Jordan to Canaan continued for some period of time and then two things happened. First, one day the Lord told me I was murmuring. That got my attention! Murmuring, of course, was what kept a generation of Israelites in the wilderness for forty years until they all died.¹² Only then, after the death of Moses, was Joshua commissioned by God to take the Israelites across the Jordan to possess Canaan, a land of superabundance. The land was so fertile that one branch with a single cluster of grapes was so large it had to be carried on a pole between two men.¹³ When the Lord told me I was murmuring, I knew what that meant and immediately stopped complaining (murmuring) about His getting me across the Jordan into Canaan. Secondly, shortly thereafter the Lord gave me a Joel 2 dream. In the dream I saw a river overflowing its banks and I knew it was the Jordan. My thought was, here is my chance. Now I would cross the Jordan. And I began to wade into the river, determined that I was going to cross over on my own. As I continued to walk, the river got deeper and the current swifter. When I had waded for a short period of time, with the water up to my waist, I looked down and saw the water was muddy, representing the filth of sin I was right in the middle of. Then I realized that the river was too wide and deep and the current too swift to make it on my own. At that point, I continued to walk, but began to trust by faith. Thereafter, with each step I took, *I was literally lifted up out of the water*. Then the dream ended. Upon awakening, *I knew* that as I continued to walk by faith, *I would be lifted up to the point that I would walk on top of the water to my Canaan!*

The lesson was learned. Jesus has done every thing necessary for you and me to cross the Jordan into our Canaan, the abundant life He promised. Everything necessary for the trip is in the Word of God and must be appropriated by faith. Any effort to obtain God's blessings in the flesh will fail. It is all by faith.

....more later, the Lord willing.

¹⁰John 17:13 - 21 (Italics added).

¹¹John 10:10.

¹²Exodus 16:2; Numbers 14:37; 1 Corinthians 10:10.

¹³Numbers 13:23.