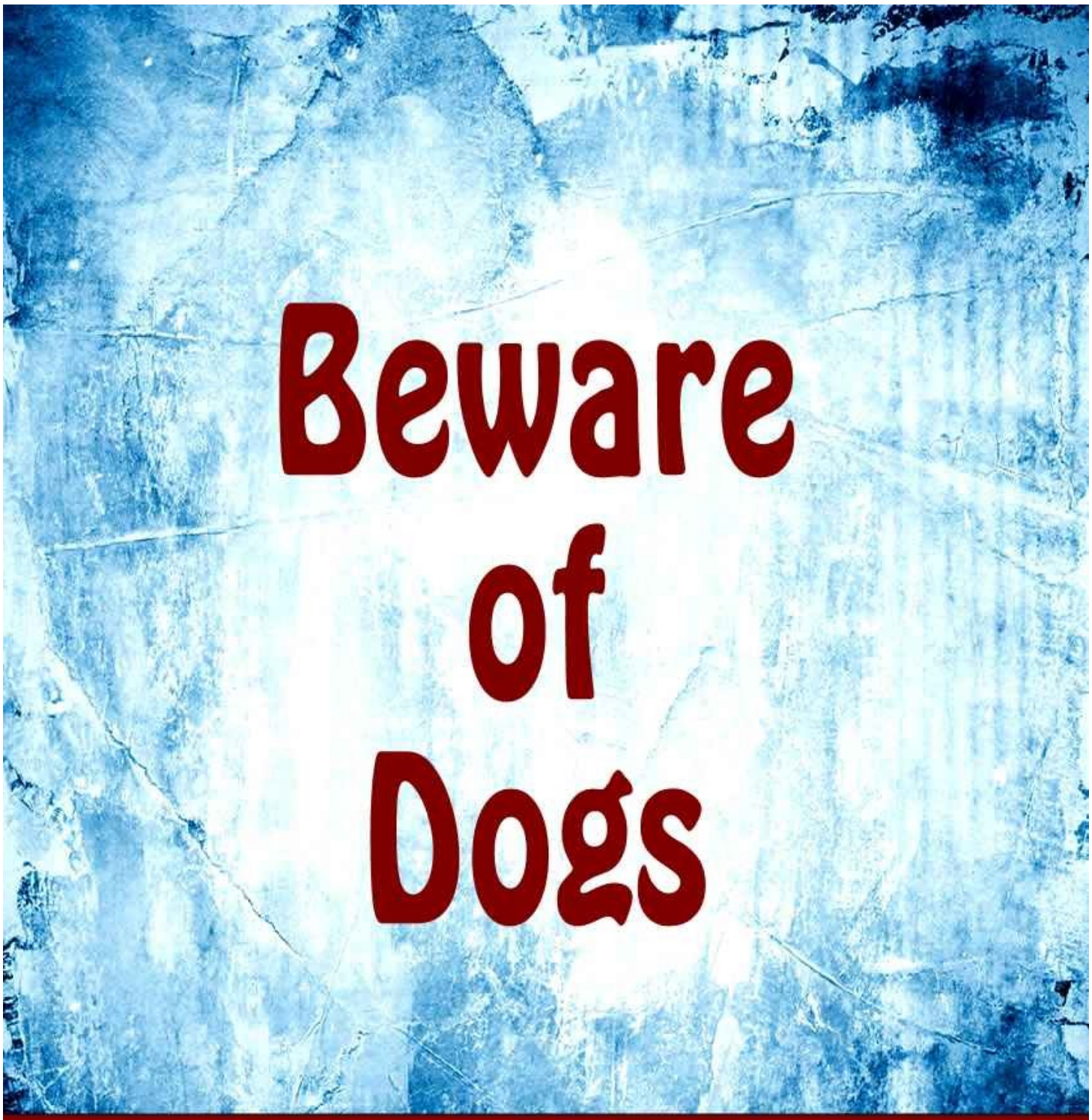



Bible Studies By
Scott McConaughey

# BEWARE OF DOGS

## Overcoming Religious Spirits In The 21st Century Church

SCOTT MCCONAUGHEY

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**BEWARE OF DOGS**
by Scott McConaughey

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## PREFACE

The body of Christ is precious in the sight of the Lord. Each member of the living body of Jesus is beloved and a treasured individual called and chosen by God to edify and build up other members of the body. I pray that my heart of love and compassion for the body of Christ may be heard in these pages as I write about a most troubling evil spirit that assaults every church in America.

As missionaries for 21 years in an inter-denominational structure, my wife Glenda and I depended upon many denominations for prayer and financial support. We personally observed great things happening in God's house all across America no matter the denominational label. There is much to celebrate and give thanks for in our churches.

There is also a cancer of religion spreading to the body that is life threatening. Nearly any time a surgeon attempts to cut out cancerous tissue from a body, he risks the danger of cutting out too much and the cure becomes worse than the disease. We need delicate surgery to remove the religious cancers from our lives.

In the parable of the tares and wheat, Jesus warned us about trying to uproot the tares until the final harvest (Matthew 13:24-30). As the final harvest approaches in these last days, the wheat of maturity in the church is getting strong enough to allow the uprooting of religious tares without destroying the true fruit. Yet this task must be undertaken with great sensitivity by the anointing and leading of the Holy Spirit. The primary focus should be to remove the beam from our own eyes.

A few years ago, the Lord warned me not to write a book about Pharisees because at the time He said that in doing so I would become one. He exhorted me to **"Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'" (Matthew 9:13).** Gradually I took hold of this word and began to learn of God's mercy and compassion for all people including those bound up by hateful religious demons.

So it was somewhat surprising that the Lord impressed upon my heart to now walk through this spiritual mine field attempting to write a book that provides more cure than curse; a book that gives hope rather than a hack at the body of Christ; a book that somehow manages to throw out the dirty religious "bath water" and cuddle and affectionately handle the beautiful baby.

Of course the body of Christ is not a baby but a maturing bride. She is emerging even more beautiful every day through many trials and

struggles. As the glory of God shines even brighter on her and as she grows in intimacy with Jesus, she will become more and more aware of “another spirit” that works religion and death against her. To fully mature, she will need to “Beware of Dogs”. To this end, these pages are offered with the prayer of faith, hope and love in our Lord Jesus Christ to help us walk holy with Him and be set free to live to the praise of His glorious grace.

## INTRODUCTION

It was a beautiful sunny day as I drove our van into the driveway of a well-known Christian leader with an international ministry. Suddenly, I found myself inside the house. As I walked towards a common office desk, I noticed a black Labrador retriever under the desk. Our family once had a friendly black Lab so I was not alarmed.

Reaching out to pet this dog, I gently bopped him in the nose with my right forearm. Suddenly, he turned vicious and attacked my arm as I frantically backed away shouting "No! No! Down!" and other equally ineffective commands. The fear and panic lingered as I awoke from this most startling dream.

Recently, my wife Glenda took a walk with a few of our children after the morning service near a church we attend. While passing a home where the owners were redoing the fencing, a dog came running out to greet them and ended up barking and biting my wife, breaking through the skin causing a nasty bruise.

I could rehearse several other dreams and experiences that God allowed into our lives recently to awaken us to the need to understand the spirit of dogs that assaults the true Church of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

The spirit of the dog can be seen in the House of Saul and the life of the Pharisees. This evil spirit seeks to hinder and destroy God's anointed ones and His anointing. The dog spirits were instrumental in crucifying Jesus on the cross. As Jesus manifests His mature presence in His body, we will need to beware of the assault of the dogs on us.

The tabernacle of David is emerging through prophetic worship and praise. In the midst of this worship, God is developing a last-days apostolic wineskin where communities of leaders are devoted to prayer and ministering the word by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Powerful evil spirits that operate through "religious" people will oppose this wineskin.

We may be sincere, diligent, intelligent and helpful individuals, but unfortunately we can be terribly deceived and used by the enemy to assault and hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. We must allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts so that all religious spirits are driven far from us.

Interpreting the dog dream quoted above, we discerned that religious spirits hide under the work ethic of many Christian leaders. The

enemy wants to convert the Christian from the works of God to the works of his own hands. When a Christian falls into this subtle trap, defensiveness and preserving territory become major characteristics. As an anointed prophet comes into his "turf" and ministers in powerful authority to break yokes, the spirit of the dog incites a tremendous assault to protect its religious stronghold.

As the Holy Spirit brings wave upon wave of new moves of Jesus into the Church, religious spirits vigorously assault them and accuse them of being of the devil. This happened in Jesus' first coming and this will be one characteristic during the season of His Second Coming.

**But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you and you did not lament." For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a wine bibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children. Matthew 11:16-19**

Jesus described the spirit of the dogs in this passage as they reject moves of God's Spirit no matter how they appear. John's ministry was from the Spirit and was like the song of mourning to which the Pharisees would not lament. Jesus came with celebration and powerful healing but they would not embrace the joy of His ministry either. Those who embrace the Spirit like little children will flow with the season the Holy Spirit brings.

In the last decade we have two well-known moves of the Spirit that parallel this passage. The "Toronto Blessing" came in as a flute to bring holy laughter, joy and dancing in the Father's love. People traveled from all over the world to experience the joy, revelation and inner healing this move brought. Religious spirits said that it was from a demon.

At Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, we've seen a major spirit of repentance with over 100,000 people responding to altar calls unto salvation by the cross of Jesus Christ. This move has been accompanied by great brokenness, weeping and mourning. Religious spirits have called it a "Counterfeit Revival". They say it is not from God.

The spirit of the dog will not dance to the flute of revival nor mourn with the brokenness of repentance. They rejected Jesus and John,

they reject Toronto and Pensacola and unless they repent, they will reject every other move of the Spirit as well.

When Jesus walked the Emmaus road with two of His disciples, they did not recognize Him because He appeared to them in another form (see Mark 16:12). After they sat and broke bread to have intimate fellowship with Him, their eyes were opened and then knew this Man was the risen Lord.

All of us must learn from this teaching that Jesus continues to manifest His presence in new forms. He does this as a "Pharisee Filter" to test our hearts. If we judge the move by our experience or doctrine rather than intimate communion with the Lord, we will be deceived and may find our selves rejecting and fighting a move of the Holy Spirit.

When the Toronto move first came out, I joined in agreement with a certain radio commentator who opposed it. I never went to Toronto and I never even prayed about this movement. Something in me just knew God wouldn't work like that! That something turned out to be fallen flesh influenced by religious spirits called "dogs".

Eventually the Holy Spirit led me to go to Toronto to attend a week of meetings. I was blessed beyond my wildest imagination. I discovered that Jesus really does love to dine with sinners. He loves to fellowship because He loves us all.

I went to one of the associate pastors and repented for my evil criticism. He graciously forgave me and prayed for me noting that many people had done the same thing. I learned a valuable lesson through that experience. God often moves in ways we don't understand or that doesn't fit into our theological box.

Unfortunately, I confess that the Toronto move was only one of many streams in the Body of Christ that I just knew weren't "right" in their doctrine and practice. As if I knew what was right and wrong! I was deceived by religious pride and have had to repent many times over the past years for my arrogant false judgments.

Perhaps there is no better person to talk about religious dogs than one who has been extensively deceived by them. Paul the eminent apostle was powerfully controlled by the spirit of the dog as he persecuted the church and headed to Damascus to bring more Christians into bondage (see Acts 9). But God demonstrated His power and grace interrupting Saul's religious hounding and

transformed him to bring the gospel to the Gentiles whom the Jews called “dogs”.

It is somewhat ironic that Paul was more assaulted by Judiazers and their religious spirits than any of the other apostles. Those demons that once influenced Paul turned against him and sought to destroy his ministry and teaching everywhere he went.

The pattern became so common that when Paul planted a church he would warn the new converts that after he left ravenous dog spirits would come in to try and destroy the church. **“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:29-31).**

The true apostolic church planter betroths new believers to Christ and labors to see Christ formed in them for God’s glory. The savage wolf or dog spirit comes in to **“draw away the disciples after themselves”**. They seek a personal following and will speak perverse things and will try to establish “control” over the people for personal gain.

Paul understood this completely and exhorted the Philippians to **“beware of dogs” (Philippians 3:2).** We must heed Paul’s warning to be on guard against this spirit that comes in to rob us of our liberty in Christ Jesus. We begin by examining our own lives.

I can personally relate to being a Saul. Many years ago, a prophetic intercessor prayed for me and saw a vision of a bulldog on a chain sniffing the air and ready to be loosed. At the time, I had no idea of the interpretation but in reality, I was chained by religious spirits and was a stubborn bulldog. Suddenly, by the blinding light of God, I was arrested in my religious pride and converted to living by the Spirit and placing no confidence in the flesh. God set me free from the spirit of the dog and now it attacks me even in my dreams.

Whereas I once kept many “dogs” as religious pets and kept them well fed, the Lord is now calling me to expose their lies and deception. I believe it will be a wonderful sign of the last days, that many “Sauls” will be converted to “Pauls” and do great exploits for God in the power of His Spirit. By God’s grace, I pray that I may be one who bears fruit to honor my Lord Jesus Christ.

Bearing fruit requires that we allow Jesus to come into our modern temple structures and thoroughly cleanse the threshing floor. The church structures which have been built by man's hands over the past centuries will be torn down by Jesus and a temple will be built without human hands (works of flesh) interfering. When Jesus entered the temple to cleanse it of robbers, He was not invited nor hindered in His work of turning over the money tables and toppling the seats of those that bought and sold doves.

Nothing will hinder the coming moves of the Spirit that will topple the financial controls of man nor the buying and selling of the anointing of God. All that hinders the house of prayer for all nations emerging will be powerfully thrown down by the Jealous Lord of Glory in these last days.

The Lord will suddenly come to His temple and cleanse it once again. When He does, all the dogs will find themselves on the outside locked out forever (see Revelation 22:15). In the mean time, we must be on the alert to drive them out of our lives and watch for their influence in others.

## CHAPTER 1 – BEWARE OF DOGS

**Finally, my brethren rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Philippians 3:2,3**

One moment Paul reminded the church to rejoice and then he warned them to beware of dogs. Paul is extremely intense in his attitude towards the **"mutilation";** those Judiazers that insisted that Gentile converts must observe the law of circumcision (as well as other laws) in order to be truly saved. God declares these dogs are evil workers.

Rejoice and yet beware! The dog spirit will steal your joy if you give in to its religious law-giving ways. This spirit puts a yoke of slavery on the believer that Jesus never intended. Religious people worship God in the flesh and do not rejoice in the cross of Jesus but put confidence in their fleshly works. Succumbing to this spirit causes us to lose the joy of the Lord, which is our strength.

We must examine the dogs that lived a few thousand years ago. We're not talking about our wonderful furry domesticated house pets that lick our face and make wonderful childhood memories. I grew up with many Buffy Wiener Hound dog pets and am not trying to assault your favorite canine.

The ancient dog was a scavenger and a pack animal that primarily inhabited city regions. They were mangy mean junk-yard-dog animals that ate all kinds of refuse. The dog the Bible talks about is an "UNCLEAN" animal putting it mildly. They ate dead things and picked apart the garbage dump for bones to chew on.

Dogs are extremely territorial and defensive to their turf. They will growl and assault those who would try to take their possessions. Dogs to this day have this nasty habit of smelling one another in their private zones. They have no hesitancy or shame in doing this. The dog spirit puts its nose in the private affairs of others.

Dogs will also eliminate their waste anywhere they want and like wolves will vigilantly mark their territory with urine. A good old pack-alley-dog will sleep most of the day and roam the streets at night howling, fighting and digging into the garbage can where possible.

Dogs transport fleas and will deposit them wherever they sleep. Because of their unsanitary diet, they can carry rabies and pass it on through biting. My wife had to have tetanus shot after being assaulted by the dog mentioned in the introduction. Dogs also like to bury old bones in the dirt. Bones represent idols and sins that are hidden underneath the surface, but they are covered with dirt!

**After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand. I Samuel 24:14,15**

In great humility, David lowered himself before Saul and likened himself to a dead dog. To be called a dog was perhaps the lowest form of humiliation. God's view of religious spirits is seen here. They are the lowest scoundrels on earth. They are the meanest and rottenest creatures and God hates those dogs that killed Jesus. He hates the spirit of the dog that influences us too.

Before a ministry trip recently, I dreamed a large Rottweiler came at me from behind a car. The nose of this beast was at the height of my rib cage and it attacked me viscously. I grasped the snout and held the jaws shut, but the power of this dog knocked me down and overpowered me. Then I woke up. Knowing what I do about the spirit of the dog, I recognized this was probably a German dog spirit that can be associated with racism, white Aryan pride and so forth. I have German in my background.

At the three-day conference where I was teaching, we put in a lot of intercession to guard against various assaults. By God's grace the first day went well and I had a good night's sleep. At the end of the second day, I was praying for a tiny older woman whom I later discovered had a lot of Satanism in her family.

The Spirit showed me this woman had a health need and prompted me to pray as Jesus did over Peter's mother-in-law by rebuking the sickness the woman had. When I rebuked the spirit causing the sickness in this woman, I believe the demon binding her lost its hold on her but I immediately felt a sharp pain just below my rib cage. It was exactly where the Rottweiler in the dream had hit me. Mysteriously, the demon somehow hit or bit me on the way out and the dream had been a warning.

As I began to pray over the next person in line, suddenly I was extremely fatigued and the prophetic anointing was gone. I was completely shut down and apologized to the dear woman and said that

I would pray for her the next day. We retired for a nice meal at the Pastor's home and I didn't think much of the incident.

Many people were fellowshipping at pastor's house and when I went to walk out of the front door, I actually found myself face to face with a giant Rottweiler that looked exactly like the one I saw in the dream. This was too weird. I am not usually afraid of dogs, but I backed up and this dog had two feet just inside the threshold of the pastor's home. In spite of the fact that a dozen or more people were leaving the home, the Rottweiler stood his ground long enough to make sure that I saw him clearly and then left.

Now my attention was seriously focused on understanding the dream, the assault at church and what the Spirit was saying to the leadership. God showed us that religious spirits were assaulting this church, which is seeking to be a 24-hour house of prayer and worship. They had some tolerance of religious spirits due to unsanctified sympathy and unawareness. This is an extraordinarily loving church and it is hard to have the balance of firmness against certain subtle religious spirits. We are all learning.

The fiery dart that struck my side was extremely painful and in spite of efforts to pray it off and out, the pain continued. I did not sleep well for a few days. It took three separate prayer sessions by powerful ministry teams to get me completely pain free from the assaults of this evil spirit. Consequently, I know what it means to be "bit" in the spirit realm by a powerful religious dog.

**Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog. Psalm 22:20**

Do not underestimate the power of the dog. It can bite you and plant a venom of spiritual rabies in you that will cause your whole body to be in sickness. This story raises a legitimate question. Why did the spirit of the dog strike me? How could it get through the armor of Christ? Did I have an exposed weakness? Why was it so hard to get off me once on?

Soon after this experience the Lord gave my fourteen-year-old daughter a vision of a hand coming out of a clock in our living room pointing to a wall hanging above it. Our daughter has a pure prophetic anointing and we had no reason to doubt the sincerity of her vision, but we didn't know what to do with it either.

That night we had an all night prayer meeting and I caught some sleep early in the morning and had a powerful prophetic dream. In

this dream, I received a phone call from an old friend who told me with a somber voice, “The mystic grove, it’s all burning down.” I saw a huge fire in the distance and fireman rushing into another portion of my house. My thought was that I had to get my household in order to save them from the destructive fire.

When I awoke the Lord prompted me to study II Kings 23:6,7 that talks about the ancient groves or Ashera that the back slidden Hebrews worshipped and Josiah’s powerful reforms. “**And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the LORD, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people. Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons that were in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image.”**

The witness of the Holy Spirit hit me hard when reading **“women wove hangings for the wooden image”**. Our daughter Mary had a vision coming from a literal clock pointing to a literal wall hanging. The wall hanging was a portrait of Madonna and child that my mother made for us as a Christmas present.

Mom was born into a strong Catholic home and her father was extremely devout and also from Germany. However, he was also a profane man with a strong temper. While there are many born-again Catholics who love Jesus, there is a strong religious spirit in this church and some false doctrine especially related to Mary.

The Lord allowed me to be assaulted by the dog spirit so that I would pray against the generational flow that was still influencing my life and close up this hole in my armor. The painful bite of the dog and subsequent experiences led us to search the Spirit for ways to repent and be set free. The Lord showed us the following things to deal with at a deeper level:

1. Religious spirits of Catholicism – Mary worship and queen of heaven. We cut off all generational flow.
2. Disrespect and unrighteous judgments I had made towards controlling men in religious leadership. I had to repent and break all false judgments.
3. Ashera pole represents sexual perversion and I needed to thoroughly seek God’s cleansing from all remnants of sensuality.
4. Pride of accomplishment that I had represented by the clock given to me by a former ministry organization. I took great

pride in the tokens of affirmation given to me and they became a carnal source of approval.

My wife and I prayed over these issues and then believed God wanted us to take down the wall hanging and burn it in the barbecue. After it burned and cooled, I cleaned out all the ashes and put them in a trash bag and prophetically disposed of them. We decided to throw away every clock and symbol of ministry accomplishment that I had taken pride in so as to not worship the works of my own hands.

We were led to demolish one glass momento that I felt vanity in receiving. It took a hammer and careful planning so as not to get injured in the process of breaking this idol. God wants us to completely cleanse our lives from all religious pride, idols and false doctrine. God has called us to holiness and we will do whatever He leads in order to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit.

Paul is uncompromising in talking of the dogs as **"evil workers".** To most of us this seems so extreme. Unfortunately, the spirit of the Pharisees operates to some degree on most of us at some point in our walk with God. This can lead to the works of our own hands apart from the grace and Spirit of God. Our fleshly works are like filthy rags in the sight of God (Isaiah 64:6).

There are those in "Christian" ministry who are so deceived and consumed by the works of their own hands that they are indeed **"evil workers"** who oppose the Spirit led good works which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

Paul declared that we are the **"circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3).** God cuts away the sinful flesh that surrounds our hearts so we may be like Jesus. We must be broken and contrite vessels to worship God in the Spirit and be liberated to rejoice in Jesus because our sins are forgiven by His blood.

Paul contrasted his former life where he may have had confidence in the flesh due to his religious accolades as rubbish or dog food. In fact, that is exactly what the works of the dead flesh are, dog food. Religious dog spirits feed our egos when we feed them with prideful boasting, serving to be noticed, seeking prominence, position, power and control.

Paul said all fleshly works are rubbish and that the true goal is to know Jesus Christ and be found righteous in Him through faith **"that**

**I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10).** Religious spirits want the power but do not want to fellowship in Christ's sufferings nor to be conformed to His death.

The paradox of the Christian life is that we experience full freedom in life by clinging to the cross of Jesus and by dying to "self" daily. True freedom is not license to sin but rather liberation to obey the Holy Spirit in all things. As we seek to live this life, Paul admonishes to beware of dogs.

## The Male Prostitute

**You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the LORD your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God. Deuteronomy 23:18**

**You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or of a male prostitute into the house of the LORD your God to pay any vow, because the LORD your God detests them both. Deuteronomy 23:18 NIV**

The "price of a dog" spoken of in God's law is a reference to a male prostitute that was known even during the days of Moses. The dog is pictured here as the male counterpart to the harlot or a person who sells their body for immoral sexual indulgence. The New International Version translated the intended meaning calling the price of a dog a "male prostitute". Prostitution is evil in the sight of the Lord and the money earned by such activity was not to be given as an offering.

As we picture the allegory here, there are men (and women) who spiritually prostitute their convictions in order to increase financial wealth or maintain employment. Rather than give themselves wholly and only to Jesus Christ as their bridegroom, they also give themselves as lovers of other idols that have demonic influence hidden behind them.

Many religious leaders get caught in compromise for the love of money. **"Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him" (Luke 16:14).** Luke alerts us to the fact that Pharisees loved money. The spirit of the dog will manifest in a love for money. When finances are involved, you can often hear that dog start to bark at the church board meetings.

Rather than give themselves to prayer and fasting, leaders influenced by this spirit can get engaged in all kinds of carnal activities to raise money, draw in new people and grow the church. It's hard to even believe some of the ridiculous activities "believers" will involve themselves in to earn money for the budget.

During my last year of Bible college I attended a "Christian" seminary that was holding an "exposure weekend" to inform and draw potential new students. More was exposed that weekend than I could believe! On the first night of the event, they held a "slave sale" at which seminary students bid money to purchase the right to "employ" as a slave for 12 hours, the services of another student or staff member. This was to raise money for some school project.

There were many innuendoes of sexual misconduct, jokes and teasing of all sorts as the bidding went wild for the good looking women and men. I was so appalled by this irreverent carnality in "fund raising" that I left after that dog and pony show! It was incomprehensible how a post graduate institution seeking to instruct ministers could include such wickedness in their midst. Unfortunately, my judgment of them only exposed that my heart had the same problem hidden in it that would be delivered years later.

## The Wicked Shepherds

**All you beasts of the field, come to devour, all you beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough. And they are shepherds who cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his own gain, from his own territory. "Come," one says, "I will bring wine, and we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; tomorrow will be as today, and much more abundant." Isaiah 56:9-12**

Isaiah prophesied of a group of self-indulgent shepherds that would be devoured by the **"beasts of the field",** a reference to demonic powers. One might say Isaiah foresaw a "dog eat dog world" among the religious leaders.

In the most scathing terms imaginable Isaiah tells us these leaders called to be watchmen are blind; called to dispense wisdom, they are ignorant; called to protect, they are silent dogs that are carelessly sleeping and loving comfort and ease. The condition of the religious leaders has become so horrible that they are consumed with greed and never satisfied.

These are shepherds who look only after themselves for their own gain, protecting their own territory and forming a community that is intoxicated with the wine of self-indulgent prosperity seeking. Could such a time as this ever take over the religious landscape of the church? It seems unthinkable.

But in the days of Jesus' first coming, this condition was fulfilled by the elite leaders including the high priest, chief priests, scribes, Pharisees and Saducees. Satan schemed and plotted to destroy the people of God and took over the majority of the leadership of first century Israel. Is it possible that the condition of the church will be similar leading up to the days of Jesus' second coming?

Many Christian scholars agree that the church of Laodicea not only represents an historical church but also a prophetic picture of the condition of the church in general at the end of the age. Let's look at the picture John was given and see if it fits Isaiah's prophecy.

**And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, "These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked--I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'" Revelation 3:14-22**

The revelation John received pictures a church consumed with wealth that is self-indulgent and self-satisfied. They are deceived thinking they have need of nothing but God evaluates their true spiritual condition by declaring: "**you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked"**.

The good news in this revelation is that there is an opportunity to repent and invite Christ back into the church. Jesus cannot tolerate the wanton self-sufficient luxury of the Laodicean deception but does stand outside the door knocking. Such grace, passion and vigilant love our Savior has for us. All of us have been in a heart condition where Jesus resolutely stood outside the door of our lives and pounded away.

Not one of us would have been saved had He not longed to dine with us and fellowship with us. Jesus' word is undeniable. There will be churches in the condition of Laodicea on the last day in which He will long to enter. The question is, will we hear Him knocking and open the door?

We must open the door through diligent repentance which will include fasting, mourning and the godly sorrow that leads to genuine repentance and salvation. We will have to overcome as Jesus also overcame. How did Jesus overcome?

Every day of His sacred life on earth Jesus put the Father first and sought His perfect will. He denied Himself and overcame every temptation. Jesus memorized the word of God, prayed continuously, fasted, wept, watched and did the works of the Father. He laid down His life each day in doing the Father's bidding and overcame every temptation and obeyed even to the point of death on the cross.

We are called to follow His example. In the 21st century church in America, I do not believe it is possible to completely follow Jesus and avoid the Laodicean deception without prayer and fasting. Christian leaders need to devote themselves to prayer and fasting with deep humility and brokenness to break the bondages of the delusion of our great wealth and the seductive spirits of comfort, entertainment and ease. The spirit of the dog is extremely powerful to deceive us in the love of money or the desire to be rich.

**"However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).** Jesus taught us that some kinds of demons cannot be expelled apart from prayer and fasting. Since religious spirits killed Jesus, they are certainly of the highest level and will require prayer and fasting to experience personal and corporate deliverance.

The Laodicean church had a religious spirit that convinced them that they were doing well because of external conditions. American churches are the richest churches in the world and have been granted

great gifts and endowments by the Lord. Unfortunately, we are being assaulted by the same deceptive spirits as Laodicea.

As one who has tasted of the deeper things of the Spirit of God, I can say weeping in my heart, that Jesus is standing outside most of our churches in America seeking entrance. They are certainly His churches, but He is not welcome to come in the way He wants to come. Religious traditions, programming, carnality and self-centered leadership has caused His presence to move outside longing to be back inside.

Many churches I've visited in past years are so devoid of the living water of God's Spirit that I actually come out thirstier for God. Instead of a cold cup of living water, it can be like eating sawdust. I've sat in church yearning for a teaspoon of God's tangible presence but only got religious formalities, human personality and unanointed activities. My heart aches for the presence of the Lord!

What stuns me even more is that few in those congregations even realize that something is horribly wrong with their spiritual condition. The building is beautiful. The sound system has wonderful acoustical powers. The people are well dressed and properly mannered. The pastor has an eloquent message and the choir sings some beautiful songs including ones in Latin.

This beauty can not hide the blinking red warning light I see in the spirit. The system is failing. There is a central core meltdown, and few seem to notice or hear the warning siren. The deceptive veil of Laodicea hangs thick over the spiritual eyes and ears of most American churches. We are becoming clouds without water. Jesus is simply not in the building on Sunday morning! Oh what an incredible tragedy!

## Living Waters

Being so thirsty for God has a downside. Sometimes you have to go a long way to get a drink of living water, the true presence of the Spirit of God. As this book is written, our family is traveling 86 miles each way to church in Barstow, California where I also serve. Barstow is in the middle of the Mojave desert and is not where anyone would choose to take their honeymoon. It is an extremely dry place in the natural.

In contrast, the prayer meetings and Sunday services are anything but dry. The presence of God is so extraordinary that it "ruins" many people from enjoying traditional church. After six prayer meetings during the week including all night prayer there is a Sunday service where God is in the house.

Expectations are high as people come to see what God will do and some drive for hours just to come and worship the Lord. The worship is so intense and incredible that it is not uncommon to praise God for over an hour having only sung a few songs. The afternoon service often includes an hour or more of prophetic worship including dance. Prophetic worship is spontaneous praise and worship from the heart, the kind David did when he was inspired to sing Psalms which a scribe recorded.

In this type of worship, nearly everyone gets caught up in the flow of the wind of God's Spirit and begins to soar in the spiritual realm like a flock of birds. Just as a flock of birds suddenly changes direction and all follow on cue, prophetic worship exhibits the same characteristic. The flow of praise changes from loud to soft, fast to slow or goes altogether quiet. The Holy Spirit leads the worship service and man does not dare intervene. People that have to leave simply quietly get up and walk out wishing they did not have to go. Most come and stay through the end.

In this kind of glorious worship and praise, the atmosphere is filled with angelic ministers who come to fulfill the purpose of God including healing, deliverance, impartation and whatever God wants to do in and through His people. The preaching is anointed and speaks directly to the heart. It is the most amazing place I've ever been and God called us to serve with them to build a house of prayer where Jesus' manifested presence will dwell[1].

In the process of seeking to build such a house of prayer, there has been extensive fasting and a myriad of long prayer meetings with crying, tears and powerful intercession. There has been continuous repentance and yielding to the leadings of the Holy Spirit in all things. Opposition from the enemy has been incredible and we have learned a lot about spiritual warfare in the process.

Satan doesn't care if we have a nice religious service that makes people feel comfortable. He won't oppose most churches because they have no power with God, and Satan influences most of the

[1] For more detailed discussion on this topic, please see my book, **REBUILDING THE ALTAR**

leaders anyway. When a church fasts, prays and cries out to God day and night for Israel and the Church to be holy, that is another story. You might think every devil in hell has been assigned to you when trying to break through at higher levels, but God enables us to triumph in all things. The way up is the way down in humble repentant worship and prayer.

What is the condition of your church? Is Jesus standing outside knocking? Is the spirit of the dog influencing leaders? At what level of deception are you? These are hard questions that we must allow the Holy Spirit to search us without embracing any condemnation. God loves all of us or He wouldn't be standing at the door knocking. Listen to the call of the Spirit to be zealous therefore unto repentance so that Jesus might find entrance to dine with us. In that repentance we'll have to put all the dogs out of the house!

## CHAPTER 2 – THE TREE OF RELIGION

**Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. Matthew 7:15-17**

Jesus taught us that false prophets would be dressed in sheep's clothing. They would look like members of the flock by the outward appearance, but in their hearts, these religious spokesmen are ravenous wolves. They are mean dogs that are hungry to devour sheep. That's what ravenous wolves do. They eat sheep.

Jesus declared that we would know them by their fruits. A good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. We must meditate on trees to understand the parable at a deeper level. To do so, we must go back to the beginning.

In the Garden of Eden, two trees were distinguished beyond all others. First, the Tree of Life represents true faith in Jesus Christ from which eternal life flows. The second prominent tree was The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This tree represents man's religious efforts or the works of the flesh. This tree represents the choice God gave man to be his own "god" and decide what is good and what is evil by his own ethical standard. Eating from this tree produces death.

God wisely and lovingly commanded Adam not to eat of this tree **"For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17).** The rebellious action of taking matters into one's own hands to be like god would bear the fruit of death. Eating from this tree is an act of willful rebellion against God's rule. The seed of rebellion grows in the heart and ultimately produces the bad fruit seen in the false prophets Jesus warned against.

Eve was deceived about the tree by the serpent but Adam transgressed. Adam rebelled against God's rule and chose to rule his own life. In essence, man declared: "I want to control my own life and determine my own future. I'll decide what is right and wrong. I will assert my self and take the throne." At that moment, Adam and Eve were cut off from the life flow of God and death began working in them. They also began to become like the serpent that tempted them rather than the Lord God who created them.

The fallen hearts of Adam and Eve allowed other evil spiritual seeds to be sown in them. Over many ages, these seeds would produce the mature "trees" of false prophets Jesus prophesied about. **"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:11-13).** The final fruit emanating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a Babylonian system of religion and the rule of the anti-Christ at the end of the age. This is the season we are now approaching where the giant dog (dragon) will have his brief hour.

The dragon gives power to the second beast, the false prophet, who arises out of the earth (see Revelation 13). This beast includes a worldwide religious system noted by the numbers 666, which are the numbers of man. The forbidden tree bears ultimate fruit in a trinity of secular humanism, which exalts man above God.

The abilities of religious spirits are extraordinarily great to deceive people upon the earth. The earth presently contains over six billion people, most of whom are in bondage to a religious system which denies the need for the cross of Jesus Christ for salvation. As we review the history of religious seeds developing, we see the enemy's scheme in influencing us to lean towards "sacrifice" or man's works as opposed to "mercy", the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God loves all people but the enemy has raised up the seeds of religion through unconverted Jews, Islam, Buddhists, Hindus, Animists, New Age, Satanists, Humanists, Mormons, Cults and even some so called "Christian" religions.

The serpent tempted Eve to fall through a subtle religious argument – **"Your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5).** This argument is quite appealing to the flesh. To have discernment like God to know good and evil seems like a worthy ambition. However, Eve failed to understand that the devil is a liar and distorts the truth of God's word.

God's prohibition was based in perfect love and goodness. While He put a capacity in man to choose to live based on his own reason of what is good and evil, right and wrong, the Lord knew that this would result in separation and death from the life of Jesus flowing from the Tree of Life.

Eve distorted God's word by saying that God prohibited touching the tree (Genesis 3:3). Satan brought doubt to the word of God, put a new spin on it and Eve bit into the lie and began the First Church of Fallen Man. The result of Adam and Eve transgressing was an

immediate self-focus. The loss of covering from God was evident as they felt the shame of nakedness. Fig leaves were quickly sewn as an artificial decaying covering to hide their nakedness before God. Religious spirits offer all manners of fig leaves to cover our sins but they are ineffective. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us from sin as the animal sacrifice God provided portrayed.

The serpent's influence tempts us to shift blame and not to accept personal responsibility. By giving into his wiles, we become proud, insecure, fearful and hide from God. We quickly become unteachable and God brings forth afflictions in order that we might cry out to Him for mercy.

## The Religion of Cain

**Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" And He said, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."**

**And Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me." And the Lord said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. Then Cain went out from the**

**presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.**
**Genesis 4:2-16**

By understanding Cain, we can understand the roots of all religious spirits (dogs) who are developing their religion to be a vast Babylon that will set up the throne of the anti-Christ. Cain is a worker and offers the **works of his hands** to the Lord rather than a blood sacrifice. Cain desires to be accepted based on works, but his works are evil (I John 3:12).

Abel is righteous because he obeyed the example (word) of God given to Adam and Eve to shed blood to cover sin. The Lord killed the animal in the garden to cover the naked shame of Adam and Eve's sin. We must assume that when God slaughtered the animal to cover Adam and Eve that He taught them the pathway to restore fellowship was through the blood sacrifice. This is consistent throughout the word of God.

Adam and Eve then taught their children how to sacrifice unto God. This pictured Christ's atoning sacrifice. God could allow no other means to restore fellowship with Himself but Cain rebelled against God's command. This is the **"way of Cain"** (Jude 11) that walks by self-rule, sight and works rather than faith. The way of Cain is prevalent on the earth today and his fruit can be seen in our lives and Christian churches.

Cain became very angry with God and his face showed it. Even when God reached out to him to bring him unto repentance, Cain hardened his heart. So it is with Pharisees. They reject the way of God and their anger at God turns towards their righteous brothers. Jealous rage rose up and Cain killed Abel leading to God's question and Cain's famous response, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Cain was a tiller of the ground. He was earthly minded. His life was focused on himself and how he might be able to please God. He was certainly very religious. Cain offered God a sacrifice and communicated with God both hearing and speaking to Him.

**"And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord" (Genesis 4:3).** The fruit of the ground came from the sweat of Cain's brow, from the work of his hands. The dog of religion was working on his fallen mind. Cain probably reasoned that his hard work and effort was worthy of being accepted before God. God honors hard work

empowered by the Spirit, but our work can not restore fellowship with God.

Perhaps Cain and Abel **“in the process of time”** had gotten on each others nerves and got into some kind of an argument whereby they clearly sinned before the Lord. Scripture does not tell us specifically what happened, but one could assume that they both felt a need to worship God and restore fellowship with Him.

Abel understood the word of God given through his parents and offered a firstborn of his flock, which was a sacrifice, by faith in God’s Word. He may not have understood why an animal had to die but he offered this sacrifice by faith (Hebrews 11:4) and God declared him righteous as a result.

God did not respect Cain or the offerings of his hands. **“And Cain was very angry and his countenance fell” (Genesis 4:5).** Religious self-atoning spirits hate it when told there is only one way to get to God and that is through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. All other so-called roads up the mountain do not lead to God but to hell. The religions of the world have an “anti-Christ” spirit. This is also an anti-cross spirit.

When a person walks in self-righteous works, his countenance will drop greatly when you tell him he is walking in pride and sin. God confronted Cain to give him a chance for restoration. God will consistently confront our religious efforts so that we are not overtaken by sin, which lies at the door to rule over us. Cain did not repent nor respond to God’s convicting influence.

**“Now Cain talked with Abel his brother” (Genesis 4:8).** I perceive a conversation in which Abel shared from the heart a message of trust in God and offering a sacrifice by faith, doing what God had said to do. Cain no doubt argued from his head that his work efforts should be acceptable to God. Cain was the firstborn and probably did not want to buy a sheep from his younger brother. Pride was operating upon him. His heart was hardening and he could not hear Abel’s encouragement to walk by faith. Instead, he began to blame Abel and felt the growth of a jealous rage in his heart. Satan feeds and fuels bitterness, which leads to murder.

There were **five prominent results** from Cain’s fall, which can be seen in those controlled by religious spirits:

1. **Cursed from the earth** (Genesis 4:11). The productivity and fruit bearing capacity went way down. The religion of Cain does not bear good fruit but bad fruit.
2. **A fugitive and a vagabond** you shall be - The inability to be stable and build lasting and meaningful relationships will manifest. There will be no sense of home. A fugitive runs from responsibility and accountability. A vagabond is a wandering tramp, a drifter who does not provide for others but rather takes from them. They become stray dogs.
3. **God set a mark on Cain** – People feared him and were intimidated by him. God said that whoever kills Cain, **"Vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold"** (15). We are not to assault those bound by religious spirits but lay down our lives to save them.
4. **Cain went out** from the presence of the Lord (16). Cain was a hard worker and dwelt in the land of Nod, which means vagabond, wandering and instability. He did not live in the presence of the Lord.
5. **His descendants** became more wicked than he was (see verses 23-24).

The religion of Cain flows today. It bears the bad fruit of the forbidden tree. The entire Bible and all world history will find people divided into two camps. Those who walk by faith and find life in Jesus Christ will find the fruit of eternal life. Those who choose self-rule and the works of their own hands will reap the fruit of eternal damnation.

## The Uncircumcised Heart

Religious spirits have always influenced great men and women of faith. Abraham had a clear promise from God for a son but did not see how Sarah could have a baby in her old age. They had waited many years already. With Sarah's permission and suggestion, Abraham figured that going into Sarah's maid Hagar (the Egyptian) might be an acceptable way to solve the "problem". Egypt represents the world system. Turning to the world to solve problems or gain God's promises always backfires.

Abraham may have reasoned that God needed help in accomplishing his promise. There is partial truth here. Man is a partner with God and we must take initiative and work hard and long to make progress, but Abraham did not seek God's mind in this matter.

Ishmael was produced from Abraham before the covenant of circumcision was instituted. The life bearing seed of Abraham was

mixed with flesh and produced Ishmael, a vivid picture of what happens when we act apart from God with our hearts uncircumcised. Ishmael was to become a **"wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (Genesis 16:12).**

The offspring of Ishmael have produced the Nation of Islam, perhaps the most powerful anti-Christ religion in the world today. Muslim people are greatly loved by God and many will be saved by His grace, but this system of religious works keeps a billion or more people enslaved. It also hates Christians and converts to Christ are sometimes killed by their own family. Islam plans to take over the world and have hated and warred against the Jewish people for thousands of years. The various religious Muslim sects are divisive within each other, and there has been a fulfillment of God's word in every way.

Religious dogs seek to control through fear, manipulation and intimidation. They offer a system of man's works and man's sacrifices in order to please God. The motivational root of religion is fear and pride, guilt and ambition.

## The Nature of Esau

The religious spirits motivate selfish ambition and now oriented living. Esau was an aggressive "man's man" who was a tremendous hunter. He did not "tend a garden", he went out and killed for a living. One particular outing did not yield any "game" so Esau looked at the red stuff Jacob was cooking and sold his birthright to get this bowl of "chili".

Religious spirits cause us to feed carnal appetites and fuel impatience. Rooted in the earthly tree, those influenced by the sons of Cain will have two feet on the ground and forsake heavenly benefits for the practical here and now. We are not to neglect practical responsibility, but dealing with your eternity is extremely practical in the long run.

## The Golden Calf

Aaron was having a really bad day. Moses had been gone over five weeks and the people were becoming a real hassle. He never realized how much Moses had to put up with. The Israelites' moaning and groaning began to wear on him like a baby needing a pacifier.

Religious spirits worked on the people and they got a "great" idea which they presented to Aaron, **"Come, make us gods that shall**

**go before us; for as for this Moses, we do not know what has become of him" (Exodus 32:1).** Ten plagues in Egypt and the great sea opening was not enough to build solid faith in these former slaves. A few weeks without Godly leadership and the people were ready to worship idols.

Aaron did what most ministers under the influence of religious spirits do. In essence he said to them, **"if you give me the gold, I'll give you gods that you can worship".** Christian ministers are not immune to this disease. There are many behind pulpits that are seeking to please the people in order to keep their salary coming through the offerings.

The result of Aaron's idol worship was that the **"people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play" (Exodus 31:6).** This was not a Church picnic and a game of volleyball. God's chosen people focused on idols, which gave them unrestrained license to indulge in gluttony, drunkenness and gross immorality, which God's anger burned against.

Extraordinary measures of discipline were needed to stop this wicked carnality. Three thousand were executed by zealous Levites before the revelry terminated. Aaron demonstrated a classic religious spirit by declaring it was the people's fault and the golden calf just sort of popped out of the fire (see Exodus 32). Had Moses not interceded for his brother Aaron, God would have killed him. Instead, God forgave Aaron and he became the first anointed high priest overseeing the tabernacle. God's mercy delivers us from the grip of religious spirits and the power of the dog.

## David's New Cart

Even though there were some beautiful carts at the King's disposal, no ordinary cart would do. David had in his heart to bring the ark to Jerusalem and planned an impressive parade of thirty thousand choice men to accompany this great religious event. This awesome man of God that loved God and worshipped Him decided to build a new cart in honor of this occasion. Since it was for such a lofty purpose as carrying THE ARK of God, we can assume that it was a magnificent cart, the most ornate and beautiful one of its kind, hand crafted with great care and no doubt ornately overlaid with man's craftsmanship and artistry.

There was however, one major problem with this "idea". God had commanded that the Ark only be carried on the shoulders of sanctified priests with special sanctified wooden poles covered with gold

(Exodus 25:13; 37:5; Deuteronomy 31:9). When man produces a way to bring in the presence of God, there will be a "bump in the road" where the oxen stumble and someone gets hurt. Uzzah died because of a religious idea that seemed good to everyone except God and His clear word .

The religion of Cain has an endless "brainstorming" list of ideas for us to incorporate into our pursuit of God. Many of them are simply "new carts" that look good and seem to work but only bring forth death. The word of God must be consulted under the prayerful guidance of the Holy Spirit before making moves in ministry.

## The Mad Dogs – Pharisees

The sheer volume of scripture from Matthew to John on the Pharisees is incredible. We will address some of those scriptures in a later chapter. These are the religious leaders who opposed the Creator of the Universe who stood in their midst. When we include these leaders with the false prophets Jesus talks about, we understand that there will be large portions of the so called "Christian" church that will become a religious system similar to what the Pharisees and Sadducees had when Jesus arrived the first time. Perhaps this will become a united religion with other major world religions.

**There are several deceptive characteristics of Pharisees in today's sheep clothing:**

1. They are **Bible scholars** and have memorized many portions of the scriptures. They have been trained and are well-educated individuals.
2. They are **extremely zealous** and appear to be amazingly on fire for God.(Romans 10:2).
3. They **pray** long prayers and are seen at all the conferences and worship the Lord.
4. The are full time **workers** for the Lord.
5. They exhibit amazing **spiritual power and authority**: (Matthew 7:22).
   a. They prophecy in the Name of Jesus
   b. They cast out demons in His Name
   c. They do many wonders in His Name
6. They **travel** land and sea to win a convert (Matthew 23:15).
7. They **diligently tithe** and give to church functions.
8. **They say that Jesus is the Christ** (Matthew 24:5).

**For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it**

**is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. II Corinthians 11:13-15**

It is not our purpose to create an "us and them" mentality as we expose the religious dogs. We earnestly desire the Light of Jesus to shine in our hearts and expose the influence of the enemy in our midst. We have seen that Abraham, Aaron and David fell as examples of what nearly all of God's people suffer. Are we wiser than Solomon who fell for a season in worshipping Molech and other gods of his wives?

We must examine the characteristics of the bad fruit carefully, examine ourselves and not point the finger towards someone we know. Let us judge ourselves and be delivered by the cross of Jesus. In dealing with religious dogs, we must be extremely humble and broken before the Lord or we will be exalted in pride and become like them.

## Discerning The Religious Dog

The religious demonic spirits seek to influence the believer to substitute religious activity for the power of the Holy Spirit. Their goal is to turn one into a self-righteous hateful Pharisee. There are several chief characteristics that can develop.

1. **PRIDE:** Self-focused instead of Christ-centered. Compares self with how others are doing to evaluate. Often leads to idealism and perfectionism.
2. **IDEALISM**: Humanistic visionary goals based on human ideals, not God's word. Borders on fantasy or creating an illusion for people to grab onto. The religious dog becomes a cloud without water.
3. **PERFECTIONISM:** Everything is black and white. Thinks he has theology down and has it all together.
4. **UNTEACHABLE**: He dogmatically argues theological doctrine from the head not the heart. Will insist his view is the correct one.
5. **CONTROL**: Motivated by fear of loss, he will seek to control and manipulate those under his authority. When threatened he will become intense and angry and say all kinds of evil against others even as Pharisees said Jesus did His works by Beelzebub.
6. **LAWLESS:** Does not submit to genuine spiritual authority. Tends to be aloof and independent even though he may be part of a denomination or Church structure.
7. **SACRIFICE**: Seeks to gain things from God through a life of works and sacrifice. Will worship, pray and fast to gain "anointing

and power" rather than from a pure love for God. May have a lot of ministry programs going on.

8. **COLD LOVE**: Love for people will be conditional as long as they conform to his expectations and standards. He becomes a bossy and intolerant leader, not gentle. Often he is insecure and wounded individual trapped in bitterness.
9. **CRITICAL:** Will tear down and judge others.
10. **SELF-PROMOTING**: Declares he is "cutting edge", has special revelation from God, talks excessively about self and what God did through him.
11. **SELF-DISCIPLINE**: Takes great pride in personal disciplines; likes to be seen of men in long prayers. Talks about his discipline and all that God is teaching him.
12. **SUSPICIOUS**: Looks at others with a critical eye. Does not accept many new moves of the Spirit. May even declare they are from the devil.
13. **FALSE HUMILITY**: Will pretend humility and apologize as needed to manipulate people.
14. **FALSE DISCERNMENT**: The idolatry of his heart will cause his discernment to be twisted. His false view of how God speaks to him causes him to think that he does not need what God says to him to be judged.
15. **BAD FRUIT**: Fear, insecurity, worry, anxiety, harshness, intimidation, legalism, discouragement, confusion, disorientation and so forth hang from this corrupt tree.

Please let me remind the leader at this point, that God has delivered me from many of these characteristics. I know religious spirits so well because they were once my constant companions. Rather than cast a stone at others, I cast myself upon the Rock and pray, "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner"! We must seek truth in Jesus Christ and allow His Spirit to set us free indeed. We must remove the beam from our own eyes first!

## The Religious Dog Killed Jesus

Without genuine repentance, those influenced by religious spirits will eventually hate the God they claim to love and serve. The religious leaders of Israel were under the control of the dragon and his dogs. They hated Jesus without a cause. They cursed Him and said he was from the devil. They caused fear on any Jew that would put faith in Jesus. They intimidated the people and made many false accusations and tested Jesus with trick questions **"that they might accuse Him" (Matthew 12:9).** They were not seekers of truth but haters of men.

They plotted murder against Jesus and found a way to kill Him with the help of the Romans. Jesus stood in their midst and declared God's truth to them, and time and again they wanted to kill him.

Jesus called them hypocrites, mistaken, not knowing the scriptures or the power of God. He said they love the best seats and to be noticed by men. Jesus confronted them to their faces calling them blind guides, fools, white washed tombs, unclean, serpents and brood of vipers! (see Matthew 23 and 24). Jesus pronounced God's judgment on Pharisees who reject the Tree of Life and feed from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

**The Spirit of Control**

In my experience and observation of religious spirits operating in North American churches, the most prominent characteristic is the spirit of control. It is so common that I have even heard pastors joke about being a "control freak" as if this was some slight personality flaw that they were aware of and trying to "work" out of their system.

Christian leaders influenced by the dog will try to control everything they possibly can. The way this happens varies from leader to leader and yet the net result is always the same. The Holy Spirit is not given liberty to operate except by the pastor's permission. Excuse me! Who do we think we are that we should take control of what the Holy Spirit wants to do in our churches? Cain perhaps!

At one evening meeting, I gave an altar call and about a dozen people came forward to receive prayer. Because I pray by the Spirit, I loose track of time and always seek to pray for each person as long as the Holy Spirit gives me unction. There may be ten people waiting for prayer and the Lord may have me pray 20 minutes for the first person. God has caused me to be submissive to His Spirit, but I am also submissive to the leadership in the church. I will submit to time guidelines and all appropriate protocol. If I go over, I will ask if it is okay to continue.

On this particular evening, the Holy Spirit was moving in great power and anointing. It is hard to accurately describe the presence of the Lord. It was one of the most incredible experiences I've had. People were hungry for a fresh touch and prophetic words were flowing. People were patiently waiting in the presence of the Lord for their turn to be prayed for. I could have stayed all night except for an over anxious deacon who began making loud announcements about having to close the building and so forth.

My spirit began to shut down. I looked at the deacon in charge and asked him for permission to continue, but he said we needed to hurry up. My heart longed to continue ministering but, my spirit began to close down and the Spirit of God was grieved and began to lift.

God had come into the meeting to minister life but had conflicted with the normal time schedule of the man in charge of closing the building. God is so incredibly gracious and sensitive that He decided to leave the meeting at that time. I was heartbroken and it took great prayer and intentional focus not to become angry with the individual that basically told God to please leave. Some weeks later, this same deacon asked me to pray for him and the Holy Spirit gave through me one of the most wonderful words I've ever spoke over anyone. It amazed and blessed me. The deacon got really blessed too.

Even though he had not been in the flow of the Spirit that former night, God knew his heart and was working on him. It is so important to believe the best about people who may be on the south side of the Damascus road. God will rescue so many Sauls, and we have to learn to walk in humility and pray for them. I learned a lot through this one experience.

Unfortunately, too many of us are on the south side of Damascus. Most pastors and Christian leaders seek to control finances, time schedules, programs and so forth rather than facilitate the flow of the Holy Spirit. Of course they have been given the authority by God to lead, but God is the One who is supposed to be in control. The Holy Spirit seldom shows up in some churches, but when He does, they don't know how to handle Him and end up grieving Him and asking Him to leave.

The Lord gave me a picture as I prayed about this phenomenon. The Holy Spirit is likened as the wind in scripture (John 3:8). Without the fresh wind of the Spirit, things get real stale in a hurry. Man wants the breeze of the Spirit but he wants to control it. Just as we have well manufactured ventilation systems to control room temperature in most churches, religious programming is the control system that says when and how much of the Holy Spirit may come in through the ventilating shafts.

We have actually built entire systems to control the moving of the Spirit. Then as we go to the thermostat and push the appropriate buttons we expect God to come in and provide a fresh breeze of His presence into services. What a great delusion most of us are experiencing! God is not and never will be under our control.

We are so greatly deceived to think that we can manufacture a religious programmed system at 11:00 A.M. on Sunday morning that will last no more than 90 minutes and expect God to show up during our convenient time schedule. If and when He does really come, we don't know what to do and cut short His entrance by man controlled religious programming so that He leaves. Most of the time He simply stands at the door and knocks because He longs to dine with us.

Control spirits are religious demons that will assault every Christian leader in the world. If the leader yields to them and takes matters into his own hands, he begins to operate in the religion of Cain and starts eating from that wicked tree. It won't be long before death works its way into their midst. We are good at covering up death like the modern funeral parlor with magnificent wood caskets, fine linens, gentle lighting, soft music, plush carpet and stain glass windows. Some churches are becoming nothing more than glorified funeral parlors!

Pastors need to repent of trying to be God and control His moving. Pastors need to forsake intimidation, domination and strong-arm leadership tactics that control people and force their agenda on them. Pastors need to repent, fast and pray. Sack cloth and ashes could really be the most important part of our wardrobe this century. Without deep and thorough repentance, we will continue in the delusion that God is in our midst when in reality we are worshipping an idol made by the works of our own hands.

## Walk in Humility and Love

Jesus walked in humility and love. He did not control anything but yielded at all times to the will of His Father as revealed by the Holy Spirit. He did not try to control His own disciples. He showed them the door and asked them if they wanted to leave like the other thousands who left at His hard word (please see John 6:66 – [666] - How prophetic!).

Most of the world is under the strong delusion of religious spirits in one form or another. They are eating off that rotten tree that gives them zeal without knowledge, an epidemic worse than AIDS. As people go looking for a solution to their Jesus shaped void, we must arise and shine with the love and humility of Jesus to show them the way to behold Him. We must endeavor to snatch those we can from hell's fire to become on fire with God's love, but we must not manipulate or try to control them or God in the process.

God is looking for humble, broken, weak Christians who understand their constant need for the grace of God. They will be empowered to walk holy before God, full of His love and the fruit of the Spirit. As we cling to the cross and allow His resurrection power to fill us with strength and gifts, we will give all glory to the Lord and over come the dog of religion. We will loose our entire self-life in the process. Many of us will also be martyred.

Since we have eaten from the tree of life representing Jesus Christ and His Spirit, we will experience the fruit of eternal life in this life and forevermore.

## CHAPTER 3 – SAUL VERSUS DAVID

**So Saul asked counsel of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hand of Israel?" But He did not answer him that day.**
**I Samuel 14:37**

Saul chose to eat from the religious tree. The fact that God did not answer Saul did not stop him from going out to war. Many Christian leaders pray but don't hear God answer them "that day". Rather than wait on God for a clear answer, the religious leader goes off to war (ministry) believing God is with him. This is how Saul became a dog.

Saul ended up bearing fruit from the forbidden tree while David ate from the tree of life. The contrast in these two leaders is worthy of intense study. God earnestly fought for Saul through the prayers of Samuel but ultimately, Saul chose his own way and became a dog himself. God allowed Saul to persecute David and prepared David in the process. We see this process continuously in Church history.

**"For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet" (Psalm 22:16).** While King David prophetically released Psalm 22 that portrays Jesus' death on the cross, David experienced a measure of dogs surrounding him as King Saul tried to kill him. Hands represent our works and the spirit of Saul binds young Davids from doing their anointed works. This spirit also pierces their feet to prevent them from walking in their anointing.

Those in positions of authority are prime targets for the enemy. Religious dogs scheme to move a leader out of love and servanthood into lordship and domination. We see that pattern in the life of Saul as both a model and a warning of what can happen to a chosen leader.

**"My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me? Why are you so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?" (Psalm 22:1).** David felt forsaken and abandoned by God at times, which caused him to cry out. When Jesus quoted this verse on the cross, He was pointing us to the entire Psalm to see the fulfillment of prophecy. He was alerting us to the fact that the religious leaders surrounding Him at the cross were dogs.

We must understand that David's life in many ways is a prophetic picture of a truly anointed leader who abides in God and follows the Holy Spirit in all things. "Davids" will always encounter resistance and persecution from "Sauls". If you have never experienced

resistance or persecution by a Saul type, you may not be walking in the anointing of David yet. You can be certain that once you do launch into the depths of the Spirit through worship and total obedience to God, that the spirit of Saul will attack you. This is the same spirit of the dog that attacked Jesus, the Apostle Paul and every other anointed leader or reformer like Martin Luther.

King Saul is a vivid example of a powerful leader whose heart fell to religious spirits and even into witchcraft. His life history, which we shall examine briefly, gives us a clear pattern by which we may identify the dog spirit.

## Tremendous Gifting and Talent

**There was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish …. a mighty man of power. And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people. I Samuel 9:1,2**

Candidates for religious spirits are usually highly gifted individuals. Their outward appearance and resume is impressive. Due to their natural ability, charm, personality, physical strength and ability to produce they are often singled out by the enemy to bring into vanity and pride. Sauls are always hard working and strong men who appear to accomplish a great deal of ministry.

The father of Saul was Kish which means “snaring; bird catching; (root = to ensnare). Power; straw; forage”. The Bible teaches us that Kish was a mighty man of power. We can perceive from this that Kish was a man’s man, a go getter, a “make-it-happen” type of man. Kish was a producer but most likely used flesh rather than the Spirit to become prosperous. “Bird catching” pictures a hunter who traps or ensnares his prey. Many men who get caught up in hunting and fishing are powerful self-made men.

Saul’s name means “asked for; demanded; (root = to ask; to request; to inquire of)”. The people of Israel asked for and demanded a king like other nations had. God gave them what they asked for and it became a form of judgment. Sauls turn out to be powerful and demanding leaders who use intensity and discipline to control others. Growing up under Kish, they usually become performance oriented and insecure.

## Insecurity in the Heart

When Samuel found Saul to anoint him as king, Saul said, **"Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then to you speak like this to me" (I Samuel 9:21)?**

When it was time to announce Saul's kingship publicly, Saul was hiding among the equipment (I Samuel 10:22). He was not fully ready to lead, but the people demanded a king and God yielded to their request. We can ask God for powerful leaders too. We often want a superstar Christian leader who can "make-it-happen" in ministry. Carnal people lift leaders onto a pedestal and unfortunately many leaders enjoy the view from on high. God will bring them tumbling down.

Samuel mentioned later that Saul began as **"small in his own eyes" (I Samuel 15:17).** Saul did not start off in pride but had basic insecurity. A poor self-image comes from looking at ones self and comparing ones self to others. It comes from depending upon self for accomplishments rather than God. An insecure person is fearful, apprehensive and uncertain or unsure of himself. He walks by sight and not by faith in God.

All leaders influenced by religious spirits are insecure. They begin to fear man more than God. Their insecurity may manifest in various ways including the extremes of boastful arrogant dominating pride or fearful, weak people-pleasing leadership. Regardless of the manifestation, the root is the same: insecurity rooted in pride (self-focus rather than God focus).

## Gibeah Versus Zion

Saul made his capital at Gibeah, which means a hill or a high place. Sauls operate out of a place of pride. Gibeah was the site of one of the greatest tragedies in the history of Israel. A carnal Levite turned his concubine out of the house into the hands of perverted Benjamites who ravished her all night long until the abuse killed her (see Judges 19-21).

The nation of Israel gathered under the leadership of Phinehas the high priest and demanded justice upon the men of Gibeah who had performed this heinous crime. The tribe of Benjamin refused to deal with internal lewdness but rather defended their wicked brethren and went to war against God's army[2].

[2] I have written extensively on this story in my book, **THE SPEAR OF PHINEHAS**

By choosing this site as his headquarters, Saul also identified with men who abuse women and tolerate wickedness in their midst. The house of Saul seen today allows for great tolerance of evil and can be especially controlling and dominating towards women.

David had to war against the Jebusites to take the stronghold of Zion (dry place) where he established the open tabernacle of worship with the ark of the covenant, representing God's presence, as the central focus. Saul neglected the ark of God's presence and led by soul power, personality and physical strength.

**Impatience – Fear of Man**

**You shall go down before me to Gilgal; and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, till I come to you and show you what you should do. I Samuel 10:9**

The leader influenced by religious spirits often has a hard time waiting on God's timing. James instructs us to **"let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4).** Waiting on God keeps humbling us and causing us to be dependent upon Him alone. The fruit of patience develops maturity and brings us to completeness in our training.

Saul had not learned patience through fiery trials and a long preparation season. When Samuel appeared to be delayed, Saul took matters into his own hands and made the sacrifice that only a priest was allowed to perform. This "get a bigger hammer and make it happen" attitude is a typical pattern of a dog spirit.

After Samuel confronted Saul, the religious leader stated, **"When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering" (I Samuel 13:11-12).**

Saul saw the people leaving "from me". How many pastors get into panic when people start leaving "his" church? The temptation to take matters into ones own hands is great at that moment. Samuel had not come, and Saul was also in fear of the enemy. Under these circumstances the "flesh feels compelled" to do something to make something happen. In my experience, the Lord rarely compels us to

do anything, but rather he leads, guides, directs and moves us. Giving into quick impulses in leadership is usually rooted in impatience and pride.

The sin of impatience, the fear of man and breaking God's law in this one command caused God to take the kingdom away from Saul. Immediately Saul's decision-making skills began to deteriorate and he made foolish oaths and brought unrighteous requirements upon the people. The religious leader inflicts pain rather than bears pain. Imagine how many pastors we would have left in our churches if God took away the pulpit from every one of us who got into impatience and fear. The fact is, God has taken away the "Kingdom" from many pastors but they haven't realized it yet. David is still being trained.

## The Proud Warrior

Saul was a great military man and a powerful warrior. He fought valiantly against God's enemies and conquered many. The one consistent characteristic of powerful leaders that come under the spirit of the dog is that they are forceful individuals that work hard and accomplish a lot. The expression "I worked like a dog" is quite an illuminating revelation as to how our culture has absorbed and glorified this spirit. Literal dogs do not actually do much work at all!

Twenty years ago, I "worked like a dog" in ministry activities. It would be ridiculous to list all of the things I was trying to do at the same time. I sacrificed intimacy with Jesus and prayer for accomplishments. Office and administrative projects were my forte and I worked through assignments like a powerful buzz saw. Unfortunately, some staff members were cut with the same tool. Performance begets praise most of the time and I desired the praise of men so I worked all the harder.

I always managed to find time to play basketball, which was another form of warfare. My Christian testimony went down the tubes on many nights when games were on the line. The proud warrior is overly competitive and zealous to win.

In ministry, this manifests with an ungodly zeal to have a bigger budget, a larger congregation, better programs and all kinds of measurable activities that make things look better than they really are. Meticulous records may be taken of conversions, baptisms and other achievements that make the pastor and people look busy and productive.

Many times, this is just a cover for deep insecurity and true lasting fruit is hard to find. One church boasted at the annual business meeting of leading over 800 people to find Jesus Christ. Most of those "converts" came during a highly pressurized outreach. In the entire year, the church membership only grew by a few dozen and most of those were Christians wandering in, rather than new converts being discipled.

The statistics sounded great at the annual meeting, but where was the lasting fruit? Would the Apostle Paul be proud of such statistics if Christ was not being formed in the converts? I think not.

## Rebellion and Witchcraft

**Thus says the Lord of Hosts: "I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amelek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."**
**I Samuel 15:2,3**

The leader who allows the dog spirit to rule will rebel against God's clear commands and will move into witchcraft, the unlawful use of spiritual authority and power. Saul did not obey God's commands in order that he might please the people. He spared Agag in order to parade him around and bring glory to himself. He kept the best sheep for a celebration barbecue (sacrificed to God of course). Saul even **"set up a monument for himself"** to celebrate his carnal achievement (I Samuel 15:12b).

The dog spirit loves the recognition of achievement and receives the praises of men instead of fearing God and seeking His approval alone. When confronted, Saul was in deception to his true spiritual condition. **"But I have obeyed the voice of the Lord" (I Samuel 15:20).** This deception is characteristic of leaders captured by a religious spirit.

Let it be known that I have operated under great deception as to my true spiritual condition and level of obedience in former ministry leadership. God somehow manages to use us even when we are in some forms of deception. We all see through a glass darkly, but God can clean the lenses through diligent repentance. Saul did not repent.

Samuel's confrontation of King Saul has become a classic message to us all:

**Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king. I Samuel 15:22-23**

Saul was given powerful spiritual authority by God and abused that authority, rebelled against God and took control of the situation by doing what he felt best and what would keep the people under his influence and control. When a person in spiritual leadership rebels against God and gets into fleshly control, demonic spirits are able to work through him. This is a form of witchcraft.

Fleshly witchcraft talked about here is not the Satanic type you might read about. There is a very real and demonic witchcraft in Satanism, but there is a much more subtle witchcraft that occurs in churches all over.

When the source of spiritual authority is not from God, the leader begins to move in witchcraft, which is characterized by inner rebellion, manipulation, flattery, intimidation, domination and control. Anger is inevitably manifested in intimidating and dominating others.

The leader straying into fleshly witchcraft will not operate in love and gentleness in confronting others but will be extremely intense and intimidating. This will often happen in closed door sessions where only the insiders know. The congregation may only see the warm and caring side of this leader on a leash. The enemy knows how to deceive a church leader and make him into a dog. We must beware of the dog attacking our lives and be set free from deception.

## Godly Leadership is Gentle

**Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Galatians 6:1-5**

This passage burns in my spirit as a mirror of God to expose witchcraft in our carnal leadership "styles". The command of God is

to “restore” fallen brethren in a spirit of gentleness. How do we treat staff members who fail to be productive? How do we handle forgetfulness, irresponsibility and immaturity in those we have leadership over?

When those under our leadership mess up and make us look bad, our true heart condition will be exposed. Paul warned us to consider ourselves lest we also are tempted. We are called to bear burdens and work with people in gentle love. This fulfills the law of Christ which is to **“love one another” (John 13:34).**

Again, I have fallen to dealing harshly with others many years ago before God began breaking me out of the religious control spirit. Unfortunately, I have seen extreme abuse coming from various leaders in confronting others in a completely “other spirit” than the spirit of gentleness. We are among good company when we fall into religious judgment. James and John had this problem when a Samaritan village would not receive Jesus. They were ready to call fire down upon the village.

**But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” And they went to another village. Luke 9:55-56**

Anger towards staff members or volunteer Christians who serve the church is a manifestation of false fire. We are not to call down fire on those who fail but rather bear their burdens. We are to bring corrective action with gentleness lest we ourselves stumble in the process of leading and fall into the same action.

Paul warns us that we can deceive ourselves when we think we are something when we are nothing. This happens all the time. Here’s how it works. The leader thinks he can do the job better than the person assigned the job. He thinks he is something. “If you want something done around here, you have to do it yourself” becomes the mental if not spoken refrain.

This “do it myself” attitude is rooted in pride. Deception comes in, because God has not called the leader to do everything. He is called to empower and release others into fruitful ministry. Yes, they are weak and lack experience and competency in many areas, but the leader’s job is to gently nurture followers into godly productivity.

Leaders that deal harshly with others become prouder and more demanding over time. They work extremely hard and have no

patience for those who won't work as hard as they or as competently. They do not discern the special gifts hidden in the follower but try to get them to conform to their own agenda.

One insecure leader had no interest in the giftings, callings or anointings of his followers. He just wanted everyone to do what he told them to do and serve his vision and goals. When people under him tried to flow in their anointings, he was frustrated and put controls on them. Saul doesn't look to build a team of leaders who seek God in community. Saul seeks to build a monumental ministry to demonstrate his greatness.

Another religious leader hired an anointed prophet who was used to ministering life-giving words from the Lord to God's people. Operating in his anointing was so powerful that people began to go to Jack (not his real name) rather than the Sr. Pastor. Jack and his wife Jill were very relational while the pastor was more task oriented. As they had people over for meals and built relationships the pastor became more and more threatened.

He told the prophet not to have people over to his house for dinner any more and began assigning him more tasks outside of his anointing. He wanted the prophet busy doing custodial work and maintenance. The pastor was consumed that the prophet measure the angle of the blinds at 47 degrees. The pastor would even follow the prophet around at times to make sure he did everything exactly right. Needless to say, Jack and Jill left that hill of religious control. Unfortunately, the pastor made phone calls and wrote letters blaming the prophet and making unrighteous accusations. I can relate to this assault.

I was so powerfully assaulted by one pastor that I became afraid to operate in the anointing God gave me. We visited a new church as a family and I had a back problem at the time. They announced an opportunity for prayer in their prayer room and I went in for prayer for my back. I didn't know any of the people, and they did not know me but they graciously prayed for me. One precious woman turned to me and asked if I would pray for an issue and I said, "Well, let's pray about that right now". I put my hand on her head and the Holy Spirit powerfully touched her. When the other people in the room saw the anointing, they all asked for prayer too. It felt good to sense God's presence flowing through me again so I prayed for all the rest and God wonderfully touched each one.

As I left the room, I thought, "Oh Lord, what have I done?". I had a reflex of fear, because I thought the pastor would find out and I would

be in big trouble. Pastors can get incredibly threatened by anointing. I was nervous for a couple of weeks and tried to stay quiet at this new church and did nothing to promote myself. We attended this church, and when I was asked to speak a few months later, I was still unsure how God's anointing would be received. We were wonderfully accepted. When the pastor and his wife found out how we had been treated, they came to our home, washed our feet and asked forgiveness on behalf of pastors who had hurt us and shut down our gifting. We cried buckets of tears and experienced great healing. We have since washed other prophets' feet and seen similar healing.

It is a tragedy that anointed men and women have to be on the alert, but there are dogs hiding in most churches, and they will bite hard when their territory is threatened. I have learned to allow the Holy Spirit to flow through me to minister but will not press when a church seeks to control the flow. The Spirit of God is gentle and will not impose Himself upon us. We must seek to minister true to the Spirit no matter what level of "religiosity" reigns in the sanctuary. Leaders who seek to shut down anointing or control people under their authority are in danger of losing the kingdom they have been given to lead. Saul really lost it by being harsh to David.

## A Distressing Spirit

**But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him. I Samuel 16:14**

Once religious spirits begin to influence a leader, major stress often comes in and he becomes troubled. It is ironic that David is chosen to play soothing, anointed music to help Saul calm down. Pure worship drives religious spirits out. Saul initially loved David and required him to be his armor bearer for a brief season.

David had been anointed as the king to be, yet would go through a long wilderness preparation season with Saul as his chief trainer. Leaders who get into positions of power and authority without a thorough season of preparation are more susceptible to evil influencing spirits. This especially happens to those who are ambitions and self- promoting since they promote themselves into positions before they are properly prepared by God.

## David and Goliath

In the inspirational story of David and Goliath (I Samuel 17) there are a few key principles for our study. We observe first of all that Saul and all of his men were overcome with fear in facing the powerful,

demonized giant, Goliath. One meaning of the name Goliath is to "denude or make naked". Goliath exposed the fact that Saul and his men walked by sight and were fearful.

In contrast, David walked by faith and believed God would deliver Goliath into his hands. When Saul agreed to let David fight, it seemed reasonable that David would need body armor, and Saul offered his own equipment. However, the ways of Saul do not fit David, and he could not wear Saul's armor.

This speaks to us of old wineskins leaders have used to serve the Lord. They think that the new generation should fit into the old structures to go out to war, but God's pattern is always to bring in new wineskins over time. God desires an abiding relationship of dependence upon His Spirit rather than a repetition of what once worked.

It is quite common for the Lord to give revelation to one generation and cause a "move" by His Spirit that is blessed greatly. Other ministries want to get in the stream of blessing and go with the flow of the new move, which can be highly productive for several years. Once the method becomes the focus God is no longer depended on and the old wineskin dries out and begins to crack. It can not hold the new wine God inevitably brings. Saul's wineskin began to crack as his heart was exposed.

## Jealousy and Murder

Once David became a powerful warrior and did great exploits against the Philistines, women came out with singing and dancing and declared: **"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (I Samuel 18:7).** Saul became extremely jealous and actually began to go mad that day. Jealousy in leadership gives the spirit of the dog full reign in the house.

Jealousy led to rage and a spirit of murder that Saul vented towards David by casting a spear at him. There was no gentle confrontation here. David escaped each time Saul's anger exploded. Saul was afraid of David and his insecurity mounted daily. He began plotting ways to murder this anointed man, but David behaved wisely in all that he did.

Leaders who get into tight control of a church or ministry they established are especially prone to jealousy when a new anointed leader begins to rise up. If the leader is insecure, he can begin to have irrational fears, and a spirit of evil suspicion may overtake him.

David remained pure and as loyal as he could to Saul throughout his life. He refused to lift his hand against the Lord's anointed. Even though Saul knew this, the evil spirit he allowed in dominated his thinking, and jealous rage continued.

## Bitterness and Rage

In one of the most horrible Bible stories, Saul flew into a rage against David and invented a conspiracy theory to justify it. Saul believed Ahimelech the priest was disloyal and was helping David to overthrow the kingdom (see I Samuel 22).

In this unfortunate episode, even Saul's soldiers refused to obey his order to kill the priests. In contrast, Doeg, the Edomite who was employed by Saul as chief shepherd, gladly killed 85 priests and destroyed the city of Nob along with **"both men and women, children and nursing infants, oxen and donkeys and sheep-with the edge of the sword" (I Samuel 22:19).**

It was against God's law for Saul to hire an Edomite in that important position and we see lawlessness all over Saul. Edomites were full of bitterness, as their forefather Esau hated Jacob. The bitterness passed down many generations, and we see bitterness in the hearts of those infected by the bite of the dog spirit.

Leaders, like all of us, are often wounded by unrighteous actions of others. God calls each of us to rely upon the grace of the Lord in order to stay out of bitterness. When a wounded person does not forgive from his heart and receive emotional healing through giving and receiving God's mercy, bitterness taproots into the cesspool of hell and defiles many (Hebrews 12:15).

As God brings you into deeper intimacy through worship, intercession, fasting and prayer, the anointing of David begins to come upon you, and it is certain that you will be assaulted by the spirit of Saul at one time or another. This pattern is repeated thousands of times every day. Leaders like Saul begin making false accusations and lose true discernment in their jealous anger. They begin speaking out against certain individuals with venom.

Years ago, a prominent Sr. Pastor invited me out to lunch at which he offered me a position in his ministry. During the lunch I heard the Holy Spirit prompting me to ask him about a former staff member. I obeyed the voice of the Spirit and inquired about the well-being of the former associate whom God had used to impact my life. For the next 20 minutes, I sat in stunned silence as this pastor poured out

vehement invective towards him. Several times, he tried to stop talking about the former associate, but he couldn't seem to help himself.

His bitterness raged on and he made many accusations against this person. Normally, I would never want to hear such diatribe, but the Lord had instructed me to ask and wanted to show me this man's heart. Needless to say, I did not take the position offered.

Another Sr. Pastor was building up a flock, and the church was growing rapidly. After an argument with the worship leader who was subsequently fired in anger, the pastor become irrational and raged against anyone who would slightly question his authority. He became like Doeg and launched out to destroy those he felt were against him. His rage could not be contained, and he publicly blasted the people and accused those who differed with him to have spirits of Saul, Korah, Jezebel and Absalom. Many godly families left the church after seeing the extreme outbursts of anger and persecution towards others.

These stories are not isolated events in the body of Christ. Every day, Christians are bullied, dominated, abused and controlled by insecure Sauls who have the power of position but not the character of Jesus Christ.

## Zeal Without True Knowledge

Saul was so zealous at one point in pursuing God's enemies that he killed the Gibeonites with whom a covenant had been made to protect them. This caused a famine in the land that David had to deal with (II Samuel 21:1). Davids will have to clean up many things that Sauls before them caused. Zeal without discernment is dangerous.

The Apostle Paul talked about his countrymen as those having a zeal for God but without proper knowledge (Romans 10:2). Paul (when he was Saul) walked in a zeal that persecuted the church of Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:6). Religious spirits influence believers to be extremely zealous without intimacy with Jesus or the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Paul's former fleshly zeal caused hatred and murder against those who chose a different view of Jesus. We see this in religious leaders who persecute various other leaders or movements.

## Saul's Sword

Saul degenerated in a moral free fall as he continued to seek to destroy David. He even consulted a medium and once again broke

God's law. Some leaders will begin to hear demonic spirits and think they are hearing the Holy Spirit. This is especially a problem with "prophetic" pastors.

The prophetic gifting and anointing is one of God's greatest gifts to the church. Unfortunately, everyone goes through a learning curve when discovering how to walk in the pure prophetic anointing. Spirits of divination counterfeit the prophetic and will begin speaking to the mind of the undiscerning.

I generally find people who get into divination are convinced that God is talking to them and have an incredible open online communication with "god". Contrasting that, the prophet Moses and Jeremiah often had to fast and pray and wait on God for several days before hearing the "word of the Lord". Those caught in divination hear their "god" all the time with specific instructions like what to wear, what to eat and other specific instructions. They often prophecy out of the soul realm or by spirits of divination giving them guidance.

Only a pure heart can discern the difference between God's voice and spirits of divination. Those who claim to hear God continuously are usually extremely stubborn and will not be moved from what they believe God told them. On the other hand, the true prophetic will gladly submit what they hear to other prophets or believers knowing that we hear in part and prophecy in part (I Corinthians 13:9;14,32).

When the spirit of prophecy did fall on Saul, he became out of control, because his flesh was so active (I Samuel 19:24). Having kingly authority, Saul's words had the literal power of life and death. All leaders have power in the tongue to speak words of life or death over their followers (Proverbs 18:21).

Those who speak evil of others will eventually fall on their own sword (tongue) as Saul did on Mount Gilboa (I Samuel 31:4). One can not sow accusations and bitterness against another with out it coming back upon them. **"But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another" (Galatians 5:15).**

David provided us with one model of how to deal with unrighteous Saul consumed by the spirit of the dog; run and hide! Do not get into speaking evil of those who speak evil of you. That is the enemy's trap to get you into bitterness. Get your heart into mercy and stay there. We are never to raise our hand against the Lord's anointed. Understand that God may be using them to train you. God may not want you to work for them any longer if their behavior continues to grow increasingly lawless.

Both John the Baptist and Jesus confronted the Pharisees directly, and God will call us at times to deal directly with religious leaders. Nearly all of those who are called to come against religious spirits end up being killed by them. This began with Abel, continued through the prophets and will be a characteristic of the last days as well.

There are many Jonathans who stay loyal to Saul during their ministry life. Unfortunately, we are coming upon an hour when Sauls will fall on their own sword and take many Jonathans with them. This is a great tragedy.

After Saul died, David mourned and lamented the loss. Even though David was anointed King of Judah, the house of David warred with the house of Saul for many years. This is a pattern that we will see in this generation. The house of David is beginning to war against the house of Saul.

It is encouraging to see that years later when the kingdom split, Benjamin (house of Saul) stayed loyal to Judah (house of David). We may be at war with some of our brethren over the freedom of the Spirit verses old wineskins but ultimately we will come to unity as the Holy Spirit brings it to pass.

## Saul's Children

We will look at three offspring of Saul as a prophetic picture of what this kind of leader will produce. Jonathan whose name means "The Lord gave; Lord of giving; whom Jehovah gave" is truly a gift from God and becomes a beloved friend to David. He is a mighty man of God who truly loves the anointing and yet rightly stays loyal to his father.
We see this often in traditional denominational structures where young anointed Jonathans stay loyal in the house of Saul even though their "fathers" reject the new moves of the Spirit and the tabernacle of David. Jonathans love Davids and privately support them. They feel called to stay loyal to the place where God raised them. They are beautiful servants of the Lord and win battles. They get in trouble with their "dad" from time to time but are part of the family and often highly depended upon.

Ishbosheth whose name means "a man of shame" was a son of Saul who continued to rebel against David and reigned as king of Israel for two years after Saul's death. He had a suspicious heart and apparently falsely accused Abner of going into his father's concubine. This falling out with Abner weakened him greatly and he ended up

murdered in his own bed. Many of the offspring under Saul's leadership become shameful men who rebel against David. Their ministries do not last long.

Michal whose name means "a little brook" was Saul's daughter who loved David (her husband) but despised his free worship. **"Now as the ark of the LORD came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart" (II Samuel 6:16).** Michal represents a church under Saul that will have a little bit of the Spirit (brook) but will not give herself to exuberant worship and praise as David did. She prefers respectability and order in the worship services. As a result of despising the anointed worship of David, she is barren and produces no life.

**"And Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, put a cover of goats' hair for his head, and covered it with clothes" (I Samuel 19:13).** Michal took an idol that she worshipped and put it in the bed in place of David when he fled to escape the wrath of Saul. The church Michal represents replaces true intimacy with the Son of David with idol worship covered up by many religious programs.

Only through humble broken repentant worship and prayer can we become open to the Holy Spirit's searching to uncover the idols hidden in our own hearts. Just as Rachel had idols hidden underneath her in the saddlebags of the camel, so the church today has many idols. She can not go into the Promised Land with hidden idols. Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance as are many churches today, but she died giving birth to Benjamin, the "son of the right hand" who represents the Church of the last days. Beloved, I urge you to allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart to uncover the idolatry religious dogs have buried there.

## CHAPTER 4 – THE QUEEN OF THE DOGS – JEZEBEL

**Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshipped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a wooden image** (Asherah)**. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. I Kings 16:30-33**

The story of Jezebel graphically exposes the spirit of the dog. A spiritually powerful king named Ethbaal who ruled the northern most Phoenician City of Sidon raised Jezebel. Ethbaal means "living with Baal or Baal's man". Ethbaal was a devoted follower of Baal (Satan) and was undoubtedly possessed by demons who gave him great power to become the king.

Ahab made an unlawful alliance with Ethbaal rather than trust God to protect him from northern enemies. Ethbaal was an opportunist looking for trading opportunities to expand his fishing export business.

Jezebel was given to Ahab as queen to seal the deal. The name Jezebel includes the meanings of "noncohabitant; unchaste, without obligation; i.e. self-righteous." Jezebel was an extraordinarily devoted worshipper of Baal. Her influence and power could only succeed because of Ahab's weak moral leadership and love for personal pleasure and prosperity.

### Jezebel Kills the Prophets

God's anger against idol worship was expressed in Elijah's word to Ahab, **"As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years except at my word" (I Kings 17:1).** Baal and Asherah worship promised abundant prosperity and safety. Jezebel took control of the "religious" rule of Israel while Ahab was the political ruler. One might say that Jezebel was the Minister of Religion.

In her wicked zeal, Jezebel apparently called all of the prophets of the land together and sought to seduce them onto her staff. Those prophets whose hearts were in compromise and wanted to go with the flow of the new administration prostituted themselves to worship idols

because of the money and prestige offered. They became a huge pack of 850 dogs and opened themselves up to the deception of religious spirits.

**And Ahab had called Obadiah, who was in charge of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly. For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.) I Kings 18:3,4**

The spirit behind Jezebel is a cold-blooded murderer of anointed prophets. The choice became clear to the religious leaders of that day. Either submit to Jezebel's leadership and enjoy the banquets, prominence and pleasures of eating at her table fully supported or die. Those who escaped death managed to hide in caves and survived on bread and water. They lost comfort and wealth, but they saved their souls.

## Jezebel Arises when Ahab Rules

Ahab was a sinful man who disregarded the word of God and made alliance with the world in order to provide economic opportunity and political safety. The spirit behind Jezebel can only rise up when leaders live in compromise. Outwardly, Ahabs may appear strong, intelligent, driven, influential and powerful, but inwardly they are full of fear and insecurity. Their minds are distorted by compromise and they falsely judge the true prophets.

During the Presidential administration of the 90's, we saw the moral leadership of America reach an all time low. Compromise, immorality, lies, deception and rebellion against God characterized our highest office. This kind of weak leadership creates a spiritual vacuum that gives Jezebel opportunity to arise. She does often influence women, but 850 men carried out her bidding and refused to stand up to her in the days of Elijah.

**"Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, 'Is that you, O troubler of Israel'" (I Kings 18:17)?** Compromising leaders always look for someone else to blame for their problems. Rather than take personal responsibility for obedience to God's word, those in bed with Jezebel are constantly pointing the finger at others. More often than not, that finger is aimed at a true prophet. The powerful tongue kills many young prophets today or sends them into hiding.

True prophets must look to God to be properly supported and not the

church or denominational structure, especially during compromising times like we have in North America. All of the prophets in Jezebel's days received God's provisions while in hiding. The ones with the positions, prominence, fancy clothes and bankroll were caught up in idol worship. Most of them didn't even realize they were worshipping idols. We must recognize that these were Hebrew prophets who had God's word. They sold themselves into compromise and became dogs.

Has the spirit of Jezebel found compromising prophets all over America and promoted them to her table with lavish support? Have the leaders of American churches become compromising Ahabs and begun to think Elijah is the problem? Is it possible that we could become deceived by this evil spirit? The answer is YES!

God will preserve true servants of the Lord in the midst of the most wicked apostasy. Obadiah risked his life to support 100 prophets who lived in caves and existed on meager rations for several years. The Lord will strategically place God fearing men and women in key places of influence to preserve prophets in these last days.

While the prophets of Baal wined and dined in the finest luxury of the day, God's faithful servants of light, lived in dark caves and subsisted on bread and water, but for all eternity they shall rejoice that they did not bow their knee to worshipping Baal.

## Elijah and the Prophets of Baal

**And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" But the people answered him not a word. I Kings 18:21**

During the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, the powerful spirits behind them caused the people to be double minded. The people vacillated back and forth in compromise between the Lord and Baal. This same tendency may be observed today in our churches. Elijah was sent to bring a mighty wake up call to the children of God in the famous sacrifice by fire on Mount Carmel.

Four hundred and fifty false prophets prayed, howled like dogs, danced and prophesied, but there was no answer. After Elijah mocked them, they began to cut themselves with knives and prophesied all afternoon. Still no answer came from Baal who had been bound by Elijah's warfare prayers. Finally, Elijah restored the altar of the Lord, poured water over the sacrifice to make the miracle more amazing and called on the true God who answered by fire.

**Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!" And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there. I Kings 18:39,40**

During the reign of religious spirits, some people will not believe in the Lord unless they see dramatic miracles. Their faith is extremely weak and does not hold onto the word of God. It was even worse when Jesus walked the earth. The people were double minded. **"Then Jesus said to him, 'Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe'" (John 4:48).** Miracles only bring about temporary faith which will not last. True saving faith is based on God's word.

## Elijah Prays for Rain

The God who dispatched fire from heaven can also pour down rain after 42 months of drought. **"And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground and put his face between his knees" (I Kings 18:42). "The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit" (James 5:16b-18).**

Seven times Elijah travailed "birthing" prayer to bring forth rain. During the long period of hiding, Elijah continued to worship and build the power of his spirit in communion with Almighty God. During the reign of the religious spirits that we find upon the earth today, where are the Elijah's of God who know how to pray to bring forth the rain of God's Spirit? In a spiritually dry and thirsty land, people are crying out for living water.

The altar of the Lord must be rebuilt, and a mighty baptism of fire, the jealousy of God, must consume the Church of Jesus Christ. The false prophets must be exposed by the Brook Kishon so that we may birth the latter rain which will renew the earth. Elijah will return before the great and terrible day of the Lord and confront the Queen of Heaven (Jezebel) and her false prophets once again (see Malachi 4:5,6; Revelation 11:1-14).

**"Then the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel" (I Kings 18:46).** Elijah was supernaturally empowered to run 25 miles from Carmel to Jezreel as the rain poured down from the sky. The vindication of Elijah's ministry seemed nearly complete as he stood at the gate of Jezreel and watched the rain pour down. It had been a long day at the office.

## Jezebel's Vow to Kill Elijah

**And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." I Kings 19:1,2**

Rather than cower and admit defeat, Jezebel reacted with a violent rage. Perhaps the demonic spirits of her 450 dead prophets came upon her and filled her with supernatural boldness in the face of this mighty man of God. Elijah blinked first. In fact, he got into fear. His guard had dropped and fearful spirits attacked him mercilessly.

Great triumphs in the Lord are often followed by let downs and seasons of self-doubt, discouragement and depression. Elijah ran far south to the wilderness outside Beersheba. Tormenting spirits followed him and Jezebel's witchcraft loosed a torrent of attack against this mighty man of God that had spent tremendous spiritual energy and power to call forth fire and rain and then run 25 miles.

**And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, Lord take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" I Kings 19:4b**

Powerful forces of witchcraft aimed at a godly man in isolation can bring about discouragement, depression and despair in an extremely short time. Demonic dog spirits mocked and oppressed Elijah. He was reminded of the many prophets that preceded him whose lives had ended at the hands of evil men.

Jezebel is after the pulpits of America and will seek to kill the true prophets from the lips of those in leadership in today's churches. Being a prosperous and powerful church in the days of Jezebel is no sign of God's favor at all. Elijah was looking for victory over Jezebel and ended up in depression by the Brook Cherith (separated and cut off).

How many true prophets have been assaulted by pastors and leaders whose insecurity caused them to rise up in control to cut off prophets? Many women who hear God speak are a threat to insecure men who think that if God were to speak, He would surely speak primarily to them. God has a way of humbling us all. We must make a place for the prophets and honor them.

## Elijah Heard the Still Small Voice

Strengthened by an angel of God, Elijah arose from depression and went to the mountain of God where Moses had received the ten commandments. Here, the Lord demonstrated that His presence was not in the earthquake, the blistering wind or the fire, but in the still small voice (see I Kings 19:4-12).

God does not usually choose to build His kingdom with flash, fireworks, and demonstrations of earth shaking power or the pomp and fanfare that can be seen in some ministries today. He usually chooses to work quietly, speaking to the heart in the gentle voice of His Spirit. Tenderly and patiently the Spirit of God captivates the heart line by line to be consumed with passionate love for the Bridegroom. The kingdom is more often built in the closet than the convention center.

Elijah felt isolated and alone, which is one strategy the enemy seeks to employ against God's servants. Then God gave him a fresh assignment and had him move on to anoint Hazael as king of Syria, Jehu as king of Israel and Elisha to be his successor.

**"Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (I Kings 19:18).** Elijah is not the only true warrior. In days ahead when Syria attacked Israel, Ahab mustered the troops **"And after them he mustered all the people, all the children of Israel--seven thousand" (I Kings 20:15).** The Spirit of the Lord demonstrated the power of 7,000 soldiers who had not bowed their knee to Baal as they defeated the Syrians twice including a victory over 100,000 soldiers. God can save by few as with Gideon or by many as with the 7,000. Pure Christians can not be defeated by the powers of darkness!

Ahab did not learn from Saul's blunder and rather than kill Ben-Hadad, the evil Syrian king who God wanted dead, Ahab decided to make a treaty with him to open up economic opportunities. **"So Ben-Hadad said to him, 'The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for**

**yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria." (I Kings 20:34).** The love of money and desire to be rich is prominent among leaders influenced by the dogs of hell.

God was angry with Ahab and sent a prophet to deliver the judgment word of the Lord to him. Rather than repent and humble himself before God, **"the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria" (I Kings 20:43).** Ahab pouted! Worldly sorrow leads to trouble. Feeling down in the dumps Ahab looked for some worldly pleasure to bring temporary relief to his discouragement. This gave Jezebel the opportunity to take control.

## Naboth is Murdered for His Vineyard

Ahab lusted after the property of Naboth whose name means "fruits; prominence; productive; i.e. abundance; (root = to increase, to cause to germinate)". Not finding fulfillment in God and His word, and influenced by the spirit of Jezebel, Ahab lusted after more wealth, more prominence, more power, more, more, more!

He already had so much, but a man in rebellion to God can not be satisfied until he finds his rest in true repentance that leads to forgiveness. Ahab did not repent and his sinful weaknesses allowed Jezebel to take control and work her wickedness. Naboth would not disobey God's word by selling his land (see Leviticus 25:23; Numbers 36:7) so Ahab became even more depressed in his self-consuming mode of greed and worldly sorrow.

**But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, "Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?"** (Ahab explained Naboth's refusal to sell the vineyard.) **Then Jezebel his wife said to him, "You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." I Kings 21:5-7**

Jezebel had waited behind the scenes seeking an opportunity to take control and rule. The evil spirits behind Ahab's depression were working in concert with a strategy formed in the pit of hell. Jezebel wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal and sent them to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. She ordered them to proclaim a fast, bring forth false witnesses against Naboth, accuse him falsely and kill him.

Jezebel knew enough of God's law to twist it unto murder (see Exodus 22:28; Leviticus 24:15,16). Religious spirits twist the word of God to maintain control and intellectually destroy those who would come

against their power base. **"The Jews answered him** (Pontius Pilate), **'We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God" (John 19:7).** Blinded by hatred, religious leaders will twist the law and kill God Himself and His servants. Most people just go along with the flow because of fear, ignorance and self-preservation.

Intimidated and fearful, the elders of Israel did exactly what Jezebel told them to do. They feared the Queen of Heaven more than God. They obviously knew Jezebel was behind the plot, because after the deed was done, they sent word to Jezebel that Naboth had been stoned and was dead (I Kings 21:14). Ahab's mind was so distorted that the news of murder brightened his day. Problem solved! Jezebel told him to go take hold of his vineyard.

Religious dogs will steal the bounty and life of a righteous man or woman of God where possible. Authorities and leaders falsely accuse God's people every day. Horror stories have been written about false accusations in the church and how insecure leaders get into domineering control and crush any opposition to their selfish desires. Of course it is usually done behind closed doors where the congregation cannot see, but God sees.

Elijah was dispatched with the word of the Lord to confront the wickedness of Ahab. **"So Ahab said to Elijah, 'Have you found me, O my enemy?' And he answered, 'I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord" (I Kings 21:20).** God gave tremendous courage to Elijah who prophesied Ahab and Jezebel's death and humiliation by God's judgment.

**And concerning Jezebel the Lord also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field.'**

**But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up. And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. 1 Kings 21:23-26**

Elijah's word that dogs would eat Jezebel and those belonging to Ahab is a powerful prophetic picture. When religion and competition rule, it becomes a dog eat dog world. The utter humiliation prophesied

against these leaders is God's warning to those who would allow the spirit of dogs to influence and control them today.

At first Ahab addressed Elijah as his enemy. When dogs take control of a leader's life, he looks upon correction from the Lord as the enemy. This distorted perception of reality hardens the heart and makes it nearly incapable of hearing God, but Elijah's powerful anointing fearlessly and strategically proclaimed God's word to Ahab.

**"So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning" (I Kings 21:27).** Godly sorrow leads to repentance (II Corinthians 7:10). Ahab is not the enemy nor is the person Jezebel. God reaches out in love to those caught up in the most extreme wickedness and is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). Ahab repented.

The riches and wonder of God's mercy never cease to amaze us. Those called to serve under Ahabs or give "hard words" to leaders in error, should not be dismayed or shrink back from fulfilling all of God's call. God will use some confronting words to rescue some from the fire, to snatch them from the jaws of hell. Jezebel did not repent however.

The spirit of Jezebel continuously seeks to destroy true prophets and develop her own prophets. Years later, the many prophets of Asherah were still employed and were seduced by a lying spirit to be in agreement about a "victory" that awaited Ahab and Jehoshaphat. (Please read I Kings 22). Ahab was struck by a "random arrow" and bled to death in his chariot as the sun went down on his kingdom. As the chariot was washed by a pool, dogs licked his blood and the harlots bathed, fulfilling God's word (I Kings 22:38).

## Dogs Eat the Queen Dog

After Elijah went to heaven in the chariot, Elisha received his mantle and continued his ministry. Jehu was anointed King of Israel by Elisha and came against Jezebel and Ahab's descendants with a tenacious zeal (see II Kings 9,10).

Jehoram ruled temporarily in Ahab's place and asked the furious chariot driver Jehu if he came in peace. **"So he answered, 'What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many'" (II Kings 9:22)?** Jehu drew the bow and shot an arrow directly through the back of Jehoram as he fled in fear.

This happened on Naboth's land and Jehoram died on that plot of ground. Jehu also killed the king of Judah, Ahaziah who had made an alliance with the son of Ahab.

**"Now when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she put paint on her eyes and adorned her head, and looked through a window" (II Kings 9:30).** Jezebel employed every last bit of witchcraft to intimidate Jehu and call upon her demonic powers to overcome her enemy, but the most powerful sorceries are no match for an anointed man of God fulfilling His prophetic word.

**Then he said, "Throw her down." So they threw her down, and some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses; and he trampled her underfoot. And when he had gone in, he ate and drank. Then he said, "Go now, see to this accursed woman, and bury her, for she was a king's daughter." So they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands.**
**II Kings 9:33-36**

Eunuchs were called upon to throw Jezebel out of a window. It appears that she also died on the land stolen from Naboth. The evil spirits that castrated these eunuchs could not keep them in fear and false submission any longer. The power of their enchantment was broken, and they liberated Israel from the wickedness of Jezebel.

God uses unlikely vessels to accomplish his purposes. Jehu was far from perfect and the eunuchs were emasculated harem attendants that had bowed in fear for many years. God will raise up vessels to overthrow religious dogs in many places throughout the earth.

**So they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. Therefore they came back and told him. And he said, "This is the word of the Lord, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'On the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel.'" II Kings 9:35,36**

All that remained of the body of Jezebel were two hands, two feet and a skull. Her physical body was completely consumed by dogs. Hands represent man's works. Feet represent authority and the skull represents man's reason or religion. In this picture, we see that the works, authority and religion of Jezebel was completely cut off and destroyed. Her body became food for the dogs. Dogs carry on her traditions and the demonic flow of her power.

Jehu completed the purging by killing all of Ahab's sons and by holding a great festival for Baal worshippers in which he lured them to their death (see II Kings 10). The house of Baal was packed, and all those dogs were killed by the sword. Unfortunately, the demons moved on to find new hosts. The Asherah pole was destroyed, the house torn down and made a refuse dump. **"Thus Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel" (II Kings 10:28).**

God wants us to destroy the influence of Baal in the church. The spirit behind Jezebel still operates to seduce every Christian (especially pastors) to sell themselves for money, fame, power, pleasure and position. She has been extraordinarily successful for thousands of years. Only the holy heart purged by God's fire will avoid her deception and the destruction of becoming a dog on her leash. The end of those captivated by her enchantments is horrific.

**Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But <u>outside are dogs</u> and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. Revelation 22:14-15** (underlining mine)

## CHAPTER 5 – PHARISEES AND SADUCEES

**For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet. Psalm 22:16**

As we have seen from David's prophetic Psalm about Jesus on the cross, dogs were responsible for Jesus' death. Religious spirits are the hateful murderous spirits that worked through people to kill Jesus. They are more violent and dangerous than any other demonic forces. No wonder Paul said to "beware of dogs".

**All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, "He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him, since He delights in Him!" Psalm 22:7,8**

**Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing. Matthew 27:41-44**

It is vital that we understand that the vast majority of the religious leadership of Israel rejected their Messiah. Rather than receive the long awaited Savior, they mocked and ridiculed Him and participated in His death. How can this be?

God devoted Himself to establishing the nation of Israel as His covenant people. Over 1,500 years He taught them by Moses, judges, prophets, priests and kings. The Old Testament record demonstrates both God's mercy and righteous judgments upon His people when they turned from Him. We see the pattern of Hebrew history going through cycles of rebellion, judgment, deliverance and reform.

We must not think that this pattern suddenly changed in the New Testament. Every new move of the Spirit through history can drift into tradition and religiosity over time where man gets into control and capitalizes on what God once authored. Unfortunately, we can become like King Saul and never know that the Spirit of God has left us. If you think that you can not possibly be deceived like Saul, you are deceived already!

The spirit of the dog assaults the religious leadership in the church of every generation. This extremely powerful and deceptive spirit feeds

on pride and insecurity, especially in men. Once you understand the pattern and have the discernment of the Spirit to see it, you may see it in your own life and the lives of others in leadership. We must remove the beam (religious spirits) out of our own eye before we can help others be set free from this epidemic of spiritual blindness. This book helps us understand what the beam looks like so we can remove it from our own eyes first.

The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' time were not an isolated group of religious leaders. They are a picture of the "first fruits" of those that follow the religion of Cain and worship the works of their hands. In the last days, these kinds of leaders will bear the full fruit of a one-world religion that crowns the Anti-Christ to rule over the world. Many will come from "Christian" churches.

## Brood of Vipers

**But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Matthew 3:7-12**

John the Baptist assaulted the religious spirits he saw operating in and through the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism. The holy prophet inspired by God called them a **"brood of vipers".** The Greek word for "brood" is "genema" and means "offspring; by analogy, produce (literally or figuratively): KJV-- fruit, generation." John emphatically declared that these religious leaders were the offspring and produce of vipers.

Vipers are poisonous snakes such as fastened to the hand of Paul coming out of the fire (Acts 28:3). This passage is prophetic of religious vipers that attack anointed leaders.

**But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live." But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god. Acts 28:3-6**

Paul had been rescued from certain death through shipwreck and was now gathering wood to build a fire to get warm. Serpents like to hide in the woodpile in dark damp places. Religious spirits also can hide in the dark corners of our hearts. When the fire of God is falling, they run from God's fire and will attack the hand of the anointed apostle who walks by faith. The natives falsely judged Paul thinking that if the viper bit him, he must be a murderer and justice was paying him back.

Religious spirits accuse powerful believers as murderers. As they shake those accusations off, people will watch for a long time to see what happens. When Paul did not die, then the people venerated him to the point of extreme, as people often do those who operate in the power of God today.

**Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Matthew 12:34**

Jesus taught us that a major characteristic of these vipers is to speak evil words. They feel no shame in cursing the moves of the Holy Spirit and often blaspheme the works of God (see Matthew 12:31,32).

**Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. Matthew 23:31-36**

Vipers and serpents are murderous spirits that work through religious people to kill God's holy prophets. These vipers can be found in nearly every church in America to some degree. Their murderous roots began when Cain shed the blood of righteous Abel.

The blood shed on the ground cried out to God as a testimony against Cain. When a church leader today kills with his tongue another minister or Christian leader, that word is a curse, which causes suffering and a form of blood shed. Many ministries have been killed, and men have even died as a result of false accusations and harsh words spoken against them. Religious spirits do not want to take responsibility for what they say or the results of what happens to the person mugged by their criticism. They will be severely punished by God, and unless they bring in the fruits of repentance (including pure speech) they may fall into perdition.

## Who Is Your Father?

**"And do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones." (Matthew 3:9).** Religious people take great pride in their denomination or the church's appearance of success. Many believe that because they are part of a successful denomination that they are God's chosen people. Religious spirits look at their heritage and the respectability of their position, but John and Jesus shattered that illusion.

**"I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father." They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father--God."**

**Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."**

**“But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.”**

**Then the Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?” Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”**

**Then the Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.’ Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?”**

**Jesus answered, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.’ Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. John 8:38-59**

The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were clearly deceived about who their father was. They firmly believed that God was their father and Jesus had a demon. This deception is rooted in deep pride and religious works. Demonic spirits slither like vipers to bite the hand of church leaders today.

As the end of the age comes nearer, the chief viper has given birth to many broods of religious leaders in many religions that oppose Jesus Christ and reject His atoning sacrifice. Their influence and control of portions of American churches are much more difficult to detect. Once detected, we must pursue repentance with great vigor to cleanse the threshing floor of our lives and churches from every cell of this cancerous spirit. We do this with a great deal of fasting, prayer and godly repentance. We should earnestly beseech God for the godly

sorrow that produces repentance to deliver us from every religious spirit (II Corinthians 7:10).

**For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**
**Matthew 5:20**

Jesus admitted that Pharisees had a form of righteousness, but it was not sufficient to enter the kingdom of heaven. Self-made righteousness is filthy rags in the site of God, but Pharisees wear them with boastful pride and deluded imaginations.

## Discerning Religious Spirits

Religious spirits do charitable deeds, pray and fast to be seen by men (Matthew 6:1-6). They desire the approval of men rather than God. **"For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12: 43).** These motivations are often hidden deep in the heart and often can not be detected without the spiritual gift of discerning of spirits (I Corinthians 12:10).

While all people have some ability to discern, perceive or detect certain things, the spiritual gift of discernment is the God given supernatural ability to know by the Holy Spirit's revelation that which could not be known otherwise. This gift enables the person to know by divine revelation the motivational power or spirit behind an individual.

Years ago a prophet prayed over me and said I had the gift of discerning of spirits. At the time, I was actually a little disappointed because I didn't know what that gift was, and I would have preferred the gift of miracles or something more dramatic. Over the years, I have come to earnestly pray that God would increase His gift on me of discerning spirits. This is a wonderful gift leaders must diligently seek and earnestly desire.

Worship, prayer, fasting, Bible study and meditation are all helpful to increase this vital gift, but there is nothing quite like using a gift of the Spirit to see its increase. It is somewhat like exercising a muscle. Since I am involved in a lot of deliverance ministry, I am in need of this gift regularly and depend upon the Holy Spirit to reveal what is hidden in a person's heart, rather than natural observations or questions. Sometimes, the questionnaire approach can be misleading. The Holy Spirit knows all things and reveals in order to set people free.

While this gift has become a highly cherished blessing, it also brings with it a great burden at times. When I walk into a church and just look at certain individuals or the Sr. Pastor, within a few minutes I may begin receiving impressions or discomfort as my spirit is beginning to receive input from the Holy Spirit about what is really going on in the meeting or situation. Usually, the Lord calls me to pray for the individual quietly and ask God to set them free.

As the Lord continues to humble me and set me free from beams in my eyes, I foresee times when He will begin releasing me to speak clear words to individuals with a view to setting them free or bringing life giving correction.

Jesus and John the Baptist operated in a high level of the gift of discerning spirits. Jesus talked directly to the Pharisees and Sadducees and saw through all of their evil tricks, questions and motives. Jesus saw the heart motivation of their religion, and although most of the people did not discern it clearly, many felt it. This book is based on what the Spirit has shown me as I've visited many churches. I am the first to admit that I have been bound up by religious spirits and continuously seek freedom from their influence.

I am concerned that many Christians are blind as to their true spiritual condition and the lateness of the hour. When Jesus first arrived and demonstrated the miraculous works of the Father, multitudes cheered Him and followed Him. Then He began to call for radical discipleship in obedience to His Lordship. The crowds thinned, and some who earlier would have crowned Him as their king cried out to crucify Him as a criminal.

"If we can't control and use you we will kill you" they might as well have said. As the anointing of Jesus Christ increases on individuals and certain churches in the last days, how will religious leaders respond to the miracles that God will do through common and unknown individuals? While I want to believe the best about every denomination and ministry, the reality of Jesus' first coming experience overwhelms me. I believe it is absolutely certain that there will be a more dramatic falling away into "religion" before His second coming (see II Thessalonians 2:3; Matthew 24:24).

How will we then discern "false prophets" that come to us in sheep's clothing? How will we know religious spirits unless we study carefully their operation through the Pharisees and Sadducees? The incredible volume of scripture written about the Pharisees and Sadducees is strategic for our discernment in the last days.

## Characteristics of Pharisees and Sadducees

Below I have listed characteristics and references from the New Testament that the reader may study at greater length:

1. Matthew 3:7-10 – Brood of vipers; no good fruit of repentance
2. Mt. 5:20 – Their righteousness will not get them into heaven
3. Mt. 6:2,5,16 – Desired the praise of men
4. Mt. 7:15 – Inwardly they are ravenous wolves
5. Mt. 9:11 – Question why Jesus would eat with sinners – Holier than thou attitude
6. Mt. 9:34 - False accusations against Jesus – casts out demons by Satan
7. Mt. 12:2 – Accused Him of breaking the law – actually their traditional interpretation
8. Mt. 12:14 – Plotted together how they might destroy Him
9. Mt. 12:38; 16:1 – Demand to see a sign from Jesus – tested Jesus
10. Mt. 15:2-14 – Legalistic disputes about the law – legalism unto disobedience; blind leaders of the blind.
11. Mt. 16:6 – The doctrine of Pharisees and Sadducees is an evil leaven that spreads and corrupts the bread of life
12. Mt. 22:23 – The Sadducees deny the resurrection
13. Mt. 23:13-29 – Jesus pronounces "WOES" on them for shutting up the kingdom of heaven to men; devouring widows houses; making hypocritical long prayers; binding converts to hell; neglecting weighty maters like justice, mercy faith; cleansing the outside of the cup but inside full of extortion and self-indulgence; whitewashed tombs that appear beautiful outside but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness; full of hypocrisy and lawlessness; murderers.
14. Mt. 27:63 – Called Jesus a deceiver
15. Mark 2:16-18 – Criticized Jesus for eating and drinking and not fasting more
16. Mark 2:24 – Criticized Jesus for doing what was not lawful on the Sabbath
17. Mark 3:6 – Plotted with the Herodians to destroy Him – would plot with Romans and use whatever means to destroy Jesus
18. Luke 5:21 – Accused Jesus of speaking blasphemies
19. Luke 6:7 – Found fault with Jesus for healing on the Sabbath
20. Luke 11:39 – "Your inward part is full of greed and wickedness" Jesus said
21. Luke 11:43 – They loved the best seats in the synagogues and prominent greetings in the marketplace
22. Luke 16:14 – They loved money and derided Jesus
23. Luke 18:9 – They trusted in themselves that they were righteous

24. Luke 18:11 – Offer self-righteous prayers
25. Luke 19:39 – Tried to tell Jesus what to do with His disciples
26. John 8:1-10 – Plotted to catch a woman in adultery, dragged her before Jesus to test Him; showed heartless accusation and shameful treatment; hatred towards women
27. John 12:42 – Controlled people through fear and intimidation
28. Acts 5:17 – They were filled with indignation
29. Col. 2:23 – Religious works are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh
30. Phil. 3:2 – They are dogs and evil workers
31. Rev. 22:15 – The dogs will not enter into the heavenly city – Zion
32. Mt. – John – They conspired with Romans to murder Jesus on the cross

While Paul, Nicodemus and perhaps Gamaliel were a few Pharisees that turned to Jesus, most of this class of leaders did not. The Pharisees were characterized as super strict lawkeepers who religiously studied the traditions of the elders written by the scribes. They tithed everything and had an impeccable list of rules to maintain their purity, but rules do not make one holy, an intimate relationship with Jesus does.

Sadducees were of the wealthy ruling class and did not believe in the resurrection or angels. They had money and a lot of power and influence, but they could not carry the common people. The priests were generally seen as corrupt and would do anything to stay in power. All three groups agreed together to hate Jesus and sought to destroy Him because He threatened their kingdom control efforts.

They crucified their Creator and took pleasure in the execution of God, because of the powerful deception of religious spirits. This so powerfully exposes the sinful heart of man and his religion as to make one sick. The fallen heart of every creature wants to rule. The flesh hates God and wants Him out of our way. The fallen religious heart wants to create a god that can be manipulated and controlled to benefit our personal gratification however we perceive it. The great tragedy is that, although the Lord stands at the door knocking on the door of every heart, few respond to His knock with genuine repentance and are deceived as to their eternal destiny. So are many religious people, including many Christians.

## Many Religious People Sent To Hell

**Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we**

**not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" Matthew 7:21-23**

Perhaps the most frightening reality Jesus talked of on earth was the scene on the Day of Judgment as one after another person stands before the Lord fully expecting to enter into His glorious Kingdom and yet find they were greatly deceived. What a horrible moment as expressions of shock and terror come upon them!

All their arguments of powerful works done in His Name will not change the fact that they are going to hell forever. Jesus tells us that they claim to have prophesied in His Name. Many prophetic ministers are going to hell. Others said they cast out demons in His Name. Many in deliverance ministries are going to hell. Finally, there are those who claim to have done many wonders in His Name. Some of the huge denominations and ministries are modern wonders of hard work. Many of those leaders will be going to hell. What you say! How is this possible? Jesus said that many would be in that heart condition of "lawlessness".

To be lawless for the Christian is simply to live without God's law or the governing leadership of the Holy Spirit. Rather than yielding to the Spirit in all things, man sits on the throne of a government of control and seeks to do Christian ministry in the Name of Christ by the works of his own hands.

A lawless "Christian" is uncontrolled, unchecked, unhindered, ungoverned, unfettered, independent, stubborn, obstinate and unwilling to submit to the subtle leadings of the Holy Spirit. When any aspect of your life does not conform to the word of God, the image of God and fall under the government of the Holy Spirit you are stepping into lawlessness.

Lawlessness is walking by sight instead of by faith. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). Self-centered, self-indulgent behavior rejects God's law which tutors us to Christ. The law of God is good and brings order to our life. Keeping the law does not save us, since we've already broken it, but the laws of God confirmed in the New Testament bring our lives into holy order in submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Obedience enables us to bear fruit for His glory and represent His Name well upon the earth.

Prominent ministers who lead large congregations may be resisting the Holy Spirit and operating independent of God's government.

Jesus said that **"many"** would be in that condition at the day of judgment. Religious spirits influence many into lawlessness.

To overcome lawlessness, you must examine yourself before God. Are you lawless in any way? Are you ungoverned by the Holy Spirit? Are you unteachable, unapproachable, hard hearted, controlling or callous in any way to the tender convictions of the Holy Spirit? Do you get defensive when others confront you? Do you use irritability to control others treatment of you?

Lawless behavior dulls the conscience, deceives the mind and causes us to be unaware when the Spirit of God stops striving with us to bring us back into submission. Lawless behavior of any kind places us in great jeopardy on the day of judgment.

We overcome lawlessness by offering the New Testament version of the daily burnt sacrifice. **"Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it'" (Luke 9:23-24).**

The daily sacrifice we are required to offer is our own lives. This conforms to the law of God in the New Testament principle. Paul told us to offer our lives as living sacrifices which is our spiritual service of worship (Romans 12:1).

**Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. I John 3:4**

John taught us that a person who tolerates a practice of sin in his life commits lawlessness and God's word teaches us clearly that the lawless person will go to hell. **"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:41,42).**

The church must cleanse lawlessness out of her midst for the sake of those who are caught in the delusion of "cheap grace" doctrine. This false doctrine of salvation is man's version of spiritual fire insurance. People believe that once they have prayed a sinner's prayer, they have their certificate of salvation for the Day of Judgment and some promptly file it away. Then they go on living a life of lawlessness.

Religious spirits make up a list of cultural traditions and rules that make them look like they are righteous and spiritual. Jesus sees through all of that. **“Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matthew 23:28).**

Jesus taught us about the end of the age. **“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12).** A sure sign of lawlessness in the church is when there is little love or warmth. We must cleanse out this uncleanness through repentance. We must forsake lawlessness.

**I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. Romans 6:19**

We can not tolerate lawless, sinful mixture in the church. God’s word declares that this creates an impossible situation. Light can not cohabit with darkness. **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness” (II Corinthians 6:14)?**

Jesus came **“that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14).** We are called to be cleansed and walk holy in good works. The cleansing is first by His blood through confession and repentance. Good works will flow out of a pure heart.

**For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. II Thessalonians 2:7**

The Holy Spirit restrains lawlessness in our lives when we willfully and diligently submit to His government. If we continually resist, grieve and disobey the Holy Spirit we may be lost to lawlessness, and the Spirit may no longer strive with us (see Genesis 6:3).

**And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders. II Thessalonians 2:8**

The spirit of anti-Christ is lawless and the Anti-Christ will be the leader of rebellion against God's law. He will be allowed to demonstrate all power, signs and lying wonders. Many will be deceived into allegiance with this man of sin. Only those with intimate communion with Jesus by the Holy Spirit will discern the spirit of anti-Christ operating behind this false world leader. He will have many Pharisees and Sadducees at his side.

As the spiritual warfare pressure increases in our disintegrating world culture, Christians will need to rely heavily upon the Holy Spirit for discernment, or they may be deceived by lawless individuals who declare they are serving Jesus Christ. This is not an appeal for a spirit of suspicion, but rather a call to Spirit empowered discernment.

Jesus said that "MANY" religious workers would be in that lawless condition on the Day of Judgment. The reality is that many who attend church are unsaved, because their hearts are lawless. Often they have been taught a doctrine that allows them to be deceived into thinking God is a loving grandfather without justice or wrath.

Every Christian leader must earnestly seek to operate by the government of the Holy Spirit at all times. We must also consistently study the Old Testament and understand the principles, commands and promises that apply under the New Covenant. As we radically yield to the Holy Spirit in passionate love for Jesus, He will lead us into all truth and a partnership of being yoked to Jesus in all things.

Then on the Day of Judgment, we shall certainly hear, **"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21-22).**

## CHAPTER 6 – MERCY OVERCOMES THE DOG

**And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Revelations 12:11**

Our greatest weapon to overcome the religious dog spirit is the focal point of all history where the Son of God, Jesus the Christ, the Lamb of God hung bleeding to death on that cruel cross by the hands of sinful men. In the heart and mind of God, there was no other way.

Perfect wisdom long ago planned that moment. Angels stood awestruck watching and waiting for the command to rescue the Lord, their Creator. That command did not come. The infinite and all-powerful Creator of the universe hung in agony, gasped for breath, fulfilled all scriptures and stayed pure through the end.

The heart of the Father, full of compassion and grace, full of mercy forever, turned his back on His own beloved Son. The infinite mercy of the Father towards fallen man was revealed. Angels wondered at the tender mercies of the Father as He gave His precious Son, His lifeblood to die and suffer hells torment for sinful man. The wonders of His grace, the redemption through His blood, the mystery of God's eternal, holy habitation, the Church, was paid for in full.

**Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."**
**Luke 23:34a**

Wicked dogs under the influence of Satan, mocked and taunted the Lord of Glory. They hurled insults at Him and rejoiced at His torment. As their murderous plan was being carried out, in the midst of their horrific celebration of evil, words of pure mercy flowed from the lips of Jesus.

In His heart, Jesus knew the eternal punishment for their crime would be magnified greater than all others. From bowels of compassion, Jesus asked the Father to forgive them for their crime against heaven. The angels who kept the books were held back by one glance of the Father. This deed against the Son went unrecorded, covered by the blood of the Lamb.

The blood of Jesus overcame the dragon. The blood of Jesus overcomes all religious spirits. We overcome by the blood of Jesus, the finished work of His atoning sacrifice. "There is power in the blood, wonder working power in the blood of the Lamb." His blood

covers our sins and makes us right with God. His cross delivers us from sin's controlling power and sets us free to be bondservants of the most high God.

## Go Learn Mercy

**"For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Hosea 6:6**

**"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Matthew 9:13**

**"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless." Matthew 12:7**

Religious spirits, the most wicked and evil of all the dragon's hordes, controlled Pharisees. Religious spirits influenced fallen man to crucify Jesus in the name of the God of Abraham. It was the god of Cain they were serving.

When power, control, prestige and prominence become the focus of "Christian" leaders, they can easily fall under the influence of the dragon's wine. Intoxicated with self- preservation and ruled by fear, these "false prophets" will seek to crucify the Lord and His anointed ones wherever they may find them.

Jesus commanded the Pharisees and all of us to **"Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'" (Matthew 9:13).** As we equip ourselves for war against the dragon and his dogs, we must be filled with mercy. We must learn what the heart of God longs to see in us, a heart of mercy.

## We Were Children of Wrath

We must be reminded of the fact that we **"were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom we also once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as others" (Ephesians 2:1-3).**

Every one of us deserves to go to hell and suffer eternal torment along with the dragon and his demons. I deserve eternal separation from

the love of God. I deserve wrath and damnation for my rebellion and sin against God. You deserve the same. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We have all hated God without a cause. We must get a reality check. But for the grace of God, we would be in hell right now, suffering torment under the vilest, disgusting, wicked ruler, the prince of the power of the air, Satan.

Weeping and gnashing of teeth in outer darkness should have been our reward for living in sin. Eternal loss, woe, burning, heartbreak, despair, depression, agony and intense thirst for one moment of pleasure could have been our future.

**Now We are Under His Mercy**

**But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:4-9**

Instead of eternal torment, God's rich mercy and great love could not be held back towards us. While we were dead and enemies of Christ, He saved us. He called us His sons and adopted us into His family. He made us alive with Christ and seated us with Christ in heavenly places. We have an eternal position in Christ. It will take all the ages of billions of years for us to begin to understand the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us in His Son Jesus. What a wonderful God we serve!

The contrast of our loving Father and the devil is startling in every way. It is vital that we focus on the tender mercy of the Father and know Him intimately. We must be captivated by His love and consumed with passion for His presence so we can be like Jesus, **"who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).**

As we behold the mercy of Jesus and the love in His heart for the Father's will and pleasure, we will be empowered by His Spirit to be faithful to His call, take up our cross, despise the shame and whatever the enemy brings against us and endure till the end. We shall be

raised up with Christ and sit with Him in glory. What an awesome hope!

## Focus Intently On God's Mercy

**"And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (I John 3:3).** Beholding Jesus gives us hope. Our faith increases, and we gladly allow His Spirit to deal with our hearts and purify us. We want to be pure when we hope in Him. Hopeless people walk by sight and compromise in sin. We must focus intently on our God, and then **"we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed in to the same image from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Corinthians 3:18).**

The glory of God was revealed when Moses cried out to God, **"Please show me your glory" (Exodus 33:18)!** The Creator of the universe could have revealed His infinite power, manifested His incomprehensible wisdom or demonstrated His perfect holiness. Instead God said, **"I will make all My goodness pass before you and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you" (Exodus 33:19).**

After God graciously hid Moses in the cleft of the rock and placed His hand over him so he would not perish, **"The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation'" (Exodus 34:6,7).**

Beloved, we need to understand the glory of God is His mercy! God is love, and His lovingkindness is the antidote against the disease of sin. His goodness and truth captivates our hearts so that we willingly become His bondservants and forsake bowing down to golden idols. We would rather be thrown into the fiery furnace than bow down to the dragon of pride and his dogs!

## The Mercy Seat

**And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you. You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat...the faces of**

**the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. And there I will meet with you and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat. Exodus 25:16-22a**

Almighty God established a pattern whereby He might dwell in our midst that He might commune and talk with His children. The place of His abiding is the Mercy Seat. The Awesome and infinite, all-powerful Creator of all things longs to flow His love to us. The blood poured on the mercy seat pointed to Christ's blood covering the law of Testimony so that we could be forgiven, cleansed and set free. Our God is full of mercy!

God's mercy is His deep emotional heartfelt longing and yearning to be kind and good to His creatures. It is His passion to relieve our suffering. God is extraordinarily emotional. Mercy is the revelation of the emotions of the Father.

**And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, "You are My people!" And they shall say, "You are my God!" Hosea 2:23**

From the word wealth notes in the Spirit Filled Bible it is noted that to have mercy comes from the Hebrew word "racham" which means "to feel or show compassion, to love deeply, to show pity or mercy; to tenderly regard someone; to tenderly love (especially as parents love their infant child)". Racham is the origin of the Hebrew word for "womb" (rechem). In Isaiah 49:15, God asks, **"Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion (racham) on the son of her womb (rechem)?"**

God is looking for spiritual wombs of mercy today to birth His pure moves of last day ministry. We see many women intercessors that understand this truth so well as they cry out to God in travailing prayer awaiting His outpouring.

Fathers can also show mercy to their offspring (Psalm 103:13) and be intercessors. God wants parents to tenderly love their offspring and to show compassion toward all who are weak and defenseless. God sets the example by His constant compassion for the helpless and undeserving (Isaiah 54:8,10).

Hosea was called to prophetically live out the mercy of God in choosing to marry and love Gomer the wayward harlot. **"Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing**

**adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans" (Hosea 3:1).** The Lord taught Hosea tender kindness and love for one in shame and sin.

God's mercy is the consuming fire of His being. The fire in Jesus' glorified eyes is His pure burning passion for His bride to become intimate with Him. In many ways, the Church today is the woman caught in adultery (see John 8). Religious spirits (Pharisees) have condemned us and humiliated us for our fornication with other gods. The world has scorned and mocked our hypocrisy, but Jesus, full of mercy and tender love, turns away her accusers and looks her in the eyes and says, **"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."**

God's mercy demands that He command our holiness. His fiery love must consume every barrier to pouring out His mercy upon His people. His judgments on the earth come to remove these barriers of sin. His love comes to destroy shame, cover condemnation with His blood and loose His Bride to be pure and spotless, washed clean by the water of His Word.

## Mercy Manifests His Presence

The greatest weapon of spiritual warfare is always the manifested presence of God. When Jesus walked the earth, demons trembled and bowed before Him. The mercy of God enables His presence to be manifested. We must build Him a mercy seat in our hearts with our praise, love for one another, and our compassion for the lost. When we do, He will come and manifest Himself and fill us with His glory.

**Indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever," that the house , the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God. II Chronicles 5:13,14**

The proclamation of His mercy invited God to "presence" Himself among them. Our God absolutely delights Himself in mercy (Micah 7:18). He longs to fill His temple with His glory which is His tender mercies.

## The Beloved Disciple of Love

John understood that the central core of the heart of God is love. God is love! First John is a testimony of the love of God. We must perceive and understand that it is the heart of mercy that overcomes the dogs. **"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8).**

We must partner with Jesus and become like Him to enforce the work which He finished. We must become perfect in love. Jesus commanded us to love one another as He loved us (John 13:34,35) for in this way, the world would know that we are His disciples.

The enemy's scheme is to always get us out of love and into suspicion, jealousy, fear and bitterness. We overcome by the word of our testimony. We preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and declare His infinite love and mercy to forgive sinners. We demonstrate the gospel by loving one another and forgiving one another from the heart. As we are perfected in God's love through holy obedience to His Word, His **"perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us" (I John 4:18,19).**

## We Must Have a Heart of Mercy

**Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive Him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." Matthew 18:21,22**

In our search to go and learn mercy, the Lord has taught us much from Matthew 18. This word of testimony has overcome the dragon on many occasions. It is shared so the reader can relate to the process of getting one's heart in harmony with the mercy of God.

Years ago, God called my family to make a decision in leaving a Church we dearly loved in obedience to His call elsewhere. As we met to share this with the Pastor, in a moment of reaction, he made a comment that I really felt hurt by. In my head, I started to pray forgiveness and grace towards him, but my heart was bothered.

I was not led to say anything to him, but rather to pray and turn it over to the Lord. For ten months it still bugged me, and although I prayed a hundred times or more, I had not forgiven from my heart. We need the compassion from the Lord to forgive from the heart. When we do, we will feel the mercy. It will be emotional!

At an inner healing conference, which I thought God wanted me to attend to be trained to help others, God dealt with my deep pain going back to the death of my father and my grandfather. I was an emotional sprinkler system going off at random during the conference, as one thing after another broke through my stony heart as the compassion of the Lord was ministered to me.

At this time God gave His mercy in my heart to genuinely forgive my former pastor and I was released to move on. Believing in the heart with the compassion of the Lord brought a new level of "righteousness" into my life. It has been much easier to openly weep with the compassion of the Lord for my brothers and sisters in need. Jesus wept over Jerusalem when He saw they were not receiving the time of visitation. God calls us to weep over our Jerusalem today with His compassion and heart.

## The Process of Getting Mercy

Most of us have been wounded and misunderstood many times. After the one pastor's comment hurt me, within a year an experience at the new church was far worse and we left that church deeply wounded. It took three months to get into "mercy" this time, and we continue to bless all our former pastors. God exposed the vulnerability of my heart to pleasing men through these experiences. We must fear God and not man. I do not blame any Christian for the woundedness I felt. God has shown me my sins and need to repent and walk in the love of Jesus at all times.

Unfortunately, there is great pain and woundedness in the body of Christ unto bitterness and judgment. Through these many trials and studying the Word of God to learn mercy, I discovered that forgiveness from the heart is often a three-stage process. The parable of the unforgiving servant is vital for us to apply to overcome those religious dogs.

**Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.**

**The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of the servant was <u>moved with compassion</u>, <u>released him</u> and <u>forgave him his debt</u>.** (underlining mine)

**But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.**

**So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses. Matthew 18:23-35 (underlining mine)**

Our Lord gave this parable in response to Peter's excellent question about forgiveness. Here we discover that there is a conditional aspect to experiencing the forgiveness of God. I am not making a statement on the eternal nature of forgiveness here, but rather the practical life experience of walking in the love of God with a heart filled with mercy that overcomes the spirit of dogs.

It is a major scheme of the enemy to get Christians into bitterness towards one another. My perception is that many of us live in the dragon's belly of bitterness and are mostly deceived about that fact. This parable helps us understand the process of getting free.

1. The debt owed the master is far too great for any man to be able to pay back. Ten thousand talents of gold would be worth several billion dollars today. Our sins against God are impossible for us to pay back.
2. As we cry out to God to forgive us for the debt we owe, there is a threefold response:
   a. He is moved with compassion (bowels of mercy)
   b. He releases us
   c. He forgives us the debt
3. The forgiven servant went out and "found" a man who owed him a hundred denarii, equivalent to one hundred days wages. This is a significant debt but could be repaid over time. He physically choked him by the throat and demanded payment.
4. The man being choked begged for patience to pay back what he owed. We should observe that mercy in the heart and patience

goes together. If you are impatient towards other people, you lack mercy!
5. The forgiven servant was not patient or merciful and threw his fellow servant into prison till he should pay the debt.
6. The master (representing God our Father) called the wicked servant to accountability. The master was angry and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.
7. The conclusion is that God will do this to each of us if we do not forgive our brothers from our heart (not our heads only) their trespasses.

Our God takes no delight in turning us over to the torturers, but He has established principles in life, which Jesus has declared to us. We will experience the mercy and forgiveness of God to the extent that we give it to others.

If a person has anger in his heart, he is turned over to torturers. The devil is all too willing to torture God's people and will send a pack of dogs after us. When the landing field of bitterness opens up its like flies attracted to poop. Bitterness is the trumpet sound that declares open season for the demons of hell to come in and feed. The mind becomes uneasy, true peace and joy evaporates and the righteousness of God is replaced by a Pharisaic form of godliness.

In our experience, we often forgive from the heart in the reverse three-step process, which God uses. Since His heart is full of mercy at all times, He immediately feels mercy from the heart, releases and forgives. We usually do it just the opposite.

1. **Forgive** - when we are hurt and someone says they are sorry, we say, "I forgive you". While it is possible with minor offenses that we forgive from the heart immediately, many times, we still feel the sting of false accusation, unkindness or out right violation of our person. We know it is God's will to forgive and we begin to say in our "minds", I forgive them. We may also speak forgiveness to the person.
2. **Release** - As I daily forgave one person for one comment, the Lord brought me to a point of release or giving it over to God. At this time I did not realize how much I needed to be in mercy. God knew what I needed and heard my prayers of release and prepared to bring my heart into mercy.

3. **Mercy from the heart** - God gives a supernatural impartation of mercy to those who ask. We must have His mercy. We must recognize that on our own we will not get into a heart of mercy. When God brings you into mercy, you not only forgive the offender,

you earnestly desire God's tender mercies to cover them. You cannot bear to think of the suffering they entail, and know that the body of Christ will not be complete until they are healed and restored.

We know that people who walk in unforgiveness are being tortured. The closer you get to a heart full of mercy the less pain and grief you will experience from the enemy. But you will feel more pain and burdened for the lost and those wounded Christians trapped in bitterness.

If you go into spiritual warfare with bitterness hidden your heart, most often the dogs will sniff it out and go after it. Again, this is redemptive in that God exposes your area of weakness and gives you the opportunity to repent, receive His mercy and extend it towards those you need to. This is a win win situation!

The other spiritual reality we must recognize is that when a believer stays in bitterness towards another, they will release word curses over them. They will communicate with body language or statements or letters or radio programs their displeasure towards another. Many gifted leaders are exposing their heart of bitterness by writing books or talking against what some other believer is doing. There is no place in the Bible where we are called to criticize and judge our brothers. It is just the opposite.

When your heart begins to get in mercy, you begin to see bitterness around you everywhere. This does not make you angry, it causes you to weep knowing that they are living in torture. Jesus wants to set them free. The enemy wants to keep them under his influence and will flow bitter thoughts and draw them together with other bitter people.

When believers get in bitter "agreement" and make statements against other believers, they are unwittingly being used to "accuse the brethren". Evil words of agreement are extremely powerful and unleash a pack of demonic dogs in the spirit realm who are then permitted to go and lay hands on the person being attacked and choke them.

One early morning about 2:00 A.M. I sensed a demonic presence in our bedroom. My wife and I had been having a lot of strange attacks, but this was the worst. The demonic presence was on our ceiling fan, which never squeaks. Suddenly, it was squeaking and making all kinds of noise. I told my wife, "it's a demon," and though I did not see

it, immediately it was on my throat and was literally choking me. I could barely breathe.

My wife is a pure woman of God. When I pray warfare prayers, the volume goes way up, and though I know volume alone does not get the job done, this night it seemed we needed loud authority prayers. Glenda began to pray soft gentle prayers of praise and thanksgiving. The demon was speaking to my mind, "She doesn't know how to pray. I've got you now and there is nothing you can do." The demon continued to feed my mind evil thoughts related to my wife. After about 45 minutes it lifted, and I went into loud intercession that lasted a long time and ended in weeping. The Lord taught us a lot about warfare that night!

We will not speculate about the source of this attack except to note that in the parable, Jesus said that the forgiven servant refused to extend forgiveness and choked the fellow servant. Christians are their own worst enemy at times when they loose words, including words of bitter agreement that loose curses on God's children. Of course, witches and warlocks are ever doing the same, but they don't have the anointing on them that believers do.

No wonder Jesus' great command is to love one another. This is the central weapon of spiritual warfare! A heart full of mercy will manifest the presence of God. God's presence releases His Word which is our sword. As we walk in love, mercy and gentleness, the spirit of dogs will find no place in our house.

## The Blind Man Cries For Mercy

Blind Bartimaeus sits as a testimony of the condition of the Church of this hour. We are blind and desperately in need of the eye salve of Jesus to see our sinful condition and be delivered. Bartimaeus was wise in crying out loudly above the protests of the crowd, **"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" (Mark 10:47)!**

This has been my heart cry almost daily for over two years. Often I have cried out to the Lord for mercy, to open my eyes. When I began to pray for God's mercy to open my eyes, I was asking for prophetic vision. Instead, He showed me my fallen condition. God has continued to cleanse my heart and fill me with mercy. He has begun to open my eyes to perceive and discern as I get into His presence and look at things from His vantagepoint.

Words come from the heart. The heart is like a womb and God wants our hearts to be cleansed. He wants to birth new moves of His Spirit

through pure wombs of mercy. He is searching throughout the earth looking for hearts that are loyal and pure towards Him. Let us determine beloved, to allow the Lord of glory to visit our hearts, purify us, birth and flow through us so He might be glorified. As our hearts are full of God's mercy, we will overcome Satan and his dogs.

## CHAPTER 7 – A SOUND MIND

**For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. II Timothy 1:7**

Every believer needs to be delivered from fear and know the power, love and soundness of mind the Holy Spirit gives. Religious people experience the spirit of fear. God's love casts out all fear. Just as darkness cannot dwell with light, fear cannot cohabit with love or a sound mind. A sound mind does not fear man or the devil. The dog spirits attack soundness of mind.

Our thinking must be ordered by the mind of Christ. A sound mind gives us a sober estimate of ourselves. We recognize that we have human limitations. Our bodies are natural organisms subject to God's natural laws. A sound mind recognizes the limitations and needs of the body.

We are not driven by our bodies' needs, but we are stewards of our bodies. To be effective in ministry over decades requires that our bodies do not wear out too soon. We need to take care of our temples.

Religious spirits are constantly flowing a stream of fear towards us that manifest in many ways. One way fear manifests is through unsanctified sympathy for the needs of others. This is rooted in fear because we want to please people, which is the fear of man. We may have been called by God to minister to the poor, but we cannot give in to every demand placed upon us by poor people or we would die very young.

When my wife and I ministered in the inner city, the demands on our family were tremendous. People came to our door at all times of day and night asking for food, clothing, encouragement and someone to talk with. The needs were far greater than our physical capacity to meet them.

The demand and expectation of people around us places a pull on us to meet their needs. As we begin to give in more and more to meet their needs, which may originally be motivated by pure love, the people begin to rely upon us rather than God to solve their personal problems.

When we had to turn people away back in St. Louis' inner city, they often became resentful and angry. Tangible relief may be God's message of love and appropriate in season, but when it becomes a standard program, it places an unrighteous bondage on both giver

and receiver. The receiver usually gets into a "welfare mentality" that says, "I deserve this".

If I were to stand on an inner-city street corner every Tuesday and pass out twenty dollar bills to everyone who walks by for one hour, pretty soon, there would be a lot of people coming on Tuesdays for "their" twenty dollar bill. Rather than save their last twenty on Monday, they would begin to spend it and expect the twenty to be there on Tuesday.

If I suddenly showed up on Tuesday with ten-dollar bills, the people would begin to groan and complain. Some would resent me and say things like, "That's not fair. How can they do this to me?" This welfare mentality begins to expect and demand more while doing nothing to deserve it in the first place.

## Unrighteous Demands on the Anointing

Picture an anointed servant of the Lord, we'll call Martha, who has a strong prophetic and healing ministry. She loves God and values the precious gift God has given her. Martha loves people and wants to help them know God. People discover Martha has a strong anointing and can hear God speak for them. They start lining up to "pull" on Martha to give them what they perceive they need.

Martha gladly begins to give God's love and minister life, hope and words of truth to them. Before long, the line of people coming to Martha grows so great that she is constantly tired with never enough sleep. Her time in the word gets cut short by phone calls early in the morning with people in desperate need for an instant word from God.

Martha's health deteriorates and lands her in the hospital. Even while there, the phone calls come and people come to visit and pull on Martha to pray a blessing on them. Martha has a serious operation for cancer and unfortunately is dying. Yet the people keep coming to her. Martha cannot recover because she is not being allowed to rest, but she doesn't want to offend people and send them away.

Martha does not have a sound mind. Those of us who have done tremendous amounts of people ministry can relate to being unsound in thinking at times. A sound mind knows that only God can meet needs and we cannot help anyone apart from Christ. Sound thinking understands the need to say "NO!" to people we love and care about when they place an unrighteous pull upon us to meet their needs.

Due to our own insecurity and fears, religious spirits make us feel guilty if we do not meet every need that comes our way. We get caught in a trap of giving to the point where we have no oil in our lamps.

**Do Not Give Away Your Oil**

**Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. Matthew 25:1-13**

We observe that the five wise virgins did not sell or give any of their oil to the foolish virgins. Yet this is what some anointed servants of God are doing every day. This is rooted in the fear of man and the lack of a sound mind.

Oil represents the inner, hidden fuel acquired by spending a great deal of time in the presence of God ministering unto Him with worship, praise, prayer and Bible study. Oil represents the deposit of the Holy Spirit given to those who obey God and receive His anointing. The lamp represents the outward ministry container. The flame is the illumination of God that gives guidance and light to show the way.

The foolish believer is focused on outward ministry and will have no inner reserve when the call to join the bridegroom comes. He will not have the illumination to make the journey and places an unrighteous pull on the anointed ones for their oil. The prayerless pastor will put an unrighteous pull on books, tapes or anointed people for words from

the throne. These sermons are borrowed oil, and they will not contain anywhere near the same life as those who truly receive from God.

Second-hand messages may feed religious pride and be a pretense of a lamp full of oil when the oil is in fact borrowed all the time. Jesus is about to expose who has oil and who does not. In order for us to have soundness of mind, we must have the understanding that we are not to give our anointing or our oil to someone else. They need to go and buy oil for themselves. They need to go directly to God to receive from Him. Only God can give real oil.

In the prophetic church, we observe many people who run from one meeting to another to get a "word" from the Lord. Rather than spend hours at the feet of Jesus in worship, prayer, fasting, Bible study and waiting, soulish people want a drive-through Bible Word Burger from some anointed speaker.

This unrighteous pull for words places the leader at a decision point. If the leader gives into the unrighteous pull, he errs and may begin to take the place of God. The pull of people can be flattering to the insecure leader who lays hands on the people and speaks words of blessing or seeks words for the people. The people may flatter the leader and race to get into a place where he would pray for them. I have seen such incredible rudeness and nonsense in people looking for that special touch from an anointed man or woman of God.

The message of this hour is to go and buy oil for yourself. Many pastors will be in shock to discover that their lamps are without oil when the call comes. Religious people rub their lamps and believe they have all they need. When the bridegroom call comes, it exposes all. That call has begun and the shift has started.

## Go Buy Oil

True anointing is usually acquired in secret. God flows anointing oil to those who obey His voice and walk in relationship with Him. Religious people have knowledge and information but little or no oil. They have little secret prayer life and cover their inner rebellion with a flurry of programs and activities that make them look successful. God is about to change all that. I urge you to repent before you are completely exposed for who you really are.

Most pastors are busy beyond reason with the programs they have created to build a monument for themselves and their own esteem. It has all been dressed up with religious language like "giving glory to God, pleasing God and reaching people in the name of Jesus".

However, the bottom line is that they are not buying oil from God to fuel their ministry. Most Christian leaders operate on personality, will power, soul power, intelligence, giftings and skills.

When Christians operate this way, they are getting under the influence of the spirit of fear and not that of a sound mind. We cannot give what we do not have and we will reproduce in kind. If all we have is programs and religion, those who follow us will have programs and religion. Our trained missionaries will reproduce all that they are and if they are not filled with the oil of God, they will reproduce empty lamps.

A burning lamp needs to have oil regularly refilled. An ancient small oil lamp would not last for more than 12 hours before needing to be refilled. We cannot minister day after day and give out without refilling our hearts with the fresh flow of the Holy Spirit's impartation oil from heaven.

At times while I was a missionary, I became so busy doing ministry that I only spent a few minutes with the Lord. This was a religious check in with God thing rather than a true relationship of worship and prayer. I knew that I had to "do my devotions" in order to be a good Christian so I made sure I read my chapter and said my few prayers before going out the door. Sometimes, I was late and just said a prayer going out the door.

My ministry appeared extremely successful. There was rapid growth, a lot of people being ministered too, increased budget, new buildings and all the outwards signs of success. My visible ministry was a well-painted lamp. Inside I was running on oil fumes. God called me to resign my position and go buy oil. At the time, I did not know that was part of the reason God called me out, but it is clear today that I had a beautiful lamp with no oil.

Now, God has given me a plain clay lamp, but it is full of oil. And He has taught me that I have to go back daily to buy more oil. It is costly to buy the oil. Daily, I must surrender my life as a living sacrifice unto God. Worship, praise, prayer and intimate devotion are coins that buy the oil. I must submit myself to the dealings of God, take up my cross and follow Him daily. I must fast and pray and wait on God for decisions. As I study God's word at the feet of Jesus, revelation comes daily. I must also learn to rest my body, exercise, eat properly and have fun with my family. I must learn the balances of life and gain a sound mind. We all must learn this.

Board members who work in the business world influence most American churches and ministries. They bring business methods of leadership into the kingdom and it mixes fabrics so that the cloth becomes unclean. Big business in America is similar to the task master culture of ancient Egypt. More and more production (bricks) is demanded by many companies and less straw (support) is given. We work harder and harder to have money to do more things. This is a great bondage.

## The Sound Mind Ministry of Jesus

Jesus' ministry illustrates a sound mind. He never controlled people nor allowed them to control Him. The woman caught in adultery (John 8) undoubtedly had some serious personal problems. Today, we would put her in a long term counseling relationship or perhaps locate her in a halfway house for six months to rehabilitate her.

Jesus simply said, **"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more" (John 8:11).** Religious dogs would create a program for the woman and place her in a new form of bondage. Jesus set her free by demanding that she go and sin no more. Jesus' command makes it certain that His grace is sufficient to obey no matter how degenerate the sin condition.

**Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him. Luke 8:38-39**

The demoniac from Gadarenes was inhabited by thousands of demons and was perhaps the most degenerate person Jesus ever ministered to. Jesus cast the demons into a heard of pigs who were driven over the cliff and into the sea. The man put an unrighteous pull on Jesus to go with Him, but Jesus had a sound mind. He loved this man with perfect love and knew what the Father required. Jesus sent him away saying that he should return home and give glory to God. The former demoniac simply obeyed.

There was no 12-week follow up course for this man just delivered from demons. There was no provision made for nurture and care. Jesus expected the man to give glory to God and make right decisions from then on.

El Shaddai (Almighty God) commanded Abraham to walk before Him and be blameless (Genesis 17:1). Abraham received the command to walk blameless before the law or the church. Abraham was required to walk holy before God and had no excuses because the revelation of El Shaddai and His command releases His almighty sufficiency to empower obedience. Abraham believed in the all sufficiency of God to help him and became the father of the faith. We must grow up and become like Abraham and expect new converts to do the same.

Today, most Christians need deliverance from their victim mentality. They often shift the blame to someone else for their problem. God says that we should walk before Him and be blameless. Abraham did this by faith in God. We must walk by faith as well. Requiring believers who come to us for help to seek and obey God demonstrates the wisdom of a sound mind. Our problem is that we really don't believe God can take care of them unless we help them out. We lack faith in the power of God to transform a life. It's time to repent and get a sound mind.

## The Flow of the Spirit

A sound mind is sensitive to the flow of the Holy Spirit in ministry. Those with a people pleasing spirit (fear of man) are often self-promoting and do not wait on God properly for the timing of the Spirit to minister appropriately. This is especially true in the prophetic community.

A self-promoting person, under the influence of religious spirits, will be looking for opportunities to promote their ministry at conferences and gatherings. To impress people, they must use their prophetic gifts and be seen and heard giving awesome words. This leads to openness to divination spirits that are eager to run through the impatient self-promotion gate and give all kinds of flattering, false words.

During ministry times when the Holy Spirit is moving powerfully, I have seen Christians so out of order as to short circuit the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jane was attending a conference where God touched her powerfully. Just as the anointed man of God was ministering a pure word to her, a wild woman who wanted to get in on the action came by and grabbed Jane's head with both hands and started throwing her to the ground. When Jane resisted, the woman said, "She's in rebellion!" several times and called on a woman standing by to pray for her deliverance.

Judy was being ministered to for healing of her diseased womb when a false word was given about her becoming pregnant that robbed her of the joy and hope that was beginning to build. Nancy was laying on the floor under the power of God when a self-promoting "prophet" gave her a flattering nonsense word and broke God's ministry flow.

Prophets that are aloof and in bitterness will poise their soul over the leadership and will not submit to their covering or the government of a conference. They are caught up in themselves and prophesy or declare visions to boost their own identity. A seer we shall call Sam was so caught up in self-promotion and making a name for himself that he did not even participate in the extended worship services. He just kept praying and looking out into the atmosphere and seeing stuff. Unfortunately, Sam was looking through a psychic window and was deceived to that fact. He felt it was his calling to be a watchman over the conference he was attending and was duty bound to tell people everything he saw about them.

Everything Sam saw was flattering nonsense. He came up to me and said he saw me as totally chiseled in the Spirit. Sam said my spiritual muscles just ripped and that I was like a world champion body builder in the Spirit. I confess that I liked the word and did not recognize it as flattering nonsense until later. I broke the word off of me. Later I observed Sam flatter every person he ministered to. One sensitive intercessor had to have a brother help him receive deliverance after Sam laid hands on him.

Sam did not point people to Jesus but tried to flatter people with prophetic visions to draw them to himself. The dog spirit operates in this fashion and can take hold of insecure people who desire flattery. Flattery is a tool of manipulation for personal gratification. It is a form of abuse and hatred.

A man goes into a bar and flatters women with the intent of seducing them into immoral activity. His manipulation is for personal gratification. His action is a form of abuse and he actually hates the woman he may claim to love. His words are motivated by a lust to use the person's body for personal gratification.

It is not much different in Christian ministry. The carnal pastor flatters a woman to get her to volunteer to run the Sunday school department. She may be over burdened at home and work, but she will usually give in to the pastor because she is not aware that he actually is using her to make his ministry succeed. The pastor will often give a lot of affirmation to the stressed out volunteer whose life

at home is falling apart. She stays on the treadmill to please the pastor thinking unsoundly that she is pleasing God.

Any time a pastor uses manipulation to get volunteers for ministry, he is operating in witchcraft to bring unrighteous control over a person so he can accomplish his own personal ministry goals. This is a form of abuse and spiritual rape. God hates it and will severely judge the pastor for this. Flattery exposes that the heart does not have God's love operating.

## Jesus Showed His Disciples the Door

Jesus never manipulated or flattered any of His disciples. He never exercised control over them but rather showed them the door. **"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also want to go away?' But Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'" (John 6:66-68).**

As Lord of all things, Jesus could have commanded loyal obedience at that moment when so many other "disciples" left at his hard words. Yet Jesus asked them if they wanted to go away also. This was an invitation for them to back out of the call of God. Jesus did not appeal to them based on need, which is another form of manipulation. He simply showed them the door and asked if they would like to walk out. Peter wisely declared that they had no one else to go to who had the words of eternal life. Peter had a sound mind at that point.

## Divide and Devour

Satan uses a basic strategy to divide and then devour the body of Christ. He seeks to plant offense in the heart and cause unforgiveness and bitterness. Over zealous believers often promote themselves into authority over some members of the body and posture themselves over the leadership. When confronted and called upon to repent, they may leave the church with accusation and critical words of judgment. All accusation and bitter judgment flows from the cesspool of hell.

Sometimes, spirit-led and anointed servants are rejected because their anointing threatens an insecure pastor. No matter the details, the enemy tries to cause bitterness in the heart and great woundedness. Many people leave the church with a bad attitude and stay at home and watch TV church and avoid community. TV church may be a blessing for the elderly and certain people, but far too many Christians drop out of church altogether. Then they stand aloof and

criticize the body of Christ and lump every organized church into the same pile. All criticism of the body of Jesus looses lacerations in the Spirit against Him since He is one with His body.

While house churches may be a perfectly righteous expression of the will of the Father at times, many are formed in division through church splits. Many are also nursing their wounds of bitterness. They may brag about how their home fellowship is so family oriented and wonderful. They might say, "The presence of God shows up every week and we just love each other". Unfortunately, most of them never do anything for the Kingdom of God. They just meet and feed themselves and prophesy a bunch of flattering words to each other. They don't grow much but attract a few other disgruntled organized church deserters. They are often filled with pride and rebellion. God is not pleased.

Some who have been bitten by dogs become dogs as they wander in small packs from one church to another, knocking over garbage cans and feeding on the garbage for a while before moving onto another church to repeat the process.

## The Pride of False Humility

The dog influenced religious person cloaks himself in a garment of false humility. He may speak calmly with an air of knowing and say about others, "We have to just love him because we are all learning. We all have needs and problems."

I was once ministering at a church leadership meeting and teaching on religious spirits. The Holy Spirit told me to teach on the characteristics of the dog. After I showed an overhead that listed many characteristics, one former bitter elder declared, "You have just accurately described our church!" He went on to criticize the pastor and come against the church with a prophecy of death if "we don't change soon".

This man, we'll call Frank, exposed his heart and it was easy to see through his false humility. I spoke to Frank in private later and told him that I was not describing the church by teaching on the religious spirits, but that Frank was exposing his heart by saying the church was full of them. I confronted Frank about his rebellion against the pastor and warned him, but he would not listen to me. He left the church in anger a few weeks later and started attending another church.

False humility is always rooted in pride and insecurity. The person is often a hard worker and wants to be influential in the decisions of the church. He postures his soul above the leaders and draws other members into his counsel. False humility draws the focus onto self rather than magnify Jesus. Rather than dwell in the light of vulnerability, the religious person hides behind intellect, works and respectability.

I presently minister in a church that has cried out for truth for a long time. There is such a powerful presence of the fire of God, that peoples' dross comes to the surface often within a few minutes. We are constantly having to deal with flesh and demonized Christians. It is terribly humbling for people to be exposed but if they confess their sins to one another they are healed (James 5:16).

To have a sound mind, we must flow in the truth of God's word at all times. Our hearts must be absolutely pure. The flesh must be crucified daily with Christ. We must be led at all times by the Holy Spirit to avoid religious deception. As we embrace the cross and yield to the Holy Spirit we will be delivered from religious actions and begin to experience the true revelation of God by His Spirit. This is a most blessed place to live and dwell and have our being.

## CHAPTER 8 – OVERCOMING RELIGIOUS SPIRITS

**Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:37-40**

The primary way we overcome religious spirits is to obey God's commandment affirmed by Jesus to love God with our entire being and love our neighbors as ourselves. Jesus gave us a new commandment saying that we should **"love one another; as I have loved you," (John 13:34).** While these are commandments, they primarily speak of our relationship with God and man.

Developing an intimate, loving relationship with God and allowing His love to flow through you to love others overcomes religious spirits. Religious spirits seek to manipulate and control rather than love and serve. Religious spirits focus on performance and works to gain approval rather than praise and worship to express appreciation.

It is normal for all Christians to be assaulted by religious spirits, and most of us get involved in some degree of mixture because of our fallen nature and faulty instruction. Growing up in a liberal New England church where the pastor denied the virgin birth and the miracles of Christ, I never really heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our family wandered from church attendance and became nominal "Christians" at best. My testimony below contains principles that enabled me to overcome religious spirits.

### Personal Testimony

While attending the University of Florida in 1974 where I was pursuing a self-centered hedonistic lifestyle focused on golfing, girls and goofing off, the Lord began convicting me of my sinfulness, no doubt through the faithful prayers of my grandmother. By God's sovereignty, I met a coed who was staff-in-training for Campus Crusade for Christ and we attended some meetings together where I met genuine, born-again Christians who pursued an intimate personal relationship with Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, Bible Study and church attendance.

Through Crusade's encouragement and literature I began to study the Bible and the Four Spiritual Laws booklet. God was tugging on my heart, and I began to pray the sinner's prayer diligently for three

weeks. Finally, a brother in the Lord encouraged me to believe God and walk by faith that He had heard my prayers and had come into my life. There was an immediate radical change in my lifestyle, and I became extremely zealous for knowing God.

Until that conversion season in the spring of 1974, my personal goal was to become a professional golfer, and I worked on my golf game six to eight hours a day, seven days a week. As an intense type A, goal oriented driven personality, I always wanted to be the best at everything I did. This was rooted in basic insecurity and manifested in a lot of arrogant pride and cockiness when it came to golf or other sports in which I excelled.

These tools were now applied to the pursuit of God through diligent Bible study, reading books and church attendance. I did not know how to pray more than ten minutes so I spent extensive time on intellectual pursuits. Returning home to New England, I started once again attending the church we grew up in, not realizing most of those dear people did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ but were caught in a religious tradition.

It was extremely confusing talking to the pastor about the Bible because he said that Jesus did not cause the miracle of the five loaves and fish to multiply but rather it was a lesson about sharing. He taught a class on “demythologizing” the Bible that I faithfully attended, and the confusion grew, because I believed God wrote a Bible that was accurate and infallible. This pastor sympathized with me and was a warm personality. He said because of my zeal, I should attend a class being held at Silva Mind Control that pursued the deeper things of the spirit.

Not knowing anything about spirituality as a newborn babe in Christ and having a basic trust in my leader, I paid the fee and entered the course at Silva. A Greek Orthodox Catholic priest, a label that meant little to me, taught this course. I did not know that Silva Mind Control was a demonically inspired psychic course that tapped into the spirit realm of “spirit guides” and opened one up to all kinds of evil assaults.

During one class, the priest invited those truly dedicated ones to stay after, on our own initiative to learn how to “speak in tongues”. He taught some basic Bible verses and began speaking in syllables and encouraging all of us to go for it by faith. This teaching was mixed with some other weird psychic stuff, and being naïve and overzealous I went for it hook line and sinker.

Within a short time I began having some strange psychic experiences and felt uncomfortable with books by Edgar Cacey and other things they were selling. At the same time, I transferred to a private Christian college to finish my BA degree and talked to a godly professor about Silva Mind Control. He wisely asked me a number of questions and helped me see that this was a cult. God led me to renounce all the evil junk from their psychic training, and I determined to be more careful.

Next, students on campus from a group called THE WAY, whose leader wrote a book called JESUS CHRIST IS NOT GOD, began recruiting me to come to their "Twigs". They seemed warm and friendly, but I wasn't so sure about them. Another student warned me about them, and I decided not to attend their meetings, which made them angry with those who warned me.

I was beginning to realize that there was a spiritual mine field in the religious world, and because I had attended a liberal church decided to seek a new church home. I did not know anything about denominations and just started attending all kinds of services including some Catholic Charismatic meetings. At one such "coffee house" meeting, a young leader told me that I had to "speak in tongues" to be saved, and I had to become a Catholic since they were the true church.

In church after church in New England I heard doctrines taught that I could no longer be sure if they were true or not. One pastor taught that the Second Coming of Christ was when we became enlightened to Jesus as our guiding light. One Catholic priest rebuked us for not praying more to Mary, which I could not find in the Bible.

Meanwhile, I continued to attend Bible classes at a conservative Bible college and studied like I had played golf. In addition to my college class work, I often read five books a week on Christianity, yoga, Buddhism and all kinds of weird stuff. The teachers at school guided me towards a conservative theology, and I became extremely suspect of anyone who taught about tongues or that their church was THE ONLY WAY to get saved. The Lord protected me from a bunch of assaults of the enemy to pull me into cults. None of my family members had a personal relationship with Christ at the time so I was isolated. Because I was such a fervent intellectual and due to the fact that so many had tried to lead me astray, I became more isolated and determined to know the truth of God's word.

## Missionary Service

God led me to join a solid Evangelical missions' organization ministering to the urban poor, and it was there that I received excellent discipleship training and met my bride to be. We spent 21 years serving Christ in urban centers and reaching out to families through various endeavors, church planting and Christian camping. As a result of my earlier church experiences and my own insecurity, I continued to study extremely hard to develop a theology of truth so that I would not be wrong.

My wife and I diligently memorized hundreds of Bible verses and I continued to read many books while maintaining a busy ministry schedule. During ministry in St. Louis, we planted a church that I pastored and focused heavily upon Bible training to help young people grow in their walk with Christ. Anyone who was even slightly charismatic made me very nervous. I had heard one very conservative pastor tell me that speaking in tongues was of the devil. Since I had briefly had this experience in Silva Mind Control, I was turned off to all the gifts of the Spirit and believed the conservative doctrine that the gifts of the Spirit had ceased after the original apostles died.

Unfortunately, I chose to become anti-Charismatic and spoke against churches and individuals that taught differently than I believed. As an intellectual, I had all the theological ammunition to blast anyone out of the water during discussions or debates. I was extremely intense when these debates came up and was not being led by a spirit of gentleness, but rather by religious spirits of fear, intimidation, domination and intellectual pride.

Scholarship is an important aspect of the Christian life and I do not want to degrade it in any way. However, when a person has insecurity, fear and pride like I did, scholarship can become a heady club used to prove "I'm right and you're wrong". I used this club like a wedge out of the heavy rough.

After years of burning the candle at both ends and ministering in a difficult urban environment, my physical body began to burn out. We were invited to transfer to direct a Christian camp in the mountains north of Los Angeles, and Glenda and I agreed to take our family out of the city and minister to urban families from this rural context. This proved to be a blessed change for us.

As we relocated, we were no longer pastoring so we looked for a church home and settled on a conservative church whose pastor had similar beliefs to me. Unfortunately, he was even more anti-Charismatic than I was. We attended there for several years. My

relationship with God began to dry up, since intellectual pursuit of God can only take you so far.

## Becoming a Worshipper

In 1994, I studied the 24-tape series by Pastor Jack Hayford on worship. Although I knew Pastor Jack was Charismatic or Pentecostal, I had the opportunity to meet with him and have dinner with him and his wife Anna. I developed great respect for Pastor Jack and his ministry and he generously gave me the 24-tape album with workbook. Worship was a weak area in my life and I did not even understand it although I had been a believer for 20 years. My focus had been on the word of God and hard work.

After a thorough study on worship, guided by these tapes, I bought a few Vineyard CD's and some upbeat Ron Kenoly praise music. Because I had been so critical of Charismatics and Pentecostals in the past, I felt a little ashamed to even listen to this music and hoped no one would notice that I was drifting off into this type of "radical" behavior.

During an all night drive to visit my wife's parents in Canada, I was listening to praise and worship music for several hours and just quietly singing along with true devotion and worship. I was not prepared for what happened next as our van hummed along I-5 in Northern California.

The manifested presence of the Lord entered that van, or I became aware of God in my spirit in a way which I could never have imagined possible. God was in the van, and He was actually speaking to me in an "inner audible voice" that was unmistakable. I just knew it was the Lord. It was both exhilarating and shocking at the same time.

The Lord said, "I want to give you a Christmas gift. Ask Me for anything you want, and I will give it to you." There are not adequate words to describe the experience of the presence of the Lord as I drove along the freeway with all my family asleep at 2:00 A.M. After pondering what to ask the Lord for, I simply replied the desire He put in my heart, "Lord, I want to be holy". There was no reply. I did not need one. God graciously put tangible evidence of faith in my heart that He would make me holy.

Unfortunately, I thought it would be an instant transaction or at least be complete by the time Christmas arrived a few days later. This event triggered a transformation journey that continues today, many years later. While I've not had an experience with the Lord quite like

that one since, the presence of the Lord I experienced in worship captivated my heart, and I became a worshipper.

Soon, I had a pile of praise and worship CD's and could not get enough of good worship times with the Lord. The church we had been attending did not have the kind of worship that my heart longed for, and we prayerfully began seeking a church home that focused intently on worship. God led us to attend our first "Pentecostal" church, though my theology was still conservative. My heart was captured by the Lord in worship. This is one of the most important keys in beginning to be released from religious spirits.

During an evening service at the new church, I responded to an altar call for those who wanted to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I wasn't sure if I believed it was real or not but simply wanted more of God and all that He had for me. At the same time, I was again extremely nervous and felt shame that I was doing something I had criticized others for doing. I heard the Lord clearly once again, "If you go forward, I'll go with you". I went forward with sweaty palms and pounding heart and received prayer.

A few weeks later, after diligently studying material about the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues I prayed to receive this gift by faith. I prayed in the Spirit in my devotional times and began receiving interpretations of my tongues. I also started hearing prophetic words although I did not know what to call them. The Holy Spirit spoke to me so clearly day after day for about a month saying, "I want to fill My temple with My glory, but first My temple must be cleansed".

Being completely new to this way of hearing God, I didn't share it with anyone but rather started keeping a journal of what I sensed the Lord saying to me. It was an incredible renewed "first love" experience and I started spending as much time as I could in worship and prayer. I began reading books about the gifts of the Spirit but not nearly as much as I used to read. Now I was starting to learn to pray and listen to God. I started to become an intercessor.

## Prayer and Fasting

During these early months of intense prayer, the Lord spoke to me to do a 40-day fast. I had never fasted two days in my life and God was calling me to a 40-day fast! I needed a lot of confirmation on this word. Dr. Bill Bright had just written a book on fasting that I read, and I attended a conference on Fasting and Prayer that Dr. Bright led, which inspired me to trust that I was hearing God. After all, if a

seventy-year-old man could do a 40-day fast, perhaps I could do it also.

God enabled me, in spite of my weakness and struggles, to complete this fast. He led me to attend a conference in Kansas City at Metro Christian Fellowship, led by Pastor Mike Bickle, on the 39th day of this fast. Little did I know that God was preparing my heart to receive additional prophetic anointing and impart to me vision for the new wineskin of the Holy Spirit devoted to intercession, holiness and the prophetic in loving community. This conference changed my life, and I purchased Bickle's tape series on the Song of Solomon, which I diligently studied upon returning home.

My heart got caught up again in renewed passion for Jesus and the certainty of His love. God was luring me into the wilderness so that He could deliver me from religious spirits and hidden idols in my heart. As I was captivated in His love and pledging to do anything He wanted me to do, suddenly, He began speaking to me of resigning my position as Executive Director of the conference center and going to a place that He would show me.

After much prayer, seeking counsel and confirmation from God's word, we resigned from our ministry position and began a "wilderness journey" that God has used to expose a lot of pride and break me from so much junk it would take too long to tell. He led us to start attending renewal services at Mott Auditorium in Pasadena, led by Pastor Che Ahn, where God's Spirit was healing hearts and doing unusual things.

While I would have been extremely critical of this activity years earlier, now my heart had opened to the Lord's Spirit and worship in such a way that I got caught up in "renewal". God supernaturally touched me and healed me of many hurts experienced as a child, and the worship, dancing and ministry prayer times began delivering me from religious spirits.

The Lord began using me to pray for people and give them accurate prophetic words by the Holy Spirit. I have been the most amazed at how accurate the Holy Spirit can speak through me at times. While I have a long way to grow in the prophetic, I became extremely impressed with the Holy Spirit. He is just awesome! His gifts are wonderful! He is also very sensitive and can be grieved easily.

To overcome religious spirits, we need to learn to hear and yield to the Holy Spirit. In my experience this comes through being devoted

to prayer, and I mean hours of prayer. I have prayed often that the Lord would open the eyes of my heart so that I could see Jesus.

At first, He opened my eyes to see one sinful attitude or pattern that He wanted to remove from my life. Then He began showing me things about other people and various things in His word. God began unlocking the word of God to me after I spent a great deal of time in prayer and fasting. All of the books I have written come through prayer, and often with fasting, before God gives me the revelation and anointing to write.

Fasting needs to become a regular discipline in our lives to be delivered from religious spirits. When we fast, the Lord often brings things to the surface that are hidden and we can then deal with them through repentance.

**Love God with All Your Heart**

The most powerful truth empowering you to be set free from religious spirits is this. Seek God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. Make God the single heart affection of your life. Be devoted to worship and earnest prayer. Study the Bible and allow the Holy Spirit to teach you the meaning by His anointing. Learn to wait in quiet meditation to hear God's voice. This may take days, weeks or months, but we must pursue clarity in hearing the Lord's voice. You will have to pray and fast, doing violence to your flesh and the enemy who seeks to ensnare you. But you will overcome in Christ if you obey His voice!

When we are certain that God is speaking to us, we absolutely must obey His voice in all ways. God will call you to do some "foolish" looking things as you grow. I am astounded by how many people I've heard testify that God was speaking to them about doing something, but they did not obey. This grieves the Holy Spirit and causes the heart to get into compromise and darkness. One can then choose a church or lifestyle that does not need to yield to the total control of the Holy Spirit. Compromise leads to a lifestyle of bondage to religious spirits.

Many people complain that they cannot hear God's voice clearly. One precious brother who told me this was very sincere in wanting to hear God. I told him to go lay on the floor and pray and not get up off the floor until God spoke to him. He took me up on the exhortation, and that night about 2:00 A.M., he heard the Lord quietly speak to his heart, "I love you". He said it was the most exhilarating experience

he had in a long time, and he started prayer watching several hours each night to seek the Lord and hear His voice.

## Listen and Obey God's Voice

**My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. John 10:27**

Jesus declared that His sheep hear His voice. If you are not hearing His voice, you need to get serious about seeking Jesus through fasting and prayer. Of course, He speaks to us through the word of God, but the word must be interpreted by the Holy Spirit. I experience God speaking to me through the word of God after I have spent a long time studying and praying. Sometimes, I will study diligently on a topic for several weeks and pray that God will give me revelation.

Just because I have an intellectual understanding of the words and verses in the scriptures does not mean that I have the revelation of the truths therein by the Holy Spirit. Some truths are easy to glean even by the unbeliever. The Ten Commandments are available for all to read and understand, but there are many levels to the word of God, and along with revelation we need accurate Spirit-led interpretation and application.

God does not speak to me in a fluent conversational way day in and day out. Those who claim to hear God in this fashion may be hearing from God, but quite frankly I tend to be skeptical about this level of communication. We can hear from our own flesh or mind. We can also hear from spirits of divination. Anyone who gets involved in the prophetic will hear spirits of divination trying to pretend they are an angel or the Holy Spirit.

We have to be rooted and grounded in the word of God and humbly submit what we are hearing to the godly counsel of others to confirm certain words, especially directional words and career changing words. A lot of people get so stressed out by the fact that spirits of divination are out there that they reject all voices and shut out the voice of God. This is a great over reaction and mistake.

We must focus on the fact that God is able to speak to us and lead us as His beloved sheep rather than our inability to hear clearly. Our focus must be on God's ability rather than our weakness. God wants to talk to you and guide you in all things.

Obeying God's voice in all things puts you on a pathway of sanctification whereby He will deliver you over time from all carnality,

including the religious spirits we have discussed in this book. You will have to love Him with all your heart and seek Him earnestly in much prayer and devotion to His word. You must be absolutely passionate to be holy unto the Lord as He is holy (I Peter 1:15-16).

## Love One Another

We also must learn to love one another as Christ loved us and be in partnership with Jesus to do the good works, which He has prepared for us in loving those in this world. God has many giftings and callings in serving Him and in demonstrating His love to His body and lost people.

A great problem occurs when people in ministry become highly task oriented and goal oriented, rather than loving and relationship oriented. This was one of my greatest shortcomings. When I used to preach each week, I used to write on the top of my notes things like "SMILE! BE WARM!". I called it switching on to "pastoral mode". I was so bound up in task orientation that I made it a task to be nice to people.

Fortunately, the Lord has transformed me so much that I actually delight in being warm and friendly and don't even give it a second thought anymore. Now it is more of a challenge to get tasks done. There is a godly balance each of us must find.

Christian leaders need to learn to deal with staff and volunteers with genuine love and compassion. Religious spirits want to have us focused on accomplishing goals, rather than loving people. Staff and volunteers can feel like pawns in the machine of some leader building a monument unto himself. We must each be faithful to what God is calling us to do. Please be aware that those who flatter and manipulate us to do good works for them are leading out of a religious spirit that will not bear lasting fruit for God's kingdom.

## Patiently Wait On God

One essential character trait in overcoming religious spirits is to learn to patiently wait upon God in prayer for clear direction before launching out in various ministry endeavors. During our wilderness season where I was "unemployed" in the traditional sense for over two years, the Lord clearly instructed me to "wait on Him". After a few weeks of prayer, Bible study and more prayer, I asked the Lord what to do next. He simply said to my heart, "Wait on Me!"

This continued for over a year. God called me to wait on Him and His direction in everything I did. He trained me to wait on Him for every decision, what I would do and where I would go. It was an excruciating cross to bear for the first year, but then God began opening doors that only He could orchestrate. I began to see the power in waiting on God's direction as opposed to launching out on my own initiative.

James tells us that patience is the perfecting fruit of the Holy Spirit (James 1:4). Patience is faith in God acting itself out by waiting for His timing. Religious spirits along with our own flesh prompt us to leap into action, take matters into our own hands and make it happen. Even those who launch out "by faith" can find themselves in presumption rather than faith, because they did not wait on God's perfect timing.

One pastor heard the Lord say to go to another state 2,000 miles away. He thought it was an act of faith to resign the church and leave within one week. It turned out to be presumption, and he came back and wanted to take the church back over. This actually happened three times over a period of years, and the people were so hurt and confused that they no longer trusted his leadership and accepted new pastors who determined to stay with the flock.

**Walk by Faith in God's Word**

God has introduced tremendous teaching in the "Faith movement" and I have read a number of books from this stream. All of us begin our journey in immaturity and what we may think is faith in God may actually be fantasy, wishful thinking, presumption or demonic guidance. Rather than be overwhelmed by this challenge, we must learn to press into God through prayer, fasting and diligent waiting for confirmation in Christian community. Once the Lord has thoroughly confirmed His word with heavenly wisdom (interpretation and proper application), it then becomes time to launch out and walk by faith in His leadership.

Walking by genuine faith and proceeding by every word that comes from the mouth of God are a central part of overcoming every religious spirit that would call you to walk by sight, human reason and human wisdom. This kind of "wisdom" is earthy, sensual and demonic (James 3:15). Religious traditions and heavily programmed churches are full of earthy wisdom.

In summary, we overcome religious spirits by passionately loving God with all our heart, loving others as Christ loved us and walking in faith

and obedience to God's voice in all things. We must live a life of worship, devoted to prayer, yielded to the Spirit and obedient to God's word. These disciplines describe a relational walk with God rather than a list of "to do's". In the intimacy of relationship, our Father flows revelation and seeds of faith so we may grow up in Him and walk in maturity.

We must reject the spirit of fear and embrace love, discipline and a sound mind. We must live a life of mercy and forgiveness towards others, especially those closest to us. Our individual temples must be cleansed of every influence of dogs and sin so we can be full of God's love and glory!

God will use us to do mighty exploits as we walk in close relationship with Jesus, but His great works will be through vessels of clay, dying daily so the life and power of Jesus might flow forth. As we operate at this level of anointing and power, we always need to **BEWARE OF DOGS**!

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