

# THE PULPIT

## ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

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### THE POISON OF SELFISH AMBITION

THE APOSTLE JOHN DESCRIBES DIOTREPHES AS A PERSON "WHO LOVES TO BE FIRST," MEANING THAT HE LUSTED AFTER THE POWER, RECOGNITION AND SPECIAL PRIVILEGES THAT COME WITH POSITION. AS A RESULT, DIOTREPHES WAS RESENTFUL AND JEALOUS OF JOHN'S SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE IN THE CHURCH.

WITH HIS HEART POISONED BY SELFISH AMBITION, DIOTREPHES BEHAVED RUTHLESSLY TOWARD THOSE WHO OPPOSED HIM. UNLIKE GAIVUS, HE REFUSED TO SHOW HOSPITALITY TO ANY OF THE VISITING MISSIONARIES WHO WERE ASSOCIATED WITH JOHN; HE TRIED TO RUIN THE REPUTATIONS OF JOHN AND HIS MISSIONARY FRIENDS BY SPEAKING BADLY ABOUT THEM TO CHURCH MEMBERS; HE ALSO FORBODE CHURCH MEMBERS FROM WELCOMING THE MISSIONARIES, AND IF THEY DISOBEYED, HE PUT THEM OUT OF THE CHURCH. PERSONS RULED BY SELFISH AMBITION DISRUPT THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND DISHONOUR THE LEADERS AND THE NAME OF CHRIST.

WHEN AMBITION ONCE RAISED ITS UGLY HEAD AMONG HIS DISCIPLES, JESUS SAID TO THEM, "WHOEVER WANTS TO BECOME GREAT AMONG YOU MUST BE YOUR SERVANT, AND WHOEVER WANTS TO BE FIRST MUST BE SLAVE OF ALL. FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY" (MARK 10:43-45).

MAY THE MIND OF CHRIST RULE ALL WHO WOULD ASPIRE TO POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE. AND MAY HIS SON'S LEADERSHIP SKILL BE OUR MODEL, FOR THE SON OF MAN CAME NOT TO BE SERVED BUT TO SERVE (MATT. 20:28).

### DO YOU HAVE TO BE POOR SO AS TO BE HOLY?

IT HAS BEEN TAUGHT FOR MANY YEARS THAT HOLINESS AND POVERTY GO HAND IN HAND. THE APOSTLE PAUL SAID "I KNOW HOW TO BE ABASED, AND HOW TO ABOUND." THEN "I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME" (PHIL. 4:12-13). YOU CAN BE JUST AS HOLY WHEN YOU ARE FINANCIALLY COMFORTABLE AS YOU CAN BE WHEN YOU ARE POOR. PERHAPS IT IS EASIER TO CRY OUT TO GOD FOR HELP WHEN YOU ARE IN NEED. BUT IF CHRISTIANS SANCTIFY GOD IN THEIR HEARTS AHEAD OF MATERIAL CONCERN, THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE ABOVE THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES WHETHER THAT INVOLVES PROSPERITY OR POVERTY.

POVERTY IS A CURSE, NOT A BLESSING. IT IS CERTAINLY NOT EQUATED WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS. IT COMES SOMETIMES BECAUSE OF THE HORRORS OF WAR, SOMETIMES BECAUSE OF UNJUST OR UNWISE GOVERNMENT, SOMETIMES BECAUSE OF OPPRESSION BY THE GREEDY AND THE RUTHLESS, SOMETIMES BECAUSE OF DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDMENTS, AND SOMETIMES BECAUSE OF LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S PRINCIPLES OF BLESSING. SOMETIMES TEMPORARY POVERTY FOLLOWS A SATANIC ATTACK OR A SERIOUS AND UNEXPLAINABLE CALAMITY. WHATEVER ITS CAUSE, POVERTY IS NOT EQUATED WITH HOLINESS.

SOME VOLUNTARILY TAKE A VOW OF POVERTY SO THAT THEY CAN GIVE THEMSELVES TOTALLY TO GOD. IN THAT SITUATION, POVERTY BECOMES A BLESSING FOR THOSE PEOPLE, BECAUSE THEY HAVE GIVEN UP MATERIAL RICHES FOR GOD. HOWEVER, SIMPLY BEING POOR IS NOT A SIGN OF HOLINESS (LUKE 18:22). OF COURSE, NEITHER IS BEING WEALTHY. GODLY PEOPLE ARE THOSE WHO ARE CONTENT WHEREVER GOD HAS PLACED THEM AND WHO ARE SERVING HIM TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITIES, IRRESPECTIVE OF MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES (1 TIM. 6:6, 17-19).

### WHAT IS A DEMON? (MARK 5:2-5)

A DEMON IS A FALLEN ANGEL. WHEN SATAN, WHO WAS THE VERY HIGHEST ANGEL, REBELLED AGAINST GOD, HE TOOK A LARGE NUMBER OF THE ANGELS WITH HIM IN REBELLION (IS. 14:12-15; REV. 12:3-4). WHEN THEIR REBELLION FAILED, THEY WERE CAST OUT OF HEAVEN. THOSE ANGELS ARE NOW DEMONS. AS ANGELS CAN ASCEND THE HEIGHTS OF SPIRITUALITY, DEMONS REACH THE DEPTHS OF HATRED, BITTERNESS, REBELLION, DISOBEDIENCE AND PERVERSION. DEMONS TORMENT PEOPLE, POSSESS THEM, AND LEAD THEM FROM GOD AND HIS TRUTH (MK. 5:2-5; ACTS 13:6-12).

ALTHOUGH LUST, HOMOSEXUALITY, DRUNKENNESS, GLUTTONY AND WITCHCRAFT ARE EXPRESSIONS OF SINFUL FLESH, THESE ARE AMONG PRACTICES THAT CAN ALSO BE EXPRESSIONS OF DEMONIC ACTIVITY IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE. GROSSLY PERVERTED SEXUAL PRACTICES, SUCH AS SADOMASOCHISM AND PEDOPHILIA, HAVE DEMONIC ROOTS. IN A SIMILAR MANNER, SCHIZOPHRENIA CAN BE A MENTAL DISEASE, BUT IT CAN ALSO BE CAUSED BY DEMON POSSESSION.

JUST AS THE ANGELS HAVE ARCHANGELS AND HIGHER POWERS, THE DEMONS HAVE WHAT ARE CALLED "PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS." IT IS POSSIBLE THAT VARIOUS DEMON PRINCES ARE IN CHARGE OF SPECIFIC CITIES OR REGIONS IN THE WORLD. THERE IS CONFLICT IN THE INVISIBLE WORLD BETWEEN GOD'S LOYAL MESSENGERS AND THE DEMONIC HOSTS AND THEIR HUMAN AGENTS. SOMEHOW IN GOD'S WONDERFUL ORDER, HE USES THE PRAYERS OF HIS PEOPLE TO RESTRAIN DEMONIC ACTIVITY AND TO DIRECT THE ACTION OF ANGELIC POWERS TO CONTROL DEMONS (DANIEL 10).

### WHAT IS EXORCISM? (ACTS 19:13)

EXORCISM IS COMMANDING, IN THE NAME OF JESUS, A DEMON TO COME OUT OF AN INDIVIDUAL, A HOUSE, OR WHEREVER THE DEMON HAPPENS TO BE. EXORCISM IS ACCOMPLISHED BY THE SPOKEN WORD, IN THE NAME OF JESUS, THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND IT IS DONE SIMPLY AND QUICKLY (ACTS 16:16-18).

THE PERSON WHO IS DOING THE EXORCISM SHOULD BE FILLED WITH GOD'S SPIRIT. HE SHOULD NOT HAVE ANY WEAKNESS (ACTS 19:13-16). SO, THIS PERSON SHOULD BE PURE OF ULTIMATE MOTIVES, SEXUAL IMPURITIES, GREED, AND ANYTHING THAT WOULD LEAVE HIM OPEN TO SOME CHARGE BY THE DEVIL, WHO IS THE ACCUSER OF THE BRETHREN. ANOTHER WARNING IS THAT PEOPLE SHOULD NOT GO OUT LOOKING FOR DEMONS OR MAKE UP DEMONS WHERE THEY DO NOT EXIST. A BELIEVER SHOULD BE PREPARED TO CONFRONT DEMONS WHEN THE NEED ARISES, BUT HE OR SHE SHOULD NOT SEEK THIS KIND OF ENCOUNTER.

### The Five C's

A LONG TIME AGO SOMEONE WROTE ME A LETTER IN WHICH SHE POINTED OUT A FEW WORDS TO HELP ME UNDERSTAND PHIL. 3 IN SPECIFIC AND LIFE PRINCIPLES IN GENERAL. THAT LETTER HELPED ME. I HOPE THIS LETTER WILL HELP YOU. I WON'T TEACH YOU THE ABC'S JUST THE C'S. THERE ARE FIVE OF THEM. AFTER YOU READ THIS, TURN BACK TO PHIL. 3 AND HOOK SOME OF THOSE VERSES UP WITH THESE WORDS. MAYBE YOU COULD DO IT WITH YOUR FAMILY OR SOME NEIGHBOURS OR FRIENDS.

**CONSECRATION.** - COMMIT YOURSELF TO MAKING YOUR LIFE COUNT FOR SOMETHING OR SOMEONE.

**CONCENTRATION.** - FOCUS ON A SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE OR GOAL.

**CANCELLATION.** - TO FOCUS, YOU HAVE TO CANCEL OUT SOME THINGS. TOSS THEM IN TRASH.

**CONTINUATION.** - TO GET WHERE YOU'RE GOING, YOU HAVE TO KEEP ON GOING.

**CONSTELLATION.** THERE ARE SOME THINGS WE HAVE TO DO TOGETHER. ONE STAR DOES NOT A GALAXY MAKE. I FIND THESE PRINCIPLES OR VALUES HELPFUL IN THINKING ABOUT WHAT I WANT OUT OF LIFE. IF THEY HELP YOU LIVE FOR CHRIST, PASS THEM ALONG TO SOMEONE ELSE.

## SHUT THE DOOR TO SPIRITUAL DARKNESS WHEN TROUBLE COMES

THE YEAR 1999 MAY POSSIBLY GO DOWN AS CAUSING THE MOST SEVERE SETBACK TO THE DEMONIC WORLD OF DARKNESS SINCE JESUS' CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE MILLIONS OF CHRISTIANS TODAY THAT ARE YET TO RID THEIR HOMES OF SPIRITUAL DARKNESS. HERE ARE SOME OF THE KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK AS YOU CONSIDER HOW TO SHUT THE DOOR TO SPIRITUAL DARKNESS IN YOUR HOME.

- ⇒ DO YOU HAVE ANY FETISHES THAT ARE LINKED WITH SUPERSTITIONS (E.G. *GOOD LUCK, PROTECTION OR CHARMS*)?
- ⇒ DO YOU HAVE ANY OBJECT LINKED WITH FAMILIAR SPIRITS THAT YOUR FAMILY HAS PASSED ON FROM THE OLD GENERATION TO YOUR PRESENT GENERATION?
- ⇒ DO YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTS RELATED TO SECRET SOCIETIES (SUCH AS *OGBONI CULTS*)
- ⇒ DO YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTS OR ARTWORK THAT REPRESENTS A FOREIGN GOD (STATUS OF *BUDDHA* OR THAT OF *MARY/MADONNA*)?
- ⇒ DO YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTS OR ARTWORK RELATED TO FALSE RELIGIONS (E.G. *THE BOOK OF MOMON*)?
- ⇒ DO YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTS RELATED TO THE OCCULT (E.G. *OUIJA BOARDS*)?
- ⇒ DO YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTS THAT ARE LINKED WITH INORDINATE AFFECTIONS FROM PREVIOUS PAST RELATIONSHIPS (E.G. *OLD LOVE LETTERS OR GIFTS*)?
- ⇒ DO YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTS OR ITEMS THAT ARE PART OF YOUR BELIEF SYSTEM THAT IS CONTRARY TO THE TEACHING OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS (E.G. *CANDLES, STATUS OF MARY/MADONNA*)?
- ⇒ DO YOU HAVE MOVIES, BOOKS, MAGAZINES, PICTURES, AND OTHER OBJECTS THAT DO NOT GLORIFY THE HOLY CHARACTER OF GOD?
- ⇒ DO YOU ALWAYS CONTROL YOUR CHILDREN'S GAMES AND TOYS TO REMOVE ANY OCCULT ITEMS, DEMONIC COMICS OR VIDEO GAMES?

THESE ITEMS ARE CAPABLE OF HINDERING YOUR PRAYERS AND LIFE OF WORSHIP. THEY NEED TO BE BURNT AS IN ACTS 19:19 BREAKING ALL CURSES THAT THE PARAPHERNALIA MAY HAVE REPRESENTED. ELIMINATING OBJECTS THAT CAN GIVE THE ENEMY A PLACE IN OUR LIVES (SUCH AS THOSE MENTIONED ABOVE) IS A MAJOR STEP TOWARD RIDDING OUR HOMES OF SPIRITUAL DARKNESS AND COMING INTO THE ABUNDANT LIFE JESUS PROMISED.

### HOW TO BE FREE FROM BONDAGE

NOW IT'S TRUE THAT THERE ARE SOME HABITS WE CAN BREAK BY OUR OWN WILL POWER. BUT TO BE COMPLETELY FREE, YOU CAN'T RULE YOUR FLESH BY WILL POWER. YOU CAN DO IT ONLY AS YOU ALLOW YOUR SPIRIT TO BE EMPOWERED BY GOD'S SPIRIT. FOR EXAMPLE, YOUR WILL POWER OR THE COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT SMOKING ENDANGERS HEALTH IS NOT ENOUGH A FORCE TO HELP YOU GIVE UP SMOKING. REAL CHANGE WORKS FROM THE INSIDE OUT. THE BIGGEST BATTLE IN YOUR LIFE WILL ALWAYS BE IN THE AREA OF YOUR THOUGHTS AND IMPULSES. THAT'S WHERE THE ENEMY OPERATES. IF HE CAN GET YOUR MIND OFF THE WORD, AND INTO THAT REALM, HE CAN SWING YOU TOWARDS SIN EVERY TIME.

BUT THE WORD OF GOD IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. WHEN YOU STAY IN THE WORD YOU'RE ALLOWING THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SPEAK CONSTANTLY TO YOU — AND THEN YOU CAN KEEP YOUR FLESH IN SUBJECTION. ON THE OTHER HAND, WHEN YOU DWELL IN SINFUL THOUGHTS, YOU'RE OPERATING IN THE ENEMY'S LANGUAGE AND LETTING HIM DICTATE TO YOU.

SATAN IS THE ULTIMATE AUTHOR OF EVERY TEMPTATION TO SIN, ALTHOUGH MOST TEMPTATIONS ARE MEDITATED THROUGH THE LUST OF A PERSON'S FLESH AND THE SINFUL SPIRITUAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE WORLD. SATAN IS A CRUEL MASTER. TAKE A STEP TODAY AND BE FREE COMPLETELY.

DAVID WAS 'RIDING HIGH' UNTIL HE CAME HOME ONE DAY, TO FIND THAT THE ENEMY HAD DESTROYED HIS HOME AND TAKEN HIS FAMILY CAPTIVE. THINK, IF THE ENEMY CAN DO THAT TO KING DAVID, THEN HE CAN DO IT TO YOU. HE'LL EVEN ATTACK YOUR FAMILY TO GET AT YOU. GOD NEVER PROMISED A CARPET ON THE RACETRACK OR A BED OF ROSES ON THE BATTLEFIELD. "IN FACT, EVERYONE WHO WANTS TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS WILL BE PERSECUTED. (2TIM.3:12). HIS ATTACK ONLY CONFIRMS THAT YOU'RE MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

FIRST DAVID'S MEN GAVE IN TO DESPAIR; NEXT THEY LOOKED FOR SOMEBODY TO BLAME. SOUND FAMILIAR? BUT ALL THAT DID WAS BRING DISCOURAGEMENT TO THEIR HEARTS AND DIVISION TO THEIR RANKS. THERE'S NOT SOLUTION IN BLAME; WHEN YOU PLAY THE 'BLAME GAME' YOU'RE ONLY DOING THE DEVIL'S JOB FOR HIM AND MAKING THINGS WORSE. (REV.12:10).

LOOK WHAT DAVID DID: FIRST, HE ENCOURAGED HIMSELF IN THE LORD. HE HAD TO, FOR THERE WAS NOBODY ELSE TO DO IT FOR HIM. NEXT HE SAID, 'BRING ME THE EPHOD.' (1SAM.30:6-7). THAT'S WHAT ISRAEL USED TO GIVE THEM DIRECTION. IN OUR TERMINOLOGY, HE CALLED FOR THE BIBLE. CHILD OF GOD, THE DIRECTION AND STRENGTH YOU NEED TO WIN THE BATTLE ARE IN YOUR BIBLE. READ IT, FOR IT'S "...THE WORE OF HIS GRACE, WHICH CAN BUILD YOU UP ..." (ACTS 20:32).

FINALLY, 'DAVID INQUIRED OF THE LORD, 'SHALL I PURSUE THIS RAIDING PARTY?' 'PURSUE THEM,' HE REPLIED. 'YOU WILL...SUCCEED.'" (1SAM. 30:8) HAVE YOU TALKED TO THE LORD ABOUT IT YET? GOD WANTS TO RESTORE TO YOU EVERYTHING THE ENEMY HAS TAKEN — BUT YOU'VE GOT TO DO THESE THREE THINGS.

### LESSONS IN THE STORM

ON THIS WAY TO ROME, PAUL WENT THROUGH THE WORST STORM OF HIS LIFE. (ACTS 27:23-27) IF YOU'RE IN ONE TODAY, CONSIDER THESE POINTS.

1) **DISOBEDIENCE CAN CAUSE A STORM!** BECAUSE THE OWNER REFUSED GOD'S WARNING THROUGH PAUL, IT COST HIM HIS SHIP, HIS CARGO AND ALMOST HIS LIFE. YOUR DISOBEDIENCE CAN BRING A STORM ON YOUR HEALTH, FAMILY, CAREER AND EVER YOUR STEWARDSHIP IN THE MINISTRY. GOD DOESN'T INTRODUCE HIS COMMANDMENTS BY SAYING "IF YOU'RE IN THE MOOD," NO, HE MEANS WHAT HE SAYS AND HE INTENDS IT FOR YOUR GOOD. LISTEN TO HIM!

2) **IF YOU'RE IN A STORM TODAY, YOU'RE NOT ALONE!** PAUL SAID, "FOR THERE STOOD BY ME THIS NIGHT THE ANGEL OF GOD, WHOSE I AM, AND WHOM I SERVE, SAYING, FEAR NOT... GOD HATH GIVEN THEE ALL THEM THAT SAIL WITH THEE... FOR I BELIEVE GOD ..." WITH HIM ON BOARD, THERE'S NOT A STORM BIG ENOUGH TO TAKE YOU UNDER.

3) **WITH GOD IN YOUR SIDE — YOU'RE IN CHARGE!** PAUL LOOKED LIKE A PRISONER, BUT HAD MORE AUTHORITY THAN THE CAPTAIN. HE WAS BOUND IN CHAINS, BUT WAS THE FREEST MAN ON BOARD. YOU SEE, WHEN YOU'VE HEARD FROM GOD, YOU, CAN HANDLE ANYTHING. LISTEN, "NO WEAPON FORGED AGAINST YOU WILL PREVAIL, AND YOU WILL REFUTE EVERY TONGUE THAT RISES AGAINST YOU. THIS IS THE HERITAGE OF THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD..." (ISAIAH 54:17) THE WORD FOR YOU TODAY IS YOU'RE GOING TO COME THROUGH THIS VICTORIOUSLY.

### DEMONIC ACTIVITIES

DEMONS ARE GIVEN RIGHTS BY MAN THROUGH SIN. UNLESS THAT SIN IS REPENTED OF, DEMONS WILL LEGALISTICALLY HANG ON TO THE GROUND THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN. DEMONS DO THEIR WORK MOST EFFECTIVELY WHEN THEY ARE ABLE TO LIE HIDDEN. THERE ARE MANY SO CALLED CHRISTIANS IN THE CHURCH WHO ARE STRUGGLING WITH PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL, OR SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS WHO ARE REALLY STRUGGLING WITH DEMONS AND DON'T KNOW IT.

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