

An Evil Spirit in This Place

Luke 10:18-20

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Sometimes we as rational, logical, humanistic Christians tend to explain things away in natural ways. But often those things that are very strange to us, things that bring oppression, are really attacks from the enemy. We don't always recognize these attacks because we think they come from human beings. We think they come from people with attitudes. Perhaps we think people just don't like us. Instead we ought to see behind the evil. The Apostle Paul said, "*We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places,*" so we ought to understand that we are not wrestling against human factors. Behind every human evil is a demonic spirit that is stirring up trouble. You can find this true all through the Scriptures.

That is not to say that everything that goes bump in the dark, everything that goes wrong, everything that is different or creating difficulties in our lives, is of the devil. But certainly behind the scenes there is an evil one that manipulates people and things. We see that's true in the book of Job. It was natural phenomena that came against Job, but Satan was using those things to discourage him and to get him to turn away from the Lord. There were diseases that afflicted Job, but behind the disease was the destroyer. Behind those scenes God "lifted the curtain" so we could see that it is the evil one who seeks to devour and destroy.

There was a situation in another church that really became very oppressive. It was another church filled with conflict and infighting. Most of the board members told me they hated their church and wanted to leave. There was a nasty split some years before. People were still upset about it. It caused great dissension in the congregation. Even after the people who caused the split left the church, there was left behind the residual effects of unforgiveness, anger and bitterness.

After the first year there we discovered a gross sexual sin that had been behind the scenes for 50 years. It became our responsibility to discipline a man who was involved in homosexual acts within the church and within the community. As you can imagine that did not make us very popular. It was not easy to do go to the whole congregation and expose his sin. Some did not agree with church

discipline. Many of them thought we were overdramatizing it. So, in anger they left the church. In one week we lost thirteen families. Of those that remained behind there was certainly an attitude of hatred toward me and toward the elders of the congregation. We could feel it in the church. There was a palpable sense of demonic activity while I preached the word. Worship was stifled. The presence of God was not evident. People were not being saved. People were not getting right with God. . It was as if the word of God was being preached, but the words were falling to the ground and not going into the hearts of the people. I told my elders that there would come a day when we needed to deal with the oppression of the enemy that was prevalent in our church. That time came a couple of months later.

I was in the pulpit having the same kind of problem I'd experienced in other places when there was demonic activity in the church. I was stumbling over words and having difficulty focusing my thoughts. There seemed to be confusion in my own mind how to communicate effectively. As I looked up in the congregation I saw the angry faces of those that hated me. Those faces were hard, hateful, angry and defiant.

I had told the elders that if that would ever happen I would stop my preaching and allow about 10 seconds to go by in silence, then I would say, "Elders I need you now!" I had instructed them to go to the four corners of our sanctuary and stand as men on guard to prayerfully resist, rebuke and bind the enemy in Jesus' name. None of them had ever had experience with this so it was all theoretical up to that point.

When that day came I was impressed by the response of my elders. I stopped my preaching in the middle of a sentence. I was silent for at least 10 seconds. I looked at the congregation. I looked at every face. Then I said, "Elders I need you now!"

Immediately three of my elders got up and went to the three corners of the sanctuary. One elder was missing. Later I discovered he had been monitoring the hallways in the children's wing. There was no amplification of the message on speakers going back to those rooms. He told me later, "Pastor, I kid you not; I heard a voice say, 'The pastor needs you now!'" Then he added, "Pastor I am not a woo-woo person. I am not a Pentecostal. I don't hear voices. I'm not even sure if I believe in that kind of stuff, but this morning I heard an audible voice say, 'Pastor Dick needs you now!' I ran to the sanctuary, took my place in one of the corners and stood there resisting and rebuking the enemy in Jesus' name."

That morning the evil spirit of bitterness broke. That evil spirit of anger broke. That evil spirit of oppression broke. The people who hated me left and never

came back to church after that Sunday. God delivered us from the oppression of the enemy.

Angels Surrounded the Church

A few weeks before this I received a letter from a person in the community. In that letter she said, "Pastor you don't know me and I don't know you, but as I was praying God revealed to me that there is a great oppression in your church. I don't need to know what that is, but I wanted to tell you that as I was praying I had a vision, in that vision I saw angels surrounding the whole property of the church. Pastor the angels were there in warfare garments with sword in hand opposing the enemy. God has told me to write you and let you know that you are not alone. The battle is not yours, the battle is the Lord's and God will be the victor.

What a wonderful experience to know that God is listening to our prayers. God hears our cries. God knows what needs to be done.