

~Other Speakers G-L: Jessie Penn Lewis:**Passivity the chief basis of possession**

That believers--true, fully surrendered children of God--can be deceived, and then up to the degree of deception, "possessed" by deceiving spirits, we have seen in the preceding chapters. The primary cause must now be made clear, and the conditions for deception and possession resulting therefrom; apart from the possession which is the outcome of yielding to sins of the flesh, or any sin which gives evil spirits a hold in the fallen nature.

It is first important to define the meaning of the word "possession": for it is generally thought to cover only cases of possession in the acute, and fully developed degree of the cases given in the gospel records. But even then it is overlooked that many degrees of possession are referred to in the gospels, such as the woman with the "spirit of infirmity"; the man who was apparently only deaf and dumb; the little girl with the demon which terribly vexed her; the boy who gnashed with his teeth, and was sometimes thrown on the fire, and the man with the legion, so wholly mastered by the powers of evil that he dwelt outside the abodes of men.

THE MEANING OF "POSSESSION" DEFINED

Such cases as these are known to-day, amongst even true believers in Europe, as well as in heathen China, but "possession" is much more wide-spread than is supposed, if the word "possession" is taken to mean just what it is, i.e., a hold of evil spirits on a man in any shade of degree; for an evil spirit "possesses" whatever spot he holds, even though it be in an infinitesimal degree, and from that one spot, as a spider finds his base ere he weaves his web, the intruder works to obtain further hold of the whole being.

Christians are as open to possession by evil spirits as other men, and become possessed because they have, in most cases, unwittingly fulfilled the conditions upon which evil spirits work, and, apart from the cause of willful sin, given ground to deceiving spirits, through (1) accepting their counterfeits of the Divine workings, and (2) cultivating passivity, and non-use of the faculties; and this through misconception of the spiritual laws which govern Christian life.

It is this matter of ground given which is the crucial point of all. All believers acknowledge known sin to be ground given to the enemy, and even unknown sin in the life, but they do not realize that every thought suggested to the mind by wicked spirits, and accepted, is ground given to them; and every faculty unused invites their attempted use of it.

The primary cause of deception and possession in surrendered believers may be condensed into one word, passivity; that is, a cessation of the active exercise of the will in control over spirit, soul and body, or either, as may be the case. It is, practically, a counterfeit of "surrender to God." The believer who "surrenders" his "members"--or faculties--to God, and ceases to use them himself, thereby falls into "passivity" which enables evil spirits to deceive, and possess any part of his being which has become passive.

The deception over passive surrender may be exemplified thus: a believer surrenders his "arm" to God. He permits it to hang passive, waiting for "God to use it." He is asked, "why do you not use your arm?" and he replies "I have surrendered it to God. I must not use it now; God must use it." But will God lift the arm for the man? Nay, the man himself must lift it, note 1 and use it, seeking to understand intelligently God's mind in doing so.

THE WORD "PASSIVITY" DESCRIBES OPPOSITE CONDITION TO ACTIVITY

The word "passivity" simply describes the opposite condition to activity; and in the experience of the believer it means, briefly, (1) loss of self-control--in the sense of the person himself controlling each, or all of the departments of his personal being; and (2) loss of freewill--in the sense of the person himself exercising his will as the guiding principle of personal control, in harmony with the will of God.

All the danger of "passivity" in the surrendered believer, lies in the advantage taken of the passive condition by the powers of darkness. Apart from these evil forces, and their workings through the passive person, "passivity" is merely inactivity, or idleness. In normal inactivity, that is, when the evil spirits have not taken

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hold, the inactive person is always holding himself ready for activity; whereas in "passivity" which has given place to the powers of darkness, the passive person is unable to act by his own volition.

The chief condition, therefore, for the working of evil spirits in a human being, apart from sin, is passivity, in exact opposition to the condition which God requires from His children for His working in them. Granted the surrender of the will to God, with active choice to do His will as it may be revealed to him, God requires co-operation with His Spirit, and the full use of every faculty of the whole man. In brief, the powers of darkness aim at obtaining a passive slave, or captive to their will; whilst God desires a regenerated man, intelligently and actively willing, and choosing, and doing His will in liberation of spirit, soul and body from slavery.

The powers of darkness would make a man a machine, a tool, an automaton; the God of holiness and love desires to make him a free, intelligent sovereign in his own sphere--a thinking, rational, renewed creation created after His own image (Eph. 4: 24). Therefore God never says to any faculty of man, "Be thou idle."

God does not need, nor demand non-activity in the believer, for His working in, and through him; but evil spirits demand the utmost non-activity and passivity.

God asks for intelligent action (Rom. 12: 1-2, "Your reasonable service,") in co-operation with Him.

Satan demands passivity as a condition for his compulsory action, and in order to compulsorily subject men to his will and purpose.

God requires the cessation of the evil actions of believers, primarily because they are sinful, and secondly because they hinder co-operation with His Spirit.

Passivity must not be confused with quietness, or the meek and quiet spirit," which, in the sight of God, is of great price. Quietness of spirit, of heart, of mind, of manner, voice and expression, may be co-existent with the most effective activity in the will of God (1 Thess. 4: 11, Gr. "Ambitious to be quiet.").

THE CLASS OF BELIEVERS WHO ARE OPEN TO PASSIVITY

The persons open to "passivity," of whom the evil spirits take advantage as ground for their activity, are those who become fully surrendered to God, and are brought into direct contact with the supernatural world by receiving the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. There are some who use the word "surrender," and think they are surrendered fully to carry out the will of God, but are only so in sentiment and purpose, for actually they walk by the reason and judgment of the natural man; although they submit all their plans to God, and because of this submittal sincerely believe they are carrying out His will. But those who are really "surrendered," give themselves up to implicitly obey, and carry out at all costs, what is revealed to them supernaturally as from God, and not what they themselves plan and reason out to be the will of God.

Believers who surrender their wills, and all they have and are to God, yet who WALK BY THE USE OF THEIR NATURAL MINDS, are not the ones who are open to the "passivity" which gives ground to evil spirits, although they may, and do, give ground to them in other ways. These we may call Class No. 1, as shown in the following table.

THREE CLASSES AMONG BELIEVERS

- I. Unsundered.
 - II. Surrendered, Deceived, Possessed.
 - III. Surrendered but Undeceived, Dispossessed and Victorious.
- These use the word "surrender," but do not really know it, and act it out in practice. These seem more "foolish" than those in Class 1, but in reality are more advanced. The mind is liberated, and all the faculties are operating.

Believers in this stage are more reasonable than those in No. 2, because their faculties have not been yielded

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into passivity. In order to understand the actions of No. 2, it is needful to read them from their inner standpoint, for to them all that they do seems right. These are open to light and all that is Divine, but they seek watchfully to close themselves to all that is Satanic.

These believers call those in the next class "cranks," "faddists," ..extremists," etc. These are open to both Divine and Satanic power. No. 3 can read Nos. 1 and 2 intelligently.

Are liable to be "puffed up."

Class No. 1 are "surrendered" in will, but not surrendered in fact, in the sense of being ready to carry out "obedience to the Holy Ghost" at all costs. They consequently know little of conflict, and nothing of the devil, excepting as a tempter or accuser. They do not understand those who speak of the "onslaughts of Satan," for, they say, they are not "attacked" in this way. But the devil does not always attack when he can. He reserves his attack until it suits him. If the devil does not attack a man, it does not prove that he could not. Another class among believers--Class No. 2--are those who are surrendered in such a measure of abandonment that they are ready to obey the Spirit of God at all costs, with the result that they become open to a passivity which gives ground for the deception and possession of evil spirits.

These surrendered believers (Class No. 2) fall into passivity after the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, (1) because of their determination to carry out their "surrender" at all costs; (2) their relationship with the spiritual world, which opens to them supernatural communications, which they believe to be all of God; (3) their "surrender" leading them to submit, subdue and make all things subservient to this supernatural plane.

The origin of the evil passivity which gives the evil spirits opportunity to deceive, and then possess, is generally a wrong interpretation of Scripture, or wrong thoughts or beliefs about Divine things. Some of these interpretations of Scripture, or wrong conceptions, which cause the believer to give way to the passive condition, we have already referred to in a previous chapter.

The passivity may affect the whole man, in spirit, soul and body, when it has become very deep, and is of many years' standing. The progress is generally very gradual, and insidious in growth, and consequently the release from it is gradual and slow.

PASSIVITY OF THE WILL

There is a passivity of the will; the "will" being the helm, so to speak, of the ship. This originates from a wrong conception of what full surrender to God means. Thinking that a "surrendered will" to God means no use of the will at all, the believer ceases to (1) choose, (2) determine, and (3) act of his own volition. The serious effect of this, he is not allowed by the powers of darkness to discover, for at first the consequences are trivial, and scarcely noticeable. In fact, at first it appears to be most glorifying to God. The "strong-willed" person suddenly becomes passively yielding. He thinks that God is "will"-ing for him in circumstances, and through people, and so he becomes passively helpless in action. After a time no "choice" can be got from him in matters of daily life; no "decision," or initiative in matters demanding action; he is afraid to express a wish, much less a decision. Others must choose, act, lead, decide, while this one drifts as a cork upon the waters. Later on the powers of darkness begin to make capital out of this "surrendered" believer, and to work around him evil of various kinds, which entangle him through his passivity of will. He has now no power of will to protest, or resist. Obvious wrong in his environment, which this believer alone has a right to deal with, flourishes, and grows strong and blatant. The powers of darkness have slowly gained, both personally and in circumstances, upon the ground of passivity of the will, which at first was merely passive submission to environment, under the idea that God was "will"-ing for him in all things around him.

The text that such believers misinterpret is Phil. 2: 13, "It is God which worketh in you, both to will, and to work, for His good pleasure." The "passive" person reads it, ". . . God which worketh in me the willing, and the doing," i.e., "willeth instead of me."note 2 The first means God working in the soul up to the point of the action of the will, and the second assumes His actually "will"-ing instead of, and "working" instead of the believer. This

wrong interpretation gives ground for not using the will, because of the conclusion "God wills instead of me"; thus bringing about passivity of will.

GOD DOES NOT WILL INSTEAD OF MAN

The truth to be emphasized is that God never "wills" instead of man, and whatever a man does, he is himself responsible for his actions.

The believer whose "will" has become passive, finds, after a time, the greatest difficulty in making decisions of any kind, and he looks outside, and all around him for something to help him to decide the smallest matters. When he has become conscious of his passive condition, he has a painful sense of being unable to meet some of the situations of ordinary life. If spoken to, he knows he cannot will to listen till a sentence is completed; if asked to judge a matter, he knows he cannot do it; if he is required to "remember" or use his imagination, he knows he is unable to, and becomes terrified at any proposed course of action where these demands may come upon him. The tactics of the enemy now may be to drive him into situations where these demands may be made, and thus torture or embarrass him before others.

Little does the believer know that in this condition he may, unknowingly, rely upon the assistance of evil spirits, who have brought about the passivity for this very object. The faculty unused lies dormant and dead in their grip, but if used it is an occasion for them to manifest themselves through it. They are too ready to "will" instead of the man, and they will put within his reach many "supernatural" props to help him in "decision," especially in the way of "texts" used apart from their context, and supernaturally given, which the believer, seeking so longingly to do the will of God, seizes upon, and firmly grasps as a drowning man a rope, blinded, by the apparently given Divine help, to the principle that Godnote 3 only works through the active volition of a man, and not for him in matters requiring his action.

PASSIVITY OF THE MIND

Passivity of the mind is engendered by a wrong conception of the place of the mind in the life of surrender to God, and obedience to Him in the Holy Spirit. Christ's call of fishermen is used as an excuse for passivity of brain, for some believers say, God has no need for the use of the brain, and can do without it! But the choice of Paul who had the greatest intellect of his age, shows that when God sought for a man through whom He could lay the foundations of the Church, He chose one with a mind capable of vast and intelligent thinking. The greater the brain power, the greater the use God can make of it, provided it is submissive to truth. The cause of passivity of mind, sometimes lies in the thought that the working of the brain is a hindrance to the development of the Divine life in the believer. But the truth is, that (1) the non-working of the brain hinders, (2) the evil working of the brain hinders, (3) but the normal and pure working of the brain is essential, and helpful for co-operation with God. This is dealt with fully in Chapter 6, where the various tactics of the powers of darkness are shown in their efforts to get the mind into a condition of passivity, and hence incapable of action to discern their wiles. The effects of passivity of the mind may be seen in inactivity, when there should be action; or else over activity beyond control, as if a suddenly released instrument broke forth into ungovernable action; hesitation, or rashness; indecision (as also from a passive will); unwatchfulness; lack of concentration; lack of judgment; bad memory.

Passivity does not change the nature of a faculty, but it hinders its normal operation. In the case of passivity hindering the memory, the person will be found looking outside himself for every possible "aid to memory," until he becomes a veritable slave to note book, and helps, which fail at a critical moment. With this is also passivity of the imagination, which places the imagination outside personal control, and at the mercy of evil spirits who flash to it what they please. One danger is to take these visions, and call them "imagination." The passive state can be produced without crystal gazing,note 4 i.e., if a person gazes at any object for a prolonged period the natural vision is dulled, and the deceiving spirits can then present anything to the mind.

In pure inactivity of the mind, the mind can be used at the will of the person, but in evil passivity of the mind, the person is helpless, and he "can't think!" He feels as if his mind were bound, and held by an iron band, or by a weight or pressure on his head.