

Evicting Harassing Spirits

When I was in middle school, I dealt with a girl who would not leave me alone. This fellow classmate would irritate me, follow me around, and bother me nonstop. Finally, one day I was out in the quad during a recess or lunch, and I was next to my sister who was a year older than me. As I am chatting with my sister and her friends, this girl starts walking my way. I said out loud, “Oh great here comes that girl. She won’t leave me alone.” So, my big sister does what every good big sister would do...she grabbed this girl who was bothering me and with one hand lifted her off the ground and said, “Leave my brother alone.” Have you ever seen someone so scared all they can do is laugh nervously? It was quite the comical scene, but the bottom line is that the girl never bothered me again.

I am sure that every person in this room has been annoyed and bothered by some other person at one point in their lives. But what is worse than a human harassing you, is a demonic spirit harassing you. Last Monday I was listening to one of my favorite preachers and they mentioned something I knew about but never studied or preached on. This preacher mentioned dealing with a harassing spirit. One study at Oral Roberts University notes sixteen different kinds of demonic spirits in the Bible. Some of them include, familiar spirits, lying spirit, perverse spirit, spirit of heaviness, deaf and dumb spirit, spirit of fear, etc. These are all specific demons mentioned in the Bible.

What does a harassing spirit do? A harassing spirit is a demonic entity that persistently attacks, annoys, and intimidates individuals to cause emotional, physical, or spiritual exhaustion, often creating a hostile environment to steal joy and hinder purpose. They work to incite fear, guilt, and anger. Think about it this way, if a human was harassing you what would be their goal? They would want to torture you mentally, they want to overwhelm you, so you become exhausted, and ultimately, they want to distract you from doing what you want to do. A demon is the same. They want to torture you mentally as they relentlessly bombard you with lies, accusations, fears, etc. They want to see you exhausted from worry, stress, and depression. Ultimately a demon wants to distract or hinder you from dwelling in the presence of God and worshipping the Lord.

Today I want to preach a message titled, “Evicting the Spirit of Harassment.” Many of you have been dealing with a spirit of harassment and haven’t realized it. I believe many are going to be set free this morning and it is my prayer that you become better equipped in your authority after the message today. If you have your Bibles, go with me to the book of Acts in chapter 16. We are going to begin in verse 16. As you are turning there just a little background. In Acts 16, Paul is beginning his second missionary journey. The Holy Spirit doesn’t allow him to go into Asia Minor but in a vision, he is compelled to go to Macedonia to help in a specific way. The area Paul was called to was a thousand miles away from Jerusalem. I have a picture here of area he was heading to. When he gets to Philippi, he meets a lady selling purple items which were expensive and luxurious. Lydia and her household were saved and baptized. After this awesome event, Paul encounters a harassing demon. Let’s pick up in verse 16:

16 It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, “These men are bond-servants of the Most High

God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.” 18 She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment.

19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, 20 and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, 21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.” 22 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. 23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; 24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; 26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened. 27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!” 29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” – Acts 16:16-30 NASB1995

If you have been under my leadership for any amount of time you will know I have a problem with modern day spiritual warfare. I believe the church is very confused on the topic and I believe there is a huge market for spiritual warfare that is not really helping people. I say this all the time, but we are battling a defeated foe. We just celebrated Easter where Jesus defeated the power of the devil and death. The enemy we are fighting against and dealing with is already defeated. *The main problem is not the devil...* the main problem is Christians who don’t know what to do against the devil. In this case, the harassing spirit was a spirit of divination or fortune telling. Every time I read this portion of Scripture I am reminded of those 90’s commercials with the fortune teller Miss Cleo. Remember that garbage. We have palm readers and psychics all over DFW. The promise is that they can tell you what’s coming in the future so you can be better prepared. The truth is that they really don’t know the future and are just deceiving people. I heard one story of a pastor in Hawaii who was walking the streets and came across a fortune teller. The fortune teller said for a set price, he could tell the pastor his future. The pastor said, “So, if I give you money you can tell me what I will be doing tomorrow at this time?” The fortune teller said, “yes.” The pastor then said, “I will give you double that amount if you can tell me what I was doing at this time yesterday.” Of course, the fortune teller denied trying. Its comical really. If you call a toll-free number seeking a psychic what is the first thing they say, “Hi what’s your name?” I don’t know demon you tell me! Listen, it is not the demon we should be worried about. It is the lack of authority on our part that’s the problem. Why are we tolerating harassing spirits?

The demon in this story is a very specific one. One scholar says this about the demon:

“It actually says, ‘She had a spirit of Pythona.’ That does not mean much to most of us, which is why it is not translated literally. But ‘pythona’ was a certain kind of snake – a python. It is

used here because the python was associated with the god Apollo...not far from Philippi, in this very area of Europe, there was a shrine to the Pythian Apollo.” (Boice)

The Greek word describing this spirit has a long and dark history; it is the word python, which sounds like the English word for a large snake that squeezes life out of its victims. That is precisely what the word means—snake, or even dragon. In the mythology of the ancient world a python guarded the entrance to the Oracle of Delphi, that legendary fortune telling figure. In other words, this poor girl lived in the darkness of human and demonic slavery. Regardless of what kind of demon you may be dealing with, the bottom line is that we need to be equipped to handle it and cast it out of our lives and thoughts. I want to encourage you this morning with a few things that can equip and help you.

How to Evict Harassing spirits:

POINT #1 – Know your Identity so you won’t be Deceived.

When I was a little kid, I grew up in a neighborhood with about twenty kids my age. I had the best childhood experience growing up. I lived next door to my best friend and one day we were playing in the backyard. We were playing superheroes and even designed our own outfits. At one point in our backyard adventures my friend looks at me, lifts up his sky mask, and says, “Shh, Rudy, it’s actually me.” My friend literally thought he was a superhero and needed to keep his identity a secret. It is so true that if you give a kid a cape, or spider man shoes, they will literally think they are the superhero. I wish every Christian thought this way about their identity in Christ. That we would believe what the Scriptures declare about us and nothing and no one can change our mind. You and I have been saved, healed, delivered, and made whole by the blood of Jesus. We are beloved children of God and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian on this planet has more power in them than all of hell combined.

The devil has not changed his tactics in thousands of years. He uses primarily two attacks. The first attack is on the Word of God and the second is on our identity. Read Genesis 2-3 and Luke 4 and you will see that the devil used the same tactics on both Adam and Eve and Jesus. He succeeded with Adam but failed with Jesus. Jesus fought back with the Word and knew He was the Son of God here to save the world from their sins. If you feel you are under heavier spiritual attack lately, you need to get into the Word of God even more. I would encourage you to choose a few foundational verses to memorize in preparation for when the enemy attacks.

POINT #2 – Know your Authority so you won’t be Disturbed.

Let me just say this first...if you were to google or go on YouTube and search “How to deal with harassing spirits? Do you know what you will get? You will get titles like, “Say this prayer to remove demons” or “Pray this at 3am.” Christians can get silly when it comes to spiritual warfare. We need to keep it Biblical, keep it simple, and stand on our authority. Matthew 10:8 Jesus commands His disciples (and us because we are disciples of Jesus) to use our authority to “heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, and cleanse lepers.” In Acts 10:38 says how “Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.” In John 20:21 Jesus says, “As the Father has sent Me so I send you into the world.” We are to operate in the

same power that Jesus operated in. We have authority from heaven and the Holy Spirit. We should not be battling with the enemy but exercising our authority.

One thing I have notice in the Bible is that there is a pattern when it comes to Jesus dealing with demons. The pattern is that Jesus spoke directly to the demon and very concisely cast it out. He would say things like “Shut up,” “be gone,” and other short phrases. One thing I do not see often if at all is Jesus *praying* a demon away. When we exercise our authority, we don’t pray for demons to go, we command them to go. Prayer is intimate communication with our Father. James 4 says that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. That is a promise. But the way we resist the devil is not with theatrics. Some believers think that the higher they yell the more authority they have. Demons do not respond to decibel level; they respond to authority. I can whisper and cast out a legion of demons from a troubled soul.

POINT #3 – Know your Ministry so you won’t be Distracted.

In John 17 Jesus is giving the high priestly prayer. In this He mentions multiple times that part of His purpose was to reveal the Father. In verse 3 He even says that the definition of eternal life is that we may know the Father. Jesus primary ministry was to the Father. Much like the priests of the Old Testament, Jesus lived to bless, worship, and minister to the Father. You and I are a royal priesthood. Our main ministry is to the Father. When the spirit of harassment comes along the primary goal is to distract you from that primary ministry.

Do you remember what Paul and Silas were doing before the harassing spirit came along? They were headed to the place of prayer. They were headed to minister to God through prayer. So, what does the harassing spirit do? Make a commotion and distract the men of God from their assignment of worship. The more you understand that you are a royal priesthood put on earth to worship God, the easier it will be to reject and rebuke a harassing spirit who is trying to distract you from your purpose and assignment.

Last Sunday I hit a wall like I haven’t hit in quite some time. I am very grateful that our church is simple when it comes to Easter. For many churches, Easter is a “Superbowl” due to the larger crowds etc. I saw several of my pastor friends on social media talk about how exhausted they were. They had done multiple services and there were so many preparations leading up to Easter. We didn’t have all of that but after going out to eat after church I came home and was so depleted I fell on the bed and could not get out. It took me a whole day to recover. This threw me off because I have been very aggressive in guarding myself against burnout or fatigue. I meet with a counselor on a regular basis, I guard my sabbath and rest every week for 24 hours, and I even shortened my daily to do lists. Every Monday morning, I go to my office and plan out my entire week. I write down all my appointments, all the tasks I need to get done, the menu for the week of dinners, shopping list and more. I used to make daily to do lists that would go to about 4pm but I quickly discovered that fires need to be put out, and surprises happen all the time. So now I plan my days to not go past 1pm, knowing the rest of the day will get eaten up with last minute things or surprises or something breaks on the property, etc. So even with all these boundaries put in place, I still hit a wall. I don’t like the feeling when my body and brain cannot do what I want it to do. The more I thought about what happened to me last Sunday, the more I realize it was a spirit of harassment. I used rest to recover after I hit my wall but nowhere in that process

did I use my authority. Nowhere in that process did it dawn on me that maybe this was spiritual warfare. When I realized what had happened, I stepped into my authority in Christ and *immediately* everything changed in my mind, feelings, and body. I am talking immediately.