PASTOR, DON'T LET SATAN HIJACK YOUR CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The devil hates God! The devil hates man! Indeed, he hates anything that pertains to God and seeks desperately to fight and destroy anything that God is doing on the earth. Man, especially the born-again man, is God's instrument for achieving His purpose on the earth and the Church is the arrowhead of the move of God on the earth. God has a purpose for man.

> For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome. (Jer. 29:11 Amplified Bible)

Right from the Garden of Eden, Satan had been fighting man. If he cannot stop man from discovering the good plan—the calling and commission of God for man—he wants to hijack it and put a permanent stop to the move of God in his

life, his family, his ministry, and his destiny. Whether you are a Christian, a church leader, or a minister of the Gospel, the goal of the devil is the same. There is a satanic program to fight against and hijack your calling and commission.

The Bible does not leave us in the dark concerning this satanic plot against the children of God and the Church. Individual Christians, deacons, and the Apostles in the early Church had to face this multidimensional assault of the devil, either individually or corporately. Some were victims, some were victors. Some did exploits in this battle against satanic attacks and some were exploited by the devil.

Ephesians 6:11 talks about the wiles of the devil—his evil tricks. Satan is a defeated foe, but he has evil tricks which he keeps using to hijack the calling and commission of people. And it is rather unfortunate that he keeps recording some success, but he doesn't have to succeed in your life, in your family, in your ministry, and in your church henceforth.

In this book, using the early Church and some Bible characters as the basis of my study, I have written to show you the tricks, methods, and weapons Satan uses to fight against and hijack people's calling and commission, bearing in mind that his ultimate objective is to stop the work of God in their lives and in the Church. The good news is that

Satan does not have new tricks to use in our generation. It is the same old tricks that he keeps using because, sadly enough, he has found them very effective.

If you are a Christian, a Christian leader, or a minister of the Gospel in the five-fold ministry office, this book will help you tremendously to know the strategies of the devil and the areas you must be on guard against in his attempt to take over your calling and commission. In this book, you will learn, with the help of the Holy Spirit, both from the Old Testament and the New Testament, principles on how to watch over your calling and commission as well as ways to carefully guard against the onslaught of Satan to hijack and take it over.

I pray for you, in the midst of prevalent pollution of people's calling and commission, that you will keep your commission clean and fulfill your calling. I also believe that God will use this book to save as many people who have become victims of the devil's attack in this regard. I am equally trusting God to use it to open the eyes of His Church to these old tricks of the devil, cleanse the Church, and preserve her calling and commission from Satan's takeover bid, in Jesus's name.

CHAPTER 1

DON'T LET SATAN TAKE OVER YOUR CHURCH

The devil doesn't have any new trick. Any time he sees the move of God going on, either in somebody's personal life, in a church, or in a nation, he wants to take it over. He has done it for many moves of God. He succeeded in stopping some great moves of God in the past, and he still wants to do the same. If you know this truth, you can preserve what God is doing in your life and allow it to accomplish God's purpose. Acts chapter 6 shows us the devil's attempt to take over the early Church.

RACISM, TRIBALISM, AND DIVISION

> And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring

> of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. (Acts 6:1)

Here we see the devil using racism and tribalism to take over the move of God. People were dividing themselves based on race, tribe, and color. The spirit of division is a terrible spirit. It doesn't mind what it uses. It sets labour against the management, it uses colour against colour, male against female. It uses the educated against the illiterate. That spirit uses all kinds of things. Instead of allowing us to see the Kingdom of God as built around differences and celebrating the differences, it amplifies our differences to divide us. The Bible says here that there arose murmurings, and this was a prelude to strife. James tells us some dangerous things about strife.

> But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.
> This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.
> For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. (James 3:14–16)

Strife has stopped many people from participating in God's move in their days. It was going to do that here, bringing the Grecians against the Hebrews. The

Grecians were complaining about the neglect of their widows because they were not of their tribe. Great churches have been stopped by strife. Genesis chapter 13 tells us the story of Abraham and Lot. Abraham took Lot along, and God blessed both of them. Lot was sensible enough to know that God's hand was upon Abraham, and God began to bless them. But the Bible says there was strife between the herdsmen of Lot and the herdsmen of Abraham. Lot could have stopped it, but he didn't stop it. The truth is that every strife has a source. The solution is to identify the source of the strife, isolate it, neutralize it, and separate it; otherwise strife will stop you.

Anywhere there is strife between you and anyone in anything that God has called you to do, it is either that God has not brought you together or the devil wants to stop something great that is ongoing. He did it for Paul and Barnabas over a young man called John Mark, who was Barnabas's nephew. Because of that division, the two of them separated. And you can imagine what the body of Christ lost because of the separation of those two great ministries. The important thing is that the devil accomplished his purpose of separating them. The devil doesn't mind who he separates you from. Some people are separated from ministries and anointings that are supposed to take them further. Some people are

separated from a ministry anointing that is supposed to protect them. In Acts 6:1, the devil brought murmuring, complaints, and grumbling. That was the spirit of the devil attempting a takeover, and you must take note of that. There is nothing that quenches the fire of the anointing faster than strife and offences.

There is nothing that cuts a person from the flow of eternal life faster than offences. If you look at John the Baptist at a point in his life, the Bible says in Luke chapter 7 that he sent a message to Jesus asking, "Are you the one to come? Or should we look for another?"

And Jesus in that instant healed many people and sent a message to John saying, "The deaf hear, the blind see, the dead are raised, the gospel is preached to the poor, blessed is he that shall not be offended at me."

Jesus picked it that John was taking offence at Him. What caused John to be beheaded was not that he preached against Herod, Herod could not have killed him because he was afraid of him as a prophet, but because he took offence at Jesus. Offences separated him from the anointing. The offence so separated him from the flow of the supernatural that even the Lord Jesus Christ did not perceive it by the word of knowledge that he had been beheaded until His disciples came to tell Him, and that's what

offences will do for you. John the Baptist had finished his ministry, but he shouldn't have died that way. He came in the spirit of Elijah; Herodias came in the spirit of Jezebel. The Old Testament Jezebel could not kill Elijah back then, therefore the one that came in the spirit of Jezebel should not have been able to kill John the Baptist, yet offences separated him from the flow of the supernatural.

Regardless of the height of anointing and glory you attain, offences can reduce you to an ordinary human being. It can bring you to an ordinary level where anything can touch you and affect you. As a child of God carrying the destiny of God, carrying the anointing of God, walking in the protection of the anointing, don't respond to offences; don't respond to things that stir up envy, murmuring, and others like them.

> Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. (Acts 6:2)

They addressed the problem. Thank God for those apostles. They were so accurate in walking in the power of the apostolic calling that they did not allow anything to stop them. They realized this was the spirit of strife coming and they stopped it. They

raised strong anointed deacons to serve and administer that aspect of ministry. Today we have turned deaconship in the church into something like a chieftaincy affair. It is a call to service, and there is no anointing where there is no appointment. There must be something for you to do before you are raised up to that deaconate. There was a need for that in Acts chapter 6. If no need has arisen in your assembly, then do away with the deaconate.

WRONG DEACONATE OR NO DEACONATE

One other way the devil takes over moves of God is where there is no deaconate or wrong deaconate in place. The purpose of the deaconate is seen in Acts chapter 6 verse 2: “Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve the tables.”

When the top leadership, the ministerial leadership, those who stand in the pulpit ministry as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, begin to leave the ministry of the Word of God to serve at tables, it will reduce the anointing in the congregation. It will reduce the contribution of the Holy Ghost to the church and to the people of God

and increase the contribution of the devil. Every time there is a reduction of the anointing, there is also an increase of the contribution of Satan. And any time that the devil works on the ministerial leadership to begin to serve at the table and not concentrate on the Word of God, the devil is going to take over. We've seen racism and tribalism. Now we are seeing no or wrong deaconate, which makes ministerial leadership leave the Word of God and prayer.

> Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. (Acts 6:3)

There is a business side and there is a spiritual-ministerial side of the work. Those that are called into the five-fold ministry offices should be concerned mainly with the spiritual-ministerial end of the work and ordain men of reputation into the office of deaconate to serve at the business end. These are the qualifications: honest report, good testimony, full of the Holy Ghost (so that if the Holy Ghost decides to change direction during a meeting, they won't be rigid and say they don't agree and fight the leadership. That has caused trouble in many places and stopped the move of God).

When men are not full of the Holy Ghost, they are

not malleable in the hand of God. And the Bible also says they must be full of wisdom.

But look at the following verses:

> But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.
> And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte from Antioch:
> Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:4–6)

Look at the result of that decision in verse 7:

> And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

What happened when the Word of God increased? The faith of the people increased. When the faith in the people increased, the power in their lives increased. When the Word of God increased, the anointing increased. When the Word of God increased, understanding increased. When the Word of God increased, knowledge increased, and when knowledge increased, liberty increased. And that was

the fundamental reason why the Church in Acts of Apostles grew.

But today, we see ministers that are trying to do one thing and add another thing to it. These people said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." When those in the top leadership don't have time to give continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word and where they have to divide their time with ministering at tables or something here and there, they find it difficult to walk in the full strength of the anointing to help them accomplish their purpose. One of the things bringing weakness into the body of Christ today is this: ministers don't spend considerable quality time in communion with the Holy Ghost, to pray, and study the Word of God. This has resulted into the lifting of messages from several shallow sources. They don't have time for waiting in the presence of God, and there is a weakening of the anointing in the atmosphere. When that happens, the contribution of the devil increases, and he attempts to take over. But the apostles didn't do that. And as a result of the Word increasing, the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem, and a great company of priests were obedient to the faith. I am going to be focusing more on the Word ministry in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

In chapter 1, we saw how the devil can use racism, tribalism, division, strife, and a wrong deaconate to truncate the move of God. We saw the impact of a right deaconate in the early Church because they allowed the apostles to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. The Word of God increased and the Church multiplied. Your calling or your commission could be a ministry or the family that God has given you. There is the reality of the satanic attempt to hijack anything of God, including the moves of God. There has been various examples of how mighty moves of God started and people were being blessed. The Kingdom of God was expanding, and the people that were leading those moves became careless, and the devil hijacked it. And when the devil hijacks, he will pervert the move and stop it altogether. But we don't want the devil to stop

anything that God has started in our lives.

In this chapter, I want to focus on the ministry of the Word. You will recall that in Acts 6:1, there was murmuring of Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in daily ministrations. To address this problem which could lead to strife, the twelve called the multitude of the disciples and said: “It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.” Where there is a reduction in the ministry of the word by the top leadership, then the devil is going to take over.

What is the ministry of the Word? The ministry of the Word is for the leadership to seek the Word of God, search the Bible, study it, practise it, and preach it. It’s not just the matter of you getting bold; you must be current with God. The Bible says here: “It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.” And that is the goal of the devil for any minister. If you are a minister of the Gospel, one goal of the devil is to get you to leave the Word of God and begin to serve at the tables. Serving tables is anything that really doesn’t have any bearing on your effectiveness, chasing other things while you leave the major thing. It is through the ministry of the Word that faith comes and people are lifted from their problems to their purpose. It is through the ministry of the Word that the anointing increases in the

congregation, and the devil wants you to leave that. If you want to picture a life that is void of the Word of God, see Genesis 1:2:

> And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Gen. 1:2)

A marriage that is void of the Word of God will be without form, void, and gloomy. In a church where there is no Word of God, it will be without form and void and darkness will invade it. That is what the devil wants, but the apostles were very sensitive and said: It is not reason that they should leave the Word of God and serve tables. But there are many places today that the leadership in the body of Christ has left the Word of God and they are serving at tables. And so they said: "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

Deaconship in the body of Christ is not a title like a chieftaincy title in the world that people celebrate. It is not promotion. It is a call to service; it is a call to holy duty. There must be a duty before people are ordained as deacons. If there is nothing for them to do, don't give titles to people. One of the reasons

why there is so much worldliness and mediocrity in the body of Christ is because people have received titles without corresponding assignments. God does not release anointing without assignment. There was an assignment to be done. Acts chapter 6 mentions it, and they said: "Look out for men that have these qualifications. They must have honest report before the world, they must be full of the Holy Ghost, and full of wisdom." They must be full of the Holy Ghost because the Holy Ghost is in charge of the operation of the church, not men. And men that are full of the Holy Ghost can cooperate with the Holy Ghost when He is moving through the top leadership. One of the most dangerous things to have in a church is a deaconate that is not full of the Holy Ghost but full of the flesh and carnal ways of doing things. They will bring human ideas to replace divine direction, and they will try to replace the anointing with education.

Thank God for education, but we must submit everything in man to God's anointing before we can be useful and usable in His Kingdom. It is then that we can contribute to God's work positively. The top leadership must look at the qualifications of people they are putting into office before they put them there. In the days of David, Solomon, and Jeroboam, David represented the peak of the Kingdom of God in the land of Israel. Solomon brought compromise and

reduction, but he was still of the right stuff. Jeroboam, in his own day, brought an exchange where he replaced the gold of the temple with brass, thereby bringing inferiority into it, and it was in his days that the kingdom was divided, and Jeroboam instituted a counterfeit feast altogether and sustained it. He began to choose just anybody to become a priest.

In the same way today, there are people that are just going about making anybody serve in an office in the Kingdom of God. That's not biblical. The biblical standard is that those to be appointed must be of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and full of wisdom. It is a holy appointment that goes with an anointing. They were serving bread, yet there was an anointing on them and they did great miracles. You don't have to be on the pulpit for God to use you for great miracles. You don't have to be preaching like a pastor for God to use you to do great things in the Kingdom. We have different callings, different assignments.

My major focus in this chapter is verse 4, but we will look into verses 4–7 first.

> But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.
> And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the

> Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:
> Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.
> And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:4–7)

If you are an apostle, prophet, evangelist, teacher, or pastor, your first calling is to go into intimacy with God. Acts chapter 6, verse 4 says: "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." If you look in Mark chapter 3, verse 13, the Scripture says: He called those that He wanted to Himself that they might be with Him, that He might send them to preach and to have power to cast out devils. The first call is to intimacy. The Holy Spirit said to me years ago that "the call to intimacy is superior to the call to ministry." The call to intimacy is before the call to ministry and it is beyond the call to ministry. When we all finish our calling to ministry, the calling to intimacy with God continues now and through eternity. Many people subjugate the call to intimacy with God to the call to ministry, and when you do that, you get into trouble with God: You also get into trouble with the devil; and you lose your accuracy. Every form of accuracy that brings

effectiveness to ministry comes out of serious and real intimacy with God.

The apostles said: “We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” And when these two important things begin to reduce in the life of the top leadership, the devil will take over a church and the devil will take over a calling. The devil will take over a move when the top leadership doesn’t pray or doesn’t pray seriously or where there is reduction in the Word ministration by the leadership.

There are people that feel that the ministry of the word replaces prayer. That verse didn’t say “We will give ourselves to the ministry of prayer or the ministry of the Word.” Rather it says “continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Your ministry of the Word must come out of your prayer life if it’s going to be effective. The sign of intimacy with God is not results and success. A person can get results and success by mental acuity, but the sign of intimacy with God is brokenness and sensitivity. When you see a man that has results but he is not broken, you have seen a smart man and not a man who is intimate with God. It doesn’t matter what title the person has. As God’s people in these last days, we need to be careful; we need to watch people’s lives as we follow them. If you are a leader in the

five-fold ministry office, make sure that continual prayer and the ministry of the Word do not fall in priority in your heart.

WRONG FOCUS BY THE SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

> But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. (Acts 6:4)

It is not superfluous to say it again that the ministry of the Word is the calling on a minister—the apostle, prophet, evangelist, teacher, or pastor. There are two levels of ministry in the body of Christ, namely the pulpit ministry and the helps ministry. The calling on the pulpit ministry is first into intimacy with God, represented by prayer and then to service in the Word, which is the ministry of the Word. But when the devil gets the top leadership—those in the pulpit ministry—to do what others like deacons and those in the helps ministry should be doing, either due to ignorance, insecurity, greed, or lack of understanding of leadership principles, then it will affect the ability to stay in prayer and to minister the Word of God effectively. When that happens, the anointing in the congregation reduces, and when the anointing reduces, the contribution of God reduces in

the lives of people, which will increase the contribution of the devil.

It is the anointing that reduces and stops the contribution of the devil to the human race. The contribution of God to the human race is the anointing, and that's why God keeps raising ministers and sending them into the world. Jesus said that the harvest is truly plenty, but the labourers are few, and we should pray that the Lord of the harvest will send more labourers and not just volunteers, but anointed men that are sent with the Holy Ghost, with the power to solve the problems of the people and to help them. The contributions of the devil are problems, yokes, and sicknesses of all kinds, and as long as that is going on in the world, God will also continue raising and sending men. But those that are raised and sent must understand that if the move of God is going to continue in their lives and their commissions, they must give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word and not get involved in other things that other people can do. When people don't release other ministries, they wear out themselves, and then the move of God stops altogether.

In Exodus chapter 18, Moses made this mistake and it took his father-in-law to correct him.

> And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.
> And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people . . . (Exod. 18:13–14)

There are leaders that do things to the people, there are leaders that do things for the people, and there are leaders that do things through the people. The best form of leadership is to do things through people but not do things to people.

> . . . he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and the all people stand by thee from morning unto even?
> And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God:
> When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.
> And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good.
> Thou will surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.
> Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:

> And thou shall teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.
> Moreover thou shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:
> And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. (Exod. 18:14–22)

Anywhere you are choosing leadership, let the qualifications be biblical. One major channel through which the devil brings mediocrity to the Work of God is when you lower the standard of leadership to accommodate people's interests, and it's a very dangerous thing. If your growth in ministry has exceeded your leadership development, you will be forced to put mediocre people in holy offices. When you lower the standard, mediocrity comes in and the contribution of the devil increases. Eventually, such moves and such commissions are hijacked by the devil. It has happened in the past, and you shouldn't let it happen to you today. Let your leadership development go side by side with your growth. Whenever your growth outstrips your leadership, it's

going to lead to weakening of leadership and weakening of excellence.

The counsel of Jethro saved Moses. There are ministers of the Gospel that the devil is literally killing. They are losing their health, their anointing, and their family because of overwork. The primary reason is that they are taking up jobs that God has not given them. One of the burdens of the faithful is more work, and while the faithful have more assignments, they should be sure that the assignments they handle are assignments given to them by God.

Jesus Christ, our example, also had to pass that test. Somebody told Jesus: "Master, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

And Jesus said: "Who made me a judge and divider over you?" Jesus was saying here in essence that "I don't have anointing for that. You must know the things you are anointed to do and things you are not anointed to do."

Here, the apostles were saying that they were not anointed to serve tables; but they were anointed to preach the Word of God and to stay with God. They wanted to hear God and know what to preach and what to minister to the rest. That is the best kind of attitude you can have. Don't negotiate your commission and your assignment; don't get involved

in things that really don't matter. For instance, some ministers get involved in serving tables because they want to be involved in counting the money coming into their ministry, but I put it to you that money follows ministry, but ministry doesn't follow money.

FOUR CATEGORIES OF DEACONS

God has not called you as a minister of the Gospel to seek after money. He's called you to stay with Him and preach the Gospel. Do your part and God will take care of you. When you receive the calling to go into ministry, you must also accept at the same time that you are not going to be living like worldly superstars. Anybody that is not willing to take this vow should not venture into ministry. Three people distinguished themselves out of the seven deacons, and this provides four categories into which we can divide the first seven deacons appointed in the Bible. The first is Stephen. He did not fulfil his ministry totally, but he had a powerful calling and anointing on him. I believe he carried an apostolic calling. In Acts chapter 6, verse 8, he was martyred. The responsibility is on every Christian to receive from the Word of God, the truth, and the leading of the Holy Spirit to preserve himself for the fulfillment of his assignment.

If God has not called you to be a martyr, you are not under any obligation to allow the devil to take your life away cheaply. God needs you more alive than dead. Your life is what is going to bless people. The only person whose death could bless people was Jesus; He died and rose again. If God has not called you to be a martyr, then do everything under the Holy Ghost to keep yourself for your destiny and for your assignment. There was Philip, who had a calling to fulfill ministry, yet he started in the place of service, helps ministry, and God moved him to that. Philip was successful as a deacon, serving at table; as a minister, he succeeded, and as a believer, he fulfilled the ministry of the Holy Ghost. Also in the position of a father, he was not found wanting. The Bible says that in the house of Philip, he had four daughters who were virgins and they all prophesied. He is a standard for any father, especially for those in ministry. Are your children morally pure? Philip represents all-round success in the ministry. In his personal life, in his believer's ministry, and in his pulpit ministry, he succeeded.

In the third category was Nicolas, who did not have a calling to the pulpit ministry as an apostle, prophet, evangelist, teacher, or pastor, but he wanted one. He had a personal ministry and local church ministry, but he went beyond his measure. And when

people go beyond their measure, they will always go into error. Nicolas became the father of the Nicolaitans in the book of Revelation, who were teaching all kinds of errors and misbehaviors, and God warned us against it.

When you see people today teach things that produce ungodliness, you wonder whether God called them to the pulpit ministry. When a teacher gets up on the pulpit and tells the people, "It doesn't matter how you live, just try to coast along." No, he's not sent by God because the Bible says in Jeremiah 23:22: "But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." True ministry produces soundness in people. Men that are called and sent produce soundness in people by their message because they know they are sent by God. Paul said: "Knowing the terror of God we persuade men." God cannot afford that the pulpit in the body of Christ be darkened by men He didn't send. God didn't tell us to preach our experiences. He said we should preach the truth. God wants the truth to raise people up to the standard that God called them to be. For example, the standard that God has set for every young man in the Bible is Joseph, not somebody in his generation who failed. When the standard is high,

the quality of the competitors in any sport becomes higher, but when the standard is low, the quality of competitors is also lowered.

In these last days, God is raising the standard of life and ministry for the body of Christ so that the quality of Christians that would be produced in the last days will be high and super because the last leg of any relay team is usually its strongest. And if this generation is the last leg, like people have said, then we cannot afford to be coasting along, hearing just any kind of wishy-washy message from men that are like Nicolas, who are not sent by God and who encourage immorality. If God called you to ministry, He called you to a life of consecration to be an example for people, and you will give account for your message and for the example you are setting for believers. The devil hijacked the calling of Nicolas by moving him out of his measure, and as a result, he couldn't even fulfill what he was appointed for in the local church because he had moved out into something that God had not called him to.

Anybody can say, "God sent me" but we shall see if God really sent you by the fruit of your ministry. Does it draw men to God? Does it produce the standard of Christ in the lives of the people? In the teaching ministry, there is a local body of believers teaching. Romans chapter 12 says: He that teacheth,

let him wait on his teaching. That is a believer that is teaching within his local church, maybe as a Sunday school teacher. Then Ephesians chapter 4 says: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; That's talking of a pastor that has a teaching ability to teach within his church and share the Word of God as God gives him. And then 1 Corinthians chapter 12 says: "He set some first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers . . ." The teacher referred to in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 is a teacher to the body of Christ, and we must not intrude where God did not give us a measure, like Nicolas did and he ended up in error.

The last and the fourth category among the deacons comprised those that had a ministry to serve within the local church, served faithfully, and fulfilled their destiny. The plan of God is that no matter where you are going to end up, serve faithfully in the local church where you are serving. Find a place to serve; find a right church. Ask yourself: "Is this church my place? If this church is my place, then what is my place in this church?" Once you settle there, you will begin to grow and flourish. Then, you can eat the fullness of God's ministry for you.

shall flourish in the courts of our God. (Ps. 92:13)

The same Apostle Paul that wrote two thirds of the New Testament started as a soul winner at Damascus, and then he became an apostle. No ministry is superior to another; we are only different from each other. The apostles that said they would give themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word rather than serve tables were not saying they were better. They were only saying their job description was different and that those that could handle the serving of tables should take it up.

If the pastor of a local church begins to sweep the church, the anointing that he should be building up to minister to the hurting, the bound, the oppressed, and the saints that come to church on Sundays would have been wasted in sweeping. Even in secular settings, economic theory recognizes the Law of Comparative Advantage. Why then should Christians be foolish? There should be some people that are appointed to sweep and they will receive an anointing to do it. For any job you do in the Kingdom of God, there is an anointing for it, and it's so important that we find our place of service and ministry. Whether in a local church or in our personal lives, we must fulfill ministry. The devil tries to hijack moves through no deaconate or a wrong deaconate or when the top

leadership begins to do what God has not called them to do. They dissipate the time and energy they should have used in waiting on God to receive His counsel for the people.

The subject of leadership is one major thing that is causing trouble for many people. The devil is interested in leadership, just as much as God is interested in leadership because leadership determines where the people of God would go and what is going to become of the move of God. God doesn't look for a committee; He looks for a man. God doesn't hurry to raise a man up; He prepares a man and makes him before He puts him somewhere. But when we violate that for whatever reason, we get into trouble.

> And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)
> Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.
> For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.
> Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.
> For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

> Wherefore of there men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,
> Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.
> And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.
> And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,
> That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.
> And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:15–18, 20–26)

Don't allow a vacuum within your rank of leadership; place a leader to do the task but never evade or de-emphasize any of the conditions: He must not be a new convert, not a novice, not somebody that just came into the midst of the people of God. On the contrary, today you see people who don't have a walk with God, who have not companied with Jesus are being made leaders in the Body of Christ. Paul said: "Not a novice lest being lifted up he fall into the snare of the devil." Age is not the issue but walking with God is the requirement for

godly leadership because in walking with God, God breaks a man down and moulds a man and shapes a man's heart to a place that He can trust him with serious things of ministry and of destiny. When God is preparing you for leadership, don't hurry; let Him take His time to fashion you.

Your manifestation can neither be better nor stronger than your preparation as a leader. Many people fail in leadership today, and when you look at what caused them to fail, you will see that it's a tiny thing that should have been dealt with during the preparation years. That problem wasn't dealt with because while the man was being fashioned and groomed by the Lord, he was in a hurry. When people abort the process of God or take a shortcut, it causes trouble. God is a God of process. He's processing us into a product, but in doing that, He sets a pace for us. He determines the pace. Don't be in a hurry; don't compare yourself with another person. God has something He is forming in you and wants you to become; let Him work it out in His own way. Don't be like the prodigal son that came back to his senses later and said "Make me." God's kingdom is first of all "make me" and then "give me." That young man said, "Give me my own portion," and his father gave him. Later he came and said, "Make me." He put it upside down. Let your life be accurate. God

makes you first of all before He gives you things. Otherwise, you won't be able to handle whatever He gives you.

CHAPTER 3

UNHOLY ALLIANCES

So far in this book, you have seen how the devil tried to hijack the call and the commission of the early Church, but the apostles kept their calling and commission free, and you can learn some lessons from this. The devil did it then and he's doing it today. The truth is that many times and in many cases, he has succeeded in taking over callings.

In this chapter, I focus on unholy alliances. Unholy ministerial and spiritual alliances will give the devil room to hijack your calling. Association is something you can't do without. When it comes to relationships, the onus is on you to choose accurately. This is because where there is a relationship, there will be a flow. Relationships create a bridge for spiritual things to flow. Whatever is in the life of the people you are relating with will flow into your life.

> That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)

Fellowship has a spiritual dimension; association may not. If you work in a place, you have association with your colleagues; there may not be any spiritual flow. But when there is a relationship and there is a heart-to-heart sharing, there is a spiritual flow. That is why the Bible says: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers… what concord hath Christ with Belial?" A child of God has Christ on his spiritual side. A person that is not born-again has Belial on his spiritual side. When you get into a relationship that is deep in nature, there is a flow. This is what the devil is trying to do—bringing unholy alliances into ministerial circles. He's still doing it today, and you should be sensitive to check and identify the spirit behind a person's life. No matter what you see by way of signs and wonders, it is the spirit behind a person that is important. We don't follow signs and wonders; we follow righteousness. The Bible says: "By their fruits you shall know them."

In these last days, the devil is on a hijack mission, which was what he wanted to do for Philip in Acts chapter 8 when Simon, who was once a sorcerer

before his “conversion,” joined himself to Philip. The first error to note is that Simon, the sorcerer, was not properly discipled. Today, you find people that were popular in the world before they got born-again, and the next thing you hear of them is that they have become ministers. How come? This shouldn’t be because the Bible says not to put a novice in the office and God is not going to violate His word. That is why all kinds of errors and fallacies are being preached, and you wonder where they got them. If you check their antecedents, you’ll notice they were popular in the world, got converted, and couldn’t stay under proper pastoral cover. Many times, the reason why people don’t stay under proper pastoral cover is because there was no strong pastor to disciple them into purpose.

When men are popular in the world before they get saved, it means there is a great purpose in their lives, but that purpose must be harnessed and processed before it can be used by God. Look at Moses; his life was divided into three portions of forty years each. He became mighty in Egypt in the first forty years, and then God took forty years in the wilderness to break him down. In the last forty years, he was the mightiest prophet. If you are going to reach the peak of your purpose, your life will also have to follow those three portions. There is a

portion when you become something in the world because the devil was allowing your purpose to be used wrongly. When you get born-again, you go through a period of training "in the desert." The Bible says John was in the desert until the day of his showing to Israel. The desert is where you are broken into the will of God. That is where you understand that God's voice is more important than the voice of men and that pleasing God is more important than pleasing men. When people don't pass through this process, they become dangerous in the place of manifestation.

That was what was happening to this man. But this man's case was even more dangerous because he was a sorcerer before he got born-again. He was a personality in the land connected to the principality of wickedness in the land, and he wanted to join the Church. If he was not properly dealt with, he would have brought this wrong spirit into the Church, and that was what he was doing. The next thing he did was to offer money.

DON'T SURRENDER YOUR CALLING TO FINANCE

Money is one way by which wrong people link up with Christian leaders today, and you've got to be

careful who gives what or who supports you in your ministry and calling. When God calls a vision into existence, He raises people for that vision. The vision God gives you will produce its own peoples. Many times, people get into problem because they jump ahead of God's program for them. God's program is timed; God's program follows a process. If the money and resources are not there to accomplish something, it is either because God didn't send you or it is not yet time, and I tell you that you have not lost it; it has only gone to wait for you in your future.

The Bible says: "Except the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain that build it." You don't want to build something that God is not building. God puts us through our paces, takes us through the process, and then manifests us as the product. Don't jump the process. This man wanted to buy a portion of the holy things of God with money. In Numbers chapter 22, Balaam had this kind of unholy alliance in his life. Balak, the son of Zippor, wanted to curse Israel, and he went to hire Balaam. Dear Pastor, are you "hireable?" If you receive money from the wrong places, you will not be making a prophetic statement but a political statement. This man was "hireable." Any man of God that is "hireable" ceases to serve God's interest. I recall a group trying to invite me, and their representative asked, "How much does it

take to move you?" I answered him by saying, "I only move if God wants me to," and I didn't preach for them. Be careful that the wrong things don't motivate you in ministry.

Numbers 22:7 says: "And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midiam departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balaak." When a prophet submits his calling to finances, he becomes a soothsayer, a diviner and not a messenger of God. Verse 8 says: "And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam."God came unto Balaam and said: "What men are these with you?"

I want to ask you, man of God, Who are your present associates in life? Who are the people you're presently relating with? Are they clean? Are they holy? Are they sinners? Are they sound in their family? Or are they adulterers? You've got to be careful; whosoever you bring to your pulpit will not leave your pulpit the same because a spirit flow will occur, and there are many men that have laboured to build a sound pulpit, but they began to bring wrong men on their pulpits and the flow of the river of life on their pulpit became polluted. As children of God, you need to understand the need to make sure your

relationships carry divine approval. God links men together, but men also link themselves together. Linking up as far as God is concerned is something God chooses. God asked Balaam, "Who are these men with you?" And I believe that God is asking every minister this: Who are these men with you? Who are the closest people around you? Who are the men that are close advisors or people in your ministry in whatever form?

Simon, the sorcerer, wanted to become a financier of the move of God and buy portions, though he did not put it in those words. People may not put it in those words, but you've got to be very strong if you will keep your calling when finances begin to come from different quarters. You've got to scrutinize those sources. As far as God is concerned, the "what" is not as important as the "who" is behind the gift.

In Genesis chapter 3, the beginning of the problem of the human race was "who." When Adam ate the fruit and God came and said, "Where art thou?" Adam said, "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, I hid myself." God said, "Who told you you are naked?" To the child of God, "who" is more important than "what." If a gift comes to you, the "who" behind that gift is more important than the gift itself. This is a key to

determine whether you can take something or not. As a young lady, if a man offers you a birthday gift, who is the man? Is he somebody that wants to help you or sleep with you? Who is more important than what. Look at what Peter said to this man in verse 20 of Acts chapter 8:

> But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

That is the reason behind the gift he offered them. Of course, he must have a lot of money. He was a great man before coming to the church. He wasn't offering money as a blessing; he was offering money as bondage to purchase a portion, and there are people that have done that. You look at the story of Elisha, Naaman, and Gehazi. Elisha knew it was not time to receive gifts, but Gehazi didn't know that. He went to collect gifts and became leprous. As ministers of God, we must ask ourselves: What are we labouring for? Are we labouring for earthly applause or labouring for heavenly approval? Are we labouring for now or labouring for eternity? The Lord told me years ago that "the future does not belong to the man doing it quick. It belongs to the man doing it right." Please labour to execute your ministry the right way.

PRINCIPALITIES AND PERSONALITIES OF THE LAND

All through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, you will see the devil playing the game of spiritual hijack on the moves of God. Many times, you see the devil coming with a counterfeit shortly before God comes with the original. And it is instructive for those of us that the end has fallen upon to understand this game of the devil and not fall for deception because many times, he succeeds in deceiving God's people.

In the days of Saul and David, shortly before David came on the scene, Saul showed up. The devil moved the people of God to ask for a king, but God was already gradually moving the people toward that. That was why He raised up Samuel, a prophet with a pure spirit, to move the people from patriarchy to monarchy, but the people asked for a king themselves; they rejected God's process altogether. They wanted to be like the world. Of course, you know what Saul became. Many times, the devil plays this game. Your awareness of his gimmicks places you at a better advantage to protect yourself, your calling, and your commission from being taken over by the devil. Whether you are an ordinary Christian

or you are a founder of a ministry or a person that is on a mission to a particular place, planting churches, or starting a new work, you will need to understand this great danger of the devil to link people up in unholy alliances. Unholy spiritual or ministerial alliances bring a satanic takeover. I would like to go deeper into this subject because it is very important.

> Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.
> And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.
> For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.
> And there was great joy in that city.
> But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:
> To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. (Acts 8:5–10)

Notice that the man was the one claiming to be something special. The Amplified Bible renders verse 9 as follows:

> But there was a man named Simon, who had

> formerly practiced magic arts in the city to the utter amazement of the Samaritan nation, claiming that he himself was an extraordinary and distinguished person. (Acts 8:9)

The principalities ruling in a particular land have certain personalities in the land that personify what these principalities represent. And God can come into that place through a messenger: a pastor, an apostle, or an evangelist. In this particular case, it was an evangelist. When God comes like that, the principality will work to hijack, pollute and eventually stop the move of God by moving those personalities that are connected to him to enter into the move. If the leadership of the move of God doesn't discern them, they enter into agreement and alliance with them, and this can be dangerous. Whether it is an individual Christian or a major minister of the Gospel, the devil plans these unholy spiritual or ministerial alliances.

When you look at any land, there are spirits in a land that determine the atmosphere, the characteristics, the behavioural pattern, and the outlook the people have on life. What the Bible calls worldliness is not a way of walking; it's a manifestation of the spirits that are in the land, their behavioural pattern. Every city has it; every community has it. Those spirits in the land want to come into the Church, and they don't just walk in

with horns on their heads. They walk in through personalities of the land, the people in the land who are not properly weaned off those spirits and trained for the Lord. When the spirit of the land comes into the church without the leadership of the church discerning them, they will wipe out the distinction between the Church and the land. But there must remain a distinction between the Church and the land, or else the Church will not be able to function. Jesus said the Church is the city set upon a hill that cannot be hidden. He called the Church the salt of the earth and the light of the world. This shows that their must be a distinction between the Church and the land. Jesus said: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." When the church loses its saltiness it means we have lost our distinction. And one way that the devil obliterates the line of demarcation between the Church and the land is when the spirit of the land invades the Church through individuals in the land who are not discipled in the standard and principles of the Kingdom. God called the Church to be an instructor to the world, not to be a diplomat. God called the Church to change the society, not vice versa. As a church member, you must begin to see yourself as an agent

of change but recognize that the devil wants to take over your assignment, your commission, by unholy spiritual alliances. It could happen on a one-on-one basis or happen in the kind of situation you see here, a major personality connected to the major principality of the land trying to come in.

In the book of Nehemiah, he tried to come into their midst and participate in the leadership of the move in the days of Nehemiah. Nehemiah said to Sanballat and Tobiah: "You have no portion in this case." But in this particular place, Philip the evangelist did not discern this man, and it took Apostles Peter and John, who came from Jerusalem, to kick this man out. This tells us that one of the keys to deliver us from unholy alliances spiritually and in the work of the ministry is divine linkages. No man is, or should attempt to be an island unto himself. When you see a man highly anointed, used of God, but he does not have positive, godly relationships in his life, he becomes a prey to unholy alliances somewhere. What would have happened if Philip did not have a viable relationship with the church in Jerusalem or any link with the apostles? He could have just been walking along with this man. And that man had his own reason for joining him because he wasn't thoroughly discipled.

I have identified in Simon's case three problems:

unholy spiritual and ministerial alliances, money giving entrance to the wrong spirit to join the leadership and bilateral conversion. Bilateral conversion is where somebody who is prominent in the world gets born-again and then he wants to maintain that same level of prominence in the church without going through a God-ordained process of discipleship. There is a process of discipleship in the Church that makes people imbibe the spirit and the nature of God's Kingdom. When someone prominent in the world comes into the Church without being discipled into the spirit of Christ in the Church, that person uses worldly methods to function in the Church, and that is one of the ways by which the devil takes over the move of God and then moves people away from the holy things of God. The Bible says: "Don't remove the ancient landmarks which the fathers have established." When men come in from prominence in the world without being taken through the process of discipleship, they will take away the ancient landmarks and say this thing is not important or that is not really necessary.

Recall the story of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat (1 Kings 12:26–33). He told the children of Israel that it was too much for them to go all the way to Jerusalem, so he placed two idols for them in Dan and Bethel as their gods. When he brought

compromise, he lowered the standard so as to welcome just anybody into the priesthood because he had to sustain the thing that he had established. And he went further to institute the feast of his own mind. That was a man that entered the kingship without going through a discipleship program. Unholy alliances whether spiritual or ministerial, will bring a satanic hijack. I admonish you to check your alliances, your relationships, your interactions. You can't do without association, but you are responsible for who you open up yourself to spiritually and in ministry. As a person, you'll give account to God for the spiritual influences you allow to flow into your life. You must check the forces operating in the lives of those people. If you link up with people that are walking in the spirit of adultery, they are likely to bring that into your life. If you link up with people that are walking in honour, they will bring honour into your life.

CHAPTER 4

BILATERAL CONVERSIONS

In the preceding chapter, I identified in Acts chapter 8, three major problems, namely: unholy spiritual and ministerial alliances, ungodly financial practices, and bilateral conversion. This chapter will focus on solving the problem of bilateral conversion. Recall that bilateral conversion is a situation where somebody prominent gets born-again and he is brought into a parallel position of prominence in the body of Christ because of his worldly prominence. He's given a prominent position in the Kingdom, which lowers the standard of God. The Bible says a novice should not be put in authority. There is a difference between physical maturity and spiritual maturity. Physical age is not equal to spiritual maturity. That somebody is physically old does not mean he's spiritually mature to hold certain offices. Every one of us doing the work of God in the

ministry must not lower the standard to accommodate people, no matter their status; otherwise, we are not helping them.

If you read the salvation experience of Apostle Paul (then known as Saul of Tarsus) in Acts 9, a man that was prominent in the religious circle of his days, you will see that when he got saved, the Lord did not send him to Jerusalem. He sent him to an unknown disciple named Ananias, who took Paul through the discipleship process. Paul started his program as an ordinary soul winner and began to go out with the brethren. He joined a local church, where he was discipled. And by the time Paul was ready, he was thoroughly cooked and prepared. He didn't just become an apostle overnight. It took him almost fourteen to fifteen years before He stepped into the apostolic ministry in Acts chapter 13. He became born-again in chapter 9, and in Acts chapter 13, some fifteen years later, he was eventually called into the office of apostle. But before then, he had gone through being a church member, soul winner, preacher, and then he became an apostle.

Paul, knowing God's process of making him what he became, told Timothy not to put a novice in office lest being lifted up, he falls into the trap of the devil. And there are many people today whose bilateral conversion is not their fault but a result of the weak

Christian leadership that couldn't disciple them properly and thoroughly, that allowed the devil to hijack their calling through bilateral conversion. But I pray that you will not put yourself under weak leadership in Jesus' name.

However, sometimes insincere people look for weak leadership that can tolerate and accommodate their misbehaviour and not call them to the standard of God. God called ministers of the Gospel to call people to adapt to the standard of God and not adapt the Word of God to people. Attempts to adapt the Word of God to people results in perversion, but true conversion is when you call people to adapt their lives to the Word of God. Simon, the sorcerer, supposedly gave his life to Christ in verse 13 of Acts chapter 8. The Bible says: "Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." All he was seeing was the miracles and signs; he did not hear the demands of the kingdom of discipleship. If he had been introduced into the discipleship demands of the Kingdom of God, maybe he would have turned out different. But that is one class of problem, bilateral conversion.

The other one is unholy spiritual and ministerial alliances. Men and women that are the agents of the

enemy in the land come to church without intending to change. This man was actually looking for power in the church the same way he was looking for power as a magician. It was when the apostles got there that he said in verse 19, "Give me also this power that on whosoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." When he was in the world, he had power from the devil. Now he saw a greater power, and he wanted to grab it. If he had got it, he might even kill Philip to take over his ministry. We must watch our alliances.

> Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity built the temple unto the LORD God of Israel; Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. (Ezra 4:1–3)

The fathers of Israel disallowed them, just like the apostles here in Acts 8:21. The Bible says that when this man asked to buy the power, Peter said in verses

20–21, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.”

The third problem comes out of that. This man was trying to purchase with money a part in the holy things of the ministry. In the Bible, unholy alliances and unholy financial practices almost always go hand in hand. When the people of God begin to walk in unholy alliances, they also begin to get into funny financial practices, just like illicit sex and unholy alliances go hand in hand. And these are weapons that the devil uses to take over the calling of people. The apostles said here: “You have no part or lot in this matter.” The word for “part” here in Greek is *merismos,* which is the word used in Hebrews 2:4, talking of the distribution of the Holy Ghost. There are men today in Christian leadership that God Himself has not allocated any portion of divine *merismos* of holy things of the calling and the anointing. But through their money and prominence in the world, Christian leaders are giving them portions in the holy offices.

There are people that simply Christianize their occult practices and join Pentecostal churches as ministers, especially when people and leaders are looking for testimonies and not transformed lives.

Don’t be carried away by the testimonies of people, rather look for transformed lives. Before allowing people into leadership circles, there must be proof and evidence of transformation of their lives by a commitment to following Jesus and submitting to the demands of God. Otherwise, what happened with this man will repeat itself and lead to a satanic hijack. When you talk of money as a weapon of satanic takeover, you look at the story of Balaam and Balak. I referred earlier to this story in Numbers chapters 22 and 23. Balak wanted to hire Balaam as a prophet to curse the children of Israel, and he said he was going to give him riches and honor. The devil has used that weapon many times, and he will soon come and test you.

If you can be hired as a minister of the Gospel, somebody will dictate the message you preach. If you look again at the story of Elisha and Naaman and Gehazi, you will appreciate this danger. Elijah recognized that the time was not ripe to receive any gift from Naaman. Every minister must understand the fact that the Bible says because we minister to people spiritual things and then we have a right to their physical things does not mean the time is always right. It takes intimacy with God to know when it is not right to accept a gift. In this particular case that Elisha ministered to Naaman, it was not the divine

timing to receive gifts. God was working to see that Naaman becomes a convert of Jehovah, and by Elisha refusing the gifts, Namaan was imparted but Gehazi spoilt everything that God was trying to arrange by accepting the gifts. He said, “My master has spared this Syrian, I will go after him.” And he lied to the man to get money.

There are many people today that are arranging all kinds of projects to get money from people. When you do that, the devil knows you are weak and you can be taken over; your calling can be taken over. All he needs to do is to bring somebody across your path who is going to bring unrighteous money to you, to take you over. You’ve got to be careful of that. You must understand the fact that though the world we are living in is an expensive world, God has not closed the door on divine provision. What God orders for, He provides for. Many times, we get into trouble because we try to overreach ourselves when it comes to doing things for God, and that opens us to this kind of satanic takeover.

Another example you find is in the book of 2 Chronicles chapter 18. Four hundred prophets were gathered by Ahab to prophesy to him. If you are a man of God, you are not to be gatherable at the table of sinning, wealthy people or sinning political leadership circles. He gathered them and they began

to prophesy. And then, Jehoshaphat said, “Is there not the prophet of the Lord besides these ones that we may enquire of the Lord?” And Ahab said, “There is one Michaiah. He doesn’t tell me what is good and I hate him.” Don’t walk with people that hate true prophets or true words from God because if the Word is from God, it doesn’t have to be palatable, but we must adjust to it.

Those four hundred prophets were taken over by a lying spirit because of their greed. Every time a minister of the Gospel or a Christian allows greed to take him over, a lying spirit will also take him over, and the devil will take over his calling and commission. The apostles protected their calling and commission and the purity of their assignment so that the work of God could reach our generation. We must preserve the move of God in our generation for other generations to take their portion.

CHAPTER 5

RELIGIOUS LEGALISM

Don't let the devil take over your calling or your commission. The preceding chapters have been an exposition on the attempt of the devil to hijack the early Church, both individually and corporately, referring mainly to the book of the Acts of the Apostles to learn lessons from their experiences in order to preserve and protect your own calling and commission today. The Bible says that the end of the world has come upon us. Thus you must learn from the examples of those that have gone on ahead of you.

Now consider Acts chapter 15, and see another thing that the devil tried to use to hijack the move of God in the Acts of Apostles, and he will try the same today. And that is religious legalism.

And certain men which came down from Judaea

> taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were came to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. (Acts 15:1–5)

The church in Jerusalem at that time had people who believed in Judaism, though they got born again they were not required to drop their old beliefs . So they married Judaism beliefs with Christianity. That is why, when you look at the work in Jerusalem and the work of Apostle Paul among the Gentiles, till today, the work of Paul lasted longer than those of the other apostles that tried to marry the two. You can't marry grace and legalism because legalism will stop what God is doing. Christianity is about the grace of God while religious legalism is adding to the finished work

of Christ, and comes out of the teachings of those that try to help God. The Bible talks about things that accompany salvation.

> For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. (Heb. 6:4–9)

SALVATION IS BY GRACE

There are things that accompany salvation. When you are genuinely bornagain, certain things will follow your life: changes in your behaviour, in your appearance, and changes in different areas of your life. Legalism, on the other hand, is making those things that accompany salvation supersede salvation itself. There is no need trying to save yourself, Christ

has saved you, and as a consequence of that salvation, certain things will also change in your life. That's what grace brings into your life. There is no coercion. Grace is not a matter of "thou shall" and "thou shall not"; it is a matter of God giving you power from inside to do what you ought to do. The liberty that the Bible talks of is not freedom to do anything you like. It is the power to do what we ought to do; what God always wanted us to do. Therefore, no Christian should say he can't help himself. Grace makes that excuse unacceptable. Grace is available to do right and to live right, but it comes as something that accompanies salvation. These religious legalists in Acts 15 were saying these people could not be saved except they were circumcised and that brought problems. The devil takes over anywhere religious legalism is placed above grace and the Word of God.

Look at how Paul fought against this in Galatians.

> O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? (Gal. 3:1–3)

Religious legalism says you are going to be made perfect by the flesh. This is contrary to Christian doctrine that preaches walking in and by the Spirit; starting in the spirit and concluding in the spirit. The Bible says walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. It didn't say stop the lusts of the flesh and you shall walk in the spirit, but that is how the devil allows many people to reason.

> This I say then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. (Gal. 5:16)

The verse above didn't say stop fulfilling the lust of the flesh. When you get into legalism, it gets you to turn this verse upside down, and that is where all kinds of struggle and frustration comes into the lives of many people. Setting laws for yourself on what you won't do and what you'll do is not going to help you. Just link up with the grace of God and the regenerated spirit inside you. If you are truly saved, there are certain things that have definitely changed in you. Salvation gives power to the physical part of your life to do what you have already become in the spirit. Therefore walk in the spirit and you will not fulfil the lust of the flesh. This is absolutely important.

> Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith

Christ hath made us free . . . (Gal. 5:1)

Remember that liberty in the Bible is not freedom to do anything we like; it is the ability to do what we ought to do. And if you are born-again, you have that liberty; you have that ability in your spirit to do what you ought to do, to live right, to live clean in a dirty world, to be an example of what Christ is all about in your world and to be a lighthouse of direction for people. Galatians 5:1 continues: "…And be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." The yoke of bondage is religious legalism.

"Behold, I Paul say unto you that if ye be circumcised Christ shall profit nothing." (Gal. 5:2) Yet this is what they were asking them to do in the Acts of Apostles chapter 15. If they had done that, the move would have been hijacked and stopped because of religious legalism. Every time we take people back to the law, we put them in bondage and stop what God is doing. Some carry on religious legalism out of ignorance, others out of misguided zeal. In whatever way it comes, it will always be wrong.

> For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are

> fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. (Gal. 5:3–9)

Religious legalism hinders effective living in the grace that God has brought through salvation.

Given the nature of religious legalism, it is evident that the devil brought religious legalism to them in Acts chapter 15 to stop and hijack the move of God. Whatever God starts, He finishes, but you must cooperate with the Spirit of God. When the Holy Ghost comes inside you, He enables you to do exactly what you ought to do if you listen to Him. Sometimes people think that when you talk about grace as opposed to law, it means you do nothing. No, you do what the Scripture says you should do. As a child of God, salvation requires that you do certain things, but you did not have to do anything to be saved.

As a father, there are things I require of my children for them to walk in my pleasure and be pleasing to me. They do not do those things to become my children, just as, you don't do anything

to become a child of God except accept what Jesus has done. When you become born-again, you become a child of God, and that status places certain responsibilities and obligations on you to live in a certain way. This is true grace. It is not the kind of grace that says: "You can live anyhow. It doesn't matter even if you sin now. God has already forgiven you. You can do anything you like." No, that's confusion altogether. This is not the grace the Bible talks about. Religious legalism says you must do something (apart from what Jesus has done) before you can be saved.

> And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. (Act 15:1)

Saying one must be circumcised before he is saved is legalism and incorrect. You are saved because Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected. After you get saved, you begin to live the kind of life that salvation demands. This kind of life brings glory to God, keeps you in the path of God and keeps you glorifying God. Don't bring legalism to yourself or to your church or to anyone; it causes the devil to hijack anything that God is doing. If you have, stop it. Live in the grace of God and become all that grace

can make you.

CHAPTER 6

COUNTERFEIT GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (1)

Earlier in this book, I emphasized that every born-again person has a calling and commission from God that he is responsible to discover, protect, and fulfil. Thus far, I have been dealing with how the the devil works his program to hijack that calling and commission in the bid to use it against the purpose for which God gave it to a man.

The devil hates anything that God is doing. He hates people being blessed and his plan is to hijack anything that is of God and use it for his own purpose. This is one area that the devil has succeeded in because of ignorance in the lives of God's people. So far, this book has considered a number of instances in the book of Acts of the Apostles where the devil tried to hijack God's program. In this chapter, I want to take you to Acts of Apostles

chapter 16 to see the dangers of false prophecies and operations of the gifts of the spirit in false ways as a tool of satanic hijack that you must understand and be aware of so that you can protect your calling and commission.

> Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. (Acts 16:6–7)

Look at how God led them. There was a move of the Holy Ghost through the God-ordained leadership of the team. They all agreed that this was God's direction for them, and they went. Nobody hijacked the direction from the Holy Ghost or from the God-ordained leadership. This is one area that the devil moves to lure people out of the program of God for them. Somebody could have come with a prophetic utterance against God's direction to Paul. That would

have been out of divine order. Divine leading is always in the context of divine order. God institutes order and then leads within that context. There was the order of God, and the direction came in the context of that order. And every time you see a breach in divine order, understand that the devil is trying to hijack something.

> And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. (Acts 16:10–15)

Don’t forget that we have established that

principalities in a land operate through personalities in the land. And when God comes into a land, He moves through individuals in the land too. And you must differentiate between a person that God is opening his heart to you to come in through and the personalities that a principality in the land is operating through to hijack the move of God in your life.

> And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days … (Acts 16: 16–18)

What this girl had was a counterfeit gift of prophecy. Take note that everything she said was correct. She would say things that were true, she would say things that were supernatural, she saw visions and she knew facts about people. This was a classic case of a familiar spirit operating through somebody to deceive people. Remember in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 8, we saw the case of Simon, the sorcerer, who bewitched the whole city. This girl was in another city. A principality was using her, a spirit of divination called *python*, moving through this gift to deceive people. And that principality was

moving against Paul and his work through that girl. This is one area where lack of deliverance ministry exposes Christians to satanic hijack.

Where there is no true deliverance ministry or where there is wrong deliverance ministry, Satan, through strange spirits, can hijack the church. But we see at the end of the story that Paul thoroughly ministered to this girl. The Bible says something powerful in 1 Corinthians 14:10 that every person must understand.

> There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. (1 Cor. 14:10)

It means that in the spirit realm, there are voices that try to communicate with human beings, yet there is the voice of the Holy Spirit that we must tune ourselves to, understand, discover, and recognize. However, there are operations of the devil to deceive people. And whether you are an individual believer, a leader in the house of God, a missionary, or somebody that is doing a work that God has sent you to do, you must recognize this lie of the devil, this game of the devil to come through false prophecies and counterfeit operations of the gifts of the spirit to hijack what you are doing, and once you fall for it, he comes in. The devil tries confrontation. If it doesn't

work, he tries infiltration. And many times, infiltration is more devastating than confrontation because there is already a teaming up with the enemy without knowing it. And there is no manifestation more wicked than when it comes in through prophecy or through gifts of the spirit .

> And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination. (Acts 16:16)

Notice that the girl was in the land before they came. This is one of the key ways that the devil uses to rule over people. The principality that is supervising that region for the devil had a personality in that girl and was operating through her. She mesmerized the people with her divination. Now the apostles came there to do a work. The work of the Kingdom is to pull down the work of the devil and then establish the Kingdom of God. The devil doesn't want that to happen. He tried to join them and infiltrate the work because he couldn't stop the work by confrontation. The Bible says: "This girl met us." They didn't meet the girl; she met them. Obviously, there must have been an arrangement by the devil to get them to meet. The devil had already sensed and seen in the spirit that they had come with the Holy Ghost and they were going to dethrone, displace, and

dislodge him. The devil brought the girl to meet them. The leadership of this team was spiritually alert and understood how to recognize the difference between true prophecy and false prophecy; otherwise the girl would have joined them successfully and even become their prayer band leader.

There are many churches today that have opened up to strange spirits, allowing them to take leadership roles in their lives. We saw earlier how the devil uses money to take over Christian leadership. Now we are seeing how he uses false operation of supernatural manifestations to take over Christian leadership and the move of God. He can do it for an individual person; he can do it for a church and he can do it for a major move of God, if the leadership is spiritually insensitive. Only God knows how many people today have made decisions based on spurious prophecies concerning their business, marriage, and life and ended up in total ruins. There are people today, especially in charismatic circles, that have gone into ministry because somebody prophesied them to go into it. And today, they are struggling and suffering and failing.

Those in leadership often have prophecies given to them from outside by people that feel God is sending them. But God has a way of speaking to people. It's not always the norm for God to speak to you outside

of his circle of trust that God has established for you. And yet many people have based critical life-changing decisions on spurious prophecies. Jesus said something concerning this in Luke 21:8. It says: "Take heed that ye not be deceived, for many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ, and the time draweth near, go ye not therefore after them."

One of the warnings that the Lord gave us concerning the last days is that we must take heed not to be deceived. And one of the ways by which the devil deceives people is through counterfeit operations of supernatural gifts. Denying the operations of the gifts of the spirit will just open you to deception of the devil, and not taking time to study the truth will also open you to deception.

The way to identify counterfeit is not by studying the counterfeit; it is by studying the original enough so that when you see the counterfeit, you will know it. Many times, we don't take time to look into the Word of God to know the goal of true prophecy and how it operates. When you understand these, you can easily recognize false prophecy.

For example, concerning the Act 16 girl prophesying, the Bible said in verse 17 of Acts chapter 16: "The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying these men are the servants of most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation."

Everything she said was correct on the surface, but the nature of it was drawing attention to those men and not to God. And true prophecy never draws attention to a man. I mean, I have heard people receive prophecies like "My son, the way I am going to use you, I have never used anybody like that." When you hear such a prophecy, you know that it is designed to fan your ego. God is not fanning anybody's ego. God is not lifting you up in competition with anybody. God doesn't use competitive words like the largest, the fastest, etc. That is the human language of comparison.

God said those comparing themselves with themselves are not wise. And if God said that in the Bible, that means He can't be prophesying that to you. Anything that will lift you up in pride or cause you to compare and compete with another can't be coming from God. Anything that draws attention to a man as opposed to God is wrong. Jesus said in John 10:7–8: ". . . I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves . . ." He was not talking of prophets that came before Him. He was talking of anyone that comes before Him in prominence before the sheep; that person is a thief; he's stealing the glory that belongs to Him. And God does not want us to allow anything to lift us up in prominence before and above Him. And that's what this prophecy was

doing. Paul knew the principles of the true prophecy and was spiritually alert and awake to perceive it through the gift of spirit of discerning that the spirit in the girl was not of God.

One of the weapons of the Holy Spirit to help us in these last days is the development of the gift of discerning of the spirit. The other time we saw the personality controlling a land through money, but this time around, it came through supernatural operations. Whether you are an individual Christian or you are a leader, you must understand that the devil will try to control the work of God in your hand or in your life.

You must do a spiritual audit of everything that you are involved in supernaturally so that you don't open up to this kind of strange spirit. The goal of this spirit was to pollute the purity of the move of God, pervert it, and eventually stop it and cause all kinds of division and rancor. There are instances where people started on a powerful note, with God moving through them, using them tremendously, but somewhere down the line, all kinds of trouble, divisions, and behaviours began to manifest that made one begin to wonder if those involved were Christians. Those happenings were not of Christ; they happened because agents of the enemy like this girl had infiltrated the work of God from the beginning and kept themselves hidden until they began to manifest

behaviours that were not Christ-like. Jesus said that by their fruits, you shall know them, not by their gifts. You must stop rating people by their gifts but look at their character; look at their fruit, look at their nature. Are they following Christ? The Church is not just following power; we are following righteousness; we are following the character of Christ. There are three things that mark out Christ—authority, character, and power; you must have the three in place before you can say, "This is safe."

The girl was an agent of the devil trying to stop them, and she came through false prophecy and counterfeit operation, but Paul picked it by the gift of discerning of the spirits. This is one gift we must pray to have in the body of Christ, in the Church; every Christian must pray that the Holy Spirit will release this gift of discerning. Discerning of spirit is not the same as suspicion of people. It is a supernatural operation in the heart.

The Bible says in verse 18 of Acts chapter 16: "And this she did many days but Paul being grieved . . ." He was grieved in his heart, so he knew that the prophecy was not of God, and he spoke to the spirit behind it and cast it out. So, we see how God will help people to be free of strange operations in their lives through correct biblical deliverance ministration.

CHAPTER 7

COUNTERFEIT GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (2)

God is doing great things in our generation. The irony is that every time God is moving in the spirit, the devil also moves. Two spirits move in the spirit realm, God's Spirit and demon spirits. When we really get in the spirit, not the fleshly manifestation that is called the moving of the Holy Spirit, evil spirits also move. The Holy Spirit stirs them up and then ejects them. When Jesus got to the synagogue one day, the Bible says that as He began to minister, one man shouted and said, "What have we got to do with you?" and then He cast out that spirit. The demon spirit could not hide because the Holy Ghost was moving through Jesus.

As ministers and Christians on the cutting edge of the move of God in these last days, you must have enough knowledge of true moves and operations of

the Holy Ghost and the counterfeit move of the devil so that you can prevent the devil from hijacking the things that God wants to do in your life and in our days. In Acts chapter 16, referred to in the preceding chapter, we saw how the principality in that land wanted to hijack the move of God from Paul through a personality in that land. That girl followed them with false prophecy based on counterfeit operations of the spirit. It could be something else like miracles that are from a wrong source. You must scrutinize things before you accept them. This girl did this for many days until Paul, being grieved, turned and cast out the spirit.

There are times ministers are grieved in their hearts about some spiritual manifestation—that is the gift of discerning of spirits coming to them, yet their minds take over and say maybe it is because they were worrying or they consider the calibre of the person involved. Be careful. The calibre of the person involved is not the issue but the Holy Ghost that is trying to keep you from error.

Kenneth E. Hagin shared his testimony many years ago of a major Bible teacher that took his church to a place where a false teacher was ministering, and he lost almost his entire Bible class. A young convert of four months was there that said something told her about the spirit there and warned

her not to go again, and she was preserved. You must learn to develop the nature of following the Holy Spirit.

The Bible says: “Paul being grieved turned and said to the spirit.” He did something about the spirit—he cast out the spirit. If you are in a land, and the principality in the land wants to come in through personalities in the land through all kinds of things like behaviour, culture, false operation, you must recognize that true biblical deliverance ministry is part and parcel of the New Testament assignment to the Christian and the onus rests on you to cast out the evil spirit. The Bible says: “These signs shall follow them that believe, they shall cast out devils.” Paul did that. Denying that demons are real is going to lay you wide open to the greatest infiltration and perversion of the devil you can ever have.

Some people make strange statements like “When I get somewhere to minister, every demon travels.” That is not true. You have got to cast out demons before they go. If you don’t cast them out, they want to cast you out. Paul didn’t assume that once he stepped into the land, the devil disappeared. No. The devil actually came. The Bible says the girl met them. They couldn’t discern the girl; they could see the girl but they discerned the spirit. Remember, discerning of spirits is not the same as suspicion. If you are

going to be successful in these last days, particularly those of us that are leaders on assignment for God, we must incorporate a sound deliverance ministry into what we are doing.

A lot of people have been completely shocked by the things which manifested later in their work, not knowing that the enemy had infiltrated the camp. In the Bible, Nehemiah was a man that understood the reality of spiritual warfare and the infiltration tactics of the devil. The devil tried to join them to build with them, but he said, "No, you don't have any part in this matter. We the servants of God will rise up and build the wall for our God." The enemy also came through false prophets to attack Nehemiah and to get him to shift, but Nehemiah did not fall for their deception. So, there are tricks that the devil uses. Because you have to win the lost does not mean you should lose the move of God.

UNSCRIPTURAL SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

We must incorporate deliverance ministry to help the people that have served the devil actively before we got to the land. Some of them sincerely want to come to Christ, and if you don't minister deliverance thoroughly to them just like this girl in Acts 16 who

had operated under a spirit of divination, when they come to church that spirit will be operating through them. Maybe you have heard people say, "I have been seeing visions since I was born." Nobody has been seeing visions since he was born. Visions are operations of the Holy Ghost that come when you are baptized in the Holy Ghost. When somebody says God has been using him since he was a baby—praying for the sick, prophesying, that is not scriptural. There could be the divine hands of God manifesting in providence in the life of somebody, but to be operating spiritual gifts from birth is not scriptural. Many times, such people need deliverance, and when you minister deliverance to them, you can help them. Because after this girl was freed, she could be baptized in the Holy Ghost genuinely.

THE DEVIL IS A COUNTERFEITER

One truth of the Bible is that the devil is a counterfeiter. He doesn't create; he counterfeits. And one of his greatest stock in trade is to counterfeit the things of the Holy Ghost. He can't counterfeit the holiness of God, he can't counterfeit the love of God, but he can counterfeit gifts and signs. That's why Jesus said that many will come in His name saying they are anointed, but by their fruits they shall be

known, not by their signs and wonders. The Bible says false Christs and false prophets will arise in the last days and will do great signs and wonders that even if it were possible, the very elect will be deceived.

We are not supposed to be taken by the signs and wonders; we must check the source of the signs and wonders by connecting with the Holy Ghost in us, who can tell us whether it's right or wrong. And then we must check the fruits of that ministry. If it doesn't issue out in Christ-likeness and in conforming to Christ, we should suspect the source. The truth is that supernatural manifestations that come from God can also come from the devil. And that gives us the responsibility to discern which is which. The Bible is clear about the standards we are meant to use to discern and to judge.

Acts chapter 16 says: "And this she did many days but Paul being grieved turned and said to the spirit." He didn't say to the girl; he said to the spirit. That was a thorough deliverance, casting out the devil. And you will notice here that the devil came out the same hour. He didn't spend days upon days wasting time with a demon, asking questions from a demon, and all kinds of foolishness that people have called deliverance. And where there is no deliverance or there is wrong deliverance method applied, it leads

to more confusion and more grounds being taken by the devil. There is a genuine biblical deliverance ministry in the name of Jesus and the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and we must develop ourselves in it. We must include that in our spiritual curriculum for ministries so that we can become effective ministers in these last days. We must not neglect or deny also the reality that demons try to take over the move of God through false operations of the gifts of the spirit.

The apostles recognized this fact, prepared for it, and warned the people about it. We must also be alert and sensitive to it. Be led by the Holy Spirit not by Prophets

> Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

That scripture expressly commands us to try the spirits; it didn't say to try the human beings. It says try the spirits behind supernatural manifestations before you open up to it. Once you open yourself to a supernatural manifestation that is coming from a wrong source, that spirit will come upon you and begin to operate in your life.

You know there are people today that have lost their ministries because of people that claim they are

government prophets and can tell people how to operate in the body of Christ. God didn't tell us that; we are not led by that. The Bible says that ministry offices are set in the body of Christ by Jesus Christ the head of the church, not by a prophet. It is not scriptural for a man to say that he can tell who is supposed to be a pastor here or who is supposed to be this or that. We are led by the spirit in the New Testament; we are not led by prophets. That does not mean we don't open ourselves to prophecies because the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:20–21 that we should not despise prophesying, but we should prove all things and hold fast that which is good.

Many people have developed an aversion for the prophetic because of false prophecies and strange operations, and they have fulfilled the proverbial saying of throwing the baby away with the bath water and fallen into another error. It is one error not to believe in supernatural manifestation and refuse to open up to prophetic operations. It is another error to over-glorify prophetic operations and be so gullible as not to test the spirit. However, there is a middle of the road that the apostles established for us, where they opened up to spiritual manifestation, but they tested the spirits, they tested the ministries, and they tested spiritual manifestation.

Look at another thing the apostles said on this in 1

John 4:2–3:

> hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

This spirit of Antichrist is in the world today. It's not talking of human beings; it's talking of spirit. Spirits use human beings just as the Holy Ghost uses us to minister blessings. Evil spirits use human beings to do evil and we must not allow that.

CHAPTER 8

COUNTERFEIT GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (3)

In this chapter we continue to look at the operations of false prophecies and counterfeit supernatural operations. The Bible is full of the warnings about supernatural operations that are counterfeit in origin, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Right from the Garden of Eden, the beginning of the problems of the human race begun when we listened to another source of supernatural information. The Bible says in Genesis chapter 3 that God comes in the cool of the day to converse and fellowship with Adam and Eve. And then the Bible said the devil came through the serpent and deceived Eve. And when God came and asked Adam: “Adam, where are you?” Adam said he was afraid because he was naked, therefore he hid himself. Then God said, “Who told you you are naked?”

That question was so important because God recognized that there was a personality behind that information and information is very important. If the devil cannot be your supplier of information, he will strive to be your interpreter of information. That is why you must be soaked in the Word of God, not just derive Bible knowledge, and seek to know the Holy Ghost. The Bible is given to us to establish safe parameters for supernatural communications. In this context, anything that is outside the facts of the Bible, the principles of the Bible, the nature of the Bible, and the essence of God revealed in the Bible should not be taken, no matter who is involved. Let me say for the umpteenth time that for Christians, "who" is more important than "what." If a gift is coming, check the spirit behind the gift. Is it a gift to bless you or to blind you? If a message is coming, seek to know who is behind it. Is it God or the devil? You may say, "Well, is that really important?"

Yes, it is important. Look at Jeremiah chapter 23 for the warning of the prophet there by the spirit of God about the dangers of wrong prophecies and what it can do to people. Verse 11 says: "For both prophets and priests are profane yea in my house, have I found their wickedness. Saith the Lord."

LEVELS OF FALSE PROPHECIES

AND FALSE SPIRITUAL OPERATIONS

False prophecies and false operations of the gifts of the spirits are in levels. First there is a level of an ignorant person that doesn't understand how these things operate. He is a sincere person, born-again; he makes mistakes which can be corrected as part of growth. If you are sincere, you correct yourself and stop making that mistake. When you are trying to learn the modes of flowing in the Holy Ghost, you make mistakes here and there like a baby trying to walk, falls down and picks himself up again.

The second level is by somebody who is an outright agent of the devil, like the lady in Acts chapter 16, who was possessed of a demonic spirit, which controlled her and used her to do evil, like Simon, the sorcerer.

The third level is the minister of the Gospel that is moving out of the measure of the anointing that God has placed upon him. There are people today that generally have prophetic callings and gifts, but they move out of that measure by beginning to say things that God didn't tell them to say. There are prayer band groups that receive revelation for prayer and want to use it to control the Church. When the

controlling attitude comes in upon a person that has a genuine gift, it will open him to that spirit, and that becomes a false operation. There are people that are going beyond their measure, and we must beware of such things.

Jeremiah talked about various categories in Jeremiah chapter 23 verse 13: “I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria, they prophesied in Baal and caused my people to err.” That was a prophet operating by a false spirit, an evil spirit, prophesying in Baal, causing people to go into error. No matter how good the prophecy is, once it is evil, once it comes from the devil, it will lead people into error. Verse 14 says: “I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem, an horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers that none doth return from his wickedness.”

It is one mark of false spiritual operations to strengthen the hands of evildoers. Imagine a minister of God going through a line of five hundred people and giving prophecy to each one, prophecies which are just high sounding and nice sounding. You don’t have to look for the applause of men. The approval of God is more important than to be in the good books of people, especially if you are in prophetic ministry. You must be trusted to be a mouthpiece and

a spokesman for God. If people need to hear a hard word that will bring them to God, you must be faithful to say that and not say things that people want to hear.

We live in a time that people just want ministers to tickle their ears and tell them sweet things that they want to hear. That may not be what they need for that time. A true messenger of God says what God wants him to say, what people need to hear, not just what people want to hear. As a Christian, don't look for somebody to tell you what you want to hear all the time. That was the problem of Ahab in 2 Chronicles chapter 18, with his four hundred prophets. Don't be like the 400 prophets of Ahab, who told lies; be like Michaiah, who told him the truth.

There are many people today that want to hear only what they want to hear, and the devil deceives them through a lying spirit. Those who went to call Michaiah had told him to let his prophecy agree with that of the other prophets. It is a counterfeit prophet that will cause his words to agree with popular opinion. Say what God wants you to say and let God handle the consequence. That's being true to your calling. And this man came and told Ahab "go and prosper." Ahab said, "How many times have I told you to tell me nothing but the truth?" So, Ahab knew

that what they were telling him was what he wanted to hear, and he still wanted to hear it. I want to warn you. As a child of God, don't go looking for just what you want to hear because that leads to perversion not conversion. Let the Word of God be free to speak to you so that you can correct any area that needs correction in your life. Whether you are a minister or just a Christian, you must be willing to receive the Word of God in its fullness so that it can help you, mould you and shape you into Christ-likeness.

> I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets; behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. (Jer. 23:14–15)

You can change the prophets to ministering gifts. When ministering gifts are polluted and perverted, wickedness and profaneness thrives. To be profane means to despise spiritual things and exalt carnal things at the expense of deep things of God. Verse 16

says: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.” This is a second category that speaks for Baal, speaking from their own hearts. These are not agents of the devil; they are genuine prophets, but they want to please people. They want to be popular among the people instead of being powerful in God, and they speak things out of their own hearts, and they make people vain; they are not sound in the spirit. They speak visions of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord. The third category are those that speak from the mouth of God.

> They say still unto them that despise me, the Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, no evil shall come upon you. (Jer. 23:17)

Verse 18 tells us what happens when you hear from God:

> For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord and hath perceived and heard his word who hath marked his word, and heard it?

Remember that there are three levels of prophetic

utterance: prophecy that comes from evil spirits, prophecy that comes from the heart of the man himself, and then, prophecy that comes from the spirit of God. Verse 21 says: "I have not sent these prophets yet they ran, I have not spoken to them yet they prophesy." If God has not spoken to a prophet, he has got nothing to say from God, but if he prophesies, he must be speaking from his own mind. What you find today in most places is not prophecy but soothsaying. A true prophetic utterance is "thus saith the Lord:"

> I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. (Jer. 23:21–23)

If God spoke, God's power will back it up. When God has not spoken, then man has to manipulate things to bring it to pass, and that leads to errors and problems. All through the Bible, God warned His people about the trickery of the devil through false supernatural manifestations so that they wouldn't get deceived. The devil doesn't have anything in his hand; he copies God. Christians must understand how God moves, what God does, in order not to

open up to strange things, especially in these days where there are all kinds of human yardsticks and people want to be popular instead of being faithful to the call of God upon their lives.

Many people are falling for the error of the devil, receiving all kinds of voices. Even if you are a prophet from God, if God has not spoken, you dare not say anything. Keep your mouth shut. Don't let people put pressure on you to perform such that you feel you have to perform every time. And because people say you are a prophet, you must give a word. Don't do that because when you keep doing it, you are losing your credibility with heaven. The Holy Ghost will withdraw, and then evil spirits will invade that kind of life. It is important you avoid this.

Supernatural operations could be miracles, signs, and wonders of all kinds. If they don't follow the biblical patterns of projecting the glory of Christ, drawing attention to Christ, and transforming men to be Christ-like, then check it; be suspicious of the source. The Bible is clear that there are three sources by which you can get information; from the heart of man, from the devil, and from God. You need to be careful not to get your information from the heart of man and from the devil in order not to be led into error.

> But if they had stood in my counsel, (that is if their prophets have stood in my counsel) and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned from their evil way, and the evil of their doings.
>
> I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? Yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; (Jer. 23:22, 25–26)

Do you know that there are times that people tell you their own counsel in a prophecy? I heard a supposed prophet going around early in the morning in my neighbourhood prophesying that there are diseases coming in the area that no medicine could cure. He said people should come to see him for help and collect some water. That was a dangerous prophet! People who don't know the word of God and are not covered by the blood of Jesus would be afraid if those diseases manifested in them. They would open up to demons working with that man. Some prophesy just from their own opinion on how you should be and what you should do.

Every Christian is responsible to build a personal relationship with the Holy Ghost and with the Lord Jesus Christ. Apostles, prophets, evangelists,

teachers, and pastors are not raised to tie you to their apron strings but to connect you to Jesus and to help you to develop your walk with Him. Christianity begins as a step, then you develop a walk from that step. The step of salvation must become a walk in Christianity you walk day by day, knowing God every day, increasing in your knowledge of Him, of His word, of the nature of His person, and building a strong, sound relationship with Him. When you come to that place, you will be saved.

Look at Jeremiah 23:27:

> which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.

One of the consequences of opening up to false prophecy is that it causes you to forget the Lord; it causes you to forget the holy things of God. Some people will say, "If it is working, you can't argue with it." God argued with results in the Bible. God told Moses to speak to the rock, but Moses struck the rock and water came out, but God still dealt with him. That something is working does not mean it's from God. That you met somebody in the vehicle and he said the Lord told him how much is in your pockets does not mean it is of God. God cannot tell a

prophet how much is in your pocket! God is not in that business. When you begin to hear prophecies that are altered to take money from the pockets of people, you know the Holy Ghost is not involved in that.

JUDGING PROPHECIES

As a Christian, you should be sound, sensitive, and knowledgeable. The Bible didn't say God has given you the spirit of power alone. It says He has given us the spirit of power, of love, and the spirit of sound mind. You must not throw out sound mind in following spiritual operations. The spirit of God that you have is the spirit of power; He is the spirit of sound mind and He is the spirit of love. You should allow him have full operation in you life.

Look at verse 28–29 of Jeremiah chapter 23:

> The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? Saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? Saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces.

God recognizes that there are prophecies that could come from the enemy, prophecies that could

come from the heart of man himself without the Holy Ghost being involved and that there are prophecies from the Holy Ghost. It's the prophecies from the Holy Ghost that God confirms; brings blessings and brings the purpose of God into manifestation. Yet the devil has successfully hijacked many people's calling by getting them to listen to and follow strange prophecies that have led to destruction, broken homes, broken lives, broken destinies, and a lot of avoidable tragedies because they didn't check with the Word of God.

The Bible in 1 Corinthians 14:27–29 points out what things should be judged when prophets are prophesying.

> If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

The Bible didn't say judge the prophet; it says judge what he says. So, once you speak out, you should allow it to be judged and shouldn't be defensive. If you make a mistake, you should be willing to be corrected. That's assuming you are a

genuine servant of God or you are a genuine Christian. The Bible says prophecies should be judged, and there is in the Bible, a scriptural standard for judging prophecy.

One of the ways by which the devil has brought ridicule in the heart of sensible human beings is to rise up all kinds of flaky character who claim they are prophets of God. Sincere people who are not born-again wonder what is going on. That is the devil's attack, and as Christians, we have to recognize that it is a major attack against the genuine move of the Holy Ghost to cause people to lose faith and interest in the authentic things of God. We must live a life that is balanced and sound so that the operations of the Holy Ghost in our lives can be attractive to the world and they can see God. The apostles stood against false manifestation because they knew it would bring the spirit of the land to hijack the move of God and pollute it. And we in our days must understand that.

Let me underscore five things evident in the life of Apostle Paul in Acts chapter 16 that kept him safe.

1. There was a gift of discerning of spirits in his life.
2. There was a strong deliverance ministry.
3. He was committed to the leadership of the Holy

Ghost.

4. Paul was sound in doctrine, sound in the Word of God.

5. Paul was not alone; he worked together with other believers, other committed ministers.

When you have these five things working together in your life, it will keep you sound.

CHAPTER 9

COUNTERFEIT GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (4)

You have seen in the previous chapter that there are three sources from which supernatural manifestations can come. They can come from the devil, they can come from the heart of a man, and they can come from God. When they come from the devil, they lead people to hell. When they come from the heart of man due to pride and ignorance on people's paths, they make people vain. But when they come from God, they make God's people to be sound, holy, humble, and conformed to the image of Christ. You saw that in Jeremiah chapter 23. Now, I want to refer again to our text in the Acts of the Apostles.

> It came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met

> us, which brought her master much gain by soothsaying: (Acts 16:16)

The spirit possessing that girl was giving people supernatural information about themselves, about their future; they were going to consult this girl. Sometimes people want to do that for a man of God. They come not necessarily to hear the Word of God, but they just want to consult as they consulted before they got born-again. And that must change. God wants people's attitude and hearts to be connected to Him and to His Word so that they can live on their own a powerful Christian life, not turn ministers of God to spiritual consultants, as it were. Thank God for what the anointing in the life of the ministers of God do for us! God puts the anointing there to bail us out of crisis, but that is not to replace the development of our own work with God.

This girl was bringing her master much gain by soothsaying. "The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit," He said to the spirit, not to the girl. He separated the girl from the spirit operating in the girl. And that is something you have to understand. Effective ministry is dealing with

wrong spirits in the lives of people, evil spirits that are using people; casting them out and then helping those people to walk in the purpose of God for their lives.

THE DANGER OF NOT BEING SAVED

The Bible says in Jeremiah 1:5, Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you and ordained you to be a prophet to the nations. There are people that before they were born, the destiny that God had planned for them is to be great prophets, but they need to be born-again to serve as prophets under the right spirit. There are also people though not born-again, have destinies to be prophets, but because they are not born-again, they are open to the devil. The devil seeing their destiny, quickly hijacks it, and you see such people giving serious prophecies that still come to pass. Most of them are negative prophecies of doom. Sometimes you wonder how he knew that? That is the program of God for him, but because he isn't born-again, the devil has hijacked his destiny, and now he's become a tool in the hand of the devil.

Such people need to be interceded for and delivered, accept Jesus Christ into their lives, and receive the original spirit that God wants to work in

their lives. Destiny is a design that God has built like a car. A car can be driven by a normal person, a car can be driven by a drunkard and it can be driven by a mad person. You don't blame the car. The person driving it determines what the car does. In the same way, our destinies must be driven by the Spirit of God. If you are not born-again, your spirit can be hijacked by an evil spirit to do things that are contrary to God's purpose.

Look at Apostle Paul, for example. He was killing Christians. He thought he was serving God by destroying Christians. And that energy, that zeal, that knowledge, all the things that were formed inside him to make him such a colossus at a young age, were put there by God to be manned by the Holy Ghost. Before he got born-again, the devil used him to do something else in the name of religion. But when he got born-again, he regretted that. In fact, you see the pain in the writings of Apostle Paul that he did all those things in ignorance. But there are people that didn't find the truth like he did, and they lived and died carrying great destinies stolen, hijacked, and used by the devil and ended up going to hell.

This girl in Acts chapter 16 represents one of such that could be a prophetic vessel, but the spirit of divination had taken her over. There are times that people may not necessarily be carrying a destiny to

be a prophet, but they've opened up to spirits, and spirits possessed them and used them. Ministers and leaders must recognize the danger that this kind of spirit poses. Paul cast out that spirit and the girl became free. The masters of that girl fought Paul, but the fact remains that that demon was stopped from hijacking the ministry of Paul. Imagine what would have happened if Paul didn't discern the spirit working in this girl and welcomed her to join them? Like a lot of Christian leaders welcome people that are possessed of demons to team up with them. The people in the land would think that Paul was in the same business with the girl and bring money to him. Have you observed that everywhere you see the devil's perversion, you also see money involved? That's why as Christians, we've got to be careful about financial issues and let our financial life and practices be according to the sound principles of the Bible so that we can be preserved from this kind of danger.

If Paul had not discerned it, she would have joined them and polluted their ministry, and most likely, they would not have made any headway in that land. But they cast out that devil, and the devil fought them. If you are going to take hold of this kind of ministry to fight the devil, be ready because the devil is going to fight you with the greatest weapon at his disposal,

which is lying. The Bible says her masters told lies against Paul, they insisted that he had come to teach heresy, and Paul and Silas were put in jail. From then on, the Holy Ghost began to use the negative circumstances to accomplish God's purposes. They could have been deceived to team up with this girl because she already had a following and popularity.

There are personalities of the principality in a land that already have a following. That doesn't mean that God wants a marriage of convenience with them. God is never in a marriage of convenience with the devil. God can get His work done with or without anybody's assistance. When He calls you, He will help you to accomplish what He calls you to do. You don't need to team up with any charlatan or any false operation of the spirit in order to do what God has called you to do.

FOR MANY SHALL COME . . .

Don't forget that the Lord Jesus Christ prophesied that false prophecies and counterfeit operations of the spirit are part of the signs of the last days.

> And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. (Matt. 24:4)

The word “I am Christ” in this scripture is “I am anointed”. Many will come and say I am anointed and they will perform signs and wonders.

> Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. (Matt. 24:23–24)

Jesus was talking about the signs of the last days. Many will come in His name saying they are anointed —false anointing, false prophets with great signs and wonders, but we are not to follow those signs and wonders. Jesus Christ talking to us as the people that the end of the times will come upon, tells us in Matthew 7:15–16: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, and thistles?”

You shall know them by the fruits of their lives, not by the signs. You are not to follow signs; you are to follow fruits. Look into your spirit; look at the fruits of the lives of people before you follow them. (You can order for my book titled *Understanding Ministry Gifts* for further clarification.)

CHAPTER 10

LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS

We have been looking at the Book of Acts of the Apostles to see how the early Church, facing the attack of the devil to take over their calling and commission, overcame and preserved the commission that God gave them and handed it over to succeeding generations. Today, we can thank God for them, for fighting a good fight. Now in our own day, we have to fight the devil in the same arena in order not to allow him to take over our commission or calling as well. Whatever God has given you, you must see it as a trust from heaven and protect it with the knowledge of the Word of God.

In this chapter, I want to look at another way the devil tried to hijack the move of God in the early Church. And he will do the same today.

In Acts 20:17–29, Paul was speaking to the elders of the church of Ephesus. Notice there are two

things that Paul was saying in verse 29. First, he said after his departing, two things would happen: one, grievous wolves would come in from outside, and two, from inside would rise men speaking perverse things. The first thing evident from this statement is that the presence of Paul kept these evils away. And this underscores the next point I want to deal with—the danger of wrong leadership.

Absentee leadership or false leadership will open the door for the devil to take over the move of God. And that is very dangerous. Paul said, "After my departing." That means, while he was there, his presence, his calling, his effective leadership, and his spiritual strength in leadership kept grievous wolves away. They were there, but they wouldn't come in. Also those that would rise from among them could not rise because of his presence.

One of the primary purposes of leadership is to keep the commission of God intact and pure, to keep the move of God pure, to watch over it and keep it away from the assault of the devil. Many times, people think leadership is there to cover up error. No. God's leadership principle is such that when men are put in leadership by God, their presence keeps the Church pure. Paul was going away from that region and was warning the leaders that he would leave behind that if they didn't watch and lead well, there

would be all sorts of intruding evils. Let me show you various categories of leadership problems that can open the door to the devil:

(i). Absentee Leadership—This is when a leader is there, but he's not exerting his influence. The case of Eli is an apt example, his failure as a father, to take up the leadership role in his family, led to the loss of his children, loss of his priesthood and his lineage - succeeding generations after him was cut off from the priesthood. God gave the privilege of priesthood to another lineage because he failed to exert his leadership influence as a father on his children. In the case of Abraham, God said in Genesis 18:19, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." God's plan for Abraham was perpetuated because of Abraham's strength in leadership. It's one thing to be brilliant; it is another thing to be strong a leader. Many times people think it is brilliance that produces excellence in followers. It is strength in leadership that produces excellence.

A father at home tells his child, "If you come home with another person's property from school, I will spank you." If the child does that and he spanks

him, that child doesn't do that again because his father is strong to enforce standards, and that child grows up to be a sound person. On the other hand, a father who understands with a child how societal pressure makes the child steal a Biro that does not belong to him, will be unconsciously grooming that child to become a criminal. It will not be the fault of the child alone; it will be the failure of the father. And God will judge the father as well as judge the son. In fact, the Bible says in the Old Testament that God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Him. This means that the effect of failure in leadership will affect suceeding generations up to the third and fourth generation. And that's why it is imperative as Christian leaders entrusted with a commission from the Holy Spirit to watch it.

Absentee leadership is one that opens the door to the devil in anything that God has called you to watch over as a leader. As a pastor, you are a leader over the commission that God has given you. As a father, you are a leader over your family. Don't be an absentee father. Be there and be there for God. You know, when the human race fell, God didn't come into the garden to say, "Eve, what did you do?" The first question that God asked was "Adam, where are you?" And that tells us where God's focus was.

Adam was the one that God gave instructions to; he was the one that God gave leadership. And that was the person that God first demanded account from. You find fantastic ministers today that have people doing all kinds of wrong things under them. And the reason is simply weakness in leadership. And God will hold us responsible, first of all, for not exerting and enforcing the standards of God down the line. When the seed is holy, the product will be holy. And God holds the leadership responsible. So Paul is telling us that he did not allow the devil to hijack the move of God by the presence of his strong leadership. But he said that after his departing, he knew that this was going to happen.

(ii). False Leadership—This is a situation where people that are not of God somehow find their way into leadership. And the Bible is clear about the standards to check before we bring people into leadership because leadership can be very powerful in determining the outcome of things that God is doing among men. In fact, God did not leave the issue of the leadership in the body of Christ to any man. The Bible says He set in the Church Himself, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles . . . (1 Cor. 12:28). He didn't leave it to our own wisdom to say we want to choose this person

to be this or that. God didn't allow democracy to choose the leadership of church. And that is something that we need to understand. Thank God for democracy, but when it comes to leadership of spiritual things, we should recognize the choices of God. There are conditions that God lays down for spiritual leadership. And we must not allow counterfeit people to come into leadership in the move of God.

(iii). Unfit Leadership: This category of leadership problem is seen when people come into *Christian leadership* from *secular leadership*. They bring into Christianity, mentality and ideas that are opposed to the spirit of Christ. When the world is looking for leaders, it may look for men that are bold goal-getters, but when God is looking for men to work with in leadership, He looks for men that are sensitive, humble, broken, and malleable in His hand. These conditions are diametrically opposed to the world's criteria, and we must not transpose the world's criteria to the Church. When we do that, the spiritual potency of the Church is sacrificed for earthly acceptance. And that's what is happening today. We cannot take education to replace anointing. We cannot take a bold appearance to replace sensitivity of the heart; God is more concerned with

how sensitive we are to Him.

God doesn't want hirelings in His leadership. He wants men that are ready to lay their lives down for the sheep and do all that He called them to do to preserve His work and His move. But then the hireling comes in who is only interested in what to eat. When such people get into leadership, they create the condition that Paul was warning about here.

THE DANGER OF WOLVES

> Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not paring the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:28–30)

Remember, this passage tells us of two evils that come when Church or Christian leadership is not strong and scriptural:

(i) Grievous wolves that come from outside;
(ii) Internal errors that come in from men that have their own desire that they want to impose on the things of God.

These two evils were kept away, Paul said, by his strong and effective leadership, represented by his presence among them. The Bible warns us about the danger of wolves in Matthew 7:15: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves." Look at the descriptions. Jesus said they are ravening wolves. Paul said they are grievous wolves not sparing the flock; they want to tear the flock into pieces. They are just in it for their own interest. Paul had to stand up against them in Galatians 2. This is part of the purpose of leadership. But if leadership is wrong, they won't be able to do what they are supposed to do. And there are different categories of wrong leadership which I have mentioned already.

> And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. (Gal. 2:4–5)

Paul and his team of leaders withstood these false leaders because they wanted to pervert the truth. When leadership fails, the truth is polluted, perverted, and watered down, and it doesn't continue in its

original potency. Elijah raised Elisha, and Elisha received the double portion, but Elisha raised Gehazi in a way that he couldn't receive a portion because Elisha tolerated for Gehazi the things that Elijah did not tolerate for him, so Gehazi ended up poorly.

This generation is in need of real fathers and leaders who are sold out to the principles of God that they are not going to compromise. Moses, though he was carnal, was so jealous for the things of God and the glory of God that he was not willing to compromise. But compare him to Aaron. The people said Aaron should make a calf for them to go before them. Aaron agreed and made a calf for them to go before them. And you will find calf-makers who will do for you what you want. In fact, Paul in writing to Timothy warned him in 2 Timothy 4:1–3:

> I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

He didn't say excite people; he said, ". . . reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure

sound doctrine . . .” And I believe with all my heart that the time has come when many in the body of Christ don’t want to endure sound doctrine “but after their own lust shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears.”

Verse 3 is saying people will find somebody to tickle their ears. We are living in a time now that if a pastor disciplines a church member for a behaviour that is against the Scripture, that church member gets angry and goes to another church. And before you know it, that other church takes him up and makes him a leader. Doing this is dangerous because it breaks down discipline and discipleship development in the body of Christ.

Paul says in verses 4–5:

> And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch out in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Those that are overseers over commissions, visions, destinies, and assignments from God, have got to be careful and be strong to protect the church, the move of God, and the truth of God from false men and false women who want to hijack them. That’s a prophetic utterance from Apostle Paul by the spirit of God that a time would come, and that time

has come. Now if we are living in that time, that means, as he has said, there will be an attack that this generation will face, an attack not to endure sound doctrine, wholesome doctrine and a time when people want to do selective hearing of the truth. But the Bible says: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect (complete), throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16-17 emphasis mine) We are to be all Scriptures people thoroughly equipped for every good work; we are not supposed to be favourite-Scripture people.

Now, the time that Paul talked about has come; it means we must be strong. We must be watchful as leaders, ministers, and people of destiny so that we do not fall prey to the enemy in our commission and our calling through lack of strong scriptural leadership. In the book of Acts of the Apostles chapter 8, Philip could have made a mistake of taking Simon, the sorcerer, up as a leader and continuing with him just like he was moving on till Apostles Peter and John came there and knew that his heart was wrong. Simon was not genuinely converted; his discipleship was not thorough yet.

A LEADER SHOULDN'T BE A

NOVICE

> "This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." (1 Tim. 3:1-6)

The word "novice" here is not talking of physical novice. It means a spiritual novice, a ministerial novice. When we come to a place that the leadership of the Church is made of novices, the devil finds it easy to take over the move of God because leadership protects. Paul said his presence kept grievous wolves out and kept wrong attitudes from rising from within the assembly. But when novices are lifted to that office, the two evils will operate freely. Calling somebody a spiritual novice is not a slight if he truly is. If a person gets born again today, 1 Timothy chapter 2 says he's a babe. And you can't ask a babe to take on a man's job. A novice will take

decisions that are conflicting with the interest of the Spirit of God.

It took Jesus, the Master Himself, three and a half years to develop the apostles before he left them. If the master took three and a half years to develop the people He was going to commit ministry to, teaching them every day, building them up, testing them, and proving them, why should we take less? And if God says not a novice, it means not a novice. When the growth of a church or a ministry exceeds the leadership development program, it gives room for mediocre people's entering into the leadership. And when mediocre people enter, the standard will be lowered. It's so important, because we must not come under any pressure of performance. Our ego must not drive us. The will of God, the vision of God, the call of God must be what is leading us step by step. Otherwise, we will have nothing to hand over to the next generation. The apostles worked diligently to preserve the purity of the commission that God gave them and the truth that God committed to them to handle over to our generation; and we must not fail generations coming after us. This lowering of the standard of leadership and ministry will create a platform for novices to come up.

Novices are unskilled and immature about the things of God. In Acts chapter 8, if Peter and John

had not come, a wrong person (Simon whose heart was not right) could have been put in leadership. I want you to check yourself. Are you lowering standards or maintaining standards? It's such a simple question that will help preserve your commission and your calling and help you to give better account before the Master.

KEEP YOUR COMMISSION CLEAN

> I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: (1 Tim. 6:13–14)

J. B. Philip's translation renders the same Scripture this way:

> I charge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things and Christ Jesus who fearlessly witnessed to the truth before Pontius Pilate; To keep your commission clean and above reproach, until the final coming of Christ.

1 Timothy 6:20–21 says,

> O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and

> oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace *be* with thee. Amen.

The J. B. Philip's translation of the same Scripture says:

> O, Timothy guide most carefully your divine commission, avoid the godless mixture of contradictory notions which is falsely known as knowledge. Some have followed it and lost their faith. Grace be with you.

From these two passages, you will see the concern of Apostle Paul to protect our divine commission. If you look at generations past and even contemporary times, you will find that the devil attacks the work of God by attacking the commissions received by men from God. So much so that people outside of the body of Christ are confused as to who is in charge. And the Bible has warned us that satanic activities will increase tremendously. God wants you to keep your commission pure, holy, undefiled, and unpolluted from satanic infiltration. We've seen that when our growth exceeds our leadership development, it will require more and more people to come into leadership who are not equipped for the holy offices of spiritual leadership, and that will mean that a lowering of

standards will be taking place to put unequipped men in holy offices that require spiritual maturity. And when that happens, there will be a lowering of the anointing. When the anointing of the Holy Spirit is lowered, the contribution of the devil will increase and open the door to confusion. Most people won't know whether it is God moving or the devil. But God wants His people to be in the know; that's why He gave us the Holy Ghost.

Leadership is so important that in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, after He received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the first question that was settled between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost was the question of leadership. The Bible says Jesus was filled with the Spirit and He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness. The question of leadership determines to a large extent what happens in our commission and in our lives. And so we can't afford to have wrong leadership in the body of Christ.

Ecclesiastes 10:16 says: "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king *is* a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!" This could refer to a land, a nation, a church, or a family that pleasure is more important than purpose. Woe unto a land when it is being ruled by immature people; woe unto a church when it is led by immature leaders. It leads to problems. And verse 17 says: "Blessed are thou, O land, when your

king is the son of nobles . . .” That means he is well trained and well formed. This is a person that is fathered properly into the paces, the process, the procedure, the protocol, the philosophies of the Kingdom of God. He can actually perpetuate the principles, the values of the Kingdom from generation to generation. That brings great blessing to the move of God, to generations coming after, and to the people that are beneficiaries of that leadership in the immediate time.

Many times, God shows His mood to a group of people by the kind of leaders He allows to lead them. When the queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon, she said in 1 Kings 10:9 that it was because God loved the Israelites forever that He had made Solomon king, to do justice and righteousness. So you can see the mood of God over a group of people by the kind of leadership that He gives them or allows them to have. And more so in the body of Christ, we are God’s people, representing the best of the values of the Kingdom to the world. We cannot afford to violate the principles of the Kingdom when it comes to leadership.

Ecclesiastes 10:17 says: “Blessed *art* thou, O land, when thy king *is* the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!” Compare it to verse 16, where the

princes were eating in the morning and they just enjoyed themselves. They were more concerned with their comfort than the will of God. And that will always open the door for the devil to hijack the move of God in any generation. In spiritual leadership, the focus is not physical or mental maturity but spiritual maturity. First in the requirements for spiritual maturity is spiritual depth that will enable the man to function in spiritual leadership. That was what Paul was saying in 1 Timothy 3:6 when he said a novice should not be made a pastor. When you place education or physical maturity above spiritual maturity, you will import ideas from the world into the Kingdom of God, and make it very easy for the devil to deal with the Church because the devil is already the god of this world. This is something we must avoid as leaders.

Apostle Paul said that his presence (his physical presence) in his leadership role prevented the enemies from outside and within the assembly from hijacking the plan and the purpose of God in that day. Today, strong, focused, mature, and effective leadership is still required to preserve our commission and the move of God in our day. All those serving in one leadership position or the other must never stop growing. We must keep improving and developing ourselves so that the move of God can be kept pure

and our commission can be preserved in these days.

CHAPTER 11

FALSE DOCTRINE

After dealing with leadership problems in the previous chapter as one of the things the devil uses to hijack people's calling and commission, in this chapter, I want to focus on a related weapon the devil uses to hijack the calling and commission of people. And that is false doctrine. In Acts 20:29, Paul, talking to the elders of the church in Ephesus, said: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."

I have already dealt with that in the preceding chapter. I said a positive, strong, godly leadership will keep the enemy away and preserve the move of God.

In verse 30, it says: "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

From within the assembly, men will arise if there

is absence of leadership and bring in false teachings, error to destroy the work of God.

Verse 31–32 says: "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

One of the greatest dangers in these last days is a lack of Bible knowledge in Christian leadership. To my mind, there is no other generation of Christians that is like this present generation. There is so much Bible illiteracy in the body of Christ, so much that there is tolerance of almost anything. And the Bible warns us clearly that we must build everything we are doing on the unshakeable Scriptures; individual believers must be well taught in the Scripture.

SCRIPTURE AND DOCTRINE

In the book of 1 Timothy, Paul wrote to Timothy about the power and the role of Scriptures in the life of a man of God. The knowledge of the truth is going to keep us from errors. There are so many errors coming up in the world today. Preservation from error comes by knowing the truth; it's not by

studying errors in order to be able to fight errors. If a bank wants to prevent forgery, they train their staff to know the genuine notes enough so that when they see a counterfeit one, they can pick it out. They don't begin to train them to study counterfeit notes because counterfeit notes will always come in different forms almost every time. But once they know the original enough, they can pick a counterfeit.

In this same way we must know the truth of the Word of God so well that when a teaching is in error and heretical, we can recognize it and know where it doesn't line up with the Scriptures. When a teaching comes up, no matter how fantastic it sounds, once you are sound in the Word of God, you can get about ten other Scriptures to protect you because you will know where it doesn't line up with the Scriptures. You know you can take a Scripture out of its context and make it say anything you want it to say, and it can deceive people that are not yet grounded in the Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16 says: All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine. So we must build our doctrine from all Scriptures, not from one Scripture, not from some Scriptures, not from a few Scriptures. God doesn't want us to be favourite-Scripture Christians; He wants us to be all-

Scripture Christians. Many people today are setting themselves up for error and pollution of false teaching by being favourite-Scripture Christians. You must be an all-Scripture Christian, balanced in your understanding.

Paul says: "All scripture…is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." The same passage in J.B. Philip's translation says: "All scriptures are useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of a man's life and training it in good living. The scriptures are the comprehensive equipment for the man of God and fitting for all branches of his work." See what Paul said again to his son in ministry, Timothy, in 1 Timothy 4:6:

> If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou has attained.

This tells you that both words of faith and words of good doctrine will nourish you, not words of faith alone. There are many Christians today for whom the only thing they want to hear is the word of faith. They don't want to hear the word of sound doctrine.

Words of faith boost our faith; words of sound doctrine boost our Christian character, make us look like Christ. We must not just say we want words that will just lift up our faith alone; we must receive words that build up our lifestyle and practices and make us to be like Christ.

You can recognise false ministers by the doctrine they preach. If their doctrine doesn't issue out in godly living and sound living, then something is wrong somewhere. Don't just focus on the power you see manifest and get carried away. As Christians we follow don't just follow power rather we follow righteousness. Jesus said that by their fruit, you shall know them. One of the things that promotes holy living is sound doctrine. You can never promote holy living in an assembly where those in the leadership are not preaching sound doctrine because sound doctrine leads to sound lifestyles.

Paul said to Timothy two kinds of words that will nourish his spirit: words of faith and words of sound doctrine. Everyone that is going to preserve his commission must be sound in both faith and sound doctrine. Sound doctrine comes from the Word of God, not from any other thing. All through the Bible, the apostles fought tenaciously to preserve the move of God from false doctrine. That's one of the things that the devil uses to incapacitate people. Once your

theology of God is faulty, your reflection of God's nature and attributes will also be faulty. That's why the devil tries to inject error and wrong teachings into the lives of the people of God. You must know the Word of God to protect yourself against error. I made reference to Acts chapter 15 earlier with regards to leadership problems, but at the centre was a doctrinal problem which the apostle had to fight against.

> And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. (Acts 15:1–6)

They had to deal with this matter because it was a doctrinal issue. At the end of their deliberation, they came to a position that it was not a sound doctrine and was not needful. And you must base whatever you are doing on the authority of the Scriptures. But today some people say you don't need the Old Testament; you need only the New Testament. The cross is the filter of truth. There are certain truths that didn't pass through the cross into the New Testament, so you drop those ones. But there are some that passed through the cross into the New Testament; you must take those and not drop them. The Word of God contains two testaments: the old and the new. There are things that Jesus has dealt with as far as the Old Testament requirement of Judaism is concerned, which is one of the issues these people were asking for, and the apostles said that was not necessary for salvation. But then after salvation, there are doctrinal requirements that help to manifest the fruits of salvation. Look at what Hebrews 6:7–9 says:

> For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing form God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded

> better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

There are things that accompany salvation. The danger that they were dealing with in Acts chapter 15 is that they were saying that they should do this to get saved. No. They only needed to do that after they were saved. Your salvation is connected to what Jesus did alone, but after you are saved, there are things that accompany salvation. These are the things that show to the world that you are truly saved and delivered. That's where sound doctrine comes in. Faith in Jesus saves us, but there are truths of how to live in the Kingdom of God that allows your salvation to reflect to the world. Sound doctrine doesn't make you saved, but it causes you to walk in salvation. And these are issues that the devil wants to inject error and wrong teaching into, so that he can hijack your calling and commission. Get thoroughly soaked in the Word of God so that you can see error a mile off and avoid it.

WARNINGS ABOUT ERRORS

The church is full of men that started well, but along the line they imbibed wrong doctrine. And then their calling started veering off the intended goal to

something else. The devil is such a smart wicked person that he doesn't give you 90 percent poison and 10 percent good things. He will just put about 1 percent poison in 99 percent of something good. so you will not notice or know. Just like you put rat poison in a lot of food and the rat eats it and then dies. As Christians living in these last days, we must be thoroughly sound in the Word of God such that anytime we see anything that is contrary to the Word of God, we can recognize it. The Bible is full of warnings about error and the danger of error. Look at what Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:1–2:

> I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine

Don't let people tell you that doctrine is not important. I've heard people say, "We don't want to hear any doctrine; we just want to get the Word." You can't have the Word without sound doctrine. Understand what people have gone into all kinds of crazy fables simply because they left out sound doctrine. Anything we are preaching that doesn't align with the doctrine of the Bible is deadly. See verses 3–4 of 2 Timothy 4: "For the time will come

when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." The devil likes that. He injects fables to begin to draw people away from sound doctrine. The devil works to get God's people to focus on entertainment alone and distract us from serious issues of the Kingdom of God and serious study and meditation on the deep truths of the Word of God, which will hold us steady in these last days. This is very important. Paul in writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4, warns him of the danger of false teaching and error. This is one of the things the early church fought against to ensure that the devil didn't hijack the move of God and their commission and calling through wrong teaching and error; and you must pay attention to same. That is one of the things the early Church fought against to ensure that the devil doesn't hijack the move of God and their commission and calling through wrong teaching and error.

In 1 Timothy 4:1, it says:

> Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

The above scripture points out that there are some demons whose assignment from the devil is to manufacture deceptive, destructive doctrines that sound spiritual to the ear. But they take men away from the faith; they take men away from the purpose of God for their lives. And it's so easy for somebody to get on a hobby horse and then begin to ride it until he gets off track completely. Many people have started well with great commissions and assignments from God, yet wrong doctrine derailed them. According to that verse, one of the forces that the present generation of the Church will fight will be forces of seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Verse 2 says: "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;" Some of these doctrines according to verse 3 will be: "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." All through, Paul kept warning and telling the people that he sent to minister to be careful and protect the people against false doctrine because it is one of the weapons of the devil to fight the body of Christ.

> Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled

> again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. (Gal. 5:1–4)

This is legalism. Some people were preaching it and he warned against it. Some people preached licence, saying people could do anything. Some people even said if you sneeze too much you are living in sin! All these errors, no matter how little they are, will severely limit the ability of a child of God to reflect the glory of Christ fully to the world and to fulfil his assignment and destiny on the earth. So the apostles had to fight against it.

> For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which work by love. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. (Gal. 5:5–8)

This passage tells you that there are some persuasions that can come not from the one that calls. It is Jesus, through the Holy Spirit who calls to destiny and purpose. The fact that the Bible used the

word “persuasion” means these coaxing that will not issue from Jesus, the one who calls will be persuasive in its appeal. To discern if these persuasions are is issuing out in the Holy Spirit, Christ-like manifestation, and in fulfilling God’s purpose for you, you must know and have enough of the truth of the Word of God in you. It says in verse 9: “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” That’s the effect of error. Just a little error will affect a man’s whole life negatively. Paul had to warn them in verse 11: “And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the cross ceased.”

Paul said he was not preaching circumcision, which some people were preaching, and other doctrines which the apostles had to fight. Throughout the history of the Church, the devil has sought to inject demonic doctrines into the sound doctrine of the people of God. Once you take a bite of it, your effectiveness in the pursuit of God’s purpose becomes blunt.

You protect yourself from false doctrine by staying in the Word of God, in intimacy with the Holy Spirit, and by staying close to positive and godly fellowship and not chase after flamboyant revelations that are new. Someone rightly said that if it is new, it is error in theology. There is nothing new that you

won't find a base for in the Word of God. If you can't find it in the Word of God, drop it. If you see a person that says my revelation has gone beyond the Bible, don't follow him. Because once it's gone beyond the Bible, it's gone beyond God, it's gone beyond the Holy Spirit, and it's gone beyond Jesus. God gave us the Bible to keep us within the sphere of God's operations.

There is a world outside the confines of the Bible where the devil is operating and he can give you some high-sounding revelations. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, Jesus speaking to the seven churches talked of people that have imbibed wrong teachings:

> Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. (Rev. 2:20)

I believe that any teaching that issues out in sexual immorality, no matter how good and how sound it is, is error. Sound doctrine will make us pure, will make us sound, spirit, soul, and body, and in every way. And that is why the Bible warns us of the danger in these last days. God said He was against it, and He is still against error. Error will rise in these last days,

but we must stay connected to the truth of the Word of God. Don't go away from the Word of God and don't go away from the Spirit of God.

CHAPTER 12

IMPORTING WORLDLY METHODS INTO THE CHURCH

Another strategy which the devil uses to take over the calling and commission of people as well as the move of God is importing worldly methods into the Church. And that is what I want to deal with in this chapter.

> I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: (1 Tim. 6:13–14)

Verse 14 in the J.B. Philip's translation says:

> To keep your commission clean and above reproach until the final coming of Christ.

In verse 20–21, Paul gave the same charge and commandment to Timothy:

> O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace *be* with thee. Amen.

The J. B. Philip's translation says in verses 20–21:

> O, Timothy guard most carefully your divine commission, avoid the godless mixture of contradictory notions which is falsely known as knowledge. Some have followed it and lost their faith.

The apostles in their time were conscious of the plan of the devil to hijack their commission, and they protected it, guarded it, and preserved it so that the mandate that God gave them could accomplish the purpose for which God gave it to them. We were therefore able to receive the pure Gospel from them, and we must also protect and preserve our mandate to deliver a pure Gospel to generations coming.

A temptation that every generation of God's people on the earth faces is the temptation to import methods of the world to present the Gospel. There are certain things in the world that we definitely will

use because it is not the devil that brought them into place; it's God that released the wisdom and the knowledge for those things like telecommunications. Using radio, television, etc. to preach the Gospel is not exactly what I'm referring to by methods of the world. These are technological advancements that God has graciously blessed this particular generation with for the purpose of spreading the Good News all over the world. And as Christians, we must be free to take advantage of all that God has made available to our generation to advance the cause of the Gospel.

When I'm talking of importing methods of the world into the Church, I'm talking of methods of philosophy, methods of leadership, ways that the world does its own things under the influence of the devil's spirit, contrary to the influence of the Spirit of God.

CHURCH IS NOT A DEMOCRACY

For example, the government of the Kingdom of God is not by democracy. In the world, democracy is mostly used. But the government of the Kingdom of God is a theocracy. God is in charge and He is the one that chooses. There are offices in the body of Christ that are not subject to voting. Ephesians chapter 4, for example, says that God chooses and

places ministers in the body. Ephesians 4:11 says: "And he gave some…" it doesn't say, 'And God recommended some' rather it says "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;" These are offices that are not open to negotiation; they are not offices that people apply for. You don't go to a Bible school, graduate and become one. God must have equipped you and given you to the Church as such. Look at how 1 Corinthians 12:28 puts the same truth. This is one of the areas you see the devil trying to hijack the move of God when men import the methods of the world and want to vote people into these holy offices. You can't vote people into some offices in the church.

> And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. (1 Cor. 12:28)

It's not men that set men in the Church. Ministerial office is not a promotion that somebody aspires to. It's not like a chieftaincy title so that when somebody is made a pastor or he becomes a pastor, he begins to celebrate. No, it's a call to service that you are going to give an account for. It's for the

fulfilment of a mandate that you receive from God and you must be conscious of that, carry it like that, and discharge it like that. He didn't say men have set some in the church "first apostles." So somebody cannot say, "I am an apostle" because men gathered together and made him one. Ordination does not equal calling. There are things that will affect a calling, but are not calling. Ordination is one of them. It doesn't matter how many people lay hands on a person, if God has not called him to that office, men cannot call him into that office. There are offices in the world that men can by consensus or agreement give a person, and he begins to function in that office, but in the church, the offices of the Kingdom are given by God.

There is another level where a pastor administering his church is led to bring men in like is seen in Acts chapter 6. They said people should choose seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. Those men that were put there in the deacon level of the ministry offices are different from these ones that God himself had set in the church. When we import methods of the world into the church concerning these offices, we get into trouble. The Bible says, God has set some in the church, first Apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing,

helps, government, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? No, but everybody is set somewhere in the body. In fact, 1 Corinthians chapter 12 is one passage that every Christian leader must study and know. And we must seek to place people in the body of Christ in the area of their gifts and anointing from God.

One thing that brings mediocrity into the work of God and brings weakness to the flow of the anointing is when people serve in the area of their convenience or in their area of interest or prejudice or where tradition has carved out for them and not in their area of calling. For example, there are churches where the only role given to women is to take care of children in the church, and there is no Scripture to support that in the Bible. There are men that God has anointed to the ministry of children, to children's evangelism ministry. There are women that are also anointed and should minister in that area, not because of their gender. In some churches, they have a tradition that only women sing in the choir. No. The Bible doesn't say that; both male and female can be anointed to sing. But if you are not anointed to sing, don't stay there. Find where your anointing is.

> For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. (1 Cor. 12:12–14)

Verse 18 says: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." It's not as we want, but as it has pleased God Almighty to set members in the body. We should accept that and not bring worldly ideas into it. Biblically, age, gender, education or bribery are not factors considered in setting people into the holy offices in the body of Christ. All these are worldly ideas. And when we bring methods of the world into the Church, it leads to problems.

There is a classic example in the book of Deuteronomy 18:9–13:

> When thou hath come…the LORD thy God" Change to "When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or

> a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.

Most of these things mentioned here have to do with communication with the spirit world; supernatural information flow. God has instituted His own supernatural information flow which we must operate with. Every time we want to get supernatural information like the world does, we get into trouble. There are people who before they got born again, consulted occultists, and after getting born again, they want to consult pastors like they used to consult occultists. When pastors allow that, it can boost their ego that people are queuing to see them, but it opens them up to things that God has not called them to do. They should avoid this to preserve the commission that God has given them.

GOD'S METHOD VERSUS THE WORLD'S METHODS

From Deuteronomy 18:9–13, we see the world's method of getting supernatural information, which God warned His people against. In verse 15, God

stated His own approved way of getting supernatural information across to them:

> The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

That was looking ahead to Jesus Christ. And the Bible says in Hebrews 1:1: God spoke to the fathers in divers ways by the prophets. Now He has spoken to us by His son. You have the Written Word of God and the Holy spirit to guide you in supernatural information flow. You must not follow the pattern of the world in seeking supernatural information. That will be importing methods of the world into the church. It will result in the devil's takeover.

Remember in Acts chapter 16 how that girl possessed by the spirit of divination said things that were true of Apostle Paul, but Paul discerned the source of that information and cast out that spirit. If you seek after supernatural information in ways contrary to the Bible, then you lay yourself open to the devil to hijack your commission. Many people have been seduced out of the program of God by strange supernatural communications. Many people have been given strange callings that God didn't give them because they were seeking after supernatural information different from the way God planned.

Many pastors have been turned to occultists by church members consulting them just as they were doing before they got born again.

The pastor is not an occultist. He is to feed the flock, help you to develop your own walk with God, then you walk with God. You don't walk with God by proxy through a pastor. Our job as ministers is to help people to develop a relationship with God up to a point where they begin to enjoy the relationship and are able to work on developing it themselves. Our job is not to replace the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people. Anybody that places himself in the place of the Holy Spirit before God's people, John 10:8 calls him a thief. Many times when people look at this verse, they think that Jesus was referring to prophets that came before Him when He said: "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers." But He was not talking of prophets, saying that will be contrary to the Scriptures. Because He sent them, they couldn't be thieves. Rather, He was saying that all that come before me in order of prominence before the people of God; stealing the glory and the place that belongs to Jesus. None of us ministers, no matter our gifts and how God is using us, have any right to replace the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people. We are signposts to point God's people to God. Jesus saved them, died for them and shed his

blood for them; none of us ministers did. Our role is to help people to know Him better, enjoy Him more, and be all that He has called them to be.

The problem of Israel began when Eli began to fail and they said Samuel should make them a king like the other nations. They wanted to be like the other nations. What a terrible tragedy! God told Samuel that they had not rejected Samuel but had rejected Him. They were looking to be like the world, not knowing that was rejecting God's standard for them which was their wisdom before the world; their means of distinction before the world.

There is a way that the Kingdom of God works, which sometimes is directly contrary to the way the world operates. When we submit the wisdom of God to the wisdom of men, the devil will hijack our calling and commissions. And God doesn't want us to do that. There is a way that God wants a father to rule his family and raise children for him. When we submit it to the wisdom of the world, we will lose our children. In many families today, their children have been taken over by the devil.

In fact, in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 28, one of the curses for violating God's instruction to the family is that the enemy will take over their children. You see many people today who all kinds of spirits are taking over their children because they

abandoned God's principle. For example, the world may tell you not to spank your child. But the Bible is clear about discipline for little children, to cultivate the right spirit in them. I don't mean abusing your child by just beating them every time. But if there is a need to apply the rod, don't spare the rod and spoil the child. The world will have its own idea of what is good, but many times, it's contrary to God's idea. Jesus said some things are good before the world, but they are an abomination before God.

There is a way that the world looks at sexuality that is contrary to the way God looks at it. Sometimes, the world says sex and love are the same thing. According to the Bible, sex is an expression of love restricted only to the marriage covenant. This means that if you are not in the marriage covenant, you are not supposed to have sex at all. Sex is a means of expressing love in marriage. Even in your marriage, you shouldn't have sex with your wife without other channels of expressing and communicating your love to her. Otherwise, you will be abusing her body.

But then the world says that sex is love, love is sex. This is not true and there are already casualties of this faulty philosophy. The Church cannot accept that, even though we are in the midst of the world. That may be the standard in the world, but the

Church is in the world as an instructor, not as a diplomat. When we understand that, we will preserve the commission that God has given us, and then the Church becomes a moral leader in the society to lead men and women in the society on how God wants the society to function. But the Church that is importing the spirit and the methods of the world into its heart of operation cannot affect and influence that world positively.

In the days of David, the king of Israel, he wanted to bring back the Ark of the Covenant, which was not respected in the days of Saul. It was a good thing they wanted to do, but they did it in a wrong way. They brought the ark on a cart. They did that because that was how the Philistines returned the ark from its stay in their country for many years in the days of Samuel. Nothing happened to the Philistines who drove it in a cart to Israel because they didn't know. But David, who should have known better, put the ark on a cart. The ark should have been carried on the shoulders by the sons of Levi, according to the instruction of God. These sons of Levi represented spiritual principles of mature government, authority, and responsibility in the Church. But it is easy to think it is not necessary for some men to carry the Ark like that, so it should be modernized to make it convenient.

AVOID THE SIN OF JEROBOAM

One of the phrases you will come across in the Old Testament is the one concerning the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Many times, the Bible recorded that some kings did evil in the sight of the Lord, not departing from the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. The sin of Jeroboam is particularly dangerous because it contains three elements that leads to great damage. A good leader must avoid being guilty of this sin. (1 Kings 13:25–33).

(1). It contains the element of compromise, lowering God's standard to accommodate the people's desire.

(2). It contains the element of convenience. He said to people, "It's too much for you to go to Jerusalem." Therefore, he made gods for them, two calves of gold for them to worship. They didn't have to go to Jerusalem again. Have you heard people say "It's too much for you to follow the demands of God for your life," "It's too much to pay a tenth of your income as tithe." "It's too much for you to go to church twice a week." "It's too much for you to stay in church and hear the Word of God for two hours. Just hear ten minutes,

twenty minutes, and then go." The world may have its own idea of producing giants, but the way of producing Kingdom giants takes time. Repetition will produce a religious person, but time spent with God will produce spiritual giants.

(3). It creates a counterfeit for the things of God. He compromised the standard of God, He made things convenient for people and had to sustain what he had instituted with counterfeits. And that's always retrogression. Whenever compromise enters into the thinking of a leader, he will begin to make convenient for God's people things that God is not making convenient for them. Any person that makes the road to heaven wider than God makes it is a false prophet. The Bible says, "Narrow is the road." That means it doesn't accommodate everything. But immediately after He said that, He said: "Beware of false prophets." (One that makes the road wider than God makes it Himself.) Counterfeiting follows convenience. Jeroboam began to make all kinds of people priests. And sometimes when we compromise God's standard, we have to make all kinds of people leaders just to sustain it. And that will make it possible for the devil to hijack the

move of God. But I pray he won't hijack your commission in Jesus' name. Amen.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Pastor, Don't Let Satan Hijack Your Church is a clarion call to everyone in the pulpit ministry. God is sounding an alarm to warn everyone in the five-fold ministry on how to preserve their calling from pollution and how to escape the onslaught of the enemy against the work of God. With a step-by-step exposition of the Word, the author exposes the priority assignment of the man of God, the strategies of the devil to corrupt the work of God, and how to avoid them. Even if you are not in the pulpit ministry, this book will prepare you as a vessel unto honour. Use it for personal and group study for the preservation of your calling and commission.