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The Church Has Been Deceived Part 2

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Without repentance, it's impossible to overpower compulsive lust. Can't be done. Nor can we harness explosive rage, bitterness, fear, self-hatred, jealousy, addiction, fear, suicidal thoughts and other controlling sins. We can pray over them. Seek therapy for them. Memorize scripture about them. But until we repent those sins will remain.

Why? Because until we repent those out-of-control sins are visible expressions of a stronghold. And strongholds host idols and idols host demons. If that seems far-fetched consider the words of Paul: "What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice to idols they sacrifice to demons, and not to God" (I Corinthians 10:119-20).

So there you have it. An idol, like a pornographic image, or an addictive substance, or the memory of someone who hurt us, is nothing. The power of the idol resides in the demon attached to it. And as long as we cling to the idol the demon clings to us. In fact, it has the right to do so. That's why Paul commands us: "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:26-27). The word "foothold" can also speak of a "territory," or "jurisdiction" *which we give Satan when we harbor sin*.

Territory for a Stronghold

Does that mean we host a demon *every* time we get angry or check out porn? No. But unresolved anger and unbridled lust offer Satan the territory upon which to build a stronghold with its idol and spirit.

The Second Step

So how do we remove the idol and its dirty companion? As I mentioned in my last blog, we've got to forgive those who wronged us. Without releasing those who hurt us from every debt they owe us, we will never be free. But we must take a second step, we must repent of sinful thoughts and actions.

A Changed Mind

The Greek word for "repent" speaks of a changed mind that changes behavior. It doesn't occur when we say, "God help me stop this." It occurs when we say, "God I'm finished with this." It's the addict who says, "I'll never snort a line again." The drunk who says, "I'll never take a drink again." The fear-filled man who says, "I'll never entertain that thought again."

You get the idea? When we repent we no longer expect to return to our sin. We're done with it. Anything less is a lifeline to the idol. And it's why once someone has repented and a demon is commanded, in the name of Jesus Christ to leave, it must obey. Why? Because its anchoring idol has been removed. Repentance cancels its right to be there.

How the Church Was Deceived

And this is how the church has been deceived: It teaches freedom can be ours without repentance. It's a lie. Just read the Gospels and note how many times John the Baptist and Jesus declared: "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand."

But how is complete repentance possible? Next week we'll find out.