

Spirits Among Us!

By Wayne Vasilenko

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I remember a comedian popular many years ago named Flip Wilson, he was a funny man whose humor was rated (G) as I remember it; I could be wrong about that because I didn't watch all of his programs on TV, but I remember his signature line was, "The devil made me do it." He came to mind as me and my wife listened to a teaching on Spirits, dealing with both the Holy Spirit and Evil Spirits also known as Demons. Many people blow off talk of the spiritual realm as fantasy, but I have had a few experiences involving the "Spirit Realm" in the past that I have not shared with many people. A few years ago I was listening to a young assistant pastor preaching at a church my wife and I had attended for a number of years; he was telling a story about a man who came to him for counseling, the man was convinced that he was possessed by a demon. As the pastor mentioned this you could see a smirk come on his face as he rolled his eyes, you know the way that would suggest he was talking about some kind of nut case or someone spaced out on drugs. He concluded the story by saying that he felt that the guy was indeed a "Nut" blowing off the possibility that the guy could be right about being demon possessed. This disturbed me greatly. In the NIV Bible the word Demon appears 33 times; it appears in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and in Acts. The number of appearances varies in different translations due to the fact that the words demon and devil are sometimes translated interchangeably. The point is that the bible does talk about demons and demon possession, so what did this pastor find so humorous? Looking back, that particular church is one of those that play down the "Gifts of the Spirit." You know, they teach that the gifts that Jesus and the early disciples demonstrated no longer exist. I suppose if you believe the Holy Spirit doesn't operate in the way as it did back then, it would logically follow that you would believe that the devil and his demons probably don't function the same way either. I beg to differ on both of those points!

Hebrews 13:8 (New King James Version)

Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The church I mentioned above preaches the "Holy Trinity" without hesitation, (God the Father- God the Son- God the Holy Spirit) so that being said, the question is, how can one part of the Trinity change without affecting the others? God the Father does not change Jesus the Son does not change, but the Holy Spirit changes? This doesn't make sense to me. Think back for a moment to what is referred as the "Great Commission."

Matthew 28:18-20 (New King James Version)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

I have referred to this passage before in other teachings but what I want to bring out now are a few key points. The first point is that this directive given to the disciples to make disciples of all nations is an on-going process that goes beyond not only the life span of the disciples that Jesus was directly talking to at the time, but also the disciples that would be a result of their ministries. Another key point is that this directive goes beyond the boundaries of the world the disciples knew at the time. Many new nations have come into being since Jesus gave this commission to His disciples; this also reinforces the fact that this is an on-going process. Jesus directed them to preach the message the He had given them concerning God the father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

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Jesus had also taught His disciples about "evil spirits" and many times He demonstrated His power over evil spirits to them. With this in mind, consider the following passages paying particular attention to Verse 12.

John 14:11-14 (New International Version)

¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. ¹² I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

It is interesting that Jesus teaches us that not only will disciples have and would retain the power to perform miracles, but also as stated in verse 12, "Anyone" who has faith in Him (Jesus) will do even greater miracles than He! What does the word "Anyone" mean, is it limited to the disciples? Many churches and religions teach that it is! As a famous bible teacher friend of mine says, "they don't let the word of God get in the way of what they believe." The reason I bring this up is to illustrate the fact that the Holy Spirit is still in operation and likewise evil or demonic spirits are still among us.

A Face to Face Encounter

BE WARNED: I WILL BE ALLUDING TO SOME LANGUAGE SOME MAY FIND OFFENSIVE

IN ORDER FOR YOU TO UNDERSTAND WHAT I WAS EXPERIENCING

The story I am about to tell you took place somewhere around the year 1976. It was Sunday afternoon when my wife and I went to visit my Grandmother after attending church. We had our son with us who was still an infant. My grandmother lived in the upstairs apartment of a two family house and her daughter, my Aunt lived in the first floor apartment. As a child I was close to my Aunt and her family, but when I got older her brother, my Uncle Joe and his wife Delores led me to the Lord, that's when everything changed. My Aunt became hostile to all of us, none of us knew why at first. She called my Uncle Joe and Aunt Delores many times, sometimes in a rage, cursing them and the God that they brought before my family and me. I was young in the Lord at the time as I got saved in 1972. Normally the downstairs door at my Grandmother's house which led to a hallway and stairs to both apartments was open, this day it was locked. I was standing at the front door with a brown paper shopping bag which contained my bible at the very bottom. On top of the bible were diapers and baby food and various other items. There was no way to tell from the outside what was in that bag especially what was at the bottom. You could not see through the bag at all! I knocked on the front door loudly (I don't remember there being a door bell) and soon afterward my Aunt came to the door. What happened next, I will remember for the rest of my life! As soon as she opened the door her eyes immediately went to the bag I was holding and her demeanor changed to a look of rage. Her first words were, "Get that F'---ing bible away from me... what are you doing here...get away from me and take your F'---ing bible!" As I stood there with my mouth hanging open, half in shock, and half in fear she mumbled a few more foul words and went promptly back into her apartment slamming the door behind her. From that point on, I avoided contact with this particular Aunt, and my wife would not let our son near her.

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This event was one of the most frightening things that ever happened to me! I don't remember the exact time line, but the next time I spoke to my Aunt was at her husband's funeral a few years later. His name was also Joe and I remember him as being a very sweet person always kind and happy. How he was like that while living with what I saw in my Aunt that day was always a mystery to me. At the funeral wake, I went to my Aunt to give her my condolences and the first thing she said to me was, "I don't want to hear about the bible and your Jesus." She again embellished her statements with some more "foul curse words", but this time I will spare you those details. I think by now you get the picture. Because of this experience, no one can ever convince me that evil spirits don't exist. And no one can convince me that demon possession is a thing of the past. When my former pastor made light of the possibility of demon possession in the man that came to him for help, it triggered a flashback to the day I saw a demon face to face. I pray that no one reading this has an experience like this. I also pray that the man reaching out for help found someone who took him seriously. We will continue this study of "Spirits Among Us" next time as we look at Biblical Accounts of Evil Spirit Encounters.