

~Other Speakers G-L: Jessie Penn Lewis:**The Path to Freedom**

It has been thought almost universally that the only way to deal with demon- possession is by the casting out of the evil spirit,note 1 by some Divinely equipped believer. But facts prove that this method is not always successful, for though the diagnosis of the intruder's presence may be correct, yet the ground that gave it occupation cannot be cast out; and unless the ground is dealt with, no full relief can be obtained, or change seen, in the majority of cases. In others, when the evil spirit apparently departs, it must not be concluded that the person is entirely free, for it may be that what has occurred is only that a particular manifestation has ceased, and it is not unlikely that another manifestation may appear; possibly not a visible one, or one easily perceived or detected, but recognizable by any who have learned to discriminate between the workings of evil spirits, and those which are human or Divine. It is possible also to suppress a certain manifestation for a time, and not entirely get rid of it; and the same manifestation may return again and again in different guise, unless the ground is dealt with. In some instances, where the possession is so manifest that the true inner personalitynote 2 of the victim is almost entirely lost sight of, the relief may be immediate: but where the intruder hides himself so subtly in the mind, or body, as to be indistinguishable from the operations, or actions of the personnote 3--hidden in some state, or form, apparently natural or physical--the deliverance will not be obtained by "casting out" only, but by the truth being given to the mind,note 4 and the volition of the person actively refusing and disowning the ground.

The very first step to freedom is the knowledge of the truth as to the source and nature of experiences the believer may have had since his entrance into the spiritual life, which possibly may have been perplexing, or else thought with deepest assurance to be of God. There is NO DELIVERANCE FROM "DECEPTION" BUT BY THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND ACCEPTANCE OF TRUTH. And this facing of truth in regard to certain spiritual and "supernatural" experiences, means a keen edged knife to the man in his self-respect, and pride.

THE HUMILIATION OF THE UNDECEIVING PERIOD

It requires a very deep allegiance to the truth which God desires should reign in the inward parts of His children, for a believer to accept truth which cuts and humbles, as readily as he accepts that which is agreeable. The "undeceiving" is painful to the feelings, and the discovery that he has been deceived is one of the keenest blows to a man who once thought that he was so "advanced," so "spiritual," and so "infallible,"note 5 in his certainty of obeying the Spirit of God.

"Was he not advanced?" Yes, to a degree above the "man of soul," but he had not reached the goal as he thought, for he had but begun the journey in the spiritual plane. The end of standard one is but the beginning of standard two. So after all, he believed a lie about himself and his experience. He was not as "advanced" as he thought. Thus the truth breaks upon his mind, and its entrance is not agreeable. It is not easy to disbelieve absolutely, what he once believed so thoroughly.

Then "Was he 'spiritual'?" He may have had spiritual experiences, but this does not make a man "spiritual."note 6 The spiritual man is a man who lives in, and is governed by, and understands his spirit, and co-operation with the Spirit of God. A great experience accompanying the ENTRANCE INTO THE PLANE OF THE SPIRIT does not make a believer "spiritual."

THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUTH OF DECEPTION

The deceived believe, laid claim to positions to which he had no right, for with the entrance of truth he discovers he was neither so advanced, nor so spiritual, nor so infallible as he had thought. He built his faith about his own spiritual condition on assumption, and left no room for a doubt, that is, true doubt, such as doubting a statement that afterwards turns out to be a lie, but in due season doubt finds an entry to his mind, and brings his house of infallibility to the ground. He knows now that what he thought was an "advanced" experience, was only a beginning, and that he is only on the fringe of knowledge. This is the operation of truth.note 7 In the place of ignorance is given true knowledge; in the place of deception, truth. Ignorance, falsehood and passivity; upon these three the enemy silently builds his castles, and unobtrusively guards and uses them. But truth pulls his strongholds to the ground.

By the entry of truth, the man must be brought to the place where he acknowledges his condition frankly, as follows:--

- (1)
I believe that it is POSSIBLE for a Christian to be deceived and possessed by evil spirits.
- (2)
It Is possible for ME to be deceived;
- (3)
I AM deceived by an evil spirit;
- (4)
WHY am I deceived?

Then comes the facing of the fact that (1) "ground does exist; and (2) the seeking for knowledge as to what the ground is.

In order to discover the ground, the believer must first, in a general sense, get a fair conception of what ground is; note 8 for he is liable to be deceived in (1) putting down to "possession" what belongs to something else, and (2) placing to something else what belongs to possession. He may confuse ordinary conflict, i.e., the perpetual battle in spirit against the powers of darkness, note 9 with conflict which comes from possession. And when the deception and possession are of long standing, the spirits of evil may get the believer himself to defend their work in him, and through him fight tenaciously to guard the cause of his deception from being brought into light, and exposed as their work.

They thus get the believer himself, in effect, to take their side, and fight for them to keep their hold, even after he has found out his condition, and honestly desires deliverance; one of the greatest hindrances being the effect of an assumed position concerning spiritual experiences, which believers are loath to examine, and part with. note 10

THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF DELIVERANCE IN CALVARY'S VICTORY

The Scriptural ground for obtaining deliverance is the truth concerning Christ's full victory at Calvary, through which believer CAN BE DELIVERED FROM THE POWER OF BOTH SIN AND SATAN, but in actual fact the victory won at Calvary can only be applied as there is conformity to Divine laws. As the deceptions of Satan are recognized, and the will of the person is set to reject them, he can, on the basis of the work of Christ at Calvary as set forth in Rom. 6: 6-13; Col. 2: 15; 1 John 3: 8, and other passages, claim his deliverance from these workings of the devil in deception and possession.

Just as there are various degrees of deception and possession, so there are degrees of deliverance according to the understanding of the believer, and his WILLINGNESS To FACE ALL THE TRUTH ABOUT HIMSELF, and all the ground given to the enemy.

In doing this the believer needs to have a steady grasp of his standing in Christ as identified with Him in His death on the Cross, and his union with Him in spirit in His place on the Throne (Ephes. 1: 19-23; 2: 6), and he must "hold fast" with steady faith-grip, the "Head" (Col. 2: 19) as the One who is, by His Spirit, giving him grace (Heb. 4: 16), and strength to recover the ground in mind and body which he has ignorantly yielded to the foe. For the man himself must ACT to get rid of passivity; he must revoke his CONSENT given to evil spirits to enter, and by his own volition insist that they retire from the place (Ephes. 4: 27) they have obtained by deceit. Since God will not act for him in regaining the normal condition of his outer man, nor exercise his choice for him, he must stand on the vantage ground of the Calvary victory of Christ, and claim his freedom.

Assuming, then, that the believer has discovered that he is a victim of the deceptions of deceiving spirits, what are the subjective steps in the path of freedom? Briefly, (1) acknowledgment of deception; (2) refusal of ground; (3) steadfast fight against all that possession means; (4) being on guard. against excuses; (5) the detection of all the effects of possession; and (6) a discerning of the result of these actions. For the believer must learn to read the signs of dis-possession, as well as the symptoms of possession, lest he be deceived again by the Adversary.

We give in column form a complement to the column lists in page 102. The first treated of the way the believer has been deceived; this one of the way of deliverance.

COLUMN 1: DOUBT OF EXPERIENCE

Taking first for consideration the list in Column 1.

(1) Doubt of the experience, or "manifestation" being of God. We cannot emphasize too strongly the need of not quenching, and not ignoring the first doubt, for the "doubt" is actually the initial penetration of truth to the mind, and hence the first step to deliverance. Some have instantly quenched the first doubt, fearing to "doubt God," and in doing so, closed the mind to the first ray of light which would have led them into liberty. They have looked upon doubt as temptation, and resisted it, overlooking the distinction between true and evil, right and wrong, "doubt." This has its root in the mind of most Christians, in associating only evil with such words as "judging," "criticizing," "doubting," and "enmity," "hatred," "unbelief," etc., all of which dispositions and actions they thought to be evil, and evil only, whereas they are evil or good according to their source in spirit or soul, and in relation to their object, e.g., "enmity" against Satan is God-given (Gen. 3: 15), "hatred" to sin is good, and "unbelief" of spirit manifestations is commanded until the believer is sure of their source. (1 John 4: 1).

Chart on page 185.

To doubt God--which means not to trust Him--is sin; but a doubt concerning supernatural manifestations is simply a call to exercise the faculties, which all spiritual believers should use to discern "good and evil." The deep doubt concerning some supernatural experiences is therefore not a "temptation," but really the Holy Spirit moving the spiritual faculties to action according to 1 Cor. 2: 15, "He that is spiritual judgeth--i.e., examineth--all things," the "things of God" thus being "spiritually discerned" (A.V.)note 11

NO "CONTRADICTION" IN WORKING OF SPIRIT OF GOD

A "doubt" generally first pierces the mind either (1) from truth pointed out by others, or (2) arises from some flaw in the experience which arrests the attention of the believer. In the case of some supernatural manifestation, for instance, which bore the appearance of being Divine, there was some slight contradiction which perplexed the soul. And as no contradictions can possibly occur in any of the workings of the Spirit of God, Who is the Spirit of Truth, one single contradiction is sufficient to reveal a lying spirit at work. This axiom must not be ignored. For instance, a believer declares, under supernatural "power"--assumed to be Divine--concerning one who is ill, that God purposes the restoration of that one, yet the sick one dies. This is a "contradiction" which should be fully examined, and not put aside as among things "not to be understood;" for the supernatural element in the declaration could not be of the Spirit of God, Who cannot depart from truth in His revelation of the Will of God.

To "prove the spirits" (1 John 4: 1), so as to discern between the "Spirit of Truth" and the "spirit of error" is a clear command to the children of God, as well as to "prove all things," and hold fast that which is "good" (1 Thess. 5: 21); bring "to the proof . . . with all longsuffering" (2 Tim. 4: 2, R.V. m.). To question until all things have stood the test of full examination is the safest course, and is far removed from the doubting of God Himself, in His faithfulness and love, the only doubt which is sin.

ADMITTANCE OF POSSIBILITY OF DECEPTION

(2) ADMITTANCE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF DECEPTION is the second stage in the breaking of truth upon the mind, although it may sometimes precede the doubt. To admit the possibility of being deceived--or mistaken--in any aspect of new experience or action, or even view of truth, is really a possibility which should be acknowledged by every believer; and yet so subtle is the deception of the enemy, that almost invariably the attitude of each one is, that "others" may be open to deception, and he or she is the exception to the rule.

This certainty of personal exception is so deep seated with the most visibly deceived person, that the long battle is simply to obtain entrance to the mind for the one thought of possible deception, in any point at all. The believer seems armed with unshaken assurance that if others be misled, he certainly is not; he "beholdeth the mote" in his brother's eye, and is blind--blind to the "beam" in his own. But an open attitude to truth says, "Why not I as well as others? May not my assurance of safety be a deception of the enemy, as much as the deception I see in others?"

Why all believers should admit the possibility of deception by the deceiving spirits, may be considered just here.

THE BASIC FACT OF THE FALL

The primary fact to be recognized by every human being is the complete and utter ruin of the first creation at the Fall, when the First Adam admitted the poison of the serpent, which permeated and corrupted his whole being beyond repair. This fact of the utter corruption of the human race as a consequence of this is unmistakably declared in the New Testament:--

"The old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit." (Eph. 4: 22 R.V.)

"Being darkened in their understanding; alienated from the life of God." (Eph. 4: 18).

"We all once lived in the lusts of the flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest." (Eph. 2: 3).

Thus the Apostle described the whole race of man, Gentile and Jew, Pharisee and Publican--in all, he said, "the prince of the power of the air" wrought, as "the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience."

These facts declared by the Word of God, and the reality of the blinded mind (2 Cor. 4: 4), and ruined condition of every human being, is the **ONLY BASIS UPON WHICH THE TRUTHS WE ARE CONSIDERING IN THIS BOOK CAN BE UNDERSTOOD, AND PROVED TO BE TRUE, IN EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICE.**

ADMITTANCE OF POSSIBLE DECEPTION LOGICALLY REASONABLE

The second fundamental fact--and the logical outcome of the first--is that unless regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and the indwelling of the Spirit, means (1) sinlessness, and (2) the present possession of a resurrection body, every part of a believer not yet renewed, and freed by the redemption of Calvary from the effects of the Fall, **MEANS GROUND FOR THE POSSIBLE ENTRY AND POSSESSION OF DECEIVING SPIRITS.** Since absolute sinlessness, and the present possession of the resurrection body are not clearly taught in the Scriptures, as attainable whilst on earth, the admittance of possible deception, and entry of evil spirits to the outer man of mind or body, is logically and reasonably possible for all; even whilst the spirit and heart of the man is renewed by the Holy Spirit. If we come to facts of experience, the proofs are so abundant as to be beyond our power to handle in the limited space of this book, not only in the unregenerate world, but in those who are undoubtedly children of God, and spiritual believers. note 12

If we knew ourselves, and our actual condition as sinners, simply as depicted in God's Word, we should be in greater safety from the enemy. It is the ignorance of our true condition, note 13 apart from the new life from God implanted in us, and our blind confidence of safety, without an intelligent basis for our faith, which lays us open to being deceived by Satan through our very certainty of being free from his deception.

After admitting the possibility of deception in supernatural things, and a doubt has come in to the mind whether certain "experiences," either personal or otherwise, were of God after all, the next stage is,

(3) THE DISCOVERY OF THE DECEPTION. Light and truth alone can make free, note 14 and when once a doubt comes in, and the man opens his mind to the truth that he is as liable to be deceived as anyone else, then to the open mind and attitude, light is given (John 3: 21). Sometimes the specific deception is seen at once, but more often the discovery is gradual, and patience is needed while the light slowly dawns.

Certain facts in connection with various experiences of the past, which the believer has failed to note, may now emerge into the light, and the half truths of the Adversary which he had used to deceive, are clearly seen--the twisting of words, the wrenching of sentences out of their context in the Scriptures, note 15 all come into view as the light is given. Then comes:--

(4) THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE DECEPTION. This is now imperative. The truth must not only be faced, but owned, so that things are called by their right names, and the father of lies defeated by the weapon of truth.