
UNMASKING THE SPIRIT OF DIVINATION

Understanding How the Devil Subtly Works to Undermine and Redirect the Glory that Belongs to Christ

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This article is intended to do one simple thing:

Equip God's people with understanding that will alert them to the devil's devices.

Divided Loyalty and False Yokes

I have never had a desire to focus a lot on demons (evil spirits) and demonology but the Lord has been prompting me to write on this subject because the spirit of divination has slithered its way into the Church. Its goal, in order to find a place of habitation, is to consistently and subtly assault and increasingly defile the spirits of the saints with mindsets, expectations, burdensome commitments, or false doctrine that promote or allow false yokes of religion. It seeks to displace genuine New Covenant service, ministry, relationships, and signs and wonders with counterfeits that resemble the real. Among other things, we can falsely be yoked to a church, ministry, preacher, prayer group, an ideology or doctrine, a building program, and a certain way of doing things that produce false submission and false and blind loyalty to wrong authority. These serve as the catalyst for corrupting the holy relationships and fellowship that the blood of Christ has afforded us. Our focus and service is, therefore, redirected more so to church "things" and "benefactors" (heroes; great ones to whom we have given flattering titles; Lk. 22:25-27) rather than to Christ. This causes loyalty to be directed more toward an ideology or wrong authority. Distrustful suspicion becomes the rule instead of the true love

and discernment of Christ and His body. Partiality, personality, and human sentiment rule instead of sound Biblical principle.

Sadly, those who realize the truth and seek to throw off the false yokes are too often labeled as rebellious, unsubmitive to authority, disloyal, judgmental, or unruly by those church leaders who are handing them out. Any attempt to address what is truly taking place is considered an attack of the devil. This serves a signal to all who are falsely loyal to their leadership to rally behind them. Attitudes that display unconditional loyalty to that leadership are common among those who have fully embraced the lie. The bait that lures people in is often a strong emphasis on the need for a human spiritual “covering.” The idea of covering is used as a means of control rather than in its true Biblical sense. It is emphasized more strongly than the importance of personally hearing Christ’s voice and obeying Him as our Head and sure covering of protection and blessing in the Church. Many of those who are subject to the false yokes and who have also truly partaken of Christ know something is wrong but have great difficulty defining or discerning it while they are still under its weight. Jesus’ light and easy yoke is far more desirable to them, so their struggle for freedom begins. Who would not want to trade in a demonic, heavy yoke for Christ’s? The bottom line is that a system of rules, controls, customs, behavior, and entitlements have been set in place that honor men and not Christ. Whatever comes from man honors man.

Paul stated that he would not be a bondservant (translated servant in KJV) of Christ if he sought to please men (Gal. 1:10). In the Biblical sense, a bondservant is someone who willingly and entirely subjects his or her will to serve the will of another who is greater (the greater one is Christ and not a preacher). Paul, Peter, James, and Jude all referred to themselves as bondservants of God and Christ. This word is used in a negative and positive sense in the New Testament. Jesus told His disciples that He no longer called them servants (translated from the same Greek word) but friends because servants do not know what their master is doing (Jn. 15:15). Actually, four expressions are used in Scripture to define our relationship to God the Father. We are the children, sons, friends, and bondservants of God. “Children” and “sons” reflect our status before God and our birthright and authority from Him. “Friend” reflects on those to whom He can entrust the things that are most important to Him. “Bondservant” reflects the humble, subservient, and worshipful attitude or disposition we must always have toward God as the created must have toward the Creator—because He alone is God. We are classified as either God or man-pleasers. There is no middle ground in the matter. Until we are “set free” from people, we are of little use to our Master and, consequently, will have no God-pleasing service

of eternal value to offer mankind. In the end, our Master will say to us: "Depart from Me you worker of lawlessness, I never knew you" (Mt. 7:23).

In light of this, we must always know whom it is we are serving and, therefore, pleasing. Yes, there will be scenarios in our life experience wherein pleasing God is equal to pleasing people. My wife once asked me to move some homemade birdhouses someone had given me from the living room floor to the basement. I grunted my response: "Maybe later." Afterward, it dawned on me that I needed to please her in the matter as soon as possible with enthusiasm, so I did what she asked. It pleased her and my Father in Heaven also. In contrast, if an alleged preacher, religious organization, or church competes for your loyalty to Christ as His bondservant, what should you do? How will you know when this is happening? It will cause serious discomfort within our spirit unless we have already been giving ourselves over to a man-pleasing spirit or are submitting ourselves to leadership that operates in it. Without exception, you will become like those to whom you submit the oversight of your soul. I never commit to participate in anything of Christian service without knowing the origin of what is empowering it and the motive of those overseeing and involved in it. No, I do not go looking for what is wrong in such cases but look for underlying evidence of Christ-likeness. Will it increase His Kingdom in the earth? Does it or will it have His favor resting on it? Are His ways being honored or man's ways. If it is of Christ, it will honor Him. Again, whatever is of man honors man.

By being man-pleasers or self-serving, we deny Christ and His transcendency as Head over all things to the Church. This sin is what leaves the door wide open for the spirit of divination to invade our lives and the church with its mixture.

The Characteristics

Now, let's look at how the spirit of divination manifested through a woman as portrayed in Scripture. We will then understand more clearly what is being unveiled to us here by the Spirit of God. Acts 16:16-18 gives the account of Paul's encounter with a spirit of divination.

"Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. (17) 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.' (18) And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly

annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And he came out that very hour."

The four main characteristics of this spirit are:

- 1) It was proclaiming the truth about Paul and his companions.
- 2) It did not worship God but used its power of persuasion to direct attention to what it was saying about the servants of God.
- 3) The demonic gift of divination subtly stole the spotlight away from God and onto its ability to "discern" those who are of God, thereby, becoming the main focus of attention.
- 4) It pretended to be something it was not by using flattery mixed with truth or facts.

From these four characteristics, we can gain some important insight into how this spirit works and what it seeks to accomplish within a church. Some synonymous meanings of the word flattery will give us incredible insight into how it gains a foothold: to make conceited, fill with conceit, puff up, inflate, give a swelled head to, spellbind, butter-up, sweet talk, brown-nose, overpraise, (wrongly) promote, hype, deceive, tell people what they want to hear, massage one's ego, be a yes man, to not mean what one says.¹ It is also important to note that the woman who had this spirit was considered to be a fortuneteller. Another word for "fortune teller" is soothsayer, as in, someone who is skilled at soothing others with words. In the Old Testament in Israel, those who claimed to be prophets of God, but instead told people what they wanted to hear were also considered to be soothsayers or diviners (Jer. 14:14-15).

Condescension and an elitist mindset can also provide an open door to this evil spirit, not by flattery or sooth-saying, but by minimizing other people's callings, anointings, and emphasis in order to promote your own. Those who do this are insecure in their own calling and are weak in their personal and intimate prayer life with the Father.

The spirit of divination often seeks open doors into the Church by way of the gifts of proclamation and the wrongful positioning and promotion of people. These are the main means by which it propagates its influence. Its goal is to twist whatever is holy to fit into a selfish agenda. Jesus reproved the Jews for this same reason: "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God" (Jn.

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5:44)? Hierarchical (chain-of-command type) religious man-made structures are the platforms that are often and easily compromised for this evil spirit's purposes.

Prophecy, preaching, teaching, worship, praise, and thanksgiving can be twisted to suit this unclean spirit's agenda. The proclamation gifts are used as an unholy means of flattery, especially toward self-exalting and puffed-up church leaders who are out of touch with true Christ-like humility. Worship, praise, and thanksgiving become performance-oriented instead of Presence of God based. Giving people positions of influence in a fellowship or allowing them opportunities to "use" their "gifts" becomes a means of (placating) flattery to keep them in the church. This is done with little regard as to their credibility and the safety of the sheepfold. If position, influence, and the platform for their "gift" were stripped from them, would they remain in that fellowship?

Self-serving authority within the Church superimposes more and more human control upon the people because of existing insecurities within the leaders concerning God's endorsement of their character. This control and agenda only honors those from whom it comes no matter what Christian labels are attached to them.

In the light of all of this, one can see how flattery can displace truth and be mistaken for true prophecy.

The spirit of divination seeks to replace true faith in God by establishing a pseudo church authority structure that honors men and not God—that allows the hierarchical exaltation of one person above another. When Jesus' disciples were arguing who would be the greatest, He gave them the blueprint for the governing structure within the Church that would not tolerate any such lust for greatness. In fact, it only facilitates servanthood. The greatest person must first be the greatest servant of all. Jesus' directives destroyed any arguments among them over who would be at the top of a contrary and pseudo-Christian chain-of-command (Lk. 22:25-27).

Now let's look at how this evil spirit's influence progresses within a church:

- The goal: The spirit of divination subtly works to draw the attention away from God and His Son to something or someone else. It will use truth and facts to do so.
- The open door: It seeks to embed itself through wrong church authority that demands the loyalty and honor that must only be given to Christ.
- The symptoms: Leaders require that the people address them with flattering (Biblical) titles instead of portraying the lowly and meek

Christ-like character that invites the respect of the people. With flattering titles come inordinate entitlements and expectations from those who wear them toward those who are of “lesser rank.” These expectations often play out through coveting the loyalty of the people (aka. courting Christ’s bride). Covetousness is idolatry. (There are no ranks of command within the Church but only levels of maturity and gifts. Those with the greatest maturity and gifts should set the example as the greatest servants. This must be their most evident characteristic; Lk 22:25-27.)

- The self-delusion: A resulting elitist mindset will keep the leader(s) isolated from the holy relationships within the church that would, otherwise, keep them accountable and safe from the same condemnation into which Lucifer fell. “If we walk in the light as He [God] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7). Often and usually without knowing, they will seek to win people over to their favor through unusual and unprincipled means. Those who take part of such a system that allows the exaltation of withering flesh in the place of Christ over the Church do not realize they have slowly and subtly been given placebos in the place of the holy and God-ordained blessings.
- The control factor: “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Ps. 127:1). Anything done for God apart from His grace (favor and ability) must be empowered, sustained, promoted, and kept by human effort and intelligence. The limitations of our humanity will only prove to be quite insufficient and frustrating. Our efforts will produce no lasting fruit because Jesus is not Lord over it—we are. Suspicion and flattery (sooth-saying) become a common motivating force in such scenarios because the free gift of the grace of God has been exchanged for a refuge of lies. Those people who are non-conformists or who cannot be controlled are seen as threats. Those who pose a threat to such a system are held in suspicion and marked as trouble-makers and rebels. Within such a system, much effort goes into putting out “little fires” originally cause by not doing things in accordance with God’s ways in the first place. If the foundation of a particular church fellowship is off, the entire building is off too, no matter how much Biblical “structure” we try to build on it. A wrong foundation sets the stage for a false, self-serving authority that demands false submission to false yokes within a particular church. We must know whose “yoke” we are carrying. In other words, people are subtly coerced over time into exchanging pure devotion to Christ with devotion to something else.

- The mixture: Often the spirit of divination will subtly work behind the scenes in relationships although God is still moving and manifesting His glory in the corporate Church meeting. A common and very costly mistake is to equate God's endorsement on everything we do with such glorious manifestations. This self-deception is evident in such attitudes as: "I (we) have God's favor and complete endorsement because He shows up in my or our meetings—because of the anointing on my ministry." In reality, God is honoring the faith of the people although there may exist competition with Christ's headship and honor in the Church. Oh, how merciful and patient Christ is with His people! No minister should ever compete with Christ for the affections and loyalty of His people. Such foundational mixture in the Church will eventually corrupt the purest of hearts and will manipulate for its purposes the talents and gifts of the people. The pure and noble priority of using church ministry to build people is corrupted over time into using the people to build a ministry.
- The misuse of gifts: The gifts of the Spirit and the ministerial gifts are misused to make people dependent on us or to feed our faltering self-images. Ministry focus is placed more on achieving for God, making it more impersonal, rather than on receiving from and ministering to God, making it personal and intimate. The most important principle of righteousness as a faith-based gift becomes more like a dream than a reality, so "performance" is needed to make up for it. This grievous system taints ALL who subject themselves to it. Along with the spirits of inferiority and insecurity, the spirit of divination will seek to coerce us into looking to anything else rather than the free gift of righteousness as our source of self-worth. Our self-image must be based only on the gifts of righteousness and grace that have been made available to us. It is not based on us but on Christ's finished work. If our self-worth is tied to our spiritual gift, then we will become at the very best opportunists. We will look for positions of authority over people instead of using our Kingdom authority for people. If our self-worth is based on how well we fulfill certain tasks, we are slaves of men instead of sons of God.

Those of God's people who have already allowed themselves to be captured through such flattery, maneuverings, and manipulations are pleasers of men and not God. Consequently, their reward is the praise of men and all its futility and not God's. They have allowed themselves to be spellbound or hypnotized into accepting religious trash over eternal treasure.

Some Concluding Comments

Earlier, the word placebo was used. It figuratively means: Something of no intrinsic remedial value that is used to appease or reassure another.² It would have been of no intrinsic value to Jesus, if His disciples were “affirming” Him as the Messiah before His Father in Heaven had established it within Him by direct and intimate declaration. In fact, such human affirmation would have proven not only unstable but presumptuous, and, ultimately, nothing more than flattery.

If we have been secured and affirmed by our Father’s voice within us, we will not fall prey to the counterfeits that seek to draw unto themselves the glory, praise, and honor that belongs to Christ.

All feelings of self-worth must come directly from God by personal encounters with Him. All human ministry to the individual must only define and mature that person’s ability to hear directly from God. We re-affirm and re-assure others in Christ but cannot endorse them. Endorsement only comes from God directly. The Father’s public endorsement of Jesus (Mt. 3-4) became evident to the whole world, not just in anointing, but, more importantly, in His ability to pass all the tests to which He was subjected. Apart from this, the believer will spend most of their sojourn here being tossed to and fro by every wind of tribulation and persuasive and seductive doctrine. They will try to get from people what they should be getting from God.

We must know that God has spoken to us directly and expect it to be reaffirmed through others. If it isn’t, we must fall back to the refuge of what God has directly spoken over us.

The structure of all Church ministry, including teaching, must exist for this purpose alone. We must imperatively recognize and often teach:

- 1) That not one person is greater than another in the Church. There are differences in gender roles, talents, giftings, responsibilities, and maturity but not in status before God.
- 2) We have all been born of the incorruptible seed of the word of God (1 Pt. 1-2). That seed is the direct and personal declaration of God within us. It can only grow as long as that person’s ability to directly hear from God matures. This cannot be fully accomplished apart from

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that person receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit and the resulting operation of the nine gifts (graces) of the Spirit in that person's life, especially the revelation gifts. God's declaration over and within us established this reality in Heaven, earth, and Hell: That sin is no longer accredited to us by God. We are righteous by faith in Christ alone and have become as He is before God—joint heirs with Him.

- 3) Apart from these imperatives, the Church will have to come up with placebos to placate the people—to anesthetize them to the fullness of their inheritance in this life. This will need to include the concoction of religious platitudes, vain practices, persuasive false doctrine, and other smoke screens that veil the perfect and very possible will of God in high-sounding mysteries.

These truths deeply engraved within our hearts will keep us alert and battle-ready when the counterfeits come to allure us away. So, people of God, are you being duped? Whose yokes are you carrying? Are you giving homage to a man-made system of controls, rules, and laws that honor men instead of God? Is there a mixture of the flattery of men and the praise God in your church? Remember, to whomever you subject yourself will determine your destiny at least in this life. Because of these things, many have subjected themselves to ongoing troubles and frustrations that could have otherwise been avoided. Have we allowed and accepted inordinate entitlements and expectations and the structures facilitating them instead of the gifts of favor and praise that only come from God? I don't know about you, but when it comes down to having to divide my loyalty, faithfulness, servitude, and love between men and their corrupt systems of authority that are contrary to Christ's supreme rule over the Church, I will choose the later. His yoke is easy, His burden is light. He is full of grace and truth and provides fullness of joy and pleasures forever more—superabundant life.

The spirit of divination will seek to hinder or block the fulfillment of the covenant promises that assures God's direct communication to individuals. It will attempt to displace this as the only lasting source of self-worth with the self-serving and corrupting influence of human control. That control can come cloaked with true spiritual gifts until the Lord cuts it off. The devil will package it in such a way so that it will bear all the outward marks of being Christian but will have the same effect as a placebo: no intrinsic remedial value.

Because of this spirit of divination's ability to mimic the things of God, exposing and renouncing it will often cause us a loss of relationships. We will be marked as disloyal to the existing authority that thrives on flattery, suspicion, and control. Becoming free from the influence of this spirit will

first involve some deep heart searching before the Lord, allowing the Holy Spirit to expose everything in us that loves the praise of men more than God's. Only then can we clearly discern and hear the direct voice of God that endorses us as His own. Upon this rests our eternal destiny. Everything in us that would rather sacrifice God-given truth for the controlling factors of human sentiment and relationships and that would compromise Holy Spirit conviction for the pacifying influences of wrong authority must be recognized and renounced.

It was said of Jesus that He entrusted Himself to no man, did not seek their approval for anything, nor regard the person or position of anyone (Mt. 22:16; Jn. 2:23-25). He ultimately only served His Father and valued and protected the fellowship He enjoyed with Him to the point of death. Even when all people forsook Him, He did not stray from His God-ordained purpose but vigilantly guarded and secured His status before God. He did not sell out His status before God for a favorable status before men.

The End

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