



Critical Issues Commentary

A BIBLICALLY BASED COMMENTARY ON ISSUES THAT IMPACT YOU

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2003

ISSUE NUMBER 78

THE BONDAGE MAKERS

HOW DELIVERANCE MINISTRIES LEAD PEOPLE TO BONDAGE

BY BOB DEWAAY

The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2Timothy 2:24-26)

In 1977 I was in a ministry that specialized in inner healing and deliverance. People came to us from all over the country seeking release from hearing voices, addictions, emotional trauma due to past hurts and abuses, and many other forms of spiritual bondage. At the time our ministry was considered "cutting edge" in the world of spiritual warfare. Ours was a Christian community where people could come and live with other Christians to find healing.

About that time a woman from another state came to stay at our ministry center for a few days to receive prayer and deliverance. She had grown up in a family that was deeply involved in the occult and had been named after a Greek goddess. When she called us she was trying to get out of her occult bondage and was being attacked by evil spirits who did not want to let her go. They manifested themselves through her taunting us and making hissing sounds. We soon found out that the demons that tormented her were powerful and had no intention of leaving. Two of us took on the responsibility of ministering to her. After we had led her in some prayers, confronted some of the demons, and demanded them to leave in Jesus' name, she found some relief.

The most dramatic event in our ministry to her came after one of our Tuesday night meetings. After most people had left she stayed for more prayer. Before we even got to her, she

was taken over by a violent evil spirit. Her countenance changed, her voice altered, her face contorted and her hands became like claws. She let out a loud scream and charged at me, intending to gouge my face with her fingernails. As she screamed and raced across the room, I and the other man who had been ministering to her stood our ground and said, "Stop! in the name of Jesus." When she got two feet from us she hit what seemed like an invisible wall and fell to the floor whimpering. We prayed with her and asked God to set her free.

We had encountered many cases of demonic manifestations in our ministry, but this was the most dramatic. As I look back on this incident now, what is most significant is not what happened that night, but what happened the next day. The next day she felt much better and asked to talk to us before leaving for home. She told me, "Bob, Satan is very scared of you. You have much power and authority." What that statement and the event that led to it meant to me then was very different from how I understand it now. The difference is due to the "warfare" worldview I held then and the "providential" worldview I hold now. The way we interpret events is determined by our worldview. In this article I will discuss exorcism from the perspective of each of these worldviews.

EXORCISM IN THE WARFARE

WORLDVIEW

The warfare worldview holds that the battle between good and evil, God and Satan, is played out in human history, with an uncertain outcome. By uncertain I mean that God does not sovereignly determine the outcome.¹ There are casualties in this battle. The battle to free individuals from spiritual bondage is carried on by people of faith who have learned the tools of battle and become mighty warriors for God. According to many who hold the warfare worldview, even the destiny of nations is in the hands of human spiritual warriors who will capture nations for the Kingdom of God. My fondest hope in 1977 was that I would become one of these mighty warriors who would plunder Satan's kingdom on the field of battle.

So in that context I interpreted the woman's statement to mean that I was succeeding. At age 27 I had become a mighty warrior who was equipped to go to battle against anything Satan could throw at me. I was so charged up by that incident that I spent the next couple of years dealing with dozens of hurting people, many who were in horrible spiritual bondage. Day and night I was casting out demons, confronting the powers of darkness and helping people escape from the clutches of demons. That woman went back home and I do not remember hearing from her again. Others who lived closer, I ministered to time and time again over a period of years.

According to many exorcists who embrace the warfare worldview, demons possess their victims because they have discovered a "right" to do so. For example, a person might be under an unknown curse that gives the demon a right to torment him or her. Famous exorcist Bob Larson explains how he sees this working: "Curses are exacting, legal arrangements of the spirit world.

Just like human contracts contain fine print and carefully crafted language, satanic curses are often filled with minutia that require detailed voiding."² To get free requires the counselor to ferret out the exact wording and nature of the curse and then formulate a renunciation to break it.³ When I was a deliverance counselor holding the warfare worldview it was my job to find out what may have given the demons the right to enter and to close that entrance. I taught that if the demons found a legal "right" to stay they would, and that if they had no legal right, they would try to stay anyhow because they are nasty deceivers.

Those who hold to this view of the spiritual universe see the battle as being fought on all levels. On the level of the heavenlies, they enlist troops of "prophetic intercessors" to identify, bind and cast down rulers over cities and nations.⁴ Warriors are enlisted to take spiritual control over cities by conducting prayer walks around areas of the city. In the warfare worldview, the deliverance counselor is the foot soldier who does hand to hand combat on the spiritual battlefield. He or she fights the forces of darkness that have captured individual souls. In 1977 I was a deliverance counselor and had just found out through a powerful experience and the testimony of one who had been deeply in Satan's camp that I was a powerful warrior whom Satan feared. My sails were set to spend the rest of my life as a career spiritual military man freeing captives. Exorcism was where the battle got personal and I was chosen to be there.

To continue to improve in my counseling ministry, I read the books of those who had more experience. This increased my understanding of how demons worked. Many of the people I counseled, however, continued to struggle with demons in spite of many exorcism sessions. This required fine tuning and the development of further strategies. Battles are never easily won. In a war there are always set backs. Some of the teachings I used were very Biblical: repentance, forgiveness, the study of God's word, and getting one's self in

right relationship to the body of Christ. Also, my counseling involved helping people make wise choices in their lives.

During those years I visited people in the lock up wards of most of the mental hospitals in our area. I had ministered to so many troubled people that one time when I went to the largest lockup ward in our county, I knew three of the patients personally.

SECRET SPIRITUAL LAWS

During those years of believing the warfare worldview, I noticed that the same people kept having the same problems. As part of my study to fine tune my approach I read a book written by a famous Christian that claimed to be given to him by divine revelation. In the book he said that there are spiritual laws that govern the spirit world. One of these has to do with "passivity." Demons are able, according to him, to move in and take over when a person has a passive will.⁵ For a long time I incorporated this "truth" into my counseling, figuring that passivity was why these people kept falling back into demonic bondage. I worked out techniques for people to use to strengthen their passive wills so that the demons would no longer be able to influence them. *I no longer believe that what I was doing is valid.*

This type of teaching is still around. Bob Larson writes, "If the core of a person's identity is strong willed, it seems harder for a demon to take over, no matter what that person does."⁶ In this scheme of things, the human will is crucial: "I always tell those bound by demons to call upon that small portion of their will that is not dominated by the devil."⁷

The problem I saw was this: "passive" people seemed to be not strong willed by nature — no process changed that. They continued to feel oppressed by demons and lamented their inability to overcome "passivity." At the time I did not realize that by telling people their will had to be stronger, I was throwing gas on the fire. The warfare worldview had led me so far astray that I did not see the relevance of the sim-

plest of Scriptures, "blessed is the man who trusts in God . . . cursed is the man who trusts in man" (Jeremiah 17: 5, 7). According to the theory I taught, the "spiritual law" of the universe is such that passive wills get demonized, even if one is a Christian. To keep free one must gain a strong will. A person could not trust God for freedom unless the person had a strong enough will; otherwise God's hands were tied by the spiritual law He had created.⁸ Bob Larson writes, "The will of the victim is the spiritual battleground on which the war of exorcism is fought. The slightest reluctance can mean defeat."⁹ So where is our hope — in our own will? Larson says of one of his clients, "Her initial unwillingness to admit what happened gave the demons legal grounds for remaining."¹⁰

Evidently we need a spiritual "lawyer" to figure out the spiritual contracts of the universe by which the demons operate, and the laws that apply. In the warfare worldview the battle is between humans and wicked spirits. The humans are at a huge disadvantage because the spirits have been navigating the spirit world for thousands of years and only they know all the "rules." The exorcist must query the demons to find out needed information and then beat them at their own rules. Bob Larson forces demons to tell him the truth under threat of being punished by angels and sent to the pit (I had never thought of that strategy when I was a deliverance counselor). Having done so, he makes the demons tell him what he needs to know to deliver the person. He gives this advice to those who would do exorcism: "Someone should be designated to keep a log of the information received while interrogating the demons. As the internal structure of the victim's demonic system is revealed, list the spirits according to their ranking, cite their right and occasion of entry, and note their legal ground for remaining."¹¹ How do we know this is reliable? — "The demons will be forced to give you this information because they must submit to the name of Jesus and His authority."¹²

When I believed the warfare world-

view and did exorcisms, I believed that what I was doing was valid because the reality of demons manifesting themselves was so vivid and people were being set free in the name of Jesus. There were many who felt much better after the sessions. They came in miserable and left our ministry session with a sense of love and freedom. So I believed they were being helped. I do not doubt the sincerity of Bob Larson and others like him, nor do I doubt the reality of the stories. What I am questioning is whether the worldview that under girds their ministry is Biblical. Is it true that there is a whole unseen legal world that governs demons and other levels of Satan's hierarchy that must be discovered and exploited to gain victory over Satan? Is it true that we need trained exorcists who have this knowledge in order to see captives freed? Later I will tell you how my ministry changed for good when I came to doubt the premises that provided the basis for what I was doing.

SECRET KNOWLEDGE AND DELIVERANCE

Those who hold to the warfare worldview claim that knowledge about Satan, his emissaries, and their hierarchical structure is important in winning the battle. This is true on all levels, from battling principalities over nations to casting demons out of individuals. For example, when I was in this movement we were seeking to purchase property in one of the suburbs here in the Twin Cities. Because of difficulties with the purchase, we decided to hold an all night intercessory meeting. During the middle of the night, someone got a revelation that a principality called "Manitou" was ruling over the city, keeping us from buying the property. This principality supposedly ruled because Native Americans had practiced their religion there at one time. So we were instructed by our leaders that we needed to cast down the spirit of Manitou over the city so that we could claim it for God. The successful finishing of the purchase "proved" that our prayers had been effective which conse-

quently reinforced the idea that we needed special revelations to cast down principalities over cities.

When one holds the warfare worldview such practices make all the sense in the world. Everything one wants to accomplish is tied up in the complex interaction of curses, demons, principalities, and the legalities that control the spirit world. There is no part of life that does not operate in this realm. Individual exorcism is the micro level of the battle, cities and nations the macro level. On every level it is necessary to gain knowledge if one wants to win battles. The necessary knowledge is usually the names of demons or principalities, the nature of the curse invoked, or the structure of the spiritual hierarchy in Satan's kingdom. Bob Larson tells about performing an exorcism when one of the demons was away on another mission and had been missed during the procedure.¹³ He learned to "lock out" these demons. Larson writes: "If I had ended the procedure prematurely, I would never have known about this spirit, and he would have come back later."¹⁴

One might ask what role God plays in the warfare worldview. The answer is that He commissions us to the battle, equips us for the battle, and gives us the tools we need. God gives the exorcist knowledge and power for battle. However, it is up to the exorcist to use his toolbox to cast out the demons. The exorcist must use the tools properly or the demons will stay. For example, Larson tells how he taught a pastor why demons kept coming back: "You probably never found the gatekeeper demon. It didn't matter how many demons you cast out, they don't have to go to the pit because the gatekeeper kept the door open for them to return."¹⁵ The arrangement and locations of the spirits are determined by the knowledge and ability of the exorcist. Larson claims the right to assign demons to the pit if he does everything right.

What we must keep in mind is that the information needed to do effective spiritual warfare according to the warfare worldview is **not revealed**. What I mean is that it is neither found in God's specific revelation (the Bible) nor in

general revelation (what may legitimately be learned about the creation using our natural senses and rational mind). The knowledge that is required is secret knowledge. God has not revealed the names of demons over nations, cities, neighborhoods, or in demonized persons. The only source of such information is from some other type of revelation, either extra biblical divine revelation or revelation gained from demons themselves. Those who hold to the warfare worldview believe that it is their role to gain this knowledge and use it in the battle. Since the knowledge is "secret" it is of the realm of the occult. They have to somehow justify gaining forbidden knowledge in the name of helping the victims of evil spirits.

A SPIRITUAL "GEEK SQUAD"

In our city there is a company called "The Geek Squad" which will come to your home or place of business and solve your computer problems. They are very good at what they do and fix most hardware or software problems promptly. The reason they can do so is that they understand the nature of computers and computer software. They have technical knowledge. How is this possible? It is possible because humans created computers. Detailed manuals are available or computers can be reverse engineered by experts. Having complete knowledge of a computer is possible because computers are human creations.

The problem with the warfare worldview is that it has created the perceived need for a "Geek Squad" for souls. Not only must the demons and curses that are affecting the person be understood in detail, but the human soul must be also. The complex relationship between all the spiritual factors affecting the person and the nature and inclination of his or her soul, must be discerned and diagnosed by a skilled spiritual "technician" (they call themselves counselors) who can do the proper "fix." Computers are complex, but they are exponentially simpler than the human soul and the spiritual world it

inhabits.

For example, consider Bob Larson's description of his ministry to a person in bondage. The person in question had numerous "alters" (multiple personalities) as well as demonic bondage. This person with "dissociative identity disorder" had a demon called "Gatekeeper" who kept letting demons back in after they had been cast out.¹⁶ Larson describes the causes of such disorders and how he learned to speak to different identities within a person.¹⁷ He was dealing with a person who had alternate personalities called "Facilitator" and "Regulator." Larson theorized that in this person demons could possess an "alter."¹⁸ Larson explains:

In the realm of multiple personalities, there are good alters and bad alters. Good alters are the part of the person's consciousness that has acknowledged Christ as Savior. Bad, alters, for one reason or another, refuse to make that spiritual surrender.¹⁹

This complex situation leads to this task for the spiritual technician: "Our task is to sort through the maze to gain the assistance of the good alters. Then we can attempt to win the bad alters to God."²⁰ Larson proceeded to have the alternate personality within his client help him identify the "dark ones" and went through an incredibly complex task of sorting out the demons and "alters" within this person. He even leads "Facilitator" to Christ.²¹ Larson uncovers hidden memories, legal ground that the demons had, and the names of obscure demons.²² This is one prayer he used to help the victim find freedom: "I command that angels of God search out and torment the spirit of pain. I bind Pain to Regulator the demon, and command that both of them experience all the torment they've put on Randall. I increase that torment seven times greater."²³

The complexity of this process is mind-boggling. How can we be sure we are talking to demons, alters, or a real person? How does one know that a person can be saved but some of his alter egos still need to accept Christ? Do we really have authority to command angels to torment demons so that they

will decide to leave? The problem, in my opinion, is that the complexity Larson is describing is actually **under estimating** the complexity of the bondage and neediness of the human soul. The reason there can be no ultimately successful "Geek Squad" for souls is found in the difference between computers and humans. Computers were created by man, souls are created by God. Only God truly knows the heart of man. Only God knows the details of the spirit world and its interaction with the human soul.

The Bible tells us why no human spiritual technician can solve the problems of the inner person: "*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind*" (**Jeremiah 17:9, 10a**). That only God knows the heart is a claim found throughout the Bible.²⁴ Those holding to the warfare worldview see a pressing necessity to train a cadre of spiritual technicians who can free human souls from the complex psycho-spiritual situation that torments them. These technicians by whatever name they are given must rely on techniques and knowledge that are not revealed in the Bible. Furthermore, they must gain information about human souls, secret curses, hidden or forgotten memories, demons, names of demons, relationships between demons, relationships between alter identities within a soul, and relationships between demons and alter identities. All of this is probably just the tip of the iceberg. The "Geek Squad" for souls has no reverse engineering capabilities, no detailed record of the process by which a soul came to be, and no objective tools for examining the soul and the spirit world it inhabits.

Not only this, but the spirit entities that they interview to gain information share at least one attribute with their leader Satan — **they are liars**. This does not stop the priests of the warfare worldview from interrogating demons for secrets. For example, Bob Larson tells this story:

Step by step I cornered the adversary until he could no longer resist. Before his final

doom was pronounced, the demon looked at me quizzically. "Who taught you the rules?" he asked curiously. "What do you mean by that?" I asked. "The spiritual rules that determine what we can and can't do. Someone from our side must have taught you. I've never met anyone who knows the rules as well as you do."²⁵

It seems to me that if this warfare worldview is true and the claims of its technical "priesthood" are true, then we are all in very serious trouble with no clear way out. One must interview demons for years to figure out the "rules" since the information necessary to deal with them is neither revealed in Scripture nor accessible by any ordinary means.

In my case I was to run out of energy in trying to "tweak" the details of the warfare worldview to make it work. I would find out that what was necessary was a conversion to an entirely different view of the world God has created and governs. This conversion changed me from a spiritual technician to a gospel preacher. The rest of this article will describe how that happened.

CONVERTING TO THE PROVIDENTIAL WORLDVIEW

Two years after that encounter where I learned that Satan was afraid of me, I was wearing down from the long days and nights of helping people in bondage. There were late night phone calls from troubled people and the burden of the sheer number of ministry cases. Some individuals were in constant need of help. One very troubled person could sap the emotional and spiritual energy out of a counselor. I was dealing with up to 15 of them every week.

About that time one of these people was going off the deep end. She was running off late at night leaving her husband and children behind to go to bars and meet men. She had been through all of the various ministries we had to offer. Her husband would call me desperately needing help because she was destroying him and the children. One night after a 3:00 am call from this

woman in which she blamed me for her problems because I was a bad counselor, I felt I could take no more. I cried out to God, praying something like this, "Dear Lord, I really want to help this lady and the others. I have prayed for her, ministered to her, helped her and her family in practical ways, and cast out demons, I have done everything I know how to do. I cannot take this anymore. If I do not get some better answers I cannot stay in the ministry."

The answer to that prayer came in the form of a Scripture. It changed my life and ministry from that day on. I did not know it at the time, but what resulted from that situation was my conversion from the warfare worldview to what I am calling the providential worldview.²⁶ The passage that the Lord brought to my mind is this one:

And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.
(2Timothy 2:24-26).

The first thing that struck me about the passage is the description of the bondage the people are in: "having been held captive [by the devil] to do his will." I reasoned that no one could be in more bondage than that. It definitely fit the description of the woman whose situation drove me to question everything I was doing.

The second thing that came to my mind about the passage was how applicable it was to my situation. Paul was telling Timothy how to deal with people in the church who had serious problems and were causing problems for Timothy. That was precisely what I was dealing with. Later, after I was able to look more objectively at the Scriptures without my mind being influenced by the warfare worldview, I realized that this is the key passage in the New Testament that tells about dealing with people in the church who are in bondage to Satan. Most of

the passages I looked to for support of my ministry of exorcism were either from the Gospels which were before the church came to be as a result of the cross and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. The others were in Acts where the apostles were confronting demonized people who were unsaved. Exorcism was never used in the New Testament as a therapy for born again Christians.

The third thing I learned from the passage was the means of escape. This was what led me away from the warfare worldview toward the providential worldview. People in bondage to Satan escape only when God grants repentance! This shocked me when I first read it. It says, "if perhaps God may grant them repentance." The view I held before was that if things did not change either: a) I am a bad counselor or better get some better counseling techniques or b) the person is messing things up by not following my prescriptions and thus letting in seven worse demons. We went around and around trying to see which was the case. I finally came to see that if God grants repentance they will escape from the devil, and if He does not they will not. That was the key! Why He does in some cases but not others is part of God's secret will (**Deuteronomy 29:29**) that I cannot know.

However since I did not know if God would grant repentance, it was always possible that He would in any given case. This gave me encouragement in the fourth thing I learned from this passage — how to counsel such individuals. Paul wrote, "Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition." We used to be up a 2:00 am with three elders holding down a screaming, writhing demonized person as we shouted, "Come out of him you foul spirit in the name of Jesus." I thought later, "That is hardly teaching and correcting with gentleness." Since now I realized that the means God uses to deliver people from their bondage to Satan is the gospel and all of its implications, I could patiently teach the truth,

trusting that God will use it to change lives. God can deliver the most demonized sinner from the clutches of Satan through the power of the gospel (see **Colossians 1:13** and **Ephesians 2:1-5**). What I had been doing wrong before was assuming that because the people I was counseling all said that they had met Christ, and yet they were still in bondage, that therefore the gospel does not deliver people from darkness unless special techniques and processes are added to it. Now I believed in the power of the gospel.

The great thing about gospel truth is that it can be delivered at other times besides 3:00 am when people are freaking out! I never again went running out to cast out a demon when someone was having a late night melt down. I began to correct the troubled woman by telling her she needed to repent, to trust God and by His grace obey Him. It is a sin to run off from your family to live in drunkenness. She ended up divorcing her husband and spending the next twenty years going from one bad situation to a worse one. But I knew it was not my fault. She either embraces the gospel or lives in bondage. There is no plan "B" that can fix the human soul. She still may repent and escape from the devil, but if she does it will be by God's grace through the gospel, not through the spiritual Geek Squad.

HOW WE EVALUATE OUR EXPERIENCES

I now believe that God is in sovereign control of everything in the universe He created, even all wicked spiritual powers. Satan can only do what God allows him to do. The issues between freedom and bondage, blessing and cursing are clear and simple from this perspective. It all boils down to one's relationship with God through the gospel or lack thereof. The Bible says, "blessed is the man who trusts in God . . . cursed is the man who trusts in man" (see **Jeremiah 17:5-8**). I now believe that calling for spiritual technicians to manipulate the soul and the spirits that influence it constitutes "trusting man," no matter

how much Christian lingo is attached to the process.

I believe that the things that happened to me when I was a deliverance counselor were very real. I believe that demons were definitely involved. In the case of the woman who was taken over by demons that wanted to claw my face, I now interpret the event differently. When I believed the warfare worldview I was energized and excited to learn that I had great authority and that Satan respected it. I believed that the incident proved how badly hurting people needed me to be there with my experience with deliverance and demons to help them find freedom. That is what led me to years of working day and night fighting the powers of darkness that were afflicting Christians.

Now I see the same incident in a totally different light. I believe that Satan put on that show for me to get me and the others involved to trust man rather than trust only in God through the gospel. As hard as it was for me to see at the time, Satan had a reason to make me think that what I was doing was “scaring” him. Doing so diminished my confidence in the gospel by getting me to think that not the gospel but deliverance ministers like me delivered people from the hostile powers.

SATAN’S PROTECTION RACKET

The bondage and deliverance process is very much like a cruel, spiritual “protection racket.” The devil is working both ends of the game like one would in a protection racket where bullies threaten you and other bullies protect you from them for money. Satan does everything he can to get people into demonic bondage through overt occultism and other means. He then entices those who hold to the warfare worldview to think that their unbiblical teachings and practices are the key to freedom. Both ends of the game serve his purposes. The devil puts on a convincing show to make it all so very real.

He has one of his demons tell the Christian counselor “secrets” regarding how demons afflict their victims and then leave at the counselor’s command.

The demons respond to threats of being tormented in the pit by angels for a very simple reason — the demons want to get Christians to think that Christian counselors and not God have power over angels and power to pass judgment before the time on the hostile powers.²⁷ This serves Satan’s purpose in promoting “the lie” which tells us we can be like God. It makes us think we have power that only God has.

For example, when I was told that Satan was afraid of me, in as much as I believed that I embraced the lie and lost confidence in the truth of the gospel. The issue is whether we fear God and escape His judgment through the gospel, not whether Satan thinks we have great power and authority. The woman’s demon induced attack and her subsequent deliverance showed both ends of the protection racket. Through her, Satan attacked (the threat) and then withdrew at my command (the protection). The result was that I had more confidence in my spiritual power and was diverted from the gospel.

The warfare worldview drastically diminishes our hope through the gospel. It tells us that putting our hope and trust fully in God through Christ’s finished work on the cross **does not** deliver us from Satan and demons nor assure us that God will ultimately conform us to the image of Christ. Everything we are trying to do could be thwarted if we lack the special knowledge and techniques to fight the battle. Apparently the gospel does not really “work” for those who consult the spiritual “Geek Squad” unless many things are added to it. They teach that the gospel only potentially delivers us. After believing the gospel we now need professional curse breakers, exorcists, prophetic intercessors, inner healers, psycho-spiritual counselors, and others who constitute a new class of priestly technicians. These specialists mediate the “middle ground” between the soul and God. These are the “good” guys in the racket who keep the bad ones from beating us up.

The middle ground is the secret world of spirits that is hidden from our

view. According to their view, our spiritual and material well being is determined by what goes on in this world, and they have the secrets to guide us to freedom and prosperity. Neil Anderson claims that many Christians are in spiritual bondage because they have a defective worldview with an “excluded middle.”²⁸ Thus they see no reason for spiritual warfare because they have “Western,” rationalistic premises. What Anderson fails to realize or address in his book is that there are two different world views within Christianity that both accept the Biblical teachings about the reality of spirits and their influence on people. Anderson promotes the warfare worldview and simply calls it the “Christian” worldview.²⁹ I say this because he never addresses the perspective of the providential world view and provides his readers with “steps to freedom” that go beyond the gospel and the means of grace provided in Scripture.³⁰

I do not doubt the motives of the spiritual technicians. When I was one I sincerely wanted to help people. I was working day and night, without salary or benefits. I wanted to serve God fully and advance His kingdom. I sincerely believed I was doing so. However, my deception caused me to put people in more bondage rather than to deliver them. I was unwittingly a bondage maker.

For example, I taught that if a demon was cast out, and the person went back to whatever sin was deemed to have opened the door for the demon, then seven worse ones would enter (based on a misinterpretation of Matthew 12).³¹ This put those seeking deliverance into bondage. If the person came for deliverance from a spirit of lust (which commonly happened) and then later lusted after a woman, he then became exceedingly agitated and fearful because he knew he gave Satan a right to send demons to torment him. Then he would come back for more deliverance.

What this teaching does is make people think that their freedom is dependent on them living a nearly sinless life. Any mess up and the demons

come back. To show how much this depends on man rather than God's grace, consider what Bob Larson says: "I've known people whom I refused to help until they matured in the Lord to the point Satan didn't want them any longer."³² Evidently if you are not a good enough Christian you have to keep your demons. This worldview can only result in fear or pride. Fear if you believe that you cannot behave well enough to keep the demons from getting you, or pride if you think that you are such a powerful, sinless Christian that Satan fears you and cannot touch you. These outcomes (fear or pride) are the result of trusting man rather than God.

CONCLUSION

The key issue is the underlying worldview that one holds. The warfare worldview claims that history is played out as a battle between the forces of evil and believers. According to this view, God works through believers as much as they allow Him to. The more knowledge and power believers gain the better they can defeat the forces of darkness. If believers lack knowledge and techniques for spiritual warfare they will be victims and not victors. There are casualties in this battle and God does not assure the outcome.

The providential worldview believes in God's sovereignty over all the forces of darkness. Spiritual forces of darkness cannot harm believers without first getting permission from God. What He allows them to do always is for our greater good. The key issue is not our knowledge **about** the forces of evil but our knowledge **of** God through the gospel. The battle is between the lie of Satan that man can be like God and the truth of the gospel.

Those who promote the warfare worldview mislead us by claiming that the options are only between a worldview that believes that there are demons, curses, and real Satanic activities and a "western" worldview that effectively denies that spiritual activity, good and bad, exists. This is a false dilemma. Do not be misled. The providential worldview also believes very much in the reality of demons, fallen

angels, curses, principalities and powers as well as good angels and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The options are whether one believes in God's sovereignty over all of these spiritual beings and realities or whether one believes God is allowing the battle to run its course on its own. Those who hold to the later view see God there to help if we figure out and use the right techniques but not sovereignly keeping us and carrying us to glory. Does God determine the outcome or is the outcome determined by humans and demons?

I believe that God uses the gospel to deliver people from the hostile powers and that the gospel effectively accomplishes all God intended to do from all eternity to save sinners. Those who believe are "saved to the utmost" (see **Hebrews 7:25**) and need not fear the hostile spiritual forces of the universe. The means of grace provided in the Bible are sufficient to cause us freedom and growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

Those pushing the warfare worldview want us to think otherwise. They want us to believe that teachings, techniques, and spiritual processes that were not even conceived until the 20th century are necessary for us to be free from Satan's bondage. This means we must believe that Christians throughout the centuries lived without freedom because the gospel they believed was insufficient. By convincing us of the insufficiency of the gospel they become bondage makers. I used to be one. I thank God He freed me from that condition through the truth of the Scriptures.

END NOTES

1. Greg Boyd, *God at War*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1997) 13. Dr. Boyd defines the "warfare" worldview: "Stated most broadly, this worldview is that perspective on reality which centers on the conviction that the good and evil, fortunate or unfortunate, aspects of life are to be interpreted largely as the result of good and evil, friendly or hostile, spirits warring against each other and

against us." The worldview that Dr. Boyd rejects he calls the "providential blueprint worldview." 292. He categorically rejects the idea that the forces of wickedness are ultimately serving God's greater purposes.

2. Bob Larson, *In the Name of Satan — How the forces of evil work and what you can do to defeat them*; (Nashville: Nelson, 1996) 109.
3. *Ibid.* 109, 110.
4. See *Critical Issues Commentary Issue 48* "The dishonoring of God in Popular Spiritual Warfare teaching" for documentation of these teachings. <http://www.twincityfellowship.com/ci/articles/issue48.htm>
5. Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man Vol. 3*, (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1968 – first published in 1928) 125. Nee identifies "passivity" as a key way demons influence Christians. His chapter "The Path to Freedom" is original material that is very similar to what is being taught today. Nee was teaching these things many decades before those who are doing so today. His influence on me during my years of doing deliverance was extensive.
6. Larson, 48.
7. *Ibid.* 80.
8. *Op. Cit.* Nee 90. "All actions are governed by laws . . . Should anyone fulfill the conditions for the working of evil spirits (whether he fulfills them willingly, such as the witch, the medium, or the sorcerer – or unwittingly, such as the Christian), then he has definitely given ground to them to work on him." 90. As with modern versions of this teaching, the only way we can know about these laws is through extra-biblical revelations such as those provided in Nee's book.
9. Larson 190.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.* 208.
12. *Ibid.*

13. Ibid. 91
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid. 133.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid. 135-137.
18. Ibid. 138.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid. 138, 139.
21. Ibid. 141.
22. Ibid. 142 – 144.
23. Ibid. 142.
24. For example, consider 1Kings 8:39: “then hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place, and forgive and act and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart Thou knowest, **for Thou alone dost know the hearts of all the sons of men**” See also: Psalm 44:21; Acts 15:8; and 1John 3:20.
25. Larson, 205.
26. The process was immediate in that I followed the teaching of the verse from then on when I counseled people. It was slow in the sense that my conversion to the providential worldview was not complete until 1986 when I saw that my Arminian (free will) thinking was unbiblical and embraced God’s comprehensive sovereignty. This happened through a detailed study of the Book of Romans. The providential worldview holds that God is always in control of His own universe and is guiding it toward His decreed purposes (**Ephesians 1:11**).
27. The incident in the Gospels shows that Jesus is God and thus the One who will execute the final judgment: “*And behold, they cried out, saying, ‘What do we have to do with You, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’*” (**Matthew 8:29**). Any human teacher who claims the power to do this is claiming something that is a divine prerogative and thus trying to be like God. This is sinful.
28. Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*; (Eugene: Harvest House, 2000) 30-33.
29. Ibid. 33.
30. Ibid. 199-252. These steps include prescribed prayers, confessions, renunciations, checklists, ancestral curses to be broken, etc. The implication is that the gospel fails to deliver us from curses, demons, or other spiritual maladies unless certain techniques are applied. Rather than the simple, Biblical means of grace, Anderson offers techniques and canned prayers that “work.” Thus he has adopted the warfare worldview and not the providential world view.
31. I explain the passage on this audio: <http://www.twincityfellowship.com/audio/audiomisc/demons.mp3>
32. Op. Cit. Larson, 191.

Critical Issues Commentary
copyright © 2003

cicministry.org

For Exegetical Bible Sermons:
ggf.church

bob@cicministry.org