

Witchcraft – the greatest barrier to revival in the church. Study No.1 – Manipulation.

In undertaking these studies there was no intention of exposing members of the church, clergy or lay, in order to make them feel guilty, the sole intention is to expose the spirit of witchcraft and show from scripture how we can gain victory over it in Jesus name.

What is the greatest barrier of all to revival in the church? Without a doubt it is witchcraft. When a wrestler steps into a rink and wears a mask it is so that he can wrestle under several other names without being identified. This is exactly what happens with witchcraft – it goes under many other names, many of them seemingly harmless, but once we unmask witchcraft in every area of society we can destroy it.

The true definition of witchcraft is any attempt to manipulate people or events to your own advantage (whatever the reason be) and to gain authority for yourself or someone else other than they or you gaining that authority by what God does for you, or to illegitimately speed up that day by means other than through God's timing.

If witchcraft is not identified, unmasked and exposed for what it is then no church will ever be truly successful in the plans that God has for it. There are many forms of witchcraft that can be seen as innocent activity in the church and in society yet God hates it all and does not categorise one part of witchcraft as being less evil than any other, to Him it is all the same, and rightly so.

There are three categories that the activity of witchcraft can be listed under, these are Manipulation, Domination and Sorcery. We will see through these studies how each type is manifest. Probably one of the best known references to witchcraft in the Bible is found in 1 Samuel chapter 15. To understand it properly we need to clearly see the context of these verses.

Israel. In 2 Samuel chapter 15 verses 1 to 12 we read the story of Absalom, David's son who was next in line for the throne but he could not wait for the throne to be passed to him in God's timing, he tried to manipulate people and circumstances in order to obtain the throne now, even though what he did was treason. He would not wait for God's timing and tried to bring it about in his own.

“In the course of time, Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him. He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out to him, “What town are you from?” He would answer, “Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel.”

Then Absalom would say to him, “Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you.” Absalom would add, “If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that they receive justice.”

Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the hearts of the people of Israel.

At the end of four years, Absalom said to the king, “Let me go to Hebron and fulfill a vow I made to The LORD. While your servant was living at Geshur in Aram, I made this vow: ‘If The LORD takes me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in Hebron.’”The king said to him, “Go in peace.” So he went to Hebron.

Then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, “As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, ‘Absalom is king in Hebron.’” Two hundred men from Jerusalem had accompanied Absalom. They had been invited as guests and went quite innocently, knowing nothing about the matter.

While Absalom was offering sacrifices, he also sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counselor, to come from Giloh, his hometown. And so the conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom’s following kept on increasing. Absalom should have become King of Israel after David his father, but he tried to take matters into his own hands instead of waiting on The Lord and eventually lost everything as a result of trying to manipulated people and circumstances to his favour.

As Jesus found during His ministry on earth, if your heart is set on pleasing God you will undoubtedly make a lot of enemies on the way, but even though you will be despised in the eyes of man you will be thought highly of in the sight of God. Everyone in the bible is flawed in their character though this may be the case The Lord looks for someone whose heart is on knowing and pleasing Him.

One of the examples of how this type of witchcraft can enter the church is through someone trying to split the church in order that they may follow them not the Pastor, and then they can raise themselves up as Pastor of that new church that they start and fulfil the longing of their ego. As you can see this is not the act of a humble servant of God and the people but someone who is seeking self promotion rather than Godly promotion.

It may well then turn out that this Pastor, having set himself up in a new church will threaten to curse anyone who does not submit to his authority as a Pastor, although he does not say it this means irrespective of whether the way he is leading the church is right or wrong. That is not submission to Godly authority that is manipulation of the people which is also very much an activity of witchcraft. Some people will call it “heavy shepherding”, since this is manipulation God calls it witchcraft.

Another example of how this may work is if the Pastor or leader of an itinerant ministry embarrasses a person in the congregation to give a sum of money much larger than they can afford to give by saying –“We have to raise \$10,000 dollars for this project, Brother Thomas, The Lord has told me that you want to start the ball rolling by making a donation of \$1000 dollars, is that correct?”

Most people would not then publicly put the Pastor in the wrong by denying it but would just make out the cheque and avoid any more obvious embarrassment. This is a

manipulative way of raising money and therefore comes under one of the main activities of witchcraft, that of manipulation. God does not need your help in raising money for a project; He is perfectly able to do an even better job without it.

Another example of manipulation is found in 1 Kings chapter 21 verses 1 to 16. "Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. Ahab said to Naboth, "Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth."

But Naboth replied, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors." So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my ancestors." He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, "Why are you so sullen? Why won't you eat?"

He answered her, "Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, 'Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard. Jezebel his wife said, "Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city with him. In those letters she wrote: "Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them bring charges that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death."

So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them. They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, "Naboth has cursed both God and the king."

So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death. Then they sent word to Jezebel: "Naboth has been stoned to death." As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead." When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.

We know that this is the way some people work, if they cannot get something the legitimate way they will try to do it illegitimately, even if it means murder. The Apostle James had a word or two to say about those sort of people in James chapter 4 verses 1 to 10 inclusive.

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask

God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

Some people are literally prepared to kill in these days, that is obvious through the news bulletins that we hear so often, this is witchcraft, trying to obtain by illegitimate means something that you would never get legitimately, and therefore obviously doing it for self motivation, even when what you want is something that God has said you cannot have, or you will have to wait until later for it when He will give you what you want in His perfect timing.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 1 to 5 we read: "Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.

The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

It is a known fact that some women are so manipulative that they refuse their husbands his conjugal rights until he agrees to do what she is demanding of him. This is manipulation of the most obvious nature. In the case with Ahab and Jezebel both parties need to repent, Jezebel of having murder in her heart and being willing to kill for what could not be traded for and Nadab for being so weak and allowing his wife to carry out her murderous and manipulative plan.

Somebody said recently that marriage is a partnership of equals; that is not what scripture says. In Ephesians chapter 5 verses 21 to 33 we read the following: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and

to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body.”

This does not mean that you have to beat your wife into submission as happens in some so-called religions, but to do it in the way Christ intended is that when a decision has to be made that effects the home the husband will get together with his wife and talk it over with her. When a decision has been made (hopefully as a result of such a discussion) it is the man’s responsibility to carry it out, and if it is wrong he will get the blame for it from God.

It is not for the husband to ignore the views of his wife but to seek to know them on all major issues and only afterwards make the final decision as head of the household. Unfortunately there are many men who have totally abdicated their responsibility in the running of the home and submit to their wives in all things because they are too weak to make a decision for themselves.

An example of this is something that happens in many homes from time to time. The wife speaks to the husband about a matter in hand and asks for a decision on it. The man then immediately asks the wife what she things ought to happen, then when she has stated it simply says “Right then that is what we will do.” There has been no discussion about it but the man is too weak to make a decision for himself and therefore avoids having to make one.

If anything goes wrong it will be (according to the husband) the woman who is responsible for the problem because it was her decision, were as biblically God will blame the man for being so weak as to not be able to make a decision by himself, and also hold him responsible if something goes wrong because it is his position and responsibility to make the decisions around the house.

In our next study we shall look at the second characteristic of witchcraft which is domination.