

CHAPTER THREE

THE MISCONCEPTION OF THE BELIEVERS

We should not have a misconception that believers who are deceived by evil spirits are very defiled, degenerate, and sinful. We need to realize that these believers have completely consecrated themselves to God and are actually more advanced than ordinary believers. They strive to obey the Lord and are willing to pay any price to follow the Lord. Because they have wholly consecrated themselves to the Lord but do not know how to cooperate with God, they fall into passivity. Those who are not like this do not have the possibility of being passive. Even though they may consider themselves to be wholly consecrated to God, their manner of life is still according to the thoughts and reasonings of their natural life. They still live according to their own will. This kind of believer will not fall into passivity; they will not be possessed by the demons. They may give ground to evil spirits in other matters, but in the matter of obeying God's will, they will not give the ground of passivity to evil spirits. However, only those who are truly consecrated, who disregard their own gain or loss, and who are willing to listen to and obey God's every command can become passive and possessed. This type of believer has a will that is prone to fall into passivity. Only the ones who are willing to wholly obey every order can become passive.

Many would ask, "Why does God not protect them? Is not their motive very pure? Is it likely that God would allow those who faithfully seek after Him to be deceived by evil spirits?" Many people suppose that God should protect His children in every circumstance. Little do they know that in order to receive God's protection, one must fulfill the condition for being protected by God. If a believer fulfills the condition for evil spirits to work, then God cannot forbid them from working. God is a God who observes the law. Since a believer has given himself, either intentionally or unintentionally, into the hands of evil spirits, God cannot impede them from having the right to rule over the believer. Many people think that as long as their motive is pure, they will be spared from being deceived. Little do they know that the people who are most easily deceived in the world are those who have a pure motive. Honesty is not the condition for not being deceived; knowledge is the condition. If a believer is not concerned with the teachings of the Bible and does not watch and pray, and if he thinks that a pure motive alone will enable him to not be deceived, he will definitely be deceived. If he is deceived and fulfills the condition for evil spirits to work, how can he expect God to protect him?

Many believers assume that they definitely will not be deceived because they belong to the Lord. Or they presume that they will not be deceived because they are wholly consecrated to the Lord and have acquired many spiritual experiences. Little do they know that when a believer regards himself as being stable, he is already deceived! If a believer will not humble himself a little, he will be deceived to the uttermost; that is, he will be demon-possessed and still think that he is filled with the Holy Spirit. Being possessed is not a matter of life and is not a matter of motive; it is a matter of knowledge. When a believer receives too many idealistic teachings at the beginning of his Christian life, it becomes difficult for the Holy Spirit to instruct him with the truth he needs. The believer also may have a prejudice toward an interpretation of the Scripture that makes it difficult for other believers to impart light that he lacks to him. When a believer boasts of security when he is in such danger, he either affords evil spirits an opportunity to work or allows them to continue working.

We have already seen that passivity is the reason for being possessed by demons, but ignorance is the reason for being passive. If a believer is not ignorant, he will not fall

prey to demon-possession. Actually, "passivity" is simply misconstrued obedience and misconstrued consecration. We also may say that it is excessive obedience and excessive consecration. If a believer acquires knowledge and thereby realizes that evil spirits love to have and need to have man's passivity before they can work, he will not possibly allow himself to fall into passivity and, consequently, afford evil spirits an opportunity to work. If a believer knows that God needs men to co-labor with Him and that He does not desire that men transform themselves into machines, he will not allow himself to fall into passivity and expect God to come and move him. Today believers lapse into this stage mainly because of ignorance.

Believers need knowledge to distinguish God's moving from Satan's work. Believers need knowledge to comprehend the principle of God's working and the condition of Satan's working. Only those who have this knowledge can keep themselves from the power of darkness. Satan relies on lies for his attack on the believers; therefore, there must be truths to replace them. Satan wants to keep believers in darkness; therefore, the light must shine. We should firmly bear in mind the principle that the working of evil spirits differs from that of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, every time they work, they always work according to their own principle. Even though evil spirits are adept at changing their appearance, if we look at the totality of their work, we can perceive that the principle within is always the same. After we realize this distinction, we should examine our past experiences and discern the principle that served as the basis for our experience. Through this we will be able to discern what is of the Holy Spirit and what is of the evil spirits. Whatever has been done according to a certain principle must have been done by that corresponding spirit.

Because believers fall into demon-possession through ignorance, we need to take a detailed look at several matters that are very easily misunderstood by believers.

DYING WITH CHRIST

The passivity of many believers is due to a misunderstanding of the truth of "dying with Christ." The apostle said, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). Based on this, believers assume that the highest spiritual life is "no longer I." They assume that they should lose their personality, that they should have no more will and self-power, and that their "I" should die completely. Thus they become a machine to obey God. They think that they should not have any more feelings, that they should annihilate their personality, and that they should annul all the desires, interests, and preferences of life. They become like a corpse. Henceforth, there are no more "I"s; their "persons" are all gone. They think this kind of commandment requires them to efface themselves, destroy themselves, and "commit suicide" to the point that they do not have any feeling about themselves or their need, situation, sensation, desire, environment, state, comfort, affliction, etc., so that they only sense God's operation, working, and moving. They assume that dying to oneself means having no more self-consciousness. Therefore, they hand their "self-consciousness" over to death and try to die to the point that they do not feel anything but the presence of God. They realize that death must be fulfilled. Therefore, every time they have self-consciousness, they single-mindedly put themselves to death. Every time they sense that they have a desire, lack, need, interest, or feeling, they single-mindedly deal with it and put it to death.

They assume that they have been crucified with Christ and that the "I" is gone. They also assume that Christ is living within them and that the "I" is living no longer. "I am crucified with Christ." Therefore, the "I" has died. They try to put this death into practice by no longer having any thoughts or feelings. They think that their personality should no longer exist because "it is Christ who lives in me." Since Christ is within them, they think that they should subject themselves to Him in a passive way and let Him think and feel on their behalf. Yet they fail to notice the next phrase of Paul: "The life which I now live in the flesh!" Paul has died, but Paul has not died! The "I" was crucified on the cross, yet the "I" still lives. After passing through the cross, Paul said, "I now live"!

The cross does not annihilate the "I." It will exist forever. Even after going to heaven, there will still be "I." What meaning is there to salvation if someone can substitute for "me" to go to heaven? The meaning of accepting Christ's death is to die to sin and hand over our soul-life to death. Even the best, the noblest, and the cleanest have to be handed over to death. We have spoken about this many times before. God wants us to reject the heart that lives by our natural life; He wants us to live by Him and absorb His life moment by moment so that our whole being is supplied its needs. He does not intend to annihilate the various functions of our being, nor does He want our entire being to fall into passivity. On the contrary, the Christian life requires us to daily, single-mindedly, actively, and trustingly exercise our will to deny our natural life and draw on God's spiritual life. Just as the death of man's body is not an annihilation, and death in the lake of fire is not an annihilation, crucifixion with Christ in the spiritual life is not an annihilation. Man's person should exist, and the representative of man's person—his will—also should exist. Only the natural life by which man lives should die. This is the teaching of the Bible.

After a believer accepts the misunderstanding concerning dying with Christ and allows himself to fall into passivity (1) he will no longer be active, (2) God will no longer use him either, because this would go against the principle of His working; and (3) evil spirits will seize the opportunity to attach themselves to him because this situation fits the condition for evil spirits to work. Therefore, the consequence of this misconception about dying with Christ and trying to practice it is nothing other than demon-possession and a pretense of being filled by God. We have seen believers in many places become possessed by demons and have many peculiar experiences after they misapprehended the teaching of Galatians 2.

After the believer "dies" in this way, evil spirits cause him to have no feeling and make him ignorant of the need for any feelings of his own. When he contacts others, they feel that he is like a sculpture of iron or stone; he seems to have no sensing organs at all. He does not realize the sufferings of others, and he does not realize how he has caused others to suffer. He has no ability to know, differentiate, sense, or examine everything that is outside of him or within him. He is not at all conscious of his attitude, appearance, or actions. He does not exercise his will to think, deduce, or determine before he speaks and acts. He does not know where his words, thoughts, and feelings come from. His own will never takes any action, yet many words, thoughts, and feelings express themselves through him by taking hold of him as though he were a flowing channel. All his actions and conduct are mechanical. He does not know the reason for these things. He is bewildered and acts only because he receives commands and pressure from some unknown source. Even though he has no "self-consciousness," when others mistreat him slightly, he is very prone to misunderstand and feel hurt. He passes his days in a state of numbness. He supposes that he has died with Christ and does not sense even himself anymore. Little does he know that "the lack of consciousness" is both the condition as

well as the consequence of evil spirits possessing him. This enables evil spirits to cling to him, hinder him, attack him, impress him, make suggestions to him, think for him, support him, and urge him on without any restraint whatsoever because he is void of any feeling.

Therefore, we must remember that what we commonly know as "dying to self" is the dying to the life, power, opinion, and activity of the self outside of God. It is not the death of one's person. We do not exterminate ourselves to render our person non-existent. This must be made very clear. When we say that we do not have the self, it means that we do not have the activity of the self. We are not saying that there will not be the existence of our person! If a believer thinks that he should annihilate the existence of his person, that he should not think, feel, or have an opinion, or that he should not have any movement of the body, but instead that he should live his life in a dream, both day and night, without any knowledge of where he is, he will be possessed. He may think that this is a true death to the self, that he is indeed a person void of the self, and that his spiritual experience is higher than that of anyone else. Yet his consecration is not a consecration to God, but a consecration to evil spirits.

GOD'S OPERATION

"For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). This verse is also very easily misunderstood. A believer may think that only God is the One who wills and works, that God puts the willing and the working into him, and that God wills for him and works for him. This means that he need not will or do anything; God wills and works for him. He is a super believer and has no need of willing and working anymore; God is the one who wills and works. He is merely an unconscious machine and has nothing to do with willing and working.

These believers do not know that this verse means that God will only work within us to the extent that we are willing to will and work. God will not work further than this; He will only work to this point. God will not will and work for man. Rather, God will only work when man becomes willing to will and work according to His good pleasure. The willing and the working should still be of man himself. The apostle was very cautious. This is why he said, "It is God who operates in you both the willing and the working." God is not willing and working alone, but "in you"; your person still remains. You still have to will and work yourself. To will and work is still your own affair. Though God operates, He is not a substitute. To will and work is man's affair. The meaning of God's operation is that God works within us, moves within us, softens us, and encourages us in order to produce in us a heart that is inclined to obey His will. He does not will for us to obey His will. He only causes us to be inclined toward His will. Then we ourselves still have to will to obey. This verse teaches that man's will needs the support and help of God's power. Apart from God, whatever man determines and does according to his own will is of no use. God does not will for man; neither does He want man to will on his own. He wants man to rely upon His power to will. It is not that God takes our place in the willing, but that we will by His working.

However, a believer may not realize this. He may think that since God is operating within him, he does not need to move. He only needs to passively allow God to operate and go along with Him without and within. Since God operates to will, he need not exercise his will; all he has to do is allow another will to come upon him and use him. Hence, he dare not determine, choose, or resist anything; rather, he passively waits for the descent of God's will. When an outside will makes a decision for him, he accepts it.

He extinguishes everything out of his own will. As a consequence of this action: (1) the believer does not use his own will; (2) God also does not use His will to make any proposal for him, because He wants the believer to actively co-labor with Him; (3) evil spirits take the opportunity to seize his passive will and act on his behalf so that he either becomes paralyzed, without any progress, or burns with the "fire of demons"; and (4) at this time, the believer may think that God is thinking for him. In actuality, the authority of darkness has become lord to him.

We must see the difference between God "willing" in place of us and our cooperation with God through the exercise of our will. If God determines on our behalf, a matter will have absolutely nothing to do with us. Though our hands may do something, our hearts have not proposed it. When we become sober, we will realize that these things were not done by us. However, if we use our will to actively work with God, we will see that, even though something is done by relying on God's strength, it is actually done by us. A person who is utterly possessed by demons is not conscious of any of his actions when the demons "come." He may become crazy for a while, but afterwards he is entirely ignorant of what he has done. This tells us that all the crazy things were done by demons through his will and on his behalf. When a believer is deceived, he may think at that time that he has done everything, spoken every word, and thought every idea. But as soon as he is enlightened by God's light and starts to ask himself whether he really wants to do, speak, and think these things, he will realize these have nothing to do with him. Rather, the things that are attached to him are doing it for him.

God's will is not to annihilate our will. If we say, "Henceforth, I will not have my own will. I will just let God's will be manifested from me," we have not consecrated ourselves to God; rather, we have made a covenant with evil spirits because God will not use His will to replace our will. The correct attitude should be, "I have my own will, but my will wants God's will." We should put our will on God's side, not by our own strength, but by the life of God. The real truth is that the life that used our will in the past has been put to death. Now we use our will by the life of God. We have not annihilated our will; it is still there—only the life has changed. The natural life is dead, but the function of the will still exists. It is renewed by God, and our new life is now using it.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are many believers who have fallen into passivity and possession because of their ignorance of the work of the Holy Spirit. There are several very common misunderstandings:

A. Waiting for the Holy Spirit

The church today is indeed very ignorant of the Holy Spirit in experience! Many well-intentioned believers in many places stress teachings concerning the Holy Spirit. Among these teachings, the most common ones are that one should "wait for the filling of the Holy Spirit," "wait for the descending of the Holy Spirit," and "wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit." In practice, some pray through the night in their house and fast for a long time, "waiting to receive their personal Pentecost." Some meetings change to "waiting meetings" as soon as the sermon is over, so that those who want to seek for the Holy Spirit can wait. Consequently, many actually receive unusual experiences and experience supernatural spirits descending upon them that cause them to have unusually wonderful sensations, see visions and strange light, hear voices, speak in tongues, shake, and have other phenomena. After this the Lord Jesus becomes more precious to them, and many obvious sins are cast away. They become more joyful and

enthusiastic, thinking that they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. These actions are based upon the following verses: "And behold, I send forth the promise of My Father upon you; but as for you, stay in the city until you put on power from on high" (Luke 24:49). "He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4).

We should pay attention to a few important points. Truly the Lord Jesus commanded the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to be upon them. After Pentecost, however, we do not find anywhere in the Acts or the Epistles where the apostles commanded the believers to "wait" to receive the Holy Spirit. After Pentecost, "receive" is used instead of "wait" (Acts 19:2).

Furthermore, when the disciples were waiting for ten days, the Holy Spirit did not say they were "waiting" passively. Rather, they were praying and petitioning in one accord. The passive and nightlong waiting of today (some even more than ten days) is different from the disciples' experience.

Furthermore, after Pentecost, whenever we read about the believers being filled with the Holy Spirit, they were filled immediately. They did not have to wait like the apostles did in the beginning (cf. Acts 4:31, 9:17, 10:44).

The Holy Spirit cannot be called on directly. Neither does He come through our beseeching, because He is a gift (cf. Luke 11:13; John 14:16). Furthermore, He descended at Pentecost. In the whole New Testament, no one ever called on the Holy Spirit directly. There is not a case in the Bible where men asked for the descension and baptism of the Holy Spirit directly. Instead, the Bible says that the Lord Jesus "will baptize you in the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 3:11).

In addition, as we mentioned before, the Holy Spirit only comes upon the "new man," that is, the inner man. Expecting the Holy Spirit to come upon the physical body, demanding a feeling, and prescribing a certain sensation as the verification of the descension of the Holy Spirit are the source of deception.

Therefore, today's practice of "waiting for the Holy Spirit" is not scriptural, because this practice is entirely passive. Much of this kind of waiting occurs late at night when the body is already very tired. In addition, there is usually a long period of fasting and numerous days of waiting. The mind of the believer naturally becomes very confused. Moreover, prolonged praying, either sitting or kneeling, "waiting" for the descension of the Holy Spirit upon the body, puts the will very easily into complete passivity. The believer does not resist, discern, or choose anything. He just passively waits for a spirit to come upon him, knock him down on the floor, or use his tongue and mouth to give him a strange sensation. Such waiting affords a way for evil spirits to come. It is no wonder that in this condition the believer receives supernatural experiences. The supernatural ones have to wait for man to become very passive before they can manifest themselves. The Holy Spirit, however, will not do any work, because it would go against the principle of His working. Evil spirits take advantage of the opportunity and become very active. They perform many counterfeit works on the believer. At this time, all the prayers, promises, and faith offered to the Holy Spirit are actually offered to evil spirits. Even though a pleasant atmosphere seems to fill the house in this kind of meeting with everyone feeling peaceful and happy, and even though there may be many consecrations and works as a result of such a meeting, the natural life still has not been dealt with.

B. Obeying the Holy Spirit

The believers, in accordance with the word in Acts 5:32, "the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him," think that they ought to "obey the Holy Spirit." Because they do not follow the commandment in the Bible to examine and discern the spirit of truth from the spirit of error, they consider every spirit that comes upon them as the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they passively obey the spirit that is upon them. Their entire being merely becomes a machine. Whatever the spirit upon them instructs them to do, they obey accordingly. Whenever they do anything, they first turn to their bodies to wait for a commandment. As time goes on, this passive state gradually worsens, and the spirit upon them is able to directly take over their members, such as their mouths and their hands. The believers think that this kind of obeying the Holy Spirit is pleasing to God. Little do they realize that this verse never tells us to obey the Holy Spirit. Rather, it says that we should obey God the Father through the Holy Spirit. The apostle told us in a preceding verse (v. 29) that we should "obey God." If the believer takes the Holy Spirit as his object of obedience and forgets God the Father, he will be led to follow a spirit within him or around him and not obey the Father in heaven through the Holy Spirit. This is the beginning of passivity, and this affords evil spirits an opportunity to practice falsehood. Once a person goes a little beyond the Bible, he faces many dangers!

C. The Holy Spirit Being the Master

We have said in another place that God disciplines our spirit through the Holy Spirit and that our spirit governs our body, our entire being, through our soul (i.e., will). A casual glance at this word does not seem to reveal anything of importance, yet the spiritual relationship it implies is very crucial. The Holy Spirit only makes His will known to us by affecting our intuition. When the Holy Spirit fills, He fills only our spirit. He does not directly govern our soul or our body. Neither does He directly fill our soul or our body. This point must be well noted. We cannot expect the Holy Spirit to think through our mind, feel through our emotions, and propose through our will. Rather, the Holy Spirit manifests His will in the intuition so that the believer himself thinks, feels, and proposes according to His will. Many believers assume that they have to offer their mind (their head) to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to think from within them. Little do they know that this is the biggest mistake. The Holy Spirit never directly replaces man or uses man's mind in this way. The Holy Spirit never requires man to consecrate passively. He wants man to work with Him. He will not work for man. The believer has the power to quench His move. He does not force the believer to do anything.

The Holy Spirit will not directly rule man's body either. In order for a man to speak, he himself has to use his mouth. In order for a man to move, he himself has to lift his feet. In order for a man to work, he himself has to use his hands. God's Holy Spirit never infringes on man's freedom. Besides working in man's spirit, that is, in God's new creation, He will not move any part of man's body independent of man's own will. Even if man is willing, He will not substitute for man and move any part of his body because man has a free will. Man must be the master of himself; he must use his own body. This is God's law. God Himself will not transgress His law.

We often say that "the Holy Spirit controls man." If we mean that the Holy Spirit works within us, making us obey God, this expression is correct. If we mean that the Holy Spirit directly controls our entire being, this is absolutely wrong. Based on this we can distinguish between the work of evil spirits and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit in order to show that we belong to God; evil spirits cleave to our bodies for the purpose of driving us like a machine. The Holy Spirit asks for our

cooperation, while evil spirits seek complete and direct control. Our union with God is in the spirit, not in the body or in the soul. If we mistakenly think that our mind, emotion, body, and will should all be directly "moved" by God, evil spirits will bring in their counterfeit work. It is true that the believer should not act according to his own thoughts, emotions, and will. But when he receives revelation in spirit, he should use his mind, emotion, and will to carry out the order of the Spirit. Forsaking one's soul and body and expecting the Holy Spirit to directly use them is the initial step to demon-possession.

SPIRITUAL LIVING

Believers today have many misunderstandings with regard to spiritual living. We can only briefly look at a few now:

A. Conversation

"For you are not the ones speaking, but the Spirit of your Father is the One speaking in you" (Matt. 10:20). A believer may think this means that God will speak on behalf of him, that he need not speak, and that God will speak words out from his mouth. Such a believer "consecrates" his mouth to God. He does not make any decision and expects to be God's "mouthpiece." His lips and vocal cords fall into passivity, and he allows any outside supernatural force to use him. Some who deliver messages for the Lord think that they do not need to use their mind and will during the meeting and that they simply need to offer their mouth passively to God and allow God to speak through their mouth. The consequences of this action are: (1) the believer himself does not speak; (2) neither does God speak, because God does not regard man as a recorder; and (3) evil spirits utilize the believer's passivity to speak through his mouth. This often causes the believer to experience a kind of power speaking through his mouth, enabling him to receive "messages from heaven." Since what is spoken may be very good, the believer considers these words to be from God.

The verse in Matthew simply refers to a situation in which one is persecuted and tried. It does not say that the Holy Spirit will speak on behalf of the believer. The experience of the apostles Peter and John before the Sanhedrin later confirms this.

2. Guidance

"And your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it'" (Isa. 30:21). Believers do not realize that this verse specifically refers to the Israelites—God's people in the flesh—during the millennium. At that time, there will not be the counterfeit work of evil spirits. Believers consider this kind of guidance by a supernatural voice to be the highest leading. They think they are superior to others, having supernatural guidance all the time. They neither use their conscience nor their intuition. They just passively wait for a supernatural voice. They assume that they do not need to think, consider, choose, or determine, but just "obey" passively. They allow a voice to substitute for the function of their intuition and conscience. As a result: (1) the believers do not use the conscience and intuition; (2) God will not command them to make them obey as a machine; and (3) evil spirits will use a supernatural voice to replace revelation in the intuition. Then evil spirits will attach themselves to the believers.

From that point on, believers no longer care for the prompting of their intuition, the voice of their conscience, what they understand and sense, or what others say. They just stubbornly follow the supernatural voice without even considering it for a moment.

Their moral standard gradually falls, and they are not even aware of it because they have allowed evil spirits to be a substitute for their conscience, and they can no longer discern good and evil.

C. Memory

"But the Comforter...will...remind you of all the things which I have said to you" (John 14:26). The believer does not realize that the meaning of this word is that the Holy Spirit will enlighten his mind to cause him to remember the Lord's words. He assumes it means that he does not need to use his memory anymore and that God will make him remember everything. As a result of this, the believer allows his memory to lapse into passivity. He no longer exercises his will to use his memory. The consequences are: (1) the believer does not exercise his will to use his memory; (2) God does not use it either, because there is no one to cooperate with Him; and (3) evil spirits come in and display everything that is expedient for themselves in front of him, so that he cannot refuse them. His will becomes passive so that he has no way to control his memory anymore.

D. Love

"The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5). Believers misunderstand this verse to mean that they do not have to love and that the Holy Spirit will give them God's love. They ask God to love through them and supply them fully with His love so that they can be full of God's love. They no longer love; rather, they want God to make them love. They no longer use their loving ability, and they allow their loving function to fall into a cold numbness. The results are: (1) the believers themselves do not love; (2) God will not negate man or the natural function of his love; He will not give man a supernatural love; and (3) evil spirits will live on behalf of man and express their love and hatred according to their will. Evil spirits are allowed to give him a substitute for love because he is so passive and does not use his will to control his loving function. Eventually, the believer will become like a piece of wood and stone. He will feel cold toward everything and will not know what love is. This is the reason so many believers are hard and unapproachable even though they may be holy.

The Lord Jesus says, "You shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength" (Mark 12:30). Whose love is this? Whose heart, whose soul, whose mind, and whose strength are these? Of course, they are ours. Our natural life should die, but all these functions of ours should remain.

E. Humility

"For we do not dare to class or compare ourselves with any of those who commend themselves" (2 Cor. 10:12). Because a believer misunderstands the meaning of humility, he thinks that he should hide himself in everything. As a result, the proper self-esteem that God allows is not there anymore. Much of self-abasement is just another form of passivity and possession. The results are: (1) the believer denies himself; (2) God does not fill him; and (3) evil spirits take advantage of his passivity to keep him further in this state of "humility."

When a believer is very possessed and self-abased, his surroundings seem to become all darkness, despair, and weakness. Those who are in contact with him sense a kind of coldness, depression, and sorrow. At crucial moments, he will retreat and cause embarrassment to others. God's work bears no importance to him. Both in words and

deeds, he pays particular attention to hide the "I." But while he acts this way, his "I," to the contrary, is all the more exposed. Furthermore, it becomes a real frustration to those who are truly spiritual. When great needs arise in God's kingdom, his extreme self-abasement will not allow him to lift so much as a finger. A sense of prolonged inability, hopelessness, impossibility, and sensitivity is manifested in him. The believer thinks that this is true humility, in which one does not consider himself. Little does he realize that this is the result of evil spirits' work of overt introspection. True humility looks to God and progresses forward.

GOD'S ORDERING

In this world, in addition to man's will, two other wills are entirely opposite to each other. God not only wants us to obey Him; He also wants us to withstand Satan. Hence, God puts these two matters together two times in the Bible. James 4:7a says, "Be subject therefore to God," and 4:7b says, "Withstand the devil." First Peter 5:6-9 says, "Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God...Your adversary, the devil...Him withstand, being firm in your faith." This is balance in the truth. A believer should submit himself to God in everything he encounters. He should confess that God's ordering for him is the best. Though he suffers, he willingly obeys because this is the will of God. This is what we have spoken of in chapter one. This is half of the truth. The apostles knew that we are in danger of being biased, so they immediately said that we have to withstand the devil after we submit. The reason for this is that in addition to God's will, there is also the devil's will. Many times he counterfeits God's will, particularly in our circumstances. If we are misled to think that there is only God's will in this world, we will be deceived by the devil and take his will as God's will. Hence, God wants us to obey Him and, at the same time, withstand the devil. To withstand is a work of the will. To withstand is for the will to oppose, to be unwilling, to decline, and to disagree. God wants us to use our will. This is why He says, "Withstand." God will not withstand on our behalf; we ourselves have to withstand. We still have a will, and we still should use our will to obey God's word. This is the teaching of the Bible.

But the believer misunderstands and supposes that God's will is manifested in His arrangement of the environment. To him, everything that comes upon him is fully God's will. Consequently, there is no need for his will to have any further selection, consideration, determination, resistance, or anything else. He merely accepts everything in silence. This sounds good and right. But unavoidably, there can be misunderstanding. It is true that we acknowledge God's hand behind everything. We also know that we should fully submit under God's hand. But this is more a matter of attitude than a matter of conduct. If whatever befalls us is God's commanded will, do we have anything to say? This is a matter of attitude. When we become willing to obey God, we can further examine and ask: Are these matters from evil spirits? Or are they permitted by God? If they are ordained by God, we have nothing to say. But if they are not, we should work with God to withstand them. We should not submit to every circumstance without daily examining and testing it. Our attitude should be the same all the time, but our practice should be carried out only after we understand the circumstance. Otherwise, we may be obeying the devil's will.

Believers should not be people without a mind. They should not be entirely passive and controlled by the circumstance. Rather, whenever they encounter anything, they should always vigorously, actively, and consciously examine its source, test its nature, understand its content, and then decide on a course of action. Being submissive to God is important, but this does not mean blind submission. A vigorous investigation does not

mean that we can disobey God in our circumstance. Rather, it means that we have the intention to submit to God, but we want to know if it is God that we are submitting to. Today few believers are submissive in their attitude. This means that even if they know something is of God, few will submit. Yet when they have been broken by God, they still do not discern if a matter is from God; as long as something comes to them, they accept it without any question. The balanced truth is to be submissive in attitude yet, at the same time, to accept something only after one is clear about its source.

Many fully consecrated believers do not understand this difference. They just passively submit to the circumstance, assuming that everything is God's arrangement. This gives evil spirits the opportunity to utilize and afflict them. Evil spirits prepare the circumstances as traps in order to cause the believers to accomplish their will. They may stir up storms and may cause the believers to be afflicted by them. In this way, they make believers suffer the sin of others, while considering this to be an example of not resisting "him who is evil" (Matt. 5:39). Little do they realize that God also wants them to be "struggling against sin" (Heb. 12:4), to overcome the spirit of this age through overcoming the circumstances.

The results of such a practice are: (1) they no longer use their will to choose and decide; (2) God will not pressure them through their environment; and (3) evil spirits will utilize the circumstance to take over their passive will. Then the believers will be submitting to evil spirits and think that they are submitting to God.

SUFFERING AND WEAKNESS

Because the believer is totally consecrated, he thinks that he should take the way of the cross and suffer for the sake of Christ. He also thinks that his natural life is of no use. He wants to receive power from God, so he willingly becomes weak, hoping that by so doing, he will become strong. Both suffering and weakness are pleasing to God, yet both can become the basis for evil spirits to work through the believer's misunderstanding.

A believer may consider it to be the highest gain for him to suffer. After his consecration, he may passively submit to every suffering that befalls him, no matter through what means the suffering comes. He believes that his suffering is for the Lord and that it is with a reward and for a gain. He does not realize that he must explicitly exercise his will to choose what God wants him to choose and withstand everything that the evil spirits give to him. If he passively accepts all the sufferings, evil spirits will have a good opportunity to make him suffer their sufferings. To suffer passively may cause evil spirits to inflict sufferings on the believer. After the believer suffers afflictions and believes that they come from God—believing the lies of the evil spirits—he presents evil spirits with an opportunity to put him under suffering for a long time. He may not realize that his suffering is the result of his fulfillment of the condition for evil spirits to work and that his suffering does not come from God. He may think that he is suffering for the sake of the church, to fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ. He may think that he is a martyr, when in reality he is only a victim. He glories in suffering, not knowing that this is a symptom of being possessed!

One thing deserves our attention. Sufferings that come as a result of demon-possession are always meaningless. They produce absolutely no result and are purposeless. They are sufferings that bear no significance whatsoever. Furthermore, there is no witnessing of the Holy Spirit in our intuition that these are from God. These thoughts simply come from the believer.

If the believer investigates a little, he may discover that before his consecration, he did not have this kind of experience. It was only when he consecrated himself to the Lord and chose to suffer that he had this kind of experience. Furthermore, after he chose and accepted all the sufferings, he thought that all of the sufferings were from God. Actually, if not all, at least a majority of them came from the power of darkness. Since he gave ground to evil spirits and believed in their lies, his whole life became full of afflictions. There is no reason for them, he does not know their cause, and there is no merit in them. If the believer knows about demon-possession, he will understand this matter. Just as there are many sins that cannot be removed because of demon-possession, there are many afflictions of unknown source which are caused by demon-possession. After a believer knows the truth about demon-possession, he will be able to remove sins and also remove the meaningless afflictions.

Concerning weakness, the believer can have a similar misunderstanding. He may think that he should be weak for a long time in order to gain God's power. He considers the apostle's word, "When I am weak, then I am powerful" (2 Cor. 12:10), and thinks that he has to be weak before he can be strong. He does not realize that the apostle never said, "I have to be weak so that I can be strong." He was just speaking about one of his experiences. He just said that when he was weak, God's grace strengthened him to accomplish God's will. Paul did not ask for this weakness. He was actually weak, but God made him strong. This is not an exhortation for believers to choose weakness; Paul had no intention that the strong believer should purposely choose weakness so that God would make him strong. Rather, his intention was to instruct those believers who are already weak that they can be strong!

Choosing weakness on purpose is wrong; it affords a ripe opportunity to evil spirits. Choosing weakness and choosing afflictions both fulfill the condition for evil spirits to work because they put man's will purposely on the side of evil spirits. Many believers were healthy at one time. But they have chosen weakness, and they think that by so doing, they will be strong in God. To their surprise, they find that the weakness they have chosen becomes more apparent as time goes by, while the strength they expected never materializes. In the end, they become a burden to others and are completely useless in the work of God. This choosing of weakness will never bring God's strength. On the contrary, it will give evil spirits an opportunity to attack. If a believer does not resist, oppose, and refuse such weakness in a definite way, he will remain weak for a long time.

THE MOST CRUCIAL POINT

Much of what we have covered concerns only the behavior of extreme ones. There are many who do not have this extreme behavior. Nevertheless, the principle is the same. Whoever is passive in the will or fulfills the condition for the work of evil spirits will find demons working in him. Even though many believers have not consciously chosen these things, they unconsciously fall into passivity and give ground to evil spirits. As a result, they sink into a dangerous position. Let all who have the experiences mentioned above ask themselves whether they have been fulfilling the condition for evil spirits to work. This will rescue them from many false experiences and unnecessary sufferings.

We know that evil spirits utilize biblical truth. But the truth they utilize is stretched beyond measure and beyond its original limit. The denial of the self, submission, waiting on God's ordering, suffering, etc., are all biblical truths. Yet because of the believer's ignorance of the principle of the spiritual life, evil spirits are able to utilize the

foolishness of the believer and cause him to fulfill the condition for them to work. If one does not examine the principle regarding every teaching to see if it corresponds with the working of the Holy Spirit or the working of evil spirits, he will be deceived. Every truth that is stretched a little becomes gravely dangerous. Therefore, we have to be careful.

Now we should be thoroughly clear about the fundamental difference between the principle of God's work on us and that of Satan's work on us: (1) God wants the believer to exercise every faculty of his entire being through his own will, cooperating with God to the point of being filled with the Holy Spirit. (2) Evil spirits require that the believer be passive, forsaking every faculty of his entire being, in whole or in part, in order to facilitate their work.

In the former case, the Holy Spirit fills man's spirit and gives his spirit life, power, liberty, enlargement, and renewal, as well as strengthens his entire being and sets him free from slavery. In the latter case, evil spirits occupy man's faculties through passivity. If man does not discern it, they cause him to lose his personality and will; they make him their puppet by imprisoning, suppressing, robbing, coercing, and encircling him. They want to conquer man's soul and body, to bring man into bondage and take away his freedom. In the former case, in addition to understanding God's will in his intuition, the believer can think and understand with his mind and direct his whole being through the free exercise of his will for the accomplishment of God's will. In the latter case, the believer is pressured by an external force and assumes that the force is the representative of God's will; he cannot think or make any decision. He is coerced by a force in a mechanical way.

Today countless numbers of God's children have subconsciously allowed themselves to fall into passivity. They have stopped the function of their will and mind; consequently, they have become possessed and suffer. No matter how small the degree of passivity is, it is sufficient to cause evil spirits to work. If the degree of passivity is high, it will give place to the manifestation of many supernatural wonders through the body. This manifestation will be similar to manifestations seen in sorcerers when they give place to evil spirits. The only difference is that in the former case, there is the outward form of a Christian. We should not be surprised by the supernatural experiences of many believers, such as tongue-speaking, seeing visions, hearing voices, etc. They merely follow a law. Just as in the natural realm every matter has a law, in the spiritual realm, everything has a law. If there is a certain phenomenon and behavior, there must be a consequence that results from the phenomenon and behavior. The God who establishes the laws will abide by the same laws. Therefore, if a person intentionally or unintentionally transgresses this law, he will experience a predicted consequence. Whether you are a Christian or one who practices sorcery, as long as you are passive, evil spirits will attach themselves to you. If a man cooperates with God through exercising his will, mind, and strength, God's Holy Spirit will work. This also is a law.