

Christ Reformation Church

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Wise as Serpents – A Practical Theology of Evil

(Part 8 – What Does the Holy Spirit Look Like?)

January 31, 2016

Sermon Text: Galatians 5:16ff

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 17

Introduction-

And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." Then David

said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand." (1Sa 17:41-47)

My thesis this morning is that we do not recognize the leading and working of the Holy Spirit in us as clearly as we might think and in fact most Christians are confused about recognizing the Spirit in them because they have been falsely instructed about His nature and character. As a result, evil remains disguised, Christians wear false guilt, and the Spirit of God in us is quenched.

How did the Spirit of God in David react to evil? That is to say, how did David, led by and filled with the Spirit of God act as he faced Goliath, this taunting enemy of the Lord?

This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth...

I want us all to consider this very carefully and compare David's words with the typical claims of so many pillars of the church today. *I will strike you down and cut off your head. Do you see? That is nothing less than the Spirit of God speaking in David.* That is how the Spirit reacts to evil. And yet,

- David should have shown love for Goliath and tried to lead him to Christ,
- David should not have been carrying any weapons of any kind,
- David should have chosen to suffer, knelt down, and passively let Goliath cut off *his* head.

But David killed him. The Spirit of God enabled David, guided that stone, and killed the evil one. And then he cut off his head.

One of the tactics of evil by which its emissaries work to remain hidden under a cloak of "holy light," is to quench the working of the Spirit in us so that we do not recognize it and act by it. The Spirit is quenched by the lies of the evil one.

- It is always sinful to show anger
- We must never speak negatively of anyone
- Passivity and pacifism is what we are called to

And so, Goliath is left to oppress and to kill and destroy because Christians are duped and do not follow the leading of the Spirit in them.

How does the Spirit of God react when evil comes into its presence? Here are some answers:

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. (1Th 5:19-22)

The Holy Spirit is at work in us, leading and directing us in righteousness. He directs us to abstain from every form of evil. EVERY form. That means that we must:

- Be wise about what evil is, what it looks like, and
- Be innocent of it ourselves

To fail to heed the Spirit's leading in this is to ally oneself with evil. We are to TEST things. We are to hold fast to what is good, but we must necessarily judge and say "this is evil, this is good," or we will inevitably quench the leading of the Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit will immediately sound off warnings to us when evil comes into our presence.

Gal 5:16-23 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (17) **For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other,** to keep you from doing the things you want to do. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (19) Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, (21) envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Do you see this? *The desires of the Spirit are AGAINST the flesh.*

Powerfully. When sin and unrighteousness and evil rise up in His presence, He opposes it. Paul is here dealing with the flesh, but we must also understand that this is not our own flesh and sin, but includes the wickedness in others. The Spirit actively opposes evil. The Spirit is against evil.

Listen again-

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...

Now let me ask you. Did David exercise these fruits of the Spirit when he opposed Goliath? Was he at peace with Goliath? Was he patient with and kind to Goliath? He killed him and cut off his head!

Many supposed Christian teachers and preachers today would have David quench the Spirit. They would have told him that he was wrong to do what he did, that he should have been more patient, more kind, and should have tried to get Goliath to see the error of his ways and repent!

We have been taught wrongly and at best this wrong teaching is rank naivete, but more often I believe that it is evil that is working to cloak itself in righteousness.

I can give you a personal example and I hope that some examples from your own experience will be coming to your mind right now as well.

Once many years ago I took a phone call from a man who had attended this church occasionally. He had a reputation in the community of being a braggart and a bully but I didn't know that. He phoned and he was drunk and he was angry and threatening and he was blaspheming God and threatening this church with violence because he did not like it that we found out a relative of his was a criminal and a danger to our young people and we had warned the parents of those young people about him. So this guy is blaspheming the Lord's name to me and threatening to come over and assault me and all that sort of wickedness. I was angry and I told him he was a wicked, evil man and we were not going to be intimidated by him, and that if he wanted to come over and attack us come right ahead and I will be there waiting for him. He shut up right away and I told him we would not permit that kind of threat against us nor listen to his evil blasphemy of the Lord. I never heard from him again.

Now, not long after that when I recounted to the church board what had happened, one man in particular became very critical, accusing me of

doing wrong, telling me I should have been patient and kind to the fellow, and on and on it went. Over the years he brought this accusation up in my face repeatedly. Eventually I realized that he was a wicked man himself and he was using those false claims to pervert Scripture, to quench the Holy Spirit's leading of us, and to exalt and glorify himself.

What does the leading of the Holy Spirit look like, you see? And what I am cautioning you about this morning is that we have been so often wrongly taught so that we do not recognize the Spirit's leading in us, we are told that it is the flesh, and we quench the Spirit. And evil remains unmolested among us!

Let me give you some more examples of the Spirit's leading when evil shows up:

Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?" Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Yes, what they are

building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!"

Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders.

So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.

And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night. In Judah it was said, "The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall." And our enemies said, "They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work." At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times,

"You must return to us." So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."

When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other. And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us." So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears

from the break of dawn until the stars came out. I also said to the people at that time, "Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day." So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon at his right hand. (Neh 4:1-23)

Now, I ask you – was Nehemiah led by the Spirit of God in this? Of course he was! And if those wicked men had attacked, the Jews would have fought. With God's blessing. Nehemiah, led by the Spirit, even prayed God's judgment upon these enemies.

And I ask you once more, is all of this consistent with what we have so often been taught about being a Christian and walking in the Spirit?

Let's consider still another example:

And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them." Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained. Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, please remember

me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes." And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life. (Jdg 16:26-30)

I ask again, was this the Spirit of God? Yes it was!

He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking

people to lead him by the hand. (Act 13:7-11)

Do you see that if you have been taught a distorted, milk toast version of God and specifically of the Holy Spirit's leading in the believer, then you are going to quench that leading when evil comes into your presence and is revealed and opposed by the Spirit. Which means you will be left to act in a fleshly manner of cowardice or denial, enabling the evil. You will confuse the leading of the Spirit with the flesh and the other way round as well.

Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. (Joh 8:43-45)

Was Jesus led by the Spirit? And yet today a response like this to the wicked is branded as being "un-Christian, unkind, un-spiritual."

Where the Spirit of God is quenched, there is no fear of the Lord.

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon

all who heard of these things. (Act 5:1-11)

Ananias and Sapphira lied *to the Holy Spirit* and the Holy Spirit killed them. Was Peter unspiritual and unkind and unloving to them?

Where the Spirit of God is quenched, there is no fear of the Lord, evil flourishes unchecked and unexposed.

Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." (Mat 15:12-14)

Was the Lord Jesus speaking by the Spirit when He offended the Pharisees? What about when He told the disciples "tough. Don't worry about them."

When evil comes into our presence, the Spirit of Christ in us *mightily opposes it and exposes it*. We must understand that this is indeed the Spirit in us or we will be duped. Do not be so quick to condemn your reaction as "sinful".

Let me give you an example that I saw just this last week. I was driving

through the little town I live in and I saw a person alongside the highway hitchhiking. They had a walker and as I went by they lifted the walker up and kind of shook it to call my attention to their disability so I would give them a ride. I knew that is what the person was doing (I wasn't able to tell if the person was male or female), and I just kept driving.

The next day I was in a local business and I asked the owner about the hitchhiker with the walker. He told me, "oh yeah, that guy has been around here for months sponging off people. And I just found out that he stole that walker from someone's yard. The churches here have been helping him and paying his bills and I don't understand it because he is obviously a charlatan."

So what does the Holy Spirit say about sluggards and con artists? If they won't work, then they don't eat. We are not supposed to support such a person. And yet here, as a very poor example to the non-Christians in town, it is the professing Christians who claim they are showing this guy the love of Christ!! In fact they are participating in his sin.

The Holy Spirit is not a wimp. The Son of God is not a wimp. But we have been taught that he is. So evil flourishes among us. God is not feared.

The Day of the Lord is presented as some fun-filled Day when most everyone is going to happily walk into heaven.

This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. (2Th 1:5-10)

Are those the words of the Spirit of God? I hope that we all understand that they are indeed, and the we each one carefully give thought to what the leading of the Spirit in us really looks like. We must be wise as serpents in regard to the nature and tactics of evil while remaining innocent as doves as to participation in it.