

The Church Has Been Deceived

Written by Bill Perkins

I've got a confession to make. While I've published three books on addictive/compulsive behavior—one a best-seller—spoken across the United States on the subject, discussed it on radio and television, met with men in groups and counseled individuals—in most cases, I've helped people manage their addiction/compulsion, not get free of it.

Have you ever wondered why so many believers are enslaved to lust, anger, food, jealousy, bitterness, and a host of other sins? Why do so many of us have a room in our spiritual house we've sublet to an idol we serve with our time, money and affection? Why do our lives contradict the Lord's promise: "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed?" (Jn. 8:36).

The Element We Ignored

I'm convinced there is an element of spiritual growth the church has largely ignored. Not once during my four years of study at Dallas Theological Seminary did any professor talk about spiritual strongholds and how they can be destroyed. While I studied demonology, I was never taught how to evict a demon. The church has been deceived into believing demons exist somewhere else.

Therapy and Meds

We've fallen for the secular idea that addictions and personality disorders can *only* be treated with a combination of therapy and meds. And while this is often the case, it isn't always. I've seen too many people, for whom all treatment failed, find lasting freedom when their stronghold was destroyed and the demon that occupied it evicted.

After being set free one young woman's therapist told she only imagined the demons. And yet, getting rid of the demons did something her therapy hadn't done. It silenced the voices in her head and freed her from fear. I'm not saying therapy isn't valuable, it is. I'm a beneficiary of therapy. But therapy doesn't usually address the spiritual force behind a stronghold.

Two Crucial Steps

So how do we destroy a stronghold and evict an evil spirit? Some believe the way to get rid of a demon is to tell it, in the authority of Jesus, to leave. That would work if the person has taken two crucial steps to remove the demon's right to remain. Without these steps the unclean spirit will not only stay, it may torment its host and mock the person trying to evict it.

The Hinge on the Door

The first step toward freedom involves forgiveness. Indeed, forgiveness is the hinge on which the door of freedom swings. Nobody finds freedom who is unwilling to forgive. An unforgiving person opens the door for a demonic stronghold. If that seems extreme, consider Ephesians 4:26-27, “Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity” (NASB).

The word “opportunity” is from the Greek, “topos,” which speaks of a place or foothold, a specific territory or a jurisdiction—a legal place where an enemy can operate. A foothold can become an entry point for an evil spirit and the cornerstone for a stronghold.

Forgiveness begins the process of freedom. I see it as a spiritual transaction where we release someone from a debt they owe us. Once forgiven we will not try to collect the debt by mentally reviewing the wrong committed or bad-mouthing the offender.

Forgiveness is the first step we must take to destroy a stronghold and find lasting freedom. Next week I’ll talk about the second step.