

Dona Iris, Freed From Bondage

Luke 10:19

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

The complete story of Dona Iris I cannot tell because we were not directly involved with her over a long period of time. But we were acquainted with her from the work in Jardim das Palmeiras in Porto Alegre. Dona Iris came to Porto Alegre from the city of Belo Horizonte, where she was raised. Her husband worked with marble cutting and the work possibilities are what drew him to the south. Dona Iris had been an influential leader in spiritism in Belo and was well known for her powers. She had attained to the position of "Mãe-de-santo" which is, "mother of saints", so designated because she was a priestess of *Umbanda* and could contact the spirit world. In other words she was a very powerful medium to communicate with spirits who communicated through her.

She rarely spoke specifically of her exploits because at the time of her mediumship, she entered into a trance and could remember nothing from when she was in that state. She only heard of her own exploits from others who accompanied her and were eye witnesses. They had related that at the midnight services in which they were to go to a cemetery as a group to offer sacrifices, perform rituals, etc. she would approach the chained and locked gates, go into a trance, and by some amazing feat would pass through the gates and lead them into the cemetery.

Dona Iris first came in contact with the Gospel when her neighbor, the Jardim das Palmeiras pastor's mother, invited her to a Bible study in her home. Iris attended and listened, carefully asking questions. It was the first time she had ever heard the message of God's love and salvation through faith in him. When the pastor asked if anyone wanted to receive Christ, she was one of the first to raise her hand. She prayed the sinner's prayer and received Christ as her Savior. Immediately she began attending the Alliance Church and learned more about Christ. Her questions were many and sincere, even though often difficult to answer, because her entire orientation throughout life had been spiritist. Many of her questions were reflective ones. Learning a new Bible truth she would question, "Why do the spiritists say...(such and such)?"

The oddity in her story is that there was no power encounter, as one would expect when a medium comes to Christ. The struggle seemed to be a physical one, wherein she was sickly from the time she became a Christian. The only experience of "deliverance" as one would expect, came after church one evening. She had been feeling down and ill for some time and doubts were

plaguing her mind. For some unknown reason, after church she was overpowered by something and began writhing and struggling as if in a wrestling match. The evil spirit spoke out and claimed her to be his possession.

The young pastor was startled by all this and began to pray, pleading the blood of Jesus, and rebuking the evil spirit. Her condition worsened as she was being overpowered and the evil spirit would not leave. At that point a young Chilean woman, recently converted, stepped up to her and putting her hands on Dona Iris, rebuked the evil spirit in Jesus' name and told him to get out. Immediately the evil spirit left her and she returned to her normal state. We do not understand all of this or why her case seemed so different, but in any event, she was delivered and by a mere child in the faith who didn't stand there trembling with fear, but in simple faith commanded the situation as she knew we have the right to do.

How often we shake and tremble in fear at such manifestations of evil spirits, but Paul exhorts the Philippians (1:28) *"In nothing terrified by your adversaries."* We must recognize our safety in Christ and our position with him. Jesus said, *"I give you authority over all the powers of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you."*