

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: April 27, 2008

Confronting Evil Like Jesus Did

by Dan Trygg

"Now in the synagogue there was a man having a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴ saying, 'Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are -- the Holy One of God!' ³⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' And when the demon had thrown him in *their* midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. ³⁶ Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, 'What a word this *is!* For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.' ³⁷ And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region. ³⁸ Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. ³⁹ So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them." Luke 4:33-39

We humans are amusing. **We pick up habits and customs from our environment, and often tend to repeat them over and over, without ever inquiring as to why we do things the way we do.** This is especially true with religious practices. We have seen someone do things in a certain manner, or speak in a certain way, and we tend to assume that it is *supposed* to be done that way. We parrot their behavior, their tone, their expressions. Back in the late 1970's, my wife and I attended a college church where the pastor was from Ireland. He didn't have the stereotypical Irish brogue, but he definitely had an accent and a certain lilt in his speech patterns. It was humorous to note that the elders of the church, those who had spent the most time with this pastor, also began to speak in a lilting manner, even though they were Midwesterners. They probably were unaware of this, but it was quite noticeable to us in the congregation. **It is amazing how we can pick things up from others, and not even realize it until someone points it out, or we are somehow able to see these practices for what they are.**

I just had an "Aha!" experience like that this week, regarding a religious practice or example that I was given somewhere along the way, one which I had not been able to see clearly or evaluate for what it was. **I have had to rethink the way many of us have learned to address evil, especially the demonic.**

In different Christian circles, **you will find a wide range of opinions, thoughts and behaviors regarding this issue.** Some tend to ignore it, either out of disbelief or the lack of direct experience or unawareness of the powers of darkness in their lives. **Some are fearful and almost superstitious** about this matter, going to extreme measures to protect themselves from violating some principle that may bring undue attention from the enemy upon them. **Others are quite bold and daring, some even going so far as to mock and ridicule the enemy,** as if he was no threat to them at all.

Neither ignorance, fear or mocking disdain are consistent with the example of Jesus or the apostles.

God wants us to be equipped to understand who our enemies are, and how we are to interact with them in a healthy, safe and effective manner. For example, Paul tells us that he was not ignorant of Satan's devices (II Cor. 2:11). Instead of running from the enemy, we are to be prepared for the fight, be on the alert for his schemes, to stand firm and to resist him (Eph. 6:10-17; Jas. 4:7; I Pet. 5:8,9). Furthermore, we are clearly warned *not* to mock the enemy (Jude 8-10; II Pet. 2:9-12). Only those who are foolish and arrogant would do so. They do not understand who they are dealing with. Abusive speech is *never* appropriate (Eph. 4:29,31; Col. 3:5-8). Love does not act unbecomingly (I Cor. 13:5). Even the archangel Michael refused to call Satan names, or bring upon him a defaming judgment. It was not his position to do so, nor is it ours. There is only one Judge, and it ain't you or me (Jas. 4:11,12), ...at least not now and in our fleshly mind. Eventually we will judge angels (I Cor. 6:3), but that is *after* we have been glorified, and we are operating in minds that are fully renewed and submitted to God. *If the devil can now trick us to utilize our fleshly mind to attack him with name calling and judgments, then he entices us out from the protection and power of the Holy Spirit, and we are vulnerable to attack.*

Stop and think about this. It took Jesus' death on the cross to defeat Satan. What are you going to do to him? Again, if you are in the flesh, then you don't have Jesus protecting you. Really, what can you do against Satan, or his underlings, *in your own strength?* Read about the seven sons of Sceva in Acts 19:13-17 to see what can happen to those who try to deal with spiritual powers in their own authority, even when using the name of Jesus. Here is another reality check for you to consider. Think about it this way: **Jesus told us to pray**

and ask the Father to lead us *not* into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Matt. 6:13 - Literally, “drag us out from the evil one”. The word describes a severe and acute danger, where a friend pulls back his endangered buddy to himself in order to remove him from the impending threat.), **and you are going to *pick a fight with the enemy*? Are you crazy?** I don’t know about you, but if Jesus tells me to *avoid* something, well then, that’s what I’m going to do. To disregard this is to put the Lord to the test. On the other hand, if He tells me to stand firm, I will trust Him to keep me strong. If He tells me to advance, I will confidently do that, trusting that the battle is His, and He will guide me to victory. If He tells me *not* to engage in a confrontation, it would be wise for me to follow His counsel. It may not be time yet to deal with this issue, or God may want to use someone else, not me. **What is important is that I do *what He wants me to do, when He wants me to do it, and in the manner He tells to proceed.*** The sword of the Spirit is the word (*rhēma*) of God (Eph. 6:17). In this setting, this refers not to the scripture *per se*, but to the specific *direction* or *personal counsel* God may give in a particular situation.

The Christian life is full of spiritual warfare. Some of it is pretty covert, and many people do not see it happening at all. Other cases are very clear. I have had the opportunity over the years to be involved in some very direct, unmistakable demonic confrontations. I have seen some classic, biblical demonic manifestations, where demons cried out from within people, with a voice different from their own, just like in the account from Luke 4. I have seen people thrown to the floor by the demons, just like the man in the synagogue. I have seen and experienced many strange and amazing things, ...at least they blew *me* away! In these encounters, I have tried numerous approaches to confronting the enemy, many of them inspired by things I read in books or saw other men or women of God do in their dealings with the demonic. **We have to be careful to evaluate the techniques of people in light of the revealed word of God.** Sometimes their methods are a mixture of flesh and Spirit. Sometimes they are misguided, or they unnecessarily complicate things. At other times, they may have been directed by the Spirit to do some particular thing in a given circumstance to set someone free, ...and now they try to use that same technique with *everyone* they work with, though that is not necessary. For example, some people say that it is essential to get the names of the demons who are harassing a person. Yet, in only one case recorded in the Bible are we told that Jesus did this (Lk. 8:30). So, are we always to do this, or is this just one tool that may be helpful? **Do we follow a systematic formula, or a living Person?**

OK. All this has been background leading up to the little insight I received this week. Maybe it will be nothing to you, but it was liberating to me. In light of all the layers of church history and human practice, **it is very important to go back to what Jesus and the apostles *said and did*, in order to get a clearer picture of the essential truth.** In the particular example of religious practice God spoke to me about, I had been encouraged to “rebuke the devil”, which had been demonstrated as meaning “I rebuke you in the name of the Lord”. **In looking at Jesus’ example, however, as I examined the passages where He “rebuked” a demon, I noticed that He never used that word, at all. He never said, “I rebuke you”.** Instead, it is recorded that He “rebuked” the demon “saying...”, then giving *what* He said in that particular circumstance. For example, in Luke 4:35, it says, “and Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet and come out of him!’” As I went through each passage where the word “rebuke” occurred, it was *always* like this. He never said, “I rebuke you.” Never. He said things like, “Be quiet.” “Come out.” and, “Do not enter him again”. He did, at times, confront the evil spirit by what it was doing. For example, Mk. 9:25 records, “He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him...” Notice that He did not say “I rebuke you” or “I take authority over you”. He didn’t need to do that, because it was clear to both Him and the demon where the authority was. **Jesus just spoke out His commands, and the unclean spirit did as He said.**

It was interesting to also note, as I was doing this study, that Jesus also rebuked diseases and even nature in the same way. In Luke 4:39, He rebuked a fever, and it left the sick person. Though it is not recorded, I would guess that He did not say, “I rebuke you, fever.” No. **“Rebuke” is used to describe the action He took, but it was not the word He used.** He probably said to the fever, “Leave her”, and it left. In Mark 4:39, it is recorded that He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush! Be still!”, and the wind died and the sea became calm.

Again, this was a little insight that the Lord brought to me this past week. Often we complicate things too much. We are not listening to what the Holy Spirit is telling us to do in our present-day circumstances. Instead, we are following a formula handed down to us by someone else. **Let us return to the simple, direct, straight-talking methodology of Jesus and His disciples. Let us not fall into reusing old battle plans for today’s fight. Let us press in to receive a fresh word from the Lord, a living and active word of counsel from our living, personal God and King.**