

The Nature of the Occult

by Derek Prince

Derek Prince explores the nature of witchcraft, its connection to rebellion against God, and its manifestations in society and the church.

Duration: 58:02

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:5, Acts 16:16-18, Romans 6:6, Galatians 3:1-5, Hebrews 10:14, Revelation 9:21

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "The Cross"

Description

This sermon delves into the nature of witchcraft, highlighting how it operates in the natural realm through manipulation, intimidation, and domination, as well as in the supernatural realm through spells, curses, divination, and sorcery. The speaker emphasizes the importance of the cross of Jesus, which provides the only basis for God's provision, the means of Satan's defeat, and the source of power for Christian living. The sermon warns against the dangers of legalism and fleshly efforts that replace the power of the cross with human rules and efforts, leading to a departure from trusting in God's supernatural grace.

Transcript

Now, The Enemies We Face, Part Two, The Nature of Witchcraft. This is the second talk in our series on The Enemies We Face. In our previous talk we looked at the nature and the structure of Satan's kingdom, and we saw that his kingdom operates on two levels.

The upper level is in the heavenlies, somewhere in the heavenly region that is not the heaven of God, and is not the visible heaven. And his upper level consists of rebellious angels, who are in opposition to God. And then the lower level consists of men, who are not surrendered to God and to the righteous government of Jesus, the Messiah and the Savior.

And I pointed out that the key word that describes all those in Satan's kingdom is the word rebel. They are all in rebellion against God, whether they are angels or whether they are men. And then we saw that the gods of the pagan world, whether they are Greece or Rome or whatever other nation, are different ways of naming and depicting Satan's kingdom of angels.

And all those who have been worshipped by pagan religions and pagan societies are satanic angels. The particular generic name for the way that men seek to contact these satanic angels is witchcraft. You could say that witchcraft is the religion of fallen humanity.

It's got countless different forms and ceremonies, but it has this one common feature that it's different ways of contacting different satanic spiritual beings. There are many different ceremonies. Most of them are in some way sensual or cruel or defiling.

The things that men have done through the ages to somehow ingratiate themselves with Satan and his kingdom have been really terrible to contemplate. I spoke a little bit about the American Indians as an example of a racial group that have for the most part not escaped from the dominion of Satan. And just as a matter of interest, I was reading in the National Geographical Magazine their main ceremony is what they call the sun dance in which they fasten hooks in their skin and then hang by those hooks and tear great portions of their skin out.

They do this in order to worship their God. There are countless other different forms of such worship all over the earth. As I said, go to any kind of society that still retains the marks of its primitive nature and there's one kind of person that you'll find everywhere with a different name in each language, but it is witch doctor.

And in many of those societies really the most powerful person is the witch doctor. We have a remarkable example even in the Bible. It says that Philip went down to Samaria and preached in the city of Samaria.

But there was a man there who dominated the whole of that city. His name was Simon. He was a sorcerer, that is a practitioner of witchcraft.

And it says the whole city was in fear of him because of the magic that he used. That's not an unusual situation in a certain sense. That's a pretty typical picture of pagan primitive society.

So there is a direct connection between rebellion and witchcraft. When I say rebellion, I mean rebellion against God. This is brought out very clearly in 1 Samuel 15 and verse 23.

These are words that were spoken by the prophet Samuel to King Saul after Saul himself had become a rebel. He had refused to obey the particular charge and commission that had been given him by God through the prophet Samuel. And here Samuel is telling Saul God's estimate of his conduct.

And he says, we could read verse 22, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. And now he goes on with this definition of witchcraft. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he also has rejected you from being king. Samuel makes two comparisons there. Rebellion is a twin of witchcraft.

Stubbornness is a twin of idolatry. I'm not going to comment on idolatry at any length, but let me point out one way in which a stubborn person is an idolater. A stubborn person makes idols of his own opinions.

And that's a form of idolatry. You see it's interesting to consider our attitude in the church today. We won't accept, for the most part, drunkards or openly immoral people.

But how many stubborn people do we have in church? And in God's eyes, they're idolaters. We wouldn't have somebody who came into the kind of churches we're used to with a wooden idol, fall down and worship in front of the church. We'd say we don't tolerate that.

But alas, I'm afraid we tolerate a lot of stubborn people. And often we let them get away with it. But let's return to the other comparison.

Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. Very, very important. The root of witchcraft is rebellion.

And wherever you find rebellion, you can anticipate witchcraft. I learned this in the ministry of deliverance. For instance, I learned that if a person needed deliverance from a spirit of witchcraft, almost invariably they also needed deliverance from rebellion.

And conversely, where you encounter a spirit of rebellion, you better check to see that there isn't also a spirit of witchcraft. They're close together. Let me try and explain to you simply how this comes about.

You see, rebellion rejects God's authority, legitimate authority, just like King Saul rejected the authority of God's Word. But you can't exist in life for long without authority. So if you don't have legitimate authority, it's going to be replaced by illegitimate authority.

And if you have illegitimate authority, it has to be supported by illegitimate power. And the illegitimate power that supports rebellion is the power of witchcraft. So really, wherever you find illegitimate authority being exercised, you better be prepared to deal with witchcraft.

There's a very clear example in the United States in the 1960s. There was the rebellious generation. They turned their backs on almost all accepted forms of authority-- parents, church, government, whatever.

And they became a generation of rebels. Now I've dealt with many of them, many of them that met the Lord are my friends today. But almost without one exception, all those who went in rebellion went into the occult, went into the satanic supernatural, went into witchcraft.

This is the logic of spiritual experience. It is almost impossible to be deeply involved in rebellion without sooner or later coming under the power of witchcraft. If we go back to the example of King Saul for a moment, if you remember the story, he disobeyed Samuel's injunction to slaughter all the animals that had been captured.

And he kept, as he called it, the best to offer to God. God said, I'm not interested in your sacrifice because it comes out of disobedience. Now Saul himself as king of Israel had actually put away all the witches from Israel.

But just before his death, in desperation, when he couldn't hear from God, he himself sought to a witch. That's not an accident. That's cause and effect.

I want to emphasize this. Wherever there is rebellion, sooner or later there will be witchcraft. And another point is this, that when you want to deal with witchcraft, the satanic supernatural, the occult in all its forms, if you only deal with the occult, you've not dealt with the root, because the root is rebellion.

Now I want to give you a little picture of what witchcraft is like. This is something that God has given me what I think I could call a postgraduate course in. I didn't apply for it.

I just got enrolled. Ruth and I got enrolled together. As a matter of fact, I'll tell you briefly how it happened.

We were in a conference in the center of the United States in 1979, just about a year after we were married, less than a year. And it was a family conference. And the theme was essentially dealing with

family relationships and so on.

But in the middle, a young man stood up. I don't think I've ever met him. I don't know who he was.

But he gave a tremendously powerful prophecy which was fortunately recorded on tape so that I've seen the written version. And in this prophecy, God said that all that he had been doing against witchcraft up to that time was merely preliminary skirmishes. But from that point onwards, 1979, he was declaring total war on witchcraft.

And he said the reason is this, because witchcraft has millions of men bound whom I need in my end time army. And then he also told us something else which we didn't really understand at the time. He said, if you will join me in this war, and we understood that he was calling us to join him, and we did.

He said, you will encounter people who are under curses that have been passed down through families from generation to generation. But you do not need to be afraid. You will be able to release them.

Well at that time, that was just a statement to Ruth and me. But in the subsequent period of nearly ten years, we have encountered thousands of people under curses passed down through families. And God has given us, by his grace, the ability to release them.

This confirms to me that this prophecy was from God because it contained a prediction which we didn't know anything about which has been absolutely fulfilled. So that's how I've come to know something about witchcraft. As a matter of fact, I had gotten involved somewhat earlier in brief encounters with witchcraft.

At a certain point, I think I could say I was a kind of pioneer in the ministry of deliverance. And I was a very controversial figure at that time. Some people loved me and some people hated me, but very few people were indifferent.

And a lot of the cases that I dealt with, the person who needed deliverance had a spirit of witchcraft. Well I was a pretty orthodox Pentecostal at that time, and I'm still a Pentecostal, but maybe not quite so orthodox. And the people that needed deliverance were somebody like, you know, the pastor's daughter, or the deacon's wife, or the church soloist.

I mean the last people who ought to have needed deliverance. And I really became concerned about this. I said, God, I do hope I'm not getting into something that's not right.

So please, I said, would you tell me what is witchcraft? And I believe this is the answer he gave me. Witchcraft is the attempt to control people and make them do what you want by the use of any spirit which is not the Holy Spirit. And then he said, as a kind of corollary, if any person has a spirit which he or she uses, it is not the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is God and no one uses God.

I'll say that first part again. Witchcraft, in its essence, is the attempt to control people and make them do what you want by the use of any spirit which is not the Holy Spirit. And when my eyes were opened to that, I saw why the church was full of witchcraft.

Because there are a lot of people who feel they want people to do something and they use any means they can do to get them to do it. Most of them don't realize what they're doing. Now I want to take three aspects of witchcraft.

First of all, as a work of the flesh, which many people don't realize. Second, as an evil spiritual power. And thirdly, the working of witchcraft within the church.

Let's take it first of all as a work of the flesh. Turn to the list of the works of the flesh in Galatians chapter 5, verses 19 and 20. Now I want to say that in various translations different words are used.

Some translations say witchcraft, some say sorcery and so on. In just a little while I'll give you a delineation of the three main branches of witchcraft. That's witchcraft, divination and sorcery.

But you find here in this passage some translations say witchcraft, some say sorcery. Let me say they're really just different names for the same power. So Paul says in verse 19 of Galatians 5, Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery.

But the old King James says witchcraft. So there right in the middle of the list of the works of the flesh are idolatry and witchcraft. That is there the expression of man's carnal fallen nature.

And I say that's the way the flesh, the fallen nature is. We in our fallen nature desire to control people. We desire to get people to do what we want.

And very often we use illegitimate means to get that. Now this kind of operation I say has three key words. And I want you to listen carefully because wherever you encounter these operations you are encountering witchcraft.

And it may be you've never realized it up till now. The three key words are manipulate, intimidate and dominate. Now the end purpose is dominate.

Control people, make them do what you want. There are two alternative routes. One is manipulate, the other is dominate.

And it depends on the situation and the purpose which route a person will follow. But whether they use manipulation or whether they use intimidation, the end purpose is control, it's domination. Now in the natural, we're not talking about anything supernatural yet, in the natural witchcraft as a work of the flesh operates really in every area of society.

Some of you are going to go out of here and you're going to see things in a very different light. I hope the first thing you'll do is look in the mirror. Before you point out your husband or your wife or your grandmother or your mother-in-law or whoever it may be, just check on yourself.

Let me give you a few examples. For instance, in the family life. Now whether people like it or not, God has ordained a certain order in the family.

The husband is the head of the wife. People can stand the family up on its head but God hasn't changed the order. And beneath the authority of husband and wife there is children who are, in God's order, subject to the authority of their parents.

Now what witchcraft will do is use either manipulation or intimidation to set aside the divine authorized order. Let's take children first. Children are master manipulators.

You don't have to be old. A child of five can be a master manipulator. All right, suppose mother has guests to tea or coffee depending on the social situation.

And there are biscuits or cookies depending on your vocabulary. And the little child of five knows that mama doesn't want her to have cookies, biscuits. But she knows that when guests are there it's going to be very difficult for mother to say no.

So when the guests are there she comes in and says Mama, may I have a cookie? And you know, what is the mother going to do? Well, she probably gives way. She's been manipulated. Years and years ago my first wife and I lived next to a Pentecostal family.

Father, mother, and I think the daughter was about three years old. Now in those days people used to go grocery shopping on Saturday nights. So when they dressed up to go out grocery shopping on Saturday night, the little girl was a little angel.

She toddled along happily. When they wanted to go to the Sunday school on Sunday morning that little creature would lie on its back and scream with her legs in the air to prevent the parents getting to the place where they needed to be. Now that little girl didn't reason but there was a force in her that had no objection to the parents going to the grocery store but strongly rejected the parents going to the place where they could hear the Word of God.

So you begin to work that out. A fellow preacher of mine said a little baby of six weeks is in its cot and it's wet. It needs to have its diaper or its nappy changed.

So it cries. Along comes mother, picks up the little baby, changes it and then cuddles it, which of course the baby loves. Well, next time the baby wants to be cuddled it cries even when its nappy isn't wet.

You see, what's that? Manipulation. You see, this is something natural to fallen man. It's not only children.

It can be mothers and fathers. Now the normal way for a woman to operate is manipulation. The possible way for a father to operate is intimidation.

But each of them has the same aim. Control the other. So the wife doesn't get her way.

She throws a cheerful fit, burns the food and makes her husband's life miserable. So in the end, what does he do? He gives way. Or it's the husband.

Now there's many different ways this can happen but the husband may be a brute. He may be a strong man with a bad temper and if he doesn't get his way he shouts and becomes violent and threatens. And the whole family tiptoes around.

The one thing they want to avoid is another fit of temper by daddy. What's he doing? He's intimidating them. What's his aim? To get his way.

You see, it can well be that a husband and wife have differences. The divine order is that they talk it out face to face, prayerfully and seek God. But manipulation never faces the real issue.

It always goes round behind. The real issues are never brought out into the light and there are who knows how many millions of married couples even in this land that never really bring their differences out into the open. But each tries to go round behind the other to get what he or she wants.

That's manipulation. Take the church. There's many, many examples of manipulation in the church.

We'll take a Pentecostal congregation and I don't think there's much I don't know about Pentecostals. I mean, I've been an Anglican and I'm a Pentecostal and I think basically I know how they operate. I may be a bit out of date with Anglicans but there are all sorts of other people I don't know much about.

Anyhow, let's take a little Pentecostal congregation. There's a young pastor. It's his first pastorate.

There's only about a hundred people in the congregation and he's a little bit nervous and timid. And there's two very spiritual sisters. I mean, not just spiritual, but super spiritual.

And they know how the church ought to be run. They don't sit down prayerfully and talk it over with the pastor but one of them gets a tongue and then the other comes with the interpretation. And between them they tell the pastor what to do.

You think that doesn't happen? I can tell you it certainly does. What is that? Manipulation. That's right.

Many other areas. Business. People manipulate one another.

The boss may manipulate his secretary or the secretary may manipulate her boss. I can't take a lot of time this evening but you can see what I'm talking about is something that's natural to fallen man. This is witchcraft as a work of the flesh and its three trademarks are manipulate, intimidate and dominate.

And I would like to say wherever you encounter those things behind them is the part of witchcraft. And when your eyes are opened it's so much easier to deal with it. One of the most common tricks of witchcraft is to make you feel guilty.

Well you didn't come and see me when I was sick. There I was all alone. Never regard the fact that the other person had a lot to do.

I've learned this. If ever I find a person is making me feel guilty I stop and ask myself what's working through him. You see as I understand Scripture the Holy Spirit does not make people feel guilty.

He convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment. He'll put his finger on specific things and say you did that wrong. This is what you have to do.

You have to repent and put it right. But guilt is something that you never finish with. You know, did I really do enough? Ought I to have done more? What did I say wrong? Why doesn't she talk to me in church any longer? Another operation of witchcraft is trying to make you feel that the person's opinion and approval is very important.

If you don't do this I won't approve you. They don't say that but that's the implication. Again I've learned to ask myself when I'm confronted with that is that person's approval really so important to me that I'm going to allow myself to be manipulated by it.

And generally my conclusion is it doesn't matter so much. All right now we're going to move on. Let me point out a connecting link in James chapter 1 and verse 14.

You see this desire for power, for control, and also for knowledge is a strong feature of every human being. And Satan exploits this desire to get power over us. This is what James says in his epistle, chapter 1, verse 14.

Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desire or lust and enticed. So there is in you this desire for power, for control, for appreciation, for knowledge. It's in all of us.

It's born in us. But if Satan can begin to use that he'll get us under his control. See you couldn't count the number of people in this nation today who are involved in the occult.

I'm sure it must be at least 75% of people in this nation today are involved in the occult. What is the motive that Satan uses? The desire for power, the desire for control, and the desire for knowledge. What was the desire that first got the human race into trouble? Have you ever stopped to think? What was Adam desiring in one word? Knowledge, that's right.

And when he reached out for knowledge in an illegitimate way he became a captive of Satan. Uncounted millions of people are lured into the occult by the desire for knowledge. Where did my son go when he died? What did they end up by doing? Going to a seance.

Am I going to have a happy marriage? So what do people do? They go to whom? Fortune teller, that's right. That's the motivation. And that's what Satan exploits.

Now let's look at witchcraft as a spiritual power. Now we're talking about something that's supernatural. It's more than human ability.

Very important to understand that not all supernatural comes from God. A lot of it comes from Satan. There are, I believe, only two sources of the supernatural available to man, God or Satan.

Any supernatural power that does not come from God does come from Satan. As I said before, God's kingdom is a kingdom of light. Usually you know where you're at in God's kingdom.

Satan's kingdom is a kingdom of darkness. You don't know what's manipulating, what's controlling you, what's driving you. There are, I think, three main branches that we can describe in the English language.

In some other languages you might have to use slightly different terminology. They are witchcraft, divination and sorcery. And I'll try to give you a little picture of each.

I think they cover the whole field of the satanic supernatural. Now witchcraft is the power arm. Its product is power.

And it operates through such things as spells and curses. I think perhaps the most single powerful weapon of witchcraft is curses. It's a very old practice.

If you go turn to Numbers chapter 22 you'll find that Balaam was what we would call a witch doctor. Balaam is one of the most difficult types of people to classify that we still encounter today because he was open to supernatural from both sources, from God and from Satan. And there are a lot of people like that.

And they're the hardest to deal with because sometimes they're right and sometimes they're wrong. If a person's only open to God he'll always be right. If a person's only open to Satan it's wrong.

But the people that really are difficult to deal with and we have them in all congregations are people who are sometimes open to God and sometimes open to Satan. I tell you for a pastor to deal with them that requires insight, authority and courage. Now let's look at what Balak, the king of Moab said to Balaam, the witch doctor.

In Numbers 22 verse 10 Balaam is actually explaining to God the proposition he's had from Balak. Balaam said to God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me saying, Look, a people has come out of Egypt and they've covered the face of the earth. What people was that? Israel, that's right.

Come now, curse them for me. Perhaps I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out. Now this is standard practice in the cultures of the Bible.

It was normal for kings or others going to war not merely to fight them on the natural plane but to make war on a supernatural plane. So they would get their witch doctor to curse the other people. There's a list of curses pronounced by the Egyptian pharaohs in the 19th century B.C. and there are 66 nations against which they've pronounced curses.

See, what's the point of cursing them? You bring them to a place where you can defeat them in war. It's very interesting when Goliath came against David he cursed him in the name of his gods. That wasn't just a display of vulgarity.

He really was asserting, My gods can deal with your gods. So in a certain sense, ancient warfare was often not just a conflict between nations but it was viewed as a test of power between the gods of those nations. For instance, when God dealt with Egypt and brought Israel out, the psalm says, He judged the gods of Egypt.

Not just the natural rulers but the spiritual rulers. So Balak was hired as a good cursor. That was his profession.

Ruth and I visited Bath a few years ago. They had just then excavated a pagan temple and they discovered that one of the main functions of the priests in that temple was to write curses for people who came. They didn't trust themselves to write a good enough curse for themselves so the function of the priest was to write a really horrific curse against the person whom they wanted to see destroyed.

Don't smile at that. I mean you can smile and think it's funny but believe me, in a certain sense, it works. People wouldn't spend thousands of years in a certain way of doing things if there wasn't some reality in it.

All right, then we look at divination which in most modern translations is called fortune telling. This is the knowledge element of witchcraft. The product is not now power but it's knowledge which as I pointed out was the first desire that led man into sin.

And there's a picture in Acts chapter 16 very clear. Acts 16, verses 16 and the following. This is what happened when Paul and Silas first arrived to preach the gospel in Philippi.

Now it happened as we went to prayer that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us. Now what the Greek actually says is having a spirit, a python or a python spirit. In other words, a snake spirit.

And remember, snakes have always been regarded in pagan society as somehow the source of unusual knowledge and wisdom. There's a well-known lady in Washington, D.C. who is a well-known fortune teller who in her own autobiography stated that the power came to her when a snake came in bed with her. Now, what I want to point out to you is what this girl said was absolutely true.

And she didn't know it by natural means. She knew it by supernatural means. She was just a slave girl.

But she brought her masters much profit by fortune telling. Because she was a slave, the profit didn't go to her. It went to her masters.

This girl followed Paul and us and cried out saying, These men are the servants of the Most High God who proclaim to us the way of salvation. Wasn't that amazing? It was absolutely true. I've sometimes commented that contemporary missions, that lady might have been made a charter member of the church in Telepa.

She was the first person to recognize who Paul and Silas really were. But Paul knew that isn't God's spirit. That's a divining spirit, a fortune telling spirit.

In the end, he turned around, commanded it to come out in the name of Jesus. It came out and she was no longer able to tell fortunes. Her masters were so angry at the profits that they'd lost, that they brought Paul and Silas before the magistrates.

You know the rest of the story. The whole city was in an uproar because a single slave girl was delivered of a spirit of divination. At that point, not merely was Paul dealing with Satan's kingdom on the natural, physical plane, but Satan's kingdom in the heavenlies intervened because their strategy against the church was being frustrated.

It's a remarkable thing. Almost everywhere Paul went, there was a riot. And later, in 2 Corinthians, he said there was an angel of Satan that buffeted him.

I believe that's exactly correct. It's not a metaphor. There was a satanic angel that organized a riot in every city where Paul went.

So, why don't we have riots? Maybe we don't bother Satan enough. I really believe when the church is what it ought to be, there'll be a lot more riots. But there'll also be a lot more revivals.

I don't know how many revivals you can have without riots. So you have to decide, is it worth the price? Then there's sorcery. Sorcery, I think, and this is not always used this way, operates through objects.

Potions, charms, anything that's called lucky, like a lucky horseshoe. All that is occult. The people that carry things that give them luck.

It also operates through, you know, love potions. Very, very common. I want this man to fall in love with me, so I go to the witch doctor and get a potion, put it in his food, and after that he's going to fall in love with me.

And of course, to a certain extent, it works. Ruth and I were in Zambia and we, together with some other brothers and sisters, we offered to pray for all ladies who were barren, couldn't have children. For Africans, that's a real disaster.

About four hundred ladies gathered in front of us. Before we prayed, someone asked the question, they were all professing Christians, how many of you went to the witch doctor for a potion to deliver you from barrenness? And all but two of them raised their hands. See, we're not dealing with something that's very rare and uncommon.

Sorcery also operates through music. Remember we saw that very probably Lucifer was in charge of the music. He knows a lot about music.

He knows its power. And a lot of contemporary music, what's called acid rock and others, is simply sorcery. You watch a young person who's been listening to that for an hour and their eyes are staring.

They've lost contact with reality. And then another main branch of sorcery is drugs. The Greek word for sorcery is directly formed from the Greek word for a drug.

And the whole drug cult, with all its accompaniments of acid rock and so on, is just a clear example of sorcery at work in our culture. And almost all those people, if they come to Jesus, will need to be delivered from that power. In fact, I've come to the place myself where I doubt whether it's much use working with people in that particular stratum of society if you don't understand how to deal with demons.

Let's look at just one picture of sorcery. Revelation chapter 9 and verse 21. Well this describes a future scene, I believe, in human history when God's judgments are being manifested and falling on the wicked.

But it says in verse 20 and then 21 that the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons and idols of gold. Notice idolatry is the first thing. Gold, silver, brass, stone and wood which can neither see nor hear.

And notice what goes with idolatry. They did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality. And the word sorcery, the alternative translation in some versions is drugs.

And together with sorcery goes sexual immorality and violence. And the tremendous upsurge of violence in our contemporary civilization is largely the work of sorcery. So when you want to pray about it, don't just pray about the branch.

You'll have to deal with the root. Now we come to the third area of this subject which is witchcraft or sorcery within the church. And here's an area where some Christians have no idea what is really going on.

I want to turn to Galatians chapter 3 and read a few verses. These are the first five verses. O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? Did you ever absorb that thing? They were charismatic Christians, Pentecostal Christians.

You'll see they knew the Lord, they were saved, they had received the Holy Spirit, they were witnessing miracles, but they were bewitched. And this is the standard Greek word for to bewitch. Interestingly enough, it's still used in modern Greek.

The word *vaskaneia* is the modern Greek word for the evil eye. I happen to know because a Greek Orthodox priest who had come to know the Lord Jesus came to me one year ago and said, pray for me, I want to be delivered from this *vaskaneia*. It's exactly the same word that's used here.

All right. O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified. How did Paul know that witchcraft was operating? What was the evidence? Very important.

Witchcraft had obscured the revelation they had received of Jesus Christ crucified. That's the supreme aim of witchcraft in the church is to hide the reality of Jesus Christ crucified. Now look at the description of what happened in the following verses.

This only I want to learn from you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Notice they had received the Holy Spirit. Paul says, how did you receive it? By keeping the law of

Moses or by hearing the gospel with faith? Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? I really am inclined to think that text could go up over the entrance of most churches.

Are you so foolish, having begun in the Holy Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain? If indeed it was in vain. Therefore he who supplies the Spirit to you, notice the Spirit was ministered to them, and works miracles among you. Does he do it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? So the root problem was the reality of Jesus crucified had been obscured by an evil satanic power that had moved in.

And the two problems that resulted were carnality and legalism. They had gone back to fleshly attempts to do the will of God and please God, to keeping all sorts of rules as a way of achieving righteousness with God. And they had missed the purpose of Christ's death.

And the final result is stated in verse 10. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. For it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things were written in the book of the law to do them.

In other words Paul says, if you are going back to achieve righteousness by keeping the law, remember you've got to keep the whole law all the time or you're under a curse. Because when Israel came into the land of Canaan one of the first things they had to do was pronounce a curse upon themselves if they did not keep the whole law all the time. See keeping a little bit of the law some of the time doesn't do you any good.

If you're going to be justified by keeping the law you have to keep the whole law all the time. And none of us in God's sight can ever be justified by the works of law. It's a deception of Satan.

It's a deception that appeals primarily to human pride. Because Paul says, Abraham if he had been justified by works would have had something to boast of. But not before God because it says Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.

You see basically all of us would like to have something to boast of. In some way or other we'd like to be a little more righteous than our neighbor. And if we have a set of rules that we are keeping somehow we can convince ourselves that makes us righteous.

When I was in the British Army years ago and came to know the Lord I became a witness for the Lord. And because I led a life that was so different from my fellow soldiers lots of them would come up and talk to me. And I would tell them, no I didn't get religious, I got saved.

And then I would tell them a little bit of salvation. You know the first reaction of almost everyone was they'd start to give me a little list of the rules they kept. And each one had a list tailored to his own particular life.

In other words the first reaction of man confronted with God's demand for righteousness is I'll keep a law. I have said many places and sometimes I'm shocked Christians Christianity is not a set of rules. Once we reduce it to that we've lost the vision of the cross.

And we've lost the power of God. Now why does Satan want to obscure the cross? Let me just interject this. I personally as I travel around most of the earth and I minister to Christians of many different backgrounds I think there are two main needs in the church.

The first is to restore the centrality of the cross of Jesus to its rightful place. Because that's the one thing that totally distinguishes Christianity from any other religion. There is nothing like it in any other religion.

And when we displace the cross and its uniqueness we just go back to living by a set of rules. Human psychology. See psychology can tell you what's wrong but it can't enable you to do what's right.

That power comes only from one source which is the cross. The other and it's a related problem is the church needs to give Jesus back his headship. Because God made him head over all things to the church.

The problem is that basically the church does not really acknowledge the headship of Jesus. The head is the thing that makes the decision. The body follows.

In how many churches are the decisions really made by Jesus through the Holy Spirit? How many churches actually ever invite Jesus to make the decisions? Let alone listen to what he has to say. What's the problem? What's the force at work? You tell me. Witchcraft.

That's right. Now you see I've given you a diagnosis. If you will use this diagnosis it will totally change your attitude and your perspective on many of the things that concern you most closely.

Because Satan likes to operate in the dark. He doesn't like people to know what he's doing or how he's doing it. I tell you that I have faced tremendous personal opposition to preaching this particular message here tonight.

And I know why. Because this message is bringing out into the light things that Satan doesn't want to be brought out into the light. Whether it's the nature of witchcraft in the natural, the work of the flesh, or whether it's the nature of witchcraft in the supernatural.

And the last thing he wants is for Christians to realize that witchcraft is at work in the church. Why does Satan want to obscure the cross? Let me give you three reasons. It's the only basis of all God's provision for His redeemed people.

There is no other basis. Hebrews 10.14 says, For by one sacrifice God has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. By the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross God has done all that will ever be needed for any human being in any period of history.

It's all done through the cross. Now our appropriation of the cross is progressive. We are being sanctified.

What Jesus has done is perfect, finished, complete. But our appropriation is progressive. I don't believe there's a single person here, myself included, who has yet appropriated all that is available to us through the cross.

But if we will go through the process of sanctification, being made holy, being conformed to God, thinking God's thoughts, living His way, we will appropriate more and more. But if witchcraft moves in, witchcraft will obscure the cross and although we should be living like children of the king, we'll begin living like beggars and paupers. Because all the benefits that God has provided come to us solely on the basis of the cross.

Satan is very astute. He knows exactly what to strike at. He knows that if he can obscure the cross, he has the church at his mercy.

The second reason is that the cross was the means of Satan's total defeat. I can't go into all the Scriptures, but through the cross Jesus ministered a total, eternal, irreversible defeat to Satan. Satan can't change that.

But what he can try to do is conceal the fact from us so that we no longer live in the victory because we don't realize the victory that was won for us. The third feature of the cross is it's the only source of power for real Christian living. You can quote the Sermon on the Mount as much as you like and all sorts of psychiatrists will say, well that's the way people ought to live.

But the only way we get the ability to live that way is through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Because his sacrifice dealt with the old man, the fleshly nature. Paul says, Our old man was crucified with him.

He says a little later on in Galatians, Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. Until you learn to apply the cross to your carnal nature, it masters you. You cannot master it.

Paul says in Romans 6, Our old man was crucified that we should no longer be the slaves of sin. That's the provision of the cross. I've mentioned I have an Anglican background and I thank God for many wonderful things that came to me through that.

I know some of you here will appreciate this. In those days, which are long ago, we used to have the general confession about 11.15 every Sunday morning. One of the things we used to say was, Pardon us, miserable offenders.

I used to look at the people around me and think, Well, that's surely a good description. But I thought to myself, What good is religion if it only makes you a miserable offender? And my ultimate conclusion was, I can be an offender without religion and not nearly so miserable. So that was what I did.

But you see, another thing I said to myself was, I can confess my sins on Sunday morning, but I know I'm going to go out this week and commit the same sins. Am I pleasing God by confessing sins I'm going to go on committing? No, I wasn't insincere. I was just ignorant.

I didn't know that there had been a provision made to put that old rebel inside me to death. But it's made through the cross. Now, let me read what I've written here.

Instead of the power that comes from the cross, witchcraft substitutes fleshly effort and legalistic means. You make ten rules and people don't keep them, so you say we'll have twenty rules. And they keep still fewer, so you make forty rules.

But making rules doesn't make people righteous. Do you know that? Judaism today has 613 commandments. One of my grandsons is part of a very ultra-religious Orthodox Jewish group, and they say we keep 32 of them.

And I mean they keep more than anybody else. The truth of the matter is we can have all the rules, but we don't keep them. Going back to rules is the effect of witchcraft in our lives.

I personally believe that this has happened in almost every major section of the church. You can disagree with me. I think every major move of God in the church produced something that was significant, lively, powerful.

But within a generation or two they lost the vision of the cross and they went into carnal effort and rules and organization and such things. Let me close by quoting Jeremiah 17. Cursed is the man who makes flesh his arm, who trusts in man and whose heart departs from the Lord.

See, that's the curse that witchcraft brings upon the church. We are no longer trusting in the supernatural grace and power of God. We're trusting in the best we can do with our own efforts.

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