

Cleansing Stream

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Also See Section [Spiritual Warfare](#)

Section Includes Can A Christian Be Demonized?, How Deliverance Ministries Lead People to Bondage, Binding and Loosing, Territorial Spirits, Spiritual Warfare and Generational Curses

Introduction

You are about to enter the world of Johnny Christian and his roller coaster ride with the false teachings of Cleansing Stream. I think it is important for the reader to understand my heart on this issue and some of the reasons why I have chosen to take such a strong stand against the Cleansing Stream.

From the outset I want to make it clear that I have no personal vendetta to settle with anyone in the Cleansing Stream program or at The Church On The Way. My reasons for opposing this program are purely theological and pastoral. My heart is grieved when I consider what this program teaches and what it does to Christians and professing Christians.

The Cleansing Stream is a deliverance ministry and do not let their smooth words about oppression versus possession fool you. They cast demons out of Christians and practice all sorts of spiritual warfare "techniques." This program insults the work of Christ, undermines the power of regeneration, and butchers the doctrine of sanctification. The more I have studied this program and its theology, the more I am convinced that they are in serious error.

There are bound to be some who will object to my straightforward assessment of this program, but I stand by it. I am willing to be corrected by the Scriptures if I am wrong. My heart holds firm to the Bible and what it teaches. I am not going to be swayed by appeals to experience or by sloppy interpretation. I challenge the reader to test me and the theology I present by the Word of God.

In closing I would like to answer some common attacks against me. I would like to comfort those who might doubt this, but I am not demon possessed! I am Christian who loves Jesus Christ! It is a sad commentary on the spiritual blindness of some that when they face biblical criticism, they demonize their opponents (which is also a danger sign of [a cult](#)). I am also not doing this for fame or prestige. Some people have accused me of wanting to make a name for myself! Imagine that? Rest assured, I am not making a name for myself. I am only trying to be faithful to God's Word.

Another objection is that I have no right to be doing this. Some people believe that only Jesus can correct those in the church, and I need to leave all the correction to Him. I wholeheartedly disagree! The Scriptures show that it is the church that needs to judge the church. I wish that someone else would have done this long ago, and maybe someone has, but I am not aware of any substantial attempt to refute the errors of this program; instead, I have watched this program spread world-wide to the detriment of many thousands of believers.

I ask the reader to judge this material fairly. My words and thoughts may not be clear, but do not dismiss the whole because of the failings of some small parts. I am aware that there might be grammatical errors in places that I missed in my reviews; I only ask the reader to forgive my failings.

Tom

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Chapter One

Johnny Christian has been saved for about a year now. His life with Jesus has witnessed remarkable transformations and his knowledge of Christ has been growing steadily. Still Johnny has been struggling with a sin since his conversion. Johnny's conscience has been bothering him and he has made an appointment to see his pastor so he can discuss his struggle with him.

After the initial greetings and a warm embrace, Johnny and pastor Warren Fare sit down for a chat about what has been going on in Johnny's life. Johnny jumps right to the point and tells pastor Fare that he has recently been in a spiritual slump and is finding himself beset by the old sin of lust. "Before I believed in Jesus, I engaged in sexual sin and often watched pornographic videos. I have tried to stop watching pornography, but I feel like I just can't stop. It plagues my mind! I read the Scriptures and often am afraid because I think I might not be saved. What am I to do? How can I stop practicing this sin?" Johnny looked at the ground and felt uncomfortable discussing his sin. Johnny glanced at pastor Fare and waited for his reply.

Pastor Fare, being heavily involved in the Cleansing Stream, believes he knows what Johnny's real problem is.

"Johnny, I know what you are going through and I don't want you to worry. Let me ask you a question. Have you been through Cleansing Stream?"

Johnny looked up. "No, I have never heard of it before. What is it?"

"The Cleansing Stream was designed for people just like you Johnny. The program is going to teach you how you can have victory over Satan in you life. It is very important that you attend and learn everything." Pastor Fare's face brightened as he thought about Johnny learning how to protect himself from Satan's devices. "The program is going to be starting in a week so I want you to register as soon as possible."

"All right, I'll go." Johnny still felt uncomfortable about his sin and wondered how he was going to get through this evening. "Pastor, what is going on with me? I don't understand why I can't shake this sin?"

"Well, I don't want to steal all the thunder from the program, but when you sin you give the Devil a legal right to put hooks in your soul. These hooks are bondages, which demons can just come and tug on, and off you will go sinning. There is also the possibility of generational curse from your family members. You have to wait to get to the program; you will learn all about these things there."

"Um, you said I would have to register. Is there a cost to the program?"

"Yes, it is going to cost around two hundred dollars, but you will find out about the prices at the sign-up table."

Pastor Fare stood signaling that the appointment time had ended.

"Thanks pastor for seeing me."

"You're welcome."

This scenario and ones like it have been repeated almost daily since the advent of Cleansing Stream founded by Tim Davis. Christians are learning that their struggles with sin are not really battles against the flesh, but battles against the devil. Cleansing Stream is a deliverance ministry that seeks to help Christians in their walk of sanctification by teaching them that Satan and demons are at the root of their sin problems. The program believes that what the Christian really needs to live the victorious life is deliverance from the Devil.

Now that Johnny has agreed to go through the program, he will learn about a basic assumption called the "bound believer." In order for Cleansing Stream to work its wonders it has to first establish that Johnny has a problem. The primary job is to convince believers like Johnny that salvation was not enough to cleanse them from demonic bondage. These believers must be convinced that they are still bound by Satan and need what is taught in this program to free them. How is the Cleansing Stream going to do this? First they are going to establish the "fact" that bound believers exist.

To help establish the "fact" that bound believers exist, the program supplies an authority to support it. This authority is Jack Hayford, Senior Pastor of 8000+ members The Church On The Way. Pastor Hayford glowingly endorses the Cleansing Stream and his testimonial is given in the literature and videos supplied to the participants. This is not a wild stretch for pastor Hayford since he also believes in demonically bound believers. Jack Hayford in his article entitled "The Finger Of God" authoritatively pronounces,

The proposal made by a few, that to acknowledge such oppression or bondage in a Christian is to demean, diminish, or deny the power of the reigning Christ indwelling the believer are dishonest. Further, they beg the real question; the fact that 'bound believers' do exist and that theological pretensions or arguments aren't going to free them.⁽¹⁾

This endorsement from a well-respected pastor is often enough to sway most who might be doubting the theological soundness of such a program. How can a pastor of the caliber like Jack Hayford support something that is theologically wrong? Little Johnny Christian might feel intimidated if he decided to go against such a well-known teacher.⁽²⁾

With Jack Hayford's testimonial laying the foundation, Tim Davis, the founder of Cleansing Stream, is free to state "the obvious" that bound believers exist. In the opening introduction to the Cleansing Stream workbook, Tim Davis gives his testimonial how the program came about. The Cleansing Stream program does not owe its existence to diligent theological study, but instead to a conversation with God over some perplexing experiences.⁽³⁾ Basically, Tim Davis could not figure out why some Christians remained "bound" in sin, even after his prayers, and thus God showed him the basics of Christian demonic cleansing. Now "Christians" are being cleansed regularly and the experiences prove it.

Notes

1. Jack W. Hayford, "The Finger of God," in *A Reader on the Holy Spirit: Anointing, Equipping and Empowering for Service*, (Los Angeles: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1993), 205.

2. The testimonial from Jack Hayford is often the big stick used to "beat" objectors into submission. Often the story goes something like, "Do you know more than Jack Hayford?" It is common to also be questioned as to one's submission to the church: "If you don't trust Jack Hayford than why are you here?" There are often accusations then made against those who would object like, "I sense a rebellious spirit." Sometimes the objector can even be demonized with others thinking that the objector is possessed of a spirit. There are also times when veiled threats are made like, "if you don't submit to your pastor then you will be out of from underneath the covering." This threat often means that one is now open to a whole host of demonic

oppression and injury. These tactics are unloving, unholy, and unbiblical.

3. Timothy Davis, *Workbook for the Cleansing Seminar 2nd ed. (Van Nuys: Cleansing Stream Ministries, 1993), 1.*

Chapter Two

Johnny picked up his packet of Cleansing Stream materials and his eye was drawn toward a testimonial sheet. He poured over the testimonials and found himself in awe at the spectacular things these people were saying. Some people claimed that they were healed of years of abuse, while others said that various spirits were cast out. One testimony really caught his attention. Johnny found it hard to read it because it reflected his own struggle so closely. He read it slowly again and again whispering, "I was delivered from a spirit of pornography." Johnny sat quietly and considered his own soul's condition. "I wonder if I have a spirit of pornography?" Johnny asked himself soberly. Getting up, he walked briskly over to his bed and started to pray with tears. "God, I don't know what is happening with me. I feel so dirty. Jesus, do I have a demon?" Prayers and tears gave way to silence as Johnny wept himself to sleep.

The Cleansing Stream program relies primarily upon experiences to establish the "fact" of deliverance. Along with the testimonial from an authority like Jack Hayford, the Cleansing Stream adds multitudes of participant testimonials. The Cleansing Stream brochures and packets come filled with testimonial sheets from both participants and pastors who have nothing but rave reviews for the program. These experiences are very much the heart of the program. When program members or leaders are challenged with Scriptures that would deny the legitimacy of the program, these ones are quick to give testimonies about their experiences. There was a particular evening after one of the main sessions of the Cleansing Stream program that this author went and spoke to Tim Davis about the many biblical objections raised against his program. The conversation was rather brief for when the objections were made known Tim Davis replied, "A man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with a theology!" It was obvious by the look on his face that there was nothing more to be said on either end and this author left in amazement.(4)

Though there are many hundreds of testimonies which speak in favor of the program, the Christian cannot judge truth by experience. This is a foundational thought and one that needs to be explored further. There was a cry launched during the Reformation that encapsulated much of what was happening during that time of great upheaval. The cry was "*Sola Scriptura*" which is translated as "*Scripture Alone!*" Whereas the Popes and the Roman Catholic Church were adrift in doctrinal heresy because of theologies held apart from Scripture, the men of the Reformation sought to bring the Church back under the authority of the Bible alone!

The idea of *Sola Scriptura* is not a new concept. The principle is found in biblical texts like 2 Tim 3:15-17.(5) The Apostle Paul reminds Timothy,

And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Notice here that one of the areas that Scripture speaks with final authority is doctrine. The Scriptures are sufficient for all of our doctrinal needs and are the standards by which all doctrines are to be tested. Timothy faced difficult situations, perilous times, and false teachers, and Paul refers him to the Scriptures for answers. Without this firm conviction regarding the Word of God, one can find himself lost on the high seas of traditions and experiences. If one abandons the foundational point of *Sola Scriptura*, then he is at the mercy of those who seek to establish their own traditions, experiences, and theologies in an effort to fill the void left by such a low view of Scripture. If someone wants to be complete and thoroughly equipped for

every good work, then he need look no farther than the Bible.

A good illustration of *Sola Scriptura* in action is found in the Gospel of Mark 7:1-13. Jesus and his disciples had a confrontation with some Pharisees and scribes over the traditions of the elders. The disciples did not keep a tradition and the Pharisees and scribes wanted to know why! Jesus proclaims, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men."⁽⁶⁾ Jesus further establishes His objection by exposing the sinful practice of "Corban." Jesus rebukes, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."⁽⁷⁾ Though the term "*Sola Scriptura*" is not mentioned specifically in this passage, the principle is here nonetheless. Jesus showed that any doctrine or tradition that contradicts or goes beyond God's word is to be rejected and has no authority in the life of a follower of Christ.

So how does this affect the discussion over Cleansing Stream? The principle of *Sola Scriptura* does not allow for experience to be the judge of truth! There can be thousands of testimonies produced by any program or religious belief.⁽⁸⁾ What separates the wheat from the chaff is whether or not the Scriptures teach and uphold the said experiences. For Cleansing Stream to be accepted it must first pass the test of Scripture. If the program fails the test of Scripture, it needs to be abandoned in favor of what Scripture teaches in its place.⁽⁹⁾

Notes

4. This author has also spoken to Roger Allen, the president of *Glory Communications International*, the publishers of the Cleansing Stream materials. The communication was over the first paper that this author wrote about the Cleansing Stream program. The first paper had many quotations from Cleansing Stream materials and this author sought permission to use the quotations. The request was denied and the letter in return contained Mr. Allen's experiences and testimony for the program. When this author called and spoke with Mr. Allen, the theme of the conversation was not the Scriptures, but all of Mr. Allen's unique and extraordinary experiences.

5. All Scriptural quotations are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

6. Mark 7:6-8.

7. Mark 7:9

8. If experience is the judge of truth then what is the Church to do with the Mormons? How about various other cults and their claims to religious experiences and truth? Most Christians recognize this truth when it comes to the cults, but suddenly get squeamish when it comes to testing "Christian" programs and teachings. This is extremely dangerous! The body of Christ must be able to fend off error from without and within!

9. In practice this is where this program and its members fail the most. The appeal is often to the assumption, the experience, or "the fruit." The widespread biblical illiteracy commonly found in the Church today helps foster this appeal to experience because only a few in the pew and pulpit are capable of sustaining a cogent theological argument. If a person does not know his Bible, or how to interpret it, then all that is left is the appeal to experience and often a rather heated anti-intellectual opinion.

Chapter Three

Johnny sat down in his favorite chair and began to think about all that he has learned over the past months since he started the program. Thinking of his new friend Larry that he just met over the weekend, Johnny

reached over to the phone and dialed his number.

"Hello Larry?"

"Johnny?"

"Yeah, it's me." Johnny said laughing.

"I was just thinking about you. What are you doing?"

"Well, I was just sitting here thinking about all the stuff I have learned while I have been at the Cleansing Stream seminar." Johnny spoke enthusiastically.

"Oh, the Cleansing Stream . . ." Larry felt a twinge inside.

"Yeah, it's been great! I have learned all about "aligning my body, soul, and spirit, the power of my words, demonic hooks which can ensnare my soul, and generational curses. I cannot believe how many things I never knew about. People are so ignorant of what Satan can do. Have you been through?"

"No, I have not and I don't plan on it either." Larry spoke conversationally but firm.

"Why not? Man, you have to go! Don't you know that you have demonic issues and bondages? I've learned that some bondages could be with you all the way from the womb. Besides, there are so many who have gone through and are now free!" Johnny was feeling a little hurt and starting to get frustrated with Larry.

"You know Johnny, I have some good biblical reasons why I disagree with the program. Do you have some time to listen?"

"Uhhh, well, I really am tired and wanted to kinda get some sleep before work tomorrow. Maybe some other time?" Johnny was feeling sorry that he called Larry.

"All right. Maybe we can get together for lunch?"

"Yeah, that sounds cool. I will call you and let you know when I have some time available. It's been nice talking to you."

"You too, Johnny."

"Bye."

"Bye."

Johnny slumped some in the chair and thought to himself that this is the type of opposition that would occur to prevent him from being cleansed. He remembered how Tim Davis and others in the group had warned that Satan and the demons would attack him once he started in the program because they hate believers learning the truth about deliverance. Johnny then wondered whether his friend Larry might not be trying to hide demonic bondage in his own life.

When a person enters the Cleansing Stream program, one of the first things he will learn is that Christians have given "place" to demons. The Cleansing Stream emphatically and repeatedly declares that salvation was not enough to cleanse the soul from demon bondage. For Cleansing Stream, regeneration is in the spirit only. This view is based primarily on the theological position called trichotomy. Trichotomy is the belief that man is made of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Cleansing Stream teaches that when a person

is saved only their spirit is born again. This theological error of spirit-only regeneration opens the door for the program to teach that a Christian is "bound" in the soul. ⁽¹¹⁾

Once man is broken down into pieces and no longer viewed as a whole, Cleansing Stream introduces the idea that bondage is different from possession and that demonic bondage occurs only in the soul. The program teaches that Christians have given demons legal right to be in the soul through word curses and sinful behaviors. Demons gain "footholds" in the soul and then manipulate believers into further sinful actions. Cleansing Stream goes to great lengths to establish this point, and the workbook is filled with pictures of the soul with some big fishhooks in it. These footholds are referred to as hooks and demons tug on these hooks whenever they feel like it. The only way to get free from these hooks is to learn the Cleansing Stream truths and then to renounce these hooks. The renouncing of hooks is an elaborate formula prayer, which has the Christian address Satan and demons and thus break any legal contract made between them.

The idea of hooks is an essential element to all Cleansing Stream theologies. Yet for all the hoopla over hooks, the Scriptures do not teach this "truth." Where then does the Cleansing Stream hook theology come from? The theology comes primarily from one misread verse: Ephesians 4:27. In Ephesians 4:27 the New International Version reads "and do not give the devil a foothold." To better understand what is actually being said here, it is best to examine the immediate context of Ephesians 4:17 ff..

The Apostle Paul began the section of Ephesians 4:17 exhorting the Christian believers to no longer walk as the Gentiles walk. In Eph. 4:25 Paul begins to delineate for the believers how their redeemed lives are to be lived. The Apostle is very practical in this section and lists various sins and the biblical alternatives to these sins. It is in the midst of these sins and their biblical alternatives that Paul references the specific sin of anger. The text states, "Be angry and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, not give place to the devil."⁽¹²⁾ This is all the text says about the subject and then moves onto another admonition. Where the error in interpretation comes for Cleansing Stream is in making the text say way more than what it actually says.

The Cleansing Stream uses the NIV version of the text because of one specific word: foothold. ⁽¹³⁾ This word in English carries with it the connotation of giving ground and can sound sinister, "You have given the Devil a *foothold!*" This view of foothold meaning soul bondage is not unique to Tim Davis and Cleansing Stream; Jack Hayford also holds the soul bondage view declaring, "*The word "place" (topos) clearly indicates a specific possibility of a location being surrendered in the soul of a believer*" (emphasis mine).⁽¹⁴⁾

A survey of other translations will help in considering the true significance of the word the Greek word *topos*. *The NKJV translates topos as "place," while the NASB translates it as "opportunity."* The word *topos* in the Greek lexicon can mean a literal inhabited place like a city or region. The word can also be speaking about a "place in a book" or an "office," but in Eph. 4:27 the lexicon lists *topos as meaning "possibility, opportunity, or chance."* ⁽¹⁵⁾ In the specific reference to this verse the lexicon states, "do not give the devil a chance to exert his influence." ⁽¹⁶⁾ The context of this verse, with its lists of sins and biblical alternatives, is **not** teaching about the nature of soul bondage. Paul is stating a truth regarding the disruptive effects of anger within the Christian community. A Christian is not to sin with anger and thus give an opportunity to the devil to come into the community and tempt with further anger and discord. To sin with anger is to give the devil a place from which he can work to disrupt fellowship through the enticements of further sin within the fellowship.⁽¹⁷⁾ There is no reference inherent in the language of *topos* to insinuate that a Christian can indeed give a place in the **soul** to Satan. From the context and the Greek lexicon, it is clear that Ephesians 4:27 is not speaking about hooks or soul bondage in a Christian believer. The hook theology is a pure invention and addition to Scripture. Thus, all the teachings about hooks and their removal are doctrinal error and lead Christians to a wrong understanding of progressive sanctification.

The hook theology of Cleansing Stream is so pervasive in the program that its influence colors the interpretation of other verses as well. In 2 Tim 2:20-21 the Christian is told to cleanse himself so that he can become a vessel of honor which is then useful to the Master. The exhortation to cleanse oneself is not seen in its own context, but is seen through the lens of Cleansing Stream hook theology which reads in its understanding of cleansing oneself to be a cleansing of hook bondage in the soul. (18) Cleansing Stream teaches, "If we are sincere about becoming 'gold and silver' then we must ask; 'From what do I cleanse myself?' Any area of our life where the Devil has a foothold, a hook of bondage in our soul where he is able to influence our behavior or exercise control over us"(19) But as seen earlier, there is no biblical basis for understanding that believers have hooks in the soul. To read hooks into the cleansing being spoken of in 2 Tim 2:20-21 is to go beyond what Scripture teaches at this point. What the passage is speaking about is the cleansing of oneself from false teaching. Timothy and others were to cleanse themselves of the false teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus, and then they would be useful to the Master of the house.⁽²⁰⁾ It is important to note that this passage in context says nothing of the spiritual nature of their bondage. It is by reading into the text the previous hook theology that one is able to see the cleansing that Paul was speaking about referring to as hooks in the soul.

Though the hook teachings of Cleansing Stream have not stood up to examination, some take what is found in the next few verses of 2 Timothy as proof for the idea of soul bondage. In 2 Tim. 2:25-26 the passage states, "In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." The Cleansing Stream finds significance in this passage based on the KJV rendering, "In meekness instructing those who oppose themselves"(21) The workbook goes on to teach that whenever a person sins they are actually opposing themselves which means that believers are giving the kingdom of darkness an even stronger foothold.⁽²²⁾ Here again it appears that Cleansing Stream has chosen a specific translation to support their theological bias of hooks, but KJV rendering of "oppose themselves" is not the best translation of the word. The NKJV and the NASB translate the word as "those who are in opposition." The NIV translates the word simply, "Those who oppose." Timothy is to humbly correct those who are in opposition, which means opposition to the Truth. The context here is the false teachers and their teachings and Timothy is to labor in his instruction to correct their errors. But the question still might be raised whether the passage teaches soul bondage because of these ones having been taken captive by the Devil.

From the text itself it is plain that these false teachers were caught in a trap set by the Devil. This trap was not a literal physical trap, but the reference here is figuratively speaking about the method of deceit (false doctrine) that the Devil used to trap these ones. Paul tells Timothy to gently correct these false teachers with the hope that God might grant them repentance. Paul does not describe the exact nature of this trap that these false teachers were caught in, but his remedy for the situation is for Timothy to faithfully labor in correction. God is the one who will grant the false teachers repentance. To go further than this and attempt to ascertain the nature of the snare or of the captivity is to ask a question that the text is not concerned with answering. What is important here is the attitude of Timothy and disposition of God who is the only one who can rescue these false teachers. For Cleansing Stream to read into these texts hooks and soul bondage is beyond the boundaries of solid exegesis.

Notes

10. Davis, 133 ff. This author is in disagreement with Cleansing Stream on the issue of trichotomy. It appears from the whole of Scripture that man is a dichotomy (body, soul/spirit). This position is the only one that does justice to the fluidity of the language that the Bible uses in describing the immaterial part of man. Nevertheless, it is patently wrong to suggest that man is only "born again" in the spirit. Scripture is clear in 2 Cor 5:17 that the Christian is a new creation. Man is a unity and God's work at regeneration

affects the whole person. Cleansing Stream makes a grave mistake with this teaching.

11. The dangers of this compartmentalizing of man are evident in this program. The introduction of trichotomy can open the door for neognostic theology. Neognosticism refers to the revival of gnostic-like doctrines in the church today. Often there is a disparaging of things which are physical and intellectual in favor of the spiritual (see Kim Riddlebarger, "TRICHOTOMY: A Beach-head for Gnostic Influences" *Modern Reformation Magazine* [1996]: 10 pages. Online. Available: <http://www.remembrancer.com/ace>. 25 April 1997). Consider that Cleansing Stream teaches that to walk in the soul (mind, emotion, and will) is bad. The pictures and charts show that the spirit has to be over the soul otherwise a person is then "out of alignment." What does this infer to the participants? People can infer that the mind, emotions, and will are bad and that only the spirit is good. A participant can easily learn to disparage his "soul and body" in favor of his new "spirit." This plays right into the Pentecostal/Charismatic mindset which all ready exudes a rampant anti-intellectualism. Man is whole and needs to present himself as a living sacrifice to God. Man's members are now members of Christ's body and are no longer to be used for sinful living. The Cleansing Stream trichotomy and spirit-only regeneration theology is terrible and can wreak havoc in the minds of believers.

12. Ephesians 4:26-27.

13. Davis, 162. The workbook has the word bolded for emphasis. Clearly the translation was chosen to emphasize the aspect which Cleansing Stream reads into the text.

14. Hayford, "Finger of God," 215. This position is fanciful exegesis and finds no support in the language or the text.

15. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature 2nd ed.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 822-23.

16. Ibid., 823 2 c.

17. The community of believers becomes vulnerable when a member is sinning with anger. The devil can take advantage of unrepentant anger and begin to tempt other believers to respond with anger and thus begin serious discord amongst brethren. It would not be long before one could be tempted to a whole host of sins through the anger of one brother.

18. Cleansing Stream is guilty of another hermeneutical error called eisogesis. Eisogesis means to read into a text a meaning which is not there. To find hook soul bondage in this passage is reading in a meaning which the author of the passage never intended.

19. Davis, 164.

20. The standard interpretation is that the cleansing here refers to the false teachers (see George W. Knight III, "Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles," *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, eds. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque, [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992]), but Gordon Fee makes a case that the cleansing refers to the teaching itself (see Gordon D. Fee 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus in the *New International Biblical Commentary series NT ed.* W. Ward Gasque [Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992.]

21. Davis, op. cit. 170.

22. Ibid., 170

Chapter Four

Johnny was really enjoying the fellowship he was sharing with his fellow brothers and sisters over dinner at Denny's. Everything was going well till Mary made a funny little joke at Johnny's expense.

"Mary, I don't receive that."

Mary looked perplexed. "What are you talking about Johnny?"

"Your joke is not just a joke, but a curse." Johnny was beginning to get angry at Mary's lack of understanding of such a basic issue. "There is power in your words Mary. When you spoke that joke you were giving a demon legal right to come into my life and torment me with thoughts of inferiority and rejection." The more Johnny thought about this, the more he grew impatient with his friends lack of concern and foolish speech.

"Johnny, it was just a little joke. Relax. I meant nothing by it."

"No, you don't understand. What you said is a curse. I have been learning from Cleansing Stream that every word that comes out of my mouth is either a blessing or a curse. Mary, you are advancing either God's Kingdom or Satan's kingdom."

"Johnny, you are really going too far with this." Mary pleaded.

"Well, you are just being ignorant of Satan's devices."

The Cleansing Stream is very emphatic in its teaching on the power of words. The workbook gives numerous examples of God, Satan, and man speaking. The inference from these passages is that man has power in his speech. The term is used often "The power of the spoken word."⁽²³⁾ Cleansing Stream believes that believers can loose the working of hell into their lives through improper speech. This power of spoken words theology is not a biblical one but rests heavily on the false teachings commonly found in the Word of Faith movement. In a summary of the Faith movement doctrine found in the book *Beyond Seduction*, point six says, "Never make a negative confession."⁽²⁴⁾ Faith teachers warn that the tongue can kill you or that it can release life. The basic idea is that whatever you confess you get. This is why the movement is called Positive Confession.⁽²⁵⁾ But is this a biblical understanding?

In the beginning of the Words section, the workbook states that God had only to speak and everything came into being.⁽²⁶⁾ But the analogy between God speaking and man speaking breaks down since man is not God and cannot speak things into existence. Also, it was not the power of God's words that brought forth creation, nor faith, but the very fact that it was God who did the speaking! Dave Hunt points out, "The power is in God, not in words. But by putting the emphasis upon words, it follows that man would be able to emulate God's mighty acts."⁽²⁷⁾ Cleansing Stream continues with some other Scriptures in support of the idea that man has power in his words. One favorite Scripture amongst the many proof texts is "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."⁽²⁸⁾ This verse is used to support the thesis that man has power in his words. Cleansing Stream holds to some invisible law or force that works when man speaks. The idea is that some form of legal transaction occurs through the spoken word. Yet the numerous Scriptural passages detailing people making various "positive" and "negative" confessions do not prove this theology. Yes, the Scriptures do teach that death and life are in the power of the tongue, but what exactly is being said here?

It is important to examine the literary genre of the proverb before interpretation can begin. Proverbs are brief, particular expressions of a truth. The briefer the statement, the less likely it is to be totally precise and universally applicable.⁽²⁹⁾ Proverbs must be understood reasonably and taken on their own terms. They do not state everything about a truth but they point toward it.⁽³⁰⁾ This is an important step in the correct interpretation of biblical proverbs. Square proverbs cannot be pressed into round interpretive holes. There

are limits to what a person can make a proverb say. A person would not think of trying to build mountains of teachings off the modern proverb "Look before you leap!" Yet how often does one find Bible teachers stretching the limits of every word in a proverb!

Proverb 18:21 states, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." This proverb states succinctly the truth that speech can have wide ranging effects. What a man speaks can have either good or bad effects upon him. It also says that those who love it (the tongue) will eat its fruit. The tongue can bring a harvest and a Christian needs to be wise in the exercise of it. The teaching about speech is throughout Proverbs and throughout the New Testament as well. But nowhere does the Bible teach that words have power in and of themselves. Nowhere does Scripture even suggest that what comes out of a mouth then becomes a tool that gives demons legal right to come into a believer's life and torment. These are additions to Scriptural teachings by the Cleansing Stream and have no solid base in Scripture.

Still another Scripture bolded and emphasized to support the claim of power in the words is Proverb 6:2 "You have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your mouth."⁽³¹⁾ This proverb is used to support the idea that what a Christian speaks becomes a tool of bondage in his life. Here the teachings get dramatic and declare that by a negative confession a Christian has bowed his knee at the feet of a demon, who by the power of the Christian's spoken word, has legal right to be there and begins to whisper in his ear. In this weakened spiritual state, hell begins to attack the Christian with demons like depression, worthlessness, hopelessness, anger, bitterness, and even suicide!⁽³²⁾ All this is prooftexted from Proverbs 6:2! Then an illustration is given that shows a representation of the soul with a big hook in it. Yet Proverbs 6:2 does not teach this!

Proverbs 6:2 is part of the larger context of Proverbs 6:1-5. If a person takes just a few moments in observation, the context of the proverb makes clear the interpretation. "My Son, if you become surety for your friend, if you have shaken hands in a pledge for a stranger, you are snared by the words of your mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth."⁽³³⁾ What is being spoken of here? The answer is becoming surety for your friend.⁽³⁴⁾ This proverb has nothing to do with the demonic ensnaring of a Christian's soul through the power of spoken words, instead it is a sober warning against a person becoming entangled by being a guarantee to a creditor on behalf of another person. Basically, one is bound to his oath or promise. Clearly this has absolutely nothing to do with Christian soul bondage, yet the text is used to bolster the claim that there is power in words.⁽³⁵⁾

One last text that needs to be examined in relationship to man having power in his words is Matthew 16:19. The workbook declares that the power of the believer's spoken word is the key to his authority.⁽³⁶⁾ The biblical text states, "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."⁽³⁷⁾ The Cleansing Stream interpretation of this verse is that through the power of spoken words, Christians can actually bind the operation of the works of hell in their lives, and at the same time loose the works of God to fulfill their lives. The sinister side of this is that through disobedience and ignorance, the Christian can give place to words that loosen the works of hell and bind the works of God thus effectively preventing God's plans and purposes for their lives.⁽³⁸⁾ Yet again, this verse does not teach what Cleansing Stream claims. There are a couple of key features to this text that help in its interpretation. One of the keys is found in the definition of the words: keys, bind, loose, and hades (found in the previous verse). The second key feature is in the original language of the text which the Spirit-Filled Life Bible has noted.⁽³⁹⁾

The key words of this text are keys, bind, loose, and hades. The keys of the kingdom are references to the knowledge of the Gospel. In Luke 11:52 Jesus rebukes the lawyers because they have taken away the key of knowledge. This taking away of the key of knowledge prevents the lawyers from entering into the

Kingdom and hinders others. The binding and loosing terminology is rabbinic in origin. The rabbis used these terms in reference to forbidding and permitting, and that is the same idea used in this text.(40) The word hades in Scripture refers to the abode of the dead and does not refer to hell or the place of demonic activity.

Now that the terms are defined, the interpretation becomes easier. Jesus tells Peter that He has given to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which are the keys of the knowledge of the Gospel. The context where this is spoken is immediately following Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The verse then goes on to state that whatever is bound shall be bound in heaven and whatever is loosed shall be loosed in heaven. Here the binding and loosing refer to whatever Peter permits or whatever he forbids will be forbidden in heaven. Finally Jesus had said in the previous verse that the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.(41) The gates of Hades does not refer to the demonic realm but to the power of death. Jesus gives the Church a promise that the power of death shall not prevail against the Church. This truth is gloriously demonstrated by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The definition of the key terms helps in the interpretation of the passage, yet there is still one more significant element to be found in the original language of the passage.

As noted earlier, the passage Matt 16:19 contains a note that refers the reader to the center column of the Study Bible. The center column note states, "Or will have been bound . . . will have been loosed."(42) This is to alert the reader that there is a grammatical nuance in the passage, and the text should be examined closely. In this verse the words "will be bound" and "will be loosed" are future perfect passive participles. This means that they have the possibility of being translated "will have been bound" and "will have been loosed."(43) This is an important point for the proper understanding of the passage. The binding and loosing are in reference to the keys of knowledge regarding the Gospel. What Peter is told is that what he forbids (binds) will have been already forbidden (bound) by God in heaven. Also, what he permits (looses) will have already been permitted (loosed) by God in heaven. This text is not a license for spiritual assault on Satan and the kingdom of darkness, instead this verse teaches that the Church has the keys of knowledge and She is responsible for forbidding and permitting the actions of others as they seek to enter the Kingdom. She also has the promise from Her Bride that the power of death will never overcome Her! Therefore the interpretation that Cleansing Stream has set forth that Christians have great power in their words to bind the actions of hell and loose the works of God does not stand up to biblical scrutiny. This text in Matthew 16:19 does not teach power in the words and does not support the notion of words creating bondage in the soul.

Notes

23. Davis, op. cit., 96.

24. Dave Hunt, *Beyond Seduction* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1987), 53.

25. Ibid., 53.

26. Davis, op. cit., 95.

27. Hunt, 55.

28. Davis, op. cit., 110. The quote is from Prov 18:21.

29. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth 2nd ed.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 217. *This author cannot stress enough how helpful this book has been personally. This book is a must read for any who want to honor God with sound interpretation of His Word.*

30. Ibid., 219.

31. Davis, op. cit., 117. Quote is from the NIV.

32. Ibid.

33. Proverbs 6:1-2.

34. What is surety? Surety translates the Hebrew word *'arab* which means to give a guarantee on behalf of another person. This is to make a financial pledge and this could open one up to devastating consequences if the person defaults and the one who is the guarantee is then required to make payment. R. N. Whybray, "Proverbs," *The New Century Bible Commentary* ed. Robert E. Clements, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 94.

35. The use of this text incorrectly is a good example of two exegetical fallacies: prooftexting and isolationism. Prooftexting is when someone uses a string or series of texts out of context to prove a theological point. Isolationism is when someone fails to interpret an individual text in light of its context. The entire section on words is filled with these two fallacies. Texts are quoted and certain aspects highlighted all in a futile attempt to prove the assertion that man has power in his words.

36. Davis, 113.

37. Matthew 16:19.

38. Davis, loc. cit.

39. Jack W. Hayford, ed., *Spirit-Filled Life Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 1436. Reference the center column note on Matthew 16:19.

40. Leon Morris, "The Gospel According to Matthew," *Pillar* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 426.

41. Matthew 16:18.

42. Hayford, *Spirit-Filled Life Bible*, loc. cit.

43. Morris loc. cit.

Chapter Five

The Cleansing Stream preacher thundered from the pulpit, "Right now there are demons lined up against the wall here in the church! They are waiting for you to speak a negative word like 'I'm stupid.' When you speak that way you give demons legal right to come into your soul and torment you with those thoughts."

Johnny became terrified at the thought of demons in the church waiting for him to make one slip of the tongue. "I wonder how many curses I have spoken in my life?" "I must have thousands of demon hooks in my soul!"

The preacher continued in his descriptions of demonic workings. His face was aglow with passion as he detailed how Satan and demons bombard the mind and speak to the inner ear of the soul. "Often you think that temptations to sin are your thoughts, but behind every sin is a spirit! You are being ignorant of Satan's devices. Satan has his spirits bombarding peoples minds and planting thoughts which are so subtle that we think it is our own minds." The preacher dramatically paused to let the full impact of what he was saying

strike the supple minds of the listeners. "If you find your mind thinking lustful, perverse, hateful, or any other immoral thoughts, you need to know that the kingdom of Darkness is behind it someway!"

Johnny sat dumbfounded. "My lustful thoughts have been demons!"

The Cleansing Stream is specific and detailed in its understanding of the demonic realm. Satan and demons are portrayed as ominous enemies to Christians and they await every opportunity to get hooks into a believer's souls. The danger of the whole concept of demonic sanctification is highlighted by the manifold speculations and instructions that result from this unbiblical premise. To attempt to categorize and examine every error under this category would necessitate the writing of another paper, but there are certain areas of correction which should be offered.

In the Cleansing Stream world view there is a cosmic battle raging. Satan and demons are incredibly powerful opponents who thwart God and control the lives of believers. The program seeks to counter this work of Satan by educating believers as the true nature of the battle they face. To put this simply, Cleansing Stream suffers from a world view error called "dualism." To say that the program is dualistic means that Cleansing Stream views God and Satan as equal opponents. One author describes this error,

When people blame all the good on God and all the bad on the devil, they are guilty of an ancient heresy called "dualism." Dualism basically sees God and the devil (good and bad) as two independent and sovereign powers struggling for ultimate control of this world Unfortunately most Christians today are guilty of believing that very heresy. This is especially true of the charismatic movement as well as anyone else that emphasizes health and wealth as the birthright of every Christian and blames the devil for everything that hinders our "personal happiness." This is the heresy of dualism at its worst.(44)

Though there is no direct statement in the workbook that declares God and Satan as cosmic equals, in practice and experience the Cleansing Stream program is dualistic. Consider that Cleansing Stream teachings assign all sin to demons and have believers being led around by hooks in the soul. The real battle for the believer is not with his flesh but with Satan and demons. Every word that comes out a believer's mouth is either a blessing or a curse, it either promotes the Kingdom of Heaven or the kingdom of darkness. The demonic realm manipulates believers who are often not even aware of these actions against them. Demons also have the ability to hide their action and create "soul peace" in the believer. For Cleansing Stream there is a dualistic war going on with the real victory only coming through the exorcism of Satanic influence in a believer's life.(45)

To achieve this dualism, Cleansing Stream has to shrink God and to inflate the Devil. The program's world view of Satan, demons, hooks, soul-ties, generational curses, word curses, footholds, and the like only serve to distort the biblical reality that God is sovereign and that the believer's battle is against the flesh. This world view of Cleansing Stream is not found with Jesus or the Scriptures. In fact, the Scriptures paint the opposite picture. The coming of Christ was the in breaking of the Kingdom of God amongst men. Jesus spoke in Matthew 12: 22-30 of the binding of Satan and the plundering of his goods. Dr. Robert Guelich, Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, insightfully summarizes on this passage:

The setting of this pericope [passage] against the backdrop of Jesus' exorcisms indicates that his exorcisms represented the actual plundering of Satan's "house" rather than the binding or disarming of Satan himself. By implication, therefore, the binding or disarming of Satan had to precede the "plundering" of Jesus' exorcisms One would assume, therefore, that the binding of or disarming occurred simultaneously with the coming of the "Kingdom of God" as inaugurated through Jesus, the Spirit-anointed Messiah in other words, Jesus' ministry of exorcism declared and demonstrated that the power of Satan was broken by the promised coming of God's sovereign rule, the "Kingdom of God," into history. His exorcisms were signs of the presence of the Kingdom of God.(46)

There was no dualistic struggle between Jesus and demons nor was there ever a hint that the demons might prevail. Jesus came to set free the captives and He has done that in all who believe. There is no need for Christians to be cleansed of demonic workings or control. Believers are a cleansed, swept, and **filled** house!

The truth regarding the sovereignty of God and the understanding of providence will protect believers from entering into this nebulous realm of speculations and errors. It is imperative for believer's to remember that Satan was a created angel (Lucifer) who fell in sin. Satan is not omnipresent, omnipotent, or omniscient. He is God's devil and cannot do what he wants when he wants! Satan is used by God to fulfill God's plans and purposes; he may desire to sift one as wheat or to take all that one has, but he cannot work apart from God's approval.(47) God is King and His will is what is being worked out on earth as in heaven. It is the providence of God that allows temptations and trials, but these are for our good and God uses them to sanctify His people. The great Reformer Martin Luther insightfully wrote:

And tho this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us,

We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:

The Prince of Darkness grim, We tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure; One little word shall fell him.(48)

To lack this fundamental understanding of the sovereignty of God is to open the door wide to an imbalanced and unbiblical understanding of the nature of Satan and his workings.

Notes

44. John Reisinger, "Six Basic Principles," *The Sovereignty of God in Providence*. Online. Available: <http://www.cet.com/~dlavoie/solo.christo/theology/salvation/pog/pog.sbp.html>. 30 April 1997.

45. This author has seen the effects of this program on a ministry. Spiritual warfare as practiced by some from Cleansing Stream is not just a theology but a way of life. Prayer times are not so much directed to God, but directed at the Devil. Satan and demons are dwelt upon constantly and this is where the meeting really "takes off." The prayers to God which are often quiet and without much passion, turn to loud shouts and claps as Satan is addressed and his kingdom assaulted. There is definitely the sensation with all the emotional commotion that real spiritual damage is being done, but this is part of the deception of this program.

46. Robert A. Guelich, "Spiritual Warfare: Jesus, Paul, and Peretti," *Pneuma* 13:1 (Spring, 1991): 39.

47. Cf. the story of Job. The providence of God and its implications are rarely understood today. What is often meant to "protect" God from looking bad is really denying God's proper place as sovereign King over the affairs of men. God is in everything, the good and the bad, in one way or another. It is true that God does not do evil, but God ordains and allows evil to come into our lives. Job declared during his day of calamity, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord (Job, 1:21). How could Job say that? Didn't Satan have his hand in this? Yes, but the calamity was from God and God used Satan to do the work. Truly, Satan is God's hardest working servant though he serves God's will out of hatred and malice. As with Joseph, what is meant for evil, God means for good.

48. Martin Luther, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.

Chapter Six

Things have been going fairly well for Johnny lately, but all day he has been struggling with lustful

thoughts. Upon coming home from some time with his friends from church, Johnny felt the bitter sting of temptation. Thoughts of lust flooded his mind and the temptation came for him to run to his stack of pornographic tapes which are hidden in the drawer. "No, I won't do this! Line up body! Line up soul! Line up spirit!" Johnny's mind raced as he thought of all things that the program had taught him. Still, the temptation raged in his mind and heart. The images which he had watched so many times before were now playing in his mind. "Line up!" Johnny cried. Still the lust was there and not abating. Soon Johnny was giving in to the lustful thoughts and reached into his drawer. "No! I don't want to do this!" Johnny sat on his bed and tried to gather his thoughts. Still his body was inflamed with lust and his heart was pounding. "I must have a demon! This can't be me." Johnny fought for another couple minutes, but victory would have to wait for another day. Johnny opened the drawer and hurried to his VCR.

The feelings of guilt wrapped Johnny like a heavy winter coat. "I hate myself!" Johnny sat on the edge of his bed and wondered why he kept doing what he hated to do. "Perhaps I have a generational curse? Somebody in my family must have given place to this sin and that's why I am struggling." Johnny remembered back to a friend of his who went through the program and found out that his sin was motivated by a generational curse. "Boy, I can't wait to get to the retreat so I can be free from all these things."

Along with the many other misunderstandings of Scripture, Cleansing Stream adds still another: the generational curse. The workbook does not spend much time on the subject, but the idea that the sins of the fathers have effect on believers is pervasive. The passage used to support this is Exodus 34:6-7,

The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.(49)

From this passage and others it is often taught that a Christian can have generational curses. Generational curses are often seen as invisible bondages that twist the lives of believers. Often a person is taught to examine the family history and look for the sins which parents and others have been involved in. The reason for this is that Cleansing Stream believes that the sins of the ancestors have influence on believers lives that they are not even aware of.(50) While this might appear to be a keen insight and to offer an explanation for the apparent sin problems in a believer's life, generational curses are unbiblical.

When a person reads texts like Exodus 34:7 and others, a first glance and quick reading might seem to support the teachings of generational curses. To some the text might seem quite plain, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me"(51) How can the text mean anything but what Cleansing Stream and others teach? The answer begins with Ezekiel 18:1 ff.. Ezekiel 18:2 introduces a proverb that was being spoken by the Israelites, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." God is deeply concerned about this proverb and the attitude that it reveals. He commands that this proverb is no longer to be used in Israel. In the next verses the Prophet Ezekiel refutes the false understanding that the Israelites had regarding the ancestral sin. It seems that at some point in Israel's history they had made a false inference from the verses like Exodus 20:5. They believed that the judgement that they were facing from God was a result of the sins of their parents and thus the proverb about the sour grapes. But God refutes this and states clearly that it is the soul that sins that shall die.(52) Ezekiel puts forth the story of three generations of Israelites and demonstrates that the only the wicked son, not the father or the grandson, is guilty before God. Clearly God is correcting their false inference.

The truth that God sets forth in His refutation of the false proverb is the same truth that was really being spoken in Exodus 20:5 and Exodus 34:7. The sin and guilt and iniquity that one faces is only because of the sin of the individual. When one is following in the sin of their fathers then one is liable to experience the

punishment that befalls the fathers. If a person turns from hating God and to loving God then that person falls under the blessings of God to the thousands of generations. Ezekiel 18:19 is excellent at this point, "Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?' Because the son has done what is lawful and right" Here is the proper understanding of generational sin. If a man follows his father's sin then he will also experience the visiting of iniquity of the father's sin. The fundamental reality of Christian life is that believers have turned from sin and Satan to God! Believers are made righteous in Christ and share no part in the visitation of iniquity for sin. The believer's regeneration and justification ensure that there will be no retribution for sin because all their sins past, present, and future are forgiven in Christ. God laid on Christ the iniquity of us all. Jesus Christ bore the wrath of God that was due believers. Therefore, we stand holy before Him based on the merits of Christ and His righteousness.(53) Once again Cleansing Stream is in error.

Notes

49. Davis, 165. The workbook only states the last half of the verse beginning with "visiting."

50. Ibid. This is a common motif in the program. Believers are taught that they can and often are affected by sins and bondages that they are not even aware of. There are ample testimonies of Christians who claim to have been set free from some bondage (like witchcraft) that they never knew was there. It is only through this program that these are made aware of such bondages.

51. Exodus 20:5.

52. Ezekiel 18:20.

53. Often the question is raised about believers who have grown up in abusive homes and who have faced extremely sinful parents. Surely the "sins" of the parents affect the child! The child is thus condemned to repeat the sins of his parents. But this not the case in Scripture. Jesus makes a Christian a new creation and that believer is not bound to repeat the sins of his parents. It is the scourge of psychology that often seeks to foster this mentality amongst Christians. Often the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells believers is forgotten and the theories of psychologists are taken as truth. Believers are often caught in the false teachings of victimization and blame-shifting. The Scriptures make plain that there is no invisible bondage from a sinful parent or grandparent. Rather, the truth is that the believers are free from their sin and are to walk in the newness of life that has been given to them in Christ.

Chapter Seven

Johnny sat quietly listening to his friend Joe tell about how he got free from demonic bondage. Johnny has met so many people at his church who say that they have been set free from demons. "I really love to hear your testimony Joe. I can't wait till I'm free from my bondage. But there was one thing I didn't quite understand. Explain the difference between repenting and renouncing again, please."

"Sure Johnny. Repenting is never enough to free you from sin, in fact demons don't care if you repent all day and night. It is only when you renounce that demons get angry and leave."

"Wow. I never knew this. How come I never heard this before?" Johnny felt betrayed by many in Church for never telling him this.

"Because many are ignorant of Satan's devices!" Joe exclaimed. "Satan and demons can stay in your soul with their hooks unless you renounce the legal right you gave them to be there. Remember Johnny, when you sin you give the devil a foothold in the soul. What are you going to be about the foothold? Joe paused to let Johnny think. "You have to remove the hook by renouncing.

To renounce you have to face downward toward Satan and speak to him directly. You have to cancel all the agreements you have made with him. You then command Satan to remove his hook from your soul."

"So I have to command Satan?"

"Yes! Jesus has given you the authority and your words have power."

"Thanks Joe. I really appreciate you explaining this better for me."

When a person in Cleansing Stream becomes aware of bondages, curses, and hooks, they are instructed on the method of getting themselves free. This method is the elaborate repentance formula that has the believer repenting and renouncing his hooks; it is only then that he is cleansed. The major error in this teaching is that repentance is not enough to cleanse a believer. The workbook states, "We repent and our sin is gone. But what about the foothold or sin gave to the enemy? That hook remains."⁽⁵⁴⁾ For Cleansing Stream, repentance must also be coupled with renouncement of the hook and spiritual warfare with the devil. With face upward one speaks to God in repentance and with face downward one speaks to Satan. It is here that the program has added to the Scriptures an elaborate renouncement ritual that secures freedom for the believer. The objection is not about the idea of renouncing sin but to the Cleansing Stream version of renouncing sin which separates this from repentance and has the believer praying in a formula to Satan.

Biblical repentance can be defined as "a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ."⁽⁵⁵⁾ This repentance affects the whole man and can be classified in relationship to the mind, emotions, and the will.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Part of the nature of true repentance is the renouncing and forsaking of sin. Therefore, 1 John 1:9 can declare, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and **to cleanse us** from all unrighteousness" (emphasis mine). Biblically there is no distinction between repentance and renouncement. To reject sin and turn from it is part of the call to true discipleship. Cleansing Stream has made a significant error in its understanding of repentance. The program has invented the hook theology and explains bondage in Christians by teaching that repentance is not good enough. Thus Cleansing Stream redefines repentance into to separate categories (repent and renounce) believing that most believers have repented but left themselves bound with hooks having failed to renounce their legal agreements made with Satan.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Renouncement for Cleansing Stream is an elaborate formula prayer that has a believer turn from addressing God to Satan. The believer is told to speak to Satan and is given a long list of suggested words to speak.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Even after this unbiblical prayer, the believer is not really assured of freedom and told that the Enemy may put up a fight and resist leaving.⁽⁵⁹⁾ A Christian will search in vain for any place in Scripture where a person is ever commanded to pray to Satan. The addressing, the breaking, the canceling, and the commanding of Satan are just more examples of the elaborate additions to the Scriptures that supplant the simplicity of what the Bible teaches. Prayers of repentance which include the renouncing of sin are always addressed to God.

A good example of the call to repentance is found in Acts chapter eight. This text is a favorite proof text for the Cleansing Stream program and it is often used to support the unbiblical position of Christian soul bondage. In Acts 8:9 ff., Peter has an encounter with Simon the sorcerer and gives him a very explicit instruction. The same passage that is used by the program to support its hook theology, actually proves the opposite.

Simon the sorcerer is an interesting study in the early life of the Church. The text in Acts states that Simon himself also believed and was baptized, but it is his subsequent actions that leave his conversion suspect. The Cleansing Stream believes Simon to be a born-again believer and to be suffering from soul bondage.⁽⁶⁰⁾ There is sufficient ground to be concerned over the true nature of Simon's conversion considering the history of the name Simon and the subsequent identification of Simon as a teacher of gnosticism.⁽⁶¹⁾ It is

not mere verbal confession of belief and baptism that save a man, but salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit that results in good works. The text states that Simon believed and whether he was a true believer is a matter of debate, but the remedy for him in either case is the same. Peter, being offended with the offer of Simon to purchase the Holy Spirit's power, tells Simon that he is poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity. These are harsh words and ones that cause Simon to fear. Peter's answer to Simon's sin is repentance, "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you."(62) If what Cleansing Stream teaches about hooks and soul bondage is true, then Peter has just made a huge error and left Simon bound.

Peter tells Simon to **repent**. Notice that there is nothing said about soul bondage. As mentioned earlier, in Cleansing Stream teachings, to repent is not enough. The workbook declares, "We repent and our sin gone. But what about the foothold our sin gave to the enemy? That hook remains." Peter knows nothing of the Cleansing Stream theology on this matter, but simply commands repentance from Simon. Simon is **not** told that he has a demon or that he has hooks in his soul. Simon is bound in that deception of sin and must repent from it. The only reason that this text is popular with the Cleansing Stream is probably because of the words bound and poisoned. These are buzz words that evoke ominous pictures of demonic power and strongholds. The text is plain and the remedy is straightforward. There is simplicity in the words of Peter, a simplicity that is missing from the teachings of Cleansing Stream.

Notes

54. Davis, 178.

55. Grudem, 713.

56. See the excellent sections in Grudem's systematic theology pages 713-717 and in Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1987), 210-11.

57. Davis, loc. cit. Cleansing Stream teaches that a believer can repent and repent with nothing really happening with regards to the demon soul bondage. The program sets itself as the mediator of real knowledge that once acquired enrages Satan. One wonders what the godly men of old did without these new insights.

58. Ibid., 179.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., 158.

61. F. F. Bruce "The Book of the Acts," *New international Commentary on the New Testament, rev ed., ed. F. F. Bruce, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 166-67. Bruce identifies Simon as the founder of the Gnostic sect called Simonians.*

62. Acts 8:22.

Chapter Eight

The big weekend was now upon Johnny. All of the teachings have been preparing him for this moment; the weekend retreat is to be his weekend of deliverance. Johnny sat nervously thinking about whether he had a demon and whether he would manifest like some of the testimonies he has heard. Even though Johnny had eagerly thought he had a demon or some generational curse, there was still some doubt about the theology of this program. "What if I don't manifest? What if I do? Am I truly a Christian?" Johnny sat silently

and pondered all these thoughts.

The time came for prayer. Johnny had renounced all his soul-ties and had tried to remember every sin he ever committed. "Please pray for me. I have been in bondage to sexual sin. I have been involved in pornography and sexual immorality." Johnny felt ashamed.

The prayer warrior began to pray violently. He spoke loudly and others around him prayed in tongues while music played in the background. Spirits were rebuked and strongholds torn down. Demons were bound, cast, and forbidden to return. Still Johnny just stood and wept. Nothing was happening in him.

Suddenly a man next to him fell to the ground screaming. The shrieks blast out of his mouth and others were startled by the ferocity of this man's bondage. Johnny looked over quickly and saw people gathering around this man.

"I command you foul spirit to leave this brother!" One warrior prayed.

"I will not leave! Never! I will kill him first! The demon shouted defiantly.

"What is your name? Identify yourself!"

"I am anger! I hate you! I hate all of you! The demon continued and began to curse the others wildly.

Johnny found it hard to concentrate while all this was going on. Johnny felt a twinge of surprise as he glanced over to the man on the floor again. "Hey I know that guy! It's . . . It's Greg! Wow! Greg has been in the church for years!"

The prayers for Johnny ended and he wandered back to his seat to continue praying. While seated there he could not take his mind off Greg. Greg was rolling on the floor and screaming out curse words. The warriors were still doing battle with the demon and Greg was not getting free. "Poor Greg, he must really be bound."

Johnny's thoughts wandered back to himself. "I wonder why I didn't manifest anything? Do I have a demon in me? I have to! How could I still struggle with pornography if I don't have a spirit of lust? I don't know what is going on." Johnny slumped in his chair. Still in the distance he could hear Greg screaming.

The Cleansing Stream workbook stresses that Christians cannot be possessed by Satan or demons, but the program believes that Christians can experience soul bondage. The workbook states, "A Christian CANNOT be demon-possessed or possessed by Satan because Jesus possesses the believer's spirit" (emphasis in original).(63) The program attempts to distance itself from the idea of Christians being possessed by demons, but in practice that is exactly what happens. The testimony sheets are replete with Christians claiming to have been set free from spirits of lust, anger, and witchcraft. Cleansing Stream tries to explain away possessions by inventing a new category of Christian called "bound believer." The question that needs to be asked is whether the Scriptures make any distinction between demon possession and soul bondage.

When referencing the working of Satan and demons in the lives of humans the Bible uses the Greek word *daimonizomai*, which means to be demon possessed.(64)

Another Greek dictionary defines the word, "to be possessed of a demon, to act under the control of a demon."(65) In an article published by the Christian Research Institute, after thorough study, the authors rejected any other interpretation of the word *daimonizomai* than demon possessed. The authors understood this word to refer to the control that a demon exerts upon its victim.(66) The Scriptures do not

teach soul bondage instead of possession, but understand demon possession to be a matter of demon control of the individual.

A good example of the control that demons exercise in possession is seen in the account of Garesnes demoniac in Mark 5:1-20. This demoniac was controlled by an unclean spirit the result of which was that the man could not be bound with chains. Also the man is seen crying out and cutting himself with stones. When Jesus appears, the demons immediately recognize Him and implore that they might not be tormented. An interesting point to note in this account is that the demons know Jesus Christ immediately and fear Him. They recognize that they are in the presence of a superior who has the authority and power to do whatever He wishes with them. Jesus goes further and casts out the demons with the result that the man is sitting and clothed and in his right mind. This passage refers to the man as being demon possessed and the evidence of such possession was the terrifying behavior.

Another example of demon possession which demonstrates that the real issue to be control is the account in Mark 9:14-29 where a boy is seized by a mute spirit. Whenever the boy was seized, the effects were that he was thrown down, foamed at the mouth, gnashed his teeth, and became rigid.(67) Also the account further shows that this demon often seized the child and threw him into fire and water trying to destroy him. Again the remedy was Jesus and his casting out of the demon. Demon possession is internal and physical. Demon control of the person and its effects can be devastating.

Again it needs to be declared that there is no place in Scripture that distinguishes between demon possession and soul bondage. Cleansing Stream's regeneration theology affects only the spirit of man and leaves his soul filled with demonic hooks and under demonic control. This control is not called possession since Cleansing Stream understands possession as more ownership than control. Yet the Scriptures show that possession is less ownership than it is the control that is exercised over the individual. Though possession is ruled out and emphatically denied, the Cleansing Stream experience has Christians being seized by demon spirits which are named and commanded to leave in Jesus' name. The testimonies are replete with examples of spirits being cast out and freedom coming to the individual.(68) So in theology Cleansing Stream says no to demon possession, but in practice they cast demons out and have Christians internally manipulated. This appears to be a case of playing semantics and an attempt to avoid calling possession possession. To hear or witness a session with a "bound" believer one would be hard pressed to distinguish soul bondage from possession. Scripture does not make this distinction or teach this new category.

An obvious question that remains is just what exactly is happening to Christians at the Cleansing Stream? If Scripture does not support soul bondage but knows only of possession then what is one to make of the many experiences of Christians who claim deliverance from spirits and sin? Again it needs to be stressed emphatically that the principle of *Sola Scriptura* applies to this situation. Scripture alone dictates what is truth and not experience. Experiences can be produced for almost every false religion and theology encountered in life. To base truth on experience is to leave the solid foundation of the Word of God. Thus far in the examination of Cleansing Stream theology, it is hoped that the reader has become aware of the many errors that pervade the program. There is no solid foundation for this program to teach demon bondage in Christians. Their many proof texts do not amount to a solid clear biblical teaching that Christians can be controlled in the soul by demons. In fact, the Scriptures teach the exact opposite.

Just what is happening to certain individual this author cannot say. It is not within the scope of this paper to determine what is really going on with these ones. Each case is individual and a "pat" answer will not do. What is certain is that a Christian cannot be in bondage to the point where demons seize the individual and have to be cast out in the name of Jesus. Though there is no single verse that teaches either for or against Christian demon possession, this does not mean that the area is gray and cannot be decided upon by a preponderance of Scriptural evidence. The doctrine of the Trinity is not taught plainly in one single

verse, but orthodox Christians recognize that the whole of Scripture overwhelmingly establishes the doctrine.(69) Thus the lack of a specific verse to answer the question plainly does not detract from what can be learned from the whole of Scripture.

There are many Scriptural reasons why believers should be confident that their problems do not stem from demonic bondage or possession. The most significant relates to the nature of regeneration itself. The believer is a new creation in Christ according to 2 Cor. 5:17 and this new creation affects the whole man. Regeneration completely transforms the believer. Dr. Wayne Grudem states, "Scripture views regeneration as something that affects us as whole persons. Of course, our 'spirits are alive' to God after regeneration (Rom. 8:10), but that is simply because we as *whole persons are affected by regeneration*" (*italics in original*).(70) Man is not a fragmented being but a whole and salvation affects the whole man.

Another reason a believer can be confident against the idea of demon bondage is that he has transferred kingdoms. The Apostle Paul was given that commission by Jesus Christ in reference to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." The understanding of deliverance from Satan is fundamental to the work of salvation. Christians are delivered from the power of Satan at salvation and transferred to the Kingdom of God and put under His power. Colossians 1:13 proclaims, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." In both verses cited the word for power is the Greek word which can be translated as power or authority.(71) God has worked a miraculous deliverance at salvation and freed Christians from the bondage and power of Satan. Commentator Peter T. O'Brien states on this verse, "A further exposition of this remarkable change that God had effected at the time of the Colossian's conversion is spelled out . . . Negatively, God has delivered us . . . from the tyranny of darkness and, positively, he has placed us under the rule of his beloved Son."(72) Christians have been delivered from the power of Satan at salvation! The Christian is now the temple of the Holy Spirit and he dwells in Christ. The Christian at salvation was freed from Satanic bondage and lives his life resisting the expelled and defeated foe.

It is hard to imagine how one can transfer into the Kingdom of Christ and God and be left filled with demons. Another helpful passage that illustrates this transference is Ephesians 2:1-10 which sets forth the believer's spiritual biography. The believer was dead in sin in which he used to walk according to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Paul puts all this in the past and stresses their present condition of being made alive. Note the contrast in Eph. 2:2 when Paul states, "in which you **once walked** according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who *now works in the sons of disobedience* (emphasis mine). Satan is working in the sons of disobedience, not the Ephesian believers who have been made alive with Christ! The realm of Satanic working is for those who are outside of Christ.

Still another reason for a believer to be confident that he is not internally demon bound is that Christians are members of the body of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Cor. 6:12-20 Paul instructs the Corinthian believers that their bodies have a special function and place as Christians. Some Corinthians were sinning by sexual immorality and Paul rebukes their sinful behavior with questions that are aimed at recalling the facts of their conversion and standing as Christians. How can a believer commit sexual immorality when his body belongs to Christ and is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Paul refers them to the very nature of their salvation and reminds them that they were purchased at a price. This text argues clearly against the "spirit-only" regeneration theory of the Cleansing Stream and shows that at salvation the believer was bought at a price and became a member of Christ's body and the temple of the Holy Spirit. How then can a believer be controlled by demons?(73)

Another area of confidence is that the Greater One is within the believer. 1 John 4:4 declares, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the

world." This verse is powerful and should comfort all those who might doubt the sufficiency of their salvation. The statement "You are of God" should at once smash any idea of demonic soul bondage or possession. One commentator says that the clause refers to the believer having his origin in God, this referring to the believer being born of God.(74) John goes further and states that the greater one is in them then the one in the world. It should be noted that the contrast is not internal but external. John does not say greater is the one in them then the one in them. If God is in the believer then Satan is out!

Still another reason for a believer to be confident his problems do not stem from demonic bondage is found in the very silence of Scripture on this point. There are passages that tell the believer to resist that devil and to stand against him, but none that tell Christians to seek deliverance from demons. The New Testament is silent at the very point that one would expect explicit instructions. How could such a vital truth to the spiritual health and welfare of believers have nothing said about it anywhere?(75) Instead of deliverance, Paul contrasts flesh and Spirit and commands believers to put off sin and put on righteousness! The argument from silence here speaks volumes. Since Scripture is silent about deliverance, the Cleansing Stream seeks to go beyond what is plainly spoken about the current position of Christians and establish its claims with experiences and proof texting.

Notes

63. Davis, 156.

64. BAGD, 169a. Here the lexicon simply says "be possessed of a demon."

65. W. E. Vine, "An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words" *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985).

66. Brent Grimsley and Elliot Miller "Can A Christian Be Demonized?" *Christian Research Journal* (Summer 1993): 16.

67. Cleansing Stream deliverance sessions see this same type of behavior with "Christians" falling down and manifesting various demonic characteristics.

68. This author had a conversation with a person of high responsibility within the program who told of a "believer" having a demon. This account centered around the "believer's" father being an adulterer and thus a generational curse was active in his life. When it came time for prayer this man fell down and manifested a demon which had to be wrestled with and cast out. There is no denying that this program routinely casts demons out of "believers."

69. Many cults like to play up this fact by saying things like, "Show me a verse that says Trinity", or "Where do you find the word Trinity in the Bible?"

70. Grudem, 701.

71. The Greek word here is . The domain is which Satan operates and exercises authority in is no longer the domain of Christians!

72. Peter T. O'Brien "Colossians, Philemon" *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1982), 27.

73. Notice that in 1 Cor. 6:12-20, there is no command from Paul for the Corinthians to cast demons out of the sinning believers. Paul does not teach that these believers now have hooks or soul ties or generational curses; instead he commands that the sinning believers flee from sexual immorality.

74. I. Howard Marshal "The Epistles of John," *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*,

75. Would God leave the "truth" of deliverance hidden and only let special teachers like Tim Davis and others reveal these hidden secrets?

Chapter Nine

Johnny sat alone in his apartment with his thoughts running wild. "Why didn't I manifest a demon? Maybe I need to go through the program again?" Johnny remembered he hadn't checked his answering machine since coming home from the retreat, so he leaped out his favorite chair and went into the bedroom.

"Hi Johnny, this is Larry. Remember me? I haven't heard from you in a couple of months and I was wondering how you are doing. Why don't you give me call soon? Remember we were going to do lunch? Call me. Thanks."

Johnny looked for Larry's number and picked up the phone. "Hello Larry? It's Johnny!"

"Hey Johnny! How are you doing? I've been thinking about you a lot lately. What have you been up to?"

"Well, I just finished the Cleansing Stream retreat. I just got home about fifteen minutes ago and just listened to my messages."

"How did the retreat go?" Larry's voice echoed concern.

"All right I guess. I don't know. I don't think anything happened to me."

"What do you mean?"

"I didn't manifest a demon and I'm not sure what my problem might really be. Nothing happened. I just got prayer and nothing happened." Johnny shoulders slumped and his body felt weary from lack of sleep.

"Johnny, I can hear that you're pretty tired. Why don't you get some sleep and we will talk sometime tomorrow. How about lunch? Are you up for it?"

"Yeah, let's do it. Where do you want to go?"

"I know a great place near your house. Do you like Italian food?"

"Sure, who doesn't!"

"Great! I will give you directions and meet you there around noon."

The air was warm and a slight ocean breeze whipped through the city; it was another typical day in Southern California. Johnny felt better after a good night sleep and waited anxiously for Larry at the restaurant. Larry arrived and both were seated outside on the patio.

Larry jumped right into the conversation. "Johnny, I am concerned about your involvement in the Cleansing Stream."

"Really? How come?" Johnny was caught off guard by Larry's forthrightness.

"I don't believe the Scriptures teach that Christian's are demon bound, or that Christians need

deliverance." Larry spoke with compassion, but his voice was firm.

"Larry, aren't you just are being ignorant of Satan's devices? I have seen Christians manifest demons! Besides, how could someone like Jack Hayford be wrong? I don't know much, but I trust Jack!"

"The issue isn't about trusting Jack Hayford. The issue is biblical truth and this program is not in accordance with what the Bible teaches about sanctification. I know you are young and have not studied that much, but you need to search the Scriptures and test this program. Good men like Jack Hayford and others can be in error."

The waitress hated to interrupt the conversation, but coughed slightly to make her presence known. "Hi guys. We are having a great lunch special today. It is spaghetti with our special meat sauce, along with a salad, roll, and a drink for \$4.95!"

"Mmm. . . that sounds great!" Larry looked at Johnny with a nod.

"Yeah, make that two." Johnny quipped.

The waitress finished taking the order for dressings and drinks, and soon left the two to continue the conversation.

"You know Johnny, I really care about you. I know that you might not understand my objections, but this is part of growing in Christ. You have to begin to exercise discernment. I wish I could say that everything out there in Christianity was biblically sound, but that is not the case. We have to study and hold fast to truth. There will always be men who pervert truth. You need to watch yourself."

"I agree Larry, but this program quotes from the Bible. How am I supposed to know better? I can't take you around with me everywhere."

"I know. This is why you have to learn how to interpret the Bible for yourself. I've been through Bible college and I can give you some materials on how to study the Scriptures. There are principles that we use to arrive at the meaning of the text. You will see that this program does not follow those principles very well at all."

"All right, so what do you think my problem really is Larry? I struggle with lust and pornography. I do things I hate! I feel like I am bound in my sin, just like Cleansing Stream tells me. If they are wrong, then how am I supposed to get free from this? What is going on with me? Johnny's voice conveyed desperation and deep emotional struggle.

"Johnny, this is what the Bible says about sanctification . . ."

The struggle with sin is a real battle for Christians. Some find that they are not often victorious in an area(s) in their life and thus begin to wonder what is wrong with them. It is often in this state of vulnerability that a program like Cleansing Stream can seem like a Coast Guard helicopter arriving to help a stranded boat being tossed on a stormy sea. While the motives for seeking help are plenteous, the sad reality is that Cleansing Stream is the last thing that struggling or strong Christians need.

The Corinthian church to which Paul wrote was a church plagued with problems. From factions to incest, this church needed strong counsel from the Apostle Paul and they received it. Yet in his counsel, remarkably Paul never tells the Corinthian believers that they need deliverance, or that they are bound with hooks! Instead Paul reminds them,

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither

fornicators, not idolaters, not adulterers, not homosexuals, nor sodomites, not thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.* (Emphasis mine)(76)

Look at this list of sins! Yet Paul reminds the believers that they have been washed, sanctified, and justified. Clearly the power of the Gospel and the miracle of regeneration has made these believers new creations. A believer in Christ has been set free from the dominion of sin and is no longer called by the sin trait that used to dominate his life. A believer is now called a saint and is told to live like one, not to be delivered from demonic control.

This truth is proclaimed in Romans 6:1-23, which is the believer's "emancipation proclamation." Paul writes to the Roman Christians, "knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."(77) For a believer the battle with sin has been won in Christ, as Paul states, "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."(78) This truth should cause the heart to leap for joy and to praise God for what He has done through Christ. The Christian is free! This truth must not be watered down. The Bible declares the old man dead and the believer free from the dominion and slavery to sin. Paul declares this truth again in Colossians 3:9-10, "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." The old man is dead and the believer must know this truth.

It is precisely because the old man is dead that the believer is given explicit instructions on how to live a Christian life. Paul declares in Romans 6:11 "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Here is the key to progressive sanctification. A believer is to know that he is dead to sin, out from its dominion, and now he is to reckon that fact as truth in his life. What does it mean to reckon? To reckon is to account something as true; it is to consider and believe what is said. Commentator Leon Morris states, "Perhaps here 'regard' or 'recognize' would help us understand that Paul is arguing that his readers should come to see the truth of their situation."(79) Paul's use of reckon is a command and the present tense he uses speaks of the action being a daily ongoing process. Every day the believer is to reckon or count himself dead to sin and alive to God.

Thus Paul enjoins the believer to action based upon the truth of his new situation. Where once the believer was a slave to sin and under the dominion of sin, he is now free from the dominion of sin and is to account that fact as truth and begin to live in the freedom that Christ has won for him. The command is based upon the fact and the order must not be reversed. The believer does not strive to break sin's dominion. The dominion is already broken! The believer is to live every day as the new and free person that he is. It is only because the believer is a new creation and has died to sin that he can be commanded to no longer let sin reign. The slave has been liberated to serve a new master. Therefore, the old way of life (sin) is incompatible with the new.(80)

The Method of Sanctification

The believer is to know and to reckon that he is dead to sin and alive to God. This is the fundamental truth of sanctification and this is the ground from which the believer launches his assault against sin. The method of sanctification is the putting to death the deeds of the body as Romans 8:12 says "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Paul teaches plainly that believers are to put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit. The deeds of the body are also the deeds of the flesh, these are the sins that characterized the old man. Here is the rub for many, the subject of the verb "put to death" is "you."(81) It is the believer's task to put to death the sins of the body. This might seem like an impossible request and it would be if it were not for the Holy Spirit.

Thankfully, a believer has the Spirit and has been freed from the dominion of sin. Therefore the believer has the very power of God on his side to put to death sin! It makes no sense for a believer to say "I can't" when the Scripture declares that he can and is to be doing it daily by the Spirit.

Paul describes the battle between the flesh and the Spirit in Galatians 5:16-17 saying, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things you wish." What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? To walk in the Spirit means to walk under the *control of the Spirit*. It is living every day controlled by the Spirit which results in the fruits of the Spirit. It is to walk in love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In Galatians 5:16 Paul made a very emphatic statement, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." The "shall not fulfill" renders an emphatic negative in the Greek language. What that means is that Paul stated as strongly as possible the impossibility of fulfilling the lust of the flesh for the one who walks in the Spirit.(82) Again the believer is confronted with the absolute possibility of putting to death sin by the Spirit. The flesh is no match for the Spirit.

A believer should feel very comforted and confident that the power of sin has been broken. There is hope in the battle to daily put off the deeds of the body, but this does not minimize a Christian's struggle. The struggle with sin is real and Dr. John MacArthur is very helpful here, "Paul does not promise immediate freedom from sin's harassment . . . on the contrary, he speaks of a continuous struggle with sin, where he is persistently, perpetually 'putting to death the deeds of the body.'"(83) Though a believer struggle with sin, he can and is to be victorious since Christ has freed him from its power.

The Means of Sanctification

A Christian is to put to death the sin in his life. The power to fulfill the command is found in the current standing of the Christian. The fact that the believer is free from sin's dominion is the force behind the command to not let sin reign in the body. The believer is empowered by the Holy Spirit and is to put sin to death. With the Holy Spirit there are other very helpful and essential means that the believer should be using in his war with sin.

The first means in the war with sin is the Word of God. The Bible often witnesses to its own adequacy in helping a believer walk in sanctification. Consider the passage in Psalm 119:9-11 "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word . . . Your word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You." Another passage that is helpful is 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Finally there are the words of the Savior, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."(84) It is in the Scriptures that the believer learns of the wonders of Christ and the extent of the power of salvation. To neglect the Word is to stunt growth that is in no other way possible.

The second means in the war with sin is prayer. Jesus taught prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and specifically mentioned that a believer should pray, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." The believer is to be a man of prayer and needs to heed the command of Christ. An example of the believer's need for prayer is found in the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus went to pray. Jesus was asking his disciples Peter, James and John to watch with Him as He prayed. Instead the disciples slept and Jesus warned, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."(85) Believers need to be people of prayer and need to humbly acknowledge their dependence upon God for protection from temptations in which they might stumble into sin. The prayer Jesus taught his disciples also looks for protection from the evil one Satan. This calls to mind the words of Jesus in Luke 22:31-32, "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me,

strengthen your brethren." There is a demonic element that believers can face and at times do face, yet these trials are not internal demonic hooks that need exorcism. The good news is that believers have a High Priest named Jesus Christ who is in heaven. The call for believers is to pray! They are to be watchful in prayer and to entreat God for protection.

The third means in the war with sin is to be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 declares, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." This call to be filled with the Spirit is essential for the believer's walk in Christ. The filling of the Spirit is a continual action that means to live a life controlled by the Spirit. Believers are to yield themselves to the power of the Spirit of God, but this is not passivity. Dr. MacArthur states,

In other words, it is worth repeated reminders that Christians cannot abandon their own responsibility and passively wait for God to mortify sin on their behalf. The Spirit-filled life is active, vigorous, working endeavor, where they work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). When they obey, they then discover that it is actually God who is at work in them "both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (v. 13).(86)

Living a life that is Spirit-controlled is where the believer finds the strength to obey the commands of put off what characterized the old man and put on what characterizes the new man.

To some this might sound like a whole lot of theory and no practice. Often the biblical view of sanctification described here is considered "simplistic" and not practical in the "real world." Biblical sanctification teaching is like "telling a blind man that he can go ahead and see." The difficulty lies not in the Scriptural model of sanctification, but in today's model of pastoring and counseling which often better reflects a psychologist's office or a motivational speaker's litany. Some have never seen solid biblical counseling and thus deduce that there is no such animal and that it doesn't work. Others have languished under poor or nonexistent biblical teaching and thus have never heard or reject biblical sanctification in favor for what is popular today. What is presented here is what Scripture teaches regarding sanctification. Paul never commands believers to minister deliverance to each other when there is sin. Scripture does not know Cleansing Stream's model of demonic sanctification.

Notes

76. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

77. Romans 6:6.

78. Romans 6:17-18.

79. Leon Morris "The Epistle to the Romans," *Pillar (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988)*, 256.

80. Some might want to object at this point, "This is way too simplistic!" Some think that the problems faced today are of a different cloth and that this biblical model is not adequate to handle the problems of modern society. This objection is false and only the biblical model will bring true freedom to believers.

81. The verbal ending is plural (you'all) and refers to the "brothers" addressed in verse 12, but the principle and application for believers can be singular (you). This is not a passive sanctification that waits for God to come and take sin away. There are some who believe that God must deliver them from their sin and anything else is just wasted effort. This means that they indulge in the sin and make no real effort to kill it. An example of this is found in Christians who know that smoking is a sin in their life but are not willing to throw out the cigarettes. How about Christians who are overweight but will not stop eating ice cream? These ones are waiting for a deliverance rather than being obedient to what God would tell them to do. It is

easier to have God "take away" the sin than to put it to death. It is easier to "be delivered" of a demon than to obey the command to put sin to death.

82. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996)*, 468. Wallace states that an emphatic negation rules out the idea as being a possibility.

83. John MacArthur "Mortification of Sin," *The Master's Seminary Journal (Spring 1994)*: 12.

84. John 17:17.

85. Matthew 26:41.

86. MacArthur, op. cit., 18.

Chapter Ten

Larry finished explaining some of the facets of sanctification. "Your problem Johnny is not demons, but your flesh. You are a new creation and the dominion that sin exercised over you is now finished. The struggle you are engaged in is the war to put to death those things which categorized your old way of life. Sins like lust do not magically disappear! You can't cast out the flesh! I know that you have heard the testimonies of people saying that a spirit of anger or a spirit of adultery were cast out, but that is just flat out wrong."

"Man, you have really hit home Larry. This is really difficult. I want to get this straight; are you saying that there is no such thing as a bound believer?"

"Where do you find a "bound" believer in Scripture Johnny?"

"I don't know, but the Cleansing Stream is really emphasizing that believers are bound. I guess at times I feel bound. How would you explain bound believers?"

As it was mentioned early in the beginning of this paper, the enigma of "bound" believers is at the core of deliverance ministry. Often Christian ministers with large pastoral hearts want answers to the perplexing problems that plague certain believers. There are believers that appear to always fall into sin, and this has caused some ministers to give deliverance ministry a try. But throughout this examination of Cleansing Stream, the doctrinal foundations for what the program is doing have been precarious and most of the time nonexistent. Still the question is asked, "What about bound believers?" This question demands a biblical response.

To start it is helpful to define just what Cleansing Stream means when it speaks about "bound" believers. The words of Tim Davis seem to help define this elusive group:

One day while wrestling with these thoughts the Lord said, 'Tim, the problem is not with you,' and He began to layout the ingredients for preparing people for deliverance. When people walked through these steps, the cleansing began to take place on a more regular basis. Homosexuals have been freed, those bound in witchcraft, alcoholism, adultery, fear, and rejection have been delivered, and the words of Jesus, that He has 'come to set the captives free' have been experienced in many lives. (87)

It appears that a bound believer is one who is living in some sort of repeated sin. These are ones who don't seem to get free from sin easily or never and thus this program steps in to fill the gap and get the believer free. But Romans 6:1 ff. declares the believer to be free from the dominion of sin from the moment of conversion on. The power of sin has been broken and the believer is commanded to put off the old way and walk in the Spirit. There definitely appears to be a contradiction here. Is a believer free from sin or not? What is going on with these believers?

The tough question that needs to be asked is whether these "believers" are truly believers. This does not mean that any believer who struggles with sin is not saved, but the question is valid for those who continually live in sin. There is no room in Scripture for the habitual sinner to claim true fellowship with Christ. These are tough words, but Scripture bears them out. Consider the passage in 1 John 2:3-6,

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

This passage aptly demonstrates the fundamental truth that believers do not live in sin. It is not difficult to imagine that what happens often in the Cleansing Stream is the misdiagnosis of a spiritual malady. A person is not a believer because they have raised their hands and bowed their heads at an altar call. To be a true believer is to have had a genuine conversion by God which will produce good works. The imprecise Gospel proclamations that characterize a large segment of the body of Christ have produced a whole generation of "defeated Christians" who are not really Christians.(88) Thus in one aspect what appears to be a "bound" believer is really a pagan with Christian religion. These ones are incapable of ever pleasing God or of being free from sin in their state of unregeneration. The call is to proclaim the Gospel accurately and have these ones look to Christ for their salvation which will produce the ability to put sin to death.

But what if the person is truly a Christian? Can Christians struggle in a sinful condition? The answer is yes. Do they need deliverance? No! As with the tragedy of the lack of sound Gospel presentations to lost souls, so also is the tragedy of the lack of sound biblical teaching on sanctification in the pulpit. How do programs like Cleansing Stream gain a foothold in a church? The foothold comes when a church abandons solid expositional preaching and teaching of the whole counsel of God. The biblical model of sanctification is to put off sin and to put on righteousness, but these truths are not taught in their power and simplicity. If a believer is sinning then that believer needs to be taken through the Scriptures and to know he is dead to sin. From there he is to reckon himself to be dead to sin, which means he will fully consider what Scripture says to be true regarding himself. The power of sin and its dominion over him have been broken and his old man is dead in Christ. The sin which besets him can and is to be put off since he is a new creation. This believer is to present his members no longer to unrighteousness to sin, but to righteousness to God. This is the model of sanctification found in the Scripture. There is no command or instruction to tell this believer that his sin is from a demon and that he needs to renounce this demon foothold. This does not rule out that a believer cannot at times struggle with sin, but what the struggling brother needs is the love and help of a sound biblical pastor and church.(89)

Often there are objections at this point because of a stereotypical picture of this type of biblical minister. The common stereotype of the biblical model believes that biblical pastoral counseling is done without love and excels at "throwing the Book" at the struggling Christian. But this is just an excuse made by some to evade the biblical model of sanctification. There might be uncaring pastors who "throw the Book" at others, but that does not invalidate the biblical model of sanctification. The struggling Christian must be loved and prayed with and counseled from Scripture. There might be moments and days when sinful habits seem to overcome a believer, but the believer must stand in his position in Christ believing firmly in his heart, "I am dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus my Lord!" This is not a ritualistic formula but a heartfelt declaration of truth. The believer is free from the dominion of sin and can and must put sin to death by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Cleansing Stream goes beyond Scripture and supplements its own program of demonic sanctification. This program must be rejected and the believer must take responsibility for his life and actions. Ultimately the assigning of sin to demons and the whole deliverance model is destructive. Dr. R. C. Sproul exclaims regarding this type of ministry,

We have people saying that particular demons cause particular sins. There is, they say, a demon of

alcohol, a demon of depression, a demon of tobacco and so on . . . there are demons for every conceivable sin. Not only must these demons be exorcized, but there are necessary procedures to keep them from returning on a daily basis. I know of no polite way to respond to this kind of teaching. It is unmitigated nonsense. Nowhere in sacred Scripture is there to be found the slightest hint of this kind of demonic diagnosis. These teachings cross the line into the sphere of magic and result in serious harm to believers who are duped by them Therefore, I say that with all urgency that believers must turn from those who teach such things. Indeed run, for your very spiritual lives.(90)

These are sobering words. Dr. Sproul and others recognize the dangers of this type of error and warn emphatically against participation in it. A believer may sin repeatedly, but he is to be counseled from Scripture and to seek help from competent biblical counselors.

Notes

87. Davis, 1.

88. The Gospel in many segments of the Church is not accurately being preached. The message of sin and the call to repentance and faith are often never heard. What is commonly substituted is a weak message on the love of God. The preaching of the law must precede the preaching of grace. Christ is the Savior from sin, and the Gospel is the message of forgiveness of sins. A half-gospel invites stillbirths and produces pagans with Christian religion who wonder why they can't get free from sin.

89. Yes, a sinning brother needs love. But this is not love by the contemporary definition of the word. Biblical love will rebuke and reprove those in error for their benefit. Biblical love does not allow blame-shifting of sin onto demons or generational curses or society. Biblical love is not psychologizing sin into dysfunction and thus excusing sin as an addiction. The believer must be loved enough to be told the truth and commanded to flee from his sin.

90. R. C. Sproul, *Pleasing God* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988), 90-92

Chapter Eleven

"Will that be all for you guys? I hope you enjoyed your meal." The waitress smiled and waited to drop the bill.

"Are you done Johnny? Do you want some desert?"

"Naa, I'm done."

"Me too. Thanks, but we will take the check please."

"You got it. Have a good day guys."

Johnny sat for awhile trying to gather his thoughts. Lunch was only about an hour, but all that Johnny learned from Cleansing Stream was challenged as unbiblical.

"Larry, I appreciate your taking this time to talk to me. I am not sure what I am going to do. What you have said has really caused me to think. I need to go home and study. If I have some more questions can you help me?"

"I would be honored Johnny. I can even help you with some information on how to study your Bible."

"Thanks, I definitely need it."

"Search all that I have said in Scripture. Make sure you test everything by God's Word. Hey Johnny, give that back!" Larry reached out and tried to grab Johnny's hand.

"Nope, I've got the bill on this one."

Though the Cleansing Stream logo depicts a beautiful stream of water flowing by a healthy tree, upon closer examination this stream is found to be filled with toxic waste from a theological Chernobyl. The Cleansing Stream is a theological Marah which needs to have the tree of sound doctrine placed in it to make the bitter water sweet. In Johnny's case, he is blessed to have a friend like Larry. Many today are not so blessed. Often times believers are sheep who fall into the hands of a poor shepherd who leads them to drink from polluted streams. This author knows that the struggle with sin is real. There is no shortcut on the sanctification highway. Sin must be put to death and the mind must be renewed! The Cleansing Stream wants to step in and help believers, but it is actually doing the exact opposite and harming believers. The emphasis on Satan and demons is out of balance with Scripture and the methods of "cleansing" are flat out error. What Christians need is to return to biblical sanctification, not to have demons cast out. The Cleansing Stream should have a warning sign which says "Contaminated Water!" This stream is polluted and will harm any who drink from it. The call is to come out from this program and to hold fast to what God's Word teaches about sanctification.